Narrative in Social Movements," *Qualitative Sociology* 21(4) (1998a): 419–46; Mark Steinberg, *Fighting Words: Working-Class Formation, Collective Action, and Discourse in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

3 Months before, in the party primaries (*internas*) current Governor Sosbisch allied with Cutral-co former mayor Grittini against the then current Governor Sapag. Sapag won the primaries and Mayor Martinasso, who initially sided with Sosbisch-Grittini, switched factions and join Sapag's group.

4 An "injustice frame" is a mode of interpretation—prefatory to protest—produced and adopted by those who classify the actions of an authority as unjust. See William Gamson, "The Social Psychology of Collective Action," in Aldon Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller, eds., *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

5 For the classic statement on resource mobilization theory, see John McCarthy and Mayer Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements," *American Journal of Sociology* 82 (1977): 1212–41; J. Craig Jenkins, "Resource Mobilization Theory," *Annual Review of Sociology* 9 (1983): 527–53.

6 Laura's personal troubles are indeed political in the sense that feminism, broadly understood, speaks of the term "political" but not in the sense that Laura herself gives it. When speaking of "politics" and "political" I am referring to indigenous categories, i.e., to the definitions that actors themselves adopt: Politics, in this sense, mean "party politics."

7 Apparently (and this has been confirmed by many local sources), some of the organizers of the protest did not want protesters to interrupt the distribution of gasoline and oil to nearby areas (former mayor Grittini, for one, was the owner of many gas stations in the area).

8 See my *Contentious Lives* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

9 C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (London: Oxford, 1959).

10 See, among others, James Rule, *Theories of Civil Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) and Beth Roy, *Some Trouble with Cows* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1994).

11 Charles Tilly, "How to Detect, Describe, and Explain Repertoires of Contention," Center for the Study of Social Change, New School for Social Research, *The Working Paper Series* 150 (1992): 6.

Part VIII

How Do Institutions Influence Movements?

Introduction

Any social movement must deal with a range of powerful institutions. Among them, the state is usually the most important. Many movements make demands directly of the state, primarily through demands for changes in policies or laws. Sometimes it is state actions that are the focus of the grievance. If nothing else, the state lays down the rules of the game within which protestors maneuver, and if they choose to break those rules they are likely to encounter punitive action from the police or armed forces. Another major institution with which social movements usually come into contact are the news media, which can be used to purvey a movement's message, portray opponents in an unfavorable light, and influence state decisions. In this section we examine these major players in a social movement's environment.

In the political process school, the state is the major influence on social movements, even to the extent of very often causing movements to arise in the first place. In part II we saw that, according to this theory, it is changes in the state ("political opportunities" like the lessening of repression, divisions among elites, etc.) which often allow movements to form.

There are different ways of understanding the term "opportunity." One is in a more structural fashion, in which large changes occur without much intervention by movements themselves. Sociologists Craig Jenkins and Charles Perrow represent this point of view in the excerpts below, from a 1977 article that helped define the process approach. For one thing, they argue that the same factors explain both the rise of farmworker insurgency and its outcomes. Those factors center squarely on political and economic elites. When they are divided, such that some of them provide resources and political support to a social movement, then that movement has a much better chance of both establishing itself and attaining its goals (we'll see in part X that these are both seen as forms of success in the process model). In another argument typical of the process approach, Jenkins and Perrow dismiss the explanatory importance of discontent, which they say "is ever-present for deprived groups." Jenkins and Perrow also exemplify the process school's focus on those social movements composed of people with little or no political and economic power, groups who normally face severe repression when they try to organize and make demands on the system.

Celebrities Most social movements try to publicize their cause by attracting media coverage. They seek to stage protest events that will be considered newsworthy, perhaps because they are flamboyant or represent a new twist on old tactics. But certain people are also newsworthy, attracting attention simply because they are celebrities. When they call a news conference, reporters come. Social movement groups often try to get well-known actors, musicians, singers, and athletes to support their causes, knowing they will get more publicity this way. This strategy can backfire, however, when a celebrity has her own view of a social issue which may be at odds with that of the protest group.

Moral Panics Students of deviance, social problems, and politics have used the concept of a moral panic to describe sudden concern over a group or activity, accompanied by calls for control and suppression. Out of an infinite range of potential perceived threats, one—which may be neither new nor on the rise—suddenly receives considerable attention. Marijuana use, motorbikes, and rock and roll music are common examples. The news media, public officials, religious leaders, and private "moral entrepreneurs" are key in focusing public attention on the issue, typically by identifying some recognizable group as "folk devils"—usually young people, racial and ethnic minorities, or other relatively powerless groups—responsible for the menace. New political or legal policies are sometimes the result, as are new symbols and sensibilities (available as the raw materials for future panics). Some moral panics inspire grassroots protest groups, but others are manipulated by interested elites to undo the work of social movements. For instance, a series of moral panics over the "black underclass" in American cities—having to do with crime, teenage pregnancy, drugs, and so on—were used to scale back affirmative action programs in the 1980s.

