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## A Critique of Functionalist and Rhetorical Social Movement Theory: A Case Study of China's 1989 Democracy Movement

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A CRITIQUE OF FUNCTIONALIST AND RHETORICAL SOCIAL MOVEMENT  
THEORY: A CASE STUDY OF CHINA'S 1989 DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT.

A THESIS

The Honors Program

College of St. Benedict/St. John's University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Distinction "All College Honors"

and the Degree Bachelor of Arts

In the Department of Communication

by

Lia Veenendaal

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PROJECT TITLE:

A CRITIQUE OF FUNCTIONALIST AND RHETORICAL SOCIAL MOVEMENT  
THEORY: A CASE STUDY OF CHINA'S 1989 DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT

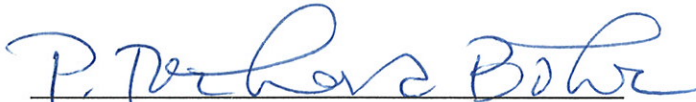
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**Thesis:** While functional and rhetorical approaches to social movement theories are helpful in organizing, identifying, and analyzing aspects of social movements, they neglect to include important cultural forces and biases behind some social movements. The problem is that they come largely from a Western perspective.

### **Introduction**

As social movement theory has developed and expanded over the years, various researchers have pointed to the necessity of placing oneself within the context of the rhetorical situation when evaluating social movements. For example, Leland Griffin, in his essay entitled "*The Rhetoric of Social Movements*," suggested that successful social movement analysts must put themselves in the historical context of the situation. He writes, "the critic must judge the discourse in terms of the theories of rhetoric and public opinion indigenous to the times. This principle means that the critic will operate within the climate of theory of rhetoric and public opinion in which the speakers and writers he judges were reared..." (Griffin, "Historical Movements", 187). Brent D. Ruben talks of "the difficulty of isolating and analyzing the conflict-related effects of a single or several messages taken out of the processural, time- and space-bound, multi-channel networks which interrelate individuals to one another" (Ruben 204). Both theorists suggest that in order to correctly analyze and evaluate a rhetorical act, the analyst must look at the act through the lenses of the culture and political climate in which it took place. This proposition can be further expanded to include social movements. I believe that it is essential to successful social movement interpretation that evaluators place themselves in the rhetorical context of the culture in which the social movement occurs.

In this thesis, I intend to show that current social movement theory does not take into account the culture in which a movement is based. In particular, Eastern cultures seem to be largely unaccounted for. The problem is that current social movement theory is formulated in language that inhibits the interpreter's ability to "see" the movement in the manner that Griffin and Ruben suggest. In fact, many of the theories are written from a Western perspective that automatically assumes a democratic government as the governing body. I plan to address this issue while demonstrating the importance of considering the cultural components that affect social movements by using the Chinese Democracy Movement of 1989 as a case study. I will then critique current social movement theory and offer direction for future research.

Because such a plethora of social movement theories exist, it would be impractical, if not impossible to examine and critique all of them. Therefore, I have decided to narrow my focus to examine two dominant social movement theories from the field of communication, my major area of study. These two theories are known as the functional approach and the rhetorical approach. I selected these theories because they have been a driving force in social movement analysis. I will not be examining critical theories such as feminist or political theory, because these theories are not part of the dominant paradigm used in social movement evaluation. These critical theories might be frequently used to evaluate social movements, but analyses from these theoretical perspectives have not been published as frequently as those from the functional and the rhetorical perspectives.

## FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

A fundamental concept of the functional approach states that every movement has certain “functions” to help it adapt to changing social situations. According to Stewart et al., the functional approach “...views persuasion as the primary agency through which social movements perform necessary functions that enable them to come into existence, to meet opposition, and, perhaps, to succeed in bringing about (or resisting) change” (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 119). These functions may include tactics such as mobilizing for action, transforming perceptions, and sustaining the movement (Stewart, “Functional Perspective”, 78).

I have decided to focus my review of the functional perspective to one branch of the approach in particular. This branch, known as the social systems approach, is commonly used in the analysis of social movements. The social systems perspective looks at a social movement as an organism whose existence depends on its adaptability to its ever-changing environment. The social movement, as an organism, will be concerned about “issues of survival, organization-environment relations, and organizational effectiveness” (Morgan 40).

This perspective believes that every system needs to be in constant communication with its environment, using clues that the environment provides to adapt to changes (Ruben 205). In order to adapt with its environment, a social movement uses persuasion. A social systems approach defines persuasion as “...a process of mutual adjustment in which people and societies engage” (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 116).

A social movement not only must adapt itself to the changing environment, but also make the environment change to meet its needs (Ruben 205). The ultimate goal is to create a balance between the system and the environment through mutual adaptation.

The constant struggle of adaptation between a social movement and its environment creates conflict (Ruben 206, 209). Conflict between the social movement, its environment, and the establishment is welcomed and necessary for a movement because "...conflict creates the opportunity for growth and progress" (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 107). In other words, while the challenge of conflict may be detrimental to a system, it may also push the system to change and to strengthen (Ruben 209, Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 107, 109).

A movement needs to be flexible and creative in order to survive, constantly developing and using new strategies of resistance and agitation (Ruben 205, Morgan 45, Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 105). If a movement's tactics become predictable, the establishment will learn how to react and effectively counter the social movement's strategies (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 106-107). As Alinsky writes, "Radicals must be resilient, adaptable to shifting political circumstances, and sensitive enough to the process of action and reaction to avoid being trapped by their own tactics and forced to travel a road not of their choosing. In short, radicals must have a degree of control over the flow of events" (6-7).

