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Pathways of Insurgency:

Black Liberation Struggle and the Second Reconstruction,

1945-1975.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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protests, asserting common cause with liberation struggles in Africa and Asia, challenging President Truman's global leadership and aiming to split the Democratic Party. After a period of quiescence, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, civil rights activists, calling for equal and integrated participation in the U.S., challenged de facto disenfranchisement and physically defied the legal and customary segregation of public spaces through nonviolent civil disobedience. And in the late 1960s, revolutionary black nationalists denied the legitimacy of U.S. governance generally, mobilizing parallel government at the community level, establishing "diplomatic relations" with socialist States from China and N. Vietnam to Algeria and Cuba, and engaging in armed confrontation with police.

What were the causes and consequences of Black Liberation Struggle, 1945-1975?

When considered in terms of practices, Black Liberation Struggle 1945-1975 followed three distinct phases – Black Anti-colonialism in the late 1940s, the civil rights movement in the early 1960s, and Black revolutionary nationalism in the late 1960s. In each movement, a distinct and relatively coherent set of insurgent practices emerged, rapidly proliferated, and then subsided. Not only were the practices different, but the "indigenous institutions" and social networks upon which these movements built were largely distinct, and the political allies of one were often political enemies of another.

Building on the insights of the political process tradition, yet seeking to transcend its limitations, I advance a new, more truly processual theory of social movements which I dub "pathways of insurgency theory." I show that when insurgents

develop a set of practices which is highly disruptive and difficult to repress in a given historic context, they open a pathway of insurgency, and mobilization proliferates in terms of those insurgent practices.

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2014

**PATHWAYS OF INSURGENCY:
BLACK LIBERATION STRUGGLE AND THE SECOND RECONSTRUCTION,
1945-1975.**
By Joshua Bloom

<i>Introduction</i>	1
PART I. Black Anti-Colonialism	27
PART II. Civil Rights Movement	107
PART III. Revolutionary Black Nationalism	153
<i>Conclusion</i>	707

Pathways of Insurgency: Black Liberation Struggle and the Second Reconstruction, 1945-1975.

Introduction

After several centuries of slavery and half a century of formal caste subordination, in the three decades following WWII, hundreds of thousands of black people in the United States participated in insurgent social movements. In the years immediately following WWII, Black Anti-colonialists petitioned the United Nations for international military intervention against lynching in the U.S., and mobilized street protests, asserting common cause with liberation struggles in Africa and Asia, challenging President Truman's global leadership and aiming to split the Democratic Party. After a period of quiescence, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, civil rights activists, calling for equal and integrated participation in the U.S., challenged de facto disenfranchisement and physically defied the legal and customary segregation of public spaces through nonviolent civil disobedience. And in the late 1960s, revolutionary black nationalists denied the legitimacy of U.S. governance generally, mobilizing parallel government at the community level, establishing "diplomatic relations" with socialist States from China and N. Vietnam to Algeria and Cuba, and engaging in armed confrontation with police.

What were the causes and consequences of Black Liberation Struggle, 1945-1975?

The effects of the Black Liberation Struggle, and perhaps even more so its causes, have been the subject of great political debate. A few, principally political conservatives (in the American sense), have asserted that the Black Liberationists had little if any historic effect – that any transformation would have occurred without their actions. Ironically, a few radicals echo that position arguing that racism persists and that little of substance was accomplished by

the reformist civil rights movement. More common is the liberal argument that the Black Liberation Struggle was a natural development of American Democracy, and that extension of that Democracy was both cause and consequence of the movement. Most published accounts celebrate the civil rights movement, that particular wave of Black insurgency that peaked in the late 1950s and early 1960s challenging legal segregation and de facto disenfranchisement in the South through nonviolence, suggesting that it was responsible for achieving civil rights for Blacks and that this was a good thing. In the American mass media, civil rights champion Martin Luther King, Jr. is the icon of progress much like Hitler, the champion of fascism, is the icon of evil.¹ Further, the civil rights movement became an important reference in cold war debates frequently cited by American cold warriors as evidence of the moral superiority of the West.²

Scholars have attributed a variety of historical consequences to the Black Liberation Struggle: Black liberationists ended formal caste subordination and garnered Black access to government hiring and elite education; they played a role in transforming the basic Party alignments in American politics; and in the context of anti-colonial movements struggling for national liberation throughout Africa and much of Asia during the period, cold war geopolitics not only shaped, but was shaped by the domestic Black insurgency.

Sociologists have mainly focused on explaining the causes of Black Liberation Struggle. In the process of explaining the Black Liberation Struggle, they tore down the prevailing social-psychological theories of social movements, and developed the political process and resource

¹ The fact that elected politicians of every stripe and much of the mainstream press hated and publicly vilified King in the years preceding his death is forgotten. Also forgotten is the earlier Black Anti-colonial movement. Still vilified are the revolutionary Black nationalists who were the center of Black insurgency by the time King was killed.

² All of this is actually pretty one-sided rather than a debate. The main story is the Liberal ideological appropriation of the civil rights movement, both in domestic and international political discourse.

mobilization theories that continue to underwrite most empirical studies of social movements today.

I agree with political process scholars that the decline of cotton economy, the northern and urban migration of Blacks, related changes in voting patterns, anti-colonial struggle internationally, and the Cold War all combined to create a sea change in race relations and the institutions of race in the U.S. in the postwar decades. But while these forces may have made change in race relations inevitable, they did not cause the widespread emergence of Black insurgent movements. Neither the fact of Black insurgency, nor the outcomes in terms of shaping racial relations, were determined by broad, impersonal, structural processes. The structural processes were, instead, a terrain upon which Black Liberation Struggle developed.

For 40 years, sociologists have been debating what causes social movements. Today, the consensus is that the prevailing theories are insufficient to answer this question. Despite the appellation “political process theory,” most applications have flattened historic context to an independently causal variable, yielding an un-testable structuralism. Critics have rightly pointed to the importance of actors and their actions, but have not been able to account for how context matters for insurgent politics. Marx wrote that people “make history, but in conditions not of their own choosing.” The question is whether the concept of insurgent social movements is sufficiently meaningful that testable propositions can be developed about how conditions matter in their development, and inferences drawn across historical cases.

Recovering lost insights from the early political process studies of Black Liberation Struggle, I conceptualize social movements as comprised by a set of insurgent practices.

When considered in terms of practices, Black Liberation Struggle 1945-1975 followed three distinct phases – Black Anti-colonialism in the late 1940s, the civil rights movement in the early 1960s, and Black revolutionary nationalism in the late 1960s. There were important continuities between these three movements, especially the promise of liberation from a shared history of racial oppression. But in each movement, a distinct and relatively coherent set of insurgent practices emerged, rapidly proliferated, and then subsided. Not only were the practices different, but the “indigenous institutions” and social networks upon which these movements built were largely distinct, and the political allies of one were often political enemies of another. Disaggregating Black Liberation Struggle by practice challenges the basic premise of classical political process theory. Given that different groups of people participated in these three movements at different times, in different places, and very different ways, there is little reason to believe that a single set of opportunities would explain why Black people generally mobilized insurgency.

Building on the insights of the political process tradition, yet seeking to transcend its limitations, I advance a new, more truly processual theory of social movements which I dub “pathways of insurgency theory.” I propose that when insurgents develop a set of practices which is highly disruptive and difficult to repress in a given historic context, they open a pathway of insurgency, and mobilization proliferates in terms of those insurgent practices.

The design of this dissertation is to apply pathways of insurgency theory to explain Black Anti-colonialism, the Civil Rights Movement, and Revolutionary Black Nationalism in turn, testing pathways of insurgency explanations against the rivals. Of course these were not the only Black insurgencies in the 20th Century U.S. For example, Garveyism, the anti-lynching

campaigns of the 1920s, Black industrial labor insurgency in the 1930s, the Double V campaign and the MOWM campaign in the early 1940s all warrant considerable attention, as do slave rebellions of earlier centuries. But these were the main black insurgencies of the postwar period which scholars have usually explained as a piece (see Jenkins et al 2003; Lawson 1991; McAdam 1999). My aim is to test the fruitfulness of pathways of insurgency theory against the prevailing social movement theories in explaining Black Liberation Struggle 1945-1975 – the case upon which the rivals were founded.

Towards a Practice Centered Theory of Insurgent Social Movements

The social movements field was founded on a group actor assumption. In seeking to explain insurgent social movements, social movement scholars have premised their studies on the assumption that social groups are the protagonists of insurgency and that shared group interests, capacities, constraints, and opportunities explain the timing and extent of insurgent mobilization. Black people in the postwar United States shared a rational group interest in their liberation as black people, a common interest historically rooted in the original kidnapping and shipment of their ancestors from Africa, hundreds of years of chattel slavery, and the persistence of formal and legal racial subordination, enforced by lynching. As the social movement field was built on the study of black insurgency in the postwar decades, perhaps shared group interest amongst blacks helped convince social movement theorists of the plausibility of the group actor assumption. But just because a rational group interest motivated black insurgency in the postwar decades does not mean that all black people participated in black insurgency in similar ways, or that group action is the most fruitful conceptual framework for analyzing and explaining insurgent mobilization generally.

No concept has proven more influential in the social movements field than “political opportunity.” The political opportunity thesis – that vulnerability in the political system confers advantage on a subordinate social group enabling insurgent mobilization – transformed the field of social movement study, emphasizing the importance of social context. The political opportunity thesis has been tremendously generative, guiding a proliferation of important studies in the last several decades (Amenta and Zyglidopoulos 1991; Banaszak 1996; Brockett 1991; Costain 1992; Eisinger 1973; Jenkins and Perrow 1977; Kriesi et al. 1995; McAdam 1982, 1996, 1999; McAdam et al. 1996; McCammon et al. 2001; Meyer 1990, 1993; Tarrow 1989, 1994, 1998; Tilly 1978) and continues to guide scholarship on social movements today (Ho 2011; Kollman and Waites 2011). Since 1980, the political opportunity thesis has framed most empirical sociological studies of social movements (Goodwin and Jasper 2004: 3-4; Meyer 2004: 125; McAdam 1996a: 23; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001: 18). Scholarly use of the term “political opportunity” has expanded rapidly.³

Even the most sophisticated and influential political opportunity analyses have assumed group actors and sought to explain the timing and extent of insurgent mobilization with reference to conditions affecting the group as an actor. For example, Doug McAdam writes: “By mid-century the growing electoral importance of blacks nationwide, the collapse of the southern cotton economy, and the increased salience of third world countries in United States foreign policy had combined to grant blacks a measure of political leverage they had not

³ Google Scholar reports 55 texts/year in the 1980s using the term “political opportunity,” 287/year in the 1990s, 1,010/year in the 2000s, and 1,160 texts in 2010. Compare flat use of term “political” across the period. Based on a January 6, 2011 search.

enjoyed since Reconstruction” (1983 p.737). The assumption here is that the political opportunities salient to civil rights mobilization accrued to blacks as a group. But constructivist writings suggest not taking the “groupness” of insurgents for granted. For example, Rogers Brubaker writes:

Participants, of course, regularly do represent ethnic, racial, and national conflict in such groupist, even primordialist terms. They often cast ethnic groups, races, or nations as the protagonists – the heroes and martyrs – of such struggles. This is entirely understandable, and doing so can provide an important resource in social and political struggles. But this does not mean analysts should do the same. We must, of course, take vernacular categories and participants’ understandings seriously, for they are partly constitutive of our objects of study. But we should not uncritically adopt *categories of ethnopolitical practice* as our *categories of social analysis*. (Brubaker 2004, p. 10)

Instead of viewing insurgent social movements as a particular kind of action by group actors, I argue that it is more fruitful to conceptualize an insurgent social movement as the diffusion of a relatively coherent set of insurgent practices. Surely, structural conditions confronting a social group can motivate members of that group to pursue political change. But as social movement scholars – including founders of the classical approach – now widely recognize, structural conditions do a poor job of explaining insurgent mobilization (Goodwin and Jasper 2004, 2012; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). The crux of my argument is that rather than conferring general political advantage on a group for insurgent mobilization, it is more fruitful to conceptualize opportunities as political cleavages vulnerable to particular forms of insurgent practice. When insurgents develop practices that disrupt established social relations while drawing broad allied support, they generate a novel source of power and insurgency proliferates.

The case of black insurgency provides a strenuous test of this practice centered approach to social movements. Because the classic group actor theories were founded on the study of black insurgency, if practice centered theory better explains the timing, character, and extent of black insurgency than the classical theories, it will likely prove fruitful for explaining other cases as well.

In two regards, this dissertation is written in conversation with the foundational classic work of Doug McAdam. First, most social movement scholars employ rather than explicitly theorizing political opportunity. Most build on the foundational theoretical work of Doug McAdam in their employment of the concept (especially McAdam 1982). While Tarrow, Tilly, Meyer, and others have also powerfully shaped use of the concept, no one has contributed more to the theorization of political opportunity than McAdam, and so I take McAdam as my primary point of conceptual departure. Second, between the cracks of the explicit theoretical schemes that social movement scholars have so widely adopted, McAdam's classic empirical analysis contains lost processual insights that suggest a different, more practice centered social movement theory.

