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Reconceptualizing Social Movements and Power: Towards a Social Ecological Approach

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ABSTRACT

Existing social movement theories subsume protests into abstract conceptualizations of society, and current ethnographic studies of protests overburden description. Through a case study of London protests, this article transcends these limitations by articulating a social ecological approach consisting of critical ethnography and autoethnography that unearth the organizational strategies and symbolic representations exchanged among police, protesters, and third-party observers, while mapping the physical and symbolic characteristics of space bearing on these interactions. This approach points to a conceptualization of power at work as transient, typological structures: (a) rooted in collective agency; (b) both mediating and mediated by symbolic representations; (c) whose sensibilities are determined by symbolic interpretations; and (d) thrown into binary opposition between protester power and police power, who mutually represent meanings to resist and be resisted by.

KEYWORDS

Collective behavior and social movements; community and urban sociology; social psychology; theory; methodology; political sociology

In the American and European sociological conventions, three major schools of thought have dominated the development of social movement studies over the course of the twentieth century: the Tillyan polity model, resource mobilization, and new social movement theories. The Tillyan polity model constitutes the crux of a political opportunity structure (POS) model that consists of state-related variables that encourage or discourage social movements (McAdam 1996:27; Tilly and Tarrow 2007:57), such as openness of regime, inclination for repression, or state capacity (McAdam 1982; Meyer 1990; Tarrow 1989); social movements are predicted to arise when the POS opens, and decline when the POS contracts (Ho 2015).

In a similar vein, resource mobilization theory emerged from studies of collective action concerned with the conditions that enable protests, predicated on the basis that external resources—time, money, skills, and political opportunities—are indispensable to the success of movements (Eltantawy and Wiest 2011). Emerging out of the failure of resource mobilization theory to make sense of growing "new social movements" and constituencies organized around issues or identities (Buechler 1993), new social movement theories have directed the attention of sociologists to the study of identity-construction processes, claiming that "efforts to define, celebrate, enact, and deconstruct identity are more important in recent movements than they have been in the past" (Polletta and Jasper 2001:287). Implicated was a profoundly

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altered social formation behind these new forms of collective action that displaced class-based political mobilization with modes of participation independent of class location, such as peace, local autonomy, environment, homosexuality, and feminism (Castells 1997; Cohen 1985; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Melucci 1985; Touraine 1981, 1985).

Yet, that collective identity (non–class-based participation) remains a popular grounds for mobilization (Dean and Aune 2015; Paternotte 2015) compels a deliberation on the role of protest gathering spaces within contemporary movements. During gay pride parades, for instance, the encounter between the city and particular public displays of sexualities produced tensions that reshaped participants' boundaries of emotions and sexual identities (Ahmed 2004:165; Ammaturo 2015; Britt and Heise 2000:253–54; Jasper 1998:404; Valentine 1993). It follows from this example that the subjection of identities to the influence of their protest spaces illustrates two significant gaps in the literature concerning the spatial dimension of protests: first, existing social movement theories are largely deductive, defining protests as highly abstracted functions of society, and eschewing bottom-up approaches to analyzing how protest spaces themselves shape the interactions and strategies within them. Second, methods used to study social movements, aside from scholarly commentary, gravitate toward content analysis or purely descriptive ethnography (see Rowen 2015), neglecting critical forms of ethnography, rooted in interactionist theories dealing with analyses of social interactions and dynamics on the micro level, that investigate and theorize how the protest site operates as more than a neutral stage, becoming a cultural milieu influenced by characteristics of its space and other members of the city[1].

Nevertheless, the connection between ethnographic methodology and abstract theories remains absent in contemporary studies of social movements. This study attempts to move the study of social movements toward a new social ecological approach consisting of a theoretical paradigm preoccupied with the structuration of power, as well as a methodological program of shuttling between ethnographic and autoethnographic roles that unearths the social structures, organizational strategies, and symbolic representations in an urban space, which determine interactions between protesters, police, and third parties, while mapping the physical and symbolic characteristics of their environment that come to bear on these interactions. This article interprets these structured interactions through a conceptualization of power that is fundamentally transient and rooted in a public space of appearance that combines action and speech. I demonstrate how these interactions are underlaid by a novel conceptualization of power as a transient social structure (a) rooted in the combination of action and speech; (b) both mediating and mediated by representations of symbolic meanings generated through collective interpretations; (c) whose sensibilities and efficacies are determined by collective convergence in symbolic interpretations; and (d) possessed of a binary opposition between protester power and police power, who mutually constitute symbolic representations of hostile principles to resist and be resisted by. In doing so, the article addresses the following research questions:

(1) How do actors organize themselves within protest spaces?
(2) How do these parties perceive and interact with others?
(3) How does the urban environment come to bear on protest spaces?

The Social Ecological Approach

The social ecological approach draws inspiration from Elijah Anderson's articulation of "code of the street" as "not the goal of product of any individual's actions but . . . the fabric of everyday life, a vivid and pressing milieu within which all local residents must shape their personal routines, [practices and] . . . relations" (Anderson 2001:326). This approach also gleans concepts from anthropology, philosophy, political theory, social theory, and ethnographic praxis, used to demonstrate that such a milieu exists in the organization of protest spaces, lending theoretical and methodological insights for the study of social movements and power.

Theoretically, the concern with action and speech in Hannah Arendt's preoccupation with the formation of public appearances contributes important concepts to the conceptualization of power in protest spaces. According to Arendt, action, the actualization of the human condition of natality, and speech, the actualization of the human condition of plurality (Arendt 1958:178), are inextricably combined to impute meaning to any form of conduct located in a world inhabited by human others. Any activity undergirded by an attempt to extricate the two, forcing the transpiration of one without the other, expunges from itself the quality of being human. That is, action without speech loses its subject and actor, and thus, its relevance, for an action only becomes relevant or human when an actor identifies as an actor, announces what he or she does, has done, and intends to do; to have otherwise risks its reduction to the brute physical appearance of a chore (Arendt 1958:179), and one that is dislocated from the community of thinking, agentive humans, which constitutes the human condition (of plurality). Conversely, it can be surmised that speech without action similarly prescribes a disconnection from this community, wherein "speech becomes indeed 'mere talk'" (Arendt 1958:180). Intentions can be disclosed, at most, but remain valid only in the confines of their producing minds, otherwise abolished from reality without their foothold in the physical world where the human community lives, perceives, and interacts.

The revelation of one's identity through the entwinement of action and speech forms their appearance, an identity at once distinct and perceptible, that inserts them into the world (see also Polletta and Jasper 2001). The centrality of action and speech in the formulation of public appearances derives from the conceptualization of the public as a qualifier for the veracity of our perceptions, where "the presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves" (Arendt 1958:50). The processes by which this public space of appearance sediment "the reality of the world" draw justification from collective identity literature, which articulates the necessity of collective identity to social movements as a process that involves "cognitive definitions about ends, means, and field of action . . . given voice through a common language, and enacted through a set of [shared] rituals, practices, and cultural artefacts" (Flesher Fominaya 2010).

Moreover, collective identity is located in a shared space and is linked with collective agency or "'we-ness' anchored in real or imagined shared attribute and experiences" (Snow 2001:3). The public space of appearance implies a novel conceptualization of power that sustains its interactions: a form of power that "exists only in its actualization . . . only where word and deed have not parted company," and in which its actualization is not determined by the quantity of men, but by their solidarity as it "springs up between

men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse" ((Snow 2001:200). I advance this conceptualization of power, central to which is the insecurity of its existence, by drawing the contours of its anatomy against the shape of a social structure, through which its formation and functions are made comparable to a duality of structure as both "medium and outcome of reproduction of practices" (Giddens 1979:5). Power forever remains a specter of potentiality whose manifestation is not necessarily continuous or even guaranteed; implicated is a transient nature that imparts an incapacity to be accumulated, constituting a social structure that exists at the moment of its creation. The characterization of power as a structure is inspired by its function of enacting/reproducing social life through "generalizable procedures" (Giddens 1984:21), which not only exclusively serve to reproduce itself, as traditional treatments of structuration have held to their detriment (Sewell 1992). They also organize police and protester strategies in a way that connects with the broader city environment beyond the site of its formation and locks itself in a binary opposition—power among protesters versus power among police—to specify practices and beliefs of each group (see also Sahlins 1981, 1985). These practices, I assert, cannot be extricated from discussions of their symbolic function integral to establishing such formations of power. That is, the transience of power can be theorized as the node adjoining the fleeting impermanence of protest spaces and demonstrations of solidarity within them, the latter of which provide representations of symbolic meanings through which power is created.