The social systems perspective describes the existence of a social movement as a life cycle (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 22). However, according to Stewart et al., "...social movements rarely proceed in an orderly step-by-step manner...*Minimal* organization is both necessity and reality for most social movements" (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 6). The five stages of the

social movement life cycle, outlined by Stewart et al., include Genesis, Social Unrest, Enthusiastic Mobilization, Maintenance, and Termination (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 22):

### **Genesis**

The genesis of a social movement begins with a “prophet,” an individual or group who sees a problem with society, decides that something needs to be done, and begins to raise public awareness (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 22-23, Griffin, 186). This generator of the movement seeks to change people’s perceptions of past, present, and future, persuading people that the future will be positively or negatively impacted as a result of their action or inaction (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 122-124).

The social movement is initially met with little or no resistance by the institution it opposes because the institution either does not know that the dissent exists or it does not take it seriously. Typically, an event that triggers some sort of action is needed for the movement to move into its next stage, social unrest (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 22-24).

### **Social Unrest**

As this stage begins, more people are expressing their dissatisfaction against the establishment. Often, the triggering event that moves a social movement from Genesis into Social Unrest is the calling of a convention among like-minded people to express their concerns about a situation and to determine what can be done about the problem. Often, out of this convention is born a group’s declaration about their beliefs and ideology (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 24). The group also identifies an enemy. Some movements portray the “enemy”, or opposing institution, as a powerful, dominant, evil force that has deliberately tried to oppress people. Others portray the institution as weak and incompetent (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 125-126).



Petitioning is the first tactic that a movement needs to use. Members of the movement must be able to demonstrate that they initially tried to achieve change through legal means. If the movement does not petition and moves directly toward more aggressive tactics, it will lose credibility with the public, thus reducing its chance of success. Therefore, the movement uses the tactic of petition to the alert offending establishment of the problem, pressure them to change the situation, and demonstrate that the movement has public support (Bowers and Ochs 17).

Promulgation is another tactic used during Social Unrest to change perceptions of the past, present, and future. Posters, literature, and mass demonstrations raise awareness of the movement and recruit more support. Promulgation is also used to generate media attention. If the media become involved, the movement will have an easy avenue to broadcast its message to a larger audience, potentially gaining more support and sympathy from the general public. Therefore, the movement will often seek the support of legitimizers (well-known figures who support the movement) and members will plan newsworthy events to attract media attention (Bowers and Ochs 17-20).

During the period of Social Unrest, leaders of the movement also begin to establish group solidarity among movement members. Bowers and Ochs state that solidification, “the rhetorical processes by which an agitating group produces or reinforces the cohesiveness of its members, thereby increasing their responsiveness to group wishes”, is essential to a movement’s success. (20). Solidarity is achieved through the use of polarization, derogatory jargon, songs, slogans, and symbols, all of which foster identification, enforce group cohesiveness, prompt movement members to action, and reinforce beliefs (Bowers and Ochs 20-26).

A subcategory of polarization that also promotes group unity is the invention of derogatory nicknames for groups or individuals that the movement opposes (Bowers and Ochs 28). Through tactics such as slander, a clear we-they distinction begins to form, which assists movement members in seeing their group as an established, genuine social movement (Stewart, et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 24, 125).

At this stage, the movement's major goal is still transforming perceptions of the past, present, and future, for the public as well as the establishment. Many times, members of the movement believe that if everyone is made aware of the facts, the situation will be righted (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 24-25).

In response to the social movement's efforts, the institution will often try to discredit the social movement's cause, claiming that a problem does not exist or that it is not serious enough to merit the establishment's attention. Their goal is to stall the movement by not reacting (Stewart, et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 24).

### **Enthusiastic Mobilization**

Enthusiastic Mobilization begins when the movement grows frustrated with the establishment's lack of response or failure to change and decides to adopt more aggressive means of protest. The social movement's goal is to persuade more people to join its cause as well as to pressure the institution into making concessions and giving in to the movement's demands. This may be accomplished through demonstrations, rallies, boycotts and marches (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 26). Members of the movement choose a means of protest that allows them to combat the establishment symbolically (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 26, 129 and Alinsky 165-183). By using more aggressive tactics, the movement generates more media attention, and the original leaders of the movement are

often replaced with more charismatic leaders that are “adept at countering growing opposition to the movement” (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 26). The movement’s strategy is to use tactics that will provoke the institution into reacting in a manner that will expose its “true evil character” (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 27 and 130, Scott and Smith 8). The tactics employed by the social movement may include polarization, nonviolent resistance, escalation/confrontation, guerilla and Ghandi, guerrilla, and revolution, in addition to the continued use of petition, promulgation, and/or solidification (Bowers et al. 17). I will examine only the tactics of polarization, nonviolent resistance, and escalation/confrontation because, as Bowers and Ochs state, “*Ghandi and guerrilla, guerilla, and revolution* are increasingly nonrhetorical, involving actual physical attacks on the establishment...rather than [acting] from a compromise and reform point of view” (Bowers et al. 44 ).

Enthusiastic Mobilization uses polarization to a much greater extent than during Social Unrest. By using polarization, the speaker implies that the issue is black-and-white and that only two sides of the issue exist. In reality, there are many other options, but these are not made known to the audience (Raum and Measell 31 and Haney, 305-307).

