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The impact of reticulation on a movement's ability to sustain mobilization in the presence and absence of opportunities

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**THE IMPACT OF RETICULATION ON A MOVEMENT'S ABILITY TO SUSTAIN
MOBILIZATION IN THE PRESENCE AND ABSENCE OF OPPORTUNITIES**

By

Eliot Assoudeh

Accepted in Partial Completion
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Moheb A. Ghali, Dean of the Graduate School

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MASTER'S THESIS

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Eliot Assoudeh
August 9, 2010

**THE IMPACT OF RETICULATION ON A MOVEMENT'S ABILITY TO SUSTAIN
MOBILIZATION IN THE PRESENCE AND ABSENCE OF OPPORTUNITIES**

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

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August 2010

Abstract

This thesis discusses the impact of a movement's reticulation structures on its ability to sustain mobilization in the presence and absence of political opportunities. It initially focuses on the relationship between the nature of a movement's reticulation structure and the movement's behavior. It goes on to explore specific connections between varied reticulation configurations and specific behaviors they are associated with, based on a detailed comparison between the student movement and women's movement in Iran from 1997 to 2008.

This study shows that a movement's reticulation structure will affect its behavior. The student movement employs a hybrid composed of cliques and polycephalous structures, which gives it the ability to respond quickly to opportunities as they arise. In contrast, the women's movement employs a hybrid structure that is segmented, decentralized, and reticulated. This enables the women's movement to utilize an abeyance structure to sustain its activity under longer repression than the student movement.

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1. Introduction

Soon after the revolution of 1979 in Iran, the Islamic regime took actions against two important pillars of Iranian society: women and students. Both had a major role in the revolution of 1979. The Family Protection Law was abolished and women were barred from holding many governmental and judiciary offices. In addition, women were required to observe Islamic dress codes in all public places. In response to these new rules, on March 8th 1979, the International Women's Day, thousands of women protested in Tehran. The next target of the revolution was university campuses. Revolutionary vanguards invaded university campuses under the name of a "cultural revolution" and the Islamic regime closed all universities for three years (1981-84). Although women engaged in ongoing contention to regain their rights, the revival of the student movement did not happen until early 1997.

The presidential campaign of 1997 not only boosted dissent but also opened opportunity for reform struggles. Mohammad Khatami's landslide victory in 1997 was a turning point in Iran's political atmosphere. Women and students played a major role in Khatami's presidential campaign.

The Closure of *Salaam*, a daily newspaper, on July 7th, 1999 triggered a student uprising in Tehran and fifteen other cities for almost ten days. *Salaam* was not an ordinary paper; it was a Left-Islamic daily, founded by Ayatollah Mousavi-Kho'eihi, a leftist cleric and a former member of *Majles-e-Khobregan-e-Rahbari* (the Assembly of Experts for the Leadership). *Salaam* not only had been targeting and criticizing the key institutional element of the Islamic regime, i.e. *Velayat-e-Faghih* (the Rule of Supreme Jurisprudence), but also had been the only speaker for students, women, laborers and others who wanted their voices to be heard. A day before its closure, *Salaam* had published a "top secret" letter about a new

tougher press law issued by the ministry of intelligence addressing *Majles* (the parliament). Soon after *Salaam* shut down, the regime banned more than 200 publications overnight.

During president Khatami's first term (1997-2001), women's rights activists and student activists ventured a lot but they didn't gain much. Even the few laws, passed by the reformist parliament (the sixth term), in support of women's rights for divorce were vetoed by the Guardian Council claiming the laws were in conflict with Islamic law. This resulted in much less support and fewer votes for Khatami's re-election in 2001. According to Mohsen Sazegara, one of the founders of the Revolutionary Guard who became a reformist and now lives in Washington DC as a political activist in exile, "unfortunately, the experience gained from the reform movement in 1997-2005 proved that no possibility exists of moving the democratic movement forward within the framework of the constitution of the Islamic Republic and the fundamentalist theoretical structure of these groups" (Sazegara 2006, 30)¹.

In 2005, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad became president and he declared a return to Ayatollah Khomeini's revolutionary values. His taking power was a huge setback for democratization in Iran. Women and students were the first victims of his policies. A new "cultural revolution" started; this time not by closing campuses, but by purging dissenting professors and imposing heavy sanctions on student activism. The new government replaced many university presidents with clerics who did not have any knowledge of modern academics. Establishing Basij units in all campuses to monitor student activism was another move towards militarization of the universities.

In 2005, the Guardian Council banned women's candidacy for the presidency. On June 12th 2005, in the heyday of the Presidential election and in political gaps between the two governments, women's rights activists gathered and initiated a campaign demanding an

¹ I observed Chicago style of citation throughout the paper.

end to institutionalized discriminatory laws against Iranian women. These women, some of them students and also active in the student movement, organized a vast campaign which aimed to collect one million signatures to demand changes to discriminatory laws against women. The “Change for Equality” campaign grew fast and became the main mobilization vehicle of the women’s movement. Since its formation, the campaign activists have been faced with oppression from radical groups, and Ahmadinejad’s government imposed even more discriminatory laws against women.

Both of the events, the students’ protest on July 7th, 1999 as well as the women’s demonstration on June 12th, 2005, started peacefully. On those days, masses of people poured into the streets demanding changes. But the power holders in Tehran heavily repressed them. The Islamic Republic is not a democratic regime. In the eyes of the state, protest and contention are not legitimate; Basij and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps repress movements rather than negotiate.

The closure of *salaam* in 1999, and the order of the Guardian Council preventing women from presidential candidacy in 2005 created incentives for student and women activists to protest against authorities. Transition from a reformist administration to a more hard-line government in 2005 brought changes in opportunities and initiated new phases of contention for both of the movements in Iran. Neither the student movement nor the women’s movement enjoys a centralized leadership and organization. So, how can the movements’ participants sustain their contention in the face of state repression and changing political opportunities and constraints?

Political opportunities are: political openness, political realignment, influential allies, and factionalization within the polity. Constraint is the state’s capacity and will to repress

(Tarrow 1998). Some dimensions of opportunity, in the period under study (1997-2008), such as the state's repressiveness were more stable, and some dimensions such as influential allies changed drastically. No matter how stable the structure of political opportunity was, the student movement and women's movement have exhibited both periods of contention and relative quiescence during the period under study. Therefore, the quest of this research is not to formalize an explanatory matrix based on the political opportunity structure, but to explain a movement's ability to sustain mobilization based on the forms of mobilization it employs, its repertoire, and the social networks and connective structures on which it builds (Tarrow 1998).

This thesis concentrates on social movement organizations in Iran. I am interested in two Iranian social movements and their organizational structures: the women's movement and the student movement. In particular, I examine the relation between the reticulation of these movements' organizations and their ability to sustain mobilization in the presence and absence of political opportunities. According to Merriam-Webster "to reticulate" means "to divide, mark, or construct so as to form a network". This paper studies the organizational structures of the student movement and women's movement in Iran and compares their mobilization abilities based on their reticulation. Both of these movements take the form of a net in which, "nodes are tied together, not through any central point, but rather through intersecting sets of personal relationships and other intergroup linkages" (Gerlach and Hine 1981, 55). Here I have examined these organizational structures within a decentralized framework. A decentralized organization is segmentary, polycentric, and reticulated.

The existing literature on the relation between decentralized social movement organization and social movement behaviors explores the effectiveness of a decentralized

approach in turbulent social, cultural, or political climates; addresses the role of personal ties in a movement's formation; discusses the role of social ties and bonds in recruitment processes; and evaluates the role of web based communications on mobilization. But it does not address specific connections between varied reticulation configurations and specific behaviors they are associated with; how various configurations of many segments that are horizontally linked and exchange information through grapevine communication structure affect a movement's behaviors. In addition, the existing literature is mostly based on the studies conducted on democratic systems, and in the cases of nondemocracies, the main focus has been the effectiveness of non-violent tactics rather than the nature of a movement's reticulation structure. This study tries to shed some light on variations of a movement's behaviors based on the movement's reticulation nature within a nondemocratic regime in an under developed country in the Middle East.

This study will show that the nature of a movement's reticulation will affect its behavior. More specifically, in my study of the two Iranian movements I have found that the women's movement is more decentralized and more segmented with its abeyance structure, and therefore has a better ability to sustain mobilization and that the student movement, which has a more centralized structure in a limited environment (campuses), and mostly in contact with a specific faction of the society (students), can respond faster when opportunities are available, or conditions to create opportunities exist.

In the next chapter I discuss two theoretical approaches to examine the mobilization ability of the movements in this study: the political process and decentralized organization approaches. I define decentralized organizational structure and reticulation, review the existing literature, and assess the role of social network in studying social movements.

Chapter 3 provides the research methodology and then introduces the hypothesis that is tested. I also discuss what I hope to contribute and the gaps I have found in the literature. Chapter 4 discusses the power structure of the Islamic Republic, its legitimacy issues and its impact on the rise of social movements in Iran. In chapter 5, and 6 I discuss the student movement centered on the OCU and women's movement centered on the Change for Equality Campaign, their main mass protests, and their mobilization vehicles respectively. Both of the chapters consist of an examination of challenges to the theocratic regime in Tehran. Chapter 7 examines the hypothesis with respect to the reticulation of the movements' structures and their mobilization abilities. Both movements implemented a decentralized organization and in both cases the Islamic state was faced with a loss of legitimacy, especially after the failure of the reformist administration and its parliament. Finally, the concluding chapter assesses the role of reticulation in sustain mobilization in the presence and absence of opportunities, and points out the areas for future research.

2. Historical Context

In the following sections, my goal is to explain the power structure of the Islamic Republic and discuss its non-democratic political system. Secondly, I will narrate briefly the student movement and the women's movement from 1997 to 2008. I will describe their mobilization vehicles, their main events (i.e. protest or demonstration), and their main challenges under the reformist administration of President Khatami (1997 - 2005), and while the conservative president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, held the office (2005 - 2008). I am leaving the organizational structures and outcomes of the student movement and women's movement to chapter five (From Organization to Mobilization), where I will discuss the impact of their reticulation structures on their mobilization abilities in the presence and absence of political opportunities.

The power Structure of the Islamic Republic

Since the revolution of 1979, Iran's political system has been an Islamic Republic. Although the term 'republic' might bear a resemblance to a democratic state, at the same time the term 'Islamic' heralds a theocratic state. This duality within Iran's political system has been reflected in the way that power has been exercised in the state (Thaler, et al. 2010). Ali Banuazizi (1995) argues that Islamic Republic's contrasting image is rooted in the inconsistency and conflict between its bureaucratic system operating within a constitutional framework and a cleric who is appointed rather than elected and rules above all civil laws.

According to Asghar Schirazi (2008) there are two main sources of contradiction in the Islamic Republic's constitution: Disagreement between *Sharia* (Islamic law) and civil laws; and disagreement between democratic and non-democratic components.

The constitution of the Islamic Republic is based on the following Islamic components: the state has an Islamic Shi'a nature; the mission and responsibilities of the Islamic Republic are defined based on *Sharia*; the leader of the state has to be a Shi'a *Faghih* cleric (a cleric who has the authority to interpret Islamic laws based on Quran and other Islamic sources); legislations of any sort have to be in consistent with *Sharia*; Islamic laws mark the boundaries and criteria of civil rights citizens practice; political and civil institutions are responsible to preserve Islamic characteristics of the state. According to the democratic components of the constitution, citizens can contribute to national affairs through electoral participations, elect their representatives for *Majles* (the Parliament), Urban and Rural Councils, and enjoy some democratic rights such as freedom of speech; freedom of press; freedom of political parties, unions, and associations; freedom of assembly; and censorship, and intercepting citizens' phone calls, letters, and other communication means are forbidden (Schirazi 2008, 16-24). Schirazi argues that religious components and civil constituents negate each other: –Authoritative power of Shi'a clerics is in conflict with authoritative power of citizens through elections; there is discrepancy between Islamic Ummah (the Muslim community) and Iranian nation; the Supreme Leader rules over the president; The Guardian Council disarms the *Majles*, and *Velayat-e Faghih* (the rule of jurisprudence) contradicts the republic” (2008, 25).

According to the constitution, Iranian people toppled the monarchy through an Islamic revolution, and the sovereignty devolved on the people. At the same time, the constitution asserts the sovereignty just belongs to God and the hidden Imam (the twelfth Shi'a Imam), which in his absence God entrusts the sovereignty to *Valy-e Faghih*, who holds the institution of *Velayat-e Faghih*. In addition, the Iranian people, based on the Islamic

Republic Constitution, are not equal as fellow citizens, and as joint tenants in the sovereignty, rather only the members of the Shi'a Twelver Muslim community are entitled to all the rights. But in practice, even a Shi'a Twelver Muslim is subject to more restrictions if he wants access to the power structure (i.e. representative of Majles). Such a candidate should prove his loyalty to the Islamic Revolution, the Islamic Republic Constitution, and *Velayat-e Motlaghe-ye Faghih* (the absolute rule of the jurisprudence). Muslim women are not equal under the law and they enjoy half of the rights men do. Women are barred from holding many offices including becoming judges. Generally, women, ethnic minorities, and religious minorities (more than 50% of the population) are treated as second class citizens in front of the law.

After the revolution, Khomeini ordered the execution of Army Officers of the old regime. Soon after, the Revolutionary Courts sentenced opponents and anti-revolutionaries to either long term in prison or execution. The regime became more and more politically repressive: no political parties, no dissent, no access to political participation for opponents, compulsory Islamic dress code for women, abolition of the majority of rights women had gained before the revolution, oppression of youth, and damaging the middle class (Banuazizi 1995). Reza Afshari (1996) examined the Islamic Republic's human rights record with respect to the Universal Human Rights Declaration and rated Iran's performance as a disaster. According to Afshari human rights in the Islamic Republic are in crisis due to the following: citizens are not equally protected against the law - there is no social system of justice; political dissidents have no access to political participation and the regime portrays them as enemies of God; very limited freedom of press and cultural affairs under governmental watch and censorship; no tolerance for apostasy; no personal freedom; faked

trials with no attorney, and confessions under torture; mass political executions; institutionalized discrimination of women's rights in all aspects of life (R. Afshari 1996).

According to Bashiryeh there is a big difference between the Islamic Republic Constitution and the old regime's Constitution - the one which was based on the 1906 Constitutional Revolution. Legitimacy in the old Constitution was rooted in the nation, and parliament was in the center of power, whereas the new Constitution seeks its legitimacy in God and *Majles* does not have its old place in the power structure. After the revolution there was a rift among the clergy over the matter of leadership. Although some favored the Islamic tradition of *Shoura* (consultation), Khomeini and his followers successfully institutionalized religious and political authority in the concept of *Velayat-e Faghih* (Thaler, et al. 2010, Bashiryeh 1984).

Schirazi (2008) discusses the rift between clerics over the institution of *Velayat-e Faghih* is rooted in the different interpretations of Sharia components of the constitution. Those who favor *Velayat-e Faghih* believe the Islamic constituents affirm the absolute rule of the jurisprudence, whereas the opponents' interpretation of the same constituents is a conditional rule of the jurisprudence.

After the death of Khomeini the ruling clergy divided over appointment of his successor. They knew there was nobody who could fill Khomeini's position. Apart from his charisma, he was not only religiously qualified but also a political leader (Banuazizi 1995, Bashiryeh 1984, Sadjadpour 2008). Before Khomeini's death, parliamentarians drafted an amendment to the Constitution stating that religious qualification and political leadership were two separate matters. Thus, the Assembly of Experts appointed then President Khamenei as the leader. Soon after, Khamenei was elevated to a leader with religious

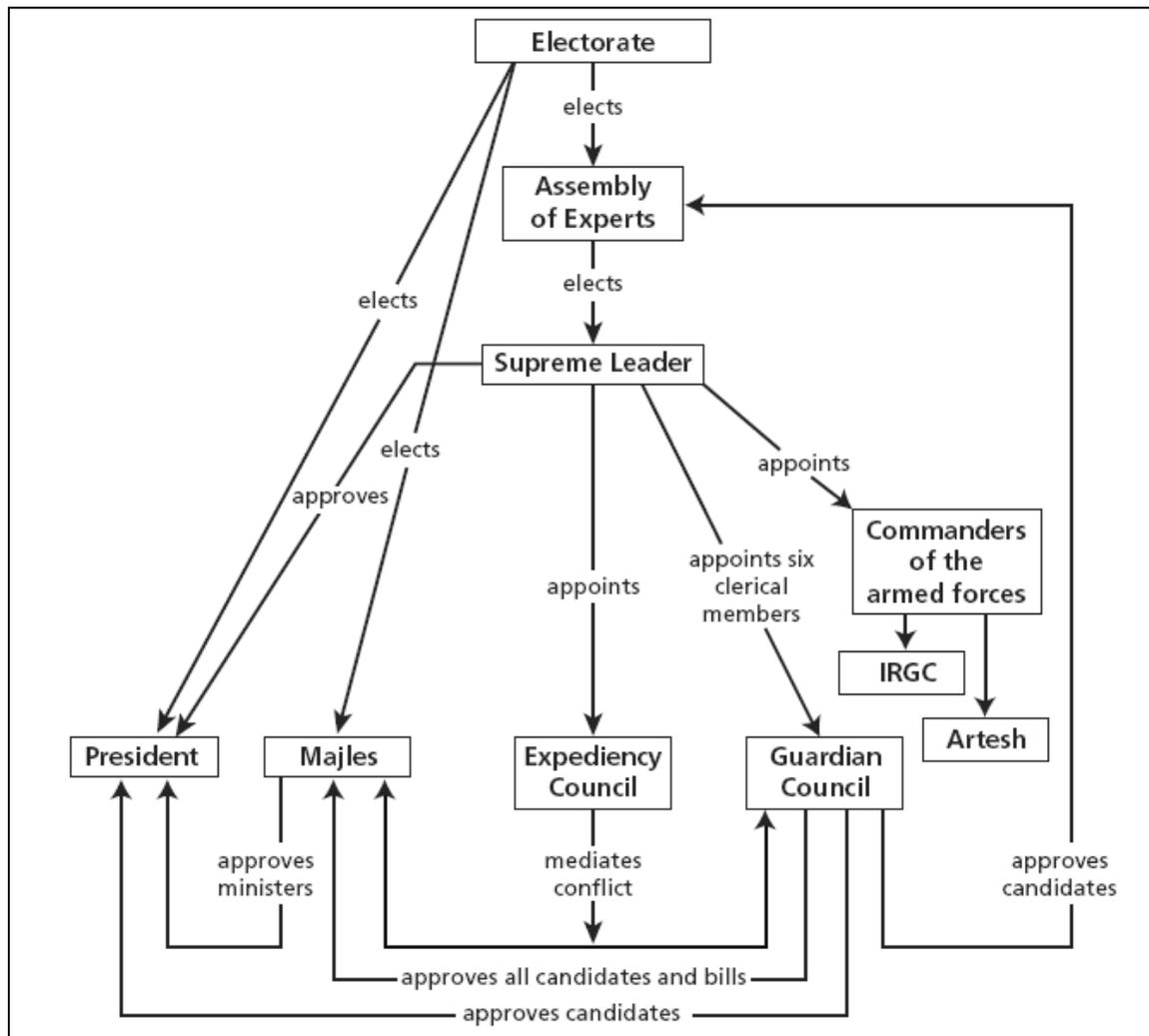
qualifications necessary to seize the institution of *Velayat-e Faghih*. This move led to widespread factionalism among high-ranking clerics. Any criticism was responded to brutally. Even when the late Grand Ayatollah Montazeri, who had originally introduced *Velayat-e Faghih*, criticized Khamenei, the regime took him under house arrest till his death.

According to a recent report by RAND (2010), in the past 25 years the power in Iran has been in the hands of a small number of ruling individuals who remained loyal to the institution of *Velayat-e Faghih*. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of power in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic. The Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, who controls the institution of *Velayat-e Faghih*, is central to the power structure. Individuals who find their ways to the political institutions are either appointees or candidates approved by the Supreme Leader. Even the president, who is the most important authority after the Supreme Leader according to the constitution, has a relative influence and power in policy decision making. If the president has Khamenei's support he can pursue his agenda (i.e. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad), otherwise he fails (i.e. Mohammad Khatami). Khatami's failure as the president to open civil society and to pursue relations with the West was a clear example of Khamenei's power to prevent Iranian domestic and foreign policy from changing in ways that contradicted his own worldview" (Thaler, et al. 2010).

According to Karim Sadjadpour (2008), considering the unexpected appointment of Khamenei as the Supreme Leader after the death of Khomeini helps in understanding his way of leadership. Although Khamenei has lost face, due to his strong networks with different institutions such as the Revolutionary Guards, Guardian Council, Majles, and judiciary, he has remained the foremost powerful man.

Iranian society has been divided into two main networks: *khodi*, meaning “one of us” (beneficiary of the regime), and *gheyr-e khodi*, “outsider”. The Supreme Leader and his associates (15% of the population), who are appointed or approved by him within the power structure are *khodi*, and the rest of the population (75%) consists of middle class, students, women and pro-democracy forces are *gheyr-e khodi* (Thaler, et al. 2010).

Figure 1–The Power Structure of the Islamic Republic in its Constitution²



² Source: Adapted from Mehran Kamrava and Houchang Hassan-Yari, "Suspended Equilibrium in Iran's Political System," *The Muslim World*, vol. 94, October 2004, p. 506, cited in RAND 2010, p. 23

According to Mehrdad Mashayekhi (2007), political structures in nondemocracies impact social movements' formation in these countries. He recognizes the Islamic Republic as a nondemocratic regime because of the following reasons: there is no separation between religious and political institutions; the state employs a specific interpretation of the Shi'a Islam as an ideological tool to control the society; the regime has different paramilitary forces with parallel intelligence communities for intimidation; and institutionalized discriminations against women, modernists, seculars, dissents, and ethnic and religious minorities. Mashayekhi argues that within the last three decades the discriminatory policies of the theocratic regime of Tehran have marginalized various segments of the society and have barred them from political, economic, cultural and social participations. He concludes that grievances are main sources of social mobilization in post-revolutionary Iran. Participants in different social movements in Iran, when a relative political openness is available, have challenged the state through a varied set of collective actions: signing petitions, peaceful protests, sit-ins, demonstrations, chanting, and blogging.

Mashayekhi (2007) argues the Islamic regime has maintained a powerful presence in various facets of the society and has monopolized both economic and political structures. This omnipotent existence has turned many social movement participants from cultural challengers into political opponents. Susan Tahmaasebi, one of the participants of the One Million Signatures Campaign, mentions that ~~the~~ rights Iranian women want to achieve is a socio-cultural issue, we are not opponents of the regime, but the authorities, to prove the righteousness of their ideology, treat us as political opponents" (One Million Signatures Campaign 2008, 30).

There are different accounts that show Iranian authorities seeking democratic legitimacy through electoral process (Ganji 2005, Mashayekhi 2007). “Democratically disguised dictatorships use semi-democratic elections to choose government officials with very limited power, all of whom are approved by the regime” (Ganji 2005, 43). Political opposition parties and pro-democracy forces who struggle for reform or a regime change in Iran have been divided over the matter of electoral participation. One group boycotts elections as long as the Islamic Republic is in control. Reformists believe that electoral participation is important even they know there would be a slight chance for their candidates to be elected. The third group argues that democratic forces should look at electoral participation based on the socio-political context of the day. If they are able to reshape the political structure in their favor (i.e. Presidential election of 1997, and 2009) they should participate in the election. If their participation does not have any impact on the political process (i.e. 2005) they should boycott the election. Mehrdad Mashayekhi (2007) argues that after the failure of the reform movement, the center of struggle for democracy shifted to the society. Resistance and struggles of social forces, including political challenges of the student movement, numerous women’s campaigns, unions and labor movement, and ethnic resistance are all signs of future widespread movements across Iran. He mentions that, in this critical time, it is the responsibility of oppositional elites to raise the political awareness among the participants of these movements and to orchestrate their future mobilization.

It seems oppositional elites and liberal forces could successfully grab the attention of international community toward social movements and their struggle for democracy. Karim Sadjadpour, a scholar at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, recognizes individuals, groups, and trends, in post-Khomeini era, that have been able to grab

international attention. Table 1 demonstrates domination of social movements in the center of focus since 1997.

The institution of *Velayat-e Faghih* generally and the Supreme Leader specifically have been the target of the student movement and the Green Movement (the movement that formed in protest to the disputed results of the 2009 Presidential election). The women’s movement has challenged the Islamic law and sought the equality of men and women in front of the law. The inability of the Islamic regime to address national issues and the failure of the reform process have both been sources for mobilization.

Table 1 – Various individuals, groups, and trends determining Iran’s trajectories since Khomeini’s death³

Year /Focus	The Individual	The Group	The Theme
1989-1997	President Rafsanjani	Islamic technocrats	Post Iran-Iraq war reconstruction
1997-2005	Reformist President Khatami	The student movement	Democracy and civil society
2005-2009	Hardliner President Ahmadinejad	The revolutionary Guard <i>The women’s movement</i>	Return to revolutionary radicalism
<i>2009-present</i>	<i>Symbolic leaders</i>	<i>The Green Movement</i>	<i>Liberalism</i>

Akbar Ganji (2005) and Mohsen Sazegara (2006) explain that with the failure of the reform movement (Khatami’s government), it seems the Islamic regime is not able to solve its own problems and there is a need for a Constitutional change followed by a regime change. They agree that the reform movement cannot lead to a democratic state.