The Group Actor Assumption

Structural theories explain insurgent mobilization with reference to structural conditions that confront a social group. Structural theory imbues the prevailing social science explanations of the Black Liberation Struggle (Dudziak 2000; Jenkins et al 2003; Lawson 1991; Layton 2000; McAdam 1982; Piven & Cloward 1977), and for good reason. Structural theories provide a powerful framework for understanding two key aspects of the Civil Rights Movement. First, structural oppression – namely the systematic violent enforcement of racial subordination of

black people – motivated broad participation in the Civil Rights Movement. Most participants in civil rights insurgency, black and non-black, were willing to be beaten, jailed, or killed because of a commitment to defeating racism. It is difficult to explain the sweeping mobilization for Civil Rights without reference to the particular form of structural oppression it challenged, formal racial subordination enforced by lynching.

Second, structural theories help explain why the Civil Rights Movement became possible in a way that would not have been possible early in the 20th Century. As evidenced by the Elaine Massacre in 1919 and countless conflicts on a smaller scale, Civil Rights type mobilization before WWII most often yielded mass lynching of insurgents and rapid repression. Something certainly changed in the macro-structural context to make the Civil Rights Movement possible in a way that it had not been possible before. Classical treatments argue that broad social structural transformations in the years preceding the Black Liberation Struggle destabilized the subordinate social position of blacks providing them with the political opportunity to mount an effective insurgency. Piven and Cloward emphasize that agricultural industrialization and the decline of cotton sharecropping “weaken[ed] the stakes of agricultural and industrial leaders in the maintenance of caste arrangements,” and made them vulnerable to insurgent challenge (1977, p. 195). Lawson argues that with the Northern migration of blacks, “the black electorate grew in influence, [and] so too did its success in shoving civil rights to the front of the national political agenda.” In this context, black insurgents “recognized that mobilizing blacks from below pressured the national government to act” (1991, p. 104). Other scholars emphasize geopolitical pressures. In the words of Layton, Cold War “international pressures on the U.S. government to ‘put its own house in order’ ... provided new opportunities for civil rights

advocates” (Layton 2000, pp. 2-3; see also Dudziak 2000; Plummer 1996; Von Eschen 1997) In his seminal political process explanation, Doug McAdam discusses the importance of all three of these factors in creating the political opportunity for black insurgency (1982, pp. 73-86 and 156-163).

While structural theories help explain important aspects of insurgent mobilization processes, they tend to over-reach – attributing actor-like qualities to groups and structures. In recent years, political opportunity theory has been widely criticized for attributing too much of the mobilization process to structural determination, obscuring rather than illuminating the vital role of social actors in generating insurgency. Goodwin and Jasper argue that political opportunity cannot explain mobilization in part because the effects of any given political opportunity on mobilization are “historically and situationally contingent” (Goodwin and Jasper 2004: 13). Even the canon leaders have become critical of this bias in political opportunity theory. Doug McAdam concurs that “the dominant analytic framework in the field has remained resolutely structuralist” (McAdam 2004: 225). McAdam, Tilly, and Tarrow begin their 2001 *Dynamics of Contention* by stating that they seek to transcend the “overly structural” limitations of political opportunity theory and the “classic social movement agenda” they helped to create (McAdam, et al. 2001: 18, 32 and chapter 1). In contrast to some critics, I maintain that macro-structural processes do influence insurgent mobilization in crucial ways. Structural contradictions generate grievances that motivate insurgency, and destabilize institutionalized group roles. But the effects of macro-structural processes on insurgent mobilization are indirect. In seeking to explain contextual influences on insurgent mobilization, structural theorists make two erroneous assumptions:

- (1) That social groups are the protagonists of insurgent social movements;
- (2) That structural processes privilege insurgent mobilization by the group.

Based on these assumptions, classical movement theorists ask: what kinds of conditions privilege insurgent action by a social group? Having formulated the question of contextual effects on mobilization in this way, scholars obstruct analysis of the more precise effects of political context on practices. Attempting to identify the salient contextual effects for a group, scholars cannot help but assign opportunity post-hoc, according to levels of mobilization, and there has been little success explaining subsequent mobilization by political opportunity. In the words of David Meyer, “Because it is often coupled with writing that suggests movements flourish during favorable or expanding opportunities and fade in times of less favorable or declining opportunities, the collective scholarship runs the risk of turning an important analytical advance into a mere tautology, defined backwards through the observation of political mobilization” (2004: 135).⁴ Repeated attempts to specify how to recognize political opportunity have achieved little accord (e.g. Brockett, 1991; Kriesi et al 1992; Tarrow 1994; McAdam 1996 “Conceptual Origins, Problems, Future Directions”) and consistently fail to predict mobilization (see Meyer 2004). Predictions based on political opportunity theory have generally failed (Goodwin 2011).

The Limits and Lost Insights of McAdam’s Classical Theory

Perhaps the most influential and important sociological analysis of the black insurgency is Doug McAdam’s *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*

⁴ In my view, the problem here is not so much that analysts identify political cleavages salient to an insurgency after mobilization has been initiated – it could be no other way – but rather that the macro conditions identified are theorized to contribute an untestable period effect of political advantage for the group. Lots of contextual developments coincide with mobilization without causing it.

(1982). As discussed below, even while McAdam's schematic theorization falls prey to the group actor assumption, important aspects of his substantive analysis reach beyond these limitations. Unfortunately, it is the schematic theorizations based on the group actor assumption which scholars have most applied to other movements. So a more precise discussion of group actor theorizations in McAdam, and their limits, is warranted at this juncture.

The Group Actor Assumption in McAdam's Political Opportunity Thesis

As classically conceptualized, political opportunities are structural conditions that confer political advantage to a group. Political opportunities "elevate the group in question to a position of increased political strength" making the political system vulnerable to challenge by that group, and enabling mobilization of that group (McAdam 1982, p. 42). According to McAdam, "opportunities for a challenger to engage in successful collective action ... vary greatly over time. And it is these variations that are held to be related to the ebb and flow of movement activity" (McAdam 1982: 40-41).

This formulation assumes a group actor. From this perspective, the group exists as a coherent and unitary political actor independent of any particular political circumstance. From this perspective, a social movement is generated by the insurgent mobilization of one such existing group actor. Social conditions, from this perspective, are salient to the development of social movements in the way that they facilitate or constrain mobilization by existing group actors. Political opportunities are the kinds of conditions that facilitate insurgent mobilization by a group, i.e. by elevating that group to a "position of increased political strength."

Opportunities for Blacks

McAdam's analysis of the Black Insurgency applies the political opportunity thesis to black people as a group. His assumption is that contextual influences on mobilization accrued to black people as a whole encouraging and facilitating their insurgent mobilization. McAdam summarizes the political opportunity thesis as applied to the black insurgency:

As shaped by several broad social processes, the "structure of political opportunities" confronting blacks gradually improved ... thus affording insurgents more leverage with which to press their demands (McAdam 1982: 230 and see 73-86).

Opportunity is here seen as a quantitative variable characteristic of "blacks" as a social group that can increase or decrease over time. The more opportunity, the more blacks as a group actor can press their demands. Thus the more likely the group will mobilize insurgency. In this formulation, the specific character of insurgent practice is not salient because the influence of political opportunities is to provide leverage to blacks generally.

McAdam specifies opportunity for blacks as follows: "By mid-century the growing electoral importance of blacks nationwide, the collapse of the southern cotton economy, and the increased salience of third world countries in United States foreign policy had combined to grant blacks a measure of political leverage they had not enjoyed since Reconstruction" (1983 p.737). Again, the foundational assumption is that structural processes conferred political advantage on blacks as a group actor generally. McAdam assesses the importance of these political opportunities as generic apertures, generating the structural possibility for black insurgency generally, rather than destabilizing particular institutional forms, or facilitating particular insurgent practices. McAdam writes: "These factors had the effect of enhancing the political significance of the black population, thus granting organized elements within that population increased leverage with which to press their claims." (1982: 180)

The Critical Dynamic

If classical social movement theory has become schematic and flat, it was not always so. The founders were grappling with how to make sense of a world transformed in front of them by the Black Liberation Struggle. The explanations that garnered great influence may have done so in part because they clearly presented generalizable theory. But undoubtedly part of the influence of the foundational works stemmed from their passion and insight. Unfortunately it is easier to emulate the more schematic aspects of the work, harder to emulate the inspiration.

Returning to McAdam's foundational work, I recover a lost processual insight that I believe can help extricate social movement theory from its current quagmire. In a section he labels "The Critical Dynamic," McAdam argues that it was the ability of the civil rights activists to draw Federal intervention against the brutal repression of local whites that was crucial to the development of the civil rights movement (McAdam 1982, pp. 174-179). McAdam calls this the "critical dynamic" of the civil rights movement and explains:

The importance of this dynamic cannot be underestimated. It was, in fact, the recognition and conscious manipulation of this dynamic by insurgents that produced the particularly high rates of activism and significant victories characteristic of the years from 1961 to 1965. The dynamic can be described simply. Lacking sufficient power to defeat the supremacists in a local confrontation, insurgents sought to broaden the conflict by inducing their opponents to [violent acts of repression] to the point where supportive federal intervention was required. As a byproduct of the drama associated with these flagrant displays of public violence, the movement was also able to sustain member commitment, generate broad public sympathy, and mobilize financial support from external groups (McAdam 1982 p. 174).

The argument can be diagrammed as follows:

***** Diagram 0-1 about here. *****

This argument has implications that contradict more schematic distillations of McAdam's (1982) Political Process Theory. Most importantly, McAdam's critical dynamic

centers on a particular set of insurgent practices which disrupt a particular set of established social relations. The Federal Government is not intervening because of the general political strength of blacks. McAdam is clear throughout the book that Federal intervention comes grudgingly and only when forced. Instead, the Federal Government is intervening because it specifically cannot tolerate the highly visible and violent repression of civil rights activists. Cold war foreign policy pressures, the ascendance of cold-war liberal electoral coalitions incorporating black voters, and the widely publicized commitment of the Federal Government to civil rights did not create a political opportunity for black insurgency generally. They specifically made it difficult (or impossible) for the Federal government to stand on the sidelines as white supremacist officials and vigilantes publicly brutalized nonviolent civil rights activists. A particular form of insurgent practice was crucial to this dynamic: the insurgent civil rights practice of nonviolent violation of legal segregation and de facto disenfranchisement coupled with the call for full participation in U.S. citizenship rights. Centering the practices of the civil rights insurgents makes the importance of the political context in the civil rights movement intelligible.

Waves of Insurgent Practice

This insight introduces the central conceptual innovation of this dissertation: insurgent social movements can best be understood as the proliferation of a relatively coherent and stable set of insurgent practices. In a given insurgent social movement, in a relatively short period of time, many people independently decide to participate in very similar insurgent practices – often at great personal risk – and that insurgent participation rapidly spreads across a large geographic area.

In his 1983 article "Tactical Innovation and the Pace of Insurgency," McAdam develops the idea that tactical innovation is crucial to the development of insurgency. McAdam shows that the Civil Rights Movement developed through several waves distinguishable by a series of tactical innovations which each reinvigorated insurgent mobilization: from the bus boycott in the late 1950s, to the sit-ins of 1960 and 1961, the 1961 freedom rides, and the voter registration and community campaigns from 1962 through 1965. McAdam argues that, given group political opportunity and organizational strength, tactical innovation allows insurgents to create crisis, a capacity that diminishes with the waning novelty of the tactic.

McAdam's provides powerful evidence that the pace of insurgency is driven by tactical innovation. The level of civil rights insurgent mobilization clearly develops in a series of waves following these tactical innovations. But adhering to the group actor assumption, McAdam sees the practical dynamics of insurgent mobilization in each of these waves as a side note to the larger story of propitious conditions for group mobilization by blacks generally. He artificially separates the question of why blacks mobilize insurgency from the question of the timing and extent of black insurgent mobilization. Locked into the assumption that the movement generally can be explained by the structural opportunity and organizational strength of blacks, the strength of tactical innovation is portrayed as its novelty – as if any new tactic would suffice. McAdam claims that each of these waves abated because the novelty wore off, and authorities found counter-tactics to undermine the salience of the new tactics. In general terms, he theorizes: "Lacking institutional power, challengers must devise protest techniques that offset their powerlessness. This has been referred to as a process of tactical innovation. Such innovations, however, only temporarily afford challengers increased bargaining leverage.

In chesslike fashion, movement opponents can be expected, through effective tactical adaptation, to neutralize the new tactic, thereby reinstating the original power disparity between themselves and the challenger.” (McAdam 1983, 752)

To the contrary, the efficacy of each wave of civil rights insurgency is diminished by concessions rather than the familiarity of local authorities with the once novel tactic. The effectiveness of the bus boycott diminished because the Federal government ruled such segregation illegal, and buses were integrated in many Southern cities. The effectiveness of the sit in diminished because most lunch counters were integrated, and sit in participants were ignored if not served. The effectiveness of the freedom rides diminished because interstate travel was integrated through Federal military intervention and new legal rulings. The effectiveness of voter registration as insurgency diminished because blacks won de facto enfranchisement. In several instances, McAdam (1983) even presents evidence that concessions and redress explain the diminishing efficacy of each wave. But McAdam (1983) does not assimilate this evidence because the analysis is deeply rooted in the group actor assumption that opportunities confer to groups rather than practices.

The important theoretical point here is that a similar political dynamic drives the diffusion of each wave of insurgent practice that together constitute the Civil Rights Movement. Within this insurgent Civil Rights phase of Black Liberation Struggle, each wave consisted of nonviolent civil disobedience against legal segregation and defacto disenfranchisement coupled with claims for full citizenship rights for blacks.

Institutional Statism

McAdam's critical dynamic suggests situating insurgent social movements within a broader, more dynamic approach to understanding political process. Institutional statism, a la Michael Mann, provides a powerful framework for doing so.