Agitators use nonviolent resistance to break laws, customs, or policies that they consider unjust. Some means of nonviolent resistance include “sit-ins, school boycotts, economic boycotts, rent strikes, fasts, blocking entrances to buildings...and a variety of other such tactics” (Bowers et al. 37). Nonviolent resistance is often met by physical resistance from the establishment. The confrontation, which attracts the media’s eye, may turn violent on the part of the establishment, generating public sympathy for the social movement and causing the establishment to look bad. On the other hand, the

establishment may not respond to the violence, rendering the nonviolent resistance ineffective (Bowers et al. 37).

Escalation/confrontation is a strategy designed to make the establishment overreact to the agitators' actions, thus exposing the establishment's evil character. This may be accomplished through tactics such as creating the illusion that a protest will be larger than it actually is, threatening violence, or making non-negotiable demands (Bowers et al. 42).

As tensions between the movement and the institution grow, distinctions between the two groups escalate. The movement's goal is to establish a distinction between "us" and the "opposition" (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 125, Raum and Measell 28). Many times, an "if they're not for us, they're against us" mentality is adopted (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 125). People who quit the movement or those who remain neutral are looked down upon (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 27). Stewart et al. states:

"The opposition includes all individuals and groups who do not openly support the movement and thus are responsible for allowing intolerable conditions to exist or develop. 'They' often include established institutions, counter movements, the 'silent majority,' the mass media, other social movements, factions within the movement, and those for whom the movement is fighting who have not joined in the struggle...The 'we' or self include all the righteous, moral, self-sacrificing individuals and groups who are willing to stand up...to an evil condition, force, or trend" (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 125).

As Raum and Measell write, "Thus, the we/they distinction both underscores the in-group vs. out-group dichotomy and promotes in-group solidarity as the auditors respond favorably to the distinction" (32).

During this stage, some members of the movement may be purged if they are thought incapable or without understanding of the movement's true cause (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 27). Stewart et al. expands:

Some social movements establish membership limitations to create elites capable of dealing with 'unsolvable' conditions and the omnipotent forces that have produced them. 'We-they' distinctions may be as prevalent within a social movement as they are between the social movement and its opposition (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 128).

Meanwhile, leaders have fostered a high level of optimism within the movement. Members involved are truly committed to the cause and believe that the movement will succeed. They see themselves as an oppressed voice that is justified in its actions and believe that their movement is the only tool that can bring about the desired change (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 26 and 130).

The institution is also mobilizing during this stage in response to the social movement's actions. They are very aware of the social movement's threat to their authority. Often, they will initiate a "counter social movement," supporting its members with donations of money and resources. The institution uses this and other tactics, such as claiming to be on the side of the "silent majority," as a cover-up, making it appear as though the institution is taking no action against the movement. Sometimes law enforcers are called if the threat to the institution becomes too great. The larger the movement is and the greater the number of participants, the more drastic the institution's reactions will be (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 26).

Often, social movement participators become martyrs as a result of their dedication to their cause. As Stewart et al. states, "Leaders and members may experience martyrdom for the cause by suffering injury, imprisonment, banishment, or death. They may readily accept and even seek suffering; the 'cause' has become the true believer's reason for being" (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 26).

Although the movement may win some battles, success is not guaranteed. Leaders of the movement face large challenges, such as coping with discouraged members, explaining failures, and trying to maintain enthusiasm. The movement is pressured to keep itself publicized and active by continually generating media attention. It must also constantly develop new tactics or risk the possibility of the institution learning how to deal with the protesters effectively. Mobilization is also made difficult because the movement often lacks funding or access to communication mediums such as printing presses and the mass media (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 128-130). At the end of the Enthusiastic Mobilization stage, enthusiasm for the movement begins to fade, as participants begin to realize that success is not imminent (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 28 and Alinsky 159-160).

### **Maintenance**

At the end of the enthusiastic mobilization stage, both public and media attention begin to fade. Leaders are still focused on spreading awareness and persuading others to join their cause, but the main goal is to keep the movement alive and functioning. Boredom, fatigue, discouragement, and a general decline in morale contribute to a decrease in the movement's membership. Leaders of the social movement must counteract this trend by recruiting new members and reaffirming the movement's

ideology as well as the its chances of success (Stewart et al., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 81). The movement also turns to fundraising to gain the financial support necessary to sustain the movement (Stewart et al., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 82).

Usually, the battle moves from direct social conflict to a political battle in the courts. The movement's rhetorical focus turns toward maintaining its internal structure, rather than pressuring the establishment (Stewart et al., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 82). Lack of visibility and publicity is a problem for the movement, so members are always watching for another triggering event that will raise attention once more (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 28-30). Stewart et al. state that "Leaders resort to ceremonies, rituals, annual meetings, and anniversary celebrations during which martyrs, tragedies, events, and victories are recounted and memorialized" (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 30). Usually, those who have been leaders during the Enthusiastic Mobilization stage are replaced by a "statesman or administrator" who is more adept at pursuing the issue through the legal system (Stewart et al., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 83). The more moderate persuasion tactics of the new leader may make the establishment more willing to compromise with the social movement (Simons, Requirements, 10-11). Sometimes, the movement will resort to focusing on pushing one particular issue rather than the multitude of issues that movement members had previously fought for, because focusing on one aspect of change makes success more possible and it requires less effort (Stewart et al., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 83).