Another way to understand opportunities is shorter term. During any conflict, there will be moments when quick action can have a big effect. The media suddenly notice your cause, perhaps because of a crisis or accident, or maybe because of an event you have organized. You must move quickly to use them to get your message across. Or there may be a crisis in government that gives your social movement room to maneuver and make the government concede to your demands just to keep the peace. Social movements are constantly looking for these openings in the state, as well as for sympathetic politicians. But many of these windows of opportunity can hurt as well as help, reshaping, curtailing, or channeling movement demands in the very process of recognizing them. "Opportunities" are also "constraints."

A third way to envision opportunities (or a third kind of opportunity) is as relatively permanent features of a country's political landscape. Administrative structures, legal systems, electoral rules, and constitutions all constrain what social movements can achieve. We might call these "horizons" of opportunity, since they define what is possible within that system, in contrast to "windows" of opportunity that open and shut quickly.

The mass media are of course another important institution that shapes and constrains movements and which movements seek to shape and constrain as well. Modern social movements can hardly be imagined without the media to amplify their messages. The cheap newspapers that appeared in the nineteenth century, for instance, helped larger, more national movements form for the first time in the industrialized countries. Today, hardly any movement can afford to ignore the media, which can reach much larger numbers than can the movement itself through personal networks or its own publications. These anonymous audiences can be especially important in contributing funds and in affecting state policies.

Movement activists devote considerable time to figuring out events that will attract news coverage—in other words, events which editors and reporters will consider "newsworthy" (Gans 1979). Especially flamboyant marches and rallies, new twists on old themes, and clever incantations can all help events to get on the evening news. Abbie Hoffman was a genius at attracting this kind of attention, with events such as the "levitation" of the Pentagon. But social movements challenging the status quo often face media that are not entirely sympathetic, and which sometimes are hostile to the movement's message. What is more, movements' opponents often have better access to the news media. Movements have little control over how they are ultimately portrayed.

Choice Points Protestors and their opponents make numerous choices in the course of their varied engagements. In doing so they face many strategic dilemmas, in which each course of action has potential benefits but also costs and risks. The creativity of movements is evident when a choice is made to do something differently from what is expected or what has been done in the past. Not all choices are consciously faced, as many people—following routines—do what other protest groups usually do because that "is just the way it is done." Even when they are not faced, the strategic dilemmas still exist as tradeoffs, shaping the outcomes of conflict. Scholarly analysts can often see alternatives activists themselves do not.

Perhaps the best analysis of the complex interaction between a movement and the media is Todd Gitlin's book about the New Left of the 1960s, *The Whole World Is Watching*, parts of which appear below. He first shows some of the ways that the media "framed" the protest at its height (in other words, when it was most threatening to mainstream institutions) by concentrating on its more extreme ideas and actions and at the same time trivializing the threat it posed. At the same time, this loosely organized movement began thinking about itself in the terms laid out by the media! As the next part of Gitlin's excerpt shows, one hazard of media coverage is the creation of media stars from among movement leaders. These are not always the actual organizational or intellectual leaders, but usually people who are flamboyant and photogenic—in other words, with a talent for attracting media attention. This creation of spokespersons whose power comes from their ability to attract media coverage further distorts a movement's message. Many potential leaders simply abdicate this role in the face of media dynamics.

It is clear from Gitlin's account that one effect of the media can be to give undue prominence to radical or illegal wings of movements, or to segments that are further outside mainstream culture: the "kooks" in a movement. Governments, too, often radicalize a movement by indiscriminately repressing moderates and radicals (in which case there is little incentive to be a moderate), or simply by repressing a movement too heavy-handedly. In the end, these interactions with media and the state deeply affect a movement's ability to change its society.

The media have had a significant influence on the human rights movement in the West, as detailed by James Ron, Howard Ramos, and Kathleen Rodgers. The media are generally uninterested in (and often incapable of) reporting human rights abuses in poor and "obscure" countries, even when those abuses are extensive. So human rights organizations, which generally prize media visibility, tend to focus on abuses in wealthier and more accessible countries, even if the abuses there are less severe. Media visibility also makes it easier for rights organizations to raise funds, an important incentive for focusing their efforts on wealthier and better-known countries. The media's priorities, in short, encourage the human rights movement to pay less attention to abuses in poorer countries than would be merited in a fairer world.

