Differential Impact of Repression on Social Movements: Christian Organizations and Liberation Theology in South Korea (1972–1979)*

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During the height of authoritarianism in South Korea (1972–1979), Christian activists challenged the state along two dimensions. First, protesting Christians formed formal social movement organizations to better garner the resources to sustain their social movement. Second, they waged a discursive battle that challenged the legitimizing rhetoric of the state. By 1979, Christians developed a social movement industry involving the network of formal organizations as well as systematizing their rhetoric of protest in the guise of a Korean liberation theology; Minjung Theology. Drawing upon archival data and social movement theory, this study traces the rise and development of both the Christian social movement industry and Minjung Theology. We find that the emergence and evolution of mobilizing structures and movement frames were influenced by the state's repressive apparatuses and legitimizing rhetoric, respectively. Likewise, Christians' attempts to mobilize and challenge the legitimizing rhetoric of the state further contributed to the closing of the political opportunity structure. This study empirically verifies recent theoretical work emphasizing the importance of considering the differential impact of repression on various components of a social movement.

Social movement theorists have pointed to the importance of several key factors that facilitate political protest. Much literature has highlighted the critical role of social movement organizations (SMOs) and activists' abilities to frame issues in the sustaining of a movement. While the former trend in the literature is best articulated by Resource Mobilization Theory (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tarrow 1998; Tilly 1978), the latter line of research is generally categorized as the cultural approach to social movements (Haydu 1999; Johnston and Klandermans 1995; Klandermans 1984; Rohlinger 2002; Snow and Benford 1988; Snow et al. 1986; Swidler 1986). In addition, scholars of social movements have insisted on the importance of the larger political context in which a movement takes place. This last approach is captured in the Political Process Model (McAdam 1982).

Movement scholars have attempted to consolidate these various research programs and have offered a synthetic and interactive approach to studying political protest and contention (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). These scholars argue that it is imperative to acknowledge the various components of a
movement including the important role of both organizations and cultural frames. In addition, they argue that a movement’s organizational capacity and actors’ abilities to successfully frame issues are influenced by the larger political context. Thus McAdam and colleagues (1996) advocate an approach to studying social movements that focuses on the interaction between mobilizing structures, framing processes, and the political opportunity structure.

One way to study the interaction between these three components of a social movement is to assess the impact that repression has on various movement components. As repression is one aspect of the political opportunity structure and a “threat” that movements face, it has a direct bearing on the ability of activists to garner resources, create movement organizations, and frame issues (della Porta 1996; Goldstone and Tilly 2001; Kriesi 1996). Earlier studies focusing on movement organizations and frames have assessed the contributions of these two movement components to the success of a movement. Less is known, however, of how these movement components emerge and evolve through the course of a movement. Therefore, we draw attention to how external factors, such as repression, impact the transformation of movement organizations and frames.

We present the case study of Christians’ participation in South Korea’s democracy movement in the 1970s to explicate how state repression can influence mobilizing structures and cultural frames. We situate Christian SMOs and Korean liberation theology in relation to the state’s repressive apparatuses and legitimizing rhetoric, respectively. We find that state repression affected the emergence and evolution of Christian SMOs as well as Christians’ abilities to frame issues surrounding the movement. Christian SMOs were formed in direct reaction to the repressive policies of the Korean state. Complementarily, the state’s branding of Korean Christians as political opportunists and communist instigators prompted movement leaders and theologians to further develop the religious justification for their movement which ultimately culminated in the articulation of a Korean liberation theology. Extrapolating from this empirical case, we point to the usefulness of considering the differential impact of repression on not only public displays of protest but also mobilizing structures and movement frames.

Organizations, Frames, and Repression

The current trend in the movement literature does not assume the mutual exclusivity of mobilizing structures, frames, and political opportunities but rather emphasizes their synthesis and interaction (Isaac 2002; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; Tarrow 1998; Voss 1996). In their edited volume, McAdam and colleagues (1996) propose a synthetic theory of the interaction of these three variables while offering the first set of empirical studies that uses this tripartite approach. Below we provide a brief synopsis of this theoretical research program.
One important contribution of Resource Mobilization Theory (hereafter RMT) to the social movement literature has been its emphasis on the role of formal organizations in social movements (McCarthy 1996; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tarrow 1998; Tilly 1978). In their seminal article, McCarthy and Zald (1977) note the fundamental assumption in RMT: that social movements can only be sustained if they can garner material resources (i.e., money and labor). They use the term “social movement organization” (hereafter SMO) to describe those individual formal organizations “which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a countermovement and attempts to implement those goals” (p. 1218). They also theorize that different SMOs can work together in a single social movement to facilitate the garnering of resources. To capture this idea of SMO networking, they use the term “social movement industry” (p. 1219; hereafter SMI). Finally, they go on to speculate that within a single society there could arise various unrelated social movements. The general grouping of SMOs and SMIs is collectively identified as a “social movement sector.” Through these concepts, resource mobilization theorists furthered our understanding of social movements by making salient the strategic choices of movement participants and the importance of garnering material resources.

Although RMT has been influential in the study of social movements, theorists began to criticize and elaborate on it without fully leaving its main tenets. The Political Process Model (hereafter PPM) is one such attempt. Proponents of the PPM note that RMT neglects to situate social movements in relation to those groups that are being challenged by the movement (della Porta 1996; Kriesi 1996; McAdam 1982; Tilly 1978). These scholars argue that the study of social movements must recognize that movements occur within a larger political opportunity structure (hereafter POS). They insist that elite groups fundamentally affect the opportunity for the emergence and durability of a social movement.

While early studies focused on how the POS influences the emergence and fate of social movements (McAdam 1982), more recent work has turned their attention to how the POS shapes the form that social movements take. As McAdam (1996:29) notes, “movement form would appear to be yet another variable that owes, in part, to differences in the nature of the opportunities that set movements in motion.” Della Porta (1996) furthers the discussion by arguing that repression is one important aspect of the POS and shows how the policing of protest in Italian and German social movements greatly influenced the “action repertoires” of both movements. Generalizing from these two empirical cases, she argues that a closed POS has a “direct impact on social movements . . . restricting a movement’s resources and limiting its facilities . . . destroying leaders . . . encouraging conflict between groups, and sabotaging particular actions” (p. 65). Both McAdam’s (1996) theoretical argument and della Porta’s (1996) empirical comparative study show the importance of considering
opportunities in understanding how a social movement emerges, takes shape, and the degree to which it succeeds.

The PPM contributes to social movement theory by firmly situating movements in relation to those groups they challenge. While RMT and the PPM have been dominant in the movement literature, some scholars have criticized them for neglecting the interpretative dimension to social movements (Gamson 1995; Gamson and Meyer 1996; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Klandermans 1984; Rohlinger 2002; Snow et al. 1986). In their seminal article on frame alignment processes, Snow and colleagues (1986) argue that RMT and PPM does not explain how participants come to understand their participation in a movement. Thus, they argue that social movement theorists still need to address the social–psychological aspects of movement participation.