### **Termination**

In this final stage, a social movement becomes something other than a social movement. In the case of victory, members of the movement will take over the establishment's position and form a new establishment. This means movement leaders

embarking on a new rhetorical battle, for they must convince those under them that the new establishment's ways are best. Dissenters are purged and eliminated (Stewart et al., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 84).

In the case of defeat, the group may fade into oblivion, pressure groups, political parties, or be completely crushed by the institution which it opposed (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 31). The latter occurs when "the institution and a significant portion of the public comes to view it as a grave danger to society" (Stewart et al., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 84). Many times, leaders and members simply discontinue their efforts because it is too difficult to maintain the level of energy necessary for the movement's success or survival (Stewart et al., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 84). However, Stewart et al. claim that "Total disbandment is unlikely...because elements of every social movement make the cause their reason for being and their livelihood, and they will trust no one else with its principles or their jobs" (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 83).

Those who evaluate social movements from a functionalist perspective are really looking at the ways a movement adapts to meet the new situations and challenges it encounters. Although it is obvious that every social movement will encounter varying circumstances, these theorists maintain that a general pattern emerges that can be traced through the course of a movement's existence. The functionalist approach focuses on how the social movement operates as a complete entity, while the rhetorical approach, as described next, focuses on how the movement works not only on a macrocosmic, but also on a microcosmic, individual level. Since these approaches look at social movements in such different ways, it seems that using these perspectives in conjunction with one another would help obtain a clearer picture of all the elements affecting a movement.



Bowers and Ochs are two theorists that use aspects of both the functionalist and rhetorical approaches to analyze social movements, an idea that I strongly support and will discuss further in the conclusion of this thesis.

### **RHETORICAL APPROACH**

Like the functionalist perspective, the rhetorical perspective can be divided into several branches. I have decided to explore two of these branches in depth, because they are commonly used in social movement evaluation. These approaches include the dramatistic theory and the narrative theory of social movements. Although similar, these theories have some minor differences. For example, the dramatistic approach states that man sees and defines life as a drama. The narrative approach, developed by Walter Fisher, is built off the dramatic approach, suggesting that humans see and define reality through stories, or narration (Fisher 58 and Littlejohn 177). Littlejohn highlights the theories' differences: "*Dramatism* is distinguished by its heavy reliance on a theatrical metaphor, and *narrative* is characterized by its use of story sequence" (177).

Theories under the rhetorical approach focus on how people think, relate to, and communicate with one another. Rather than focusing on the movement as an organism like the social systems approach, it focuses on the specific processes people go through to create and sustain a movement. The rhetorical approach focuses on human behavior and the ways in which it is created, motivated, and changed. It then applies these theories of human interaction to social movements, emphasizing how people are persuaded to join the movement and what causes a movement to go through a cycle of change. The rhetorical approach emphasizes that *morality* is what affects human behavior and, in turn,

social movements. This is much different than the social systems approach, which argues that a changing environment is what alters a movement.

### **Dramatistic Approach**

First, we will explore the dramatistic approach. However, before delving into dramatistic interpretation, it is necessary to provide background information on several key elements behind the dramatistic perspective.

Kenneth Burke was an important pioneer for the dramatistic approach. Burke believed that humans communicate through symbols, defining man as “the symbol-using animal” (Language 3) (Language 3, 5-6, Permanence and Change xxii and Littlejohn 179). He later elaborated on this statement, calling man a “symbol-using, symbol-making, and symbol-misusing animal” (Language 6). Humans use these symbols, or language, to actively create and define reality, thereby motivating all human action and social behavior (Rueckert 130 and 161, Burke, Language, 5, and Stewart et al., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 160 and 162.). This reality includes things such as reason, morality, and codes of conduct (Rueckert 130-131). Since reality is constructed out of language, Burke argues that language is the medium for action, and through language, society, and therefore, social order, is created or altered (Stewart et al., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 160). Likewise, as social order is created through communication, social *disorder* arises from disorders in communication (Stewart et al., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 172).

Burke saw human interaction as a drama, in which people interacted through prescribed social roles that were delegated to them by the social order that they had created. He invented the *dramatistic pentad* as a tool for evaluating these dramatic acts, or social interactions. Burke determined that the key components of the pentad were *act*,

*scene, agent, agency, and purpose* (Burke, Grammar and Rhetoric, xvii, 127-317 and Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 168). The “*act*” element describes what happened, the “*scene*” depicts the context in which the act occurred, an “*agent*” is the person or group who committed the act, the “*agency*” describes how the act was committed, and the “*purpose*” gives the reasons behind the act (Sanbonmatsu 37). These elements are parts of a drama that, when applied to the analysis of social movements, assist in analyzing the movement with dramatism in mind, thus making it easier to see the movement from a rhetorical perspective.

An important principle of dramatism is the concept of identification. Identification involves using symbols to create shared meanings, thereby “establishing a common interest, value, or form with others” (Sanbonmatsu 36). In other words, shared symbols and interests unite people into a group, although the people will still remain distinct individuals (Burke, Grammar and Rhetoric, 544-545 and Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 167).

Rueckert defines identification as a “drama of moral choice” (45). Burke agrees, arguing that identification leads to a “moral controversy” because people will identify with different things and accept different realities, thus producing division (Burke, Grammar and Rhetoric, 546, 549-550).

In order for a person or group to be persuaded, identification between them and the persuader is essential (Burke, Grammar and Rhetoric, 548, 579). Burke writes:

You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his...For the orator, following Aristotle and Cicero, will seek to display the appropriate ‘signs’

of character needed to earn the audience's good will... (Grammar and Rhetoric, 579-580).

