

## “Free spaces” in collective action

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Good metaphors may be essential to social science. By putting “the polysemous properties of language in the foreground,” they facilitate what Richard Harvey Brown calls the “genre-stretching” that drives innovation.<sup>1</sup> The danger of a good metaphor, though, is that claims merely implied are subjected neither to theoretical specification nor empirical investigation. Evocation substitutes for explanation. This has been the case, I argue, in recent discussions of the role of “free spaces” in mobilization. Since Sara Evans used the term in her 1979 *Personal Politics*, “free spaces,” along with “protected spaces,” “safe spaces,” “spatial preserves,” “havens,” “sequestered social sites,” “cultural laboratories,” “spheres of cultural autonomy,” and “free social spaces” – different names for the same thing – have appeared regularly in the work of sociologists, political scientists, and historians of collective action.<sup>2</sup> For all these writers, free spaces and their analogues refer to small-scale settings within a community or movement that are removed from the direct control of dominant groups, are voluntarily participated in, and generate the cultural challenge that precedes or accompanies political mobilization.

The term’s appeal is considerable. Not only does it discredit a view of the powerless as deludedly acquiescent to their domination, since in free spaces they are able to penetrate and overturn hegemonic beliefs, but it promises to restore culture to structuralist analyses without slipping into idealism. Counterhegemonic ideas and identities come neither from outside the system nor from some free-floating oppositional consciousness, but from long-standing community institutions. Free spaces seem to provide institutional anchor for the cultural challenge that explodes structural arrangements. Yet the analytic force of the concept has been blunted by inconsistencies in its definition and usage and by a deeper failure to grasp the more complex dynamics of mobi-

lization. How ubiquitous are free spaces? How necessary are they to mobilization and are they necessary to all movements? What makes them free? The variety of answers to these questions stems in part from the term's conflation of several structures that play *different* roles in mobilization. That is, a feminist bookshop created by activists in the American women's liberation movement bore a different relation to protest than did a book circle in Estonia under Soviet rule.<sup>3</sup> I suggest, therefore, that we disaggregate structures as well as tasks of mobilization. The three structures that I identify – transmovement, indigenous, and prefigurative – can be compared along several dimensions. I argue that the character of the associational ties that compose them, respectively, extensive, dense/isolated, and symmetrical, helps to explain their different roles in identifying opportunities, recruiting participants, supplying leaders, and crafting compelling action frames.

This reconceptualization still does not answer to a second set of problems, which has to do with a tendency to *reduce culture to structure*, in spite of the free space concept's promise to integrate the two. This is most evident in discussions of what I have termed "indigenous" structures. Opposition is made dependent on the structural characteristics of the free space (its density and isolation), and on the structural transformations (opportunity or crisis) that turn the challenge nurtured there into a mobilizing action frame. But that conceptualization obscures, first, the cultural dimensions of structural transformations outside the free space and, accordingly, insurgents' capacity to influence, indeed create, opportunities; and, second, the cultural specificity of the structures within it. Depending on what *meanings* are attached to actual or perceived ties, dense and isolated networks are as likely to impede protest or limit it to purely local targets and identities as to facilitate it. Rather than providing insight into the dynamics by which such constraints are surmounted, free spaces remain a cultural black box grafted onto a political opportunity model or a structural breakdown one. Conceptualizing structures *as* cultural reveals resources available to insurgents and obstacles facing them that have been overlooked in analyses of free spaces.

Drawing on two cases whose status as free spaces has become near-paradigmatic, I demonstrate the yields of such a reconceptualization. I argue that network *intersections* are critical to generating mobilizing identities, not just because weak-tied individuals provide access to previously unavailable material and informational resources, but because their social distance endows them with the authority to contest

existing relations of status and deference among the aggrieved population. Thus, I show how rural black Mississippians' interaction with people they saw as representatives of the national civil rights movement proved important in countering local black elites' reluctance to engage in militant action. This was true even though the movement activists to whom they were exposed, namely college-age organizers, provided neither financial resources, physical protection, nor guarantees of political success. Similarly, the development of a feminist challenge within the Southern civil rights movement was made possible by veterans' contact with white newcomers from Northern activist circles, whose social distance not only brought new information and ideas, but enabled them to defy conventions of racial and gender deference. In both cases, mapping the structural relations without examining the meanings of those relations is insufficient explanation for the timing and form of collective action.

### **Theoretical convergence on the free space concept**

In a much-quoted passage, Sara Evans and Harry Boyte write:

Particular sorts of public places in the community, what we call free spaces, are the environments in which people are able to learn a new self-respect, a deeper and more assertive group identity, public skills, and values of cooperation and civic virtue. Put simply, free spaces are settings between private lives and large scale institutions where ordinary citizens can act with dignity, independence and vision.<sup>4</sup>

For Evans and Boyte and the scholars who have followed them, the free space concept shows that the oppressed are not without resources to combat their oppression. In the dense interactive networks of community-based institutions, people envision alternative futures and plot strategies for realizing them. Free spaces supply the activist networks, skills, and solidarity that assist in launching a movement. They also provide the *conceptual* space in which dominated groups are able to penetrate the prevailing common sense that keeps most people passive in the face of injustice, and are thus crucial to the very formation of the identities and interests that precede mobilization. As Eric Hirsch puts it, "Havens insulate the challenging group from the rationalizing ideologies normally disseminated by the society's dominant group."<sup>5</sup> Free spaces have included, by Fantasia and Hirsch's count, block clubs, tenant associations, bars, union halls, student lounges and hangouts, families, women's consciousness-raising groups, and lesbian feminist communities.<sup>6</sup>

The Southern black church, removed from white control and central to the life of black communities, figures in most surveys of free spaces. For the emerging civil rights movement it provided meeting places to develop strategy and commitment, a network of charismatic movement leaders, and an idiom that persuasively joined Constitutional ideals with Christian ones.<sup>7</sup> The Southern civil rights movement itself, and particularly the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), in another oft-cited example, gave white women the organizing skills, role models (in effective older women activists), and friendship connections that were essential to the emergence of radical feminism. It also gave them the ideological room to begin to question the gap between male activists' radically egalitarian ethos and their sexist behavior. "Within the broader social space of the movement," Evans and Boyte write, "women found a specifically female social space in which to discuss their experiences, share insights, and find group strength as they worked in the office or met on the margins of big meetings."<sup>8</sup> Free spaces within movements thus contribute to the spread of identities, frames, and tactics from one movement to another. And as "abeyance structures"<sup>9</sup> and "halfway houses,"<sup>10</sup> they preserve movement networks and traditions during the "doldrums" of apparent political consensus. They are "repositories of cultural materials into which succeeding generations of activists can dip to fashion ideologically similar, but chronologically separate, movements," as McAdam puts it.<sup>11</sup> As "movement communities," free spaces are an enduring *outcome* of protest.<sup>12</sup>

The free space concept has been appealing to scholars of varying theoretical stripe for its recognition of the usually constraining operation of common sense while refusing the across-the-board mystification of dominant ideology theses. Counterhegemonic frames come not from a disembodied oppositional consciousness or pipeline to an extra-systemic emancipatory truth, but from long-standing community institutions. Converging with resource mobilization models' attentiveness to the networks and organizations that precede insurgency, the notion of free spaces highlights in addition the specifically *cultural* dimensions of prior networks.<sup>13</sup> It thus seems to provide a much needed conceptual bridge between structuralist models' focus on institutional sources of change and new social movement theorists' interest in challenges to dominant cultural codes. It recognizes the cultural practices of subordinate groups (free spaces are often cultural institutions) as proto- or explicitly *political*. The free space concept undermines another well-worn opposition between tradition and radical change. Free spaces

are often associated with the most traditional institutions: the church in Southern black communities;<sup>14</sup> the family in Algeria and Kuwait;<sup>15</sup> nineteenth-century French peasant communities.<sup>16</sup> Although under normal circumstances such institutions are conservative, the rapid social change that both threatens their existence and puts ancient ambitions within reach may make of them, as Calhoun puts it, “reactionary radicals.”<sup>17</sup> Incorporating institutional and ideational dimensions, tradition and change, and community and challenge, the free space concept seems an ideal conceptual tool for probing the foundations of insurgency.

### **Divergence and ambiguity**

Yet what seems like consensus on what the term “free space” means, refers to, and illuminates conceals a good deal of divergence. What are free spaces? Authors variously describe them as subcultures, communities, institutions, organizations, and associations, which are very different referents. Evans and Boyte represent them as *physical* spaces; the term, they say “suggests strongly an ‘objective,’ physical dimension – the ways in which places are organized and connected, fragmented, and so forth.”<sup>18</sup> However, Scott maintains that *linguistic* codes that are opaque to those in power are as much a free space as is a physical site of resistance; Farrell says that the 1950s Beat Movement created “free spaces in print and performance”; Robnett describes the grassroots, one-on-one recruitment activities that were dominated by women in the civil rights movement as a “free space,” and Gamson calls “cyber-space” a “safe space.”<sup>19</sup>

Do all oppressed groups have free spaces? Gamson and Scott argue that only total institutions provide the powerful complete control; all other regimes of power coexist with spaces of relative autonomy. Fantasia and Hirsch similarly argue that “[t]hese ‘free’ social spaces or ‘havens’ have had counterparts wherever dominant and subordinate groups have coexisted.”<sup>20</sup> But they go on to suggest that “the *availability* and nature of such ‘free’ spaces play a key role in the success of a variety of movement mobilization efforts,”<sup>21</sup> this implying that free spaces are *not* always available. Hirsch reiterates the point: “Successful recruitment to a revolutionary movement is more likely *if* there are social structural-cultural havens available where radical ideas and tactics can be more easily germinated.”<sup>22</sup> If not all oppressed groups possess free spaces, then under what conditions do such sites emerge? What about free spaces make them free, and free of what? There seems

to be agreement among the authors I've cited that freedom from the surveillance of authorities is essential.<sup>23</sup> The hush arbors of slaves, bars in working-class communities, Kuwaiti mosques under Iraqi occupation: each gave oppressed groups the opportunity to voice their complaints and openly discuss alternatives. On the other hand, federal *prison* served as a launching pad for the radical pacifist movement, according to James Tracy. "In these artificial communities, [WW2 conscientious objectors] feverishly exchanged ideas about reforging pacifism and experimented with resistance against the microcosm of the state they had near at hand in their places of internment."<sup>24</sup> Whether free spaces are characterized by *ideological* freedom is also disputed. Evans and Boyte, Gamson, Hirsch, and Fantasia and Hirsch argue that they are; James Scott claims that subordinates' apparent consent to their domination is everywhere a performance.<sup>25</sup> Free spaces offer people not the opportunity to penetrate the sources of their subordination, since they are already obvious, but to preserve and build upon a collective record of resistance. But what about groups that are not subordinate? They launch movements too, for example, for animal rights and environmental protection, but presumably lack a "hidden transcript" of collective resistance. Do they require free spaces?