Culture’s role in social movements has been defined in a variety of ways by different theorists. Fine (1995:128) sees social movement culture as a “bundle of narratives” that provides interpretive coherence for individuals to make sense of their participation. Swidler (1986) on the other hand, construes culture as a “tool kit” from which participants draw their symbolic weapons in their discursive challenge. Snow and colleagues (1986) understand culture as a collective mental “frame” that provides a “schemata of interpretation” for individuals engaged in a social movement. And still others advocate a general constructionist approach that makes salient individual sense-making when participating in collective action (Gamson and Modigliani 1989). While variations in semantics abound, most are agreed in terms of how culture functions in a social movement. First and foremost, a social movement culture provides a coherent worldview which makes sense of individuals’ participation in a social movement. But beyond this, frames, cultural tool kits, and movement narratives, play a pragmatic role in social movements by providing both a diagnosis of the problem and offering a solution (Snow and Benford 1988).

**The Impact of Repression on Movements**

As summarized above, the literature has tended to construe SMOs and frames as independent variables influencing the sustainability and success of a movement. In contrast, we explore the factors that impact the emergence and evolution of organizations and cultural frames. In an authoritarian context, repression can be an even larger factor in the overall POS as there tends to be more solidarity and centralization amongst elites, less official venues for public discourse, and higher levels of both material and discursive “threat” (Alexander 1992; Davenport, Johnston, and Mueller 2005; Earl 2006; Goldstone and Tilly 2001; Johnston 2006; della Porta 1996).

Past studies regarding the impact of repression on public protest events have yielded a variety of conflicting findings. Some scholars have found that
state repression dampens the pace of protest (Olzak, Beasley, and Olivier 2003), while others have found increasing rates of protest and collective action following attempts at movement repression (Khawaja 1993, 1994; Loveman 1998; White 1989). And still others argue that the relationship between repression and protest is nonlinear. But even here the curvilinear pattern describing the relationship between repression and protest is debated. Some argue that repression is a cost to movement participants and thus deters protest activity initially. If, however, this repression is determined illegitimate, the same repression can motivate further involvement in movement activities and thus radicalize a movement (Opp and Roehl 1990; Rasler 1996). In contrast, others argue that the real relationship takes on an inverted U pattern as lower levels of repression might signify a safer context for participation. But when repression becomes severe, the cost of participation can be too high and thus contribute to a movement’s demise (Muller 1985; Weede 1987).

While these earlier studies have shown the complicated influence of repression on public protest, collective action, and the use of violence by movement participants, they have only considered the most direct and public component of a social movement. With the exception of Loveman (1998), these empirical studies have looked at how repression deters or motivates public protest events in the form of street demonstrations, petitioning, public claims making, and the timing of these conspicuous events (Barkan 1984; Olzak et al. 2003; Opp and Roehl 1990; Rasler 1996). They have also looked at how repression impacts the use of violence in street demonstrations (Weede 1987; White 1989).

However, as we discussed above, movements consist of more than the public actions that are staged. Keeping this in mind we want to “broaden the range of consequences” of repression and ask how repression impacts more inconspicuous mobilizing efforts including a movement’s organizational capacity and actors’ abilities to articulate cultural frames (Earl 2006:140). Thus, we do not attempt to adjudicate between the contrasting findings in the empirical literature about repression’s impact on public protest events but rather assess the differential impact repression had on Korean Christians’ abilities to create SMOs and develop a theological understanding of their participation.

Our study is an attempt to empirically explicate the theoretical assertion that we should be concerned with the interaction between the repressive state and mobilizing actors (Davenport, Johnston, and Mueller 2005; Rohlinger 2002). More specifically, we follow through on Earl’s theoretical insight that repression will influence “the construction of grievances . . . [and the] organizational formation” of a social movement” (Earl 2004:77). Drawing on recent studies that emphasize the potential for repression to “backfire” and become “transformative events” that facilitate a movement’s development, we focus on the specific links between state repression and the founding of SMOs (Hess and Martin
In turn, we also bring to the fore the “contentious talk” between the state and Christian activists and show how “oppositional speech acts” facilitated Christian theological development as well as the state’s strategy of branding activists as political opportunists and communist sympathizers (Johnston 2005, 2006).

**Data and Methods**

Our main archival source is the University of California at Los Angeles Archival Collection on Democracy and Unification in Korea (hereafter UCLA Archive). This archive was initially compiled by the North American Coalition for Human Rights in Korea and reorganized by the Korea Church Coalition for Peace, Justice, and Reunification. Included in this prodigious archive are various types of primary documents including publications by the Coalition, Korean National Council of Churches, various Christian social movement organizations, and formal declarations of protest by individuals and groups of Christian activists.

A second archival source is *The 1970s Democracy Movement* (National Council of Churches in Korea 1987). This eight-volume collection was compiled by the Human Rights Committee of the Korean National Council of Churches and published in 1986. This set of primary sources includes mission statements of various Christian SMOs, official histories of these organizations, and formal protest statements declared by Christian activists during the Yusin era. Finally, we draw upon the South Korean government’s publication of Park Chung-hee’s public speeches given throughout his tenure.

In this study, we utilize the methodology of the narrative mode advocated by historical sociologists. The employment of the narrative mode in demonstrating “the temporality of social action and historical events” distinguishes historical explanation from nonhistorical ones (Griffin 1992:405). Our historical explanation of the emergence and evolution of Christian SMOs and frames shows how the narrative mode, couched within a bounded temporality, can uncover critical relationships. We are less interested in the “final product” (e.g., the established SMI and *Minjung* Theology at the end of the 1970s) as we are with how the process of interaction between Christian activists and the state fueled both groups to develop their organizational capacity and discursive rhetoric. Thus, our narrative reconstruction of Christian protest in the 1970s reveals the factors that facilitate the founding and networking of SMOs as well as the evolution of movement discourse over time.