Participants in the student movement and women’s movement in Iran could be faced with the charge of *Moharebeh* (the enemy of God). But despite the state’s violent repression

³ Source: Adapted from Karim Sadjadpour, *–Reading Khamenei: the World View of Iran’s Most Powerful Leader,*” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2008, p. 2. The italic texts added by the author of this paper.

accompanied with a shadow of fear, people do not comply, they rather defy. Women participate in all social activities in spite of institutionalized discriminations and students continue to be the voice of society. In the following two sections I briefly discuss the student movement and women's movement within a historical framework from 1997 to 2008. I will explain these two movements in more details in chapter five, where I discuss their organizational structures and their unique impact on the movements' behaviors in the presence and absence of political opportunities.

The Student Movement: 1997-2008

Introduction

According to one account, soon after, the establishment of the University of Tehran in 1934 student activism was born. But the root of the student movement in Iran goes back to December 7th, 1953, when students of the University of Tehran started protesting against Mohammad Reza Shah's White Revolution. Since then, this movement has taken different trajectories, and has shown up in different situations, either against universities' administrations, or against authorities, before and after the revolution of 1979. Students have mainly leaned toward the left of the Iranian political spectrum, but there has also been pro-government student activism sponsored by the Islamic regime in recent years. However, the revival of the student movement did not happen until early 1997. The presidential campaign of Mohammad Khatami, initiated by students and supported through university campuses, not only boosted dissenting activism, but also provided an opportunity for reform struggles. Women and students were key components of Khatami's presidential campaign. Khatami's landslide victory in 1997 was a turning point in Iran's political atmosphere. According to Mashayekhi (2001) the student uprising in Tehran and fifteen other cities, which lasted for a week, focused national and international attentions on the student movement in Iran. What triggered the massive mobilization across Iran was the brutal and bloody invasion of government security forces and paramilitary members of *Ansar-e Hezbollah* (followers of the party of God) to the dormitories of the University of Tehran (Mahdi 1999).

The July '99 Protests

According to Ali-Akbar Mahdi (1999) there have been many uprisings and protests in the Islamic Republic; most of them were rooted in the mishandling of economic policies. But the mass mobilization of July 1999 had a political rather than an economic nature. He argues –it represented the strongest manifestation of the structural crisis unsettling the Islamic Republic of Iran” (Mahdi 1999, 17). Mashayekhi (2001) explains how a series of events provided necessary conditions that led to the July protests.

Many refer to the closure of *Salaam*, a daily newspaper, as what triggered the student uprising of 1999 (Baghi 2005, Mahdi 1999, Mashayekhi 2001). *Salaam* was not an ordinary paper; it was a Left-Islamic daily, founded by Ayatollah Mousavi-Kho'einiha, a leftist cleric and a former member of *Majles-e-Khobregan-e-Rahbari* (the Assembly of Experts for the Leadership). Mahdi (1999) argues that a couple of months before the July events some radical newspapers affiliated with the conservative faction of the authority warned that student activities conducted by the Office for Consolidation of Unity (OCU) were against the institution of *Velayat-e Faghih* (the Supreme Rule of Jurisprudence) and *Sharia* (Islamic law). They warned that if the administration did not stop dissent, the revolutionary vanguards and devotees to the path of Imam Khomeini would take action. Members of *Majles*, on July 7th, 1999 passed a bill stating some new measures for press (more censorship). A few days before this move, *Salaam* disclosed the story and published the letter from an intelligence officer addressing *Majles* on the necessity of limiting the freedom of press even more. This gave the excuse to the authority to ban this newspaper. According to Mousavi-Kho'einiha (1999) the main reasons that *Salaam* was ordered closed were: 1- Criticizing the institution of *Velayat-e Faghih*; the regime's economic policies; the Guardian Council's *Nezaarat-e*

Esteswaabi (Approbatory Supervision); and national affairs, 2- Disclosing the serial killing of intellectuals and political opponents, 3- Defending the rule of law (based on the Constitution), 4- Defending civil liberties (based on the Constitution), 5- Reasonable defense of Islam and the Revolution, 6- Pioneering Khatami's presidential campaign, 7- Being the official speaker for the students. Baghi (2005) argues that the regime knew if ordered to close *Salaam*, there would be vast consequences and it would probably be faced with national protests. Therefore, this order was not issued by a middle or even a higher level official, but by the Supreme Leader, who was the center of all the criticism.

The same night, July 7th, 1999 students of the University of Tehran peacefully protested in front of their dormitories and requested the regime to reverse its decision and let *Salaam* continue publishing. But the authorities attacked the students and repressed them brutally. Nearly 1000 rooms were destroyed, a few hundreds injured, some students were killed, and over a thousand students were arrested, some of whom are still in prison (Mashayekhi 2001). The regime issued three execution orders for the leaders of students (Mahdi 1999). "During the following days, thousands of students, employing various methods of protest including rallies, demonstrations, marches, sit-ins, and even violent street skirmishes, openly challenged the system, particularly its authoritarian conservative faction" (Mashayekhi 2001, 284).

The student movement not only gained national and international recognition, but also showed that people of Iran are different from the rulers of the Islamic Republic. A few days after repressing the students, the Islamic regime of Tehran, faced with a legitimacy crisis, arranged a pro-government rally at the University of Tehran in support of the Supreme Leader and the institution of *Velayat-e Faghih* (Mashayekhi 2001).

Students, Universities, and Mobilization

Alvin Gouldner (1985) describes students as carriers of “the culture of critical discourse, a subculture of reason and critical judgment which facilitates the critique of the power structure and conventional wisdom” (Mashayekhi 2001, 286). Jungyun Gill and James DeFronzo referring to Phillip Altbach (1989), characterize students as “a conscience of their societies” (Gill and DeFronzo 2009, 207). Altbach (1981) recognizes various reasons for student activism in underdeveloped and undeveloped countries: 1- suffering from the lack of democratic structure and in the absence of political parties and institutions, access to political participation, especially for dissent activism, is very hard or impossible; 2- students are generally from middle and upper middle class families and universities are in capitals, centers of power, or other major cities. Another source for student activism, almost in every country, is the campus-related issues like the condition of dorms, the quality of foods, transportation, tuition rates, student/teacher ratio, and etc (Mashayekhi 2001).

According to Mashayekhi (2001), to study the nature and source of the student movement in Iran, it is necessary to understand the reasons behind spreading university campuses after the revolution of 1979. The rapid expansion of campuses across Iran is due to the following factors: the increase in urban population, the fact that universities are not centered in major cities anymore, the proliferation of private and Azad universities, Iranians’ growing interest in higher education, and a better living standard in rural areas (Mashayekhi 2001, Ziba Kalaam 2001). In addition, there are two more important issues that have contributed to the student movement in Iran: The first is, “the governmental quota system”. Children of families who were victims of the Iraq-Iran war could attend universities through a quota channel. Many of these students are not in harmony with the dominant student body

(as studious as those who enter universities through the entrance examination), and this has damaged the quality of education (Mashayekhi 2001). The second is, “cultural revolution”. Mahdi (1999) mentions that in 1980, a year after the Islamic regime consolidated its power, the authorities issued an order that there would be no tolerance for political activism across the campuses, and the activities and behaviors of the students must meet Islamic terms. A month later, and before the Persian New Year 1980, Ayatollah Khomeini blamed universities as the sanctuaries for the anti-revolutionary and infidel professors and students under influence of Western intelligence communities. Shortly after his speech revolutionary vanguards led by the Islamic Student Associations (ISA) raided colleges and higher education centers which resulted in closing all universities for three years. The Islamization process and gender segregation policies have intensified student activism during all these years (Mashayekhi 2001, Ziba Kalaam 2001).

Considering the struggle of Iranians for freedom and the rule of law since the Constitutional Revolution in 1906, students have been legitimate political actors (since 1934) and universities have been “alternative institutions”, as Mashayekhi (2001) points out, in the absence of political parties and institutions. Universities that participated most in the history of the student movement are either in capital Tehran or other major cities, where power or religious centers are located. Mashayekhi argues that universities contribute to mobilization by supplying resources to the movement participants. The various resources are: “organizations, funds, information, framing process, media connections and location, classrooms, libraries, dining halls, plazas, and a set of informal social networks including artistic groups, sports associations, travel groups, and student-run libraries provide arenas for political mobilizations” (Mashayekhi 2001, 290). He compares periods with some level of

political openness and periods with a higher degree of repression. In the former, formal organizations are active, whereas in the latter, dissent activism is disguised in informal networks.

Office for Consolidation of Unity

To understand the organizational role of *Daftar-e Tahkeem-e Vahdat* (the Office for Consolidation of Unity) within the student movement in post-revolutionary Iran, it is necessary to look at its complex trajectories within the last three decades (Table 2). A radical Islamic organization, once established by the authorities to monitor student activism throughout campuses, has been turned into an independent liberal student organization criticizing the most important pillar of the Islamic Republic, i.e. *Velayat-e Faghih*.

A few months before 1980, the representatives of Islamic Associations of Students (ISA) held a national meeting and announced the establishment of the Union of the Islamic Association of Students of the Universities and Other Higher Education Centers. Pouya, a student activist, explained to me, in their meeting with Ayatollah Khomeini, [the representatives of ISAs concerned with differences between Islamic students], he told them *–Beravid Tahkeem-e Vahdat Konid*’ (i.e. go and consolidate your unity). After this meeting, the ISAs called their union, *Daftar-e Tahkeem-e Vahdat* (the Office for Consolidation of Unity). From 1980 to 1989, the OCU was an arm for the establishment and student activism was in its lowest degree. During the history of the OCU in post-Khomeini era, whenever the regime was concerned about challenges from the OCU, they employed the British policy of *–divide and rule*’. After the death of Khomeini, the balance of power shifted from the political left to the political right, and the OCU lost its influence within the newly arranged

establishment and started criticizing. The ruling clerics (Rafsanjani, the Head of *Majles*, and Khamenei, then President) who, were concerned about the political participatory role of the OCU, and were aware of their lower degree of credibility among the OCU members tried to influence within this organization.

The new power structure tried to limit the OCU by limiting the activities of some of the ISAs, even announcing them illegal and arresting their activists. This intervention turned the OCU from absolute supporter to a critic, but still in support of the regime. Over the next four years the following factions were recognizable within the OCU: *Jaryan-e Velayat Pazir*, or *Velayee* (followers of the new Supreme Leader); Left-leaning trend affiliated with *Ruhaniyun-e Mobarez* and *Sazman-e Mojahedin-e Enghelab*; and the new Modern Fraction who were in absolute minority.

The Modern Fraction had a new and different interpretation of the OCU role. They adopted the doctrine of Abdolkarim Soroush and other religious intellectuals, who “were engaged in a highly emotional theoretical debate criticizing a traditionalist reading of jurisprudence (*fegh-he sonnati*) on liberal and scientific grounds” (Mashayekhi 2001, 293). This group wanted the OCU to be an elected body of the students, rather than the appointees of the establishment, and also wanted it to become autonomous. According to Pouya, who was one of the founding members of the Modern Fraction, this group was able to consolidate the electoral process into the OCU.

Some of the excluded Left-leaning members of the OCU joined the leftist press and organizations, such as *Salaam*, or *Kian*, think tanks of religious intellectuals leading by Dr. Abdolkarim Soroush (Mahdi 1999, Mashayekhi 2001). The exclusion of the left political faction from power provided an opportunity for the leftist intellectuals to criticize their past

which resulted in spreading a pro-democracy approach and a new interpretation of Islamic values among this group (Mahdi 1999, Mashayekhi 2001).

Through their close ties with religious intellectuals and moderate Leftist elites, democratic values diffused into the OCU and this organization became more autonomous. Consequently, political pressures started to mount against the OCU members (Mashayekhi 2001). Mashayekhi argues that members of the OCU started to embrace promoting democratic values throughout the campuses, where the disruption and violent repression of their gatherings and activities became the regime's systematic routine. Frustrated with the continued threat and repression from the conservative faction of the establishment and backed by Leftist elites, the OCU decided to vastly participate in the upcoming presidential election and mobilize the students to change the power structure in its direction (Mashayekhi 2001).

Table 2 – The trajectories of the Office for Consolidation of Unity from 1980 – 2008

Year	Key Authority	Key Events	Political Orientation
09/27/1979	Khomeini	The OCU established	Revolutionary\Leftist
1980 - 1982	Khomeini	The OCU lead the Cultural Revolution	Revolutionary\Leftist
1983-1989	Khomeini	The OCU Participated in the parliamentary and presidential elections of 1983 and 1987, The OCU mobilized students to the battle field in Iran-Iraq war	Revolutionary\Leftist
1989-1996	Khamenei\Rafsanjani	The OCU criticized economic and foreign policies Factionalism within the OCU	Conservative Fraction Leftist Fraction Modern Fraction
1997	Khamenei	The seventh presidential election	Modern Fraction (dominated)
1998	Khamenei\Khatami	The OCU protested against the presence of Basij on campuses	Modern Fraction (dominated)
1999	Khamenei\Khatami	Challenging the institution of <i>Velayat-e Faghih</i> , and the Guardian Council's Approbatory Supervision	Modern Fraction (dominated)
07/08/1999	Khamenei\Khatami	Mass mobilization	Modern Fraction (dominated)
1999-2001	Khamenei\Khatami	Election campaigns for the Urban and Rural Councils, the Sixth <i>Majles</i> , and the re-election of Khatami, the OCU criticized Khatami's policies	Modern Fraction (dominated)
2001-2005	Khamenei\Khatami	Failure of Reformists, the election campaign for the Seventh <i>Majles</i> , the ninth Presidential election, the regime created a fake OCU parallel with the OCU	Modern Fraction (Allameh trend)
2005-2008	Khamenei\Ahmadinejad	The OCU protested against militarization of campuses	Modern Fraction (Allameh trend)

The Seventh Presidential Election

The presidential election of 1997 was a turning point in the activities of the student movement. The regime, faced with the legitimacy crisis, decided to give some freedom during the presidential campaign and debates. There were 234 presidential candidates, including nine women. The Guardian Council approved just four male candidates; three conservative candidates and the fourth, reformist Khatami (Mashayekhi 2001). The OCU was leading in organizing Khatami's campaign on campuses. Ali Afshari⁴ was the coordinator of Khatami's presidential campaign in more than 30 universities across Iran. Mashayekhi (2001) argues that apart from their roles as voters and activists, students were "a new reference group" for the public. In a society suffering from the lack of dissent political activism and continued propaganda through state-controlled media that enforced ruling clerics as a reference group for people's decision, the OCU marked students as a new, trustworthy group of reference. Under the reform administration student activism prospered: 1- the new administration revoked some of the restrictions on campuses; 2- peaceful demonstrations were allowed if permitted; 3- more than 100 protests took place within the first two years of Khatami's administration; 4- the protests and demonstrations either were condemning the closure of secular publications, torturing political prisoners, serial murdering of dissent intellectuals, or were in support of human rights values; 5- great impact on public opinion; 6- great motivation for mass mobilization of the younger generation, especially for the electoral campaign of the Sixth Majles also known as the reformist Majles; 7- criticism of the performance and legitimate position of the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei (Mashayekhi 2001). By the end of 2004, the OCU established itself as the mobilization vehicle and

⁴ Ali Afshari was a board member of the Islamic Student Association of Amir Kabir University (1995-1999) and in central leadership of the OCU (1999-2004).

adopted a leading role for the newly revived student movement. “The OCU is in a strategic position to connect the Islamic Associations in most academic institutes” (Mashayekhi 2001, 308).

The Failure of the Reform Administration

After the July events of 1999, President Khatami remained silent for three days. This was a big backlash for the student movement. The students requested an open trial for the security forces and authorities behind the scenario of the bloody attacks on the dormitories of the University of Tehran. But it seemed Khatami’s administration was not able to follow the students’ requests in this matter. This resulted in a much lower turnout for Khatami’s re-election in 2001. In addition, the Guardian Council, backed by the conservative faction in the Majles, rejected or stopped many reform bills the reformists prepared. In 2004, during the electoral campaign for the Seventh Majles, the Guardian Council rejected many of the reformist candidates due to financial scandals. Many of the oppositional elites boycotted the Majles election. Mehrdad Khansari argues that “the experience of the past 7 years since the advent of President Khatami, have demonstrated that while ordinary citizens may go through the motions of turning up at regularly held elections, this makes very little impression on how the country is run. This is mainly due to the fact that standing above the election process are those unelected officials, headed by the Supreme Leader, who assume the right to bypass people.” The OCU also, after assessing the political structure of the upcoming election as an opportunity, boycotted the election. According to Abdollah Momeni, then board member of the OCU, President Khatami and his reform administrations betrayed people’s votes; they had many opportunities in hand to reform but easily lost them (Khansari 2003). Sazegara

explores the roots of failure of the reformist administration and concludes that the only option left is a regime change: “Democracy, human rights, civil society, and good international relations were the goals of the reformists. However, it became quickly apparent that reaching those goals within the framework of the present constitution was impossible” (Sazegara 2006, iv). Akbar Atri, who was a board member of the OCU from 1997 to 2005, in his testimony in front of the US Congress explained that the student movement does not have any more faith in the process of reform within the Islamic Republic constitution and its political institutions. He argued that the reform movement deviated from its main goals: democracy, human rights, limiting the power of the Supreme Leader, and structural change in the constitution (Iran-e Emrooz 2006).

The failure of the reformist administration resulted in a rift within the OCU. The liberal members of the OCU have become more critical of their past, and have stopped unconditional support for the reformists, and have encouraged or discouraged electoral participation based on its socio-political context. Whereas the conservative members have maintained “the reformists’ motto of legalism [that is, remaining within the legal boundaries of the current system]” (Ganji 2005, 42), and have encouraged unconditional participation in elections. Since 2001, the conservatives backed with the Revolutionary Guards and Basij forces tried to dismantle the OCU. In 2002, Islamic Student Associations University of Shiraz, University of Rasht, and University of Shahroud, held a general meeting in Shiraz and announced their own central committee. The regime sponsored this move and created a parallel organization, the OCU (Shiraz trend) to fulfill its ambitions for having a controlling hand within the universities, and provided them with all sorts of financial and governmental support. The OCU (Shiraz trend) is in the minority but due to the regime’s supports, seized

the official website of the OCU and tried to damage the popularity of the OCU (Allameh trend), which is in the majority and has much greater support amongst students and pro-democracy forces. In response to the division, previous members of the OCU led by Ali Akbar Mousavi Khomeini (reformist member of the Sixth *Majles*), sympathized with the Allameh trend members, established *Sazman-e Danesh Amokhtegan-e Iran* (Iran Students Alumni Organization) or *Advar-e Tahkeem-e Vahdat*. This organization is a political organization whose main agenda is to defend human rights. *Advar-e Tahkeem-e Vahdat* has its own branch in major university-based cities and has been a great partner for the OCU (Allameh trend). Since the website of the Allameh trend has filtered, the website of *Advar-e Tahkeem-e Vahdat*, which runs out of Iran, has been the official site reflecting the news and events about the OCU (Allameh) members and their activities. In 2004, the conservative faction took over the Seventh *Majles* and began preparation to consolidate the entire power structure in the upcoming presidential election.

The Return of the Conservatism

In 2005, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad became president and he declared a return to revolutionary values. His taking power was a huge setback for democratization in Iran. Women and students were the first victims of his policies. A new “cultural revolution” started; this time not by closing campuses, but by purging dissenting professors and imposing heavy sanctions on student activism. Dr. Ramesht, who was appointed to the University of Isfahan as the president in 2005, in a meeting explained how conservatives, after six years of covert operations, could take over the government. He mentioned of 40 purges of dissent faculty members of the University of Isfahan that was supposed to take place soon (*Advar News*

2005). The new government replaced many university presidents with clerics who did not have any knowledge of modern academics. Establishing Basij units in all campuses to monitor student activism was another move towards militarization of the universities. Despite all of the security measures and repressions, the OCU (Allameh), held the election and its new board members started their term in 2005. Dr. Fatemeh Haghghatjoo, a reformist member of the Sixth *Majles*, who has been in the United States, issued a congratulation statement and praised the bravery of the OCU in its continued activities even under turbulent political atmosphere (*Advar News 2005*). The organization of Advar-e Tahkeem-e Vahdat also expressed its happiness about the new board members of the OCU and embraced their struggles (*Advar News 2005*). The hard line administration employed different tactics to eliminate the OCU (Allameh trend): creating parallel student organizations and expelling dissenting professors and student activists from the universities. The regime, through a systematic and engineered method, has planned to bury the bodies of martyrs within the campuses to have its vanguards present anytime they want (Momeni 2008). Abdollah Momeni (2008) argues that the presence of security forces and Revolutionary Guards throughout the colleges is an important sign for the regime's legitimacy crisis.

One of the bravest moves of the OCU, in this period, was the announcement of its newly founded committee to defend women's rights. The Committee for Defense of Women's Rights formed on November 23rd 2005. In their statements they declared "we [the OCU] believe the path to democracy shall pass through the women's movement" (*Advar News 2005*). Bahareh Hedayat, a board member of the OCU and also a member of the Change for Equality Campaign, along with three other members of the OCU have been under persecution to announce the dissolution of this organization (Jaras 01/28/2010).

The Women's Movement: 1997-2008

Introduction

Iranian women have been key players in numerous historical and contemporary events. Their participatory and supporting roles in that past 100 years, for instance, range from supporting and being involved in the Constitutional Revolution of Iran to active involvement of support during the Iran-Iraq war, helping with the reconstruction process, including helping in many different areas of education, cultural, army, and aviation.

The emergence of the women's rights movement in Iran dated back as early as 1910. The women's movement was led by the middle to upper class women from Tehran and other major cities. The main goals of the movement were education for girls, equality in the society, and raising awareness among women of different sects about their rights.

Iranian women could achieve many of their goals including modern schools for girls in the early twentieth century, published many women's journals, established many women's associations, received the right to vote (1963), were elected as parliamentarians (1963), were elected as senators (1964), could receive appointments to the judiciary (1969), cabinet position as minister (1968), minister of state for women's affairs (1975), head of diplomatic missions (1976), and the Queen's right to regency (1967). The Family Protection Law (1967), the Family Planning Program (1967), and abortion law (1977) helped to develop some equal rights for women.

Soon after the revolution of 1979 in Iran, the Islamic regime took actions against women who had a major role in the revolution. The Family Protection Law was abolished and women were barred from holding many governmental and judiciary offices. In addition, women were required to observe Islamic dress codes in all public places. In response to these

new rules, on March 8th 1979, the International Women's Day, thousands of women protested in Tehran. The next target of the revolution was university campuses. Since then, women started their struggle to regain the rights they had achieved in the past. This study explores the challenges and efforts of the women's movement in Iran, centered on the Change for Equality Campaign. As Noushin Ahmadi Khorasani mentions, "the literary and intellectual legacy of these earlier activists is one of our campaign's most treasured resources" (Khorasani 2009, 31).

June 12, 2006

June 12, 2005 was a turning point in the history of the women's movement in Iran. On that day, thousands of men and women peacefully protested in front of the University of Tehran, against the institutionalized discrimination of women's rights in the Islamic Republic. Women marked that day as the National Day of Solidarity for Iranian Women (One Million Signatures Campaign 2008).

A year later, on June 12th, 2006, women organized a peaceful demonstration to show their protest against the discriminatory laws in the constitution. They gathered in *Haft-e Tir* Square, a main square in central Tehran. According to Parvin Ardalan (One Million Signatures Campaign 2008), following Shirin Ebadi's winning the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize, some women activists gathered to exchange their ideas on methods to change the discriminatory laws against women in the constitution of the Islamic Republic. They called this group *Ham Andishi* (like-mindedness). Susan Tahmaasebi, a campaigner, said in an interview that "it was in this gathering that for the first time I felt I was entering into a place filled with feminine self conscious" (One Million Signatures Campaign 2008, 30). When asked "who

was behind the One Million Signatures Campaign?” in an interview with the Voice of America, Persian News Network, Fariba Mohajer, one of the key members of the Campaign said “our feminine dreams” (Mohajer 2010). This group invited women from different factions of the society, from modernist to traditionalist, and Islamist to secular, to make a coalition against ‘Discrimination of Women’s Rights in the Constitution’. The following groups, organizations, and websites signed this invitation: 90 groups active in women’s rights issues, youth, and environmental issues; 350 women activists; 130 weblogs; and 10 women’s organizations outside of Iran. After its public announcement, the following supported this move: many of Nobel Laureates; Human Rights activists; some of the feminist groups and human rights activists outside of Iran; Human Rights Watch; 60 members of the student organization of the Office for Consolidation of Unity; 114 student activists; 14 student publications; 150 male activists; along with 6000 people who silently protested in front of the University of Tehran, from 5:00-6:00 PM on June 12th, 2006.

The security forces attacked the demonstrators and heavily cracked down on their peaceful protest. Many of participants were beaten and assaulted. The regime arrested more than 70 of activists.