As Sanbonmatsu writes:

Dramatic identifications, significant in the Burkeian process, develop the heroes and villains with whom the audience selects their identifications. In the process of identifying with the hero symbols (persons, values, institutions) and actions in the dramatic conflict, the audience's attitudes and beliefs become congruent with the speaker's purposes.

Stewart et al. describes seven ways in which identification can be achieved. First, identification can be created by seeking to establish a common ground with a group of people. Identification may occur when one becomes involved with groups. Repeated exposure to the group's ideas and beliefs may cause one to become tolerant of, or even persuaded by, the group's ideology. Identification can also be created by sharing similar appearances. One example of this is changing a hairstyle or mode of dress to "fit in" with a group. Likewise, identification can be established by adjusting one's language to match that of the audience being addressed. "Content adaptation" involves using examples that a group can easily relate to or identify with. Reiterating a group's values is key to establishing identification, because it demonstrates a willingness to understand the group's views. Visual symbols are also important, in that they promote a sense of unity with the group. Finally, identification can occur by making reference to individuals or groups that the audience approves of or admires (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 167). In addition, Burke lists another way in which identification, and therefore persuasion, can be achieved, through styles of speech:

We know that many purely formal patterns can readily awaken an attitude of collaborative expectancy in us. Once you grasp the trend of the form, it invites participation regardless of the subject matter...in cases where a decision is still to be reached, a yielding to the form prepares for assent to the matter identified with it (Grammar and Rhetoric, 582).

Leaders depend on identification with their followers to maintain their power, thus uniting the followers under one belief system. If followers cease to identify with the leaders, they reject the symbols used by those who hold power, and discontent arises (Stewart et al., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 173-174). Stewart et al. write, "when division in society is so great that symbols no longer possess common meanings, people will turn to leaders who will create new symbols" (Stewart et al., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 173).

Burke proposed that humans have an inherent need for order, stating specifically that humans are "goaded by the spirit of hierarchy" (Language, 15). This order is created, he theorized, by people's use of elaborate symbol systems constructed through shared meaning. In other words, humans use language to construct hierarchy, and therefore, social order. Hierarchy, and thus social order, is created and reinforced through language, because language in and of itself is hierarchical (Rueckert 132, 135 and Burke, Permanence, 276-283). Hierarchy assigns everyone a place and role in society. Human behavior is the result of learning to act out specific roles, or social dramas (Stewart et al., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 172). Hugh Duncan states that, "action is determined by the forms in which men communicate as they act together, and that the creation of such forms is, therefore, the creation of the ways in which we relate in society" (48). As Stewart et al. writes, "When

followers, through socialization, have been taught 'significant symbols' which uphold social order, they require their leaders to 'play' their roles within the principles established" (Stewart et al., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 172). Those in power create and participate in roles and rituals that connote authority, thereby legitimizing their right to rule (Cathcart 264). They will also use these rituals combined with language to persuade people that the establishment's way is the best possible way of doing things (Cathcart 269). Their roles and rituals reinforce the desired actions of their followers and create templates that regulate and define human behavior (Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 140 and Stewart et al., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 171).

As humans belonging to societies, we need to play "roles", communicating in a certain way for our needs to be met. According to Hugh Duncan, "we play society through social forms called manners" (48). Manners, or the roles that we play, determine where we stand in society's hierarchy. However, not everyone will passively accept their defined "role" in society. Many will deviate from the social expectations that they are endowed with and strive for an alternate reality (Rueckert 132-133).

The existence of hierarchy also creates the existence of a "hierarchic motive" (Burke, Permanence, 281-283). This motive exists when people on the bottom of the hierarchy want to move upwards, and people at the top have a fear of being lowered on the social scale (Rueckert 132). Problems arise when followers within the social system, or existing hierarchy, cease to identify with those in power. Burke calls this term "hierarchic psychosis", which in simple terms means tension exists between the existing hierarchy and some members of society (Burke, Permanence, 278-279). Rueckert adds that this "psychosis" will occur in any existing hierarchy, even if a hierarchy is good,

because all hierarchies create and maintain an “order” which surely will not be accepted by everyone it affects (Rueckert 132). Social movements challenge the existing hierarchy and the symbols that comprise and reinforce it. But challenging or rejecting the existing hierarchy causes guilt, a term that Burke renames “categorical guilt” (Burke, Permanence, 278-279, Rueckert 132-133, and Cathcart 269). In turn, this can lead to resentment, fear, and the search for a sacrifice that will make redemption possible (Burke, Language, 19). This brings us to the dramatistic method of evaluating social movements.

Burke maintains that all social movements are dramatic in nature, composed of several acts: hierarchy, transformation, transcendence, guilt, victimage, redemption, and salvation (Stewart et al. 176). Like the Social Systems model, the dramatic approach maintains that movements do not necessarily progress through these cycles in an orderly fashion. Sometimes it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine what particular stage a movement is in (Cathcart 271). Stewart et al. expands upon Burke’s actions, speaking of the life cycle of a social movement. They maintain that a movement travels goes through eight phases, including:

societal order (the prevailing hierarchy, beliefs, attitudes, values, goals, and cessation of identification with the prevailing hierarchy), action (symbolic behavior of articulating grievances, altering perceptions of society, providing courses of action), drama (symbolic acts, events, episodes), conflict (separation, confrontation, violence, tragedy), victimage (identification of the causes of societal evil, conflict, and violence that must be destroyed), transcendence (the purging and removal of social ills while establishing new levels of social identification, cooperation, and unity), redemption (forgiveness of social sins),

and order (hierarchy and societal values accepted, sanctioned, and legitimized) (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 173).