Within the social ecological approach, the mechanisms by which power is legitimized in a protest call into account how power becomes attached to symbolic meanings and "the ways in which real people in … situations orient their activities in relation to them" (Simmel 1997[1900]:237, cited by Dennis and Martin 2005:209). The interpretive processes behind the creation of meaning—(1) the indication and representation of things acted toward, and (2) the communication of self that establishes the importance of these representations (Blumer 1969)—gain traction in protest spaces: the inherently social character required for meaning-creations and their communication (Handberg et al. 2015) is provided by default in the inescapable copresence of others in a protest space saturated with symbols. These symbols are *shared* by protesters and police in ways—albeit in *different* ways, creating disparate, clashing forms of power—that produce and unite interpretations to sediment power and form the social reality of the space, speaking to the embeddedness of meanings in networked spaces (Lamont 2000). The extent to which signs and strategies—chants, formations, discourse—enacted by a group successfully reproduces symbolic meanings and their members converge in interpreting and acting on these interpretations determine the sensibilities—what conditions stimulate, depress, or elicit collective reactions—and strength of their power. These processes, in turn, recursively structure the efficacy and selection of subsequent strategies employed, and by extension, sustaining or altering the constitution of their power structure.

Methodologically, the social ecological approach prescribes for ethnography a focus that concerns both action and speech in collective terms. This proposes the combination of both participation observation and interview techniques (see Crang and Cook 2007:1) in an ethnographic tradition capable of constructing a cultural milieu that captures both the forms of unifying interaction between protesters and the environmental prompts that encourage solidarity in these actions. These prompts are operationalized in chants, behaviors, signs, and symbols that hold together power in a protest demonstration, and by extension, the

protest itself. Conceptualizing the interplay between protest and environment calls into question the role of the city. While the physical features of a city can be subject to the influence of social life, they can also be actors in shaping social life itself (Sklair 2010). This is particularly true for global cities, like London, that link major economic regions into the world economy, and in which scenes of iconic architecture are often located. Analogous to the way in which iconic architecture converts public space into consumerist space (Sklair 2010), protests convert public space into antiestablishment spaces. Inserted into the life of the city, protests influence the interactions within the public spaces they occupy, and vice versa. The social ecological approach thus draws attention to how protests are impinged upon by features and members of the city by locating the role of the city in strategies and clashes of power between the protesters and the police.

The social ecological approach gathers its observations by concurrently applying two methods:

(1) A critical ethnography to study the physical layouts of protest spaces, activities during protest events, actors' feelings within these contexts (Robson 2011:324–25), and the organizational principles of gatherings that tie them to larger theoretical frames (Puddephatt, Shaffir, and Kleinknecht 2009:2), conceptualizing protest spaces as cultural milieus. Applications of ethnography to the study of social movements have yielded keen insights on their interactions, reflecting on the "'ruling relations' that are embedded in the definitions at play" (Meuleman and Boushel 2014:54) in light of the wider contexts of social movements (Smith 1990).
(2) Autoethnography accommodates for the interplay of one's self engaged with "cultural descriptions mediated through ethnographic explanation" (Ellis 2003:38). Autoethnography also constitutes a mode of reflexivity (Landy et al. 2016) through which symbolic meanings represented by protest demonstrations can be verified and measured against one's own interpretations, and in order to assess the formations of power established through these representations according to one's own participation experience.

I purposively sampled and attended seven protests in London, accessing protests addressing different-issues—peace and antiwar, antidiscrimination, environment, foreign affairs, remembrances, policy critiques (i.e., austerity measures)—where I (1) informally interviewed and spoke to actors to explore their feelings and motivations, and (2) observed protest and police strategies and their intersection with indicators of a cultural milieu in signs, outfits, chants, and behaviors. These protests occurred over the duration of three months, between October and December 2015, during which time public discourse was focused on the subjects of minorities in local communities and refugees in foreign affairs: liberal voices in favor of accepting refugees were juxtaposed with anxieties from terrorist attacks on Paris and Brussels. At the same time, police became more visible on the streets in everyday life, patrolling streets and popular tourist destinations in central London, but which never produced conflicts. These themes ran through the majority of the demonstrations, intended to observe whether everyday tensions would appear in protests, but counterbalanced with enough diversity in order to: (1) enhance the likelihood of achieving saturation, where potential themes consistently reappear (Robson 2011:148); (2) assess how variations in protest issues may produce social conditions that differentially structure

interactions between actors; (3) augment reflexivity when I assume complete-member-researcher, active-member-researcher, and peripheral-member-researcher roles (Adler and Adler 1994:379–80) in different protests to explore insider, outsider, and intermediate perspectives on interactions with other actors and strategies.

Since most of the protests were organized around protest issues pertinent to particular communities (i.e., Sikh, Egyptian protests; see Table 1), and all of them consisted primarily of non-Asian races, the combination of my ethnicity and my presence formed an "outsider within" (Collins 1986:S15) position that sharpened my reflexivity. As an East Asian man, I was ostensibly an "outsider," often standing out from the protesting crowds in a way that attracted glances and questions about my presence. But after staying for the full duration of the protests and visibly engaging with others, I became viewed as a dedicated participant, more than just a curious passerby, earning an "insider" status. According to Collins (1986), the merits of the "outsider within" position are born of Simmel's (1921) essay on the sociological significance of the "stranger," wherein it constitutes:

> (1) a peculiar composition of nearness and remoteness, concern and indifference; (2) the tendency for people to confide in a "stranger" in ways they never would with each other …; (3) the ability of the "stranger" to see patterns that may be more difficult for those immersed in the situation to see. (Simmel 1921)

Thus, this position permitted enough distance to gain trust from protesters and to access their thoughts and feelings, at the same time observing their interactions and understanding the

Table 1. Summary of protests attended, their locations, main constituents of protesters, their context, and my choice of participation role.

Time	Protest	Location	Predominant Protesters	Context	Participation Role
October 22	Sikh protest	India House (Indian Embassy)	Sikhs	Protesting the Indian government's treatment of violent discriminatory crimes within and the theft of sacred objects from the Indian Sikh community	Active-member-researcher
November 4	Egyptian rally	Whitehall Street (across from 10 Downing Street, Prime Minister's Office)	Egyptians	Protesting UK prime minister David Cameron's invitation to Egyptian president Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to the UK, bringing attention to his past/ongoing record of human rights abuses	Periphery-member-researcher
November 29	Global Climate March	From Park Lane to Parliament	Varied	Raising awareness of environmental issues prior to the Paris climate meeting	Periphery-member-researcher
December 1	Syrian protest	Parliament Square	Varied	Protesting against war on Syria, in reaction to the impending Parliamentary vote on the proposed bombing of Syria	Complete-member-researcher
December 2	NHS bursaries protest	Department of Health (East side of Whitehall)	Nursing students	Protesting the UK government's decision to cut the National Health Service	Periphery-member-researcher
December 2	Syrian die-in	Parliament Square	Varied	Protesting against war on Syria, in reaction to the impending parliamentary vote on the proposed bombing of Syria	Complete-member-researcher
December 4	Finsbury Park Mosque vigil	Finsbury Park mosque	Varied	Protesting against Islamophobia in light of discriminatory attacks on the Muslim community, following the November 2015 Paris attacks	Complete-member-researcher

meaning they attributed to them. Throughout, I measured these meanings against the interpretations of an outsider by shuttling between different participation roles to simultaneously construct an autoethnographic account of the "different selves" that emerged from my different roles, investigating how my experiences align with propositions generated from ethnography (Ellis 2003:47). I continually recorded the changes in my feelings about (a) each protest's themes and issues, (b) other actors, and (c) how each protest succeeded or failed. This complements the ethnography by: (1) improving the quality of ethnographic data by enabling me to identify nuances in the data and assess whether they are a result of biases from differing levels of participation; (2) identifying the factors that facilitate or inhibit transitions between the poles of complete and marginal participant (i.e., whether it is difficult to revert to a marginally participating researcher in a protest after having fully participated as a protester in a previous one, and what makes this difficult); (3) gaining a "within-participant" or "insider" interpretation (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011) of other actors, and of what motivates participants to get involved or strengthen their involvement (i.e., from raising signs to sit-ins).