Since then, the members of the campaign and their supporters defied the regime and became more and more resilient. If there is opportunity, they gather publicly, and in the absence of opportunity, as Shahla Entesari (2008) explains, they follow their traditional gathering, *doreh* (a women’s private party); a legacy from the struggle of their ancestors during the Constitutional Revolution of 1906.

One Million Signatures Campaign

Due to the discriminatory laws against women in the constitution of the Islamic Republic, women are treated as second-class citizens in their very land, Iran. Women enjoy half of the rights that men have in the nation's legal system. The Change for Equality Campaign or The One Million Signatures Campaign, supported by a wide range of ideas, made a call to reform the discriminatory laws against women, especially family laws, where violation is disguised without regard to nation or location. Khorasani (2009) explains that many of her Iranian sisters live under the shadow of fear of losing a child, being abused, harassed, or even killed, or finding themselves in a crowded marriage style of polygamy. Therefore, if legislatures reform some of the laws with respect to custody of child, polygamy, and domestic violence, a new horizon would rise to the life of countless women. There are many sermons from ruling clerics and Imams in mosques condemning violence against women, but as Khorasani emphasizes –what is needed to protect women is not preaching, but laws” (Khorasani 2009, 15).

Janet Chafetz and Anthony Dworkin (1986) define women's movement as: –conscious and collective revolt on behalf of women, defined as a general category with a set of problems and needs specific to themselves, which in turn are created by a socio-cultural system that categorically disadvantaged them relative to men” (p. 48). Women of Iran, due to unjust laws of a theocratic system, institutionally have been disadvantaged and discriminated relative to men. But here the problem is worse, the Islamic regime of Tehran considers women's struggle against *Sharia* (Islamic law) which is not only the source for the constitution, legal system, and judiciary, but also rules above all. Therefore, women's activists are faced with charges like *Moharebeh* (enemy of God).

Jo Freeman (1975, 1979) compares centralized and decentralized structures in the case of women's movement organizations. She argues that while the latter are more effective for raising awareness, the former serve best for institutionalization process (Staggenborg 1989). As it is discussed in the next chapter, the Change for Equality Campaign is a decentralized organization that tries to raise awareness and mobilize people to reform the current laws. As it has been best described by Noushin Ahmadi Khorasani, one of the founders of the campaign: "It is nowhere and everywhere, placeless yet ubiquitous". Table 3⁵ illustrates the trajectories of the One Million Signatures Campaign from June 2006 through 2008.

Janet Afary (2009) in *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran* describes the formation of One Million Signatures Campaign initiated by educated women believed "that social activism could change things". Like their Moroccan counterparts, Iranian women assembled their repertoire based on "Middle Eastern practices of gathering petitions, the consciousness-raising techniques of American feminists in the 1970s, and contemporary methods of access to the Internet and electronic news letters" (Afary 2009, 370).

Ahmadi Khorasani discusses that the force behind the Change for Equality Campaign is very different from secular and Islamic feminists. This generation neither ignores Islam nor tries to fit within the religious codes, it seeks a new engineered interpretation of Islam for women's rights issues (Afary 2009).

⁵ Adopted from: Ahmadi Khorasani, Noushin. 2009. *Iran's Women One Million Signatures Campaign for Equality: The Inside Story*, Women's Learning Partnership Translation Series, pp. 155-167

Table 3 – Trajectories of the One Million Signatures Campaign from 2006 through 2008

Year	Campaign Activity	The Regime's Response
June 12, 2006	Peaceful demonstration in support of equal rights for women	Brutal crackdown, 70 men and women were arrested
August 27, 2006	Official Launch of the campaign	
September 15, 2006	Launch of campaign in city of Tabriz	
October 20, 2006	Launch of campaign in city of Isfahan	
November 4, 2006	Launch of campaign in city of Hamedan, Women's rights awareness workshop in Hamedan	
November 5, 2006	Launch of campaign in Gorgan, grassroots workshop in Gorgan	
November 9, 2006	Launch of campaign in city of Zanjan	
November 14, 2006	Launch of campaign in Karaj, Seminar with 60 activists	
December 2, 2006	Launch of campaign in Yazd	
December 14, 2006	First general meeting in Tehran	
December 15, 2006		Arrest and imprisonment of some campaign members
December 29, 2006	Launch of campaign in Kermanshah, Training workshop in the same city	
January 10, 2007		Some campaign members were arrested in Tehran's subway while collecting signatures
January 27, 2007		Some campaign members were barred from leaving Iran
February 22, 2007	Launch of campaign in Mashhad, Training workshop in the same city	
February 24, 2007	First meeting of the Mothers' committee in Tehran	
February 29, 2007	Launch of campaign in Rasht, Training workshop in the same city	
March 4, 2007	Peaceful gathering protesting the prosecution of 4 women for their participation in the June 12, 2006	33 women's rights activists were arrested
March 4, 2007	Seminar in support of campaign, Soleymaniyeh, Iraq	
March 5, 2007		Some campaign members were barred from leaving Iran
March 6, 2007	Launch of campaign in Sanandaj	
March 8, 2007	International Women's Day	At least 8 women were arrested
March 14, 2007	Second general meeting in Tehran	
March 15, 2007		Some of the NGOs, and training center active in women's rights issues were ordered shut down
April 2, 2007		Five campaign members were arrested while collecting signature in Laleh Park, Tehran
April 11, 2007		Some campaign members were sentenced to prison
April 18, 2007		Some campaign members were sentenced to prison
April 26, 2007	Third general meeting in Tehran	
June 10, 2007		Some key members were arrested while collecting signatures

Year	Campaign Activity	The Regime's Response
June 12, 2007	First anniversary of the National Day of Solidarity for Iranian Women	
July 9, 2007		Student leader and campaign member Bahareh Hedayat was arrested
July 11, 2007		The first male campaigner was arrested while collecting signatures
August 13, 2007		Revolutionary Guard warned against women activists and campaigners
August 25, 2007	Campaign seminars held in Kermanshah for activists from Tehran, Rasht, and Hamedan	
September 3, 2007	Women activists met to mobilize against a proposed "Family Protection Bill"	
September 14, 2007	Training workshop in Khorramabad	25 activists were beaten and arrested
October 9, 2007		Arrest of women's activists in Kurdish regions
October 13, 2007	Launch of website of Men for Equality	
October 23, 2007	Launch of campaign in Zahedan	
October 30, 2007	Peaceful protest at Allameh Tabataba'i University	Some activists were arrested
November 4, 2007		Some campaigners were arrested
November 15, 2007	Launch of website by campaign activists in California	
November-December 2007		Heavy crackdowns on campaign bloggers and journalists
January 23, 2008	First training workshop on women's rights for campaign members	
February 1, 2008	Campaign website established by German activists	
February 1, 2008		The women's magazine <i>Zanan</i> was ordered shut down
February 14, 2008		Some campaigners were arrested
March 3, 2008		Some campaigners were barred from leaving Iran
March 7, 2008		Some campaigners were barred from leaving Iran
April 8, 2008		Some of the Campaign Mothers' Committee members were arrested
April 16, 2008	Launch of campaign activists in Cyprus	
April 22, 2008	Launch of campaign activists in Kuwait	
May 4, 2008	Launch of campaign in city of Ilam	
May 8, 2008	Launch of campaign in city of Amol	
May 15, 2008	Two-day meeting for campaign members in city of Rasht	
June 12, 2008	The second anniversary of the National Day of Solidarity for Iranian Women	Nine activists were arrested prior to the event
June 13, 2008		Some campaign member were arrested
July 9, 2008		Some campaign member were arrested

Year	Campaign Activity	The Regime's Response
July 12, 2008		Some campaign members were appeared before the Revolutionary Court
August 31, 2008	A meeting held by a Coalition of women's rights activists	The government backed down on the controversial "Family Protection Bill"
September 19, 2008	The first Human Rights International Prize for the campaign, Merano, Italy	
October 1, 2008		Iranian-American campaign member Esha Momeni was barred from leaving Iran
October 5, 2008		Some campaign members were arrested
October 22, 2008		Authorities raided to the houses of some campaigners
October 26, 2008		Some campaigners were barred from leaving Iran
October 16, 2008	Launch of campaign in city of Kerman	
November 4, 2008	Launch of campaign weblog for working group on equal inheritance	
November 13, 2008	An achievement for the women's movement: <i>Majles</i> passed legislation equalizing blood-money amounts for men and women involved in car accidents	
November 28, 2008	Reporters Without Borders Jury Prize for the campaign	
December 6, 2008	Nomination for OneWorld People of 2008 Award	
December 8, 2008		The website was blocked for the 18 th time

Women and the Reform Process

The Presidential campaign of Khatami not only boosted student activism, but also encouraged Iranians with diverse backgrounds, from journalists to stay-at-home moms, secular or religious, to turn the socio-political discourse from a 'no-mercy' society marked by numerous 'red lines' imposed by the state, to a more tolerant discourse. Janet Afary (2009) discusses the idea that reform process was mainly shaped by the following factors: many Iranians who either participated in the revolution and were involved in the state's political affairs, or were veterans of the Iran-Iraq war, felt betrayed by the regime's policies; the collapse of the Soviet Union and its Warsaw allies; and impacts of the communication technology, especially internet and satellite channels. For many of the Islamist reformists, the

revolution was far beyond anti-imperialism and the fall of monarchy, they were seeking a society based on a new interpretation of Islamic texts appropriate for a modern state (Afary 2009, Moghissi 2009). Hayedeh Moghissi (2009) even goes further and argues that secular forces, like Marxist groups or the Iran National Front, who participated in the revolution interpreted Khomeini's anti-modernist thoughts as anti-Western or anti-Shah, and either were ignorant or turned their eyes away from the revolution's anti-woman policies.

Women had a great level of participation in Khatami's Presidential campaign. In his speeches, he promised a more tolerant society with less restrictive measures regarding youth and women. In her study, Afary (2009) explores the successful participation of women as candidates under Khatami's administration. She compares the elections of the Urban and Rural Councils in 1999 and 2003. Her findings show that the number of female candidates doubled within four years, from 7,000 in 1999 to more than 14,000 in 2003.

Khatami appointed many women as deputies in his administration. These women introduced some rules and after lobbying, the Sixth *Majles*, also known as the Reformist Majles, passed a few of them. The Center for Women's Participation, an organization affiliated to the Office of the President, was the main ally of the women's movement within the polity (Afary, 2009). Although, Khatami was supportive, on many occasions, of the women's rights issues discussed in the Majles, the Supreme Leader and his Guardian Council either rejected or revised them. One of the main struggles between the reformists and conservatives, with respect to women's rights issues, was over the adoption of the UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Although Khatami and his fellow reformists supported CEDAW adoption, radical clerics and

their followers looked at it as an obvious sign of declaring a war against Islam and God (Afary 2009).

The Guardian Council disqualified many reformist candidates, which barred them from the electoral process of the Seventh Majles. This led to a victory for the hard-liner candidates. In 2004, the conservatives in the Majles reversed many bills passed by their reformist rivals. The weak approach of Khatami's cabinet and some exogenous events, such as wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, resulted in the victory of hard-liners throughout the political structure.

The Women's Movement and the Rise of New Radicalism

In 2005, Ahmadinejad took power as the president. He marked a new radicalism: a return to the revolutionary values, plus granting political power to the Revolutionary Guards. According to Afary, who was in Iran just before the presidential election of 2005, "Ahmadinejad's election also expressed a backlash against the sexual revolution taking place in Iran" (Afary 2009, 331).

Afary (2009) explores that gender issues and sexuality will remain challenges of a modern Iran for years to come. She argues many of the pro-democracy forces, secular or Muslim, from human rights activists to religious intellectuals, who challenged the Islamic regime drastically on many fronts, when it comes to the equal rights between men and women, they are either ignorant, or hesitate to step forward.

Khorasani on how the Change for Equality Campaign formed explains that "this inspiration-seeking on the level of the imagination came to the fore precisely when Iranian

women seemed to be facing a dead end in their struggle for justice” (2009, 43) after the failure of the reformist Khatami.

On March 8th, 2007, the regime did not give permission to women to celebrate the International Women’s Day. They were barred from any assembly in public places, thus they decided to celebrate it at their homes. Despite the presence of security forces and police, 150 women activists gathered in one house and held their celebration. Nahid Keshavarz, one of the activists, in an interview said –each of us is a movement by herself, who has been able to impose the equality to our patriarchal society” (Rahmani 2007).

To discredit the efforts of the activists of the One Million Signatures Campaign, Ahmadinejad’s administration introduced a new –Family Protection Law” to the *Majles* that campaigners believe carries more burdens for women than protection in a male dominated society. The campaigners in coalition with some eminent Iranian women could stop the bill temporarily (Afary 2009, Moghissi 2009).

Afary mentions that the theocratic regime of Tehran, aware of the power of the women’s movement, employed different methods to stop and destroy this campaign. But despite arrests, jails, death threats, and daily discriminations, the campaign is –moving on” although –slowly but defiantly, challenging a history of oppression and inequality, and seeking to change the position of Iranian women, one mind and one signature at a time” (Afary 2009, 373).

While an abeyance structure of these dissenting organizations is necessary most of the time because of persecutions, there are strategic tactics made to draw public attention at critical times, or when there is relative openness to dissention, such as during elections. For example, in 2008, when the nation preparing for the 2009 presidential election, a coalition

was formed of more than 40 women's groups and 700 activists, called the "convergence" of the women's movement. The main goal of this coalition was to use the relative openness of the elections as a forum for communicating their agenda and distributing literature about the women's movement. Women activists do not see the elections as a reform itself, or support or boycott the elections, but see them as a means of communication; a crucible opportunity for change.

3. Theoretical Background and Prior Research

In the following sections, I discuss two theoretical approaches to examine the mobilization ability of the movements in this study: the political process and decentralized organization approaches. I will define a decentralized organizational structure and review the existing literature. Part of the discussion will focus on the different components of a decentralized organization. I will focus on reticulation structure and social networking in more detail. This chapter will conclude with a summary of different findings with respect to movements' organizational structures, gaps in the literature, and propose my hypothesis.

Why Examine a Decentralized Structure and These Two Movements?

–Decentralization”? What a strange structure for a phenomenon that seems to be highly orchestrated and harmonized both in structure and in organization. Do social movements need to be centrally organized? Or are they just a random grassroots outbreak suffering from lack of coordination and leadership. Although the type and scope of a movement's organization depends on its socio-political context and the authorities' response to its rival, there has been a consensus over a third type of organizational structure which is neither ~~an~~ amorphous collectively nor a highly centralized autocracy” (Gerlach and Hine 1981, 78). It is decentralized! Why decentralization is important for a movement's organization is what I will discuss in the proceeding sections in more detail. Decentralized organizations are more adaptive to changes in their contexts, have a learning mechanism, can survive violent oppression, and are innovative. In addition, they are even more effective in non-democratic systems where any centralized opposition is the regime's target to destroy.

A decentralized organization is characterized by segmentation, polycentrism, and reticulation (SPR organization hereafter). According to Sidney Tarrow (1998) the most successful organizations are the ones “with a delicate balance between formal organization and autonomy - one that can only be bridged by strong, informal, and nonhierarchical connective structures” (p. 137). Therefore, the web-like connective structure or the reticulation system of a movement is the key player “operating within and between formal movement organizations” (p. 137).

Iran’s political system is theocratic, a religious dictatorship, in any case not a democracy. The regime of Tehran has a robust and centralized government under its supreme leader. It is equipped with different military and paramilitary factions in addition to a national army and parallel intelligence communities webbed across the nation and among the Iranian diaspora. There is no tolerance for any disagreement or criticism, no institutional access for opposition, no freedom of press, and no freedom for opposing political parties. There are vast human rights violations. In the absence of political freedom, social movements in general and the student and women’s movements in particular are the political voices of dissent. Access to political opportunities under the Islamic regime of Tehran is a very difficult challenge for opposition movements. In Iran, political opportunities have either emerged through endogenous realignment within the polity, as with the Presidential election of 1997, and the birth of a reform faction within the system, or, as Alexis de Tocqueville mentioned “when a bad government seeks to mend its way” (Tarrow 1998, 74), like free presidential debates prior to the Presidential Election of 2009 which led to a disputed result and the birth of the Green movement.

Given the high levels of institutionalized discrimination, human rights violation, injustice, and oppression in Iran, “the potential always exists that the hegemonic ideology will be questioned and that the state may lose legitimacy through frame transformation” (Schock 2005, 28). Hossein Bashiryieh, an Iranian political science scholar and a victim of Ahmadinejad’s “cultural purge,” who lives in New York and teaches at Syracuse University, argues that the Islamic Republic established its legitimacy based on four main pillars: Islamic justice, political religion, anti-imperialism, and anti-monarchy. According to Bashiryieh, the Islamic regime of Tehran has been starting to lose its legitimacy. He believes the Green movement in the post-presidential election of 2009, the student movement and the women’s movement, expedited this collapse (Bashiryeh 2009).

In March 2006 *Nameh*⁶ conducted an interview with Abed Tavancheh (board member of Islamic Student Association, Amir Kabir University) and Morteza Eslahchi (general secretary of Islamic Student Association, Allameh Tabatabaei University) both of them then board members of the Office for Consolidation of Unity (OCU, hereafter). They mentioned:

“Until the time that there is no freedom of expressions and political freedom it is the duty of us in Islamic Student Associations of Universities to reflect issues people are facing in the society. In the absence of civil institutions, Student Associations leading by the Office for Consolidation of Unity are responsible to play the role of those institutions. This is our responsibility, according to the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights, to reflect issues

⁶ *Nameh* was a political-cultural monthly banned from publication under Ahmadinejad’s government and its editor in chief, Keyvan Samimi, was arrested in post-presidential election unrest in 2009.

and defend individuals under discrimination independent of their religion, ethnicity, and ideology” (Esmaili 2006).

As it will be discussed later Tarrow’s dilemma - the “delicate balance” - is best fulfilled through a decentralized structure. Both of the movements under study enjoy a decentralized structure. The delicacy of their balance will be examined in this research.

Defining a Social Movement

Leading scholars in the field offer different definitions of ‘social movement’. Mario Diani, in his comparative study on the concept of ‘social movement’, recognizes a partial among varieties of ‘social movement’ definitions. Social movements, according to Diani, are defined as “networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political and cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities” (Diani 1992, 1). Although there is no consensus over a standard definition for the whole phenomenon of ‘social movement’, many scholars refer to Sidney Tarrow’s definition as the most complete one. He defines social movements as “collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities” (Tarrow 1998, 4), rather than seeing them as “expressions of extremism, violence, and deprivation” (Ibid, 4). Some scholars see social movements as efforts to mobilize people who are “alienated” (Kornhauser 1959, 212) or “excluded” (McAdam 1982, 25) from the current system, “who do not believe in the legitimacy of the established order”, and are ready to either destroy the regime or to promote/resist changes in the society (Kornhauser 1959, 212, McAdam, 1982, 25). There is another approach that defines ‘social movement’ as a cluster of social movement organizations (SMOs) that are autonomous units

with shared beliefs cooperating with each other towards the desired political change (Lofland 1996, 143, Meyer and Tarrow 1998, 18).

Political Process Approach and SMOs

Political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing process are key elements of the political process model (Schock 2005). Although each provides different perspective on SMOs, together they offer a complex and comprehensive image of SMO structures and practices. Studies conducted by social movement scholars within each of these frameworks not only explore the role of organizations in mobilization, but also examine SMO abilities in areas such as strategic leadership, sustainability of a movement, and resource acquisition (Caniglia and Carmin 2005).

Kurt Schock (2005) in his wonderful study about non-violent movements in nondemocracies defines political process as an approach that examines “the structures through which people and resources are mobilized, their representations of the social world, and the political context in which movements occur” (p. 27). He argues that, although the political process model initially originated to explain collective action in Western style democracies, it has been integrated into the research body to examine the roots of social movements in undeveloped and under developed countries as well (Schock 2005). His comparison of the three components of the political process model within democratic and nondemocratic states illustrates the greater importance of a “free space” in nondemocracies.

The Political process model concentrates on factors that lead to movements’ success and failure (Caniglia and Carmin 2005). “The emphasis tends to be on longer cycles of mobilization and decline as well as on factors external to movements that can constrain and

shape movement outcomes” (Caniglia and Carmin 2005, 204). Scholars in the political process tradition study SMOs in their socio-political environments and seek out organizations’ reactions to external conditions. These scholars tend not to examine the internal operation of formal organizations. The foundation of their theory is based on a variety of informal, grassroots settings as mobilization structures (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996). The political process model argues that the presence and absence of political opportunities play a crucial role that can turn “the potential for mobilization into action” (Tarrow 1998). According to Sidney Tarrow there are two sets of aspects one has to consider while studying political opportunities. The first set is dimensions that cause changes in opportunities: partial access for new participants to institutionalized political system; shifts in political alignment; rifts among elites; access to influential allies within the polity (Tarrow 1998). The second set is constraints that limit opportunities: the strength of the regime and state’s level of centralization; state’s mode of response to contention; social control and modes of repression (Tarrow 1998).

Activists’ perceptions of political opportunities and the existence of opportunities are separate matters. McAdam (1994) contends that distinguishing between the two “will allow us to understand interesting cases where political opportunities do not lead to collective action, and those where collective action arises in the absence of favorable opportunities” (Goodwin and Jasper 2004).

Eitan Alimi (2007) based on his analysis of the first Palestinian Intifada argues that state repression for demobilization has a reverse effect under some conditions, and can lead to even the spread of contention and more mobilization. He explains how a shared perception of opportunities (i.e. rift within Israeli authorities over the continued occupation) and threats

(i.e. existential threat) outbalanced the latter in the light of the former and resulted in an increased contention.

In her comparative study of the gay and lesbian movement within two time frameworks, Mary Bernstein (2003) argues that activists do not act based on a favorable political opportunity, rather they respond to opportunities based on their priorities. Therefore, political and cultural opportunities, and mobilization are not in a direct relationship and a one-to-one map. She explores how the gay and lesbian activists did not mobilize around the sodomy law even when the political opportunity was in their favor, and how they chose to mobilize behind the sodomy law in a period of closed opportunity and unfavorable environment.

Some scholars have shown interest in sustainability of contentions in the absence of political opportunities. Paul Bagguley (2002), and Merrindahl Andrew and Sarah Maddison (2010) in their studies of the women's movements in Britain and Australia have arrived at this idea that some movements faced with closed opportunities spread into free spaces (i.e. societal arena) and sustain their contentions, albeit through more invisible ways than protest and demonstrations.

Paul Bagguley (2002) in his research on contemporary British feminism argues that the women's movement in UK is in an abeyance phase. It seems the movement is passive, but women activists are unobtrusively mobilized; they have meshed into male-dominated societal spaces and continued lobbying for feminism. M. F. Katzenstein (1990) defines unobtrusive mobilization as organized resistance at the level between everyday resistance and public insurgency.

Merrindahl Andrew and Sarah Maddison (2010) have studied the women's movement in Australia from 1996 to 2007, when Prime Minister Howard and his conservative administration held the office. They explored the reasons why the Australian women's movement was able to extend its mobilization through an abeyance structure during periods of closed political opportunities, but activists are not able to remain in abeyance in a long run. These scholars have found that "the significance of abeyance lies in its linkages between one upsurge in activism and another" (181).

The above cases have been conducted in Western democracies. What about nondemocracies, where a lower level of tolerance for dissent activities is available? Since opposition groups in dictatorships do not enjoy the availability of opportunities and freedom in democracies, any sign of political opportunities can lead to contention (Schock 2005). The level of tolerance for dissent activities in some nondemocracies is zero, so opposition is assumed a threat to the state. The regime responds to any oppositional organization brutally. Schock concludes that the networks and organizations are more likely to remain resilient if they can use a variety of responses and interact through any non-state controlled means (Schock 2005). He argues that network-oriented organizations and decentralized structures are the most pragmatic mobilizing strategies in nondemocracies. To support his claim, Schock studied a variety of non-violent movements in nondemocracies such as South Africa, the Philippines, Nepal, Thailand, Burma, and China.

Schock's findings show how the United Democratic Front in South Africa, and the coalition of the New Nationalist Alliance and the United Democratic Opposition in the Philippines, through decentralized structures, could help the labor movements to endure despite a violent crackdown by the authorities. His research explores how, based on the

decentralized organization of the Campaign for Popular Democracy in Thailand, and through a network-oriented system of the Nepali Congress Party, the United Left Front, and the United National People's Movement, enabled non-violent movements in these countries to sustain under intense repression and promoted a political realignment towards opponents' favor. Finally, Schock explains how the Solidarity movement in Gdansk, equipped with a decentralized organization which is loosely connected through underground links, was able to survive the brutal oppression of Polish security forces, in spite of the imprisonment of their leaders (Schock 2005).

Caniglia and Carmin explore the following SMO factors that cause variation in political opportunity: number of organizations and their membership status; networking, which facilitates contention and promotes coordination; personal relationships, associations, unions, and clubs for better and more recruitment (Caniglia and Carmin 2005). They contend that SMO research within political opportunity tradition can be classified into two major categories. "The first considers the relationship between SMOs and their external environments. Studies in this area continue to investigate how SMOs respond to changes in political conditions by examining them in a variety of national and sub-national contexts" (Caniglia and Carmin 2005, 204). Anthony Oberschall and Elena Zdravomyslova recognize that SMOs respond to their socio-political contexts in their studies and show how strategic SMOs are.