**Historical Context: Park Chung-hee’s Yusin Regime**

Following the massive student uprisings on April 19, 1960, the first South Korean republic under Syngman Rhee came to an end. Upon Rhee’s abdication
and the failure of Yun Po-sun and Chang Myon’s democratic government, General Park Chung-hee, through a military coup, assumed political control of South Korea. Citing the need for political stability and the ever present North Korean threat, Park began the process of political purging and restructuring. Fulfilling his promise to re-establish a democratic polity, Park formally retired from the military in 1962 and ran for the presidency in 1963. Soon after “winning” the election, Park established the Economic Planning Board that implemented a series of five-year economic plans for the larger goal of industrializing South Korea. These efforts resulted in a 7.8 percent rise in the gross national product (GNP) through the first five-year plan (1962–1966) and another 10.5 percent by the end of the second five-year plan (1967–1971) (Oh 1991). While the first two five-year plans promoted and incubated light industries such as the textile industry, the third and fourth five-year plans (1972–1976, 1977–1981) reallocated state resources to heavy industries such as construction and ship-manufacturing. Korea’s economy continued to grow in the 1970s and this so-called “miracle of the Han” was used by Park to justify his seizure of power as “he needed economic progress to defend his political base against those who regarded his seizure of power as illegitimate” (Vogel 1991:51).

At the end of his second term, Park coerced the National Assembly to amend the constitution so that he could run for an unprecedented third term. Winning the election of 1971 by a narrow margin, Park’s frustrations with the democratic system led him to enact the Yusin Constitution on October 17, 1972. This new “constitution” concentrated all political power in the executive branch and all future presidents were to be appointed by the National Council for Unification which was headed by Park. Park now had the additional power to appoint one-third of the National Assembly as well as all members of the judicial system including Constitutional Court justices. Most importantly, the Yusin Constitution allowed the president to declare special ad hoc “Emergency Decrees” which gave Park the flexibility to amend national law as he deemed fit. In short, the Yusin Constitution, in all practicality, “transformed the presidency into a legal dictatorship” (Eckert et al. 1991:365).

While President Park did use coercive measures to carry out these “revitalizing reforms,” he also began a discursive campaign to justify the radical changes. First, he relied on the perceived threat to Korea’s national security as a reason why a strong authoritarian government was needed. The United States’ efforts at rapprochement with China, highlighted by President Richard Nixon’s visit to that country in early 1972, as well as the relaxing of tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, signaled to Park that South Korea’s position as the bulwark against communism might be compromised (Park 1973:25–6). In addition to relying on national security as a legitimizing factor, Park argued that continual economic growth is dependent upon a strong government.
Park “emphasized that without ‘economic equality, political democracy is no more than an abstract, useless concept’” (Oh 1999:52). Put even more bluntly, Park argued that Korea has “to resort to undemocratic and extraordinary measures in order to improve the living conditions of the masses . . . one cannot deny that people are more frightened of poverty and hunger than totalitarianism” (Oh 1999:53).

Emergence and Evolution of the Christian SMI

The Christian SMI that emerged in the 1970s constituted many different types of organizations that were differentiated depending on their main concerns, activities, and member characteristics. Substantively, the activities of these SMOs can also be considered to be part of secular movements (i.e., labor movement, student movement, farmer’s movement, etc.). However, the solidarity of these organizations, and thus the justification to put them under the rubric of a specifically Christian movement industry, lay in their overt and stated Christian motives for mobilization. Table 1 provides a brief description of the most salient organizations.

The Christian SMI was differentiated by the characteristics of its members. Although SMOs were networked into a larger community of Christian activists, different SMOs primarily recruited students, youths, clergy, urban poor, laborers, women, or prisoners of conscience. The diversity of these identity-based communities led to a greater diversity in organizational activities. The range of activities included the unionization of labor, urban poverty relief, monitoring of the human rights situation, women’s rights, aiding political prisoners, and monitoring voting booths during elections. Most Christian SMOs were founded during the height of authoritarian rule (1972–1979) and as such the diversity of the Christian SMI is, in part, the result of the interaction of state repression and Christian response.

State repression took the form of arrests and incarceration of a wide range of people who were critical of the government. In addition, the political opportunity structure became increasingly closed through the promulgation of special Emergency Decrees. As the following historical reconstruction reveals, Christian organizations might have been “weak and informally structured” at the beginning of the Yusin era, but they became increasingly networked with each other in response to these state measures (Kriesi 1996:154). The dynamic interplay between the state, which monopolized control of the political opportunity structure, and Christians helps explain how individual SMOs emerged and evolved into a SMI. More generally, the Korean case exemplifies the interaction between a repressive state and movement actors (Davenport, Johnston, and Mueller 2005; Issac 2002; Kriesi 1996; della Porta 1996). In Figure 1 we display the important moments of contention between state and society throughout the 1970s.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Movement Organization</th>
<th>Founding date</th>
<th>Principal members/member characteristics</th>
<th>Activities and main concerns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian Academy</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Kang Won-yong</td>
<td>Political conscience-raising study groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Women United</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Christian women including Lee Oo-jung</td>
<td>Women’s rights, antiprostitution movement, political prisoners, human rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean Student Christian Federation</td>
<td>November 1, 1969</td>
<td>Na Sang-gi, Park Hyung-kyu</td>
<td>Organize students, street protest for political change, political conscience-raising study groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Youth Council for the Protection of Democracy</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Christian Youths/Young Adults</td>
<td>Monitor election of 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seoul Metropolitan Community Organization—later, Korea Metropolitan Community Organization</td>
<td>September 1, 1971</td>
<td>Park Hyung-kyu, Kwon Ho-kyung, Kim Dong-won, Lee Hae-hak, Lee Kyu-sang, Huh Byung-sub, Mo Kab-kyung</td>
<td>Urban poverty, antislum evacuation movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Members/Characteristics</td>
<td>Activities and Main Concerns</td>
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<tr>
<td>Association of the Family of Prisoners of Conscience</td>
<td>September, 1974</td>
<td>Kim Duk-kui, family members of political prisoners</td>
<td>Political prisoners, human rights monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights Committee-Thursday/Friday Prayer Meeting</td>
<td>September 18, 1974</td>
<td>Members of HRC, AFPS, and released prisoners associated with the APRD</td>
<td>Prayer meetings, dissemination of HRC’s human rights newsletter, public testimonies of political prisoners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean Christian Action Organization</td>
<td>February 8, 1975</td>
<td>George Ogle, Cho Hwa-soon</td>
<td>Umbrella organization, human rights, urban poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Industrial Mission</td>
<td>February 8, 1975</td>
<td>Prisoners of Conscience</td>
<td>Labor rights, urban poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Prisoners for the Restoration of Democracy</td>
<td>March, 1975</td>
<td>Prisoners of Conscience</td>
<td>Organize political prisoners within jails and once they get out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Protestant Clergy Corps for the Realization of Justice</td>
<td>March 20, 1975</td>
<td>Protestant clergy members including, Kang Sin-myung, Kang Won-yong, Kim Kwan-suk</td>
<td>Political/prayer meetings, release of political prisoners, reinstatement of dismissed professors and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecumenical Youth Council</td>
<td>January 29, 1976</td>
<td>Christian students and youths</td>
<td>Human rights monitoring, antidraft movement, organize students and youth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1
Timeline.
As in many other countries, urbanization accompanied South Korea’s transformation into a modern industrialized nation. State enforced policies of the Economic Planning Board finalized South Korea’s transition from an agrarian society to a leading capitalist nation in East Asia (Shin 1998a). While the seeds of capitalism and the necessary infrastructure were laid during the Japanese colonial period (1910–1945; Eckert 1991), the birth of the modern city only occurred after the Korean War as citizens in rural Korea flocked to urban centers. Rapid urbanization and the large influx of migrants into metropolitan areas inevitably created an “urban underclass” and large groups of laborers found themselves working under atrocious conditions. From this context arose South Korea’s modern labor movement, sparked by Chun Tae-il’s self-immolation protest on November 13, 1970. Urbanization was also symbiotically tied to the rapid growth of the protestant church and contact between laborers and the clergy was inevitable.