Small size, intimacy, and the rootedness of free spaces in long-standing communities seem to be common themes. Evans and Boyte define them in part "by their roots in community, the dense, rich networks of daily life."<sup>26</sup> Scott writes: "Generally speaking, the smaller and more intimate the group, the safer the possibilities for free expression."<sup>27</sup> And Couto: "When the conditions of repression are paramount and the possibility of overt resistance is small, narratives are preserved in the most private of free spaces, the family..."<sup>28</sup> But intimacy is no guarantee of freedom of expression. And as feminist theorists have long pointed out, the family has been a prime site for the reproduction of patriarchal relations.<sup>29</sup> With respect to free spaces' deep community roots, this doesn't seem to be the case with movement free spaces, which are created *de novo* as a deliberate strategy for freeing up discussion. In Hirsch's account of community organizing in East New York, the "havens" within which an oppositional culture developed – block clubs – were founded by organizers from outside the community. The block clubs *were* the movement rather than precursors to it.<sup>30</sup> The Highlander Center, federal prisons, and the Christian Faith and Life Community within which New Left ideals were developed have each been labeled free spaces but none can be considered integral to the daily life of pre-existing communities.<sup>31</sup> 1960s feminist activist Pam

Allen is explicit: “It is when we come into a long term relationship with people with whom we don’t associate regularly that the old roles we play can be set aside for a space in which we can develop ourselves more fully as whole human beings. . . . Free Space is free because we do relate *apart* from our daily lives.”<sup>32</sup>

Finally, what are the connections between the counterhegemonic challenge that is nurtured in free spaces and full-fledged mobilization? For Evans and Boyte, “Democratic action depends upon these free spaces, where people experience a schooling in citizenship and learn a vision of the common good in the course of struggling for change. . . . Free spaces are the foundations for such movement countercultures.”<sup>33</sup> Fantasia and Hirsch argue, by contrast, that the alternative cultures developed in such sites only become politicized in the context of insurgency. For Scott, the cultural practices in free spaces are already political. However, insurgency is only triggered by a relaxation of surveillance. For Whittier, activists turn to cultural work within free spaces when direct engagement with the state is no longer possible.<sup>34</sup> Are participants in the free space more likely to perceive political opportunities when they open up? Do leaders within the free space, for example, ministers or teachers, the local bartender, or conveners of a consciousness-raising group within a movement, become the leaders of the (new) movement? Do the institutions within which opposition is nurtured shape the character of insurgency? And do free spaces precede the emergence of *all* movements? Evans’s and Boyte’s claim that free spaces are necessary to “*democratic* action,”<sup>35</sup> and Fisher’s that free spaces are “seedbeds for *democratic* insurgency,”<sup>36</sup> suggest their limited applicability. But is there any reason why free spaces do not play a role in right-wing movements?

It seems clear that by “free space” analysts have something more in mind than a gathering place that is removed from the direct surveillance of authorities. It is hard to imagine insurgents not finding a physical space for communication, whether a shadowy alley, a prison exercise yard, or the internet. And indeed, in several cases the physical space that analysts refer to doesn’t seem to amount to much, for example the “margins of big meetings” that Sara Evans identified as a free space for the development of radical feminism within the New Left, and the street corner defended against rival gangs that Gamson describes as a safe space.<sup>37</sup> Rather it makes sense to see the free space concepts as an attempt to capture the social structural dimensions of several cultural dynamics. We know that cultural practices can express, sus-

tain, and strengthen oppositional identities and solidarities (especially at times when repression makes direct claims on the state impossible, but also when institutionalized understandings of politics exclude issues and identities as personal, private, or otherwise non-political); that movements build on prior activist networks, traditions, and know-how; that pre-existing affective bonds supply the selective incentives to participate rather than free-ride; and that community institutions can nurture traditions of opposition to dominant ideologies. However, the free space concept simply posits a “space” wherein those dynamics occur, without specifying how, why, and when certain patterns of relations produce full-scale mobilization rather than accommodation or unobtrusive resistance. As a first cut at these questions, I propose that we distinguish three types of associative structures that have been called free spaces, and specify the ways in which each one is more and less likely to facilitate key tasks of mobilization. Then I suggest what such a typology leaves out.

### **An alternative: Structures of association and preconditions for mobilization**

*Transmovement*, *indigenous*, and *prefigurative* groups<sup>38</sup> all operate within or in sympathy with an aggrieved population and all foster oppositional practices, whether explicitly political or proto-politically cultural (see Table 1). I focus here on the character of their *associational ties*, both those linking participants and those linking particular networks to others within a “multiorganizational field,”<sup>39</sup> in accounting for their differential capacity to identify opportunities, supply leaders, recruit participants, craft mobilizing action frames, and fashion new identities, tasks essential to sustained mobilization. Note that transmovement, indigenous, and prefigurative forms of association by no means exhaust the structures that play a role in mobilization. Most obviously missing are formal movement organizations, along with counter-movements, third parties (media and funders), and authorities. I treat only these three because they have been characterized as “free spaces” but without the differentiation necessary to identify the specific resources each provides for mobilization efforts. Note also that my intention is not to privilege the character of social ties over their substantive content in accounting for their role in mobilization, that is, to privilege structure over culture. I understand culture as the symbolic dimension of all structures, institutions, and practices (symbols are signs that have meaning and significance through their



Table 1. Associative structures in social movements

Structure	Character of ties	Role in mobilization	Examples
Trans-movement	Extensive ties	Well-equipped to identify opportunities. Not well-equipped to supply leaders or mobilizing frames, or to recruit participants	Highlander Folk School, National Women's Party, radical pacifists
Indigenous	Dense ties, isolated network	Well-equipped to supply leaders, local participants, and mobilizing frames; but not to identify extra-local opportunities or mobilize extra-local participants	Southern black church, German Turner halls, Estonian literary circles, craft guilds
Prefigurative	Symmetric ties	Well-equipped to develop new identities and claims, but unless they begin to provide non-movement services are difficult to sustain	"Women's only" spaces, new social movement "autonomous zones," "alternative" services

interrelations; the pattern of those relations is culture). More on this follows below.

*Transmovement* structures are the "halfway houses" described by Aldon Morris, the "abeyance structures" by Verta Taylor, the "movement midwives" by Christian Smith, and the "movement mentors" by Bob Edwards and John McCarthy: the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Highlander Folk School, and Southern Conference Educational Fund for the civil rights movement, the National Women's Party for second wave feminism, and the American Friends Service Committee and Fellowship of Reconciliation for the 1980s Central American peace movement.<sup>40</sup> They are activist networks characterized by the *reach* of their ties geographically, organizationally, and temporally. That is, activists are linked across a wide geographic area, have contacts in a variety of organizations and are often veterans of past movements. At the same time, they are marginal to mainstream American politics.<sup>41</sup> Transmovement structures can be concentrated in a physical site like the Highlander Folk School, which trained generations of activists in the techniques of nonviolence and community organizing. Or they may consist in a looser cadre of activists, for example, American radical pacifists who operated in a variety of movement organizations in the

New Left, anti-Vietnam War, and civil rights movements.<sup>42</sup> Either way, transmovement groups' extensive contacts position them to identify changes in the structure of political bargaining that indicate the state's likely vulnerability to movement demands.<sup>43</sup> By comparison, locals' distance from national political elites makes it difficult for them to identify the splits and alliances that signal new prospects for successful insurgency.<sup>44</sup> Transmovement groups may provide funding for emerging movements and for activists pursuing militant tactics or a radical agenda, as well as legal advice and communications contacts.<sup>45</sup> They often train movement leaders in strategies and tactics (as radical pacifists Glenn Smiley and Bayard Rustin did in honing Dr. King's knowledge of Gandhian nonviolent resistance).<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, transmovement groups are not well-positioned to supply leaders, engage in recruitment drives, or develop resonant mobilizing frames. For the U.S. Central American peace movement, the "stability and bureaucratic formality" of groups like the American Friends Service Committee and the National Council of Churches "seem[ed] to produce a certain sluggishness that inhibit[ed] the kind of high-intensity organizing needed to mobilize insurgency," Christian Smith notes.<sup>47</sup> In other cases, the marginal and sometimes prosecuted status of transmovement groups has made them of ambiguous benefit to leaders seeking to present their movement as "homegrown" and deserving of mainstream support. Radical pacifists' refusal to bow to movement realpolitik made them at times worrisome wild cards for moderate leaders in the civil rights, New Left, and anti-Vietnam War movements.<sup>48</sup> And leaders of the African National Congress in the 1950s sought to dissociate themselves publicly from the illegal South African Communist Party, even as they sought its advice on forming an underground organization.<sup>49</sup> Transmovement groups' marginal position has reduced the pressure to develop ideological visions with broad appeal (indeed, members' collective identity may have been preserved by emphasizing differences with dominant ideologies<sup>50</sup>). This may result in a sophisticated ideological vision, but one too esoteric or radical for a potential recruitment base. Even if not seen as subversive, their very longevity may make them unappealing to a fledgling movement eager to distinguish itself from an older generation of activists.<sup>51</sup>

A second structure often dubbed a free space is *indigenous* to a community and initially is not formally oppositional. Indigenous groups include Southern black churches before the emergence of mass insurgency, German Turner halls and anti-temperance societies in nineteenth-century Chicago, and Kuwaiti mosques during Iraqi occupation.<sup>52</sup>

Discussions of these groups have focused on their political, social, and economic isolation from dominant institutions and the *density* of their associational ties. Strongly integrated networks facilitate recruitment on the basis of pre-existing ties;<sup>53</sup> dense horizontal ties and the lack of ties to groups in power facilitate the development of an oppositional frame. Thus Hirsch writes, “the lack of positive vertical ties – the lack of social interaction with upper status groups – makes it more likely that such groups can be successfully defined as the enemy, which makes it easier to sustain commitment to revolutionary goals and tactics and prevents movement participants from developing undue sympathy for the opponent.”<sup>54</sup> Craig Calhoun argues similarly that “traditional communities” have often proved potent revolutionary forces on account of their distance from outsiders and strongly integrated networks. These provide the communication resources, solidary incentives, and commonality of interests necessary to develop a radical challenge. Normally conservative, members of traditional communities may mobilize when their “interests,” that is, their families, friends, customary crafts, and ways of life, are threatened by rapid social changes or when such changes “put old goals within reach.”<sup>55</sup> Their centrality to people’s daily lives equips indigenous groups to recruit a first wave of participants, develop leaders, and formulate mobilizing frames in a familiar idiom. However, as I noted above, they are not well positioned to identify the extra-local political shifts and potential allies that provide important resources for protest. The concentration of ties in indigenous institutions may make it difficult to mobilize beyond the bounds of the locality; hence the importance of formal movement organizations in mass recruitment.<sup>56</sup>