Oberschall studied (1996) political opportunities in the Eastern European revolts of 1989 within four countries: Poland, Hungary, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia. He argues for the critical role of opportunities in Eastern block democracy movements. Failure in "legitimacy" he mentions, "that is, citizens' moral approval" of those Eastern authorities

provided the best opportunity for contention. His research explores how leaders and oppositional elites under a Communist regime formed scattered and loose clusters of groups based on personal bonds that led to successful mass mobilizations.

Zdravomyslova (1996) studies political opportunities in Russia's transition to democracy. She explores how two social movement organizations, one radical and the other moderate, took advantage of Gorbachev's reforms and facilitated a transition to democracy through symbolic framing. According to her findings during Russia's cycles of contention, opportunities expanded and social movement organizations populated rapidly.

–The presence and impact of relations among organizations, both as networks and coalitions, is the second stream of SMO research in political process tradition” (Caniglia and Carmin, 2005, p.205). Charles Kurzman's study of four religious movements has shed light on another aspect of SMO response to political opportunities: the role of pre-existing organizations in a movement's success and failure. He examines how pre-existing organizations facilitate mobilization and provide resources for sustained contention to a movement (Kurzman 1998). In his study of the Iranian revolutionary movement in the Shi'a Muslim *ruhaniyat*, he explores activism within the Shi'a community after the death of Grand Ayatollah Burujerdi. Kurzman's study shows that after Burujerdi's death, the Shi'a *ruhaniyat* community lost its centrality. Khomeini took advantage of this opportunity and by networking the mosques and mobilizing them against the Shah, prepared the settings for the revolution of 1979. But soon after the revolution succeeded, Khomeini as the new grand ayatollah centralized his control over *ruhaniyat* establishment (Kurzman, 1998). According to Kurzman's findings, –religious institutions with greater organizational opportunity were partially or fully mobilized for social movement activism. But institutions with less

organizational opportunity were less mobilized for social movement activism” (Kurzman 1998, 42).

Suzanne Staggenborg, Beth Schaefer Caniglia and JoAnn Carmin (2005) mention that in the absence of a favorable political and social context, SMOs help movements endure. Research works conducted on the women’s liberation movement and the civil rights movement in the U.S. demonstrate the important role of informal networks formed among participants in these movements (McAdam 1988).

Joe Freeman (1972) in her research on the women’s liberation movement explores the advantages and disadvantages of “structurelessness”. She argues although this approach is effective during the formation phase of a movement and for raising awareness, it is not successful in getting goals accomplished. She declares that a more effective movement should employ the following attitudes: task delegation, responsibility, authority distribution, task circulation, information diffusion, and having equal access over organizational resources.

Suzanne Staggenborg (1989) in her comparative study of two movement organizations explores the impact of ideology and structure on SMOs’ approach to solve organizational issues. She argues that movements with formalized and centralized structures maintain better and are more effective in institutionalized change, but informal and decentralized organizations are better for cultural change and the formation of future collective actions.

Referring to Tarrow's dilemma of movement organization⁷, Schock contends formal, informal, or hybrid structures are more a matter of choice in democratic countries. While in nondemocracies, where authorities can destroy any centralized structure easily, decentralized structures are necessary if opposition groups want to succeed (Schock, 2005). In nondemocracies, transforming public opinion or a conviction that a problem exists into a form of collective action requires greater organizational efforts (Swain 2001).

Political process scholars believe that political opportunities and mobilizing structures are not sufficient factors for collective action to occur. Intervening between opportunities and mobilization is the framing process (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996, Tarrow 1998). According to Oliver and Johnston (2000) "the role of movement leaders is not to direct, but orchestrate, facilitate, and enable a movement to grow, by creating the receptive context for its formation" (Bate et al. 2005, 33). Between being aggrieved and daily routines there should be a horizon promising enough that if the group acts collectively there will be achievements (Bate et al. 2005, McAdam 1996). Snow and Benford (1988) recognized three types of framing: addressing a problem (diagnostic); designing appropriate logistics (prognostic); and awakening emotions (motivational) (Bate et al. 2005). Tarrow (1998) argues framing is a process that needs to be learned while people are in struggle. Between the values they share and their differences there is something (e.g., symbols) appealing enough rooted in the common cultural context of the participants that could lead to a successful mobilization.

⁷ "The dilemma of hierarchical movement organization is that, when they permanently internalize their base, they lose their capacity for disruption, but when they move in the opposite direction, they lack the infrastructure to maintain a sustained interaction with allies, authorities, and supporters" (Tarrow 1998, 137).

Mario Diani (1996) has conducted a research on the Northern League in Italy in a historical context and has assessed the relationship between mobilization frames and political opportunities. His findings show the variations of political alignments based on different opportunities available within Italian polity. Based on the degree of opportunity for having political access, and the degree of opportunity to create a crisis, Diani introduces four framing strategies: realignment, anti-system, inclusion, and revitalization.

Table 4 – Most Successful Framing Strategies,
according to different configurations of the political Opportunity Structure⁸

Opportunities for Autonomous Action within the Polity			
Opportunities Created by the Crisis of Dominant Cleavages	High		Low
	High	Realignment Frames	Anti-System Frames
	Low	Inclusion Frames	Revitalization Frames

Since democratic states show a higher degree of tolerance for opposition and the society is open, framing is easier and more effective within a democratic system. In nondemocracies, a shift in alignment is a sign of contention and framing realignment jeopardizes the regime’s legitimacy which could eventually lead to a movement. Nondemocratic states respond to any realignment with an iron fist and create a shadow of fear over their nation (Schock 2005).

In sum, according to Jeff Goodwin and James Jasper (2004) “the political process model claims that social movements result when expanding political opportunities are seized by people who are formally organized, aggrieved, and optimistic that they can successfully redress their concerns” (p. 17). In the following sections I will discuss social movement

⁸ Source: Diani, Mario. 1996. Linking Mobilization Frames and Political Opportunities: Insights from Regional Populism in Italy, *American Sociological Review*, vol. 61, December, 1053-1069, Figure 1, p. 1056.

organizations (SMOs) and their different configurations, as facilitators for mobilization, in more detail.

Defining a Social Movement Organization

Scholars in the field of social movements have been mostly focused on the causes that lead people to participate in movements rather than the endurance of the movement. Some scholars like Meyer and Tarrow are more interested in studying strategic views and organizational structures behind movements that endure after their emergence and peak time. According to some scholars, when a movement is in its infancy, it does not enjoy a well-structured organization. “Movement organizations not only develop internally but also put their energies into building other kinds of movement-related organizations - usually after their protest related activities decline” (Meyer and Tarrow 1998, 19).

Social movement organizations (SMOs) are associations of persons making idealistic and moralistic claims about how human personal or group life ought be organized that, at the time of their claims-making, are marginal to or excluded from mainstream society - the then dominant constructions of what is realistic, reasonable and moral” (Lofland 1998, 3). The National Organization for Women of the Women’s Liberation movement, the Berkeley Free Speech Movement of the student movement, Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, and Congregation Based/Church Based Community Organizations, are examples of social movement organizations in the United States.

Movements have diverse organizational roles ranging from transforming a contentious event to a sustained mobilization to producing leadership out of contention. Sidney Tarrow argues that confusion about a movement’s organization and its role is rooted

in the three-fold meaning of the concept, namely: ~~formal~~ hierarchical organization, the organization of collective action at the point of contact with opponents, and connective structures” (Tarrow 1998, 123-4).

Social movement organizations and formal organizations share many characteristics such as members, place, partially recognized as a player in the polity, and practices (Davis, et al. 2005). According to Heidi Swarts, organizations provide the best grounds for their members/participants to experience civic society, practice to be influential, and get acquainted with new ideas and cultures (Swarts 2008).

Social movement organizations vary in respect to the following attributes (Lofland 1996, 141-149):

Membership: some organizations have individual members and some of them are coalitions of organizations. In both cases they have at least two members for the membership to exist. Some with many members might even include a membership department (Lofland 1996).

Fragility and Temporariness: some organizations are fragile either because of their limited participation in protests or because of a naïve strategy vulnerable to repression by the authorities (Lofland 1996). On the other hand, some organizations are temporary although they enjoy a robust structure. These types of organizations, after achieving their goals, fade out. There are also movement organizations that persist and involve themselves in electoral politics such as the Green Party of Germany.

Formalization and Centralization: some organizational structures are hierarchical, some informal, and some in between these two. Some organizations enjoy a centralized leadership, some have an effective board of leaders, and some of them follow a charismatic leader (Lofland 1996; Tarrow 1998).

Diversity: some organizations have members from different facets of the society and are diverse. Other organizations recruit a specific class or group in the society.

Hierarchical and Geographical Scales: hierarchical scale distinguishes among organizations that are local, national organizations with local chapters, or national organizations without local chapters (Lofland 1996, Davis et al. 2005).

Democratic and Oligarchic: oligarchy in the SMO literature refers to Robert Michels' "Iron Law of Oligarchy". Michels argues that even in the democratic context of an association, oligarchy is unavoidable (Lofland 1996). Tarrow interprets the term as "over time, organizations displace their original goals, become wedded to routine and ultimately accept the rules of the game of the existing system" (Tarrow 1998, 123). John Lofland argues that movement organizations' tendency at the beginning is toward democracy but they will turn into oligarchy eventually. According to Tarrow, Luther Gerlach and Virginia Hine proposed a "decentralized, segmented, and reticulated" model that broke the Iron Law. Their organizational structure contains loosely coordinated units enabled for disruption and autonomous enough for participation with no central leadership. This structure keeps activism alive and makes revival possible for future political opportunities (Tarrow 1998).

How to Identify a SPR Organization

Not all social movements endure. But if they last, social movements retain an organizational structure. Movement organizations follow an evolution-like process during different stages in the cycle of contention. In the mobilization phase, protests and demonstrations are not organized, but as they transition to other phases their organizational structure becomes well-defined. A "well-structured" organization, as Kriesi et al. (1995) define, has the following

dimensions: ~~–~~formalization, professionalization, centralized control, well-financed operations, and large number of supportive members” (Meyer and Tarrow 1998, 19). Gerald F. Davis et al. (2005) compare SMOs with formal organizations and argue that both types of organizations share the following characteristics: ~~–~~a known location and group of participants, recognition as a more or less legitimate player, and some continuity of mission and routines” (p. 189). Over time, movement organizations develop different components like ~~–~~authority structure, and strategic leadership” (Davis et al. 2005, 189), or take on different political and non-political roles such as political parties and interest groups, or NGOs (Meyer and Tarrow 1998).

Luther Gerlach and Gary Palmer (1981) explore the relation between resource fluctuations and the formation of polycentric networks. They refer to findings of Pradip Khandwala (1981), and Fred Emery and Eric Trist (1965, 1973) as other cases elaborating the direct impact of resource fluctuations on political and economic decentralization. Khandwala (1981) explained the adaptation procedure of societal segments to resource fluctuations through decentralization. Emery and Trist (1965, 1973) suggested that ~~–~~organizations in disturbed-reactive environments become flexible, a property which encourages a certain decentralization and also puts a premium on quality and speed of decision at various peripheral points” (Gerlach and Palmer 1981, 363).

According to Emery and Trist (1965) organizations adopt various strategies during turbulent times. One strategy is for organizations to maximize cooperation, while not taking over each other’s role. Gerlach and Palmer (1981) argue that facing turbulent situations with more innovative strategies than Emery and Trist’s ~~–~~organizational matrices”, created to empower organizations ~~–~~not only to cope with turbulent fields, but also to shape turbulent

fields to suit their objectives and to generate changes which create turbulence” (Gerlach and Palmer 1981, 364). This more innovative strategic model is segmented, polycentric, and reticulated. Luther Gerlach and Virginia Hine developed this model based on field studies of the Black Power, Pentecostal, and Environmental movements, as well as a literature review of other movements such as Protestantism in sixteenth-century Europe, Sufism in Persia to protest Arab domination, and the anti-colonial Mau Mau movement in Kenya.

John D. McCarthy’s (2005) research on federated social movements in the United States shows that in spite of daily increasing number of Robert Putnam’s “social movements without members”, nationally federated and polycentric movement organizations are pretty much alive. He also argues that when these decentralized structures get trapped in organizational logistics and formality, the opportunities for their participants’ activism decline.

Jackie Smith (2005) conducted research on the effects of globalization on transnational social movements. She suggests a coalition approach based on a decentralized and informal structure for transnational movements. She argues that in this case the shared ideological and organizational rules and procedures remain minimal and limited and coalition organizations can maintain their autonomy while active in a shared framework with others.

Luther Gerlach and Virginia Hine (1981) closely examined the Black Power and Pentecostal movements. According to these scholars, people in general and even many of the participants in both movements believe that either the movements are centrally controlled or they are random grassroots outrages. Based on their observations, Gerlach and Hine described a third form of organization. –A movement is neither an amorphous collectively

nor a highly centralized autocracy, but one that was a segmentary, polycentric, and reticulated (acronym SPR)” (Gerlach and Hine 1981, 78, Gerlach 2001, 289).

Segmentary - “Composed of many diverse group, which grow and die, divide and defuse, proliferate and contract” (Gerlach 2001, 289).

Polycentric - “Having multiple, often temporary, and sometimes competing leaders or centers of influence” (Gerlach 2001, 289).

Reticulated - “Forming a loose, reticulated, integrated network with multiple linkages through travelers, overlapping membership, joint activities, common reading matter, and shared ideals and opponents” (Gerlach 2001, 289).

Based on this model, decentralization, segmentation, and reticulation have to do with decision making, compositional structure, and bridging respectively. SPR organizational structure lacks a central leadership, but may enjoy a charismatic leader or a leadership board. This prevents the decision-making unit of an organization from ruling the entire movement’s participants (Gerlach and Hine 1981).

Segmentation

A segmentary movement consists of a wide variety of, nationally and/or internationally, autonomous cells or units. These constituent elements can join together and form a bigger cell, or they can divide to smaller cells. The new segments either preserve the functionality of its components or take on a new role. As a result of appending and splitting, participants in a movement could be affiliated to more than one segment (Gerlach and Hine 1981, Gerlach 2001). Gerlach and Hine (1981) argue that in a segmentary movement, like Black Power or Pentecostalism, each component has its own interpretation of the movement’s ideology and

therefore, different cells employ different means to achieve the goals of the movement.

Studies on the religious movements of the 1960s and the environmental movement in the United States led scholars to recognize different sources for segmentation process in a movement: “personal power, pre-existing cleavages, competition, ideological differences” (Gerlach 2001, 291-292).

Personal Power: According to Gerlach (2001), participants in the movement, individuals or groups, operate based on a genuine feeling that they are key elements of the movement, who have access to all available resources, and are responsible for the movement’s achievement. “They don’t wait to be asked” (Ibid, 291). “Individual initiative, independent action, and personal responsibility” (Gerlach and Hine 1981, 43) encourage participants to form new action-cells and advocate for their own means to achieve the movement’s ends.

Pre-existing cleavages: Cleavages are reflected in two operational levels of a segmentary movement, recruitment and factionalism. Differences have variety of roots: socio-economic, educational, geographical, or personal. According to Gerlach and Hine (1981) there were two main sources for segmentation in the Pentecostal movement of Latin America: participants’ socio-economic backgrounds and cleavages among the American missionaries. People with friendship and kinship ties get together and form a new active-cell, or members of a local group try to recruit a new member with different background to add diversity to their group and practice tolerance.

Competition: Movement participants compete over the variety of rewards and benefits. Rewards such as “economic, political, social, and psychological”, and benefits such as “followers, media attention, influence, funds and personal satisfaction” (Gerlach 2001).

Ideological differences: Participants in a movement come from different ideological trends based on the socio-political and cultural context in which a movement is mobilized. When some members divide over ideology, they either reject each other and choose separate paths, or accept each other and choose symbiosis. “Most division occurs during the growth phase of a movement and contributes to its expansion, but it may occur at any time” (Gerlach 2001).

Polycentrism

A polycentric social movement has different leaders and headquarters. The leaders are not under a central and coherent leader. It may enjoy, sporadically, a charismatic leadership. A charismatic leadership usually appears based on some critical circumstances when an individual comes up with a solution for challenges in the way of a movement. The leaders do not have power to rule over an entire movement. Personal strength and a non-violent approach are main characteristics of a good leader, which can lead a movement to successfully challenge the authority and at the same time foster the contention. “Thus a leader must often act as no more than a ‘first among equals’ ” (Gerlach 2001, 295).

Reticulation

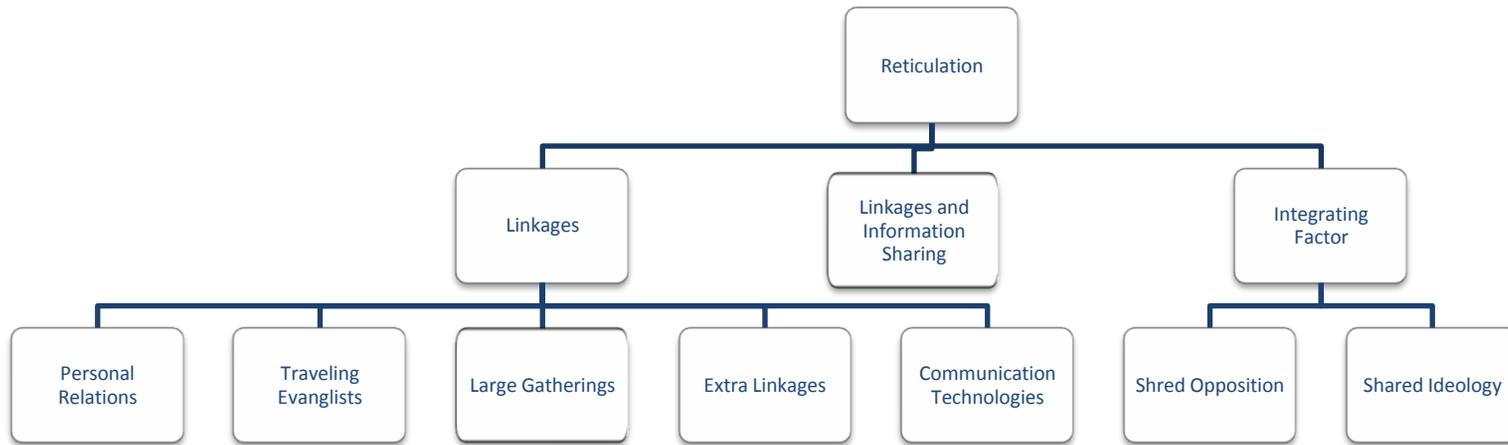
As discussed before, a movement has different components or active-cells. These many units are not detached, but attached. They are connected through a horizontal social relation, a collective identity, and a shared opponent. Through a network structure, participants exchange information, recruit new members, organize simultaneous actions in different places, and attract new resources (Gerlach 2001). In another word, reticulation is a network that connects various segments to each other and equips them with communication channels.

Figure 2 illustrates the main components of a reticulation system namely, linkages, linkages and information sharing, and integrating factors. Linkages include: personal ties, travelling evangelists and visitors, large gatherings, communication technologies, and extra movement linkages. Shared opposition and shared ideology are two key components almost common amongst a movement's participants. Different segments of SPR organization exchange ideas and share information through a wide variety of communication tools (Gerlach and Hine 1981, 55-63; Gerlach 2001, 296-302).

Mark Granovetter in his outstanding study (1983), *The Strength of Weak Ties: a Network Theory Revised*, recognizes two different sets of social relations: close friendships (strong ties), and acquaintances (weak ties). Every individual in the society, according to Granovetter, more or less, establishes both kinds of ties. According to this perspective every person has some close friends and some acquaintances, who in turn have some close friends and acquaintances. Therefore, a social network is a mesh or cluster of close friends interlinked through their acquaintances. According to Granovetter "weak ties provide people with access to information and resources beyond those available in their own social circle; but strong ties have greater motivation to be of assistance and are typically more easily available" (Granovetter 1983, 209). In other words, employing Tarrow's "novelty" concept into Granovetter's "weak ties theory" crystallizes Snow's "mobilization vehicle".

Borrowing from Tarrow and rephrasing it with Granovetter's terminology, one of my arguments is that *what underlies the most successful of social movement organizations is the role of weak ties operating within and between movement organizations' strong ties.*

Figure 2 – Reticulation System Architecture⁹



⁹ Adapted from: Gerlach, Luther P, and Virginia H Hine. *People, Power, Change: Movements of Social Transformation*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1981.

Granovetter's findings are:

- Weak ties are key players for diffusion of innovations (Granovetter 1983, 214),
- Weak ties are bridges over which information crosses the boundaries of social groups (Ibid, 219),
- Strong ties have the main impact on the decision-making process (Ibid, 219),
- The more the number of weak ties, the more the possibility of mobilization (Ibid, 224).

Robert Putnam's (2000) "social capital" theory is based on weak ties and strong ties, although through a different terminology. Putnam refers to strong ties as "bonding capital" and to weak ties as "bridging capital". Putnam argues that "for a successful mobilization, the ideal groups' structure should be the ones which bond along some social dimensions and bridge across others" (Swain 2001, 17).

In his research conducted on the role of civic networks, Diani and Baldassarri (2007) recognize two types of social ties for coordination across a polycentric network: social bonds and transactions. "Social bonds actually characterize dense clusters within broader networks, while transactions facilitate links between almost disconnected subgroups" (760).

Borrowing from Tarrow and rephrasing it with Putnam's terminology, my second strong argument is that *a successful movement organization must maintain a delicate balance between its bonding capital and bridging capital with respect to the hierarchical movement organization it employs.*

As stated before, a reticulation structure is a network that connects various segments of a movement to each other through different personal, organizational, and extra linkages and equips them with communication channels.

Personal ties: There are different sources for personal ties. Participants connect with each other through “kinship, marriage, friendship, neighborliness, and other associations” (Gerlach 2001, 296). The majority of personal ties are considered as strong ties and they remain between participants even if a group breaks into smaller cells. According to Gerlach (2001), some high profile members, or leaders, in a movement are generally active in more than one cell and this turns them into a node through which several groups are bridged together.

Travelling Evangelists: Evangelists are activists who travel across the network, from one city to another, from one campaign to another campaign, and spread the word of a movement. I call them a “mobile knot” of a movement that bridges many groups and knits weak ties together.

Large gatherings: Gatherings provide opportunities for participants to share information and exchange ideas. Different sorts of gathering are: seminars, conferences, workshops, conventions, general meetings, and demonstrations (Gerlach 2001).

Communications technologies: They provide participants great means for outreach activities: internet, TV, radio, newsletters, newspapers, fax, weblogs, emails, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter.

Mario Diani (2000) explores the role of computer mediated communication on social movements. He argues that virtual networks of communication assist activists in their solidarity and collective identity. He declares that web technologies are very helpful for mobilization and modify operational means of SMOs.

Extra-movement linkages: The structure of a social movement not only depends on the various relationships within the movement community, but also depends on “the reticulation

formed by various types of linkages among otherwise unrelated cells or some groups of cells” (Gerlach and Hine 1981, 61).

Diani (1997) in his study on the relation between social movements and social capital explores the capacity of social movements to build new ties. He argues that to be innovative, social movements not only rely on their preexisting networks, but also they need to extend their social capital within societal arenas and political elites.

Shared opposition: A main reason that maintains diverse groups together in a movement is a common opposition. Movements and their oppositions are in a direct relation with each other. The stronger a movement, the stronger its opposition becomes, “much as a kite flies against the wind” (Gerlach 2001).

Shared ideology: According to Gerlach (2001), movement ideology has two distinct functionalities: participants use them as movement mottos or slogans, and different interpretations. Gerlach argues that apart from divisions that can happen over different interpretations of ideology, sometimes core beliefs can rule over a movement and even reshape the discourse of a society. He explains how, after ‘ecology’ entered to the public knowledge, “the prefix ‘eco’ became widely used to give new meaning to other words, i.e. ecofeminism” (Ibid, p. 301).

Stanley Wasserman and Katherine Faust (1994) define a social network: “a network consists of a finite set or sets of actors and the relation or relations defined on them” (p. 20). The “relational information” is the key characteristic of a social network. In a relational approach the main components of analysis are linkages among units, whereas, in a positional approach underlying social structures are the main components of analysis (Saunders 2007).

Wasserman and Faust recognize the following as important while studying a social network:

- Actor and their actions are viewed as interdependent rather than independent units,
- Relational ties, weak or strong, bond or bridge, between actors are channels for both information flow and diffusion of novel repertoire,
- Opportunities and constraints for mobilization are created by the network structural environment (Wasserman and Faust 1994, 4).

In recent years social science scholars have employed social network analysis methods to study a wide range of topics from social movement organizations to political violence and terrorism (Pedahzur and Perliger 2006, Ray et al. 2003, Saunders 2007, Wasserman and Faust 1994).

Ashok Swain in his research on the relationship between social networks and social movements cited studies conducted by David Snow and his colleagues (1980) on the importance of social relations, especially pre-existing ties, as an innovative tactic for mobilization. They employed social network analysis and “demonstrated that social ties were instrumental in drawing new members into the movement. ... Most of recruits were mobilized through a friend or relative previously associated with it” (Swain 2001, 14-15). Social networking and social ties are cornerstones of a movement. It is through these structures that people are recruited, mobilized and retained. Social ties cross the organizational boundaries of a movement and reach out for new resources for struggle, new leaders, new channels for communication and finally the target of the contention (Bate, Bevan and Robert 2005).