Clergy associated with the Urban Industrial Mission (UIM), learned of the working conditions through stories their laity told them. UIM ministers, concerned with the situation, decided to obtain manual labor jobs to see for themselves how the laborers were being treated. From this insider’s vantage point, UIM ministers began to hold Bible studies for the workers at the factories. These Bible studies evolved into educational meetings for the laborers and together with them, UIM members began the strategizing work necessary to form company unions. Their efforts spread to various factories and the UIM helped organize no less than 20 percent of all new unions founded in the 1970s (Koo 1993). The UIM became a leading organization in the larger labor movement primarily through their involvement in two salient union disputes.

Aided by the UIM and especially the Revered Cho Wha-soon, laborers at the Dongil Textile Company had managed to successfully establish a prolabor union. On February 12, 1978, the preferred candidate of the women-dominated union was about to win leadership for the second year in a row. Frustrated by their past success and fearing another year of dealing with a prolabor company union, management of Dongil Textile Company, with the complicit support of the state, hired street thugs to disrupt the election. Not only were the women attacked and beaten but human excrement was also thrown on them by the hired strongmen to further humiliate them. One hundred and twenty-four union members were fired on the spot including the union leadership for “causing damage to company property” and the company refused to acknowledge the union completely (Ogle 1990:86). Upon hearing news of this incident, the UIM and other organizations in the Christian SMI began to mobilize support for these workers. Fired workers joined members of the UIM, the Human Rights Committee of the Korean National Council of Churches, the Ecumenical Youth Council, various Catholic groups, and journalists from Dong-A Daily Newspaper,
to begin a “fast protest” at Dapdong Cathedral on March 12. The Dongil Textile Company labor struggle became an important incident and a rallying point for the larger labor movement (Koo 2001).

The UIM’s role in the Dongil Textile Company struggle catapulted them to the forefront of the labor movement. This incident also facilitated the networking of different Christian SMOs who came together in solidarity with the UIM and women workers of the Dongil Textile Company. Through various incidents such as this, the UIM became an important SMO in the larger labor movement. The government influenced the rise of the UIM in the labor movement in two ways. As mentioned above, the first two five-year economic plans (1962–1971) of the Economic Planning Board facilitated the development of a large working class as light industries (especially in textiles) were promoted and financed by the government. Second, the state executed the unspoken policy of supporting or assisting labor repression by employers and conservative labor organizations (Koo 2001). Thus, the state created the structural conditions whereby a large labor force was created and its attempt to discipline this burgeoning labor force motivated organizations such as the UIM to stand in solidarity with workers. The state then, in the form of economic and repressive policies, acted as an “external factor” influencing the development of the Christian SMI and points to the importance of the “interactions between challengers and authorities” (Kriesi 1996:160–1).

In the ranking of prominent moments in the labor movement of the 1970s, the Dongil Textile Company incident is only rivaled by the labor struggle at the YH Trading Company. On August 11, 1979, roughly 250 workers at the YH Trading Company held a sit-in strike to protest the closing of their plant due to mismanagement (UCLA Archive:Box 09-1, Folder 09-1-06). In an effort to suppress their protest, and at the behest of the managers of the company, the government sent 1000 policemen in full riot gear to the plant. During the violent skirmishes between workers and the police, one woman worker was killed and many more injured. Shocked by the violence and the death of the woman worker, members of the Human Rights Committee of the Korean National Council of Churches held a press conference for both Korean and international journalists. The following day, another Christian SMO, the Association of the Families of Prisoners of Conscience, joined the effort to decry police brutality and held a sit-in demonstration at Hanbit Church. Working closely with the remnants of the workers and the UIM, these other Christian SMOs were now part of the larger labor movement.

As repression is one way the state can influence the opportunity structure (Kriesi 1996; della Porta 1996), the emergence of Christian SMOs in the larger labor movement points to the importance of the interaction of political opportunity structures and mobilizing structures. Through the promulgations of Emergency
Decrees, Park Chung-hee was able to manipulate the law at will and the political opportunity structure became increasingly closed. Along with the more general claim of national security, violations of these Emergency Decrees were the main justifications for the mass arrests that took place during the Yusin period. Various Christian SMOs were founded to address the closing of the political opportunity structure as shown in Table 1 and Figure 1.

In an effort to quell the student activists that played such a prominent role in the April 19, 1960 revolution, Park Chung-hee issued presidential Emergency Decree (ED) number 4 on April 3, 1974. Following up on ED numbers 1 and 2, which made illegal any slandering of the Yusin constitution and formed a court system to prosecute violators of the decrees, ED number 4 outlawed the progressive student association, the National Federation of Democratic Youth and Students (minch’ông). In addition, ED number 4 closed down Korea University which was a hotbed for student activism. The specificity of the Emergency Decrees shows that the state took seriously, and was reacting to, the movements that challenged it. The increasing closure of the opportunity structure in South Korea was influenced by the larger social movement that Christians were a part of, and in turn, shows the “reciprocal influence” of challenging and challenged groups (della Porta 1996:64).

For the most part, the mass arrests of student activists that took place under ED number 4 silenced this historically important segment of civil society. Members of the Korean Student Christian Federation, who worked through college networks, were also arrested during the “minch’ông incident.” Upon realizing that the college campus was too dangerous a space for antigovernment protest, the Human Rights Committee of the Korean National Council of Churches formed the Ecumenical Youth Council. The Ecumenical Youth Council was founded to mobilize students and youths outside of college campuses in order to draw upon the potential strength of the student population. Thus, the founding of the Ecumenical Youth Council only occurred as a reaction to ED number 4. Remembering that ED number 4 was itself a reaction to the larger student movement, this one case is an example of the process by which the state responds to a movement by closing the opportunity structure which in turn motivates activists to form a SMO.