Social context is a terrain of struggle, not a cause of mobilization. Scholars have not been able to agree on what kinds of conditions cause insurgency because conditions do not create movements – people do. When people act, the social context determines the consequences of those actions. The political opportunity thesis has fallen short of explaining mobilization by advancing too structural a view of political conflict. Certainly, there are some historical situations in which large scale political divisions destabilize entire regimes, and any mobilization by insurgent challengers becomes influential regardless of its content. But more often, the particular practices of insurgents are consequential. The political context does not determine the extent of mobilization, per se, but instead affects how insurgent practices will be received.

Sociologists have begun to show how different political contexts are conducive to different forms of insurgent practice. Kitschelt (1986) argues that the political structures in France, Sweden, the U.S., and Germany differentially determine the effectiveness of particular insurgent strategies, and thus explain the different strategies employed by anti-nuclear activists in each country. In an important, and more recent intervention, Walker, Martin, and McCarthy (2008) argue that insurgent mobilizations in the U.S. tended to use different tactical repertoires depending on whether they confronted corporate, state, or academic targets, suggesting that different kinds of targets made different sorts of insurgent action efficacious. Taylor et al, in a study of same sex weddings, find that practices “matter in political contention” (2009 p. 885).

They argue that attention to practices is important to explaining why people participate in particular social movements, as well as movement trajectories. Koopmans et al (2005) find that different forms of citizenship and immigration policy differentially shape forms of immigrant mobilization in different European countries. While these works take important steps, many more steps are required to move beyond the political opportunity thesis that social context is an independent cause of mobilization.

Institutional statist political theory, as developed by Michael Mann in the Weberian tradition, provides a crucial insight. Classically, Max Weber conceptualized politics as necessarily territorial, and the state as a political organization which maintains a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence within a territory (Weber 1978 v.I: 54). Building on Weber, Mann develops a theory of institutional statism in which state power institutionalizes social relations, and through conflict, re-institutionalizes them:

Because states are essentially ways in which dynamic social relations become authoritatively institutionalized, they readily lend themselves to a kind of “political lag” theory. States institutionalize present social conflicts, but institutionalized historic conflicts then exert considerable power over new conflicts. (Mann 1993: 52)

Mann argues that rather than unitary and systemic, states are messy, and contradictory, embodying the outcomes of past struggles (1993: 88). Not only do states maintain and police historically specific social relations; but different segments of a state may separately administer capacities for organized violence, enforcing distinct standards of legitimacy.

This theory of politics suggests a more nuanced view of how political context matters for insurgent mobilization. In short, insurgent movements contest the legitimacy of target

institutions by disrupting established social processes protected by state authorities.⁵ When insurgents disrupt established social relations, they contest the legitimacy of the targeted social institution, and force a political referendum on their claims. In many instances, potential insurgents do not have the established political power to challenge a particular set of social relations. But when insurgents create social disruption, they force other powerful political actors to take sides.⁶ Because states regulate social *practices*, the efficacy of an insurgency depends upon the practices it employs. The determinant question is not whether various political actors support the claims of insurgents in the abstract, but whether – given insurgents’ practical actions – they will intervene on insurgents’ behalf.

This approach builds upon, but diverges from, the political opportunity thesis in two key respects. First, while political cleavages are viewed to be quite consequential for insurgent mobilization, these do not autonomously crystalize into opportunities for mobilization. Instead, insurgents advance particular practices, and the cleavages affect mobilization only indirectly – through the political reception of these insurgent practices. Second, the way that movements contest part of a political regime is seen as institution specific rather than group specific.

Insurgents contest the legitimacy of a particular institution through disruptive practices, forcing a referendum on their practice and that institution. Together, these insights enable a more

⁵ There is extensive variation in the social movements literature about what constitutes a social movement. Many authors distinguish insurgent movements from other forms of participation in institutionalized political channels. For the purposes of this paper, I conceptualize insurgent mobilization as collective political mobilization in which the insurgent actors seek social transformation through intentional disruption of established social processes.

⁶ Resource mobilization theorists long ago recognized the importance of allied intervention. For example, as early as 1968, Lipsky wrote: “The ‘problem of the powerless’ in protest activity is to activate ‘third parties’ to enter the implicit or explicit bargaining arena in ways favorable to the protesters” (Lipsky 1968). The problem was that resource mobilization theory emphasized the importance of allied support at the cost of serious attention to all else. The contested legitimacy approach redresses this limitation, theorizing the importance of allied support in specific relation to insurgent practice, and political context.

dynamic and meso-level study of insurgency. Scholars have not been able to independently identify structural “political opportunity” in the world because it does not exist as such. Instead, only once insurgency is in process, and a particular set of insurgent practices creates a referendum on a particular social institution, can the salient political cleavages be identified, and the insurgent dynamics expected to follow an explicable trajectory.

The development and demise of an insurgent movement is determined by the political vulnerability of a particular social institution to a given set of insurgent practices. My core proposition is that when insurgents develop a set of practices challenging the legitimacy of a social institution which is both highly disruptive and the repression of which is threatening to powerful allies, mobilization escalates and a movement is born.

[Diagram 0-2 about here.**]**

When insurgents develop a set of insurgent practices which is both disruptive, and the repression of which draws powerful allied intervention in a particular historic context, they generate the self-reinforcing feedback loop depicted in Diagram 0-2 above. *The extent of disruptive mobilization determines the extent of repression* (controlling for exogenous factors, such as the repressive tendency of authorities). *But the attempted repression by authorities, in turn, generates further mobilization.* When authorities cannot effectively enforce established custom and law, insurgency expands. Repressive acts by authorities, by failing to stem the insurgency and drawing broad allied resistance, increase the practical appeal of a set of insurgent practices to people who see themselves as oppressed⁷ by the social relations which

⁷ While I believe a theory of objective oppression is possible and likely useful for explaining insurgent mobilization, it is beyond the scope of this paper. One starting point for such a theory might be Charles Tilly’s *Durable Inequality*. For the purposes of this paper, it is not necessary to maintain a theory of objective oppression. Oppression here only requires the subjective perception of oppression shared by many potential insurgents.

the insurgency challenges and claims to transcend. Potential insurgents see the promise of liberation in authorities' failed attempts at repression and mobilize.

When the social disruption escalates, it eventually forces authorities to offer concessions to break the self-reinforcing cycle of insurgency and re-stabilize the political equilibrium.⁸ Concessions can undermine allied mobilization by drawing off the allegiance of allies and making insurgents more repressible. Concessions can also undermine the disruptive potential of insurgent practices by displacing the social institution which an effective insurgent practice challenges.

Overview of the Dissertation

In the pages that follow, I test and develop my “pathways of insurgency” practice-centered theory of insurgent social movements by applying it, in turn, to analyze the development and demise of each of the three main phases of postwar Black Liberation Struggle.

Part I analyzes the Black Anticolonialist insurgency which rose to influence immediately after WWII, focusing on the pivotal year 1946. This part analyzes how and to what extent Black Anti-colonialist practice compelled President Harry Truman, initially an apologist for the slow pace of racial reform in 1945-6, to become an avid advocate of civil rights. Conversely, I probe the hypothesis that Truman's advocacy of civil rights allowed him to repress Black Anti-colonialist forms of mobilization while enabling the Civil Rights Movement to come. If correct, then shifting political alignments closed the opportunity one form of black insurgent practice

⁸ This view, suggested by Mann's institutional statism, finds compliment in much classical social theory. See, e.g. Gramsci (1971: 180-183).

while opening the opportunity for another. The methodological supplement in this part systematically develops the novel theoretically guided application of the method of Event Structure Analysis (ESA) applied to analyze Truman's adoption of civil rights advocacy.

Part II applies pathways of insurgency theory to a quantitative analysis of the Civil Rights Movement. Building on institutional statism and constructivist insights, I propose that when insurgents contest the legitimacy of a social institution with highly disruptive practices, the repression of which is threatening to powerful allies, mobilization escalates. If so, it should be possible to retrodict subsequent levels of insurgent mobilization based on such dynamics. For a stringent test, I evaluate these competing approaches on the political opportunity thesis's foundational case – the Civil Rights Movement. I use quantitative event history analysis of content coded event data to evaluate competing model predictions of lagged mobilization effects.

Part III applies pathways of insurgency theory to a narrative analysis of the leading revolutionary black nationalist organization, the Black Panther Party. The sections in this part analyze in turn the major phases of the political development of the Black Panther Party, tracing the "strategic genealogy" of Black Panther political practice. Rather than centering particular individuals as in biography or the organization of the Party per se, in order to uncover the political dynamics of the Party, I focus on the political practices of the Black Panthers as my main object of analysis. Tracing the history of the evolution of Panther insurgent practice, and the simultaneous ebb and flow of the Party's influence and following, allows sustained fine grained testing and refinement of the proposition that movement influence and following depend on the disruptiveness and resilience of particular forms of practice.

In the concluding dissertation chapter, I synthesize the findings in a comparative analysis applying Pathways of Insurgency Theory to explain the three distinct phases of black insurgency

in the postwar decades, showing how a practice centered approach improves explanation over the group actor assumption in each phase. Drawing parallels and contrasts across these phases, I advance a general practice centered theory of insurgent social movements.

The dissertation cannot, by its nature, rigorously test the full scope of application of the theory. But I hope that if pathways of insurgency theory does a better job of explaining Black insurgent social movements in the United States in the post WWII decades, it can also do better elsewhere, providing a new way of thinking about the causes and consequences of social movements for further development.

Diagram 0-1: McAdam's Critical Dynamic

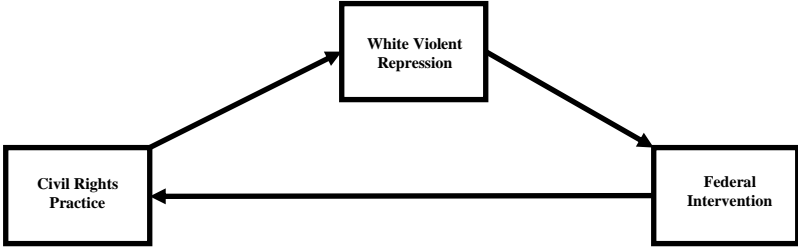
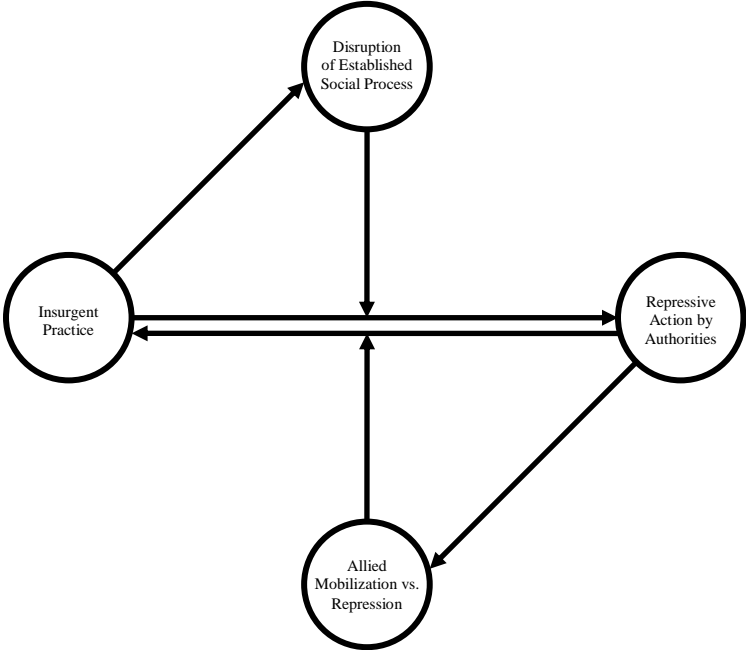


DIAGRAM 0-2: TOWARDS A PRACTICE CENTERED THEORY OF INSURGENT SOCIAL MOVEMENTS



******* Conclusion *******

Opportunities for Practices: The Black Insurgency Revisited

In the preceding chapters, I have tested the capacity of a practice centered theory of social movements against the prevailing theories for explaining the timing and extent of insurgent mobilization within three discrete phases of postwar Black Liberation Struggle in the United States. The analysis has demonstrated that in each wave, the timing, extent, character, and consequences of black insurgency all follow the development of powerful insurgent practices. In each wave, unique insurgent practices harnessed the power of disruption, and leveraged historically specific political cleavages to draw broad allied support. In each wave, people across the country, many with no prior relationship, emulated the effective insurgent practices, mobilizing and sustaining insurgency in the face of brutal repression.

The primary theoretical contribution of the dissertation is to advance a new practice-centered theory of insurgent social movements. The social movements field in Sociology has reached consensus that both the structuralist classical models upon which the field developed so rapidly in recent decades (McAdam 1982; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; Tarrow 1994; Tilly 1978) and culturalist critiques (Jasper 1999; Goodwin and Jasper 2004) are insufficient (Goodwin and Jasper 2012; McAdam and Boudet 2012; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). The field has recognized the centrality of diffusion processes (Andrews and Biggs 2006; Givan, Roberts and Soule 2010) and moved towards more dynamic mid-range theories (especially following McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). But no coherent and testable rival paradigm for analyzing insurgent social movements has yet emerged.