Clare Saunders (2007) explores relational ties between different types of organizations participating in a London based environmental movement. Saunders prefers relational approach to positional method since her interest is to study the impact of different ideologies on an organization's relations within the environmental movement. Saunders findings show that radical organizations, in contrast with reformists, do not share their information with the rest of the movement and tend to act isolated.

Kathryn Ray et al. (2003) explore the relation between network structure and the socio-demographic structure of the members of an organization. They study three social movement organizations in the northern part of England: a local Labor Party, an environmental group, and a conservative group. Their findings show that core members, members who are the most active, in each of these organizations have more strong ties within their organizations. In addition, in a case of well-established organizations, weak ties or bridging capital are not crucial mobilization factors.

Ami Pedahzur and Arie Perliger (2006) in *The Changing Nature of Suicide Attacks: A Social Network Perspective* argue that local activists, rather than decision processes within a terrorist organization, make decisions about a suicide operation. Their findings show that ~~networks of suicide bombers are local and cross-organizational; networks have hubs rather than leaders~~"; and suicide bombers are not central figures in the network, rather ~~they~~ come from the environment close to the network to carry out the operation" (p. 1995-6).

David Snow and his colleagues (1980) examine the relationship between movement networks and recruitment strategies. Their findings confirm the important role of preexisting ties, and the absence of competing groups in recruitment processes and the growth of a

movement. Their results show the relative openness of a movement's social network and how its members both have structural influence on the spread and growth of a movement.

Gerlach and Hine (1981) have explored recruitment processes in the Black Power and Pentecostal movements. According to interviews they conducted with the activists of both movements, face-to-face recruitment is mentioned as the most important factor for the growth of the movements. Their findings show that recruitment emerges from preexisting relations, new participants are recruited to segments rather than the movement, and committed ordinary participants are more active than leaders in recruitment process.

Jo Freeman (1979) in her study explores formations of four social movements: civil rights, student protest, welfare rights, and women's liberation. She recognizes the importance of the preexisting communication network as the necessary pre-condition for mobilization. Freeman argues that it is not communication networks per se, rather their cooptation characteristic that lead to collective actions. She concludes a contention will turn into mobilization only if a well structured network exists, or the activists are linked together by some trained organizers.

Mario Diani (2000) in his research on social movements and their capacities to develop a system of relationships among individuals with different socio-political cleavages, shows the more the number of bridges over cleavages, the more a social movement can embrace the newness and the more it stands away from traditional class based movements. He argues that it is important to identify patterns of ties, rather than their mere existence, among activists and movement organizations, to determine for if ties are within subcultures or between subcultures as well, or if linkages are specialized or diversified. He concludes that the innovation of a social movement lies in its ability to develop constant networking and

solidarity building within new emerging subcultures. Diani (2009) has conducted research on different demonstrations on March 15th 2003 across the world, opposing the U.S. invasion of Iraq. His findings not only confirm the role of associations (i.e. peace groups) for mobilizations, but also show the impact of an informal network of “protest communities, sets of activists sharing a sustained participation in protest activities,” (63) on mobilization. This study confirms the level of innovation in protest communities in solidarity building over cross cultural cleavages, and different political contexts.

Jo Freeman (1979) in her comparative study between the civil rights movement and the women’s liberation movement explains four main components for a more effective strategic decision making: “mobilizable resources, constraints on these resources, SMO structure and internal environment, and expectations about potential targets.” She compares two main SMO structures: the centralized, hierarchical organization, and the decentralized, segmented, and reticulated organization. While the former enjoys a “well-developed division of labor”, the latter has “at best a simple division of labor”. She argues that a centralized structure is better for achieving narrow goals, but a decentralized one has better ability for recruitment. Freeman concludes, survival is not the main issue for a centralized structure, whereas a decentralized approach is all about survival.

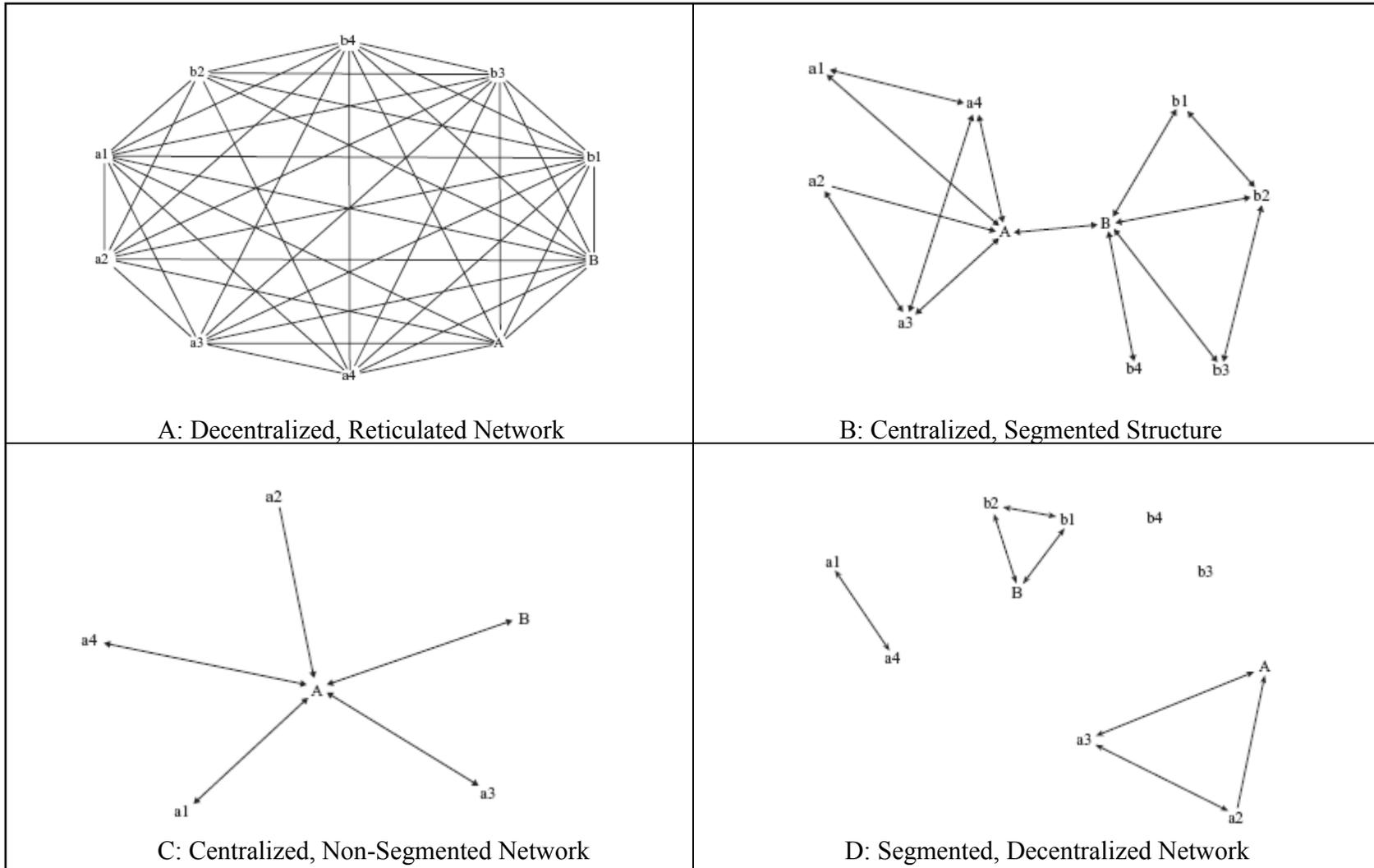
Diani (2003) in his research on networks and social movements describes two main dimensions of networks: centralized vs. decentralized structures, and segmented vs. reticulated structures. Based on these dimensions he introduces four types of network structure: clique, polycephalous, wheel/star, and segmented and decentralized networks.

Table 5¹⁰ – Four Types of Network Structures

Type	Pattern of Linkages	Reticulation	Segmentation	Decentralization	Key Characteristics
Clique Figure 3 – A	strong, redundancy of ties, all nodes are adjacent to each other	high	null	yes	less opportunity for external engagements, configuration may have ideological, cultural, or specific issue base
Polycephalous Figure 3 – B	horizontal linkages	no	partially	relatively centralized	some actors are involved in more links, and are able to control relational flows within the network
Wheel/Star Figure 3 – C	one central position as linking point	no	low segmentation	high centralization	individual holding the central position coordinates exchanges across the network
Segmented and Decentralized Figure 3 – D	largely atomistic style	no	high	high	actors largely operate either on their own, or have limited collaborations

¹⁰ Source for Table 5 and Figure 3: Mario Diani, "Networks and Social Movements: A Research Program," in Mario Diani and Doug McAdam, eds., *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 307–312 (Figs 13.1–13.4)

Figure 3 –Illustrations of Four Types of Network Structures



SPR Adaptive Functions

According to Gerlach (2001) this organizational structure “supports rapid organizational growth in the face of strong opposition, inspires personal commitment, and flexibly adapts to rapidly changing conditions” (Gerlach 2001, 303). SPR is highly adaptive for the following seven reasons. 1- Since it is a scattered cluster of units and each unit is autonomous though interlinked with the others, it can survive despite its partial destruction. 2- It is diverse and recruits from a wide range of backgrounds and interests. 3- The more diverse and the greater the numbers of groups, the more the number of sympathizers to advance the goals of the movement. 4- It helps that each part of the movement learns from others’ failure or success. 5- Competition between different groups and leaders prevents one part of the movement from giving in to the demands of authority, and if it does the rest respond harshly. 6- It adapts previously approved socio-cultural forms. 7- It is innovative (Gerlach and Hine 1981, 63-78; Gerlach and Palmer 1981, Gerlach 2001, 302-307).

According to Walter Powell (1990), Robert Burrowes (1996), and Schock who studied decentralized contentions in nondemocracies or under colonization there are different advantages a decentralized, network-oriented structure has over a hierarchical system: enhancement of learning ability among participants; diffusion of information and repertoire of contention through horizontal and grapevine communication; bridge over cleavages to strengthen the collective identity; and minimize the likelihood of state repression (Schock 2005).

Schock’s findings show that non-violent movements with a broader range of repertoire and ability to challenge the regime in different “spaces” and at multiple “places” are more likely to remain resilient and achieve their demands (Schock, 2005).

Gaps in the Literature

A look at previous studies reveals a number of areas in which the social movement literature is underspecified. The first three areas have already been mentioned by other scholars like Schock (2005). I hope this study sheds some light on these areas, and adds to the developing literature on the comparative study of movement mobilization through social networking in nondemocracies:

National/International Opportunities: Most of the scholarly works about social movement organizations and the political process model concentrate on national opportunities (Schock 2005). According to Schock, “the international context may influence political contention by shaping the balance of power within countries or indirectly through its impact on national political structure” (Schock 2005, 154). This thesis, in addition to national opportunities, studies how a movement’s reticulation structure can challenge the authority and change the political context in its favor with the help of international opportunities.

Repression - Contention Relationship: According to Schock the relationship between repression and contention needs more investigation. It is not clear, based on the literature, when repression expedites or delimits contention (Shock 2005). This thesis examines the relationship between the Islamic regime’s levels of despotism and the mobilization capacity of an organization according to its kind of reticulation.

Reshaping Political Context: Schock argues that most of the social movement scholars are interested in a way that movements respond to political opportunities, while it is also important to consider how movements are able to reshape political context in their favor when an opportunity exists (Schock 2005). This paper tries to show how the organizations

under study not only respond to available opportunities but also reshape the political scene in their favor based on the kind of their reticulation architecture.

Theocracy: The political context of the movement organizations being studied is a theocratic system. The scholarly works reviewed are either based on a democratic system or a non-democratic/dictatorship framework. According to Schock, nondemocratic systems through a shadow of fear try to force their opponents to compromise. Therefore, dissents within nondemocracies ought to be innovative in their frame alignment to lessen fear (Schock 2005). In a theocratic system like the Islamic Republic any oppositional activity can be considered against the Islamic laws and oppressed brutally. For example, in different occasions after the disputed Presidential election of June 2009, the regime of Tehran arrested a wide range of peaceful protesters on charges such as threatening the national security of the country and/or *Moharebeh* (waging war against God). In January 2010, the regime executed two young protesters in their twenties on charge of waging war against God. Thus for the movements in Iran the way they frame their alignment to prevent the Islamic Republic's policy of victory through fear is a key to success. I hope this study can contribute to the literature by examining a theocratic regime and these movements' ability for mobilization.

Information Technology and Innovative Repertoire: This research will explore the innovative repertoires of these movements rooted in their decentralized and network-oriented natures. Especially since communication plays a key role in unarmed contention, I will focus on decentralized communication skills that these movements innovate as they progress in their struggle. For instance, the people of Iran developed a very innovative strategy to convey their messages to the outside world in the absence of the free press and international media through Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. They marked the first internet revolution.

–Implementing a broad range of methods facilitates mobilization by permitting people with different levels of commitment to participate in the struggle” (Schock 2005, 167).

Diaspora Community: The Iranian diaspora has a very decentralized and diverse structure. For the past three decades Iranian opposition leaders in exile have been involved in a constant contention with the Islamic Republic. There were occasions that their activities promoted the struggles of people inside Iran and there were times that their support of the movements in Iran was counter productive. This study will consider the role of Iranians in exile in providing opportunities for the movements inside Iran. Especially the Iranian diaspora, in the very recent struggle after the disputed Presidential election of 2009, showed its ability to resonate the people’s voice of Iran.

In the existing literature and research we see, that the idea of decentralization (SPR) as an effective organizational structure has been addressed by several scholars (Burrows 1996, Diani 2003, Emery and Trist 1965, 1973, Freeman 1972, Gerlach 2001, Gerlach and Hine 1981, Gerlach and Palmer 1981, Khandwala 1981, McCarthy 2005, Powell 1990, Schock 2005, Smith 2005, Staggenborg 1989). They find this structure to be adaptive for a changing environment. Some research shows its sustainability in turbulent social, cultural, or political climates (Gerlach and Hine 1981, Gerlach and Palmer 1981, Gerlach 2001, Emery and Trist 1965, 1973, Khandwala 1981). Some scholars find it’s innovation under nondemocracies to be critical to its effectiveness (Burrowes 1996, Powell 1990, Schock 2005). Although decentralization as an initial approach for contention is approved by many, some scholars place limitations on the degree to which decentralization can be effective (Diani 2003, Freeman 1972, Staggenborg 1989).

Social networks and preexisting ties are often seen to be key components to current social movement formation (Diani 2003, Freeman 1972, Gerlach 2001, Gerlach and Hine 1981, Gerlach and Palmer 1981, Staggenborg 1989, Swain 2001). Social and cultural ties or bonds are also discussed in context of how relationships can be formed within and between various segments of a movement (Diani 1997, Diani 2003, Diani and Baldassarri 2007, Freeman 1972, Gerlach 2001, Gerlach and Hine 1981, Gerlach and Palmer 1981, Granovetter 1983, Pedahzur and Perliger 2006, Putnam 2000, Ray et al 2003, Snow et al 1980, Saunders 2007, Tarrow 1998, Wasserman and Faust 1994). Some scholars also bring up emerging networks which support mobilization and relationships to extend awareness (Diani 2000). Both Preexisting ties and new recruitment to movements are also addressed by scholars (Gerlach and Hine 1981, Snow et al 1980). The existing and emerging of new communication technologies, including web-based, have been addressed by scholars as a key component of reticulation (Diani 2000, Freeman 1999, Gerlach and Hine 1981, Gerlach 2001).

Based on the existing literature on decentralized organizational approach and social networks I propose that the nature of a movement's reticulation structure affects a movement's behavior. In chapter five, where I will study the Iranian student movement and women's movement in depth I will develop the specific connection between varied reticulation configurations and specific behaviors they are associated with.

4. Research Method

In this chapter, I will discuss the research method I applied to study the nature of the organizational structure of the student movement and the women's movement from 1997 to 2008. I explain the independent variables, the movement's structure and availability of opportunities, the dependent variable, the movement's behavior, and sources for data collection. Finally, I will define these variables into measurable factors.

Luther Gerlach, Virginia Hine, Sidney Tarrow, Kurt Schock, Robert Burrowes and other scholars have arrived at a consensus that the SPR model is the most effective organizational structure that can adapt rapidly to environmental changes, survive between cycles of contention, resurface quickly, and innovate. This decentralized model is of more importance within non-democratic systems, where there is much lower tolerance towards dissent activity, and brutality is the response of the authorities to any contention (Schock 2005).

This study compares two movement organizations in Iran: the student movement and the women's movement. Both enjoy a decentralized structure. Table 6 provides a brief summary of these movements' organizations, their mobilization vehicles, and their main SPR characteristics. I will study these movements in a comparative framework in post-revolutionary Iran.

To minimize the comparative research syndrome – “many variables, small N” - I tried to observe and follow Arend Lijphart's comparative methods (Lijphart 1975, 159). It was not possible to “extend the analysis both geographically and historically”. The study is about social movements in Iran, so was bound geographically to Iran. The period of this study is from 1997 to 2008. This is a crucial period when one can observe the resurfacing of social-

political activism (although very limited) in the society after 17 years, starting with Khatami's presidential campaign in 1997. Within this timeframe a gradual closing down of activism started in 2004 when the conservative bloc dominated the seventh *Majles* and the outcome of the presidential election of 2005 marked a return to revolutionary values of 1979 followed by a shift toward an Islamic militarized state.

By focusing on "one state or a particular type of state" as Ashok Swain argues, Iran and the Islamic Republic in this case, I was able to "keep the state factor constant" which creates a situation, where mobilization can be seen and studied in detail (Swain 2001).

This study tried to "focus the analysis on comparable cases" and "restricted the analysis to the key variables" (Lijphart 1975, 159). The student movement and women's movement in Iran are similar in a number of ways: they both occur within the same geographical-cultural context; they challenge the same regime; they experience the same level of the state's repression; they enjoyed open opportunities, although limited, from 1997 – 2005; and they faced with closed opportunities and more constraints between 2005 and 2008.

Although both of the movements in this study employ a decentralized configuration, their organizational structures are different with respect to the nature of segmentation, polycentrism, and reticulation. Another difference between the student movement and women's movement is rooted in perception of their participants of political opportunities, and their interpretations of means and ends in contention. These two sets of differences, organizational structural and perception of opportunities, have led these movements to behave differently.

Table 6: Contrasting mobilization vehicles and SPR structures of the organizations in the study

	Mobilization Vehicle	History	Massive Mobilization	Purpose
Student Movement Organization Structure	<p>Persian Name: Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat</p> <p>English Translation: the Office for Consolidation of Unity</p>	<p>Founded in 1979 as a conservative Islamist organization protecting Islamic values, and combating secular students in university campuses.</p> <p>Since mid 1990's, the office has transformed to a pro-democracy and reform organization.</p>	<p>Students uprising in Capital Tehran and major cities.</p> <p>July 8 - 13, 1999</p> <p>To protest the brutal invasion on Tehran University dormitory by the regime's security forces.</p>	<p>To challenge Iran's status quo of political scene.</p> <p>Main demands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more political and civil freedoms in society • No paramilitary Basij forces on campuses • Freedom in academic research
Women's Movement Organization Structure	<p>Persian Name: Tagheer baray-e Barabary</p> <p>English Translation: Change for Equality</p>	<p>Founded in 2005</p> <p>Initially signed by 54 individuals</p>	<p>June 12, 2005</p> <p>To protest institutionalized discriminatory laws against women</p>	<p>Changes to discriminatory laws against women</p> <p>Main demands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family protection law • Right to divorce • Child's Custody • Equal rights in testimony

	Segmentary	Polycentric	Networked
Student Movement Organization	<p>Organizational Members: Islamic Student Associations More than 80 association members representing public and private higher education centers.</p> <p>As diverse as possible based on the office's statute</p> <p>Condition: student</p>	<p>Board of leaders reside in the main office</p> <p>Coordinates all offices and mobilizes students through its members regarding national issues</p> <p>Local leaders in its branches with great level of autonomy regarding local issues</p>	<p>Decentralized</p> <p>Loose integrated network</p> <p>Multiple linkages</p> <p>Joint activities</p> <p>Common reading matter</p> <p>Shared ideals and opponents</p>
Women's Movement Organization	<p>Individual members</p> <p>Active campaign in more than 25 cities in Iran</p> <p>Active campaign in 8 cities around the world</p> <p>As diverse as Iran's society</p> <p>No condition</p>	<p>No specific leadership</p> <p>Great coordination through personal relationships and other intergroup linkages</p>	<p>Decentralized</p> <p>Loose integrated network</p> <p>Highly reticulated</p> <p>Multiple linkages</p> <p>Overlapping membership</p> <p>Joint activities</p> <p>Common reading matter</p> <p>Shared ideals and opponents</p>

The main goal of this paper is to study the organizational structure of the student movement and women's movement in Iran and its impact on their outcomes. Therefore, a social network perspective is employed. But due to the lack of access to solid statistical data and more robust empirical evidence with respect to the strength of ties, the density of bonds and the exact number of ties/bonds an actor extends, my analysis is based on just the *involvement* of actors and the range of ties. The same token, lack of data, provided me with no choice of distinction between actors as initiators (being the source) and receivers (being the recipient) of ties. Thus the proposed network structure will be non-directional.

The sources of data collection included interviews, documents and academic literature. Documents include newspapers, organizational websites, blogs, documentaries, and video clips. The interviews were conducted with Iranian-American scholars and political activists in exile. Among them, there were prominent student activists with leading roles between 1997 and 2005, and a women activist and campaigner of the Change for Equality Campaign.

The interviews were both structured and informal. For the structured interview protocol conducted for this study refer to Appendix A. The same questions, and in the same order were asked of respondents, which enabled me to compare their responses in order to test my hypothesis with more confidence. To reach the target population for interview I applied snowball sampling. W. P. Vogt (1999) defines snowball sampling as “a technique for finding research subjects. One subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on” (Atkinson and Flint 2001). Access to my target population for interview was a very difficult task. Considering the difficult situation of activists in exile and security measures they observe for themselves snowball method was the

only approach. After extensive study and research based on the interviews and academic activity I chose my initial contact within the target population. This contact referred me to other individuals. The total number of activists I planned to interview was ten, but only five of them responded positively to my request for an interview. Three of them were active members of the student movement and women's movement with pivotal roles between 1997 and 2007, and provided me with valuable data and empirical evidence.

I observed some discretion and decided not to reveal the real name of the interviewees. Thus I labeled them with other names. I named the male interviewees Dana, Pouya, Kara, and the female interviewees Vala, and Ziba.

I return to my research question: "How does the reticulation affect a movement's ability to mobilize and respond to opportunities and to sustain mobilization in the absence of opportunities?"

The independent variables are the structure of the movement and availability of opportunities. The dependent variable is the behavior of the movement.

I define a movement's structure by the following measurable factors: variety of segments, polycentrism, and linkages (personal relations, traveling evangelists, large gatherings, extra linkages, communication channels). The evidence for structural configuration were gathered from my interviews, organizations' internet sites and archives, secondary documents (interviews with activists by Voice of America, BBC, and Iranian satellite channels and radios outside Iran), and studies and articles on the student movement and women's movement in Iran.

Political opportunities, in this study, are defined as "failure of the reform process", "allies within the polity", and "election" factors. Sources of evidence are international press,

Iranian news web sites, my interviews, organizations' internet sites and archives, secondary documents (interviews with activists by Voice of America, BBC, and Iranian satellite channels and radios outside Iran), and studies and articles on the student movement and women's movement in Iran. This study is conducted over two periods when opportunities vary with respect to the degree of openness. From 1997 to 2005 a relative openness of activism was observed, whereas between 2005 and 2008 activism was faced constraints.

The movements' behaviors are defined based on their sustainability, their response to opportunities, and creation of opportunities. Information was collected about the behavior of the student movement and women's movement from international press, Iranian news web sites, my interviews, organizations' internet sites and archives, secondary document (interviews with activists by Voice of America, BBC, and Iranian satellite channels and radios outside Iran), and related studies and articles.

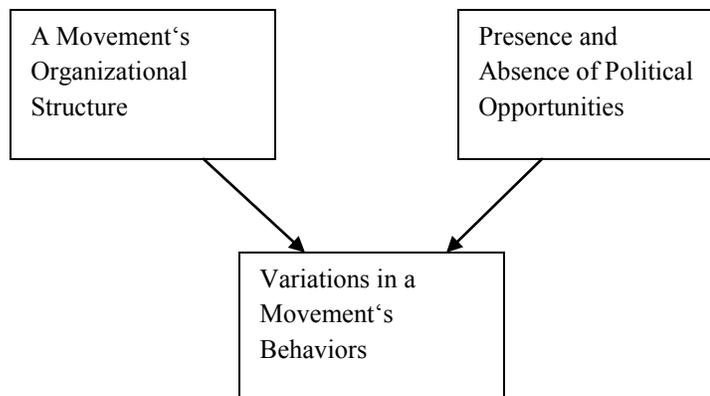
5. From Organization to Mobilization

In the following sections, after reviewing the analytical framework used for this study I will evaluate the behaviors of the student movement and the women's movement based on their structures and their perception of political opportunities. Part of the discussion will focus on the mobilization abilities of the two movements. This chapter will conclude with a summary of findings with respect to the movements and propose the hypotheses.