Typologies of Power Among Interactions

Power, embedded in public spaces of appearance as typological structures, both mediates and is mediated by strategies and interactions within such spaces. In the context of the protest as a space that fosters the consolidation of identity with the self and with others, three categories of actors can be identified, whose efforts to organize constitute the bases upon which typological structures of power are built: police officers, protesters, and external observers. Stronger organization better allows for, though does not necessarily imply, the establishment of solidarity, which determines the likelihood of achieving their goals. Thus, the success with which members of each category organize themselves is bound up with the potentiality of power.

Police Power: Silence, Order, and Copresence

Across all the protests, interactions with the police revealed consistent ways in which they constructed symbolic representations to organize and by organizing themselves to consolidate their power and collective agency. Approaching police officers in a line was confronted by silent apathy. During the Sikh protest at India House, I walked toward a young male officer in line, but even when I stood in front of him, he refused eye contact with me. Ignoring me, he stared into the distance, past the Sikh crowd that had gathered before the line, shooting pictures of an arrest being made behind them. When I began to ask the officer about the context of the protest, he interrupted me with instructions on how to navigate through the blocked road. I repeated my question, to which he denied any knowledge. I returned after the line had seen a change in officers, and received the same response—denial—from a young white female officer, and again from other officers in different lines. During the Syrian protest at Parliament, organized against the proposed bill to bomb Syria, my inquiries similarly failed to elicit certain information from officers in line. Questions concerning the context of the protest received legitimate answers only by virtue of its focus on domestic policy, rather than foreign affairs. However, when I asked about an arrest that had just been made by officers in line, my questions were quickly dismissed. A young white female officer said, "I don't know, you know more than me,"

and another white female officer replied, "I don't know what you're talking about, but if someone did get pulled away they were probably arrested. I don't know about it though." Neighboring officers refused to look at me or acknowledge the conversation.

But although questions concerning the protests were met with indifference or rejection in groups of officers, they managed to encourage an open conversation with officers located outside their ranks. At the Sikh protest, a white male officer, with whom I spoke alone beside the traffic island, told me very conversationally, "I don't know if you follow the news, but the Sikhs had their holy book stolen from them in India. The Sikhs protested the event afterward, but the Indian government cracked down on them violently with guns." When I asked further about whether there had been an incident, he quipped:

> this is a test of my knowledge [laughs] … well, yes, at 12:00 p.m. the Sikhs went over the barriers and sat on the street. Some police were hurt, and the violent ones are kept over there [points in the direction of the encircled group in front of the theater].

During the Syrian protest, protesters engaged in an impromptu die-in, where they lay on the road in front of Parliament beyond their allotted protest time (10:00 p.m.). I approached a white male officer who stood watching from a distance by himself, who was very willing to speak and explained with humor and care that "this part wasn't [supposed to happen]:

Me: So what's supposed to happen?
Officer: Well, we'll speak to them a bit more, and make them know they have to leave at some point and that they are creating an offense. At that point, then we will use force [to remove them].
Me: At what point will that be?
Officer: Ah, it's not really for me to say.

The dispositions of officers almost always lightened whenever extricated from the copresence of fellow officers, speaking honestly, being more trusting and visibly at ease. On the other side of the street from the Egyptian protest on Whitehall Street, two police officers, separated from a string of officers on the traffic island, responded very warmly without suspicion, despite my many inquiries:

Me: Do you know what this is about?
Officer: It's something to do with protesting the Egyptian president.
Me: Is it a peaceful protest?
Officer: Just got here myself, so I know about as much as you.
Me: You seem to have a lot of protests here in London.
Officer: [laughs] yeah …
Me: Why are the barricades on this side?
Officer: Oh, they're because of an earlier protest. It was the student protest [against high tuition]. We actually just came from that protest.
Me: Ah, I see, I was surprised to see [the barricades] when walking by.
Officer: Yeah [laughs] [the barricade] isn't normal; the street isn't usually like this.

During the Syrian die-in, a lone white, male officer even empathized with the protesters when I asked him about his feelings about the protest, saying that "[this protest] matters

for [the protesters], and it matters because the people making decisions will be more wary about making those decisions."

Reflecting on my interactions, however, empathy was discouraged among the police. The discrepancies in awareness among members of the same police force assigned to oversee the protest reveal how backstage organization of the police operates to eliminate empathy. By eschewing the substantive context of a protest in the debriefing, officers become only capable of acting as tools for dispensing governance and coercion on protesting masses. They are lifted out of their individuality, rational thought, and humanity into an organic machine that replaces these dimensions with conformity (to rules), silence, and the pressing need for order; it thus seeks to preserve a conceptualization of order that dismisses and purges empathy as an extraneous, and even threatening, element to this goal, displacing the identity of the self (personal identity) in the public space of appearance with a new, predetermined reality of the world (collective identity).

That the copresence of the police imposed a silencing influence on its members inspires recourse to the structuring of power, made to repeatedly occur in a continuous fashion. It emerges that silence itself functions as a symbolic mechanism to organize power by maintaining solidarity through universal adherence to an identical strategy. Upon the bodies of officers in formation, silence urges the symbolic representation of order that occupies the same site as its interpretation—shared between different officers, this twofold process mediates the consolidation of power among police, improving the efficacy with which their power can challenge that of protesters as manifested in demonstration tactics. Speaking, then, breaks this silence in a way that necessarily thrusts individual officers from the organized collective. Much in the way that nonviolence prevents the dissolution of power among protesters (Arendt 1958:203) by foreclosing the disruption violence would bring, silence holds together collective agency within a shared interpretation, and by extension, power, among the police while banishing an interaction whose forms must necessarily be asymmetrical and unpredictable—where silence is uniform, speech is not; it is for this reason, too, that power among protesters made visible through chanting, though more pronounced, is more capricious and difficult to concentrate on a single symbolic representation than power among police, described in terms of containment (Posadas and Teknomo 2016) and order (Myers-Montgomery 2016). Parallels can be drawn with findings from collective identity literature that empower this assertion: if the success or the strength of a collective identity depends on inclusivity within (Smith 2001) or the breadth of identification with a common cause (Gamson 1991), then protesters, whose collective agency is not guaranteed, necessarily produce more capricious power structures compared to the police, whose symbolic representations that receive their collective commitment are less complex and more visibly apparent by virtue of their being a part of their occupational responsibilities.