This dissertation has demonstrated that each wave of black insurgency was not generated by independent structural forces, nor by the strength of organizations or the talent of leaders. Instead, the development of powerful insurgent leaders and organizations follow the proliferation

of novel insurgent practices suited to leverage historically unique political cleavages in each wave. Insurgent power derives from insurgent practices that draw support from powerful allies even as they threaten the interests of institutionalized authorities. When insurgents develop such a set of practices, both disruptive and difficult to repress in a given historic context, they open a pathway of insurgency, and mobilization proliferates in terms of those insurgent practices. Concessions by authorities, in turn, reconfigured both racial and political institutions, undercutting the resilience of insurgent practices, and de-escalating each insurgency. Social movement scholars forged the prevailing social movement theories in explaining the black insurgency. This analysis demonstrates the capacity of pathways of insurgency theory to more accurately and parsimoniously account for the vast scope of historical evidence concerning this original case. Thus it advances a research program that promises to improve explanation of insurgent social movements in other times and places.

The dissertation also makes a substantive historical contribution. Until recently, most of the scholarship on Black Liberation Struggle concentrated on the narrower southern Civil Rights Movement. Influential recent works have extended the temporal and geographic scope of study (Biondi 2006, Dougherty 2003, Flamming 2006, Jones 2009, Lassiter and Crespino 2009, Orleck 2006, Sugrue 2008, Taylor 2010). A newer generation of "Black Power Scholars" distinguishes the Black Power movement in crucial ways from the Civil Rights Movement (Countryman 2007, Jeffries 2010, Joseph 2006, Ogbar 2005, Rooks 2006, Springer 2005, Williams 2005, Williams 2000, Woodard 1999). But this scholarship overstates the temporal scope of historical importance for a short-lived if highly transformative Black Power movement. Argumentation has remained largely anecdotal. *Pathways of Insurgency* provides the first theoretically grounded and systematic analysis of the successive waves of insurgent practice that comprised Black

Liberation Struggle in the postwar decades. I demonstrate that each of the three waves followed a unique if parallel dynamic and trajectory. Broader black politics and organizations followed in the wake of each wave in turn, building on the power each insurgent movement harnessed.

I began work on this dissertation with a preliminary set of theoretical ideas about the limits of prevailing social movement theories, and the promise of a practice centered theory of insurgency. My theory building strategy has been to develop and extend the practice centered theory by applying and testing it against prevailing movement theories in my analysis of each phase of postwar Black Liberation Struggle. Rather than an abstract pedagogical exercise, I sought to use each step in the analysis to engage and shape scholarly debates. Towards that end, I wrote each part with the aim of making an independent scholarly contribution.

While each section of the dissertation makes its own contribution, the warrant for each case is ultimately to contribute to the development of a novel practice-centered theoretical framework for analyzing insurgent social movements. Thus while this conclusion emphasizes the overarching conclusions and theoretical contributions of the dissertation as a whole, I begin by briefly reporting in turn the specific findings of each substantive part.

Part I analyzes the Black Anticolonialist insurgency which rose to influence immediately after WWII, focusing on the pivotal year 1946. This part analyzes why President Harry Truman, initially an apologist for the slow pace of racial reform in 1945-6, suddenly become an avid advocate of civil rights. Classic treatments argue that macro-structural forces caused Truman's civil rights advocacy, generating the opportunity for insurgency by blacks as a group. But Event Structure Analysis reveals how Black Anti-colonialist practices seized opportunities afforded by the earlier Progressive Challenge to compel Truman to adopt civil rights advocacy. Civil rights advocacy, in turn, allowed Truman to repress Black Anti-colonialist practices even while setting the stage for the Civil Rights Movement to come. Different forms of insurgent practice seized opportunities created by different institutional cleavages, rather than the same opportunities advantaging all insurgency by a social group.

The methodological supplement in this part systematically develops the novel theoretically guided application of the method of Event Structure Analysis (ESA) applied to analyze Truman's adoption of civil rights advocacy. ESA is a formal method of historical analysis which combines the strengths of narrative history with those of formal sociological analysis. The classic method of applying ESA most fully explicated in print (Griffin 1993; Griffin and Korstad 1998; Heise 1989) uses informal narrative to bound events for analysis. ESA as classically applied is well suited to rigorous probing of an expert's narrative understanding of an event, but poorly suited to targeted testing of general theories of prior concern, and thus "does not answer questions analysts might wish to ask of their data" (Griffin 2007: 5). Conversely, many sociological analyses – and almost all variable based analyses – begin with general theoretical questions, and empirical indicators identified as representative of general theoretical concepts. Such "theoretically guided" identification of empirical indicators allows the analyst to use the empirical analysis to probe general theories of prior concern, or to test one general theory's explanatory power against rival theories. While important studies have applied ESA in theoretically guided ways, such application has not been fully explicated. This methodological supplement serves to explicate theoretically guided applications of ESA.

Part II applies pathways of insurgency theory to a quantitative analysis of the Civil Rights Movement. Building on institutional statism and constructivist insights, I propose that when insurgents contest the legitimacy of a social institution with highly disruptive practices, the repression of which is threatening to powerful allies, mobilization escalates. If so, it should be possible to retrodict subsequent levels of insurgent mobilization based on such dynamics. For a stringent test, I evaluate these competing approaches on the political opportunity thesis's foundational case – the civil rights movement. I demonstrate that civil rights practices, by

drawing brutal repression and forcing Federal intervention, created a referendum on caste subordination. I conduct graphic, OLS, and event history tests using the Stanford dataset. I find that dynamic retrodiction better explains the timing and level of civil rights mobilization.

Part III applies pathways of insurgency theory to a narrative analysis of the leading revolutionary black nationalist organization, the Black Panther Party. The sections in this part analyze in turn the major phases of the political development of the Black Panther Party. Section 1, “Organizing Rage,” analyzes the period through May of 1967, tracing the Party’s development of its ideology of black anti-imperialism and its preliminary tactic of policing the police. Section 2, “Baptism in Blood,” analyzes the Party’s rise to national influence through 1968, during which time it reinvented the politics of armed self-defense, championed black community self-determination, and promoted armed resistance to the state. Section 3, “Resilience,” and Section 4, “Revolution Has Come!” analyze the period through 1969 and 1970 when the Party was at the height of its power, proliferating community service programs and continuing to expand armed resistance in the face of the state’s intensified repression. These sections unpack the dynamics of repression and response in three cities—Los Angeles, Chicago, and New Haven—showing how the Panthers attracted support from multiracial allies at home and from revolutionary movements and governments abroad and explaining why Black Panther insurgent practices were irrepressible. Section 5, “Concessions and Unraveling,” analyzes the demise of the Black Panther Party in the 1970s, showing how state concessions and broad political transformations undercut the Party’s resilience. During this period, the Black Panthers divided along ideological lines, with neither side able to sustain the politics that had driven the Party’s development.

Part III holds important implications for two general theoretical debates. First, this history suggests a way out of dead-end debates about how the severity of repression affects

social movement mobilization. One common perspective, supported by a rich scholarly literature covering various times and places, is that “repression breeds resistance”: When authorities repress insurgency, the repression encourages further resistance. But others pose the opposite argument, with equally rich scholarly support, suggesting that repression discourages and diminishes insurgency. A classic sociological position that seeks to reconcile this apparent contradiction is that the relationship between repression and insurgency is shaped like an “inverse U”: When repression is light, people tend to cooperate with established political authorities and take less disruptive action; when repression is heavy, the costs of insurgency are too large, causing people to shy away from radical acts. But, according to this view, it is when authorities are moderately repressive—too repressive to steer dissenters toward institutional channels of political participation but not repressive enough to quell dissent—that people widely mobilize disruptive challenges to authority.

Part III defies the basic premise of this debate: that the level of repression independently explains the level of resistance. The Black Panther Party faced heavy federally coordinated state repression at least from 1968 through 1971. The analysis shows that for the first two years, from 1968 through 1969, brutal state repression helped legitimate the Panthers in the eyes of many supporters and fostered increased mobilization. But during the second two years, 1970 and 1971, the dynamic gradually shifted. The Panthers maintained the same types of practices they had embraced in the previous two years, and the state maintained a similar level and type of repressive practices. But in this later period, as the political context shifted—increasing the difficulty of winning support for the Panthers’ revolutionary position—repression made the core Panther practices difficult to sustain and quickly led to the Party’s demise.

The level of repression did not independently affect the level of mobilization in a consistent way across the four years. Instead, the level of repression interacted with the political reception of insurgent practices to affect the level of mobilization. In other words, potential allies’ political reception of Panther insurgent practices determined the effects of repression on mobilization.

The analysis in Part III also suggests a way forward in stalled debates of the political opportunity thesis that broad structural opportunities, by conferring political advantage on a social group, generate mobilization. Recovering lost insights from early political process writings by Doug McAdam and Aldon Morris about the importance of tactical innovation for explaining mobilization, Part III shows that political context, rather than independently determining the extent of mobilization, determines the efficacy of particular insurgent practices. The stepwise history of the Black Panther Party's mobilization and influence demonstrates that the relative effectiveness of its practices depended on the political context. Panther insurgent practices—specifically armed self-defense—generated both influence and following when they were both disruptive and difficult to repress. But the Panthers became much more repressible when the political context shifted, making it harder for the Party to practice armed self-defense and sustain allied support. This history suggests that insurgent movements develop when activists develop practices that simultaneously garner leverage by threatening the interests of powerful authorities and draw allied support in resistance to repression. Conversely, when concessions undermine the support of potential allies for those practices, the insurgency dies out.

Pathways of Insurgency Theory

The remainder of this conclusion draws comparatively on evidence from the three phases of postwar Black Liberation Struggle to advance a more refined practice-centered general theory of insurgent social movements. First, I synthesize and diagram the insurgent dynamics for each phase of postwar black insurgency. Then, drawing parallels and contrasts across these phases, I more fully articulate a general practice-centered theory of insurgent social movements.

Black Anti-colonialism

One of the implications of the classic political opportunity thesis, and the group actor assumption upon which it is founded, is that insurgent mobilization by a social group depends

upon earlier expansion of political opportunity for that group. In the case of the Civil Rights Movement, Presidential support for civil rights is widely seen as a telling indicator of expanding political opportunity for blacks. Harry Truman was the first U.S. President to vocally advocate civil rights for Blacks. With a focus on explaining the Civil Rights Movement, and built upon a group actor assumption, most historical accounts have viewed Truman's actions as temporally and analytically prior to black insurgency.

Instead, Truman's adoption of civil rights advocacy undermined one form of Black insurgency – Black Anti-colonialism – even as it made Civil Rights insurgency possible. That changes in the political context may cause the demobilization of one form of insurgency even as they facilitate another form of mobilization by a similar group suggests that the effects of political context on insurgent mobilization are practice specific – rather than conferring political advantage on a group generally as group actor analyses assume.

Truman's Civil Rights Advocacy

In the second half of his first term, in a dramatic departure from earlier policies, Harry S. Truman, the pragmatic President from Missouri who continued in private to express racial attitudes that would make vehement White supremacists proud, adopted strong measures of civil rights advocacy. He met with anti-Lynching activists in September 1946, and created the President's Committee on Civil Rights (PCCR) in December. In the following 2 years, he became the first President to ever speak forcefully to Congress and in front of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for civil rights, his PCCR released the first ever high level government report extensively documenting repression of Blacks and recommending an extensive platform for civil rights reform. Drawing on the PCCR recommendations, he introduced amicus curiae briefs to the Supreme Court in support of

desegregation, proposed legislation to abolish the poll tax and end lynching, and issued executive orders to create racial equality in Federal hiring, and to desegregate the military. While liberal Congressmen had advocated civil rights before this time and measures such as anti-lynching legislation generally earned wide support in opinion polls, no President including Truman's Progressive and charismatic predecessor Franklin Delano Roosevelt had actively supported civil rights. Civil rights scholars widely view federal civil rights advocacy, first established by Truman, as necessary to the emergence of the civil rights movement in the 1950s (Lawson 1976; Marable 1991; McAdam 1982).

Standard analyses have focused on the importance of broad social processes, such as the decline of the Southern cotton economy and the emergence of cold war foreign policy pressures, in explaining Truman's adoption of civil rights advocacy. But while many authors credit the Truman administration with laying the foundation for future civil rights insurgency, the group actor assumption has obscured the ways that an earlier wave of Black Anti-colonialist insurgents compelled the Truman administration to adopt civil rights advocacy, or the effects of that policy shift on the earlier wave of insurgents. From 1945-1950, Black Anti-colonialists petitioned the United Nations for international military intervention against lynching and social subordination in the U.S., and mobilized street protests, asserting common cause with liberation struggles in Africa and Asia, challenging President Truman's global leadership and attempting to split the Democratic Party.

How Black Anti-colonialists compelled Truman's to adopt civil rights advocacy

Truman adopted civil rights advocacy as a concession to Black Anti-colonialism. Black Anti-colonialists appealed to the UN for international intervention against lynching, attempted to split Black voters from the Democratic Party, and organized protests publicly denouncing US

race relations in internationalist terms. These actions were especially threatening to Truman's efforts to develop alliances with emerging national independence movements as he embarked on Cold War competition with Soviets, and his attempt to hold together FDR's Democratic Party alliance in the face of a strong Progressive 3rd Party challenge. Black Anti-colonial insurgent practices, by disrupting Truman's domestic and foreign policy agenda in ways that garnered broad allied support and thus were difficult to repress, compelled Truman to adopt measures of civil rights advocacy.