Analytical Framework

To identify those characteristics which may be responsible for different behaviors of the student movement and the women's movement in Iran from 1997 to 2008, I designed an analytical framework based on the possible factors affecting the movements' outcomes. Figure 4 depicts the model behind the analytical framework.

Figure 4 – Logic Model of a Movement's Behavior



Both of the movements in Iran are similar in a number of ways: they both occur within the same geographical-cultural context; they challenge the same regime; they experience the same level of the state’s repression; they enjoyed open opportunities, although limited, from 1997 – 2005; and they faced closed opportunities and more constraints between 2005 and 2008. But their organizational structures and their perceptions of opportunities are different, which has led these movements to behave differently.

Table 7 summarizes the independent variables and the dependent variables, their measurable factors, and the sources of evidence.

Table 7 – Variables Analyzed in This Study

Category	Variable	Measurable Factors	Sources
Independent	A Movement’s Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Segmentation - Polycentrism - Reticulation 	My interviews, organizations’ internet sites and archives, secondary documents, and studies and articles on the student movement and women’s movement in Iran.
Independent	Political Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Failure of the Reform Process - Allies within Polity - Elections 	My interviews, organizations’ internet sites and archives, secondary documents, and studies and articles on the student movement and women’s movement in Iran.
Dependent	A Movement’s Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainability - Response to Opportunity - Creation of Opportunities 	international press, Iranian news web sites, my interviews, organizations’ internet sites and archives, secondary documents (interviews with activists by Voice of America, BBC, and Iranian satellite channels and radios outside Iran), and related studies and articles.

Student Movement

Gerlach and Hine (1981), based on their research and field experience, noticed a third type of organization, which is neither centralized, nor a random grassroots outrage; it is segmentary, polycentric, and reticulated (Gerlach and Hine 1981). In Iran, the student movement, centered on the Office for Consolidation of Unity (the OCU) has employed a decentralized structure since the July protests of 1999.

Segmentation

The student movement is segmentary, as its different components, mostly student groups, change through coalition and division. The student movement and its mobilization vehicle (the OCU) during Khatami's presidency, especially in the aftermath of the July events of 1999, has gradually distanced itself from the political structure and marked the group's independence. This has led to a large degree of autonomy for the Office for Consolidation of Unity (Allameh trend) and its segments (the Islamic Student Associations (ISA)) throughout campuses.

There are different sources for segmentation process in a movement: "personal power, pre-existing cleavages, and ideological differences" (Gerlach 2001, 291-292). Based on the trajectories of the movements under study, I have identified another source for segmentation in nondemocracies: authorities. The regime's intervention creates a new cell, through nesting sympathizers and then splitting into new cells, that continues to grow into a countermovement. If participants play clever and flexible they can gradually isolate this ill-formed unit and discredit it in the eyes of the public. The Islamic Regime, aware of the mobilization ability of the student movement, has intervened in the body of this movement

and divided them into rival groups during the last three decades. The oppression over the student movement has been so constant and institutionalized, that division has been inevitable for the activists.

In the following sections, I discuss the other sources for the segmentation process with respect to the student movement and women's movement in Iran.

Personal Power: Participants in the student movement operate based on a feeling that they are key elements of the movement and are responsible for the movement's achievements. Kara, a student activist, said that "we, in the OCU and ISAs, act based on the electoral process. Students know that their voices are heard and each student knows himself or herself responsible for the outcomes." Kara mentioned that the main reason some universities have been separated from the OCU (Allameh) is the lack of free elections in their campuses, enforced and monitored by pro-conservative forces dominating there.

Pre-existing cleavages: In Iran, students are distributed into different universities and colleges across the country based on their ranks in a very high competitive entrance examination. A student who had grown up in the capital Tehran might end up studying in Yazd, in central Iran. Thus, developing friendship ties is the most common way to build connections among students in a new environment. Members of a local student group try to recruit a new member with different background to add diversity to their group and practice tolerance. Kara told me that, for instance, if we consider a student association in University of Shiraz; local students (Shirazes) locate a Kurdish girl student and try to recruit her. If successful, they would bring three unique elements to merge to their group: female (gender), Kurd (ethnicity), and Sunni (religion). There are times when individuals, especially in bigger units with different cleavages, conflict, which results in factionalism. Another student

activist, Pouya, told me that the majority of student activists in each university form amongst out of state students. These students generally live in the dorms and form different student groups from sport and art groups to book clubs.

Generational gap is another source for factionalism. According to Abed Tavancheh, a board member of the OCU, effective student activism is between 3 to 4 years. Therefore, each “generation” is faced with new issues and new approaches to challenge them; generational gap is something the student movement cannot avoid. He argues that previous generations of student activists belonged to revolutionary, leftist, or reformist ideologies, but the generation in the post-reform period is independent of ideology. He explains that “our concern is far beyond political freedom; we have focused on social freedoms.”

Ideological differences: As discussed in chapter 2, the student movement divided on ideology over and over again. The splits either have internal roots, such as participants of a student group are supporters of different oppositional and state’s political parties, or have external roots in the regime’s intervention. According to Kara, in recent years, there has been a limited degree of freedom for the Leftist student activism. He said this was a smart move by the regime’s security forces and intelligence community to destroy Liberal Student Organization through a virtual openness across the colleges. This is in addition to the regime’s sponsored OCU (Shiraz trend) to paralyze the OCU (Allameh trend).

Pouya told me prior to the Presidency of Khatami there were different political-ideological trends amongst the student activists that were sources for divisions and conflicts. But after the Modern faction of the OCU formed “we tried to be an umbrella to cover all these different segments.”

Polycentrism

Ahmad Ahmadian, secretary of the pro-democracy student association of the University of Tehran, in an interview describes the student movement as “a pro-change organization with a mobile and network structure which is decentralized and is able to build coalition with other pro-democracy groups to foster its demands” (2010). Pouya explained how the OCU builds connections with other (primary educated) factions of society, like political parties, press, journalists, and other movements like women’s movement and labor movement. “The OCU is like the hinges on the door between the university and Regular Society.

The OCU has two central committees, one to discuss national issues, and the other one to be activated when something urgent happens in the capital Tehran. The OCU has different committees for conducting a variety of tasks including publication, advertisement, contact with authorities, women’s issues, and etc. The OCU is a union of the Islamic Student Associations (ISA) of public and private universities. A majority of votes belong to public universities. Each unit of ISA is autonomous but interlinked with others and the central board of the OCU. Members of the OCU (Allameh trend) are elected from the members of ISAs, both through electoral process. The OCU has enjoyed charismatic leaderships at some points, but never a single leader rules over the whole body of the student movement. According to Dana, a scholar who monitors social movements in Iran, Ali Afshari, who had coordinated Presidential campaign of Khatami throughout 30 campuses, was one of the charismatic student leaders.

Those students who graduate but are interested to continue their activism generally join *Advar-e Tahkeem-e Vahdat* (the Alumni of Graduate Students) and try to be a helping hand to the OCU members. Although the OCU does not look to *Advar* for its decisions, they

consider their guidelines and try to learn from their mistakes. Advar is a political group and has branches in many of major cities.

Reticulation

As discussed before, the student movement has different components or active-cells (ISAs and other student groups). The ISAs, the OCU, and other student groups are not detached. They are linked through horizontal relationships and are involved in some sort of collaboration and exchanging information.

Personal ties: Kara mentioned that in the beginning of each academic year, members of the Islamic Student Associations and representatives of the OCU contact freshmen personally and invite them to the orientation programs. He said this approach, especially for recruiting out-of-state students who are new to the host city, has been successful. He said the trust that builds between student activists is of a kind that in times of turbulence, they will sacrifice for each other even when their own families may not.

Travelling Evangelists: According to Kara, travel to other campuses and inviting visitors to different programs that the OCU and ISAs hold has been very successful in sharing information and mobilizing new participants in other colleges. He said on many occasions he was an invited as a guest speaker to different campuses and academic centers. He said –At some point of my activities, I used to travel twice a week to different colleges and educational centers across Iran.”

Large gatherings: Gatherings provide opportunities for participants in the student movement to share information and exchange ideas. Different sorts of gathering are: seminars, conferences, workshops, conventions, general meetings, and demonstrations. Student

activists have also been faced with the same scenario in colleges. Especially since 2005, the regime's security forces have raided campuses and seized the assets and properties of the OCU and ISAs. The regime does not permit student activists to organize any sort of gatherings on campuses. Thus the OCU, under repression, has arranged its gatherings and meetings outside colleges.

One of the practices that participants in the student movement observe is to promote and encourage solidarity through chanting and singing songs. The main song they sing in almost every gathering and has become famous as the student solidarity song is *Yar-e Dabestani-e Man* (My Elementary Classmate).

Communications technologies: They provide participants great means for out reach activities: internet, TV, radio, newsletters, newspapers, fax, weblogs, emails, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter.

Communication channels, especially computer mediated and web-based communication, have turned into major tools for a sustained mobilization amongst activists in Iran. Whenever they cannot pour into streets, they populate the web. Despite the Islamic Republic efforts to slow down communications through the net and hostility against dissent bloggers, the rate of internet use in Iran is one of the top-ranked among nations. According to Internet World Stats website the number of users in Iran rose from 250,000 in 2000 to exceed over 33,000,000 in 2010, which is 43.2% of the population.

The student movement centered on the OCU (Allameh) has two main official website, one, the website of the Amir Kabir University, and the other Daneshjoo News. These two websites are under constant filtering of the regime. The other website that helps student activists a lot is the official website of *Advar-e Tahkeem-e Vahdat*. This website is

run outside of Iran and therefore is safe from filtering. Student activists also publish numerous blogs. One of the main helps that activists inside Iran receive from their sympathizers and supporters within the diaspora is the countless number of proxy websites to help activists access to their desired websites and information. All activists I interviewed agreed that since 2005 the main information channel for contention has become the internet, chat rooms and virtual conferences. The growth of web-based activism is so high that one official website affiliated to the Revolutionary Guard Corps announced the establishment of a Cyber Army to combat activists inside and outside of Iran.

Extra-movement linkages: The student movement has established different ties with political parties, other student groups, other movements (e.g. women's movement and labor movement), and international movements. But it does not have an established link with the authority and its political structure in post-reform period. According to Darvishpour (2008), the student movement marked its independence from the state on July 8th, 1999. Dana told me that after reformists failed, the student movement gave up hope on reformist parties and gradually approached pro-liberal democracy forces outside Iran. Pouya said there are some ties between some of the student activists and minority reformists inside the polity, but there is not an official tie between the OCU (Allameh trend) and any faction within the authority.

Non-governmental clerics and those who believe the mosque and state should be separate are another source of support for the student movement. Notable Ayatollahs like Zanjani, Sane'ie, and the late Grand Ayatollah Montazeri have different offices in many major cities. On many occasions, when the regime brutally attacked students and cracked down their peaceful gatherings, one or a few of these clerics have issued a statement criticizing the regime's behavior.

The student movement and the OCU exchange ideas and share information with some students' groups like Liberal Students of Tehran University, the Student Committee to Defend Political Prisoners, Pro-Democracy Student Group of the University of Yazd, and Students' and the Alumni National Union. The OCU has issued many statements defending participants in the labor movement. Especially the OCU has arranged numerous visits with the families of labor activists in jail, and tried to be supportive. In addition, in a great move, the OCU established its women's committee in 2005 and has supported the Change for Equality Campaign since its formation. Some of the activists of the student movement are in touch with Iranian student activists in exile and with some of the international student movements.

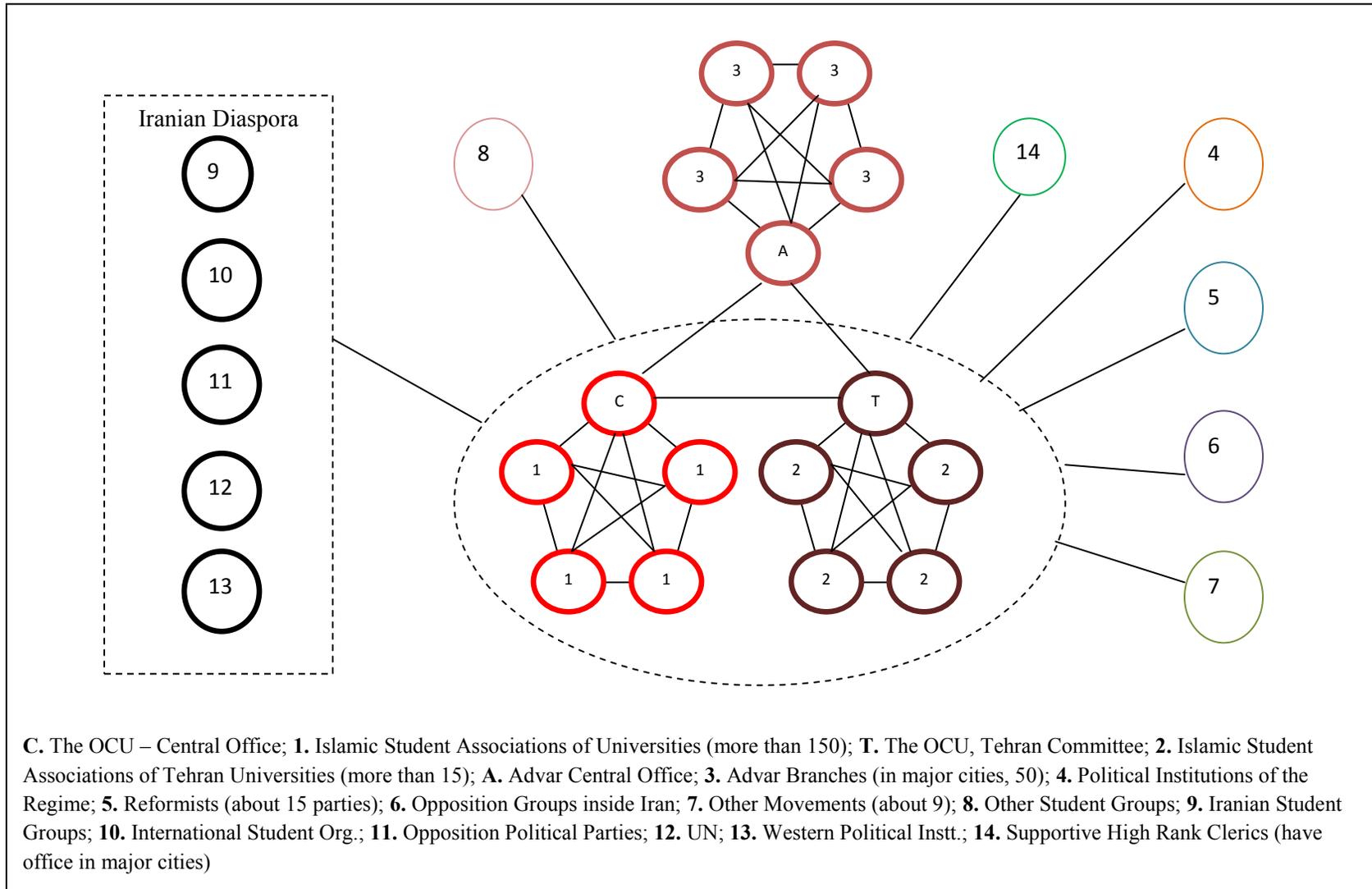
Integrating Factors: A main reason that maintains diverse student groups together in the student movement is their common opposition: the Islamic Republic and its constitution.

The student movement consists of different student groups with wide range of political ideologies, from the conservative Right to the liberal Left. But the Office for Consolidation of Unity, especially after the failure of the reform movement not only has marked its independence from the political structure, in this case the reformists, but also its autonomy from any ideology. Thus the OCU tried to bridge over the ideological gaps and cover students with diverse political alignments.

Figure 5 illustrates different dimensions of the student movement centered on the Office for Consolidation of Unity. It demonstrates the social network between the OCU (Allameh trend) and the Islamic Student Associations, the relationship between the OCU and network of *Advar-e Tahkeem-e Vahdat*, as well as their network within the social-political context of Iran. The OCU and the ISAs build two cliques, one for Tehran and the other the

rest of the country. The OCU and the ISAs have established ties with other student groups and some of the reformists. They are also connected to the political structure of the state, and semi-legal political parties such as the Iran National Front, or the Freedom Movement. The figure also demonstrates the social network between the student movement and the global North through established ties with the Iranian diaspora and the active Iranian student groups in exile. The configuration of the student movement is a hybrid consisting of a few cliques, polycephalous, and segmented and decentralized structures.

Figure 5 – The Configuration of the Student Movement Structure Centered on the OCU (Allameh)¹¹



¹¹ Source: Diani, Mario. "Networks and Social Movements: A Research Program," Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2003: 307–312.

Political opportunities

In Iran, due to its nondemocratic system, political opportunities are rare to access in general and almost impossible for dissent activists. The student movement and women's movement seek opportunities either through a divide in the polity (i.e. Khatami's presidency), or through semi-democratic debates the regime permits prior to elections in order to earn democratic legitimacy.

During the Khatami's presidency students had allies within the reformist administration and the Sixth *Majles*. For instance, the student movement had many allies in the *Majles* such as Mr. Rep. Ali Akbar Mousavi Khoeini, Mr. Rep. Ali Tajernia, and Ms. Rep. Fatemeh Haghighatjoo, all of them previous members of the Office for Consolidation of Unity. These representatives started the student fraction of *Majles* to follow demands of the student activists. But what ever they ventured through *Majles*, the Guardian Council and the Supreme leader heavily revised or rejected. Therefore, any reform or change which was not approved by the Supreme Leader could not be achieved. Political institutions in the Islamic Republic such as Presidency, Parliament, and Judiciary may share a common name with their Western institutions but they certainly employ a very different functionality. Even President Khatami in his farewell address seemed apologetic to the nation when he said ~~in~~ "in the Islamic Republic, the president does not have any authority". It seems the next remaining alternative is elections.

The student movement has been divided over the matter of participation or boycotting an election. Even this difference is evident within the central board of the Office for Consolidation of Unity. One of the student activists told me that after Khatami's presidency he did not participate in any election and boycotted the election. Another student activist

explained that he evaluates the political structure of a certain election, so that if through participation there is no chance to re-shape the political structure in their favor, he boycotts the election (like the Presidential election of 2005), but if there is a good chance to re-shape the political structure, he promotes participation (like the Presidential election of 2008). In both cases, the student movement has a strong ability for mobilization and demobilization behind elections. They mobilized masses of students behind Khatami, who claimed a landslide victory in 1997 and they demobilized 20 million individuals through boycotting the 2004 parliamentary election.

Student movements also try to create opportunities for contention as they can. Kara told me that one of the ways students seize the opportunity to protest is when the OCU planned to take freshmen in colleges for a couple of days camping. He said “we rent a bus and take students, boys and girls, together. Most of the time the university administration does not let us commute boys and girls together. We see this as an opportunity and start protesting and chanting in favor of our demands.”

In the absence of opportunities, in the repressive context of the Islamic Republic, both of the movements sustain mobilization by employing adaptive functions of their decentralized organizations.

The Student Movement and Adaptive Functionality of the OCU

As I discussed before, decentralization is a repertoire of necessity for social movement organizations in nondemocracies (Schock 2005). In periods of tribulation, strong opposition and absence of opportunities, a SPR organization rapidly expands to multiple places and different spaces, and adapts to the new environment, which leads to a sustained mobilization (Schock 2005, Gerlach 2001, Gerlach and Hine 1981). SPR organizations employ different adaptive functions: survivability, proliferation through factionalism, ability-based participation, reliability, spreading of contention through competition, learning mechanism, and innovation (Gerlach and Hine 1981, Gerlach 2001).

Figure 6 illustrates the adaptive functions of a decentralized organization based on the communication means it employs for information sharing, its social network, and its segmentary structure.

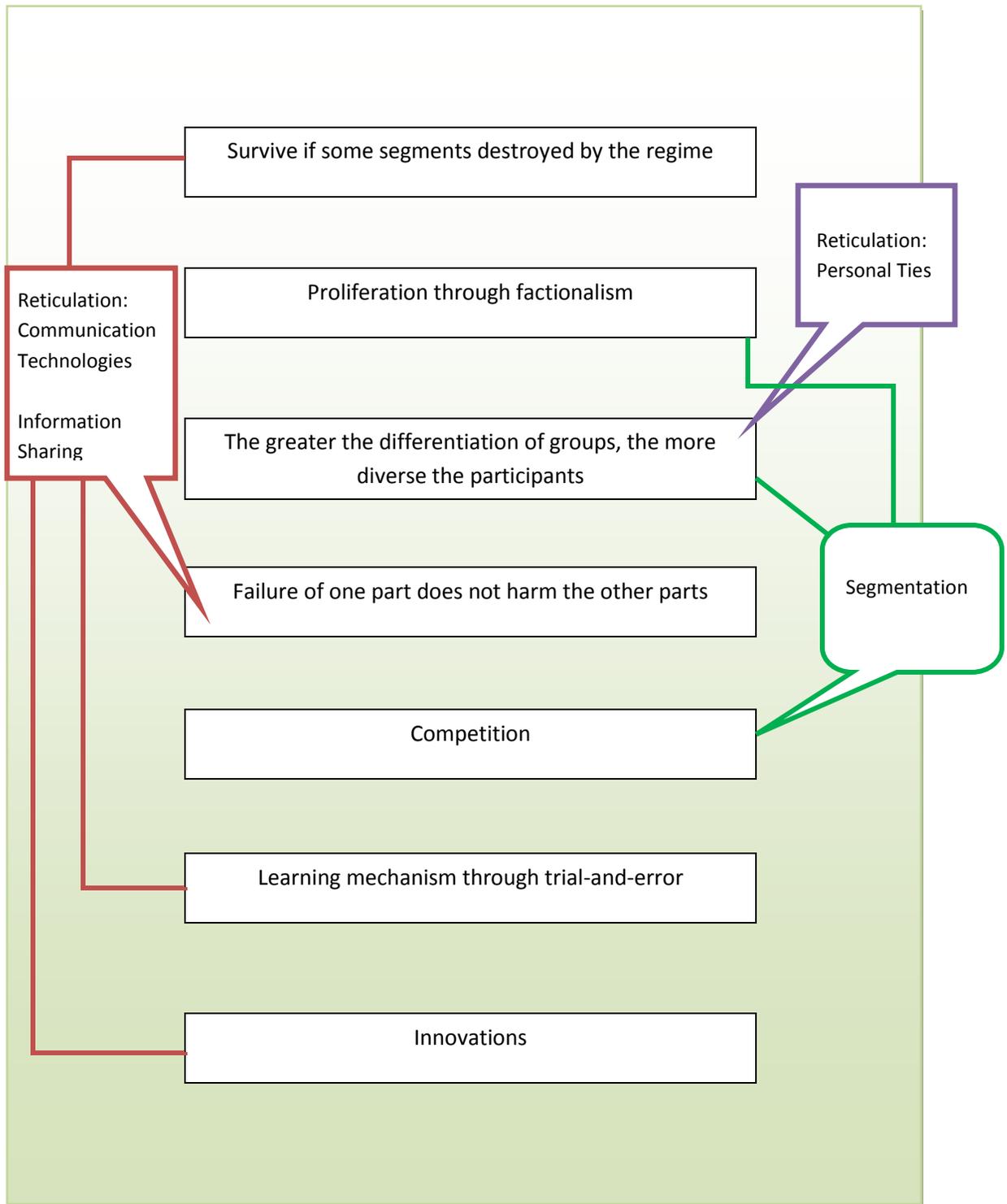
The student activists also learned to sustain under oppression. Whenever security forces arrest the OCU board members, they immediately get together and elect new board members. Through this process they signal the authorities that arrested students are not officials of the OCU anymore and thus any enforced confession against the organization lacks legitimacy.

The most innovative move by the student movement and the OCU was to regulate the electoral process within the body of the student movement, and enforce their independence from the regime and its political structure. Pouya said that despite the parallel OCU (Shiraz trend) funded by the regime and all Basij members throughout the campuses, the student activism has maintained. One of the ways that students keep their activism alive is when

Ahmadinejad or government officials plan to deliver a speech in one of the universities, and is often faced with demonstrators and protesters.

Another innovative means at their disposal are internet based technologies. All of the student activists I interviewed told me since there have been no places for their gathering across the universities; they have been forced to virtual places. One of the main technologies they use is text messaging via their cell phones. One of the activists once told me that prior to elections the regime's security forces faced a lot of trouble and disapproval from the authorities because they could not stop the countless text messages in support of boycotting that election.

Figure 6 – Adaptive Functions of a SPR Structure¹²



¹² Source: Gerlach, Luther P. "The Structure for Social Movements: Environmental Activism and Its Opponents." In *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Military*, by John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt. Washington DC: RAND Publications, 2001.

Women's Movement

In Iran the women's movement, centered on the One Million Signatures Campaign has employed a decentralized structure since the June protests of 2005.