Accounting for how the functions of these representations—containment and order—uncovered in the literature are operationalized among the police, I observed that speech brought interruptions that were *reparable*, unlike violence. Thus, silence operates as the ideal tool for holding together police power through the creation of an organic machine; it is flexible enough to allow for the address of immediate, idiosyncratic demands that necessarily vary among officers without threatening the dissolution of power, given the ease and haste with which officers can and did return to silence, while constituting a simple enough act for every member to participate in irrespective

of their tactical location or duties. Whether an officer was offering directions to passersby as in the Sikh protest, or fencing in protesters on the curb as in the Syrian protest, silence was their default disposition in the company of other police officers, demonstrated by their discomfort about answering questions or speaking about the protest, which was punctuated with attempts to revert to silence. Silence is consistent with presumptions about the expression of order, wherein officers become embodiments of their very goal. That is, silence has hitherto been conceptualized in the literature as a characteristic of order, and exercises a punitive function (Joosse 2006) on its *witnesses*—the protesters—by ostracizing them in a way that threatens sense of belonging, self-esteem, and sense of control (Williams 2001:60–64). However, my findings indicate that this function can be extended to include its practitioners: through its elevation to the default state to which officers revert, silence impresses on its *practitioners* the values of stillness, uniformity, efficiency, and thus, the importance of order.

This also supplements research on police behavior that indicates commonalities across coordinated formations for crowd control—kettling, steering, flocking (Tanner, Jadbabaie, and Pappas 2003)—centering on the tendency to maintain order as the ultimate objective of police presence in public spaces—such as how crowd control formations share a *manifest* function of asserting control, time spent in the copresence of police outside these formations similarly converges to maintain *latent* forms of control. At any given moment, the more cohesive the collective as a single body, the more potent their power, and the greater the efficacy of their efforts to challenge protesters.

Protester Power: Social Scripts, Framing, and Utopianism

For protesters, the task of cohesive organization and its challenges proves more complex. Power among the protesters was maintained by the structuring of social scripts governing prompt and response. These scripts were most pronounced with the organization of chants and the use of signs, which served as vehicles of communicating symbolic representations through which interaction could begin (Burbank and Martins 2010) and constituted the cultural milieu of the spaces. Signs and fliers were identified at every protest. Some were "official" (printed and provided by organizers), though many were hand-made (slogans and images drawn onto boards). It was the combination of both that imparted a sense of conviction to me; it convinced me that protesters cared for the issues they were protesting. At the same time, the purpose of signs extended beyond the dissemination of a message, to attract engagement from other members of the city. The act of exchanging a flier with passersby often led to conversations about the content of the protest. At the National Health Service (NHS) cuts protest, signs were used to encourage interaction from the public, as trucks and cars honked as they passed by, rousing cheers. The Syrian protest's march around the block also elicited honks and claps from members of the city. This example illuminates how protest spaces, though transformed from neutral spaces, remain *public*, to be impinged upon by physical features of these spaces and members of the city.

Speakers during the Syrian protest outlined prompts and responses for the audience to engage in, including "don't bomb Syria," to which the crowd responded "no more war," as

well as "David Cameron" and the response "shame on you." Where the prompts offered a symbolic representation of public discontent with political leadership and its foreign affairs policies, the unified responses ensured solidarity in this interpretation, becoming a strategy through which power among protesters "sprang up" and reproduced itself. Chants were also a convenient method of maintaining solidarity among protesters, for even outside the presence of established leaders, ordinary protesters could initiate chants and others would respond, observable in all the protests. The transient quality of chants enabled the sustenance of power beyond the conclusion of a protest. After 7:00 p.m. at the Egyptian protest (the time for its conclusion), protesters still lingered in the spaces. Stewards stood atop a block and started the chants again, attracting a small crowd of roughly 20 to 30 people around them to chant with them. During the Syrian protest, a group of us near the statue of Winston Churchill chanted, "Don't bomb Syria, no more war," while the same could be heard 20 or 30 feet away—only it was out of sync. After 20 minutes of chanting, the content of the chants quickly diverged.

These experiences boldly illuminate the drawbacks of this strategy. First, the larger the protesting mass, the greater the variety of ongoing chants. The flexibility with which chants can begin and end enables consolidation of power, but simultaneously permits disorganization. While symbolic representations being communicated by various co-occurring chants shared similar themes, gravitating around discontent and reform, they nevertheless retained nuanced differences that fracture collective consciousness and, as a consequence, divulge individual interpretations. Thus, power necessarily fragments to a greater extent among protesters than among the police, who organize by the employ of a strategy much more accessible, easily universal, and less strenuous. Second, the efficacy with which they can generate power relies excessively on proximity to these nodes of power, at the core of which are the initiators (speakers, chanters). Where the spheres of influence overlap, confusion briefly appears before conforming to one of the ongoing chants (see Figure 1). This further demonstrates the separation of symbolic representations into multiple and intersecting meanings (Handberg et al. 2015), closely followed by the ability of protesters to share in interpretations and interact through them.

Speakers were also implicated in this power dynamic, as protesters closer to the platforms were joined in a collective, participating in chants and responses, while those farther from the platform were much less engaged, atomized into nonparticipating individuals or groups absorbed in their own activities. In the Egyptian protest, concentrated on the east side of Whitehall Street, police could only stand at a distance on the traffic island or extremely close on the sidewalk. Police were thus forced to either appear detached, potentially threatening their own ability to observe, or imposing, threatening protesters' sense of security. When they chose the latter appearance, altercations arose between stewards and officers about how far onto the sidewalk protesters were and could stand. The space on the sidewalk was narrow, forcing the protesting mass into an elongated shape extending from the speaker stage at the east side of Whitehall Street. As a result, power was allowed to fragment when protesters farther from the speakers were unable to hear and began speaking among themselves in small groups.

Similarly, as Figure 2 shows, the Sikh protest and Finsbury Park mosque vigil exhibited the most stretched and separated audience distributions, indicating the least consistent participation. By contrast, protests in broader areas allowed for a greater range of inclusion. Speakers in the Sikh and NHS cuts protests were in the middle of their crowds, and

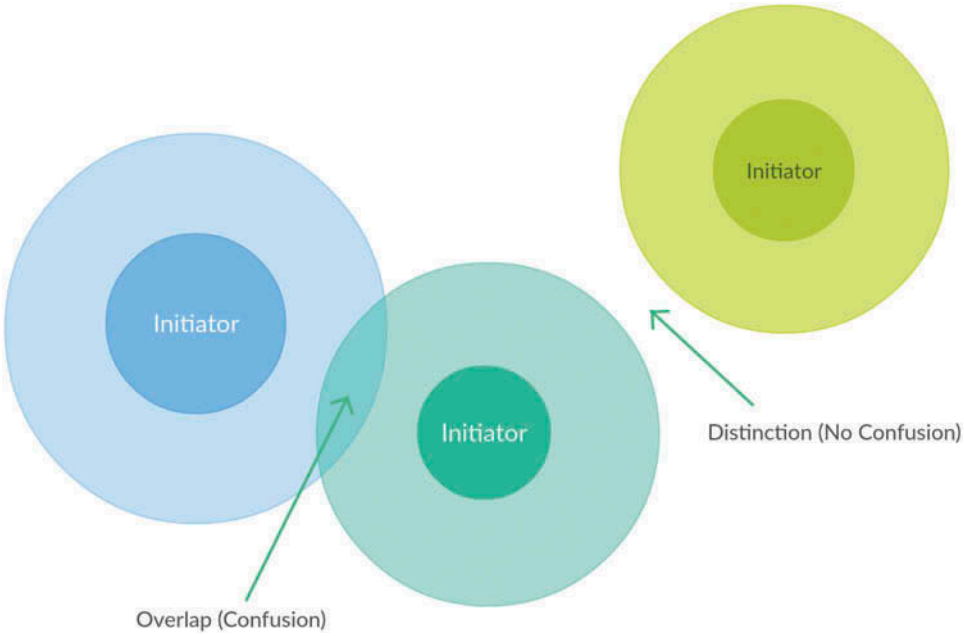

Figure 1. The copresence of spheres of influence among different initiators (chanters) within a single protest space.

those in the Syrian protest and die-in were at the front of crowds evenly distributed in Parliament Square, facilitating interaction (i.e., united chanting) across a greater number of participants. Power in protests thus cannot be conceptualized with the quality of *accumulation*. How well protests perform depends on their ability to unite as a collective, vis-à-vis the police, mediated by a fundamentally *transient* power rooted in a public space of appearance that combines action and speech—and, as the police demonstrate, how well its structure is reproduced in a continuous fashion. Where power as a typological structure repeatedly occurs in a continuous fashion among the police by and to the effect of strengthening cohesive organization, it did so among the protesters with more interruptions and greater difficulty.