Most dissidents, when first challenging the establishment, will try to promote their interests through normal, legal channels. If and when this proves ineffective, they will move toward more aggressive tactics. Similar to what the social systems approach suggested, the establishment usually reacts by ignoring the social movement, ridiculing it, or addressing only the complaints of the movement. In response, the movement must react to the establishment in a way that moves the issue into the rhetoric of a battle over morality (Cathcart 269-271).

Cathcart argues that it is essential for social movement members to create a moral battleground (Cathcart 271). He writes, "if the establishment agents fail to respond appropriately, the moral legitimacy of the establishment can be called into question (270). The challenge to an establishment's morality has to continue throughout the lifespan of the social movement (Cathcart 272).

As morality is called into question, the conflict heightens, increasing the energy of the movement. The movement members, as well as the establishment, seek to prove their moral superiority through the use of symbolic acts that strive to provoke the establishment into reacting in a manner that unmasks its "evil" nature. Some of these acts may include sit-ins, boycotts, fasting, marches, human blockades, non-negotiable demands, threats of disturbance, and derogatory references toward the establishment (Bowers et al. 37).

On a larger level, each side is competing for the audience to accept *their* respective definition of reality. Eventually, the movement reaches a climax in which one



side dominates over the other. From here, the movement begins to move toward a resolution. First, however, because of the guilt caused by the rejection of the existing hierarchy's "social order", humans feel a need for redemption, and language and transcendence makes redemption possible (Rueckert 132). A man can be redeemed, through victimage (in most cases, punishment of another), or mortification (punishment of self) (Rueckert 146). Because victimization involves the punishment of another, the victim must be identified with or identified as the cause of the social problem (Rueckert 151). The victim may be symbolic or actual, and the act of victimage can also be symbolic or real. In any case, once victimage has been accomplished, the "evils" in society are dispelled, the "guilty" party is redeemed, and social order is once again restored, either by the establishment that previously existed, or, if the social movement was successful, the new establishment. At this point, the new or already existing establishment is faced with the task of reinforcing their social reality, hierarchy, and order. They must persuade their audience (i.e. society) that the new or current definition of reality is indeed correct.

### **Narrative Approach**

Walter Fisher writes that his narrative paradigm theory is an extension of Burke's dramatic theory (Fisher 63). Both approaches define rhetorical acts and social movements as a moral battle, relying heavily on the principle of identification. Both argue that humans create, maintain, and change reality through language, and that language structures society. Finally, both agree that dissent, the instigator of social movements, is caused by discrepancies in how groups of people perceive reality as it has

been created through language. Fisher believed that narration was essential to all types of communication, theorizing that humans communicated through stories (64). He writes:

History records no community, uncivilized or civilized, without key storymakers/storytellers, whether sanctioned by God, a “gift,” heritage, power, intelligence, or election (67).

This storytelling, or “narration,” involves the use of verbal and/or nonverbal symbols to tell a story, describing a “sequence of events” to which an audience then assigns meaning (Littlejohn 185-186). The narrative perspective suggests that stories create and define our reality. Specifically, Fisher states:

The world as we know it is a set of stories that must be chosen among in order for us to live life in a process of continual re-creation...The materials of the narrative paradigm are symbols, signs of consubstantiation, and good reasons, the communicative expressions of social reality (65).

A narrative has the ability to change people’s “perceptions of reality and society”, provided that the audience is able to identify with the content of the narrative (Stewart et al. 242). Identification is essential to persuading an audience, even more so than logical or rational argument (Fisher 66-67 and Stewart et al. 242). Identification exists, as previously mentioned, when an audience and a narrator share common realities. Both the social movement and the establishment need to create a narrative with fidelity, which Fisher defines as “whether or not the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives” (64). They must also present a story with narrative probability which Fisher explains is “what constitutes a coherent story” (64). Any

audience will be persuaded to side with one point of view over another on the basis of narrative probability and/or narrative fidelity. The narrative must also be coherent, in that the narrative seems realistic, or consistent with an audience's experiences (Fisher 58, 64 and 194). Thus, identification becomes a moral issue, because an audience will evaluate a speaker's claims based on their already existing perception of reality as well as their moral standpoint. The closer that the message is to the audience's frame of reference and moral stance, the more accepted the message will be (Littlejohn 186). Burke strongly agreed with this point, emphasizing the importance of appealing to an audience's experience and perspectives in order to be persuasive (Sanbonmitsu, 37 and Burke, Grammar and Rhetoric, 548, 579). As Stewert et al. suggests, those "who identify with the narrator step into the story, enact it, and retain the experience. Stories that facilitate these processes, in turn, foster identification" (242).