The founding of the Human Rights Committee of the Korean National Council of Churches (KNCC) can also be considered an “organizational response” by Christians to the state’s repressive measures. Christians’ initial challenge against Park Chung-hee and the Yusin regime centered on political themes. The recovery of democracy was the prime objective of Pastor Park Hyung-kyu’s 1973 Easter Sunday protest and marks the beginning of Christians’ challenge to the Yusin regime. Immediately after the protest, the state arrested Pastor Park for violating the National Security Law. Pastor Park’s arrest and the mass
arrests that followed ED numbers 1, 2, and 4, motivated Christians to incorporate the rhetoric of human rights into their social movement. Thus, what began as a political movement quickly evolved into a humanitarian movement in response to repression by the state. Learning of the harsh treatment of political prisoners, the KNCC sponsored a “Church and Human Rights Week” (NCCK 1987 Vol. I:295). During that week, members of the KNCC and other concerned Christians began the strategic work necessary to address the Yusin regime’s human rights violations. This desire for a strategic humanitarian front culminated in the formation of the Human Rights Committee (HRC) on April 11, 1974. This SMO acted as the central organization networking other SMOs in the Christian SMI. In addition, the Human Rights Committee developed various ad hoc organizations to address specific issues as they arose.

One of these ad hoc organizations was the Association of the Families of Prisoners of Conscience (AFPC), formed in September of 1974. As more and more Christian dissidents were being incarcerated under the Emergency Decrees, family members of those arrested were in need of a community that could sympathize and provide support. Realizing this need Kim Duk-kui, wife of former president Yun Po-sun and members of the Human Rights Committee, established the AFPC. This group grew in membership as it made efforts to mobilize the family members of arrested activists. Similarly, the Association of Prisoners for the Restoration of Democracy (APRD) was founded with the assistance of the Human Rights Committee as members in the latter SMO felt that even incarcerated dissidents would benefit from a community that understood their situation. The APRD also grew in numbers as more and more dissidents were imprisoned.

While their activities were of course limited, inmates were able to find a meaningful collective identity as they shared their stories of protest, arrest, torture, and incarceration. Upon release, members continued their work by sharing their testimonies of prison life and exhorting Christian dissidents not to give up their struggle for democracy, human rights, and justice. The HRC, AFPC, and APRD were all SMOs that were founded as Christian dissidents responded to the state’s suppression of their social movement. Repressive measures through the policing of protest by the state indirectly lead to the formation of SMOs that specifically addressed incarceration tactics which in turn added to the diversity of the Christian SMI.

Mentioned above, ED numbers 1, 2, and 4 limited the political opportunity structure by making illegal any general criticism of the Yusin system and also specifically targeting student activists. Enforcement of these EDs resulted in the arrest and incarceration of many dissidents. But still it was not until ED number 9 was issued on May 13, 1975, that the Yusin regime reached the zenith of its repressive capability. This decree not only made illegal any criticism of Park
Chung-hee, the Yusin system, or any other facet of the government, it also disallowed any criticism of the ED itself. After the decree was issued, all dissenting elements of society were heavily monitored and persecuted by the Korean Central Intelligence Agency. Most of the Christian SMOs were forced to stop their overt activities and those that did not were forcibly closed down as leaders of various organizations were imprisoned.

It was in this precarious time following the promulgation of ED number 9 that the Friday Prayer Meetings became a critical part of the Christian SMI. Although these gatherings cannot be considered a formal SMO, it was still a space for dissenting Christians to gather and sustain their movement during great duress. Because of their overtly religious character, the state allowed these meetings to go on. Meetings consisted of Christians gathering together to pray for the nation generally and specific court cases of Christian dissidents. In addition, the Friday Prayer Meetings were engaged in subversive activities including disseminating the Human Rights Committee’s newsletter and providing an audience to members of the APRD who gave their testimonies at these meetings. Repression, then, did not completely stop Christian protest but rather influenced the direction and character of the movement. Different SMOs rescinded or came to the fore depending on the nature of the repression and how Christians dealt with that repression. That is to say, the overall building up of the Christian SMI, as well as its evolution, was intricately tied up with how the state reacted to Christian dissidents and the latter’s attempt to sustain their movement in the face of repression.

The Christian SMI represents Christians’ organizational protest against the Yusin regime. Christian protest, however, was not limited to the strategic mobilization reflected in the SMOs but also included expressive protest. Throughout the 1970s, Christians waged a discursive battle that raised political, humanitarian, and Christian symbols that both motivated and justified their actions. For a group of theologians, this discursive protest culminated in the formation of a Korean systematic liberation theology known as Minjung Theology.

Emergence and Evolution of Korean Liberation Theology

For Christian activists, Minjung Theology became a religious and cultural framework that allowed them to understand their protest. As noted above, movement frames provide a coherent worldview which makes sense of actors’ participation in a social movement (Gamson 1995; Johnston and Klandermans 1995; Snow and Benford 1988; Snow et al. 1986; Swidler 1986). Minjung Theology is the culmination of the process of “theologizing” the larger protest rhetoric that Christians utilized in their struggle against the Yusin regime. Justified by the belief that “the function and task of theology is to test, criticize and revise the language which the Church uses about God” (Thomas 1983:2), Korean
theologians drew upon their experience of struggle to construct a Korean version of liberation theology.

Christian discursive protest began with general political and humanitarian symbols but shifted toward issues of identity and purpose. This shift is due, in part, to attempts by the state to portray these Christians as political instigators. Generally speaking, *Minjung* Theology acted as a theological justification for their Christian movement and affirmed to Christian activists that their seemingly “political” protest was in fact a religious act. The discursive contest between the state and Christians was played out in a variety of mediums. The state had ready access to the media, published antiactivists tracks, and even used the courtroom to frame Christian protestors as political criminals. Christians had to find their own platforms. Ministers often used their pulpits as a stage for protest mixing political commentary and religious exhortations in their Sunday sermons. Christian leaders were key organizers for some of the most publicized protest events including Bishop Chi Hak-sun’s Declaration of Conscience in 1974 and the catalytic March 1, 1976 Declaration for the Salvation of the Nation. In addition, intellectuals, ministers, and theologians began a debate about Christians’ role in society in the journal, “Christian Thought” (*Kiddokyo Sasang*). All of these discursive protest events and academic writings by Korean Christians contributed to the initial articulation and development of Korean liberation theology. Table 2 briefly highlights three subcategories in *Minjung* Theology.³

Similar to the SMI, *Minjung* Theology was not thoroughly developed until the end of the Yusin era. *Minjung* Theology’s formation must be understood in relation to the rhetorical aspects of the Yusin regime. Movement frames are dynamic and interact with the rhetoric and justifications of the challenged group (Haydu 1999; Kane 1997; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001; Rohlinger 2002). Christian discursive protest of the Yusin regime began on April 22, 1973. During that Easter Sunday service, Pastor Park Hyung-kyu and two junior pastors of his church held a demonstration at Namsan (South Mountain in Seoul). They passed out leaflets that read “Politicians Repent,” “The Resurrection of the Democracy Is the Liberation of the People,” and “Lord, Show Thy Mercy to the Ignorant King!” (Kang 1997:102). These clergy were immediately arrested for violating the National Security Law. This initial interaction between Christian dissidents and the state set precedence and characterized the discursive contest throughout the 1970s.

Christian dissidents, including Park Hyung-kyu, emphasized that their protest was a natural extension of their religious faiths. That is, the policies of the Yusin regime contributed to the suffering of the people and that as spiritual leaders, the clergy must do something to alleviate that suffering. The Yusin regime, on the other hand, accused these Christians of overstepping the boundaries
### Table 2
Abridged Description of Minjung Theology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Soteriology</strong></th>
<th>Interprets what constitutes “salvation” in the Christian religion.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The concept of Han as the main issue for soteriology. Han is defined as both “a dominant feeling of defeat, resignation, and nothingness; [and] a feeling with a tenacity of will for life which comes to weaker being” (N.-D. Suh 1981).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Salvation as a social process rather than an individual one. A self-achieved process through the struggle for social liberation. The notion of “social sin” that blames the suffering of the Minjung on social structures rather than individual depravity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Orthodox Theology (point of contrast): salvation is by individuals repenting of their sins, accepting the resurrection of Jesus, and Jesus identified as the only begotten son of God and God incarnate. Salvation achieved by acceptance of grace which reconciles God and man.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Christology</strong></th>
<th>Interprets who Jesus is and his main purpose and message.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Jesus’s crucifixion as the symbolic crucifixion of the Minjung, emphasizing the historical person of Jesus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Story of Jesus in the gospels interpreted as a common story that all suffering people can recognize in their own oppression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Addressing and confronting the social sins of unjust societies as the defining messianic characteristic of Jesus.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Biblical Hermeneutics</strong></th>
<th>The study of how religious texts are interpreted.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Theological position that God dwells with and prefers marginalized and oppressed groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Old Testament is the history of belief about the Minjung’s liberation movement (the Exodus event) and creation of humanity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Masses of people surrounding Jesus’s ministry is a testament to his faithfulness to them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of their religious vocation and assumed that their protest was fundamentally a political act. Christian protest, the state argued, compromised the political stability of South Korea and thus justified their arrests vis-à-vis the National Security Law.

The state argued that the authoritarian structure of the Yusin constitution was necessary for not only the security of South Korean society but also for efficient modernization and industrialization. National security and economic development, the state maintained, signified the desires of the Korean people. Park Hyung-kyu, on the other hand, claimed that the Yusin system took away civil freedoms and that a return to democracy was the true will of the people. Thus, symbolic contention revolved around these two binary visions of what was truly best for the South Korean people. While Park Chung-hee assumed that the Yusin regime benefited South Korea, Park Hyung-kyu accused that system of robbing the people of their basic God-given rights. It is important to note that both the rhetoric of the state and the Christian challenge were predicated upon each group’s assumed representation of the desires and will of the people of South Korea.

Park Hyung-kyu’s arrest contributed to the further evolution of the cultural contest between the state and Christian dissidents. Moving away from the initial dichotomous structure of the cultural contest (national security/economic development versus democracy/civil rights), issues of identity and purpose became more salient throughout the 1970s. The accusation of being political opportunists vexed Christians but, more importantly, prompted a careful and conscious articulation of their reasons for protest. It was this need to respond to state accusation that provided the motive for developing a theological understanding of Christian protest. This, in turn, reveals the importance of understanding the dynamic formation of movement frames and relating it to the counter-framing attempts of the groups they challenge (Haydu 1999; Rohlinger 2002).

The “1973 Theological Declaration of Korean Christians,” written shortly after Park Hyung-kyu’s arrest, was the first public statement by Christian dissidents defining their position from specifically a religious standpoint. The declaration denied Park Chung-hee’s claim that the Yusin regime was a necessity and rather argued that “The present dictatorship in Korea is destroying rule by law and persuasion” (UCLA Archive:Box 08-1, Folder 1973). The theologians who drafted this declaration constructed a hierarchy of accountability arguing that “. . . no one is above the law except God. . . . If anyone poses himself above the law and betrays the divine mandate of justice, he is in rebellion against God” (UCLA Archive:Box 08-1, Folder 1973). The seemingly “political” protest of Park Hyung-kyu and other Christian dissidents was not political in their view, but rather an act that is deemed by “God’s divine mandate of justice” and thus fundamentally a religious act. Furthermore, this declaration also challenged the
state’s insistence that the Yusin system was necessary to secure fast and efficient economic development:

The present dictatorship is responsible for the economic system in Korea, in which the powerful dominate the poor. The people, poor urban workers and rural peasants, are victims of severe exploitation and social and economic injustice. So-called “economic development” in Korea turned out to be the conspiracy of a few rulers against the poor people, and a curse to our environment. (UCLA Archive:Box 08-1, Folder 1973)

This declaration challenged both of the state’s justifications for the Yusin regime, national security and economic development. It also redefined Christian protest as a religious act as opposed to the state’s accusation that Christian protest was fundamentally an issue of political power revealing their communist leanings.

This interactive pattern, the state’s proclivity to frame Christians as communists, and the latter’s attempts to defend their actions in religious terms, manifested itself in various important events in the 1970s. The Urban Industrial Mission (UIM)’s work with labor groups was part of the instrumental challenge of Christian activists. However, UIM’s activities also sparked a discursive debate that revolved around the identity of Christian dissidents. The government sponsorship of Hong Jee-young’s pamphlet “What Is the UIM Aiming At?” was one attempt to frame members of the UIM as communists (UCLA Archive:Box 09-1, Folder 09-1-04). The UIM, Hong argued, challenges the basis of the capitalist system because the UIM “imply companies belong to workers not to employers” (UCLA Archive:Box 09-1, Folder 09-1-06). This pamphlet was cited by the government as a justification for the violent repression of the UIM activities mentioned above.

In response to this serious accusation, members of the UIM and other Christian dissidents publicly declared that their actions were the natural manifestation of their Christian faith. The Catholic Justice and Peace Committee decried Hong’s pamphlet on March 20, 1978 and two days later, the Human Rights Committee made a similar criticism. In addition, three denominations affiliated with the Korean National Council of Churches held a press conference on August 29, 1979 to support the UIM and refute the state’s identification of the UIM as a communist organization (UCLA Archive:Box 09-1, Folder 09-1-06). Finally, from October 19 to 21, 1979, the HRC organized the conference “Consultation on Ideology” (UCLA Archive:Box 09-1, Folder 09-1-05). This conference provided the context for a more thorough investigation of how the government used anticommunist ideology to suppress civil rights and basic political freedoms.

Along with the debate surrounding the publication of Hong’s anti-UIM pamphlet, the case of the Christian Academy was another important moment. Originally founded as a generally scholarly oriented organization in the 1950s,
the Christian Academy’s mission was to raise the political consciousness of the Korean people. Its initial activities included teaching people what a democracy was, how a capitalist system worked, and generally what to expect from Korea’s modernization process. By the 1970s, however, the Christian Academy was involved in educating laborers and farmers of their particular role in Park Chung-hee’s revitalization program. This work, interpreted by the state as subversive, led to the arrests of Professor Chung Chang-yol and six other staff persons on May 28, 1979. The state cited the Anti-Communist Law for these arrests and during the court case, critical elements of the discursive contest between the state and Christians reached a boiling point. On August 6 of the same year, the judge presiding over the case asked one of the defendants, Lee Oo-jae, to define “socialism” since this was the prosecutors’ formal accusation (UCLA Archive:Box 09-1, Folder 09-1-05). Lee’s response focused on his duties as a Christian to help alleviate the suffering of the people of Korea and argued that his actions were a by-product of his faith and had nothing to do with the secular political ideology of socialism or communism.

The state’s attempts to frame Christian dissidents as communists, through the arrests of Christian Academy members and Hong’s pamphlet, ironically gave Christians an opportunity to rethink their motives for protest which in turn facilitated the dynamic formation of the movement’s frame. Other important moments in the development of Korean Christian liberation theology were two declarations that were highly publicized. First, the “Declaration of Conscience” by Bishop Chi Hak-sun (July 16, 1974), issued shortly after his arrest for violating ED numbers 1 and 4, criticized the Yusin constitution and urged all Christians to mobilize against Park Chung-hee’s tyrannical rule (Kang 1997). Second, the ecumenical gathering at Myungdong Cathedral on March 1, 1976 (the 57th anniversary of the March 1, 1919 Declaration of Independence from Japanese rule) provided the context for Lee Oo-jung’s reading of the “Declaration for the Salvation of the Nation.” This highly publicized event urged Christians to rise up against an unjust dictator and was declared in response to the state’s promulgation of ED number 9 (UCLA Archive:Box 09-1, Folder 09-1-03). Both of these declarations struggled with what it meant to be a Christian living under tyranny and concluded that active protest is a Christian duty.

More generally, the collective identity used as the master symbol to construct Korea’s liberation theology can also be considered a direct response to the state’s justifying rhetoric. The state’s legitimizing rhetoric and Christians’ protest rhetoric both claimed to speak for the Korean masses. That is, underlying both state rhetoric and Christian protest was the belief that each had the benefit of the Korean nation and its people in mind. Park Chung-hee, in his presidential declarations and speeches, constantly referred to the minjok (translated as nation) as the bearers of his goodwill and assumed that his policies
were what the Korean people wanted. Christian dissidents, on the other hand, raised an alternative rallying symbol, *minjung* (translated as masses or people), as the true referent to the Korean masses. For Christians, the *minjung* were suffering because of the Yusin system and were not the grateful *minjok* implied in Park’s speeches. For some theologians, such as Ahn Byung-mu, using *minjung* instead of *minjok* as the collective term identifying the Korean people was a conscious decision (D. K. S. Suh 1981:41). Thus as other scholars have noted (Shin 1998b), *minjung* and *minjok* became antithetical identifications of the Korean collective and symbolized the larger discursive contest between the state and Christian dissidents. The emergence of the *minjung*–*minjok* binary became a main axis on which the discursive contest was based.

What began as a contest between issues of national security/economic development on the one hand, and democracy and human rights on the other, soon turned into a discursive dilemma involving the framing of Christians as communists. Throughout the 1970s, Christians responded to accusations and arrests by consistently arguing that their activities were manifestations of their faith. But in order to further clarify what their faith called them to do, theologians began to systematize the rhetoric of Christian protest in the guise of a liberation theology. Experiences of protest, arrest, torture, and incarceration led *minjung* theologians (as they would later be called) to come together to form the Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia in October 1979. It was during these meetings that *Minjung* Theology was born after nearly a decade of struggle.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The literature regarding repression’s impact on social movements has contributed to social movement theory by making salient the influence of external actors (Davenport et al. 2005; della Porta 1996). Building on insights from Political Process theorists (McAdam 1982; Tilly 1978), various studies of repression’s influence on movements have shown how this aspect of the larger political opportunity structure shapes and influences public protest and collective action (Barkan 1984; Khawaja 1993; Muller 1985; Loveman 1998; Olzak, Beasley, and Olivier 2003; Opp and Roehl 1990; Rasler 1996; Weede 1987; White 1989). But still, these studies have looked at only the most public manifestation of a social movement: protest and public collective action. We know, however, that movements are composed of various components including movement organizations (McCarthy 1996; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tarrow 1998; Tilly 1978) and movement frames (Gamson and Meyer 1996; Jasper 1997; Klandermans 1984; Snow et al. 1986).

Extrapolating from this case study, we find that repression can have a *differential* impact on the *various* components of a social movement. Repression
of protest and public collective action does not necessarily mean a similar repression of movement organizations and the ability for activists to articulate a movement frame. Of course these are related as SMOs often organize public protest and help develop a movement’s frame. This is to simply say that mobilizing structures and cultural frames are not constants throughout the trajectory of a movement but are continually interacting with the political opportunity structure in which that movement takes place. This interaction shapes the form of mobilizing structures and frames (Earl 2004; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). The movement, of course, can have a reciprocal influence on the challenged group causing them to revert to repression or acquiescence.

Following up on research suggestions by those who advocate a synthetic account of social movements (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996), and those who emphasize a movement’s dynamic nature (Ellingson 1995; Haydu 1999; Issac 2002; Kane 1997; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001; Rohlinger 2002; Swidler 1995; Zhao 2000), we present a dialectical understanding of a movement’s emergence and evolution (see Figure 2).

The interaction between state and Korean dissidents occurred along two main axes. Material contention, or the strategic attempt to change tangible elements of the Yusin system, involved the formation of SMOs. These organizations garnered the material resources necessary to sustain Christian protest. In reaction, the state used governmental organizations, such as the Korean Central
Intelligence Agency, to repress protest by arresting and incarcerating principal members of these SMOs. In addition, the state passed laws and measures that further limited the opportunity structure of the Yusin system. The struggle between the state and Christian dissidents also involved a battle for influencing how the drastic changes brought about by South Korea’s modernization process were to be interpreted. Christians challenged Park Chung-hee’s assertion that the Yusin constitution was necessary for both efficient economic development and security from perceived military threat. Instead, they argued that a return to democracy and recognition of human rights was the will of the true Korean people, the minjung.