Complementing their organizational efforts to link individual identities with a collective identity, the rhetoric employed by organizers and protesters converged upon three themes that attempted to compensate for the burdens of disorganization and build on symbolic representations seeking to strengthen their power: (1) the notion of a global endeavor of which the local protest was only a part, (2) the phenomenon of an abstract "awakening," and (3) the tendency to engage in utopianism or prefigurative politics.

(1) Local protest efforts were ensconced in the discursive frame of a global phenomenon. According to Shawn, at the Sikh protest, "there are more than a thousand people here for the protest … there were even coach buses that brought people from all parts of the UK, to gather here. There are similar protests happening all over the country too." Many of the speeches presented at the Egyptian protest were also intertwined with reconceptualizations of the protest as part of (the need for) a

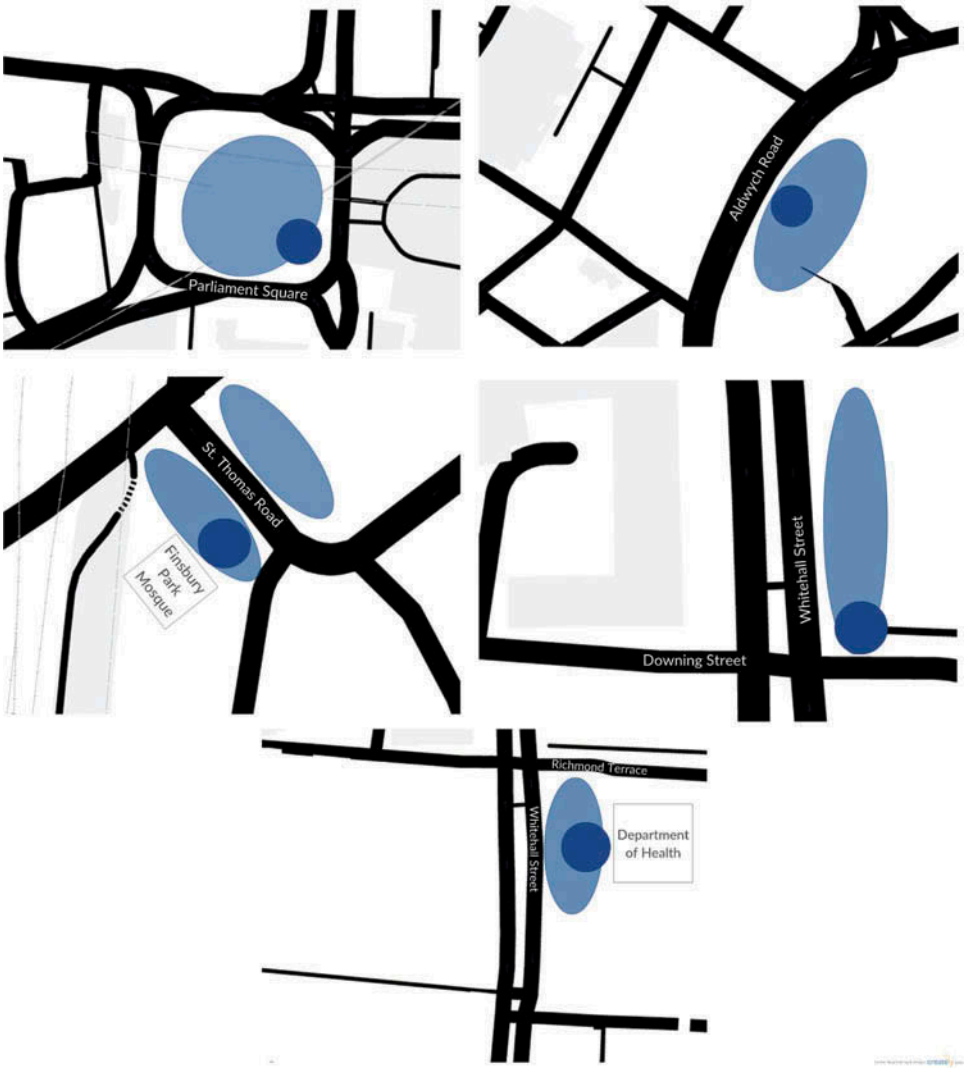

Figure 2. Speaker initiators (circles) and the distribution of their audiences (ovals). From left to right, top row: Parliament Square (Syrian protest and die-in), Aldwych Road (Sikh protest); middle row: Whitehall Street (Egyptian protest), Finsbury Park Mosque (Mosque vigil); bottom row: Whitehall Street (NHS-bursaries protest).

larger mobilization around the world, and tied their goals of Egyptian stability to the notion of "better stability and ending fascism in [the] Middle East as well." During the Finsbury Mosque vigil, Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn maintained that "[we] can't divide [ourselves] by faiths; we are a multicultural community." The purported existence of a larger unity was bulwarked by consistent calls for "solidarity with Finsbury Park and the Mosque" from other speakers, and how "we are all one." During the Syria protest, speaker George Galloway announced, garnering great applause, "MPs have voted 'no' in Edinburgh, Bristol—it's happening everywhere in different cities. We are representing tens of millions!" Attitudes

represented by local efforts were redefined as instances of the expression of a larger or global identity, a tendency consistent with efforts to generate collective identity (Flesher Fominaya 2007). But the symbolic functions of this discourse are twofold and interrelated, which go overlooked in this literature: (1) a global identity concentrates collective agency around a single interpretation (Au 2017)—namely, itself, as (2) the discourse of a broader movement becomes a symbolic representation of widespread political dissatisfaction, whom protesters currently represent.

(2) Simultaneously, the imprints of a global identity were taken to convey the sense of an elusive "awakening." Shawn at the Sikh protest persistently reminded me that there would be protests in the future, "since the Sikhs had 'awakened' now, so things will be different. Even if we have to lay down their lives, we will achieve our goal." Speakers and protesters from the Syrian protest and the die-in made frequent reference to how the opinion against bombing Syria was "shared by 75 percent of even conservative pools." British Labour Member of Parliament (MP) Richard Burgon announced here that "the people seem to want no war at all," having "gone through Iraq." An MP from Bradford declared that he "[brought] solidarity from the north" in the judgment that "we have learned nothing from Iraq and Afghanistan." Although protests underscored the burgeoning consciousness of pressing social issues, their politics fell under the realm of utopianism.

(3) Utopian or prefigurative politics conflates self-expression with content, where actions are not tactics but simply expressions or prefigurations of an actor's vision, celebrating "acts for their own sakes" (Gramsci 1991:147). Such strategies are often employed as attempts to justify the mobilization in the event of defeat, particularly prominent among protests wholly concerned with political affairs, as seen in the Occupy (Smucker 2014) and the Sunflower movements (Au 2017). Activists in the Syrian protest proclaimed, "the people united will never be defeated." Following the announcement of the vote for the bombing of Syria, I asked "has the protest done anything?" to different people, to which they responded:

A Marxism-pamphlet distributor:	No, this won't do anything … need an anti-imperial movement, but we need numbers. It's about *momentum*, and it's important *we meet each time* to bring more people… . People don't join because of pessimism.
Officer:	The short answer is no it hasn't, but it *does matter that they're here*… . *It matters for them.*
Young European:	Whether it has an effect or not doesn't matter, it is *just done to warm people's hearts*, whether it's one thousand or one [shrugs] just to warm hearts.
Older female:	It's a way to *express ourselves* and know that *I'm not alone*.