Black Anti-colonial insurgency preceded Truman's civil rights advocacy in 1945-6, and it declined even as Truman's civil rights advocacy peaked in late 1948. As WWII drew to a close, Black political leaders such as Walter White, Executive Director of the NAACP, sought to frame the Black domestic challenge in anti-colonial terms: "World War II has given to the Negro a sense of kinship with other colored – and also oppressed – peoples of the world ... the struggle of the Negro in the United States is part and parcel of the struggle against imperialism and exploitation in India, China, Burma, Africa, the Philippines, Malaya, the West Indies, and South America."¹²¹⁰ Insurgent Black Anti-colonial politics built upon the Black labor and political institutions developed during the Depression and WWII, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) which, with its grassroots anti-lynching crusade, grew explosively from a relatively small organization before the war to a national political player with 1,509 branches and more than 580,000 members by 1947. Both the NAACP and the National Negro Congress (NNC) petitioned the UN for international intervention to overcome racist human rights abuse in the United States. Widely reported anti-lynching protests called attention to the hypocrisy of US world leadership given racial injustice at home. The Council on

¹²¹⁰ Walter White late 1945 quoted in Von Eschen 1997: 8.

African Affairs (CAA) and Black Anti-Colonial conferences in London and New York brought together anti-colonial leaders such as Nehru, Nkrumah and Kenyatta with Black leaders from the U.S. to plan common strategies. The Black Press flourished with Black controlled newspapers achieving publication in most major cities with the largest – the *Chicago Defender* and the *Pittsburgh Courier* – reaching national distributions in the hundreds of thousands after the war. The Black Press ubiquitously denounced colonialism in these years and the Truman administration's support of France and Britain, often making the analogy between Nazi Fascism, European colonialism, and the subjugation of Blacks in the US. Most major Black political leaders, including Walter White, A. Philip Randolph, Paul Robeson, Max Yergan, W.E.B. DuBois, and Mary MacLeod Bethune allied with progressives in labor and leading New Dealers to mobilize support for a liberal split with the Democratic Party and exploring the creation of an anti-colonial and anti-racist Progressive 3rd Party. And then, even as Truman's civil rights advocacy reached its peak in 1948, Black Anti-colonial politics declined.

Key Political Dynamics

Detailed and systematic analysis shows that the way that Black Anti-colonialist anti-lynching protests dovetailed with black 3rd Party efforts was crucial to compelling Truman to advocate for civil rights. In the context of the split in the Democratic Party, these insurgent practices threatened Truman's attempts to hold together FDR's New Deal coalition. First, the Truman administration response to anti-lynching efforts increased as the 3rd Party threat was mobilized. Second, testimony from Truman aides shows that he made a radical change in course in November and December 1946 because the 1946 mid-term elections convinced him that his conservative political strategy was not working and would cost him the Presidency in 1948. The sequence of Truman policy shifts on not only civil rights but labor and economic policy in 1947

all support this assessment. Third, it is only when Walter White and the NAACP mobilized explicitly with his Progressive allies in the wake of Truman's increasing tension with Wallace and the Progressives that Truman met with White and a delegation of anti-lynching Progressives including high ranking officials of both the CIO and the AFL. Truman then proceeded to appoint many of these Progressive NAACP allies to the PCCR with White's involvement suggesting the importance to his administration of addressing specifically Progressive mobilization. Finally, Truman's antagonistic treatment of Paul Robeson showed that he was less interested in black political perspectives on lynching or short-term publicity in the Black Press, showing instead the importance not only of White's allies, but of his willingness to adopt a position friendly to the Cold War. In short, Truman might have championed Cold War liberalism as a response to the Progressive Challenge without any black insurgent pressure. But he would not have made civil rights advocacy a central plank if not for the Black Anti-colonial insurgency.

Rather than fostering black insurgency, as Truman adopted civil rights advocacy and created strong alliances with Walter White, A. Philip Randolph, Max Yergan, and other key black leaders, Black Anti-colonialism was repressed and destroyed. When W.E.B. DuBois vocally supported the Wallace Progressive 3rd Party campaign in 1948 on anti-colonial grounds, Walter White, now working closely with Truman, expelled DuBois from the NAACP. Max Yergan the director of the BAC Council on African Affairs (CAA) of which Paul Robeson was President, also made an alliance with Truman and attempted to take over the CAA. The battle raged from February-September of 1948.

Once Truman consolidated the Cold War Liberal alliance and beat back the Progressive challenge in the 1948 elections, his administration unleashed full repression on the remaining BAC leadership. The Federal Government seized Robeson and DuBois's passports and forbade

them from traveling internationally. CAA was charged under the Foreign Registration Act as a foreign agent for its relationship with the South African, Kenyan, and Nigerian independence movements. Alphaeus Hunton was imprisoned and eventually the CAA was crushed, unable to keep up with court costs. Du Bois was indicted in 1950 and prosecuted for his work with the Peace Information Center opposing the Korean War.

Important Black Anti-colonial organizations, such as the CAA, collapsed, but those that remained, such as the NAACP, deserted both their anti-colonial ideas and the insurgent political practices of which they were a part. The Black Press followed. And for the next 8 years there was little progress on civil rights.

By linking their cause to the Progressive Challenge, Black anti-colonialists leveraged cleavages in the Democratic Party coalition, making their movement difficult to repress, and compelling Truman to adopt civil rights advocacy as part of forging a new Cold War Liberal coalition. Once Truman had championed civil rights advocacy, however, he was able to easily repress the Black Anti-colonial insurgency. At the same time, Truman's civil rights advocacy generated new cleavages that would prove crucial to the Civil Rights insurgency a decade later – the split between the National Democratic Party leadership and Dixiecrats wedded to Jim Crow.

Opportunities for Black Anti-Colonial Practices

As group actor analysts have suggested, macro-structural processes, such as the decline of cotton sharecropping and urban migration of blacks, undoubtedly destabilized Jim Crow and powerfully shaped the political dynamics in which black insurgency developed throughout the postwar decades. Indeed macro-structural processes made some transformation in the social position of blacks inevitable. And both sets of political cleavages which the Black Anti-colonialists and the Civil Rights insurgents leveraged – the Progressive Challenge and the

National Democratic Party/Dixiecrat split respectively – can potentially be seen as meso-level expressions of the same macro-structural processes. But variation in the slow and steady rate at which such macro-structural processes developed does not correspond with, let alone explain, the ebb and flow of black insurgency over the period.

Instead, black insurgency can be better explained by disaggregating black insurgency by practice. Black Anti-colonialism expressed different claims, aimed at different targets, opposed different authorities, employed different tactics, drew support from different allies, and mobilized different constituencies than the Civil Rights Movement. And it leveraged different political cleavages as well.

It was the interaction between an insurgent practice and a political cleavage – namely Black Anti-colonial practices and the Progressive Challenge – that generated insurgent influence. The Progressive Challenge did not confer advantage on all black insurgent politics generally. Instead, it created a specific opportunity for Black Anti-colonial insurgent practice. Truman’s adoption of civil rights advocacy sutured the cleavage upon which Black Anti-colonialism depended even as it opened a new cleavage upon which Civil Rights insurgents would mobilize a decade later. Explanation of the timing and extent of insurgent influence requires attention to the ways that particular insurgent practices leverage historically specific political cleavages.

***** Diagram 4-1 about here. *****

It is widely recognized that Truman’s adoption of civil rights advocacy helped lay the foundation for the Civil Rights Movement to come. But the relationship between Black Anti-colonialism and Truman’s adoption of civil rights advocacy raises two serious problems for political opportunity theory. First, Black Anti-colonial insurgency preceded Truman’s civil rights advocacy so Truman’s civil rights advocacy cannot reflect the initial opening of opportunities for

black insurgency generally as previous analysts have assumed. Second, if Truman's civil rights advocacy had contributed to the expansion of political opportunity for black insurgency generally as group actor analyses have argued, then why did Black insurgency decline even as Truman's civil rights advocacy peaked in the late 1940s? Given that Truman's adoption of civil rights advocacy undermined Black Anti-colonial mobilization even as it lay the foundation for civil rights advocacy, we can expect that other political changes might be conducive to one form of insurgency even as they undercut another form of insurgency by members of a similar group. Against the idea that political opportunities are conducive to insurgent mobilization by a group generally, it is more fruitful to center on historically specific practices rather than pre-configured groups and theorize political context as a terrain of struggle – conducive to some insurgent practices, and not to others.

The Civil Rights Movement

In the early 1960s, Civil Rights insurgents physically defied the legal and customary segregation of public spaces and challenged de facto disenfranchisement in the South. They drew brutal repression by local authorities and white mobs prompting Federal response. Drawing repression was an intentional element of the strategy. Martin Luther King, Jr. explained: "Instead of submitting to surreptitious cruelty in thousands of dark jail cells on countless shadowed street corners, [the southern black] would force his oppressor to commit his brutality openly – in the light of day – with the rest of the world looking on"(King 1963b, p. 27).¹²¹¹ Intentional disruption, repressive action, and Federal response are evident in all the major civil rights campaigns during the movement's heyday in the early 1960s.

¹²¹¹ King expressed similar ideas on many occasions in many different ways. For example, see also King 1963a; King 1967, p.185.

On February 1, 1960, four black college students sat down at the segregated “Whites Only” lunch counter at Woolworth’s in Greensboro, North Carolina, and politely asked to be served. Word spread, and in the months that followed, tens of thousands of others followed their example at lunch counters throughout the South to be arrested by police, beaten by white mobs, and locked out by restaurant managers closing shop (Andrews and Biggs 2006; Carson 1981; Chafe 2003). The students had arrived at an insurgent practice that, in its historical context, was neither possible to ignore, nor easy to repress. Pushed by reporters, President Eisenhower told the *Baltimore Afro-American* that he was “deeply sympathetic with the efforts of any group to enjoy the rights, the rights of equality that they are guaranteed by the Constitution” (1960).

Drawing lessons from the sit-ins, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) organized the Freedom Rides of 1961 with the intention to provoke arrests by local authorities. The violent repression of Freedom Riders that ensued drew widespread support to the movement. James Farmer, national director of CORE explained: “Our intention was to provoke the Southern authorities into arresting us and thereby prod the Justice Department into enforcing the law of the land. We started the Freedom Rides with thirteen people. But after one bus was burned in Anniston, Alabama, and the riders on another were beaten and abused, we were deluged with letters and telegrams from people all over the country, volunteering their bodies for the Freedom Rides” (Farmer 1965, p. 69. See also Arsenault 2006; Barnes 1983; Meier and Rudwick 1969; Meier and Rudwick 1973).

The Civil Rights campaign in Birmingham, Alabama prompted national and international outrage in early May 1963 when police under the direction of Commissioner Eugene “Bull” Connor repeatedly attacked black school children nonviolently protesting segregation with dogs and high pressure fire hoses. The Kennedy Administration intervened, sending Assistant

Attorney General for Civil Rights to advance negotiations (Eskew 1997; Garrow 1989; King 1963b; Manis 1999). At the signing of the Birmingham agreement, President Kennedy told Martin Luther King, Jr.: “Our judgment of Bull Connor should not be too harsh. After all, in his way, he has done a good deal for civil-rights legislation this year” (Kennedy in King 1963b, p. 144). In June, Kennedy gave a major civil rights speech and introduced the Civil Rights Act to Congress.

In the 1964 Freedom Summer, a coalition of the major civil rights organizations (COFO) organized a campaign for voter rights and education in Mississippi drawing more than 1,000 white volunteers from the North to participate. In part, the strategy was based on the recognition that violence against Mississippi blacks was often ignored and intended to expose it to the world. In June, three civil rights workers Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner (two white-Jewish, and one black) on the way to investigate the burning of a Church hosting civil rights activities, were arrested by the Deputy Sheriff of Neshoba County and released to the Ku Klux Klan who shot them and buried their bodies in an earthen dam. President Johnson responded by ordering a massive Federal search and investigation (Belfrage 1965; Cagin and Dray 2006; Dittmer 1994).

During the Selma campaign of early 1965, in a series of attempts by civil rights activists to march to Montgomery as part of a voting rights campaign, state troopers and violent white mobs blocked and beat activists, killing James Reeb, Viola Liuzzo, and Jimmie Lee Jackson in three separate attacks. Responding to the broad public outcry, Johnson sent 2,000 soldiers and 1,900 members of the national guard to protect the insurgents in March. Five months later he signed the Voting Rights Act (Cobb 2008; Garrow 1978; Stanton 1998; Zinn 2002). Martin Luther King most explicitly identified the elements of civil rights strategy in his discussion of the Selma campaign:

The goal of the demonstrations in Selma, as elsewhere, is to dramatize the existence of injustice and to bring about the presence of justice by methods of nonviolence. Long years of experience indicate to us that Negroes can achieve this goal when four things occur:

1. Nonviolent demonstrators go into the streets to exercise their constitutional rights.
2. Racists resist by unleashing violence against them.
3. Americans of conscience in the name of decency demand federal intervention and legislation.
4. The administration, under mass pressure, initiates measures of immediate intervention and remedial legislation (King 1965, p. 17).

In many historical circumstances, repressive action by authorities is effective – silencing dissent. But in the context of the United States in the early 1960s, civil rights leaders discovered that nonviolent defiance of legal segregation and mobilization challenging de facto disenfranchisement was difficult to repress, drawing Liberal outrage and Federal intervention. The early sit-ins in February 1960 targeted lunch counters in cities such as Greensboro North Carolina where segregation was less entrenched, and students felt they had a chance of victory (Andrews and Biggs 2006). But by 1965, the easy battles won, civil rights activists sought the holdouts like Selma's Sheriff Jim Clark where defying segregation was still likely to draw brutal repression by local authorities (Hubbard 1968; Garrow 1978).