The opposite side of this coin, as Clifford Bob shows, is a tendency for movements in poorer countries to adjust their own goals and strategies to match the concerns of potential allies in richer countries. Bob notes how the Ogoni ethnic group in Nigeria, led by Ken Saro-Wiwa (see the short biography that follows Bob's article), reframed its conflict with multinational oil companies from one of ethnic domination to "environmental warfare." This strategic shift was instrumental in winning the support of Western environmental organizations. But worthy movements that lack savvy, charismatic leaders attuned to Western audiences (including highly participatory movements) are likely to suffer in isolation. Movements that seem complex, unfashionable, or hopeless are unlikely to attract international support.

Corporations are another important institution with which movements contend. The changing character of corporations and the capitalist economy has altered the playing field on which movements—especially labor and environmental movements—have mobilized in recent years.

Corporations are increasingly powerful and global in scale. As Stephen Lerner points out, most of the 100 largest economies in the world today are not countries, but global corporations. Accordingly, Lerner suggests, labor unions need to focus their organizing efforts on corporations, not countries, which in turn means organizing on the same global scale as corporations. (Lerner is an official of the Service Employees International Union [SEIU], the fastest-growing union in the U.S.) Multinational corporations may be increasingly powerful, but they are also dependent on service workers whose jobs cannot be relocated or "off-shored." (A janitor in Manila cannot clean an office in Los Angeles; a maid in Calcutta cannot make a bed in Miami.) So even low-wage workers have some potential leverage in the global economy. Global capitalism has certainly created daunting challenges for labor movements, but it has not changed the need for or possibility of them. As we have seen, in fact, it has even spurred a transnational movement for democratic globalization.

Discussion Questions

1. What kinds of "opportunities" affect the efficacy of social movements?
2. What are the benefits and risks of having allies among prominent politicians or other celebrities?
3. To what extent was the farmworkers' movement successful because of a shifting political environment? To what extent was its success a product of specific strategies?
4. As a political activist, how would you go about getting media attention for your cause? What are some of the risks of that attention?
5. What factors shape how the media will portray a social movement and its ideas?
6. Corporations are increasingly global in their operations. In what ways does this make them more or less vulnerable to pressure from workers and their allies?

29 Farmworkers' Movements in Changing Political Contexts

J. Craig Jenkins and Charles Perrow

From about 1964 until 1972, American society witnessed an unprecedented number of groups acting in insurgent fashion. By insurgency we mean organized attempts to bring about structural change by thrusting new interests into decision-making processes. Some of this insurgency, notably the civil rights and peace movements, had begun somewhat earlier, but after 1963 there were organized attempts to bring about structural changes from virtually all sides: ethnic minorities (Indians, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans), welfare mothers, women, sexual liberation groups, teachers and even some blue-collar workers. The present study isolates and analyzes in detail one of these insurgent challenges – that of farmworkers – in an effort to throw light on the dynamics that made the 1960s a period of dramatic and stormy politics.

Our thesis is that the rise and dramatic success of farmworker insurgents in the late 1960s best can be explained by changes in the political environment the movement confronted, rather than by the internal characteristics of the movement organization and the social base upon which it drew. The salient environment consisted of the government, especially the federal government, and a coalition of liberal support organizations. We shall contrast the unsuccessful attempt to organize farmworkers by the National Farm Labor Union from 1946 to 1952 with the strikingly successful one of the United Farmworkers from 1965 to 1972.

The immediate goals of both movements were the same – to secure union contracts. They both used the same tactics, namely, mass agricultural strikes, boycotts aided by organized labor, and political demands supported by the liberal community of the day. Both groups encountered identical and virtually insurmountable obstacles, namely, a weak bargaining position, farmworker poverty and a culture of resignation, high rates of migrancy and weak social cohesion, and a perpetual oversupply of farm labor, insuring that growers could break any strike.

The difference between the two challenges was the societal response that insurgent demands received. During the first challenge, government policies strongly favored agribusiness; support from liberal organizations and organized labor was weak and vacillating. By the time the second challenge was mounted, the political environment had changed dramatically. Government now was divided over policies pertaining to farmworkers; liberals and organized labor had formed a reform coalition, attacking agri-business privileges in public policy. The reform coalition then furnished the resources to launch the challenge. Once underway, the coalition continued to fend for the insurgents, providing additional resources and applying leverage to movement targets. The key changes, then, were in support organization and governmental actions. To demonstrate this, we will analyze macro-level changes in the activities of these groups as reported in the *New York Times Annual Index* between 1946 and 1972.