The transformation of protests into vehicles for *expression* betrays the Gramscian imperative of politics as *action*, where to do otherwise risks utopianism, but it also provides a way of maintaining power within and beyond a single demonstration. Utopianism insulates

protesters from the discouragement that failures might create toward present and future mobilization.

However, protests bereft of organized power produced prefigurations that resuscitated the *neutrality* of their spaces, in which random or radical elements felt comfortable appearing without repercussion. In the Global Climate march, the largest protest, the tens of thousands of protesters present were visibly unorganized. The atomization observed in the Egyptian protest, among those distanced from (the influence of) the speakers, was manifest throughout the entirety of the march. People broke into groups chatting, small bands played music irrelevant to the theme of the environment, families with children could be seen enjoying the march, and some appeared in costumes of animals and with branches and leaves glued to their bodies. The milieu of the environment, left to its members without organization, created a space that encouraged expression irrespective of the political bearings of the messages expressed.

This type of prefiguration prepares an allowance for the potential diversity of movements present. That is, it shifts the focus of congregation from content to *demonstration*. The march saw the representation of many different issues and identities in signs, costumes, and chants, including: save the bees, eat vegan, save the dolphins, start clean energy, stop fracking, end fossil fuel dependence, promot "systemic change," criticize the secretary of state for Energy and Climate Change, Amber Rudd.

I inquired about interpretations of the diversity of messages present. A female protester, holding a sign that said "stop bombing Syria" near the Socialist Worker newspaper booth, told me:

> [Syria relates to the environment] massively since it's bombing people, displacing them, ruining environment. *[The protest is] just a place for you to voice your opinion. Climate is just a word*. It's about crimes against humanity, it's about solidarity and all coming together to make a message … it's like that guy [with the speakerphone] said, maybe politicians don't listen, but if enough people speak and show they're not just like the millions, then we can make them listen.

According to another male protester:

> [The main message is] essentially fossil fuel and energy change, though there's a lot of stuff going on too… . Well bombing Syria was yesterday, and the veganism is really with us, but it's *all about people getting together* and demonstrating solidarity and making our voices heard.

Me: Do you feel the diversity of the message was a problem?
Him: No, it's all about getting the government to listen to the people.

Hence, the Global Climate March was stripped of its content to disqualify not only the importance of political action but also the solidarity of expression. The lack of organization created a different sense of prefigurative politics among the protesters—one that pardoned the farrago of ideas they felt comfortable expressing, conflating not only expression with action but also *noise* with *voice;* it did not matter what others were expressing, as long as they were expressing it. The diversity of symbolic representations weakens power among protesters and their ability to challenge the police or ascertain their goals, for where representations are scattered afield, the self cannot establish their importance or share in a singular important representation with others (Blumer 1969).

Moreover, the divergence of collective identity ultimately overwhelms efforts to symbolically redefine the situation in favor of the protesters, crystallized, for instance, in the discourse concerning membership in a global movement.

External Observers: Anonymity, Presence, and Power

Just as the social dynamics among police and protesters come to influence the city and its members beyond the protest site, in a similar manner these citizen agents without allegiance, in turn, come to empower and obstruct their clashing organizational strategies and, by extension, alter their consolidations of typological power. Flitting in and out and lingering within protest sites, these external, specter-like observers consisted of reporters, photographers, and curious passersby, whose interests in the protests were self-oriented and did not extend beyond the immediate exchanges between police and protesters. Anonymity and political indifference were integral to their observation, as they commonly exhibited an aversion to any confrontation with the actors involved. During the Sikh protest at India House, some individuals, who watched the protester demonstrations and the show of force in horsemen, vans, and riot gear, quickly retreated from a Sikh protester distributing pamphlets and offering to explain the motivations for the protest. At the Finsbury Park Mosque vigil, photographers forced themselves through the crowds to the front for closer pictures of the speakers. Unresponsive to the speeches being presented, they continued to shoot pictures of the speakers, then panned around to capture the crowd, before slipping through to another area for a different angle. In the Syrian die-in, photographers were moving about taking pictures of the crowds. While the crowds were apparently oblivious to their engagement, preoccupied with themselves, the photography of individuals disassociated from the crowd was complicated by a different social dynamic. A photographer neared me, but before he raised his camera, I maintained eye contact with him for several seconds. He responded by lowering his camera and proceeding to a different area. For external observers, interactions with other individuals, demonstrated by these experiences, facilitated a sense of openness to connect both parties in a way that confirmed each's reality and their consciousness of the other. Suddenly introducing to these observers the need for attention to social cues, much like those of a conversation, direct interaction implied issues of consent and confrontation that repelled them by threatening to disenfranchise their political indifference and compromising their anonymity.

Yet, although the interests of external observers were extricated from the expression of support for either side, their very presence cannot be extricated from the contention of power between the protesters and the police. By adding their physical bodies to the protesting masses—shuffling through the masses to glimpse the different parts of the demonstration, recording the spectacle on phones, reporting their observations immediately on social networks, watching the event unfold as one might a theatrical performance—they detracted from its visible cohesion, fragmenting the power of the protesters, and augmented those parts of the masses that appeared disorderly. At the same time, the additional disorder their presence implied spurred the cohesion of the police by bringing to life (the symbolic image of) a fragmented, unpredictable, incohesive mob that constituted a greater a threat to the order they were tasked to protect.

Its effects on escalating tension were especially pronounced in police attitudes toward interactions. I stood for five minutes in an open area, close to a group of Sikh protesters speaking among themselves, in view of a police line on the blocked road, before approaching them. The police officers appeared stoic, staring intently beyond me even as I approached one of them. When I engaged with him, a young white male, he was coarse and uninterested in speaking with me:

Me: When did the protest begin?
Officer: I don't know.
Me: Do you know what they're protesting about?
Officer: You're gonna have to ask them. What are you waiting for, mate?
Me: I'm just a spectator.
Officer: [nods]
Me: Has there been any violence?
Officer: No, not here.

It was untrue that no violence had been observed. A group that staged an impromptu sit-in on Aldwych in the afternoon was forcefully removed by horseback officers, isolated, and had members arrested, stirring scuffles between protesters and police. But prolonging my noticeable presence in the protest space had imbued my figure with an uncertainty that, although it discounted me from the protesters, made me no less suspicious among the police, inadvertently contributing to the escalation of tension. This effect occurred independent of whom I may have been around, protester or police. At the Global Climate March, I stood by a couple of police officers for 20 to 30 minutes, and spoke with them at length. Afterward, I left the area to navigate through the enormous parade before returning to speak to another pair of officers. Though they had seen me interact, smile, and laugh with the first pair of officers, they were no less suspicious of my intentions, and exhibited the same uninterested, coarse attitude as the officer from the Sikh protest, answering my questions about the protest's context curtly or denying any knowledge of its context.

But where it did detract from the power of the protesters and escalate tension by creating the illusion of disorder, elements of third-party observers were drawn into political strategies orchestrated by the protesters themselves. For protesters, third parties offered opportunities to disseminate their message and inject news of their struggle into the public consciousness. Walking through the Egyptian protest, older protesters noticed my third-party status, marked by my appearance, and often nodded, smiled, or shook my hand in silent appreciation. As Shawn, the pamphlet distributor in the Sikh protest, noted: "we're trying to get exposure so people can know about what's going on in India and how the Sikhs are being treated. The police have started some dialogue, but we won't budge till we see cameras. *We just want coverage*." Protesters at the Syrian die-in also responded to a semicircle of photographers and reporters set up in front of their impromptu sit-in, following the voting decision, by chanting loudly toward the cameras. Thus, third-party observers were welcomed as a means of advancing their goals, apparently in spite of the commotion they brought.