Earnest Borman's Convergence Theory forms an important component of the Narrative Perspective. He states that a person's concept of reality is based on fantasy themes (Bormann, Force, 10). Littlejohn defines fantasy themes as "narratives of how things are believed to be", adding that these narratives were created from symbolic interaction between people and/or groups (Littlejohn 184). On a larger scale are rhetorical visions, or people's perspectives on past, present, and future events (Borman, "Fantasy", 397 and Littlejohn 184). Both fantasy themes and rhetorical visions are composed of characters, a plot, and a scene that provides the participants with what Bormann describes as a "social reality filled with heroes, villains, emotions, and attitudes" (Bormann, "Fantasy", 398 and Littlejohn 184). According to Littlejohn, rhetorical visions "structure our sense of reality in areas that we cannot experience

directly but can only know by symbolic reproduction” (Littlejohn 184). Rhetorical visions also motivate people to action (Bormann, Force, 406). From Fisher’s perspective, narratives are actually these rhetorical visions, creating “social reality” for those that choose to accept the narrative and the values it espouses (Fisher 64). Bormann writes, “Shared fantasies are coherent accounts of experience in the past or envisioned in the future that simplify and form the social reality of the participants” (Force, 10).

He continues:

Those so transported take up the dramas in small groups of acquaintances, and some of these derivative dramas again chain out as fantasy themes in the new groups; thus the rhetorical vision is propagated to a larger public until a rhetorical movement emerges (“Fantasy”, 399).

David Carr also argues that society is organized through the telling and retelling of stories (Carr 1-116). Some of these stories reinforce the legitimacy of those in control, and thus helps to create social hierarchy. Fisher writes that “symbols are created and communicated ultimately as stories meant to give order to human experience and to induce others to dwell in them in order to establish ways of living in common” (Fisher 63). In other words, narration uses symbols (language) to persuade people to share a common reality.

Carr suggests that in the structuring of society, there are two types of stories. Stories that endure with us are called retentions, while stories that are remembered when necessary are called recollections (Carr 21-22 and Stewart et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 242). However, because society is structured around the telling and retelling of stories, conflict is inevitable, because in all probability, people’s retentions and recollections will differ.

Therefore, each of us experiences a different reality, and the stories that we tell depict this. As Stewart et al. writes, "Differences develop when one person's retention is another's mere recollection" (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 242). As a result, the storytellers will compete to determine whose narrative is a more accurate perception of reality. Such is the case in social movements.

The narrative life cycle of social movements can be patterned after Bormann, Cragan, and Shields' "life cycle" of a rhetorical vision. This cycle has three stages: consciousness creating, consciousness raising, and consciousness sustaining (Bormann et al. 2). According to the narrative perspective, the establishment holds and governs people's perceptions of reality. However, some people, such as the dissenters that participate in social movements, cease to share the establishment's perception of reality and therefore stop identifying with the establishment. The social movement thus enters into the stage of *consciousness creating*, in which the dissenters enter into a rhetorical competition with the currently accepted storyteller, the establishment. Proponents of social movements seek to change or alter people's rhetorical visions, or perceptions of the past, present, and future, through the sharing of fantasies with groups (Bormann et al. 2-3). During the next stage, *consciousness raising*, the rhetorical focus turns toward recruiting more people to participate in the group fantasy. In addition to attracting new participants for the rhetorical vision, the rhetorical strategy also focuses on persuading the new participants to disregard other rhetorical visions that they may have previously adopted. Those recruited begin to share in these fantasies, which change, develop, and grow more powerful as more people become members of the group. As the rhetorical

vision grows stronger, group participants begin to see themselves as a distinct group and to make distinctions between themselves and outsiders (Bormann, Force, 10-13).

Actions of the rhetorical movement threaten the control of the establishment, which prompts the establishment to react to the dissenters' actions. Both sides enter into a rhetorical battle to convince the public to accept their narrative and rhetorical vision, and thus their perception of reality. During this time, proponents of the new rhetorical vision must use communication to "deal with anxiety aroused by times of trouble, by the evil within the social reality. The rhetoric must deal with changing circumstances, social conflict, success as well as failure" (Bormann, Force, 16).

In the third stage, *consciousness sustaining*, the movement's energies focus on keeping members of the group committed to the rhetorical vision. New energy needs to be channeled into the movement so that participants do not grow frustrated or bored with the same situation occurring over a long period of time (Bormann et al. 12-13 and Bormann, Force, 14-15). According to the narrative approach, the outcome of a social movement is dependent upon which side can persuade the most people to participate in its rhetorical vision, or its narrative of reality.

Like the functionalist perspective, the rhetorical perspective maintains that social movements go through a cycle. However, those who analyze social movement from a rhetorical perspective focus more on the processes that people go through in the creation and sustenance of a social movement. Rhetorical analysis moves things to a more humanistic and personal level, considering how moral choices, persuasiveness, societal structure, and constraints impact a social movement. In contrast, the functional

perspective analyzes movements by looking through a broader scope, or how the movement functions as a whole.

### **Weaknesses of Functional and Rhetorical Approaches**

As mentioned earlier, I chose to examine functional and rhetorical approaches specifically because they are the most commonly used approaches in analyzing social movements from a communication perspective. These approaches provide a basic framework for interpreting social movement phenomena on a superficial level. However, these theories are written from a Western perspective, usually North American. Because of this, the theories leave out a crucial aspect in decoding the hidden meanings of social movements: they fail to take into account the cultural context upon which a social movement is based. Weaknesses in these theories become apparent when examining social movements that have occurred in Eastern cultures. To illustrate this point, I will examine the 1989 Democracy Movement that took place in China, paying particular attention to specific cultural phenomena that drastically altered the meaning of events in the movement.