A third structure often denoted by the term free space is the *prefigurative* group created in ongoing movements. These are the “autonomous zones” of European new social movements, the “women’s only spaces” of 1970s radical feminism, the “block clubs” created by tenant organizers to mobilize an urban constituency, the alternative food co-ops, health clinics, credit unions, and schools that flourished in the late 1960s and 1970s.<sup>57</sup> Explicitly political and oppositional (although their definition of “politics” may encompass issues usually dismissed as cultural, personal, or private), they are formed in order to prefigure the society the movement is seeking to build by modeling relationships that differ from those characterizing mainstream society.<sup>58</sup> Often that means developing relations characterized by *symmetry*, that is, reciprocity in power, influence, and attention.<sup>59</sup> I say often, because prefiguration may sometimes mean modeling relationships with the proper degree

of deference and authority, not equality.<sup>60</sup> My association of prefiguration with symmetric ties simply reflects free space analysts' focus on left-leaning rather than right-leaning movements (more on that below).<sup>61</sup> Prefigurative groups often restrict membership to foster new interpersonal ties. Thus, by excluding men, women's only spaces sought to foreground and strengthen the ties among women that were not yet salient in their everyday lives.<sup>62</sup> Since these structures are created in movements that are already underway, they don't play a role in identifying the political opportunities that *precede* mobilization. However, they help to sustain members' commitment to the cause and may prove launching pads for "spin-off" organizations or movements based on new identities and associated claims.<sup>63</sup> As a number of authors have pointed out, prefigurative groups are difficult to sustain, not only because the requirements of fully egalitarian decisionmaking are difficult to square with the demands of quick response to environmental demands, but because in societies characterized by taken-for-granted assumptions about class, race, gender, expertise, and authority, "social inequalities can infect deliberations, even in the absence of any formal exclusions" as Nancy Fraser maintains.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, if they can provide services (healthcare, food, education) that successfully compete with mainstream service providers, they may become enduring indigenous institutions and may supply leaders and participants for later mobilizations.<sup>65</sup>

Detailing the patterns of relations that make up each of these structures and that position them in a multiorganizational field of authorities, opponents, and allies provides clues to their resources and liabilities for protest. Transmovement groups' generational, organizational, and geographic reach helps to explain both their capacity to nurture fledgling organizations by making available financial, technical, and legal advice *and* their weaker capacity for mass recruitment. The density of relations in indigenous groups affords incentives to participate even in high-risk activism while the concentration of such ties impedes wide mobilization. Prefigurative groups' insistence on symmetrical ties throws into relief the asymmetries of conventional relations and model alternatives, but also undercuts the groups' prospects for survival. It seems clear, then, that while physical settings are important to establish or reaffirm social relationships, it is the relationships themselves rather than the physical sites that are important in explaining their role in mobilization.

But there is more to it than that. Analyzing these structures apart from the normative commitments, both explicit and implicit, that animate them provides inadequate account of their roles in protest. The place of culture is obvious in the case of prefigurative groups, where the institutionalization of symmetric relations reflects beliefs about equality and the proper relationship between means and ends in social movements. But explicit normative commitments and taken-for-granted cultural understandings are just as important to the other two structures. Not all groups with long-standing and extensive political ties support new movements: the National Council of Churches, for example, only began to assist civil rights and migrant farmworker activists after the rise of a modernist ideology of social change activism.<sup>66</sup> No one sees the Boy Scouts as a movement halfway house, although this is a group with extensive ties and, as a social organization, is removed from mainstream American political institutions. Likewise, indigenous groups' capacity to nurture opposition is often a function of institutionalized normative principles, which permit religious, familial, and educational groups some degree of autonomy from state intervention.<sup>67</sup> And dense ties are as likely to discourage collective action or limit it to purely local targets as to generate broad insurgency. As Roger Gould asks, "What aspect of a dispute over grazing rights with a local landlord would suggest to the peasants of a pastoral village that their conflict was a single instantiation of a broader struggle between 'the peasantry' and 'the nobility?'"<sup>68</sup> The existence of an indigenous structure (a church, a guild, a civic association) is not enough to explain how threats, antagonisms, or opportunities come to be perceived in terms of mobilizing identities and interests.

The problem with discussions of free spaces is not only, then, that their conflation of transmovement, indigenous, and prefigurative structures has obscured the different roles that each is likely to play in mobilization. Despite their claim to integrate culture and structure, discussions of free spaces have tended to *reduce* culture to structure. By attributing alternative or oppositional cultural practices simply to the existence of dense and isolated structural ties, free space arguments miss the possibility that dense ties may not generate oppositional ideas and identities, and that weak ties may. By attributing full-fledged insurgency to the political (structural) opportunities that make oppositional cultures mobilizing, free space arguments miss the possibility that people may use an oppositional culture to *create* political opportunities. I discuss the latter first, drawing on some of the most sophisticated accounts of free spaces to highlight problems common to many.

### One: Culture and “structural” opportunities

In their discussion of what they call “havens,” “liberated zones,” “preserves,” and “‘free’ social spaces,” Fantasia and Hirsch argue that while subordinate groups are able to “question the rationalizing ideologies of the dominant order, develop alternative meanings, [and] iron out their differences” in these settings, it is “*the context of acute social and political crisis* that provides the key fulcrum for the transformation of traditional cultural forms” into overt opposition.<sup>69</sup> And again, “we would emphasize that the extent to which culture is transformed in collective action depends not only on the availability of social and spatial ‘preserves’ within which traditional forms may be collectively re-negotiated but also, and more importantly, on a level of social conflict that forces participants outside the daily round of everyday activity.”<sup>70</sup> These formulations suggest that free spaces play only a minimal role in igniting insurgency, since culture within the free space is, if oppositional, then not mobilizing until the “crisis” that reorients the meaning of traditional practices.<sup>71</sup>

Contrary to Fantasia and Hirsch, James Scott sees subordinated groups, whether outside sequestered social sites or within them, as unswayed by the ideological blandishments of the powerful. Rejecting even a thin hegemony argument, which holds that people acquiesce to their domination because they take it as inevitable (rather than as right), Scott argues that what usually prevents utopian longings and an “infrapolitics of dissent” from being translated into overt defiance is simply the likelihood of severe repression. “Any relaxation in surveillance and punishment, and foot-dragging threatens to become a declared strike, folktales of oblique aggression threaten to become face-to-face defiant contempt, millennial dreams threaten to become revolutionary politics.”<sup>72</sup> Indeed, “[a]s soon as the opportunity presents itself,” apparent passivity turns to rebellion.<sup>73</sup> Powerless people don’t require free spaces to recognize the injustice of their situation. What free spaces do provide is the opportunity to articulate safely “the assertion, aggression, and hostility that is thwarted by the on-stage power of the dominant,”<sup>74</sup> to plot alternatives, and to test the limits of official power. For Scott, like Fantasia and Hirsch, the hidden transcripts developed in free spaces do not ignite overt protest. Rather, objective political opportunities are created remote from the agency of the oppressed. The oppressed, however, are always alert to potential chinks in the repressive armor of authorities and move quickly to take advantage of them.

The problem with these accounts of mobilization is their privileging of structural change outside the free space over the cultural framing that takes place within it. Cultural challenge is effective only when social, political, and economic structures have become unstable, that is, when repression has been relaxed,<sup>75</sup> when political realignments have created a “structural potential” for mobilization,<sup>76</sup> or when a structural “crisis” has bankrupted old ideas and made people receptive to new ones.<sup>77</sup> But these formulations raise thorny questions. Aren’t political and economic structures themselves shaped by cultural traditions and assumptions? And can’t social movements contribute to destabilizing the institutional logics that inform everyday life? As Gamson and Meyer point out, differing political opportunity structures reflect not just different political systems, for example limits on the executive branch and a system of checks and balances, but also different public conceptions of the proper scope and role of the state.<sup>78</sup> “State policies are not only technical solutions to material problems of control or resource extraction,” Friedland and Alford argue in the same vein. “They are rooted in changing conceptions of what the state is, what it can and should do.”<sup>79</sup> Such conceptions extend to state-makers and managers who, like challengers, are suspended in webs of meaning.<sup>80</sup> Whether elections “open” or “close” political opportunities surely has to do with whether elections have historically been catalysts to collective action and whether there exists an institutional “collective memory” of state-targeted protest. Something as ostensibly non-cultural as a state’s repressive capacity reflects not only numbers of soldiers and guns but the strength of constitutional provisions for their use and traditions of military allegiance. In her discussion of protest policing, Donatella della Porta observes that while the West German police “views itself as a part of a normative order that accepts the rule of the law,” the Italian police “since the creation of the Italian state had been accustomed to seeing itself as the *longa manus* of the executive power, and thus put preservation of law and order before the control of crime.” These views in turn shaped the opportunities for different forms of protest.<sup>81</sup> Note that some of the above, for example, state officials’ ideological assumptions, may exercise only transient or weak influence over a structure of political opportunities; others, for example, state legitimacy, may have stronger effect, be less malleable, and still others, say, conventions of political commemoration, may be somewhere in between.<sup>82</sup> Movements themselves can create political opportunities by changing widespread beliefs.<sup>83</sup> For example, a movement may be responsible for lowering the level of state repression that is considered legitimate and that can therefore be deployed against subsequent in-

surgencies.<sup>84</sup> A culture/structure dichotomy obscures the many instances in which people have seen opportunities where “objectively” there were none.<sup>85</sup>

Scott seems to be making just this point – and retreating from the sharp separation of structure (opportunities) and (mobilizing) culture that he posits elsewhere – when he writes:

An objectivist view would ... have us assume that the determination of the power of the dominant is a straightforward matter, rather like reading an accurate pressure gauge. We have seen, however, that estimating the intentions and power of the dominant is a social process of interpretation highly infused with desires and fears. How else can we explain the numerous instances in which the smallest shards of evidence – a speech, a rumor, a natural sign, a hint of reform – have been taken by slaves, untouchables, serfs, and peasants as a sign that their emancipation is at hand or that their adversaries are ready to capitulate?<sup>86</sup>

Scott goes on to pose the “central issue” as what Barrington Moore calls “the conquest of inevitability.” “So long as a structure of domination is viewed as inevitable and irreversible, then all ‘rational’ opposition will take the form of infrapolitics: resistance that avoids any open declaration of its intention.”<sup>87</sup> But he has already acknowledged that unobtrusive resistance has less potential for change than overt defiance (“No matter how elaborate the hidden transcript may become, it always remains a substitute for an act of assertion directly in the face of power”<sup>88</sup>). And if what stands in the way of engaging in such overt politics is a perception of the “inevitability” of the existing, then isn’t this precisely the “thin” theory of hegemony that he earlier dismissed? Despite his claims to the contrary, Scott ends up shifting between the objectivism he derides and a reliance on false consciousness to explain people’s failure to mobilize.

An alternative, following Sewell, is to conceptualize structures *as* cultural schemas invested with and sustaining resources, in other words, schemas that reflect and reproduce unevenly distributed power.<sup>89</sup> This helps to explain structures’ durability *and* their transformation. It is not that they bring about their own mutation – not that they have agency – but that they are invested with meanings that afford resources for insurgents challenging them. People can “transpose schemas” from one setting to another, can turn the worker solidarity fostered by capitalist production, for example, into a force for radical action. Sewell’s scheme gives people more power to capitalize on minimal



opportunities by framing conditions in a way that makes collective action possible or necessary. Unlike free space analyses' tendency to dichotomize culture and structure (with culture inside the free space and structure outside it), it reveals overlooked resources for mobilization.

It also reveals, contrarily, overlooked cultural obstacles to protest. Activists' vocabularies of protest are shaped and limited by ostensibly non-cultural political, economic, and legal structures. For example, to understand the currency of an "individual rights" frame, as compared to a "human rights" frame or a class-based frame, one would have to understand the legal and political traditions, systems, and rules through which those terms have become meaningful. Tarrow notes that "the French labor movement embraced an associational 'vocabulary' that reflected the *loi le Chapelier*, while American movements developed a vocabulary of 'rights' that reflected the importance of the law in American institutions and practice."<sup>90</sup> Popular conceptions of "equality," "personhood," and "problem" are shaped by dominant legal institutions.<sup>91</sup> Neo-institutionalist theories of organization should alert us to the institutional shaping of movement forms, and indeed, to the historical and cultural preeminence of the organization as a means of protest.<sup>92</sup>

To get at these resources and constraints requires that we abandon a set of binary oppositions that have underpinned and undermined recent efforts to integrate culture into accounts of mobilization, including but extending beyond discussions of free spaces. Thus "cultural," "subjective," and "malleable" have been opposed to "structural," "objective," and "durable." Free space discussions have rendered that set of oppositions spatial: *culture* is restricted to the free space, *structure* to relations outside it.<sup>93</sup> As a result, they have underestimated continuities between the two, have ignored the cultural traditions, institutional memories, and political taboos that structure politics and that can be used by insurgents to strategic effect, and have ignored how cultural understandings of organization, rationality, legality, and agency constrain insurgents' strategic decisionmaking. In other words, discussions of free spaces have simultaneously underestimated the durability of culture and the malleability of structure.

## Two: Culture and “structural” ties

In his review of Scott’s *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, Charles Tilly asks an interesting question: Why is there only one hidden transcript for each subordinated group? Why not as many transcripts as subordinated individuals? Indeed, “why not ten, twenty, a hundred as many discourses as subordinates?” Scott’s argument “requires that each subordinated population produce a unitary and shared hidden transcript.... Don’t subordinates ever resist the hidden transcript? Scott supplies no answers.”<sup>94</sup>

Actually, Scott does provide an answer, but a misleading one. “Social spaces of relative autonomy do not merely provide a neutral medium within which practical and discursive negations may grow. As domains of power relations in their own right, they serve to discipline as well as to formulate patterns of resistance.”<sup>95</sup> And again: “the hidden transcript is a social product and hence a result of power relations among subordinates.”<sup>96</sup> Yet when he describes the process by which a single, coherent transcript is pieced together from multiple negations, the power relations he just identified drop out. “In this hypothetical progression from ‘raw’ anger to what we might call ‘cooked’ indignation, sentiments that are idiosyncratic, unrepresentative, or have only weak resonance within the group are likely to be selected against or censored.... The essential point is that a resistant subculture or countermoves among subordinates is necessarily a product of mutuality.”<sup>97</sup> In other words, the oppositional frame that is developed within the free space is uninfluenced by relations of power, authority, and deference within the group.

What that misses, of course, are the ways in which densely-structured relations within dominated groups *foreclose* as well as enable certain kinds of challenge depending on the normative content of those ties. By making oppositional identities and meanings a function of the existence of dense ties within isolated networks, analyses of free spaces have minimized culture’s analytically independent role within free spaces as well as outside them. By contrast, I argue that culture operates in the formal ideologies enacted in the community institutions labeled free spaces – the church, the union, the civic association – *and* in the behavioral expectations associated with, indeed constituting, ties of kinship, neighborhood, and contract.

To illustrate, I turn to Eric Hirsch’s rich account of working-class mobilization in nineteenth-century Chicago.<sup>98</sup> Hirsch argues that Ger-

man workers launched a revolutionary movement while Irish and Anglo-American workers did not in part because Germans possessed “havens” or “free social spaces.” The “structural isolation from ruling groups [of these settings] ... allowed subordinate groups to develop innovative ideas about the nature of the system, to identify those responsible for the subordinate groups’ plight, and to discover what action was needed to resolve their common problems.”<sup>99</sup> But there is no reason that sheer isolation will guarantee the replacement of a dominant ideology with an action-mobilizing injustice frame (and physical proximity, at least, has not prevented people from penetrating the ideologies propounded by those in power, as Judith Rollins showed in her study of domestic workers<sup>100</sup>). In fact, Hirsch’s historical account reveals that whereas German workers’ exposure to anarchist and socialist ideas in Turner halls, anti-temperance meetings, and anarchist-sponsored picnics made them receptive to a revolutionary interpretation of their exploitation, exploited Irish workers tended to accept an Anglo-American ideology of individual success and accordingly to reject the idea of working-class mobilization. *Irish workers had havens too*, most importantly the Catholic Church, but the Church’s animosity to radical thought, along with Irish nationalist organizations’ focus on the Irish/British conflict overseas, led Irish workers to blame their troubles on their lack of skills, and to attribute their lack of skills to Britain’s underdevelopment of Ireland.<sup>101</sup> Hirsch’s historical analysis, contrary to his theoretical brief, suggests that the mobilizing power of havens lies not just in their structural isolation but in their specific cultural content. Or, better put, that it was the combination of dense networks and the availability of a radical cultural idiom that was responsible for the revolutionary character of German mobilization.

The story that Hirsch tells (as distinct from the way he theorizes it), is not exceptional. Other accounts have shown how insurgency is shaped by the institutions within which it develops. For example, Doug Rossinow characterizes as a “free space” the Christian Faith and Life Community (CFLC) on the University of Texas campus in the late 1950s, a group that produced leading activists of the white student left. “It was a ‘free space’ where, as one student said, he felt the ‘freedom to talk about my questions’ – questions of self, of God and of life.... [It] prepared students to take political action in defiance of established power.”<sup>102</sup> Yet, Rossinow shows that what motivated members to plan sit-ins and pickets against segregated facilities was the Christian existentialism they absorbed in the CFLC, and particularly its emphasis on achieving a spiritual “breakthrough” via political engagement rather

than personal reflection.<sup>103</sup> It was not just the “safe haven”<sup>104</sup> provided by the CFLC, but the particular cultural frames institutionalized within it that inspired the students. Similarly, Mary Ann Tetreault shows that the mosque played a crucial role in Kuwaiti opposition to Iraqi occupation not just because it was one of the few associations that was not repressed, but because of its long-standing and “morally unassailable” authority to challenge the state.<sup>105</sup> The importance of the cultural frames associated with particular institutions is obscured by a view of free spaces as defined solely by social distance between powerful and powerless. People’s physical or social separation from mainstream institutions doesn’t guarantee the emergence of a mobilizing collective action frame. What is crucial is the set of beliefs, values, and symbols institutionalized in a particular setting.

It would be a mistake, however, to see culture only as the ideologies enacted in community institutions rather than also as the basis for the very ties that make up the community.<sup>106</sup> With respect to free space analysts’ claim that dense and isolated networks facilitate protest, it is just as likely that, depending on the circumstances, such networks may impede protest. This is partly because the absence of ties to outsiders may lead aggrieved people to interpret threats and conflicts in purely local terms, as Roger Gould points out, rather than in terms of the broader identities and ideologies that are necessary to mass mobilization.<sup>107</sup> Gould argues that the development of mobilizing identities requires significant interaction across communities, in other words, that social ties determine the scale as well as content of collective identities. But the same ties may, depending on the circumstances, favor very different or contradictory behaviors. Neighborhood ties may promote competition rather than mutuality.<sup>108</sup> Business ties may promote solidarity but also deference. As Allan Silver shows, friendship in eighteenth-century Europe carried different behavioral prescriptions than it does today.<sup>109</sup> The point is that the behaviors expected of and imputed to patterned relations are multiple and variable.<sup>110</sup> Thus, strong ties may impede mobilization.<sup>111</sup> And *weak* ties may facilitate it, not only because they provide access to people and resources outside the community, but because potential insurgents may grant “known strangers” the authority to challenge the bonds of authority and deference within the community that have kept people from overt defiance.

My point, then, is that while it makes sense to pay attention to the structure of relationships that supply resources for various mobiliza-

tion tasks, we can strengthen that investigation in several ways: by recognizing that ties can impede mobilization as well as foster it; by recognizing a greater range of network dynamics, that is, the role of weak ties, network holes, conflicts, and intersections;<sup>112</sup> and by identifying the fuller range of behavioral prescriptions associated with particular ties. In the following, I don't attempt the full investigation I have in mind, but do review two cases that are frequently cited as free spaces: the black church for the civil rights movement, and the student wing of the civil rights movement for radical feminism.<sup>113</sup> Rather than characterizing each one as a space in which the constraints exercised by structure were somehow suspended, I identify behavioral expectations that constrained mobilization by African-Americans in Southern communities and by feminists within the civil rights movement, and then show how they were overcome. In each case, I find that network intersections generated mobilizing identities, but not only because weak ties to other networks (in the first case the national civil rights movement, in the other Northern left circles) provided material or informational resources that were previously lacking. Rather, their social distance and social status endowed local members of those networks with the power to challenge the relations of authority and deference that operated among members of the aggrieved group.

Without detracting from the vitally important role of Southern black churches in nurturing and sustaining Southern civil rights protest, evidence suggests that in many Southern communities, particularly rural ones, black ministers were not the shock troops of the struggle. Field reports by student organizers in the early 1960s make clear that many ministers were reluctant converts to the cause.<sup>114</sup> Ministers' timidity often stemmed from their financial dependence on whites: whereas in Southern cities, ministers' livelihoods came entirely from their parishioners, in rural areas most were forced to work part time for whites and were therefore more vulnerable to economic reprisals. In addition, some church leaders enjoyed positions of brokerage with powerful whites, and were compensated in some fashion for serving as advocates of only moderate reform. These stakes were threatened by the development of new leaders, whether student organizers or black residents.

"Outsiders" proved important in overcoming those barriers to radical action. The resources possessed by student organizers who moved into rural areas in Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia in the early 1960s are not readily apparent. With neither federal backing nor the capacity to

furnish physical or financial protection, organizers could offer residents little in the way of material incentive to participate. Their arrival was often met with stepped-up white violence against black residents. Yet, organizers *were* seen as representatives of a national movement and were often called “freedom riders” long after the freedom rides had ended. Perhaps some residents believed that the organizers’ presence signaled the government’s willingness to intervene, but my review of field reports, testimony at mass meetings, and interviews with former organizers suggests that other rationales were operating. The young organizers were putting their lives on the line, were willing to die for black Mississippians’ freedom, locals often reminded each other. How could they not participate? The rationale was one of obligation more than opportunity, and it was the organizers’ outsider status, the *distance* they came, that authorized their calls to participate.<sup>115</sup>

Georg Simmel described the “stranger” as combining “distance and nearness, indifference and involvement.” Strangers “are not really conceived as individuals,” but this does not mean that they are marginal or powerless. To the contrary, Simmel observed, the stranger often enjoys a position of influence by virtue of his “free[dom] from entanglement” in existing interests and cleavages.<sup>116</sup> This seems to have been the case with Southern student organizers. Their intimate involvement in the life of Mississippi black communities made them trustworthy, while their outsider status enabled them to challenge the relations of deference that impeded militant collective action. Former SNCC activist Hollis Watkins remembers that several organizers had begun seminary training and others, like Watkins himself, were well-versed in scripture and skilled orators. Some ministers may have come around to supporting the movement, Watkins suspects, because they believed that the SNCC organizers *were* ministers, whose popularity with the local people made them a threat to their jobs. This is an example of how the very weakness of informational ties facilitated mobilization.<sup>117</sup> A view of free spaces as untrammelled by relations of power and authority misses in this case both the constraints on mobilization and the dynamics by which they were overcome. Categorical classification of actors as black, white, or middle class would miss the networks crosscutting those categories, which proved more salient to people’s decision to participate, or to oppose participation, than categorical “interests.”

Southern ministers who were initially wary often did come around to supporting and, indeed, leading the struggle. It seems that the most successful organizers managed to persuade, cajole, or help residents to

push traditional leaders into an active role rather than circumventing them altogether.<sup>118</sup> Thus a Holly Springs organizer reported happily in 1963, “The image of students knocking on doors, the fact of their speaking at churches on Sundays, and the threat of demonstration have served to build respect for them and has challenged the local ministers no end. They see this and are beginning to work to try to build their images and redeem themselves.”<sup>119</sup> Outsiders didn’t empower a powerless group, or enlighten the falsely conscious, but they did undermine the structured relations within the group that channeled resistance in a conservative direction.<sup>120</sup>

Contrary to historical accounts – Sara Evans’s (1979) seminal piece and the host that have followed her<sup>121</sup> – it seems that outsiders, or weak-tied individuals, were also crucial in the emergence of a feminist challenge within SNCC. In November 1964, a position paper on sexism in the movement was floated anonymously at a SNCC staff retreat. Evans attributed the paper to two white SNCC veterans: Casey Hayden, who had been involved with SNCC since its founding in 1960, and Mary King, who joined in 1962. On Evans’s account, Hayden and King’s conversations with other women about their second-class status in the movement and discussions of the writings of de Beauvoir, Lessing, and Friedan culminated in their decision to bring up the issue with the SNCC staff. The paper they wrote documented a range of sexist practices – women relegated to minute-taking duties, rarely given projects to direct, never made SNCC spokespeople – and called on the group to extend its egalitarian commitment to women. For Evans and subsequent chroniclers, the fact that the memo was written by longtime SNCCers suggested that in spite of their circumscribed role as women, Hayden and King had the freedom to explore this “new” source of oppression, to toy with unconventional ideas and experiment with new roles. It suggested that SNCC was indeed a kind of cultural laboratory for radical ideas, a “free space.” A year after the first memo was met with the laughter and derision they had anticipated, Evans goes on, King and Hayden collaborated on a second memo, directed to black and white women active in the civil rights and New Left movements. Its effect, by all accounts, was galvanizing, and spurred women to build the networks and consciousness-raising groups that would eventually explode into radical feminism.

In fact, new testimony suggests that a larger group, including several Northern white women who had only recently joined SNCC, wrote the first anonymous memo in November 1964.<sup>122</sup> These women occupied a

curious position: they became part of SNCC's inner circle almost upon their arrival in Mississippi because SNCC was so shorthanded on the eve of the massive summer project it was planning, but they lacked the bonds of long friendship that united veteran members of the group. Active in other movements here and abroad, they brought a "Northern" aggressiveness that enabled them to defy not only the group loyalty that made criticism difficult, but also the norms of deference that structured white women's relations to the mainly black men who headed SNCC. Taking meeting minutes, not seeking the higher status job of field organizer, not competing for the public limelight; white women veterans understood these as *choices*, made because they were unwilling to endanger black residents by serving as field organizers, but also because they saw the movement as properly led by black men. It was easier for women who were longtime members of the group to see an auxiliary role as consonant with the group's radically egalitarian ethos. And it was easier for women whose ties to the close-knit SNCC cadre were weaker to name that role as inequality. Again, network overlaps not only provided access to new sources of information and new procedural norms, but gave license to contest long-standing bonds of friendship and shared political commitment.

Views of indigenous structures as providing only resources for mobilization and not constraints preclude analysis of how mobilizing identities and interests are shaped by the culture-structures within which grievances are framed, and by the networks that provide and limit access to power, information, and authority. Rather than seeing a single subordinate group or community, with a single set of interests, free space, and "hidden transcript,"<sup>123</sup> we should examine the multiple networks, some extending beyond the bounds of the locality, which generate distinct, often conflicting, interests and identities. Thus, in the case of Southern civil rights organizing, we see how the connections of some black ministers to white elites discouraged their adopting a militant stance, this in spite of their prior commitment to reform.

A second important line of inquiry would explore the effects of different kinds and strengths of social relations.<sup>124</sup> Rather than assuming that protest requires dense ties, we should investigate where and when dense ties constrain action and "weak" ones facilitate it. The latter point is reflected in the role of "outsiders" in both cases of mobilization that I described. Mississippi civil rights workers' combination of intimacy and distance gave them the capacity to defy structured relations within black communities, this in spite of their lack of access to



material or political institutional resources. Similarly, the white women who were fairly new to SNCC when they catalyzed a feminist challenge were in overlapping networks: a Southern black movement and a Northern white one. Their marginal position in the former, with access to the inner core of decisionmakers but without close bonds to them, made it easier, and more acceptable, for them to refuse the more deferential role played by white women veterans. These examples also show the intersection of the cultural and structural dimensions of networks. Outsiders' scope of action had to do not with the actual resources they brought to bear, but with those imputed to them, and with cultural understandings of intimacy and remoteness, of the boundaries of the group, and of the range of the sayable.

## **Conclusion**

One of the chief analytic payoffs of the free space concept was to have been its capacity to integrate culture into structuralist models of collective action. I argue that, so far, such analyses have not taken adequate measure of the multiple and contrary dimensions of the culture/structure relationship. Fuller specification of that relationship alerts us both to the greater capacities of cultural challenge to destabilize institutional arrangements and, at the same time, to the obstacles that stand between cultural challenge and full-fledged mobilization.

Rather than continue to rely on the ambiguous "free spaces" concept, I have argued that we should explore how the form and substance of associational ties in different contexts shape the emergence of mobilizing identities. Physical gathering places may build on those ties by demonstrating the co-presence of others, thus showing people that issues they thought taboo can be discussed, and strengthening collective identity by providing tangible evidence of the existence of a group. However, it is the character of the ties that are established or reinforced in those settings, rather than the physical space itself, that the free space concept has sometimes successfully captured. Networks predating movements, as resource mobilization theorists have long noted, are critical in supplying the personnel, resources, and tactical expertise necessary to mobilization.<sup>125</sup> They are also important in fostering and impeding the very identities and interests on the basis of which mobilization is mounted.

To begin to illuminate those dynamics, I have disaggregated the structures that are more and less equipped to identify opportunities, recruit participants, develop leaders, generate collective action frames, and fashion new identities. The typology of transmovement, indigenous, and prefigurative structures that I have introduced is preliminary but it should alert us to the different kinds of resources and constraints levied by different kinds of ties, respectively, extensive, dense, and symmetrical. In analyzing indigenous networks' role in developing mobilizing identities, where the need for something like the free space concept is most apparent, I have argued for attention to the ways in which pre-existing network ties militate against the formation of mobilizing identities, and the dynamics by which such constraints are surmounted. One such dynamic is the network *intersections* that provide an aggrieved population new access not only to physical, financial, and communicative resources, but also to people whose only weak ties and consequent social distance and status enable them to challenge existing relations of deference. There are other such dynamics. Specifying them enables us to understand the conditions in which cultural challenge explodes structured relations, without reducing those conditions to structural voids.

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### Notes

1. Richard Harvey Brown, "Social science and the poetics of public truth," *Sociological Forum* 5 (1990), 57–58.
2. Sara Evans, *Personal Politics* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). Harry C. Boyte used the term in his 1972 article, "The textile industry: Keel of southern industrialization," *Radical America* (March-April), and it is central in Evans and Boyte's *Free Spaces: The Sources of Democratic Change in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986). Others who have used the term "free spaces" include Robert

- Couto, "Narrative, free space, and political leadership in social movements," *The Journal of Politics* 55 (1993): 57–79; Robert Fisher, *Let the People Decide: Neighborhood Organizing in America, Updated Edition* (New York: Twayne, 1994); William A. Gamson, "Commitment and agency in social movements," *Sociological Forum* 6/1 (1991): 27–50; Alberto Melucci, *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: Free Press, 1984); Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long? African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Doug Rossinow, "'The break-through to new life': Christianity and the emergence of the new left in Austin, Texas, 1956–1964," *American Quarterly* 46/3 (1994): 309–340; Randy Stoecker, *Defending Community* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*, second edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Nancy Whittier, *Feminist Generations: The Persistence of the Radical Women's Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995). On "havens," see Eric Hirsch, "Protest movements and urban theory," *Research in Urban Sociology* 3 (1993): 159–180; on "spatial preserves," see Rick Fantasia and Eric L. Hirsch, "Culture in rebellion: The appropriation and transformation of the veil in the Algerian revolution," in Hank Johnston and Bert Klander-mans, editors, *Social Movements and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 144–162; on "free social spaces," see Robert Fisher and Joseph Kling, "Leading the people: Two approaches to the role of ideology in community organizing" in Joseph Kling and Prudence S. Posner, editors, *Dilemmas of Activism: Class, Community, and the Politics of Local Mobilization* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 71–90; on "safe spaces," see William Gamson, "Safe spaces and social movements," *Perspectives on Social Problems* 8 (1996): 27–38; on "cultural laboratories," see Carol McClurg Mueller, "Conflict networks and the origins of women's liberation," in Enrique Laraña, Hank Johnston, and Joseph R. Gusfield, editors, *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 234–263; on "spheres of cultural autonomy," see Verta Taylor and Nancy Whittier, "Analytical approaches to social movement culture: The culture of the women's movement," in Hank Johnston and Bert Klander-mans, editors, *Social Movements and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 163–187; on "sequestered social sites," see James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); on "social spaces," see Craig Calhoun, "The radicalism of tradition: Community strength or venerable disguise and borrowed language?" *American Journal of Sociology* 88 (1983): 886–914; on "protected spaces," see Mary Ann Tetreault, "Civil society in Kuwait: Protected spaces and women's rights," *Middle East Journal* 47/2 (1993): 275–291. Since almost every one of these authors cites Evans and Boyte's book, and none distinguishes explicitly between "free spaces" and the term they prefer, I suspect that the rationale for the use of different terms is simply to inflect the concept with a particular emphasis, for example, the safety of such spaces, or the predominately cultural activities that are pursued here.
3. On feminist counter-institutions, see Whittier, *Feminist Generations*. On Estonian resistance, see Hank Johnston, "Mobilization and structure of opposition in repressive states," paper presented at the American Sociological Association Annual Meetings (1996).
  4. Evans and Boyte, *Free Spaces*, 17. The passage is quoted in Couto, "Narrative," 59;

- Aldon Morris, "Centuries of black protest: Its significance for America and the world," in Herbert Hill and James E. Jones, editors, *Race in America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 27; Hirsch, *Urban Revolt*, 214; Gamson, "Safe spaces," 29; Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 147; and Stoecker, *Defending Community*, 57.
5. Hirsch, *Urban Revolt*, 206; see also Mueller, "Conflict networks"; Verta Taylor, "Social movement continuity: The women's movement in abeyance," *American Sociological Review* 54 (1989): 761–775; Gamson, "Commitment and agency"; Debra Friedman and Doug McAdam, "Collective identity and activism: Networks, choices and the life of a social movement," 156–173, in Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller, editors, *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).
  6. Fantasia and Hirsch, "Culture in rebellion."
  7. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*; Evans and Boyte, *Free Spaces*.
  8. Evans and Boyte, *Free Spaces*, 102; see also Evans, *Personal Politics*; Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); and Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam, 1987).
  9. Taylor, "Social Movement Continuity."
  10. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*.
  11. McAdam, "Culture and Social Movements," 43.
  12. Steven M. Buechler, *Women's Movements in the United States* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Taylor and Whittier, "Analytical approaches." See also Couto, "Narrative"; Stoecker, *Defending Community*; and James J. Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties: Making Postwar Radicalism* (New York: Routledge, 1997).
  13. McAdam, "Culture and Social Movements."
  14. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*; McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*; Evans, *Personal Politics*; Evans and Boyte, *Free Spaces*.
  15. Fantasia and Hirsch, "Culture in rebellion"; and Tetreault, "Civil society in Kuwait."
  16. Calhoun, "The radicalism of tradition."
  17. Ibid.
  18. Evans and Boyte, *Free Spaces*, 18. See also Stoecker, *Defending Community*; Fantasia and Hirsch, "Culture in rebellion"; and Tetreault, "Civil society."
  19. Scott, *Domination*; Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties*, 54; Robnett, *How Long?*; Gamson, "Safe spaces."
  20. Fantasia and Hirsch, "Culture in Rebellion," 157.
  21. Ibid., 159; my emphasis.
  22. Hirsch, *Urban Revolt*, 216; my emphasis.
  23. Evans and Boyte, *Free Spaces*; Fantasia and Hirsch, "Culture in rebellion"; Hirsch, *Urban Revolt*; Scott, *Domination*; Eric Hirsch, "Protest movements and urban theory," *Research in Urban Sociology* 3 (1993): 159–180; Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties*; Tetreault, "Civil society in Kuwait."
  24. James Tracy, *Direct Action: Radical Pacifism from the Union Eight to the Chicago Seven* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 13.
  25. See also Couto, "Narrative"; and Morris, "Centuries of black protest." Gamson points out, however, that it is the rare movement organization that permits complete freedom of dissent: "Social movement organizations will often consider caucuses a direct threat to the unity that challengers need to succeed against a

- formidable antagonist. This often extends beyond formal caucuses to include any attempted meeting by a restricted subset of participants.” “Safe spaces and social movements,” 30. More on this below.
26. Evans and Boyte, *Free Spaces*, 20; see also Fisher, *Let the People Decide*.
  27. Scott, *Domination*, 223.
  28. Couto, “Narrative,” 77.
  29. See also Gamson, “Safe spaces.”
  30. Hirsch, “Protest movements.” See also the discussion of “freedom schools” as free spaces in Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties*.
  31. Morris, *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*; Tracy, *Direct Action*; Rossinow, “The breakthrough to new life.”
  32. Pamela Allen, *Free Space: A Perspective on the Small Group in Women’s Liberation* (New York: Times Change Press, 1970).
  33. Evans and Boyte, *Free Spaces*, 18–20. The foregoing passage in fact seems to suggest both that free spaces precede social movements and that they are created by social movements, a dual role reflected in other statements in the book but never theorized explicitly. If free spaces are sometimes created by social movements, does that mean that they are not necessary to movements’ formation?
  34. Whittier, *Feminist Generations*.
  35. Evans and Boyte, *Free Spaces*, 18; my emphasis.
  36. Fisher, *Let the People Decide*, 221; my emphasis.
  37. Evans, *Personal Politics*; Gamson, “Safe spaces.”
  38. I use the term “group” occasionally to describe these structures, but in its minimal sense as “a number of individuals assembled together or having some unifying relationship,” *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam, 1977). As Chuck Tilly points out to me, the term risks conveying a sense of solidarity, connectedness, and common culture that I want to make problematic.
  39. Bert Klandermans, *The Social Psychology of Protest* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), chapter 6.
  40. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*; Taylor, “Social movement continuity”; Christian Smith, *Resisting Reagan: The U.S. Central America Peace Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Bob Edwards and John D. McCarthy, “Social Movement Schools,” *Sociological Forum* 7 (1992): 541–550.
  41. Smith, in *Resisting Reagan*, objects to Morris’s characterization of halfway houses as socially isolated and lacking a mass base; in the case of the Central America peace movement, “the groups that assisted the formation of key movement-carrier organizations were as important as they were *precisely because* they were both socially integrated and possessed mass constituencies” (*ibid.*, 403, n. 9). Smith distinguishes movement midwives from formal movement organizations rather by their “trans-movement identities and the specialized role they played in facilitating the formation of new movement-carrier organizations without becoming protest organizations themselves” (*ibid.*). I characterize religious groups as politically marginal not because they are *socially* isolated, or politically *radical* but because, as religious groups, they are not routinely involved in mainstream politics. The National Women’s Party that Verta Taylor characterizes as an abeyance structure had ties to earlier forms of protest (and later ones) rather than extensive geographic ties. Taylor also notes the exclusiveness and highly centralized structure of the group. These features do seem to characterize other dissident groups. For example, Tracy, in *Direct Action*, notes the charismatic leadership and power of

- A. J. Muste in radical pacifist circles, and Myles Horton was almost single-handedly responsible for the survival of the Highlander Folk School. On the latter, see Frank Adams, *Unearthing the Seed of Fire: The Idea of Highlander* (Charlotte, North Carolina: John F. Blair, 1975).
42. On the Highlander Folk School, see Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, and Adams, *Unearthing the Seed of Fire*. On American radical pacifists, see Tracy, *Direct Action*.
  43. These are components of what Sidney Tarrow, in *Power in Movement*, identifies as the political opportunity structure. See also Doug McAdam, "Conceptual origins, current problems, future directions" in Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, editors, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 23–40.
  44. Moreover, they may have had experience with federal directives ignored by local political elites. For residents of the deep South, for example, the federal government had long been an ineffectual actor. Most of the Supreme Court decisions and executive orders favorable to black claimants in the 1940s and 1950s that Doug McAdam sees as evidence of the government's amenability to black demands had little chance of being enforced in Mississippi. FBI agents, even when they appeared at victims' behest, did little but take notes, and White Citizens Councils were able to get black leaders audited by the IRS after 1955. The message was not obviously one of federal support for racial equality. Mississippi's long political isolation meant that a central challenge for activists was to convince residents that political opportunities on the national scene had meaning for the state's black Mississippians. As Charles Payne shows, networks of black activists and allies extending outside the state were able to communicate to local residents the existence of new prospects. See Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
  45. See Smith, *Resisting Reagan*; Edwards and McCarthy, "Social movement schools"; C. Craig Jenkins, "Radical transformation of organizational goals," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 22 (1977): 568–586, on the National Council of Churches' support for civil rights and farm workers' movements.
  46. Tracy, *Direct Action*, 94.
  47. Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 111.
  48. Tracy, *Direct Action*.
  49. See James DeFronzo, *Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements*, second edition (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), chapter 8. Thanks to a *Theory and Society* reviewer for directing my attention to this case.
  50. See Taylor, "Social Movement Continuity"; Verta Taylor and Nancy Whittier, "Collective identity in social movement communities: Lesbian feminist mobilization," in Aldon Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller, editors, *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 104–129.
  51. Taylor shows that members of the National Women's Party did go on to become leaders in the liberal branch of the women's movement, with four of the ten signers of NOW's founding statement of purpose members of the NWP. However, she quotes NWP leader Alice Paul's complaint that NOW members acted "as if they've discovered the whole idea." "Social movement continuity," 771. Elsewhere, I discuss 1960 student sit-inners' emphasis on the spontaneity of their protest as a way to signal their break with an earlier generation of activists. Francesca Polletta, "'It was like a fever . . .': Narrative and identity in social protest," *Social Problems* 45/2 (1998): 137–159.

52. On black Southern churches see Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*; McAdam, *Political Process*; Evans and Boyte, *Free Spaces*. On ethnic organizations in nineteenth-century Chicago, see Hirsch, *Urban Revolt*. On Kuwaiti mosques, see Tetreault, "Civil society."
53. See Anthony Oberschall, *Social Conflict and Social Movements* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973); Tarrow, *Power in Movement*; and David A. Snow, Louis Zurcher Jr., and Sheldon Ekland-Olson, "Social networks and social movements: A microstructural approach to differential recruitment," *American Sociological Review* 45 (1980): 787–801.
54. Hirsch, *Urban Revolt*, 203; see also Johnston, "Mobilization and structure."
55. Calhoun, "The radicalism of tradition," 898.
56. See Roger Gould, *Insurgent Identities: Class, Community, and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); David Knoke, *Political Networks: The Structural Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
57. On "autonomous zones" in a European new social movement, see Francesca Polletta, "Politicizing childhood: The 1980 Zurich Burns movement," *Social Text* 33 (Winter 1993): 82–101. On radical feminism, see Echols, *Daring to be Bad*. On tenant organizing, see Hirsch, "Protest movements"; on alternative service organizations, see Stoecker, *Defending Community*.
58. See Melucci, *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society* (London: Radius, 1989) and *Challenging Codes*, and Wini Breines, *Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962–1968: The Great Refusal* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1989).
59. On symmetry in relations, see Barry Wellman, "Structural analysis: From method and metaphor to theory and substance," in Barry Wellman and S. D. Berkowitz, editors, *Social Structures: A Network Approach* (Greenwich: JAI Press, 1997), 19–61.
60. These may or may not be explicitly right-wing groups. Ethnic nationalist groups may form alternative political, economic, and educational institutions that prefigure an ethnically "pure" society. See, for example, the recent shadow state and schools formed by Albanian separatists in Kosovo. Fabian Schmidt, "Kosovo Liberation Army Launches New Offensive," *Open Media Research Institute Analytical Brief*, 16 January 1997 ([www.omri.cz/Publications/AB](http://www.omri.cz/Publications/AB)).
61. Precisely one of the weaknesses of recent discussions of prefigurative politics has been an unwillingness to see its value for right-wing groups as well as left-wing ones. See Allen Hunter, "Prefigurative politics," for a good critique.
62. See Marilyn Frye, *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Trumansburg, New York, 1983); Allen, *Free Spaces*; and Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*.
63. David S. Meyer and Nancy Whittier, "Social movement spillover," *Social Problems* 41/2 (1994): 277–298; and Doug McAdam, "'Initiator' and 'spin-off' movements: Diffusion processes in cycles of protest," in Mark Traugott, editor, *Repertoires and Cycles of Collective Action* (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 1995), 217–239.
64. Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the public sphere," in Craig Calhoun, editor, *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press), 119. See also Tarrow, *Power in Movement*; and Jane Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, 1980). Again, note in the foregoing discussion the assumption that prefigurative groups strive for equality in relationship. At least one structure dubbed a free space doesn't fit into my typology: the Latin American Christian base communities described in Gamson, "Commitment and agency" and "Safe

- spaces and social movements,” were established by a non-oppositional but extra-local network (the Catholic Church), but became central to the communities in which they were established.
65. Stoecker recounts how the cafe, food coop, and health services established by civil rights and antiwar activists in the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood of Minneapolis evolved into community institutions and then formed a recruitment base for subsequent neighborhood mobilization. Stoecker, *Defending Community*.
  66. By the early 1960s, the National Council of Churches “was no longer to dispense traditional ‘Christian services’ to individuals but rather to serve as the general interest advocate and protector of the various deprived groups that had formerly been objects of missionary concern.” Jenkins, “Radical transformation of organizational goals,” 573. Jenkins shows that NCC staff was able to act on that commitment even in the face of lay opposition to support for radical movements on account of the growth of indirect and nondenominational sources of income, which insulated staff from members’ concerns.
  67. See Tetreault, “Civil society.”
  68. Gould, *Insurgent Identities*, 20–21.
  69. Fantasia and Hirsch, “Culture in rebellion,” 146; my emphasis.
  70. *Ibid.*, 158.
  71. Fantasia and Hirsch’s account suggests in different places that the oppositional culture developed in havens only becomes mobilizing in the context of structural crisis, and that the culture enacted in havens only becomes *oppositional* in the context of already-launched insurgency. The latter formulation implies that havens play no role in the development of insurgency.
  72. Scott, *Domination*, 201.
  73. *Ibid.*, 213.
  74. *Ibid.*, 114.
  75. *Ibid.* See also Couto, “Narrative.”
  76. McAdam, “Culture and social movements”; Johnston, “Mobilization and structure.” McAdam argues that “long-standing activist subcultures” (45) provide the tools to interpret “objective” structural opportunities in mobilizing ways. He is clear in distinguishing between “accounting for the structural factors that have objectively strengthened the challenger’s hand,” and “analyzing the processes by which the meaning and attributed significance of shifting political conditions are assessed” (39). Culture, on McAdam’s view, thus mediates between objective structural opportunities and objective mobilization; it does not create those opportunities. McAdam also delineates a category of “cultural opportunities,” for example, the sudden disasters, like Three Mile Island, that spur public opposition to a broader condition, or the events, like the *Brown v. Board* decision, that demonstrate system vulnerability. But his distinction between structural and cultural opportunities is not accompanied by any discussion of their relationship, leaving the impression that there is none and that structural opportunities are non-cultural. In a typologizing effort somewhat similar to mine, Johnston argues that in more repressive regimes, opposition tends to be accommodative and diffuse, that is, voiced only among small groups of trusted friends. As repression eases, opposition is expressed through “duplicitous” but formal organizations and finally through explicit dissidence in clandestine parties. His schema does list the resources provided insurgents through the different structures, but devotes little attention to the roles played by the different groups in identifying and acting on the easing of governmental repression.



77. Fantasia and Hirsch, "Culture in rebellion."
78. William Gamson and David S. Meyer, "Framing political opportunity," in Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, editors, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 275–290.
79. Roger Friedland and Robert R. Alford, "Bringing society back in: Symbols, practices, and institutional contradictions," in Walter W. Powell and Paul J. DiMaggio, editors, *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 238.
80. Jeff Goodwin, "Toward a new sociology of revolutions," *Theory and Society* 23 (1994): 731–766. In explaining the rise of the civil rights movement, John Skrentny shows that the American government's postwar sensitivity to charges of racism before a world audience was a function of the prior institutionalization of a transnational culture of human rights. The structural opportunity for activists was the superpowers' cold-war competition for influence in the developing nations, but that competition was shaped by nations' obligation – new since World War II – to adhere to human rights standards in order to claim or retain status as a world leader. "The effect of the cold war on African-American civil rights: America and the world audience, 1945–1968," *Theory and Society* 27/2 (April 1998): 237–285.
81. Donatella della Porta, "Social movements and the state: Thoughts on the policing of protest," in McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, editors, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, 83. Della Porta argues that such differences demonstrate the role of "institutions and political culture" in producing a stable set of political opportunities. She thus recognizes the importance of culture in shaping opportunities separate from the perceptions of insurgents, but unnecessarily distinguishes institutions from culture. Institutions, in Friedland and Alford's persuasive definition, are "supra-organizational patterns of activity through which humans conduct their material life in time and space, and symbolic systems through which they categorize that activity and infuse it with meaning." "Bringing society back in," 232.
82. Anthony Oberschall, "Opportunities and framing in the East European revolts of 1989," in McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, editors, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, 93–121; Jeffrey Olick and Daniel Levy, "Collective memory and cultural constraint: Holocaust myth and rationality in West German politics," *American Sociological Review* 62: 921–936.
83. Tarrow, *Power in Movement*.
84. Della Porta, "Social movements and the state."
85. See James M. Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 51–52; and Charles Kurzman, "Structural opportunity and perceived opportunity in social movement theory: The Iranian revolution of 1979," *American Sociological Review* 61 (1996): 153–170.
86. Scott, *Domination*, 220.
87. *Ibid.*
88. *Ibid.*, 115.
89. William H. Sewell, "A theory of structure: Duality, agency, and transformation," *American Journal of Sociology* 98 (1992): 1–29.
90. Sidney Tarrow, "States and opportunities: The political structuring of social movements," in McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, editors, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, 50. Law can be considered both as a component of the political opportunity structure and as progenitor of movement "master frames"; two factors that, along with mobilizing structures, are considered essential to mobilization.

- Yet their relationship has not been examined. See David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, "Master frames and cycles of protest," in Aldon Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller, editors, *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 133–155, on master frames.
91. Sally Engle Merry, *Getting Justice and Getting Even: Legal Consciousness Among Working-Class Americans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).
  92. Ronald L. Jepperson and John W. Meyer, "The public order and the construction of formal organizations," in Powell and DiMaggio, editors, *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, 204–231; Friedland and Alford, "Bringing society back in"; Elisabeth S. Clemens, *The People's Lobby* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
  93. I discuss efforts to integrate culture into social movement theorizing in Polletta, "Culture and its discontents: Recent theorizing on culture and protest," *Sociological Inquiry* 67 (November 1997): 431–450. In the next section, I argue that discussions of free spaces have emphasized their structural features in accounting for recruitment, but in a way that obscures the meanings in which those structures are grounded. One consequence that I won't discuss further is that continuities between structures inside and outside the free space are occluded. For example, the "liminal moment" described by Victor Turner as a "time and place of withdrawal from normal modes of social action," Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 167, reinforces conventions by its precise, temporary inversion of them. Of rituals of status reversal, Turner says, "By making the low high and the high low, they reaffirm the structural principle" (176).
  94. Charles Tilly, "Domination, resistance, compliance ... discourse," *Sociological Forum* 6/3 (1991): 598.
  95. Scott, *Domination*, 118–119.
  96. *Ibid.*, 119.
  97. *Ibid.*
  98. Hirsch, *Urban Revolt*.
  99. *Ibid.*, 208.
  100. Judith Rollins, *Between Women: Domesticity and Their Employers* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985).
  101. Indeed, in the historical portions of the book, that point is made. Thus, "Irish solidarity facilitated political mobilization within the Irish community. But the cultural and political characteristics of these institutional havens resulted in a reformist rather than a revolutionary response to Irish problems." *Urban Revolt*, 142. The problem is that those "cultural and political characteristics" drop out in Hirsch's more general statements about havens' role in mobilization. Hirsch goes on to show that the Germans' revolutionary mobilization was short-lived because the ethnic valence of the movement – its firm identification with German identity – limited participation to only a minority of the working class. Thus broader cultural constructions of ethnicity (Hirsch points out that particularly in the German case, ethnic attachments were not primordial) were crucial both in galvanizing protest and in limiting its scope.
  102. Rossinow, "The breakthrough to new life," 326.
  103. *Ibid.*, 321.
  104. *Ibid.*, 329.
  105. Tetreault, "Civil society," 278.
  106. See Mustafa Emirbayer and Jeff Goodwin, "Network analysis, culture, and the problem of agency," *American Journal of Sociology* 99 (1994): 1411–1454.

107. Gould, *Insurgent Identities*.
108. Emirbayer and Goodwin, "Network analysis."
109. Allan Silver, "'Two different sorts of commerce' – friendship and strangership in civil society," in Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar, editors, *Private and Public in Thought and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
110. John W. Mohr and Vincent Duquenne note that "[t]he buying and selling of commodities constitutes a set of practical activities that can only proceed by virtue of a set of shared symbolic constructions that includes the idea of private property. And yet the concept of property (as it is understood) is only meaningful in the context of a commodified world where market behavior is regularly constructed." "The duality of culture and practice: Poverty relief in New York City, 1888–1917," *Theory and Society* 26/2–3 (1997): 310.
111. In a similar critique of recent discussions of "social capital," Alejandro Portes and Patricia Landolt point out that "membership in a community also brings demands for conformity," and that strong social ties may inhibit individual initiative." "The downside of social capital," *The American Prospect*, May-June 1996, 20. While Portes and his associates are interested in the constraints on entrepreneurial economic efforts, some of the same constraints may operate on insurgent activity in tight-knit communities. Thus where Portes and Julia Sensenbrenner note that the demands placed by family and co-ethnics on an entrepreneur may restrict his or her range of action, one might substitute the pressures levied by family and friends on an individual contemplating political action that may lead to violence or economic reprisals against the activist and his or her kin. Alejandro Portes and Julia Sensenbrenner, "Embeddedness and immigration: Notes on the social determinants of economic action," *American Journal of Sociology* 98 (May 1993): 1320–1350. See also Michael Woolcock, "Social capital and economic development: Toward a theoretical synthesis and policy framework," *Theory and Society* 27/2 (April 1998): 151–208, for analysis of the conditions under which social capital aids and impedes economic development. Thanks to a *Theory and Society* Editor for drawing my attention to these three articles.
112. Thus, for example, Ann Mische shows how "interlocutors" or "bridgemakers" connect disparate identities through people's capacity to recognize different dimensions of themselves in the interlocutor. "Projects, identities, and social networks: Brazilian youth mobilization and the making of civic culture," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Toronto, Ontario, 10–14 August 1997. John Padgett and Christopher Ansell have shown how actors' interstitial position among several networks enables them to claim a brokerage role and the power associated with it, in part because their ambiguity of position leads others to attribute a variety of identities to them. "Robust Action and the Rise of the Medici, 1400–1434," *American Journal of Sociology* 98 (1993): 1259–1319. Roberto M. Fernandez and Roger V. Gould, in "A Dilemma of state power: Brokerage and influence in the national health policy domain," *American Journal of Sociology* 99 (1994): 1455–1491, argue that brokers' influence in policymaking is dependent on a perception that they are impartial with respect to the policy initiatives that they facilitate by putting otherwise non-interacting actors in communication. Fernandez and Gould develop this argument through an analysis of the government's role in health policy initiatives, but claim its generalizability. Emphasizing the construction of collective actors through conflict, Carol Mueller argues that the collective identity of feminists developed in both liberal and radical wings through a process of contestation. Thus, with respect to liberal feminism,

- she recounts that, "Through conflict with Commission [on the Status of Women] members, congressional representatives, officials, and the media over . . . a host of policies, a relatively small network of politically connected women developed a conception of gender equality or collective identity," in "Conflict networks," 247. For a useful primer on network dynamics, see Wellman, "Structural analysis."
113. Evans and Boyte, *Free Spaces*; Evans, *Personal Politics*; Couto "Narrative"; Fantasia and Hirsch, "Culture in rebellion"; Morris, "Centuries of black protests."
  114. Author's interviews with Muriel Tillinghast, New York, 5 June, 1996; Robert Mants, Lowndesboro, Alabama, 25–29 July 1996; field reports and meeting minutes in *Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers Microfilm, 1959–1972* (Sanford, North Carolina: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1982); see especially "Minutes of SNCC staff meeting" [3/6/62], reel 3 #798–800; "First Report from Lee County" [7/1/62], reel 19 #839; "Lincoln County Voter Education Project, Week of August 25–31" [1963], reel 7 #238; Untitled field report, 11/8/63, reel 5 #964; "Jerry Casey Field Report" [ND], reel 7 #1019; MFDP Newsletter no. 3, 4/24/65, reel 41 #708–709; "Fifth Congressional District Report, General Report on Laurel," October 1964, reel 20 #176–185; and in *Southern Regional Council Papers, 1944–1968 Microfilm* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1984), see especially series VI, reel 177, containing Voter Education Project field reports. See also Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*; McAdam, *Political Process*; Adolph Reed, Jr., *The Jesse Jackson Phenomenon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Clayborne Carson, "Civil rights reform and the black freedom struggle," in Charles Eagles, editor, *The Civil Rights Movement in America* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986), 19–32; John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).
  115. In Mississippi in 1962, one would be hard pressed to see an expansion of political opportunities. If the federal government was proving itself less indifferent than it had in the past to the interests of black Americans, as McAdam shows in *Political Process*, at the local level, it showed little willingness to intervene on behalf of black residents exercising their right to the franchise. White repression was stepped up after the Brown v. Board decision in 1954, and major civil rights groups eventually wrote off the Delta area of Mississippi as too dangerous for extensive voter registration work. Organizers had often to prove to residents their willingness to stay the course, especially after their first encounters with harassment or violence. SNCC worker Chuck McDew found a sign reading "SNCC Done Snuck" on the SNCC office in McComb, Mississippi after some of his colleagues had been forced out of town. He removed the sign, sat down, "and said we were open for business, and we were registering voters. It was always very important to us that we not give people the sense that we had deserted them." McDew's recollections are in Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, editor, *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998).
  116. Georg Simmel, "The Stranger," (1908) in Kurt H. Wolff, editor, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (New York: Free Press, 1950), 404, 407.
  117. This is similar to Padgett and Ansell's attribution of Cosimo de' Medici's power to his interstitial position and the identities and attributes that were as a consequence projected onto him. See their "Robust action."
  118. Some ministers, as well as other prominent black residents, assisted civil rights organizers anonymously, in some cases, so anonymously that organizers did not realize until years later that individuals they had denounced as "Uncle Toms" had

- in fact provided the food or bond money they depended on. Author's interviews with Wazir Peacock, San Francisco, California, 29 September 1996; Hollis Watkins, Jackson, Mississippi, 22 November, 1996; Robert Mants, Lowndesboro, Alabama, 25–29 July 1996.
119. "Frank Smith field report, Holly Springs May 21, 1963," Southern Regional Council Papers microfilm, reel 177 #1524.
  120. An organizer training civil rights workers in the early 1960s instructed that while it was important to make connections with local black leaders, "for action, a strong outside stimulus probably would be necessary to break what frequently was a local paralysis," quoted in Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 129. Payne relates that Mississippi residents who were identified as potential leaders "were often sent to Septima Clark's citizenship training center in Dorchester, Georgia. The trip helped people develop a sense of the larger movement and of themselves as movement people," *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 249. Mississippi organizer Bob Moses wrote in 1962 that student organizers "very seldom are free to work in their own home towns because of the pressure brought to bear on their parents and/or their relatives. And then, when this situation does not prevail, they are likely to be prophets without honor at home. Thus Curtis Hayes and Hollis Watkins" – two of SNCC's most effective organizers – "were able to recruit some 250 people to go down and register in Hattiesburg and Forrest County, but were not successful in recruiting more than two or three in McComb, their home city." "Report to VEP, RE: Mississippi Voter Registration Project. From: Bob Moses ND (rec'd Dec. 5, 1962)," Southern Regional Council Papers microfilm, reel 177 #1553–1557. The view that people should not organize in their own communities is common among organizers. Several rationales appear in their statements. Saul Alinsky wrote in 1945, "The organizer of a People's Organization will shortly discover one simple maxim: In order to be part of all, you must be part of none. In dealing with the innumerable rivalries, fears, jealousies, and suspicions within a community the organizer will discover that ... he cannot enjoy the confidence even to a limited degree of all other groups as long as he is personally identified with one or two of the community agencies," *Reveille for Radicals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), 204; see also Sanford D. Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel: Saul Alinsky – His Life and Legacy* (New York: Vintage, 1989). Cesar Chavez gave another reason in a paper in the late 1960s: "When you begin by knowing your neighbors, you begin to eliminate them. Then you say, Well, my cousin over there. No, she's not interested. My uncle. No, he's against it. My mother. She's too old. My brother? He's only interested in TV. If you were not to know the people, you would go out there full of spirit to sell them on the idea.... I would rather work in a community where no one knows me and I haven't prejudiced anyone out of the picture," (Untitled, undated paper in author's collection). Providing a third rationale, Alinsky-trained organizer Mike Miller says today, "People in your community will say, 'who are you to tell us what to do?'" Author's interview with Mike Miller, Washington D.C., 1 May, 1998.
  121. Evans, *Personal Politics*; Buechler, *Women's Movements*; Echols, *Daring to be Bad*; Evans and Boyte, *Free Spaces*; Gitlin, *The Sixties*; McAdam, *Political Process*.
  122. The following draws on Casey Hayden, paper prepared for the Fannie Lou Hamer Memorial Symposium Lecture Series, Jackson, Mississippi, October 4, 1995; author's interviews with Casey Hayden and Elaine DeLott Baker, Denver, Colorado, 9–11 March 1995; Emmie Adams, St. Johnsbury, Vermont, 8–10 July 1996; and Mary King, Washington, D.C., 2 May 1998.

123. Scott, *Domination*.
124. Mark Granovetter, "The strength of weak ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (1973): 1360–1380; Emirbayer and Goodwin, "Network analysis."
125. Doug McAdam, "Recruitment to high-risk activism: The case of Freedom Summer," *American Journal of Sociology* 92 (1986): 64–90; Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olsen, "Social networks"; Oberschall, "Social conflict"; but see Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*.