Clashes of Power: Dissenting Conceptualizations of the City

A Tale of Two Cities

How did the typological power structures constructed among the police and among the protesters come to interact? That is, how and why do they clash? At the heart of the tensions between police and protesters rests a dissonance in the ways protests are seen with respect to the city, and how symbolic representations constructed by each party are perceived by the other. The police, for instance, consistently focused on the protest's potential for disorder, punctuated with frequent references to the protest in terms of legal allowances and enforcement. Implicated is a conceptualization of the protest as a purposive threat to the order of the city. Standing before the gates to Parliament, an older, white female officer told me during the Global Climate March:

> I just saw two Anonymous protesters go by … the [Anonymous] protest was nasty—they broke a lot of regulations. The [Global Climate March] is supposed to end at 4:00, and they have to notify and agree with officers beforehand about when and where the protest is happening.

Me: What happens if they don't?
Officer: Then we can move them! Like the Anonymous—a nasty group.
Me: What did they do?
Officer: They set fire to police cars, threw fireworks at us, broke windows of buildings they didn't like, like McDonalds and Starbucks. The real nasty one is black bloc, they cause a lot of mischief … they need jobs. There are a lot of little groups in this [Global Climate March].

Her persistent references to violent protest behaviors and groups unveils an aversion to protests, seen as boundless masses that unfailingly contain radical elements capable of inflicting public damage. This perspective was consistent with officer actions across other protests. During one of the speeches in the Egyptian protest, a separate group carrying an Egyptian flag entered from behind, repeating a chant. Despite the fact that protesters had even recruited stewards, wearing neon-light vests and keeping protesters orderly and off the roads and sidewalks, officers still broke their distance from the traffic island and rushed to the east side of Whitehall Street, where the protest was happening. Additional officers closed in from the back, slipping into the middle of the crowds to keep watch from the inside.

Among the police, the preconception arises that the objectives of protesters are implicated in their immediate vicinity—their efforts are entangled in a base desire to threaten the order of the city. This conflicts with protesters' conception of the city as a means to an end, ultimately transcending the local to attain a global "awakening"; their local efforts, therefore, are aimed at acquiring coverage, wherein London is only a stage for this purpose.

The dissonance intensifies the clash of power by placing special emphasis on how the two parties engage with and, more important, how they perceive each other. Through the latter, presence itself transforms into an action taken to represent larger attitudes. At the Egyptian protest, a steward told me "[the police are handling this] very well. *They don't do anything.*" Police presence, thus, appears innocuous to protesters only when it is inactive.

When police presence is armed, however, even inactivity forebodes the potential use of force that upsets protesters. According to an older Sikh man at the Sikh protest, who took the initiative of approaching me after seeing me interact with an officer, said "the police [had been] handling it very badly." When asked if there had been violence, he underscored:

> The police call it violence, but we've been peaceful . . . and *we're just reacting to what they're doing*. It's them who are provoking us . . . just by standing there with all their gear. Look at all the horses, the cars, the gear . . . they even closed down a side of the street.

Shawn corroborated this sentiment, noting that "whatever the Sikhs have been doing, it's a reaction to police actions." When police presence becomes active, it similarly obtains a challenging character. A young white protester at the Syrian die-in, with a sign tied to his backpack saying, "give free hugs, not bombs," promptly stood his ground to a female officer's request for him to clear the streets: "children in Syria are going to be killed, and you only care about the streets of London?"

Moreover, police action sets a precedent that colors their subsequent actions and inactions during the course of the protest. In the Sikh protest, a Transportation for London public bus pulled up next to the Waldorf Hilton where the sit-in protesters had been held. A young Sikh immediately pointed at the bus, telling me "look! [Those who were held] are [going to] be arrested and put in a bus now!" though this could not have been, and was not, the case. Still, police activity had primed protesters to interpret violence, force, and oppression.

Against the theoretical backdrop of power as a social structure, police activity demonstrated to protesters the "memory traces" (Giddens 1984:377) of police power: police actions were construed as reproductions of "recursive" enactments of the structured constitution of police power; that is, police power as a structure consisted of more than patterned social practices, including the principles that patterned these practices. Instances of police activity revealed, to the protesters, the hostile nature of these principles, which was affixed between and came to define police power as a structure and the symbolic representations that built it. Confronted with forceful interference, as with the arrests in the Sikh protest, the actions would be interpreted as expressions of hostile principles that organized police activity, wherein the police themselves became symbolic representations of oppression inflicted by the state.

The Ordered City

The representation of the "ordered city" derives its context beyond protests, building upon while urging the reinterpretation of traditional understandings of space in urban studies. Space is often combined with design in theorizations about the ways in which social practices and outcomes within them are shaped (Cronon 1991; Rawson 2010; Schuyler 1986), turning to examples among public parks, highways, and even nature itself. The "ordered city" is born of this fundamental preoccupation with space as a determinant of public social dynamics, at the heart of which is the notion of imbrication (Loughran 2016), or the interweaving of multiple components—essentially, a meticulous organization of space per standards of design. But by structuring everything in the city—even social dynamics—and assigning it a proper place in its spaces, design as an ideology impresses upon its inhabitants a sense of *order* and

regularity, which inhabitants submit to, yet remain unaware of in their daily procession. Police values and their associated behaviors (conservatism, solidarity, suspicion) as well as culture (Campeau 2015) are included in its fold, being shaped around this regularity. Protests, thus, work to cast off the invisibility of order by disrupting the intended social dynamics within their allotted spaces, destroying the unique intricacies of their design and forcing their transformation into the same, alien, politicized forms. Protests flood a public space with symbols brought in from outside of itself, and invert existing spatial features into symbols of resistance, both constituting the new cultural milieus on which demonstrations are grounded.

As such, protests signal political crisis. For example, in the way that ecological crisis within cities speaks to the social underpinnings of cities (Walker 2009), so too does political crisis. And just as the aesthetics of decline, moreover, are conceived as evidence of deeper economic and social crises (Greenberg 2008; Sugrue 1996), the reverse holds true as well: protests, representing social and political crises, predict urban decline through damage and decay to spaces, while threatening changes to the social underpinnings of cities. Because protests are not designed into spaces, they are nowhere, at the same time they can be anywhere. It follows that cities are constituted by more than just imbrications of urban and natural space (Loughran 2016), including also imbrications of cultural milieus rich with symbols and meanings, which surface during demonstrations as disruptions of order, blurring the distinctions between ordinary and protest spaces.

Where police are concerned with the status quo, preserving the order of city spaces and dignity of their designs, protesters are concerned with disrupting it, manipulating city spaces to disseminate their message and bringing to life these milieus to front political resistance. Thus, as a consequence of dissenting conceptualizations of the city among police, invested in order, and protesters, invested in realizing goals of political resistance, the typological power structures among both parties are inextricably tied to one another—when one strengthens, the other responds in kind; and so the mutual opinion arises that the other's presence often constitutes a threat, wherein the actions of each is framed as a reaction to the other's provocation. The presence of police indicated a hostile symbolic representation of oppression to protesters, resisting their aim to receive acknowledgment for their demonstration objectives; at the same time, the presence of protesters indicated a hostile symbolic representation of disorder to police, constituting resistance to their objective of order.

Power From the Inside: A Reflexive Account of Role Shuttling

In considering the symbolic representations that bulwarked police and protester structures of power, how did their meaning-creation processes and interpretations thereof appear on the inside? As I navigated from within these power structures as they were formed, my reflections uncovered asymmetries between the symbolic representations interpreted by insiders and by outsiders that confronted me: sensitivities to political issues, to representations, and even to interpretation itself erupted out of the milieu to preoccupy and shape my interactions and my self or identity as an actor in the space, and by inference, the selves of others and their convergence upon a collective identity bound up in the structures they created. In doing so, the difficulties I faced when assuming different participation roles shed new light on nuances within the power dynamics discussed hitherto.