I chose to use the Chinese Democracy Movement as a case study for three reasons. First, China's culture provides a strong contrast to Western culture, which helps to highlight the need for change in social movement analysis because a majority of the tenants of social movement theory are written from a Western or a North American perspective. Second, China's government is authoritarian, which creates important constraints for movements that occur in this kind of political climate. Social movement theory, on the other hand, only explains movements that occur in democratic societies.

Finally, my experience with Asian cultures, especially Chinese culture, provides me with an excellent background to begin examining Chinese culture in depth.

I will begin the in-depth analysis of the 1989 Democracy Movement by providing a brief overview of the basic tenants of Chinese culture. Next, I will explore specific elements, unique to Chinese culture, which influenced the direction of the Democracy Movement and differentiated the movement from others that have occurred in Western culture. I will then proceed to examine events that led up to the Democracy Movement, as well as give a chronological description of the movement itself. Finally, I will briefly look at the impact of the social movement upon China and the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party's right to rule.



## **TIANANMEN SQUARE: THE PEOPLE'S CRY FOR FREEDOM**

China's culture is traditionally-oriented, which means that history plays an important part in the lives and actions of China's people. This is exemplified during the 1989 Democracy Demonstrations, in which both symbolic and literal references to China's history were used consistently throughout the movement (June 4 110).

Perhaps the most obvious example of this phenomenon is the location of the center of protest activity: Tiananmen Square, in the center of Beijing. Tiananmen Square is the traditional place for Chinese people to express dissent with the government (Hung, 84). Brook writes that the Square "commands symbolic force that no movement could do without" (22). The Square's prominence in Chinese political culture possibly arose from when the pillars of Tiananmen Gate were constructed of wood. Any person had the right to carve complaints against the ruler onto these pillars, and the emperor was obliged to read them. Prior to the May 4 Movement of 1919, Tiananmen Square had been a place for gathering at times when China's livelihood was in danger. The May 4 Movement and ensuing conflicts changed the Square's status, and eventually it "became a national forum for rallies and debates over national policy, in part because the area was becoming a political and educational hub" (Spence 19, 22 and 24).

Many of the tactics used during the 1989 demonstrations were not original, but symbolic replicas of history. The 1989 movement began as a reproduction of the demonstration held after Zhou Enlai's death in 1976, in which people expressed their disillusionment with the government (Hung 107, Spence 35, Gui 44). The students' hunger strike was modeled after Boyin Suqi, from the Zhou dynasty, who starved himself to death in protest of a corrupt government. Scholars starved themselves to death in

protest during the Yuan and Qing dynasties as well (Pye 341-342). Class boycotts during the 1989 protests emulated the boycotts of the May Fourth Movement (Perry, "Introduction", 3). The students' and intellectuals' use of petition plays back to China's famous poet Beidao who drew up a petition and led a signature drive for the release of political prisoners (Ming Pao News 13 and Hartnett and Wang 101). When Hong Kong protestors used their blood to create posters supporting the protesters at Tiananmen Square in 1989, they derived the idea from tactics used during the May Fourth Movement and throughout Chinese history (Perry 4). For example, Buddhist monks have been known to copy sutras in blood (Hartnett and Wang 102). Together, these examples support Esherick and Wasserstrom's observation:

even when they improvised, protesters worked from familiar 'scripts' that gave them a shared sense of how to behave during a given action, when and where to march, how to express their demands, and so forth. Some of these scripts originated in the distant past, emerging out of traditions of remonstrance and petition stretching back for millennia. More were derived (consciously or unconsciously) from the steady stream of student-led mass movements that have taken place since 1919 (36-37).

Stemming from Confucian philosophy, intellectuals have, since ancient times, "acted as the conscience of society" (Hung 168). This principle is known as *qingyi*. According to Schrecker, "The notion implied loyal and seriously committed members of the elite, often intellectuals and students, working outside of the centers of power for changes in incorrect and ineffective policies" (113). *Qingyi* activity exists in Chinese

history during periods where there are massive problems and disillusionment with the Chinese government (Schrecker 113).

As Lincoln Li writes:

Student nationalism...is expressive of the continuing tradition that the political elite is a politically educated elite. Student nationalism expresses a 'youth' phenomenon often observable in societies undergoing deepening crisis. As the older generation fails to solve crisis situations, the impatience of the young to try their hands at the helms of power gathers momentum (16).

Therefore, students have traditionally considered themselves the voice of China's people, confronting the government if an intolerable situation exists (Blakely 75, 76). This burden was derived from many historical sources. The notion of intellectual protest also had roots in ancient Confucian tradition. In ancient China, it was the "intellectual's responsibility to remonstrate with an emperor" (Calhoun 112). Also, protests such as the self-strengthening movement during the 1800's and the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement of 1919, as well as student activism during "the ebbs and flows of Republicanism, and early stages of Chinese communism..." caused a strong sense of obligation and responsibility to be transferred to students of younger generations (Calhoun 111, Gamble 20). One of the main reasons that students mobilized for action was because they felt responsible for China's future. In 1989, the students' feelings were exemplified by an excerpt from "The May 13 Hunger Strike Declaration":

Who should speak out, if we should not? Who should act, if we should not?

Although our bones are still forming, although we are too young for death, we are

ready to leave you. We must go; we are answering the call of Chinese history (Hunger Strike Volunteers 68).

The Democracy Movement of 1989 contained several unique circumstances that dramatically affected the mood and the direction of the movement. One of these circumstances is a concept unique to Chinese culture, the *Mandate of Heaven*. This mandate was used throughout Chinese history to legitimize the rule of the emperor and to promote justice for the Chinese people. