

### **Tactics, Strategy and the Interactions Between Movements and their Targets & Opponents**

#### **A continuum of tactics**

- Education, persuasion (choice of rhetoric)
- Legal politics: lobbying, lawsuits
- Demonstrations: show numbers or intensity of concern (marches, rallies, petitions)
- Economic pressure (Boycotts, selective buying)
- Confrontation, disruption, civil disobedience (Sit-ins, occupations, illegal gatherings)
- Property damage
- Violence against persons

#### **Interactions**

- What the movement does is always in interaction with the target/opponent
- Strategy = overall plan for how change will occur
  - Persuade power-holders to act differently
  - Change public opinion
  - Disrupt normal business, force change
  - Seize power
- Always complex, fluid, evolving
  - Movements always use a mix of tactics, generally have multiple leaders, groups, agendas
- Outcomes always depends on characteristics of the power-holder as well as of the movement

#### **Tactics Use Power & Resources**

- Sheer numbers of people
- Military capacity: weapons, armies
- Wealth, control of land, means of production
- Environmental constraints of your home territory
- Control of means of communication
- Symbolic authority: religious, cultural, political

#### **Social Organization Matters**

- Social & political organization within groups affects capacity for action
  - Geographic concentration/dispersion
  - Governmental organization
  - Cultural/religious similarity or difference. Language.
- Relations to third parties who may favor one side or the other

#### **Education, persuasion**

- Give people information, make appeals to commonly-held beliefs, values (framing and rhetoric)
- Strategic use of language: choose how to say things in ways that will lead others to agree
- Depends upon being permitted to communicate
  - 1950s, advocating homosexual rights was defined as illegal violation of obscenity laws
  - Politically repressive regimes may prohibit any public opposition
  - Need cooperation of mass media to communicate to larger public

### Responses to persuasive strategies

- **Intense repression: prohibit speech entirely, drive it underground**
  - Strong block to mobilization if you cannot even discuss an issue except with trusted intimates
- **Free speech conditions: not overtly repressed. Responses in general order:**
  1. Ignore (+ standard disinformation)
  2. Ridicule, trivialization
  3. Rebuttal, debate
  4. Adopt successful movement rhetoric, repackage to make your points in a new way

### Examples of rhetorical adaptation

- **Mid-1960s, White racists abandon attempts to publicly justify White domination & segregation; employers abandon attempts to justify employment discrimination**
  - “state’s rights” OLDER rhetoric
  - “reverse discrimination” OR “preferences” OR “traditional way of life”
  - Quoting Martin Luther King, Jr. against affirmative action
- **Religious opponents of pornography adopt feminist arguments about violence against women; some abortion opponents adopt similar rhetoric**

### Petitions, lobbying, court cases

- Stay within the legal bounds of the state
- Democratic, legal institutions are a product of past struggles, have not always been available; product of franchise + court system
- Adapt to specific political/legal environments
- May include “behind the scenes” lobbying for particular bills (e.g. disability rights) OR professional legal strategies (e.g. civil rights)
- All ethnic minorities in US have used legal tactics.

### Constraints, interactions for legal strategies

- Ability to use these strategies depends upon social location & available laws/institutions
- Opponents generally can use them too
- Most commonly successful when the movement has some elite backing (splits in elites) OR there is pressure from disruption or electoral strength
- Court cases require legal training, legal standing: tend to reinforce professionalization in movements
- Lobbying is most effective by full-time lobbyists.

### Demonstrative & Economic Tactics

- **Marches, rallies, vigils**
  - Power of numbers, “demonstrate” your support +willingness to be in the street, visible
  - Evolved with franchise & democratic elections
- **Hunger strikes, immolation & other symbolic extreme actions**
  - Willingness to incur sacrifice takes on a moral standing
  - Cultural understandings essential
- **Boycotts & selective buying**
  - Refuse to buy (use service): demonstrate economic power.
  - A coercive strategy, but does not break a law

### Responses to demonstrative tactics

- If they are illegal or disruptive, they are more threatening; present a greater potential challenge, imply the possibility of stronger resistance
- **Public tactics: do they get media coverage? Try to ignore, trivialize.**
- **Time, place, manner restrictions: limit disruptive potential**
- **Boycotts: “tough it out.”**
  - Make secondary boycotts illegal, make it illegal to advocate a boycott (MLK jailed)
  - Make it illegal to organize an alternative (e.g. transportation system in Montgomery)

### Confrontational tactics

- Goal is to disrupt without being violent
- Strike & sit-down strike: keep the employer from running the business
- Civil disobedience: disobey an unjust law, e.g. sit-in at lunch counter, freedom ride, marriage license for gays, weave textile in India
- Direct action: skirt the edge between legal & illegal. Occupy a public place, march where not permitted, rally at someone's home. Try to cause trouble.
- Make the opponent look bad if they overreact

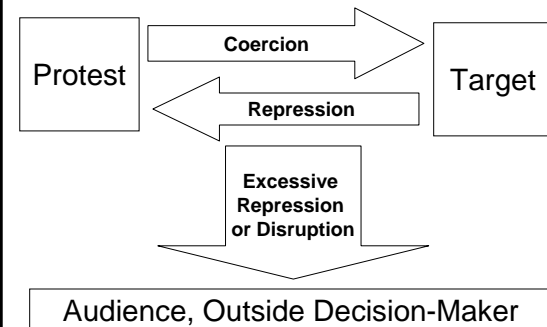
### The question of "violence"

- Both strong and weak groups can use it
- Property damage: is disruptive, a direct coercive tactic
  - Often the weapon of the frustrated, disempowered
  - However US history has many cases of White majority destroying the property & community of minorities
- Violence against persons
  - Traditional peasant attacks on the oppressive landlord
  - Lynching, mob violence: usually the weapon of the strong, the majority (Gamson's research)
  - Some terrorism is the weapon of the weak

### Responses to Violence & Property Damage

- DO often spur reforms, can be effective. But they also increase repression.
- Most often the weapon of the strong
  - Much more use of violence in the US by White supremacists than by minorities
  - Majorities are less likely to be repressed when they use violence, more likely to get away with it
- Weak groups that use violence are more likely to be violently repressed
  - A dangerous tactic is to TALK violence without the ability to back it up. "Talk loudly and carry a small stick" is a recipe for destruction.