By 1966, the civil rights movement had been largely effective at eliminating legal segregation of public spaces and winning Federal protection of the black vote. While racial segregation persisted in schooling, housing, and employment, and racial inequality persisted in myriad forms including assets, healthcare, life expectancy, judicial process, political representation, public employment, wages and working conditions, few segregated public spaces remained as targets for nonviolent civil disobedience. Many black activists turned towards other practices to pursue liberation, some abandoning nonviolence altogether.

Opportunities for Civil Rights Practices

It was the capacity of civil rights practices to disrupt widespread forms of oppression in a way that was difficult to repress in the early 1960s that drew so many people to participate, often at great personal cost. In the lunch counter sit-ins, the freedom rides, municipal integration campaigns, marches, and voter registration drives of the early 1960s, insurgents peaceably violated segregationist law and de facto black disenfranchisement, and were brutally repressed by local white authorities and vigilantes. Brutal repression of civil rights insurgents threatened many non-insurgent blacks and liberals, and deeply embarrassed the Federal Government as it attempted to assert moral leadership in a de-colonizing world.

In other words, U.S. Cold War foreign policy, the decline of the cotton economy, and the northern and urban migration of blacks do help to explain the political cleavage in the early 1960s between Southern Democrats and the National Democratic Party leadership on race policy, and thus did constitute a political opportunity for insurgent civil rights mobilization. But this opportunity did not confer a general political advantage upon blacks or empower black insurgent mobilization generally. Instead, this political cleavage increased the efficacy of a particular form of insurgent practice: nonviolent challenges to legal segregation and de facto disenfranchisement coupled with claims for participation in full citizenship rights – i.e. civil rights practices.

When civil rights insurgents violated legal segregation and de facto disenfranchisement, they drew brutal repression from local authorities and white supremacist mobs. This repression, in turn, was threatening to broad allied constituencies including the Federal Government, and drew intervention of these allies in turn. Seeing promise of victory in the strength of this widespread support, many other people joined the insurgency, and the insurgent civil rights practices proliferated. Thus insurgent civil rights practices in the U.S. South in the early 1960s

generated an escalating cycle of disruption where insurgent mobilization fed repression which in turn fed mobilization. This political dynamic is depicted in diagram 4-2, below.

*****Diagram 4-2 about here. ***]**

This political dynamic is evident across the waves of civil rights insurgency. In each wave, the tactics of civil rights insurgency shifted to find new targets where insurgent practices could exploit the political cleavages on civil rights policy. But the basic dynamic remained the same across the waves of civil rights insurgency. In each wave, the insurgents disrupted some form of Jim Crow, i.e. legal segregation or de facto disenfranchisement. Insurgent civil rights practices never provided much leverage on other forms of black subordination, such as ghettoization, lack of political representation, unemployment, lack of municipal hiring, lack of access to university education, or disproportionate poverty. In each wave, civil rights insurgent practice was met with arrests by local authorities and violence by white supremacist mobs. In each wave, Federal, black, and liberal allies intervened in response to repressive violence. And in each wave, on the heels of this allied intervention, more and more people joined the insurgency until concessions were made eliminating the aspect of Jim Crow the insurgents targeted, and necessitating further tactical innovation *within the basic framework of civil rights insurgent practice* to challenge remaining aspects of Jim Crow.

As depicted in the diagram above, the repressive response of local authorities and white supremacist vigilantes depend upon the disruptiveness of civil rights insurgent practices. To the extent authorities could ignore civil rights practices with little disruption, they often did. As concessions removed particular targets for civil rights practice, tactics oriented towards those tactics became obsolete. For example, a 1961 the Freedom Rides violated local ordinances against integrated travel. The level of mob violence against freedom riders became a serious

threat to political stability in the target cities and U.S. foreign policy. Outrage from a range allies and preliminary interventions by the Kennedy Administration only escalated participation. Then, in September 1961, a ruling from the Interstate Commerce Commission banned interstate bus companies from using racially segregated terminals, chipping away at legal segregation and making the Freedom Rides obsolete tactically (Arsenault 2006). Integrating interstate transport was no longer a violation of legal segregation, thus no longer disruptive, and thus no longer a viable practical basis for an escalating cycle of insurgent practice.

Also as depicted, the effect of repressive action on the incidence of insurgent practice is determined in part by the interaction effect of allied mobilization. Generally, institutionalized authorities tend to wield superior repressive capacity, so unchecked, disruptive insurgent practice is usually readily repressed. But strong allied support for a particular insurgent practice thus makes all the difference. If the only political actors were civil rights insurgents, local authorities, and white supremacists, each wave of civil rights mobilization would have been readily repressed. What made all the difference was that in each wave, large numbers of black people, liberal supporters, and Federal agents intervened against the repression of civil rights insurgents. Allied intervention then encouraged others to join the insurgency and the insurgent practice proliferated.

Revolutionary Black Nationalism

The civil rights insurgency rapidly demobilized in the late 1960s. The rate of participation plateaued by 1965, almost completely dissipating by 1972, and never rebounding. The insurgent cycle of the Civil Rights Movement was broken when the Federal Government firmly intervened to abolish legal segregation and protect Black voting rights with the enforcement of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the implementation of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. White supremacist repression of civil rights actions still could and in some cases did

continue to elicit widespread liberal and Federal intervention. But the major targets for insurgent black civil rights practices had been eliminated and the movement de-escalated. (Bloom 2012)

If the Civil Rights Movement was simply the height of expression of a generalized black insurgency driven by the expansion of political opportunities for blacks as a group, then we would expect the Civil Rights Movement to dissipate alongside a general decline of black insurgency, driven by the general closure of political opportunity for blacks (McAdam 1982 pp. 191-192).

There are three major empirical problems with this perspective. First, the structural processes that elsewhere created expanding “political opportunities” blacks – namely the increased black electorate, the decline of the cotton economy, and cold war foreign policy pressures – persist rather than reversing. Second, throughout the late 1960s and to this day, the Federal Government remained committed to intervening against brutal repression of nonviolent challenges to segregation of public spaces and challenges to de facto disenfranchisement of blacks. Third, and most importantly, guided by the group actor assumption, sociologists have characterized the period of the decline of civil rights insurgency – the late 1960s – as a period of the decline of black insurgency generally. But this characterization is starkly contradicted by the evidence. Other forms of black insurgency expanded even as the civil rights insurgency declined, as

McAdam acknowledges:

I should qualify the characterization of the late 1960s as a period of declining black insurgency. Labeling these years as ones of movement decline serves to obscure the extraordinary nature and intensity of black insurgency during the period.... It would not seem an overstatement to argue that the level of open defiance of the established economic and political order was as great during this period as during any other in this country's history, save the Civil War. (McAdam 1982 p. 182).

Even as the civil rights insurgency declined, black urban rebellions rocked the nation in the late 1960s. The peak annual rates of participation, incarceration, and death for these

insurgents exceeded those for the nonviolent black insurgency.¹²¹² Growing out of these urban rebellions, in the late 1960s, a range of black revolutionary nationalist organizations developed including the Revolutionary Action Movement, the Us Organization, Detroit Revolutionary Union Movement, the Republic of New Afrika, and the Black Panther Party. By various measures, the largest and most influential of these insurgent organizations, the Black Panther Party, approached or exceeded the peak scope of any civil rights organization during the heyday of the Civil Rights Movement.¹²¹³

Opportunities for Revolutionary Black Nationalist Practices

Black Panther insurgents called for black community self-determination, challenged the legitimacy of the state, and sought to organize parallel government on a local level, including free meal, health, and educational programs.¹²¹⁴ The Party claimed that these activities were part of the global challenge to imperialism, notably the U.S. imperialist war in Vietnam. It might have been possible for the state to ignore these activities if not for the frequent armed confrontations between Black Panther activists and police in cities across the country. Black Panther insurgents severely disrupted status quo policing practices, self-consciously creating a source of political leverage.

Insurgent Black Panther practices were difficult for the state to repress because of three powerful sources of allied support. First, while most moderate black political organizations did not support the tactics or claims of the Black Panther Party, in the late 1960s they were threatened by state repression of the Party and mobilized extensive political support against state

¹²¹² Comparing annual sums using Olzak data.

¹²¹³ Including number of participants in insurgent action; number of insurgents arrested; number of insurgents killed; organizational budget; rate of coverage in *New York Times*.

¹²¹⁴ The discussion of the Black Panther Party is drawn from my book, Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr. *Black against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party*, University of California Press in press, forthcoming January 2013.

repression. Despite the gains of the civil rights movement in combatting formal segregation, and the triumphant rhetoric on racial justice propounded by the Federal government, blacks generally still faced high levels of poverty, and were largely excluded from university education, electoral office, municipal police and fire departments, and government hiring generally. So long as widespread ghettoization of blacks persisted, the Black Panther Party was able to draw broad black support. Second, threatened by the military draft, and betrayed on this front by the Democratic Party leadership, many opponents of the Vietnam War believed their fate was linked to that of the Black Panther Party – if the state succeeded in killing Black Panthers with impunity for their efforts to govern their own communities, many believed it could do the same to draft resisters. Thus many worked hard to resist violent state repression of Black Panthers. In 1969, the largest and most influential anti-war organization, SDS, declared the Party “the vanguard in our common struggles.” Third, international revolutionary governments seeking to challenge U.S. hegemony supported the Black Panthers’ efforts. Algeria granted the Party diplomatic status and an embassy building, Cuba began developing a military training ground for the Black Panthers, and Chinese Premier Zhao Enlai hosted massive state celebrations in honor of the Party.

*****Diagram 4-3 about here ***]**

For several years, violent repressive efforts by the state backfired, driving more and more participants to join the Black Panther Party. Participation in the Black Panther Party proliferated across the United States in a diffusion process that resembled the proliferation of the sit-ins in 1960 or the Freedom Rides in 1961. As late as April of 1968, the Black Panther Party was a small Oakland, California based organization with a single satellite chapter getting organized in Los Angeles. By the end of the year in at least twenty cities, dozens, and in some cases hundreds

of insurgent activists had committed their lives to the Party, adopting the Party's revolutionary claims and many engaging in armed confrontations with police. By 1970, in the face of brutal state repression, Black Panther activists had opened offices in at least 68 cities. Almost all of these insurgent members sought out the Party asking to join, rather than the Party actively recruiting new members. Instead, the Party organization constantly turned away activists seeking to join as it sought to maintain the coherence of its insurgent politics.

Only concessions by the state were able to break the insurgent cycle. The resilience of the Black Panthers' politics depended heavily on support from its three broad allied constituencies: moderate blacks, opponents of the Vietnam War, and revolutionary governments internationally. Without the support of these allies, the Black Panther Party could not withstand repressive actions against them by the state. But beginning in 1969, and steadily increasing through 1970, political transformations undercut the self-interests that motivated these constituencies to support the Panthers' politics. As mainstream Democratic leaders opposed the war and Nixon scaled back the military draft, blacks won broader social access and political representation, and revolutionary governments entered diplomatic relations with the U.S. – allied support became more challenging for the Panthers to sustain. The pressures mounted eventually making the insurgent practices that had driven the diffusion of the Black Panther insurgency impossible. The Party organization, and its efforts to advance black community self-governance, collapsed. By 1972, Black Panther mobilizations in most cities had ended, and the Party became a small local Oakland based organization once again, now emphasizing community service and electoral politics rather than insurgent mobilization.

Opportunities for Practices

Most classical sociological treatments of social movements have been based on the group actor assumption. Surely broad structural concerns are important for explaining widely shared

motivations for participation, and role destabilization. But group actor theorists have tended to over-reach, attributing the timing and extent of mobilization to characteristics of groups. While classical social movement theories have been challenged in recent years, some proponents have used analyses of the black insurgency to defend classical group actor assumption.

Writing in the *American Journal of Sociology*, Jenkins et al. (2003) attempt to defend classic political opportunity theory against critics, presenting a multivariate analysis of “how political opportunities affect the frequency of African- American protest between 1948 and 1997” (278). Jenkins et al. argued that “divided government, strong northern Democratic Party allies, ... Republican presidential incumbents responding to Cold War foreign policy” as well as the level of black political representation, black unemployment and income inequality, and Vietnam War deaths almost fully explain the annual level of black mobilization (277). But rather than assuaging concerns, the study highlights the limitations of attributing political opportunity to blacks as a group. The regression R^2 of greater than 90% for various models tested appears to contradict the bulk of the substantive literature which argues in detail about how particular institutions, contingent efforts by particular individuals, and the varied responses of non-movement actors including Federal and local officials, and white violent mobs, affected the level of insurgent mobilization in important ways. This tension may be explained by the authors’ method, which is to explain the relatively little variation in the number of black non-violent protest events per year (N=50) using fifteen explanatory variables. Decisions about which variables to include appear less than intuitive, for example the number of Vietnam War deaths is included while Korean War deaths are excluded. One dummy variable marks years an incumbent Republican President or Vice President ran for the Presidency before 1964 while theoretically obvious variables, such as the number of black registered voters, are excluded. While the R^2 is

impressive, any Bayesian Information Criterion would undoubtedly show the explanatory power of the model to be an artifact of the amount of data used to explain relatively little variation.

The point is not to highlight the empirical limitations of this single paper. Rather, the point is that the political opportunity thesis, as classically constituted, misconstrues *how* context matters for mobilization, leading scholars to ask the wrong question – even top scholars writing in the best venues. Jenkins et al get the analysis wrong because they ask an unanswerable question. There is no set of political conditions they could identify that would independently explain the temporal variation of black insurgent mobilization.

Disaggregating black insurgency by practice, the illustrations above suggest that a practice centered approach is more fruitful for explaining the effects of political context on insurgency. In all three phases of the black insurgency, political context was important for explaining the power and sustainability of the black insurgency. But different aspects of the political context mattered differently for different black insurgent practices.

At the end of the World War Two, Truman's emergent cold-war political alliance with colonial powers France and England against the U.S.S.R., a former ally, and his alienation of labor and new deal constituents on domestic policy, were crucial to the efficacy of the Black Anti-colonial insurgency in the mid-1940s. The anti-lynching protests and calls in the for international intervention on U.S. race policy could have been ignored or repressed if they did not strengthen the Progressive challenge, powerfully threatening Truman's policy agenda and prospects for reelection in 1948. But in context, Black Anti-colonialist practices were impossible for Truman to repress without further strengthening the Progressive challenge. Truman responded by becoming the first U.S. President to actively advocate for civil rights for black people as part of his new cold-war liberal politics. At the cost of alienating the Dixiecrats,

Truman succeeded in re-consolidating the Democratic Party bloc, retaining the presidency in 1948, and then quickly and effectively repressing the Black Anti-colonialist challenge.

Presidential advocacy of civil rights, a key concession contributing to the demobilization of the Black Anti-colonial challenge, in turn became a key contextual factor helping explain the efficacy of insurgent civil rights practices in the late 1950 through the mid-1960s. The federal government and the national Democratic Party leadership by that time strongly advocated civil rights for black people, but wary of alienating the southern leadership of the Democratic Party, took little action. Civil rights insurgents, by nonviolently defying Jim Crow while calling for full participation in U.S. citizenship rights, forced the issue. Local authorities and white supremacists arrested and violently repressed the insurgents forcing the federal government to intervene politically, militarily, and legally. Over several waves of insurgency – the bus boycotts, the sit ins, the freedom rides, the voting rights and community campaigns – civil rights insurgents chipped away at Jim Crow. Eventually, the implementation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 overcame most legal segregation and customary disenfranchisement of black people. The defeat of Jim Crow led to the decline of insurgent civil rights mobilization because few targets for civil rights practice remained.

But this did not mean that all forms of black insurgent practice declined. To the contrary, encouraged by the powerful transformative effects of the Civil Rights Movement, many black activists sought economic and political power, experimenting with a wide range of insurgent practices. A veritable “Black Power!” ferment developed in 1966 and 1967 as black insurgent organizations proliferated seeking ways to reinvent the freedom movement to redress persistent poverty, ghettoization, and political exclusion. By late 1968, the Black Panther Party emerged as the leading organization of a new Revolutionary Black Nationalist politics, linking black

insurgency to opposition to the Vietnam War and anti-colonial insurgencies abroad. Organizing parallel governance in black communities, challenging the legitimacy of the state, and engaging in armed confrontations with police in cities throughout the country, through 1970, the revolutionary black nationalist insurgents posed a serious threat to political authorities. Revolutionary Black Nationalism combined with the black urban rebellions and the draft resistance to destabilize institutionalized politics. Revolutionary Black Nationalist insurgent practices generated a new cycle of escalating insurgency that only dissipated with the rolling back of the Vietnam War and draft, and increased black political and economic access – including incorporation of black leaders in Democratic Party machines, ballooning rates of electoral representation, municipal hiring of black police and firefighters, increased college admissions, and a range of local and federal affirmative action programs.

The level of insurgent mobilization across these three movements cannot be explained with reference to a singular set of political conditions. When considered in terms of their insurgent practices, these three movements all follow remarkably similar political dynamics and trajectories. Drawing out these commonalities across the three movements, I begin to articulate a more general practice centered theory of insurgency.

While insurgency is rare, social scientists have long recognized that relatively powerless people sometimes garner political leverage outside institutionalized channels by threatening the interests of powerful actors (Gamson 1975; Hubbard 1968; Lipsky 1968; Oberschall 1973; Piven and Cloward 1979; Wilson 1961). Wilson, in analyzing Black protest, argues that when a group is relatively powerless, “[b]argaining is not available because the excluded group has nothing the others desire...” thus they rely on “negative inducements as compensation” (1961, p.292¹²¹⁵). In a

¹²¹⁵ James Q. Wilson, “The Strategy of Protest: Problems of Negro Civic Action,” in *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, September 1961.

broad comparative study of social mobilizations, Gamson (1975, see pp. 140-142) found that such negative inducements are the most effective means “powerless groups” have at their disposal, and Piven and Cloward concur: “it is usually when unrest among the lower classes breaks out of the confines of electoral procedures that the poor may have some influence, for the instability and polarization they then threaten to create by their actions in the factories or in the streets may force some response from electoral leaders” (1971, p.15).

While the group actor assumption is often unfounded, this basic insight of these classic writings can be usefully applied to a practice centered approach. Insurgent movements do emerge and develop because they provide large numbers of people ways of challenging their oppression unavailable through institutionalized channels. Insurgent practice creates a source of power through disruption. The disruption of established social processes generates a novel source of power. Thus, insurgent practice, by disrupting established social processes, begins to create a self-reinforcing cycle of insurgency. Insurgents disrupt established social processes, garnering influence, and thus drawing more people facing similar conditions to participate in their insurgent practice, as depicted in Diagram 4-4.1 below.

This attraction of growing numbers of participants to particular forms of insurgent practices as they succeed in disrupting established social processes can be seen clearly in sit-ins, the freedom rides, and other waves of the Civil Rights Movement. It can be seen in the large numbers of people flocking to join Black Anti-colonialist anti-lynching rallies and petitions to the UN after World War II. And it can be seen in the rapid proliferation of Black Panther Party chapters and armed confrontations between new Party members and police in cities around the country in the late 1960s.

***** Diagram 4-4.1 about here. *****

If there were no constraints on this sort of disruptive influence, insurgency would be ubiquitous, and it would be impossible to maintain stable social institutions. But in the real world, many people are invested in established social institutions, and they act to protect them against any disruptive insurgent challenge. When insurgents act to disrupt established social processes, authorities, with power and interest in these processes take repressive action to stop the insurgents. This can be seen the arrests, beatings, and murders of civil rights activists by local authorities and white supremacists in the Civil Rights Movement; the arrests, censorship, and travel bans on Black Anti-colonial leaders; and the arrests, violent raids, COINTELPRO, and state sponsored assassination of Black Panthers. In most incipient insurgencies, such repressive actions are decisive, and disruptive insurgent practices are aborted. Repression thus limits insurgency. This dynamic is represented below in Diagram 4-4.2 with the dashed arrow indicating an inverse causal effect. All else being equal, repressive action by authorities against participants in a particular set of insurgent practices tends to diminish participation.

***** Diagram 4-4.2 about here. *****

But repression obviously did not have that effect for many waves of black insurgency. Usually, relatively few people take the personal risks of direct participation in insurgency. Given the overwhelming institutionalized power of most established authorities, if insurgents and authorities were the only relevant actors, insurgency would never develop. But the trajectory of insurgent dynamics often is determined in interaction with third parties, rather than insurgents and authorities alone. In particular, insurgency is sustained by allied support. Allied support depends upon the particular content of insurgent practices. Allies support an insurgency because they agree with its aims, or they feel threatened by its repression. Allied support increases when authorities intensify repression because potential allies feel more threatened. Allied support

strengthens and helps sustain an insurgency in two ways. First, strong allied support can reverse the effects of repressive action by authorities. When unchecked, repressive action by authorities on insurgents usually quells insurgency because it demonstrates the high costs of insurgency and slim chance of success. But broad allied support changes the rational calculus by which potential insurgents evaluate their participation. The stronger the allied support available, the more likely it appears that insurgents may make significant gains. Further, the stronger the allied support, the less inclined authorities are to engage in repressive action that risks increasing allied intervention. Strong allied support for a particular set of insurgent practices thus generates an escalating cycle of insurgency. See Diagram 4-4.3 below.

***** Diagram 4-4.3 about here. *****

The importance of allied intervention can be seen clearly in all three movements. Strong Progressive support for the Black Anti-colonialists initially prevented the Truman administration from taking any repressive action despite disruptive street protests, and international actions that could be considered treasonous. Truman was struggling to preserve major elements of FDR's Democratic Party coalition and could not afford strong repressive action in 1945 and 1946. Most black political organizations joined the Black Anti-colonialist movement seeing good prospects for influence and little risk. In the Civil Rights Movement, repressive action by local authorities and white supremacists was threatening to local many non-insurgent blacks and liberals, and deeply embarrassing to Federal authorities. Support and intervention by these actors in response to repressive action encouraged others to join the insurgency. Outpourings of mainstream black, antiwar, and international support for revolutionary black nationalist insurgents in the face of brutal state repression broadened the fight, encouraging other young activists to join, and the Black Panther Party emerged in the late 1960s as the main model for continued black insurgency.

Thus, the development of insurgency depends critically on political cleavages and institutional targets that make a specific set of insurgent practices disruptive and which generate allied support for these practices. The same set of insurgent practices may be highly disruptive in one context, and not in another. For example, black and white activists sitting together on an interstate bus was highly disruptive in Mississippi in May of 1961, but not so today. Political cleavages and institutional targets prone to disruption are ubiquitous, and do not create generic political advantages for insurgency. But particular cleavages make particular institutional targets vulnerable to sustained disruption by particular forms of insurgency. Political cleavages sustain insurgency by generating broad allied support for certain forms of insurgent practice. In short, both the disruptive effects of a particular set of insurgent practices and the capacity of insurgent practices to attract allied support are historically specific and depend upon political conditions – namely the persistence of institutional targets for disruption, and the political cleavages that make insurgent practices attractive to potential allies, and influence the attraction of allied support for the insurgency. See Diagram 4-4.4 below.

***** Diagram 4-4.4 about here. *****

For example, the Progressive challenge to Truman did not generate widespread support of nonviolent civil disobedience against Jim Crow, nor of revolutionary claims and armed challenges to state authority. Instead, the Progressive challenge to Truman provided powerful allies to those challenging Truman's inaction on lynching in anti-colonial terms, and to those challenging his emergent Cold War foreign policy at the UN. Similarly, civil rights insurgent practices were disruptive specifically of Jim Crow, not all forms of black poverty and disempowerment. And federal advocacy of civil rights, and international attention to federal action on racial segregation, prompted federal intervention in support of civil rights insurgent

whereas the Federal government was the main antagonist of the revolutionary nationalists. Revolutionary nationalists attracted thin support from mainstream blacks in the early 1960s while the more moderate civil rights insurgency was thriving, and it was only betrayal by the Democratic Party leadership in 1968 that pushed many opponents of the Vietnam War and draft to feel threatened by state repression of Black Panthers.

Once insurgents develop a set of practices that effectively leverages political cleavages to disrupt established social processes while drawing powerful allied support, they generate an escalating cycle of insurgency. In such situations, authorities cannot re-stabilize the social order through repression alone. In those situations, only concessions by authorities can de-escalate the insurgency. Concessions by authorities re-stabilize the social order by suturing the political cleavages that make insurgent practices effective. They either displace the targeted social processes that insurgent practices disrupt, or they undermine the political basis for allied support of the insurgency. Thereby, they undercut the insurgent dynamic, leading to de-escalation. See Diagram 4-4.5.

***** Diagram 4-4.5 about here. *****

The success of each wave of the Civil Rights Movement generated its own obsolescence as concessions to integration consecutively removed the targets for the sit-ins, the freedom rides, the community campaigns and the voting rights campaigns. Ever strengthening federal and allied support for black civil rights meant that repression of civil rights activists challenging legal and formal racial segregation would continue draw powerful allied support, and the same is true today. But authorities have mostly ceded formal racial segregation. In the other two movements, the social processes that insurgents have targeted have remained intact, but the political cleavages that motivated allied support were sutured through concessions. Truman championed a

new Cold War liberalism. Making concessions to labor and liberals, he peeled off the core constituents of the Progressive challenge. Advocating civil rights, he drew mainstream black political support away from the Progressives and undercut support for Black Anti-colonial politics. In the 1970s, ballooning black electoral representation, municipal hiring of blacks, college access, affirmative action programs, and the winding down of the Vietnam War and draft undercut broad black and anti-war allied support for insurgent revolutionary black nationalism.

In short, a practice centered approach transcends the basic limitations of the group actor assumption, and promises much more precise explanation of the ways that political context affects insurgent mobilization processes. Given that a practice centered approach proves fruitful in the black insurgency – where black people as a group shared such a strong common history and form of oppression – it is likely to prove fruitful in other times and places as well.

Diagrams

Diagram 4-1: Opportunities for Black Anti-colonial Practices

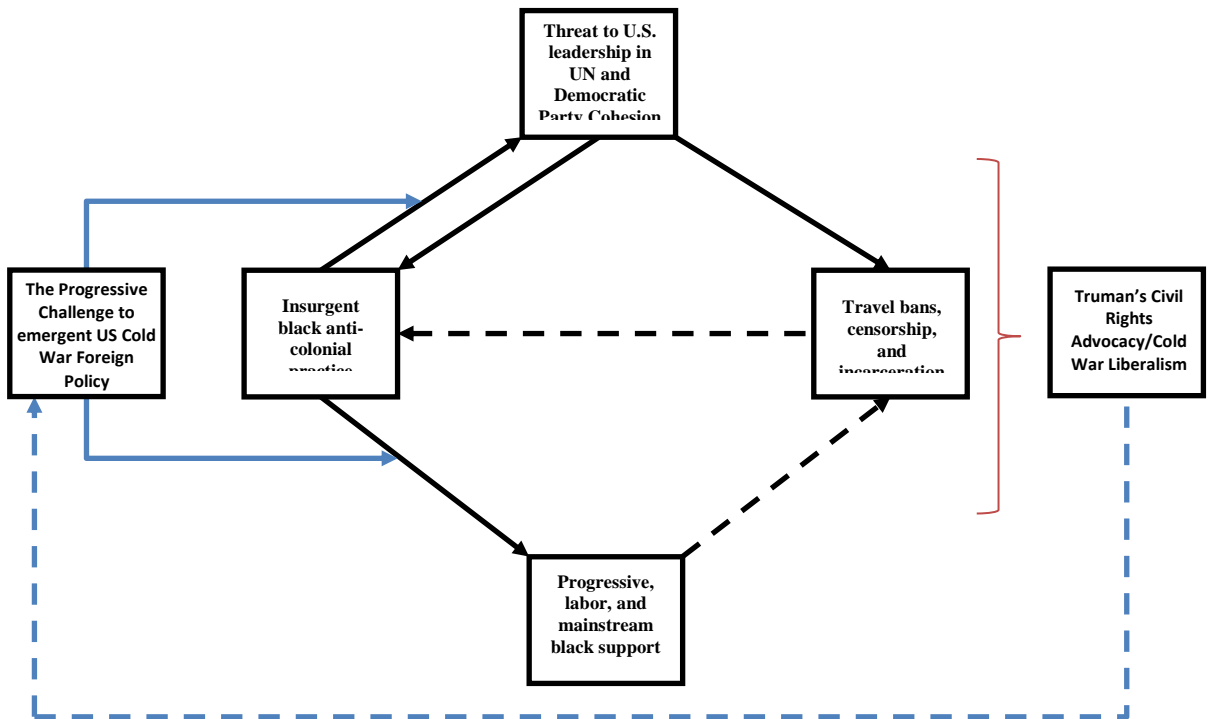


Diagram 4-2: Opportunities for Civil Rights Practices

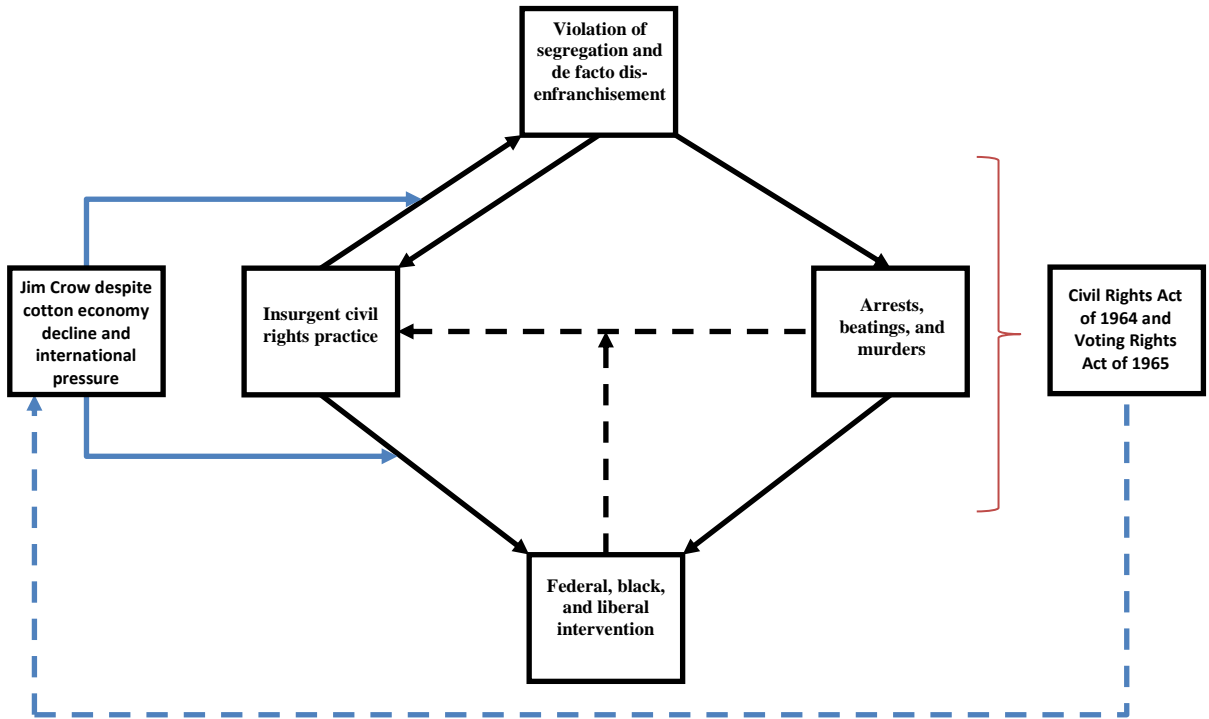


Diagram 4-3: Opportunities for Revolutionary Black Nationalist Practices

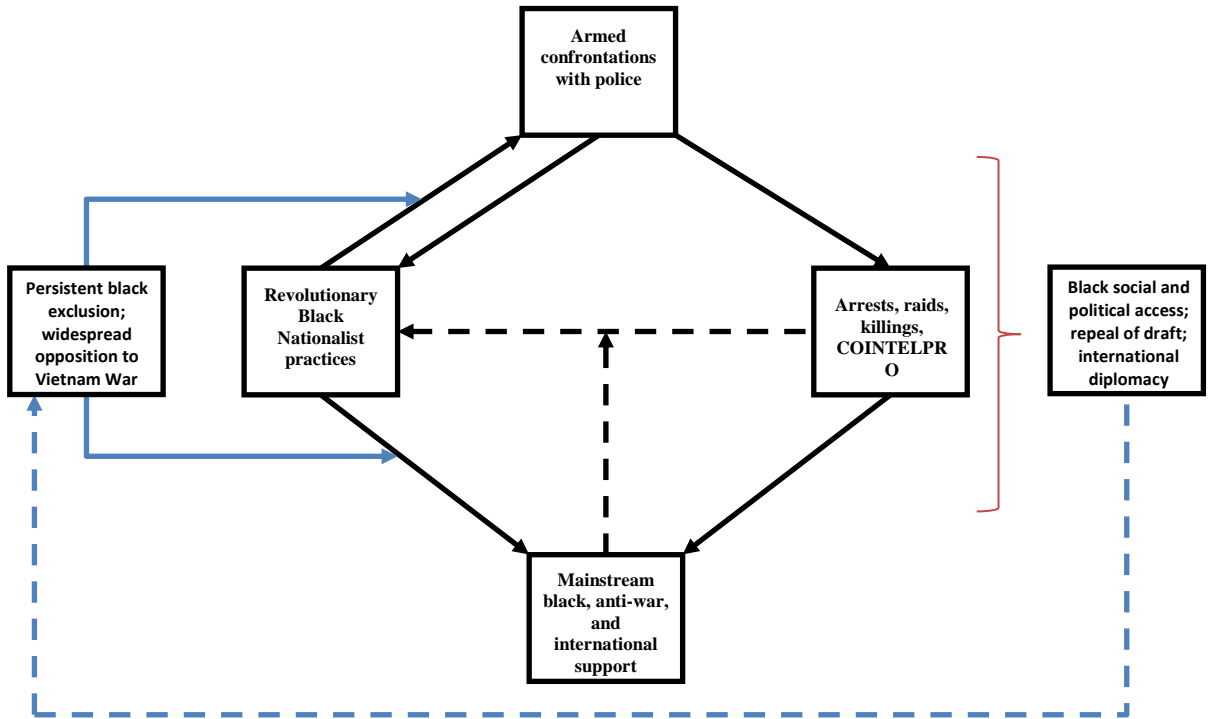


Diagram 4-4.1: Insurgent Leverage

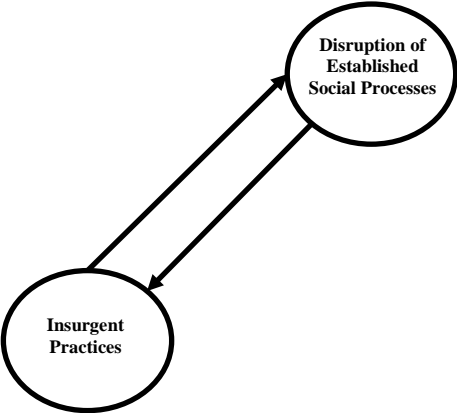


Diagram 4-4.2: Repression Limits Insurgency

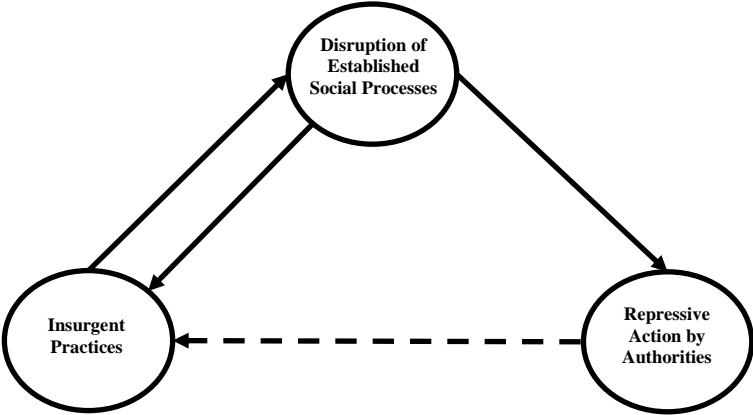


Diagram 4-4.3: Escalating Cycle of Insurgency

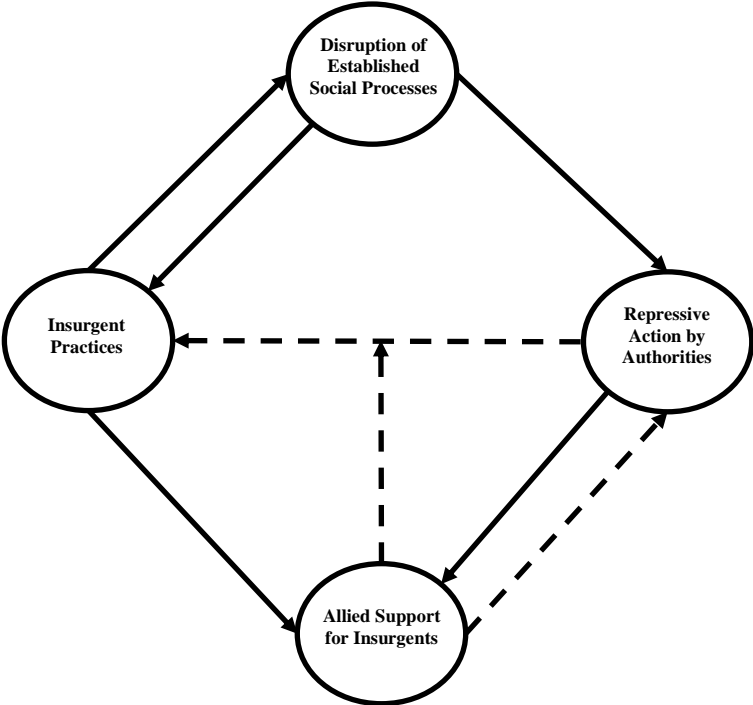


Diagram 4-4.4: Opportunities for Practices

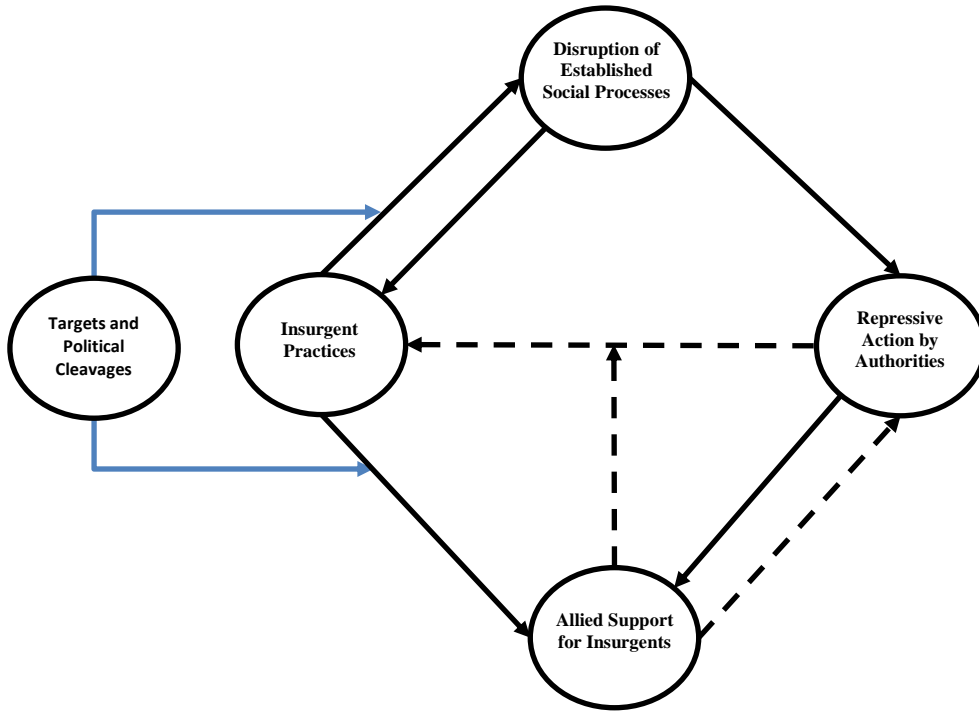


Diagram 4-4.5: Concessions and De-escalation