Segmentation

In an interview with Voice of America, Persian News Network (PNN), Fariba Davoodi Mohajer (2010) said that there are varieties of cleavages and backgrounds within the women's movement, centered on the Campaign for One Million Signatures. Under this banner, Iranian women practice democracy and promote tolerance, which has resulted in international recognition of the campaign and its achievements. Women activists gather around their core belief, equality for women, and put aside what causes conflict and division amongst them.

On the other hand, women activists of the campaign, when faced with members of a right wing conservative group, such as Zainab Society, welcomed them to their gatherings and let them participate. Ziba said women did not eliminate such groups from their activities, they believed that after all, those individuals are also women. The fact that they would sit and listen to the talks has been considered a success for the women's movement.

In the following sections, I discuss the other sources for segmentation process with respect to the women's movement in Iran.

Personal Power: Participants in the women's movement, individuals or groups, operate based on a genuine feeling that they are key elements of the movement, who have access to all available resources, and are responsible for the movement's achievement. "They don't wait to be asked" (Gerlach 2001, 291). Individual initiative, independent action, and

personal responsibility” (Gerlach and Hine 1981, 43) encourage participants to form new action-cells and advocate for their own means to achieve the movement’s ends. Ziad Munson (2002) refer to self-starters, or volunteers as Khorasani (2009) mentions, who consciously decided to contact the student movement and women’s movements, are great sources for mobilization.

–Then there was the formidable diversity displayed by the tens of thousands of *volunteers* [emphasis is mine] who swiftly filled our signature-gathering, pamphlet-distributing ranks.... Before any of us knew it, we began to feel ourselves changing and adapting.”

(Khorasani 2009, 53)

Pre-existing cleavages: Khorasani (2009) and Ziba, an activist and campaigner, argue that the new generation of women activists are independent from ideologies that dominated previous movements. They are neither Islamist leftist, nor reformist. They do not want to get trapped in the struggle over mosque and state. Ziba told me that one of the beauties about the Change for Equality Campaign is its pluralistic nature. She said women build bridges over existing cleavages and look at diversity as a way to strengthen solidarity among activists.

Ideological differences: Khorasani (2009) has identified five generations of feminism in the history of the women’s movement. The current generation, the fifth one, –drives its legitimacy from the bottom up and from within their daily lives, not from an official ideology” (p. 50). This is in contrast with Islamic feminism generation that seeks its legitimacy in Islamic texts, or the other generations that seek their identity either in another part of the world, or are in search of their lost identity.

Polycentrism

The One Million Signatures Campaign has 30 provincial campaigns, mainly in capitals of each province, and 8 overseas campaigns: two in the United States, five in Europe, and one in the United Arab Emirates. There is no one person that rules through the entire campaign. Shirin Ebadi, 2003 Noble Peace Laureate and a supporter of the campaign, once mentioned that “even if we wanted to, we couldn’t stop the One Million Signatures Campaign” (Khorasani 2009, 7). This polymorphic movement, which does not enjoy any single charismatic leader and reflects ideas and opinions of a large cross-section of women, is best described by its founders as “a polycentric movement composed of a pluralistic fabric” (Khorasani 2009, 7). Khorasani explains that in the general meeting of the campaign, participants debated the need for a tighter and more hierarchical organization, but the majority rejected the idea on the ground that “the degree of centralization proposed would be un-feminist” (Ibid, 69).

Ziba said the Change for Equality Campaign does not have a leader; the main inspirational force behind the campaign is feminine dreams. The campaign started with group-oriented leadership, and in fact, it has formed to protest *tak-sedayee* (solo voice).

Women activists in the Change for Equality Campaign do not have any leader, or board of leaders, rather they have hubs. A hub is a participant with lots of connections throughout the network and generally moves between different cells.

Reticulation

Khorasani (2009) describes the One Million Signatures Campaign as “a loose, unofficial network” (p. 6) that provides new opportunities for women’s activism in Iran. Its innovative

face-to-face approach is unique in the Middle East, and not only did its bloggers populate the internet, but also so many activists poured from every corner of the country to support the campaign.

Personal ties: In the case of women's activism in Iran, Bahareh Hedayat is a node that bridges the student movement and women's movement together. She is a student leader of the Office for Consolidation of Unity and also a key member of the One Million Signatures Campaign. Through personal ties, especially kinship and family ties, every-day new individuals voluntarily set up their connection with the campaign network. All these participants use their strong ties to add new connections to the unstructured web of the Change for Equality Campaign, and when they commute to their outreach, they initiate their weak ties and spread the information flow across these bridges. In this way, "a live and dynamic though unfixed network of participants is moving forward ceaselessly" (Khorasani 2009, 7). Ziba believes, when the campaign activists contact women of different backgrounds, they practically contact society as whole. And by the same token, the regime controls the society through controlling and oppressing women.

The Guidelines for Joining the Campaign, from the official web site of the Change for Equality Campaign, provides instructions for campaigners on how to collect signatures. It teaches through five steps how to start collecting signatures from the immediate family members and expand the circle through relatives, friends, private gatherings, weddings, neighborhoods, workplaces, and finally various social arenas including: hair salons, sport clubs, hospitals, and etc. This simple procedure shows how the women's movement expands its ties into each and every corner of the society.

Travelling Evangelists: Travel to different regions, urban and rural, is a key function of the One Million Signatures Campaign. According to campaigns' internal reports, there are about 400 trained volunteers that travel across the country, recruit new individuals, train them and help them to set up their own campaign (Khorasani 2009). These "Equality" evangelists target regions that have some common ties in them, such as ethnicity. Through all these travels, the women's movement could bridge many strong cells, and has built effective informational routes. Ziba said, when women, especially in rural areas, became aware of the campaign representatives and their programs, they were so welcoming and asked: "Are you here to help us?"

Large gatherings: The women's movement organizes a wide variety of gatherings and programs to raise awareness for their cause.

Activists in the One Million Signatures Campaign who did not have access to public places for their gatherings and were barred from holding gatherings by the regime's security forces, turned their living rooms in to "cultural salons" (Khorasani 2009, 45). Women campaigners arrange different gathering and conferences but the most common form is workshops. The Change for Equality Campaign has three main sets of workshops to raise awareness and recruitment: What is the One Million Signatures Campaign?, How to Face Family-based Violence?, and An Equal Family.

One of the practices that participants in the women's movement observe is to promote equality awareness and encourage solidarity through singing two songs in almost all of their gatherings: "Oh Woman, You are the Essence of Life" and "Oh Woman, You are My Companion". The lyrics of these two songs have been published in many feminist sites and almost become like a national anthem for women.

Communications technologies: Women in the Change for Equality Campaign share their information and exchange their ideas through a wide variety of means, from talking face-to-face, to walking from street to street and knocking door-to-door, to sending email, posting YouTube videos, and publishing blogs.

Ziba told me one of the main reasons that women activists have populated the internet is the fact that there is not any patriarchal shadow monitoring and censoring their feminist ideas in virtual spaces, as opposed to traditional publishing.

The Change for Equality Campaign has 22 official website and numerous bloggers and websites as supporters and sympathizers. Although their websites have been hacked by the regime's security forces and shut down several times, but they have started to shift their web masters outside Iran to prevent constant interruptions by the regime.

Maryam Rahmani (2008), one of the activists, used SMS messaging to promote her opposition to the Family Protection Law by text messaging members of *Majles*. At first, they responded, but eventually they blocked her number.

Extra-movement linkages: The women's movement has always struggled with making ties with political parties and interest groups. Vala, another activist I interviewed, said that even prior to the revolution of 1979, women doubted if it was right for them to enter politics. Khorasani (2009) argues that "we need to learn to turn the tables and use those who would use us in order to press our own demands for fairer treatment" (p. 75). Women activists are divided on whether to contact political structure and parties within the polity. But there is also this core belief that the campaign should find its way to the patriarchal political establishment and "spread its message of equality and fair treatment among the political class" (Khorasani 2009, 75). Ziba said the campaign's diverse background and their

segmentary characteristic has been the key to doing so. She explained, “we have spread our words within political class through our participants who are either sympathizers of, or have ties with different factions of the political structure”.

The women’s movement is a coalition of a variety of women’s groups such as the Campaign against Stoning, the Campaign against Child Execution, and the Campaign for Equality in Sport Arenas, to name a few.

Some of the activists of the student movement are in touch with Iranian student activists in exile and with some of the international student movements. The women’s movement has some strong and weak ties within the Iranian diaspora, especially women in academics or activists in one of the Iranian women’s groups in exile, and through them has established numerous weak ties with the women’s movements in different countries.

“In considering the relationship of the Iranian women’s movement to similar multinational ones, we are driven to reflect on the great social power of immigrants – in this case, the millions-strong diaspora of Iranians broad – who are multilingual and multicultural and for a prominent presence in the arts, the academy, commerce, the media, and the internet, and who exert significant influence on public and official opinion in the countries of the wealthy global North.”

(Khorasani 2009, 77)

Integrating Factors: A main factor that unites diverse women’s groups together in the movement is a common opposition: the Islamic Republic constitution.

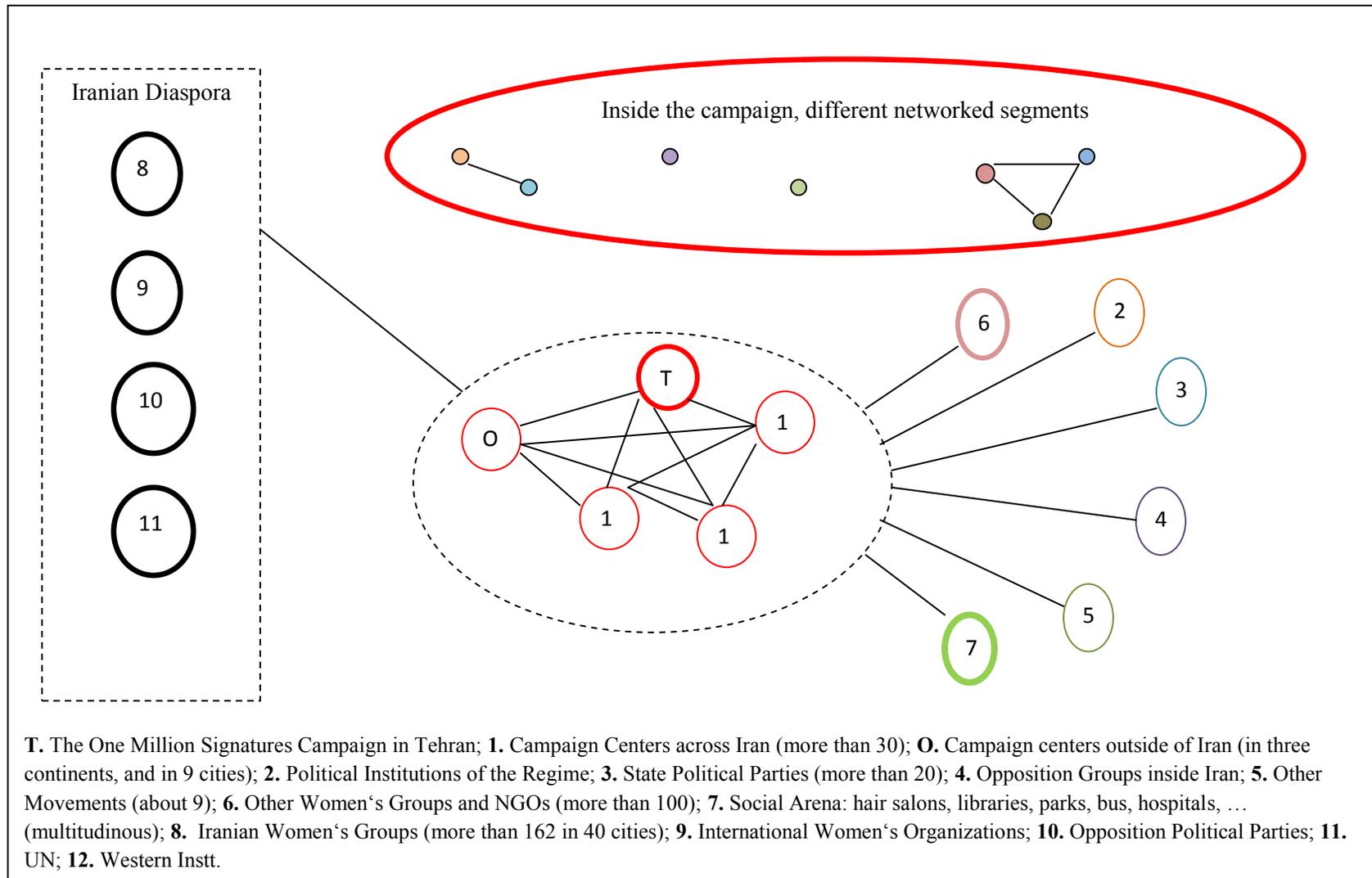
The One Million Signatures Campaign consists of numerous women’s group, with different priorities at hand, but the top priority for all of them is the concept of “equality”

which has been entered in the lexicon of all aspects of their contention (Khorasani 2009). The women's movement in its current phase is independent from dominant ideologies within Iranian society namely leftist, nationalist, and Islamist. They don't even call themselves just advocates of human rights.

Ziba told me that the main factor behind women's solidarity is "common feminine suffrages".

Figure 7 illustrates different dimensions of the social network of the One Million Signatures Campaign. It demonstrates the social network between the campaign in Tehran and the provincial centers as well as their network within the social-political context of Iran. The campaign, as a whole, has established ties with other movement, such as the student movement, or the labor movement, other women's groups, and male feminists. It has also ties with political structure of the state, political parties and interest groups, and variety of social places. It also demonstrates the social network between the campaign in Iran and its overseas centers. The One Million Signatures Campaign has nine campuses distributed in three continents: two in North America, five in Europe, and two in Asia. All of these centers have established ties with the campaign in Iran, while they are connected through horizontal relations with each other. In addition, it illustrates the network between the campaign in Iran and the global West through its ties within the Iranian diaspora. The configuration of the women's movement is a hybrid consisting of a few cliques, and segmented and decentralized structures.

Figure 7 – The Configuration of the Women’s Movement Structure Centered on the One Million Signatures Campaign¹³



¹³ Source: Diani, Mario. "Networks and Social Movements: A Research Program," Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2003: 307–312.

Political opportunities

During the Khatami presidency, women had allies within the reformist administration and the Sixth *Majles*. For instance, Mousavi Khoeini, a parliamentarian member, was one of the supporters of the One Million Signatures Campaign who was arrested on June 12th, 2006. In addition to having allies within the reformists, the women's movement had the support of the Center for Women's Participation affiliated to the Office of the President. But whatever they ventured through *Majles*, the Guardian Council and the Supreme leader heavily revised or rejected. Even some of the laws that had passed before, during Ahmadinejad's first administration were reversed or cast out from the legislature process. Ziba said, Mrs. Mohtashamipour in Home Ministry, under Khatami, created local centers to promote female entrepreneurship; teaching women skills for independence and security. Although the next government, under Ahmadinejad, shut down this program, the connections, groups, and skills remained intact.

The women's movement has another approach to elections. The activists do not boycott or encourage electoral participation. They do not endorse any of the candidates either, but present their request – reform of the discriminatory laws and joining with international conventions – to the presidential debates and ask voters to judge for themselves. Khorasani (2009) argues that one of the innovative ways that the women's movement activists seizes political opportunities is when candidates want to take advantage of this vehicle: “[they] support our campaign only out of a desire to curry favor with voters, I say: By all means, let them run and win on our platform! If our appeal becomes that strong , it will not matter if this or that politician really agrees with us, so long as he knows that the voters are with us, and the voters are watching” (p. 66). Both movements, in the presence of

political opportunities and a favorable political structure, employ the maximum number of ties to mobilize not only the public, but also the political class, especially through their weak ties or bridging capitals. A favorable political structure appears when authorities divide over the oppression or support of a movement. In a network-oriented contention ~~because~~ individuals participate in the decision making process, they may be more committed and enthusiastic in carrying out tasks than when they are simply give orders by superiors” (Schock 2005, 50).

The Women’s Movement and Adaptive Functionality of the Campaign

Ziba in an interview told me that campaign activists back and support each other’s groups. She explained the decentralized nature of the campaign does not let security forces of the regime attack to all groups, they raid one women’s group at a time: ~~When~~ the crackdown occurs, and certain activists get arrested, we react to this event and try to raise our voices to different places and put pressure on the authorities for their freedom. Thus when a unit is destroyed through the repression the rest is survived as our cells are autonomous while interlinked”.

Khorasani (2009) and Ziba argue that although the movement expands through many numbers of splits, which attract individuals with more common ties to each other, sometimes factionalism cause conflict between different women’s groups. When this happens, mainly over different interpretations of the goals or methods to approach an issue, women try to handle this ~~other~~” and do not eliminate it. This problem unfortunately exists in the other movements, especially in the student movement. In other words, women activists ~~utilize~~ individual differences to build collective strength” (Schock 2005, 50).

The women's movement centered on the Change for Equality Campaign evaluates and studies ~~the~~ history of their grandmothers' struggles", learns from their failures and tries to avoid their mistakes (Khorasani 2009, 33). They also learn from each other's failures, if part of the campaign or one of its provincial centers fails, the rest of the campaign's body tries to avoid the same mistakes (Ziba). The campaign's face-to-face approach for collecting signatures and raising awareness is its most innovative approach. It is the most non-violent means for contention in a nondemocracy like Iran. They raise awareness about the discriminatory laws while they are on sidewalks, streets, in parks, libraries, gas stations, factories, hair salons, sport clubs, and every corner of the society. An activist even once told me they collected signatures in the area of Revolutionary Court before their hearing for their activism, and she told me that when under persecution she tried to raise the awareness of her persecutors and how these laws could make the lives of their wives better! Khorasani (2009) explains that activists in the campaign ~~have~~ gradually learned how to deal with state's securities" (p. 42). Ziba said the regime's security forces who were paralyzed in uncertainty by women's protests and demonstrations, started to crackdown their gatherings brutally. She said women evaluated the situation and asked authorities if it would be fine to go and talk to people individually and make them aware of their cause, instead of protest. And the regime signaled anything but demonstration was all right. Ziba said at that time women started door-to-door campaigns. This resulted in more arrests. When asked authorities ~~why~~ do you arrest us? We didn't organize any demonstrations!" they said they were not aware of the scale and distribution of our new approach.

Another innovative approach is that the One Million Signatures Campaign does not have card-carrying membership. According to one of its official websites,

www.iranianfeministschool.org, ~~the~~ campaign does not have membership because campaigners do not want anybody think of her/him self the owner of the campaign and take the right to decide or publish on be half of the rest.”

The California branch of the One Million Signatures Campaign started raising awareness of the discriminatory laws that affect women even outside Iran. For example; according to article 46 of the Family Protection Law, a woman outside Iran who marries a non-Iranian citizen without permission of the government she and her family are subject to punishment, so they encouraged Iranian in diaspora to sign and send letters to all Iranian embassies (IranianFeministSchool.com).

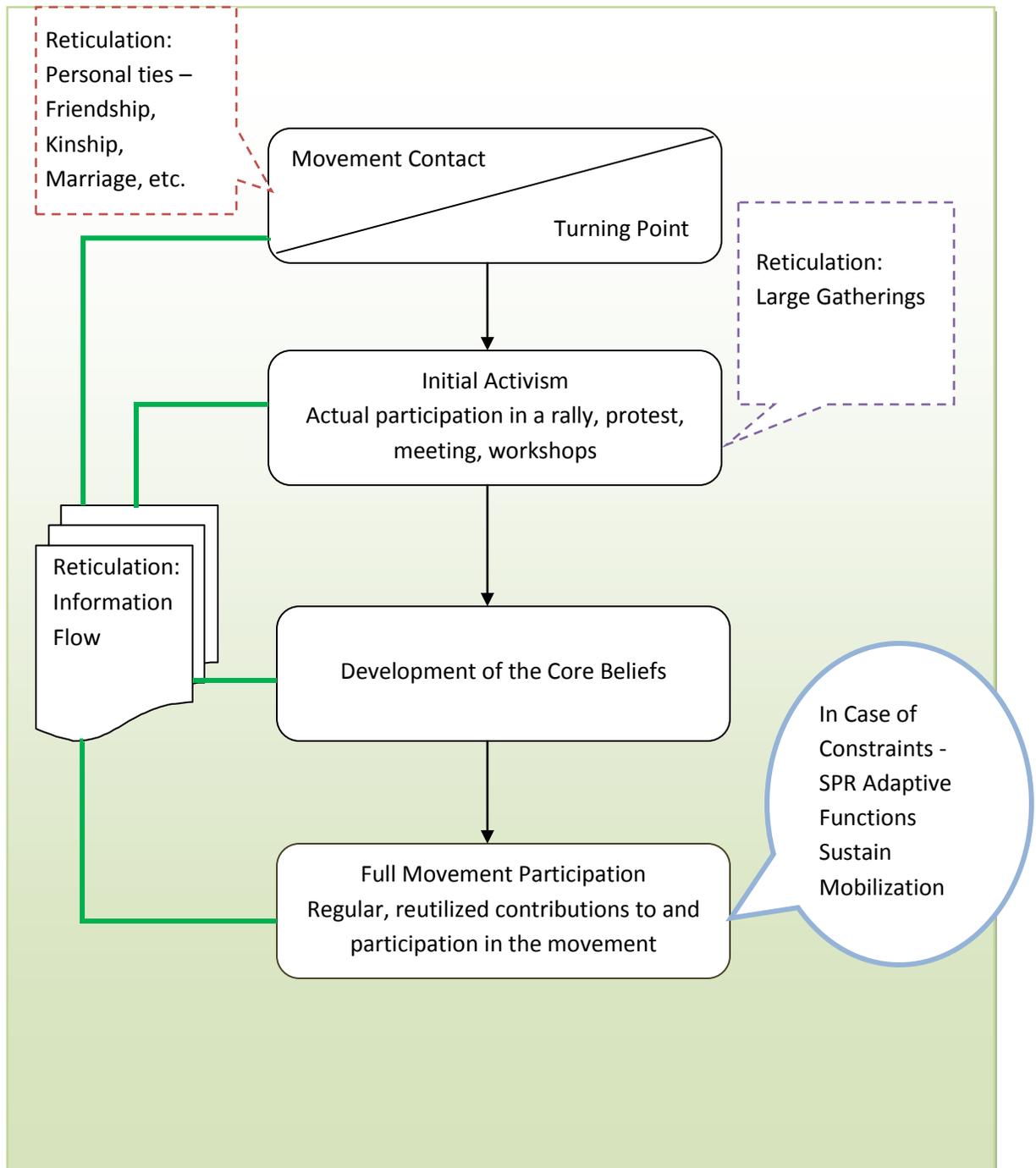
SPR and Mobilization

Ziad Munson (2008) in *The Making of Pro-Life Activists* identifies four steps for the mobilization process: “contact with the movement at a turning point in one’s life, initial activism, the development of [core] beliefs, and finally sustained activism” (p. 47). He argues that personal contacts and experiencing a turning point are two main pre-requisites for mobilization. Figure 8 illustrates the mobilization process and the social network formation of a movement. It shows the intertwined relationship between the evolving reticulation structure of a movement and its mobilization process.

Personal contact with the movement initiates the first step towards mobilization. The main component for this purpose is activists’ social network (Munson 2008); the strong ties and weak ties, friends and acquaintances. Munson defines contact as “a point at which an individual has direct experience” (Ibid, 48) with a movement. But not every contact will lead to mobilization. To be effective the movement contact has to be personal and the cause of the movement has to be discussed explicitly (Munson 2008).

Munson’s findings show the important role of the social networks in movement mobilization. Individuals’ ties are channels through which a person set up her/his contact with a movement. The wider the social network is, the higher the ability for mobilization is. That is why the activists in the One Million Signatures Campaign describe the campaigns’ face-to-face approach highly practical and innovative. The campaign activists set up a face-to-face dialogue with individuals from different social arenas of their everyday lives, from streets and parks to hair salons and even a courtyard. They express their causes, i.e. equality, with their audience under different situations, either laughing with friends at parties, or showing resistance under persecution in prisons.

Figure 8 – Mobilization Process and Social Network Formation of the Movement¹⁴



¹⁴ Sources: Ziad Munson. *The Making of Pro-Life Activists: How Social Movement Mobilization Works* 2002, p 48. Table 3.1. Luther Gerlach. *The Structure for Social Movements: Environmental Activism and Its Opponents* 2001.

They contact everybody, free from class, ethnicity, ideology, and religion, because their subject is equal human beings. Student activists contact freshmen and refresh their contacts with sophomores and seniors, invite them to their programs and activities. In comparison with the women's movement, the student movement has limited its activities to a smaller space, colleges, and its audience has been students from lower-middle class and middle class families, especially the out-of-state students. In addition to the place and audience, during summers when students, especially out-of state students, return their homes, mobilization is a more challenging issue for the student movement.

Activists in both the student movement and women's movement forge their mobilization network through a variety set of ties: family, friendship, professional, political, diaspora, random, and volunteer. But volunteers or "self-starters" as Munson (2008) references, who consciously initiate their contacts have been the main source for a sustained activism in both cases.

Although personal contact is a necessary condition for mobilization, it is not sufficient. Its complementary condition for the person is going through a turning point. Munson defines turning points as: "those periods when people are required to make significant changes in their everyday lives and, as a result, must also reorient their way of looking at and understanding the world" (Munson 2008, 55).