### Dynamics of Non-Violent Confrontation



### Movement – Opponent Dynamics

- Tactics when new are disruptive, keep opposition off guard
- Over time, authorities adapt to tactics, find more effective ways of responding
- High coercion can backfire on either side.
  - Police violence (if publicized) can increase support for the protesters
  - Protester violence can decrease support for protesters
- These are highly contingent and contested and affected by underlying levels of support
- The "moderate middle" is often the audience or target

### Paradoxical relations

- The more repressive the regime, the more disruptive a "mild" tactic is
  - If saying something opposed to the government is illegal, then even a pamphlet or speech is threatening
  - If regime is strong enough to repress strongly, can maintain control
- But legitimacy of regime is weak if maintained by repression
- Repressive regimes are threatened by any action
- "Soft" repression CAN be more effective: ridicule, ignore, rhetorical adaptation, small concessions

### American Indian Dynamics 19<sup>th</sup> Century

- War. Indians fighting back labeled as “savages,” justification for further war.
- Legal tactics brought some concessions, but dominants easily changed their mind
- Too few resources to win, the other side had too much power no matter what they did

### American Indian Dynamics Today

- Disruptive tactics mostly don’t work: too small & isolated to cause trouble for the majority (but may invigorate the activists)
- A lot of conflicts are between different factions on reservations
- Symbolic struggles upset majority, gain visibility, increase in-group pride: mascots, off-reservation fishing
- Most efforts today are on the legal front: sovereignty, treaty enforcement, economic development (including casinos)

### Black Civil Rights Movement

- Intense repression in the South
- Boycotts a traditional strategy
- Legal strategies & growing political influence opened up spaces
- The “drama” of civil rights: peaceful Black protest, southern White violence, federal intervention
- Belief in self-defense strong among Blacks, growing opposition to non-violence
- Riots shift the drama, coincide with shift of goals

### Black Movement Analysis

- For CRM the “opponent” was the explicit segregationist regimes of the White South
- The federal government and northerners were “outside opinion” which could be influenced by the drama
- CRM resulted in greater political power, become “political insiders” in many ways
- But the problems of northern cities did not respond to these dynamics
- Increased police repression in response to riots

### Doug McAdam “Tactical Innovations”

- Uses plots of the sequencing of events in the Civil Rights Movement to argue
  - New tactics explain steep rises in events
  - Dynamics of the CRM: protest first, then segregationist response, then federal response
- General argument that police eventually adapt to new tactics and their disruptive potential declines over time
- Data are from the New York Times Index

### Civil Rights Events Fig 1 (McAdam)

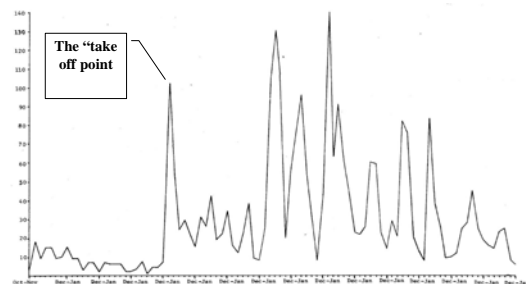
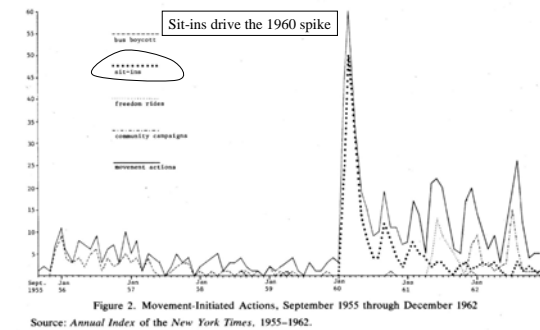


Figure 1. Movement-Initiated Actions, Oct–Nov 1955 through Dec–Jan 1971  
Source: Annual Index of the New York Times, 1955–1971

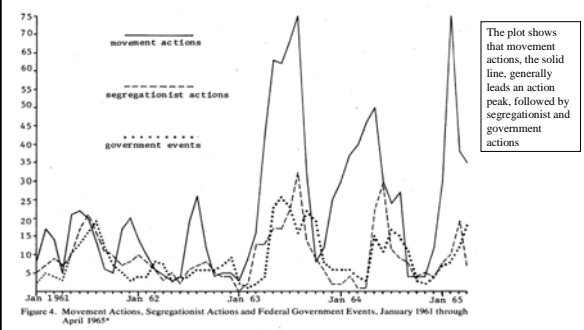
Doug McAdam, “Tactical Innovations,” ASR 1093

### Civil Rights Events Fig 2 (McAdam)



Doug McAdam, "Tactical Innovations," ASR 1093

### Civil Rights Events Fig 4 (McAdam)



Doug McAdam, "Tactical Innovations," ASR 1093

### Post-CRM protest accords: 1980s & 1990s

- General police shift from repression to intelligence & negotiation
- Try to maintain order through cooperative strategies
- Rules & regulations for protests: permits, hours
- Can avoid arrest if you follow the rules
- Protests become both more frequent and less effective