Furthermore, we find that repression increased the diversity of the Christian SMI. Organizations that had particular goals were added to the network of Christian organizations as a direct response to types of state repression. In addition, organizations rescinded or came to the fore as part of the adaptive strategy used by Christians to sustain their movement in the face of heightened repression. As other scholars have noted, religious institutions have a privileged position in society that in turn, can be utilized by social movement actors (Aminzade and Perry 2001; Pattillo-McCoy 1998; Smith 1991, 1996; Zald 1982). It was for this reason that the Friday Prayer Meetings became the leading organization during the second half of the 1970s and those organizations that were suppressed were able to partly maintain their activities through this overtly religious organization.

Similarly, Christian protest rhetoric began with political and humanitarian concerns. But with the ensuing arrests of Christian protestors and assumptions about their communist leanings, Christian theologians began to systematically articulate the religious justifications for their activities. This finding affirms those studies in the framing literature that argue for the importance of situating frames in relation to counterframing efforts by oppositional groups. Rohlinger (2002) has articulated the notion of “counter action frames” to explain movement—countermovement dynamics. She argues that organizations in the abortion debate strategically manipulate frames in response to opposition so as to better their chances to receive media coverage during critical moments. In addition, Haydu (1999) has also elaborated on the importance of counteraction frames by suggesting that we not only consider the frames of challenging groups but also how elites frame the movement and the activists that challenge them. As such, he argues that it is imperative to analyze both the framing strategies of challengers and challenged groups.

We advocate a dialectical approach to studying social movements based on recent work emphasizing “transformative historical events” that alter the course of a movement (Ellingson 1995; Haydu 1999; Hess and Martin 2006; Isaac 2002; McAdam and Sewell 2001; Rohlinger 2002; Sewell 1996). Ellingson (1995:101) has shown that movement participants can alter the content, form,
and appeals of legitimacy and he argues for the importance of the “dialectical relationship between discourse and events.” Applying this interactive approach to other cases, scholars have pointed to the changing nature of both the organizational capacity and the cultural frame of a movement. In his study of the capitalist militia in the Gilded Age, Issac (2002:360) argues that activists construct the forms of their organizations depending on what is “strategically appropriate for countering a challenging movement.” This implies that the types of SMOs that arise are influenced by “factors exogenous to the challenging movement itself” (Issac 2002:360). In addition, Zhao (2000) finds that the cultural frame of the Beijing student movement was in part shaped by how third party outsiders viewed both the participating activists and the state’s response to the students. Perceptions of legitimacy had a direct bearing on how state response to the student movement was judged (Zhao 2000:1595). The cultural frame of the student movement, then, was initially shaped by a fear of state repression, but further evolved as the legitimacy of the state itself came into question by third party groups.

Further research based on a dialectical understanding of social movements can include the discerning of other groups that played significant roles in how protest and repression took place. To this end, the notion of “dialectical partners” can be a useful heuristic device. While protesting Christians and the Yusin regime were the main partners in the shaping of the Christian social movement of the 1970s, other groups were also important. Christian activists were in part responding to the criticism of conservative Korean Christians who lambasted them for engaging in what they considered to be activities outside the jurisdiction of the church. Also, Christian activists were in dialogue with the international activist community who sometimes aided Koreans with material resources. Finally, the government of the United States also influenced Korea’s domestic politics by admonishing Park Chung-hee for human rights violations. Conservative Christians, international networks of activists, and the U.S. government were all dialectical partners with protesting Christians and the Yusin regime. To say they were in partnership is to make salient the mutually influential roles between these groups and how these relationships helped shape the democracy–human rights movement in the 1970s. Further research will pursue these relationships exploring how the actions of one group instigated and influenced that of another.

ENDNOTES

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While the UCLA Archive contains both government and movement documents, the 1970s
Democracy Movement Archive contains only documents produced by Christian activists. Because
of the possibility of bias, we do not assume that the historical reconstruction based on these docu-
ments is an objective interpretation of history but rather explicates how Christians understood their
own participation in this social movement.

As a worker located at the Peace Market in Seoul, South Korea, Chun Tae-il’s repeated
frustrated efforts at reforming working conditions for garment workers culminated in his setting
himself on fire in public. His protest and subsequent death shocked the public and galvanized work-
ers who began to demand better working conditions and the right to unionize. See Cho (2003) for
more information on Chun Tae-il’s life.

For a more in-depth treatment, see Chang (2006). It should also be noted that Korean
theologians’ efforts at developing a Korean version of liberation theology was part of the
larger international liberation theology movement. Following the revolutionary Vatican II
meetings starting in 1962, the Catholic Church enthusiastically renewed their social welfare
agenda at both the praxis and theological levels. Koreans were well aware of the seminal
liberation theology publications coming from Latin America including Gustavo Gutierrez’s
A Theology of Liberation (1973). While it is clear that Korean theologians borrowed from
Latin American Liberation Theology, they still made a concerted effort to reflect the
unique Korean experience of suffering, protest, and liberation when constructing Minjung
Theology.

For a historical analysis of the construction of the minjung and minjok terms, see Em (1999).

For example, the international nongovernmental organization (NGO), Bread for the World,
actively supported the Seoul Metropolitan Community Organization donating to it a total of
$80,000. Also, the famous U.S. community organizer, Saul Alinsky, visited South Korea in the Fall
of 1971 and helped the Korean Student Christian Federation develop their Student Social Develop-
ment Corps. Other international support for protesting Christians include the United States’ Church
Women United (whose influence played a significant role in the release of Lee Oo-jung after her
arrest on March 1, 1976), the German Ecumenical Church (supporting the Christian Academy
during their court trials, NCCK Vol. III:1553), and Amnesty International (who sent a letter to Park
Chung-hee on September 1, 1976, insisting on the release of prisoners of conscience, UCLA
Archive:Box 09-1, Folder 09-1-03).

One important incident was President Ford’s diplomatic note to Korean Ambassador Hahm
on August 31, 1976, that criticized Korea’s human rights record (UCLA Archive:Box 09-1, Folder
09-1-03). More importantly, on June 21, 1979, Senator Ted Kennedy gave a list of 300 political
prisoners to President Carter urging him to meet with dissident groups during his visit to South
Korea in 1979 (UCLA Archive:Box 09-1, Folder 09-1-06). President Carter (known by some as the
“human rights president”) met with Cardinal Kim Su-hwan and Reverend Kim Kwan-suk (General
Secretary of the Korean National Council of Churches) on May 1 of that same year. Before Presi-
dent Carter left Korea, U.S. Secretary of State Vance, handed at least two different lists of political
prisoners to the Korean government asking for their release: “Apparently in response to US Presi-
dent Carter’s request,” 86 political prisoners were released on July 17, 1979 (UCLA Archive:Box
09-1, Folder 09-1-06).
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