In reflecting on Table 1, I observe that my choice of which participation role to adopt was often influenced by the tension between the police and protesters and the

nature of the protest itself. I discovered that protests focused on issues targeting a specific demographic attracted protesters from those cohorts. My participation within the Sikh, Egyptian, and NHS bursaries protests was forced into a periphery-member-researcher role, in which my presence was extricated from participation and interaction. The dilemma of such protests becomes evident: the attraction of nuanced support is counterbalanced with the exclusion of support from other demographics. At the Egyptian and Sikh protests, though I was present, potential participation was complicated and largely ruled out by language barriers when chants, signs, and speeches were conducted in non-English languages. The NHS bursaries protest replicated this challenge differently. Though here I was able to understand them, I felt out of place among the protesters dressed in nurses' uniforms and attire. This strategy for establishing solidarity among protesters had inadvertently become its own restraint.

Active-participant-member and periphery-participant-member roles were difficult to maintain. I constantly felt pressured to remain mobile for fear of attracting suspicion. Tension in the atmosphere at the Sikh protest shifted my role from active-participant-member to periphery-participant-member. Lines of barricades and police officers bracketed the large crowd on the curb. On the north side of Aldwych, a separate, smaller crowd was detained in front of the Waldorf Hilton by a cluster of officers in riot gear. Between the two sides of Aldwych, a string of police squad vans blocked off one side of the road, punctuated by horseback officers teeming about. As altercations grew, police movement increased and their lines expanded, hostile to conversation and suspicious of those loitering for too long.

The other protests, whose goals were without a specific demographic focus, attracted participants of a wider mix of ages, races, and ethnicities. This facilitated full participation that constituted the assumption of a complete-member-researcher role, which was significantly easier to maintain: I was no longer attempting to avoid police suspicion, having accepted it as inevitable. In this role, as I engaged in conversations with other protesters at the Syrian protest and die-in, my consciousness about the position I took gradually changed. I grew more open to expressing my political orientations. Throughout the speeches on bombing Syria at the beginning, I saw external observers as individuals idling around without participating. They avoided prompts to chant and refused to raise signs or take pamphlets from the distributors. Witnessing their indifference incited a frustration within me that questioned their motives for attending the protest. It felt as if our protest efforts—and the cause we were fighting for—were insultingly dismissed as unworthy of interest. I searched, but did not find, the indiscriminate desire for coverage that Shawn described; the dissemination of our message that I found myself seeking was an active one. Passive attention, I felt, contributed nothing to the struggle at hand. So what if others were simply aware of the proposal to bomb Syria, if they did not care enough to actionize? My choice to participate itself was indication that the demonstration aligned with what I found to be important. I felt that the chants and signs were more than methods of participation—they were expressions of my personal conviction against state decisions, and my connection to a community of moral, socially conscious others. Protest tactics were symbolic representations of my will, while my body, I felt, had become a representation of moral liberalism.

My position toward the police also changed. When the decision was passed in Parliament during the die-in to bomb Syria, anger welled up inside me. I saw the police barring the gates to Parliament with a new, critical eye. Why were they standing in our way? So what if it was their job to keep order? How could that supersede the fundamental, ethical commitment to preserving human life that was undeniably in crisis? Our peace would not have anything to gain by bringing war to someone else's home.

As for those who did not actionize, they contributed nothing to what I wanted to represent, and could only detract from it by potentially *misrepresenting* us. The feeling returned, when I saw a young white female reporter move through the sit-in with a notepad. She approached protesters and asked them about their feelings on the protest, after which she requested that they state their age and residency status, and explicitly elicited quotes from them. A black man asked her "do you need to record [my age]?" to which she shrugged and replied, "it's just for quotes." What began as apprehension turned into disdain as this conversation took place beside me. Our protest was again reduced to a jovial, theatrical performance for detached study, as if we were specimens, unworthy of serious participation. It was *not her* who represented *our* movement; it was myself and those committed enough to chant who represented the movement. She should have joined or stayed away altogether to circumvent this conflation.

Full immersion in my role may invoke criticism about my having been swept up by the situation—having my perspectives shaped in ways that I may not be able to see, and implicitly altering my interpretations as a result. But as this article demonstrates, the complexity of transient, typological structures of power that organize protest spaces can only be excavated with practices of immersion, deserving of a level of engagement far deeper than the description it has been offered in scholarship thus far. Just as meaning and culture performatively define and realize the relational content of embeddedness (DiMaggio 1992), the reverse, allowing ourselves into social embeddedness, permits better access to the culture and meaning underlying social relations of an ethnographic setting; neglecting to do so would distance us from the norms, and the symbolic mechanisms by which they come to be, within the very social environments we purport to explore (Au 2017).

Shuttling between different participation roles, moreover, helps to circumvent the symptoms of "going native." The dissonance I experienced between the perspective of a protester as a complete-member-researcher—hesitant to trust outsiders—and that which was championed by protest leaders and organizers—welcoming toward third-party observers—urges reflection on my experiences as a periphery-member-researcher: why were protesters welcoming towards me when *I* was an observer, when I, as a protester, did not feel the same towards observers? Perhaps other participants at the Sikh and Egyptian rallies were more welcoming toward me *only* after observing my behavior and confirming my intentions as a potential supporter or witness for police conduct. This might speak to a potential fracture in power as perceptions of third-party observers diverge among organizers and protesters: whereas organizers sought *passive support* provided through attention (coverage), protesters sought *active support* provided through participation. I had, after all, declined to ask for quotes as a keen journalist would have or to stay only when

convenient—I stayed to observe the protest from start to finish, and I spoke with protest promoters as they approached me or otherwise.

Conclusion: Reconceptualizing Protests and Power in the Modern City

The social ecological approach methodologically transcends the absence of deeper meanings inherent in descriptive ethnography, and theoretically overcomes the difficulties associated with reductions of protests to highly abstracted functions of society according to existing social movement theories. It does so by using a critical ethnography that places a researcher within the context of a protest and within the *interactions* that form this context. Exploring the interactions also calls on an autoethnographic account to excavate discrepancies between the perspectives expressed by different roles, while improving the quality of ethnographic data by identifying and assessing whether nuances in the data are a result of biases from differing levels of participation. Shuttling between different participation roles contributes to an "outsider-within" perspective that complements the social ecological approach by augmenting critical ethnography and autoethnography, at the same time it circumvents the risk of "going native." Being a sociological "stranger" elicited honest, revealing confessions from protesters, police, and third parties in a way that helped illustrate the structured ways in which they interacted, and sharpened the reflections that resulted from these observations.

The chief theoretical contribution of applying the social ecological approach derives from a novel conceptualization of power as a transient structure. The theoretical constitution of power in social movements is, within this approach, revealed to be (a) rooted in the combination of action and speech as it "springs up" in moments of heightened collective agency; (b) both mediating and mediated by representations of symbolic meanings generated through collective interpretations; (c) its sensibilities and efficacies are determined by collective convergence in symbolic interpretations; and (d) cast into binary opposition between protesters and police, who mutually constituted symbolic representations of hostile principles to resist and be resisted by. What followed was an account of how space was organized to facilitate participation in speeches and chants from protesters *and* ordinary, observing members of the city, as well as the organizational strategies used and symbolic representations exchanged among police, protesters, and even third-party observers in relation to the demonstration, all of which supported a conceptualization of power as a fundamentally transient, typological social structure and a reinterpretation of space in the city as milieus that blur the cultural boundaries between the ordinary and the politically demonstrative, between everyday urban spaces and protest spaces.

The social ecological approach benefits future studies of social movements by enabling researchers to construct accounts of protests that penetrate the social structures that organize interactions between protesters, police, and third parties, as well as the physical and symbolic characteristics of their environment that come to bear on these interactions. Thus, its further contributions include refining future theorizations of protests by allowing for a flexible conceptualization of power and protest spaces, measuring interactions and claims against each other to uncover local biases concerning protests and the city, and further verifying these by introducing a reflexivity built through shuttling between participation roles.

Note

1. I refer to "members" (of the city), rather than "residents" because (a) people in the vicinity were not residents alone, but also included tourists and visitors; (b) "members" is meant to convey inevitable participation, willing or otherwise, in a given space.

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