Munson (2008) argues that the personal contact with a movement is effective if it happens during an individual's critical turning point. My study of the two movements in Iran shows that there were many instances that personal contact initiated a seed in an individual's mind which at a later time reminded that person as she or he reached a turning point. Or

perhaps an individual had already gone through a turning point which left an emotional scar, and after his/her contact with the movement, initiates activism.

The turning point for many of the participants in the Change for Equality Campaign was the time they witnessed a violent scene in their neighborhood, heard a friend lost custody over her children, or learned a relative or some loved one committed suicide. When these individuals become aware through the movement contacts, they initiate their participations. At the same time, the theocratic regime of Tehran accuses these volunteer activists as spies of the U.S. government, funded by Soros Foundation to conduct a Velvet Revolution in Iran (Khorasani 2009). Kara explained that after couple of years of constant contact the student activists recruited him. He mentioned that after two years of monitoring the OCU activities, and because it was few years until the electoral process had become a reality within the OCU, "I became optimistic that some change could happen through this organization". Kara's story reveals that an individual's transition through turning point makes the person physically and emotionally available for participation in the movement.

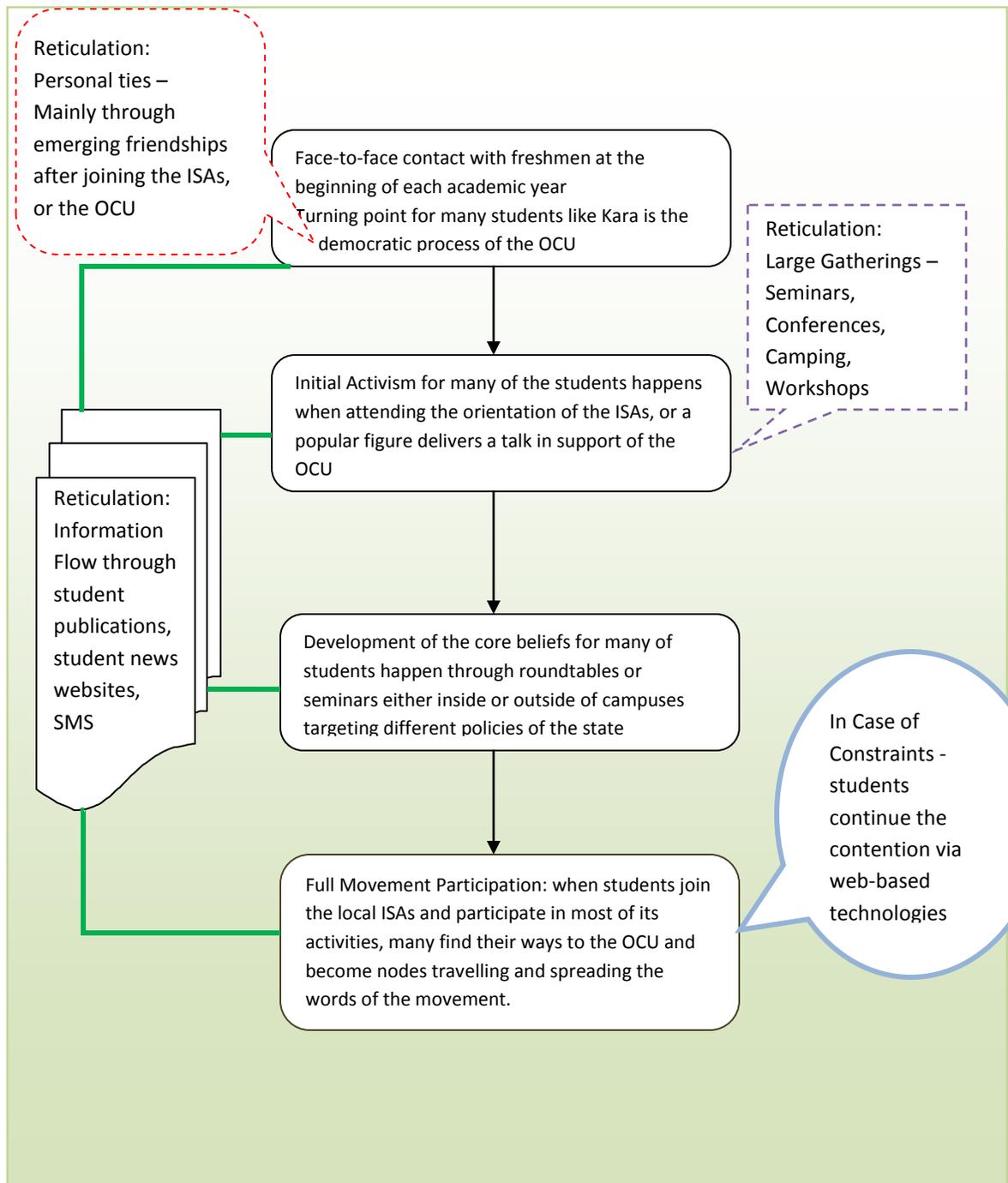
Activists in the student movement have initiated their activism, their first participation, through attending a rally, protest, or a meeting, whereas, for many of participants in the women's campaign, it has been the moment they sign a petition.

The next step in the mobilization process is developing the core beliefs of a movement. Participants, by participating in movement activities, are exposed to new ideas and interpretations of the core beliefs of a movement (Munson 2008). The Change for Equality Campaign provided the public with three main publications: a petition, campaign's means and ends, and a pamphlet (*The Effect of Laws on Women Lives*). According to Khorasani (2009), diverse participants in the campaign have a shared understanding of and

hold a common ground with respect to the core beliefs of the movement. She argues that the purpose behind these publications is to create a “thought-action continuum” (p. 6). Workshops are another way that women were exposed to the core ideas behind the campaigns. Students, by participating in the OCU activities, especially conferences and trips, are exposed to the core beliefs behind this organization.

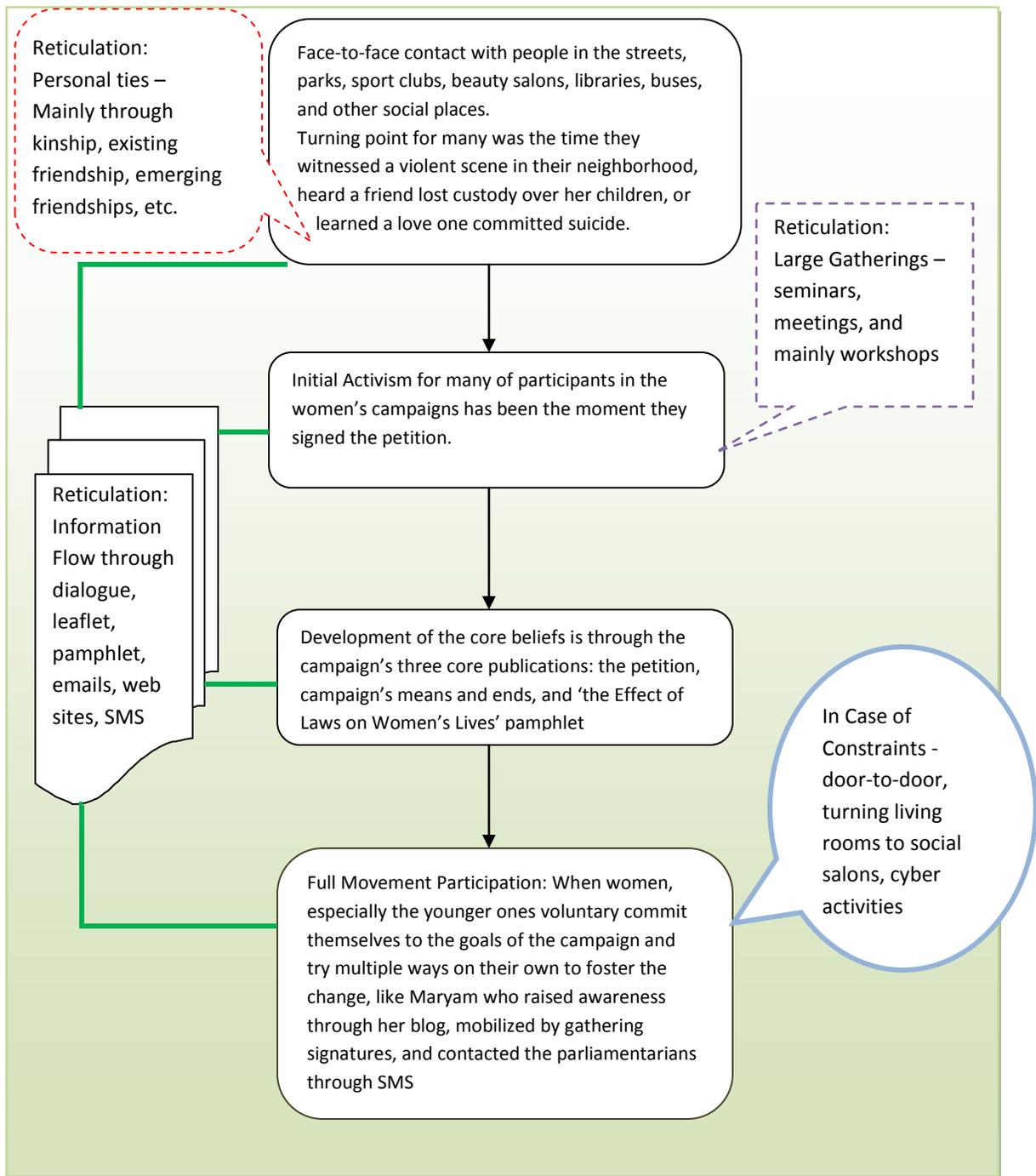
The last phase of mobilization is a sustained participation. Participants through different ways remain involved in the movement: protests, rallies, demonstrations, meetings, workshops, training, and means of information flow (Munson 2008). Khorasani argues that the success of the campaign “depends heavily on the continued commitment and enthusiasm of the campaign’s independent-minded younger members. Sustaining that commitment is [even more] important” (2009, 66).

Figure 9 – Mobilization Process and Social Network Formation of the Student Movement¹⁵



¹⁵ Sources: Ziad Munson. *The Making of Pro-Life Activists: How Social Movement Mobilization Works* 2002, p 48. Table 3.1. Luther Gerlach. *The Structure for Social Movements: Environmental Activism and Its Opponents* 2001.

Figure 10 – Mobilization Process and Social Network Formation of the Women’s Movement¹⁶



¹⁶ Sources: Ziad Munson. *The Making of Pro-Life Activists: How Social Movement Mobilization Works* 2002, p 48. Table 3.1. Luther Gerlach. *The Structure for Social Movements: Environmental Activism and Its Opponents* 2001.

Concluding Discussion

Comparison of the student movement, centered on the Office for Consolidation of Unity (the OCU), and the women’s movement centered on the One Million Signatures Campaign (the OMSC) reveals the different mobilization abilities associated with the reticulation structure fashioned by each social movement organization. Table 8 compares the student movement and the women’s movement based on this study.

Table 8 – Comparison between the Student Movement and the Women’s Movement

Student Movement	Women’s Movement
Marked its autonomy after July 1999	Marked its autonomy after June 2006
Had strong allies within the polity from 1997 to 2005	Had strong allies within the polity from 1997 to 2005
Has changed its role from an alternative for political parties under reformists to defender of the human rights under conservatives	Has a focused and targeted goal: social and legal equality for men and women
Dominated in colleges and educational centers	Active in every corner of society
Their activities are political	They do not claim their activities as political, rather social and cultural
Less support within the society when their goal was political, more support they receive as human rights defenders	Have lots of supports within the society
Look at democratization as top – down process and through elites, less attention to the public	Look at democratization as bottom – up process and within the grassroots, but has elites in its rank
Has financial problem, income is solely based on contributions from activists and family members	Has financial problem, income is solely based on contributions from activists, family members, and generous members of diaspora
Has contact with international organizations	Has contact with international organizations
Has no contact with the transnational student movement	Has problem with colleagues in transnational movement as they focus on high profile issues like stoning, rather than local issues

The trajectories of the student movement within the last three decades demonstrate its evolutionary transition –from a movement against rights to a movement for rights” (Yaghmaian 2002, v). The Office for Consolidation of Unity, once the arm of the regime within the campuses and operator of its –cultural revolution”, has turned into a human rights watch organization. It has gone through different phases of factionalism. Through the

divisions, the OCU has gradually recognized the inefficiencies of the political structure in Iran, especially after the failure of the reform government, and marked its liberation since the July events of 1999.

The trajectories of the women's movement within the last three decades demonstrate its transition through five generations of feminism. A movement once was seeking its identity within other social-political context, and later within the religious texts, has turned into a movement that seeks its legitimacy from the daily common activities. The fifth generation of feminism has liberated itself from all sorts of ideologies since June 12th, 2006.

Mashayekhi said the student movement has defined different goals based within the last decade. The OCU, from an organization that wanted to play the role of a political party under Khatami's administration, has turned into a human rights advocator under Ahmadinejad's. The women's movement, on the other hand, has been more target-oriented and has focused on one issue, i.e. equality. He mentioned that the OCU should be more specific on its demands, but on the other hand it has been customary amongst the public to expect the student movement to act as political as it can. He criticized the OCU as it does not pay enough attention to the problems students face on campuses like the quality of foods, or the condition of dorms. He emphasized if the OCU had paid attention more to these types of issue, it could mobilize the entire student body behind its political ambitions. Mashayekhi evaluated the One Million Signatures Campaign with higher level of segmentation and task allocations among its various units.

Elitism is another key difference between the OCU and the Change for Equality Campaign. The student activists have approached the reform issue through political elites and intellectuals, and has left the public behind. Women started their campaign to mobilize the

grassroots and have social elites such as Nobel Prize laureate, Shirin Ebadi, in their rank. Students look at the democratization as a top down process, whereas women activists consider it a bottom up issue. “Without seeping into the fabric of daily life, philosophical discourse cannot – and for years has not been able to – have a practical influence on the real life circumstances with which Iranian people must deal” (Khorasani 2009, 46). These two different approaches may have roots in their organizational structure. The OCU, with its more formal structure, has been more suited to “institutionalized pressure tactics” and the One Million Signatures Campaign, with its more informal structure, has been “more appropriate for service projects and consciousness raising” (Staggenborg 1989, 76).

Both student activists and women campaigners have faced continued financial problems. They are barred from organizing even fundraiser programs to cover their costs. They generally spend from their own pockets, or their families support them. But both have benefited from financial support from generous Iranian individuals inside Iran and within the diaspora from time to time. To avoid being labeled spies of the foreign countries they have even rejected the monetary part of the international awards rewarded to them.

The student activists and the women campaigners, in cooperation with their colleagues and supporters in diaspora, have invested in educating social activists in Iran. The One Million Signatures Campaign by the help of Women Learning Partnership and some other international women’s groups promote leadership skills among women for their daily life routines. The student leaders in exile have established different centers, like Tavaana, to empower and raise social awareness in Iran.

The student movement and the women’s movement both have spread their reticulation structures through the spaces and places they are active. The women activists

have used every free space they could locate in the society. They forged numerous strong ties within the society through friendship, marriage, families, and confidentiality, and spread countless weak ties across Iran and throughout the global North. In comparison the student movement has covered smaller space, has less strong ties and less weak ties within the society. The Change for Equality campaign has tried to employ its maximum bonding capital and bridging capital and therefore ~~is~~ wide and flexible enough to permit all sorts of creativity and volunteer activity” (Khorasani 2009, 68), which, according to Schock (2005), facilitates mobilization.

According to Pouya, the civil society under Khatami’s administration grew superficially, but during Ahmadinejad’s presidency the civil society has grown deeper and rooted in the social structure. He said the OCU marked its autonomy after 2001 and under Khatami, but many believed that the OCU was mainly dependent on reformists. The survival of the OCU and its sustained mobilization under Ahmadinejad’s administration and the brutality of the regime is the best evident, according to Pouya this proves the autonomy of the OCU. The women during Ahmadinejad employed an organizational diffusion tactic and an abeyance approach to mobilization. Like their counterparts in Australia, under Howard’s administration, through diffusion of feminism in male dominated structures, Iranian women activists have sustained their commitments and mobilization through hard times. After all, they believe, like many women around the globe, that protest and violence is un-feministic (Andrew and Maddison 2010). According to Tohidi, women ~~have~~ also reclaimed a number of national and religious rituals and festivals, giving them new feminist interpretations” (Afary 2009, 373).

Based on the organizational structure and the social network of each of the movements under study, exogenous effects like instability in the Middle East aside, I have identified that the women's movement is more decentralized and more segmented with its abeyance structure, and therefore has a better ability to sustain mobilization. Despite what Jo Freeman suggested, the loose decentralized structure of the women's movement not only works for raising awareness, but also is able to get things done. It does not miss any opportunity for establishing a bridge with any social, political, and cultural structure that might advance its cause; it is not political in nature, therefore it enjoys a wider set of supporters; and it is scattered throughout the country both urban and rural areas. On the other hand, the student movement has a more centralized structure in a limited environment (campuses), and mostly in contact with a specific faction of the society (students), but when opportunities are available, or conditions to create opportunities exist, the student movement responds faster.

The hypotheses are based on the data I could find from interviews and some secondary sources. Although statistical data is rarely accessible at this point, my hope is that these hypotheses will provide a starting point and an open door for future research on non-violent, decentralized movements under non-democracies.

6. Conclusion

Most studies that have examined the relationship between decentralized social movement organizations and movement behaviors have focused their attention on certain aspects of this relationship, such as its general effectiveness and adaptive functionality for a changing environment; its innovative role on nonviolent repertoire of contention in nondemocracies; its degree of effectiveness; the role of personal relationships on a movement's formation; the role of preexisting and emerging ties on recruitment processes; and the impact of internet technologies on building collective identity. In contrast this study has initially considered focusing on the relationship between the nature of a movement's reticulation structure and the movement's behavior, then has explored the specific connection between varied reticulation configurations and specific behaviors they are associated with based on a detailed comparison between two social movements.

Another distinguishing factor is the political context of the social movements I have studied. In contrast to prior research, which was either conducted on democratic systems, or if a nondemocracy the focus has been the repertoire of contention, this study has conducted on a theocratic regime; a nondemocratic, religion-based system.

The main question underlying this study was, how does reticulation affect a movement's ability to mobilize and respond to opportunities and to sustain mobilization in the absence of opportunities? This study has examined different variations of the student movement and the women's movement behaviors in the political context of the Islamic Republic based on their reticulation configurations between 1997 and 2008. Because the absence and presence of political opportunities varied this study is time-specific. The time period of the study provides times when political opportunities have been available (1997–

2005) or there have been no political opportunities (2005–2008). Political opportunities can be measured by having allies or representatives within the government, during elections, or by failure of the reform process. The other explanatory variable that could be tested at both periods was organizational structure, which has been measured by segmentation, polycentrism, and reticulation. Structural and opportunity variables reflect different variations of a movement's behaviors, which in turn can be measured based on sustainability, responses to opportunity or creation of new opportunities.

Although the president and the *Majles* were allies of the movements from 1997-2005, because of the nondemocratic structure of the regime, no lasting reforms were really achieved. In contrast, periods of election provided the student movement opportunity to either boycott the election or mobilize the public behind candidates. In the women's movement, periods of election provided greater opportunities for networking, raising awareness, and gathering signatures for the One Million Signatures Campaign.

One of the findings of this study was the effect of different structural configurations on a movement's behavior. It also reveals that movements employ a hybrid mix of structure. Based on this study, the student movement employed a hybrid of cliques and polysepalous structures, which gives it the ability to respond more quickly to opportunities as they arise. In contrast, the women's movement employed a hybrid structure composed of segmented, decentralized and reticulated structure, which means the movement can employ an abeyance structure to sustain its activity longer under repression.

Jo Freeman's study of the women's movement indicates that decentralized or structurelessness is good for raising awareness, but relatively ineffective for fostering real

change. However, the relative short history of the One Million Signatures Campaign in Iran shows that they have moved beyond simply raising awareness.

Many studies have covered communication networks a measure of exchanging information, but they have not covered technology, especially, web-based networks mobilization vehicles through which not only information can be exchanged, but ideals can be shared, opinions expressed, *new* relationships fostered through bonds and bridges. This constant emerging of networks blurs the former cleavages and strengthens solidarity in the movement.

As empirical evidence becomes more available out of Iran, hopefully statistical research will open further opportunities for future studies. Although this statistical data is not currently widely available, the purpose of this study has been to add our understanding of how behaviors of a movement change; under what conditions they change, and based on what kinds of structure.

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Appendix A¹⁷

Protocol for Structured Interviews with Members of/Experts on The Student/Women's Movement in Iran

Qualification

- 1- Are/have you (been) an active member of/expert on either/both of the organizations below?
 - Student Movement Organization (Office for the Consolidation of Unity)
 - Women's Movement Organization (One Million Signature Campaign)
 - If you are not directly involved with either of the organizations, what qualifications or connections do you have to the field? What is the basis of your knowledge about these organizations? How do you know about them?
 - Are/were you active in any similar organization before or after the revolution of 1979 in Iran? If yes, please walk me through your experience as you answer the following questions. (This provides good information especially for the parts lacking resources)

Knowledge about Organization

- 2- Do you consider this organization to be part of the student/women's movement?
- 3- What are the main aims of this organization?
- 4- Is this organization part of a network of organizations participating in the student/women's movement?

Involvement

- 5- What is/was your position in this organization?
- 6- When was the first time you got involved in this organization? How? Why? What were the campaign's achievements?
- 7- What was the first campaign you got involved with? What were the campaign's achievements?
- 8- What was the most important campaign of this organization? Why?

¹⁷ Sources: Gerlach, Luther P, and Virginia H Hine. *People, Power, Change: Movements of Social Transformation*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1981. Swarts, Heidi J. *Organizing Urban America: Secular and Faith-based Progressive movements*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Internal Structure and Decision Process

- 9- How would you describe this organization?
- 10- How would you describe its leadership?
- 11- Does this organization have any central leadership? What is the election process for the leadership?
- 12- Do you know the mechanism this organization use to choose an issue for a campaign? What is its decision making process?
- 13- Who decides campaign strategies for this organization? How?
- 14- What are the targets of this organization's campaigns?

Identity, Membership, and Background

- 15- How do you identify with this organization? What is the collective identity of the organization?
- 16- What are the conditions for membership in this organization?
- 17- What kind of Membership does the organization have?
- 18- Who does participate in the organization's activities? (rallies, protests, etc)
- 19- What is the compositional background of this organization? (race, class, religion, ideology, gender, political factions)

Self Involvement, Future of Organization

- 20- What are you doing in respect to the organization's aims and goals?
- 21- Are you currently active in any other organization with the same goal?
- 22- How do you see the future of this organization?
- 23- What are the main problems this organization is facing?
- 24- What are the strengths and weaknesses of this organization?

Reticulation - Personal Ties

- 25- Who would members turn to for advice on organizational matters, i.e. campaigning strategy, issue selection, etc.
- 26- Is there any kind of pre-existing ties such as kinship, friendship, or any other type of relationship between members of this organization?
- 27- How does involvement in this organization affect relationship ties among members of the movement?
- 28- Do members of this organization attend or are they members of another organization of the same kind?
- 29- Do members of this organization ever split?
- 30- What do you call the new group? Why did they split? A difference in ideology, aims, etc? Rivalry? Same goal, different means?

Reticulation - Leadership Ties

- 31- Is there any kind of pre-existing relationship between leaders of this organization?
- 32- How do you define relationship between leaders of local groups of this organization?
- 33- How often do the leaders of your organization meet with each other?
- 34- Does this organization have any official sponsor for its activities?

Reticulation - Activities

- 35- Do members of this organization have any travel activity to advocate their cause?
Building connections? Travelling Evangelists?
(The evangelist is a person who travels purposefully to spread the word, to be a speaker at meetings, rallies and etc.)
- 36- Does this organization hold any workshop, seminar, or any kind of gathering?
- 37- What is the purpose of these gatherings? (exchanging experience; unifying; promoting activism; or intensifying commitment)
- 38- What are the kinds of events that enhance linkages between cells of this movement?
- 39- What are the ways of promoting movement's reticulation? (for example: switchboards)

Reticulation - Extra Linkages

- 40- What are the extra-organizational linkages that this organization uses to achieve its goals? (Please walk me through each case)
 - Representative of governmental agencies
 - Civic & religious institutions
 - Private foundations and businesses
 - Mosques
- 41- What is the interaction of this organization with political parties?
- 42- What is the relation of this organization with other student/women's movements?
- 43- How do you see this organization in a transnational framework?
- 44- What does the communication of this organization look like and what are its means?
 - a. Among groups?
 - b. Organizations to coordinate actions?
 - c. To a general public?
 - d. To explain and gain support?
 - e. To the opposition?
 - f. To promote change?
- 45- What are the main communicational technologies of this organization? (Print, telephone, radio, television, film, internet, i.e. email, twitter, Facebook, and etc.)

Political Process

- 46- What is your definition of a political opportunity? (To advance the cause of the movement)
- 47- How do you evaluate the openness of political opportunities under Khatami's administration?
- 48- How do you evaluate the openness of political opportunities under Ahmadinejad's administration?
- 49- How do you evaluate the mobilization ability of this organization under each of these administrations? (Escape suppression, develop, and accomplish the goals)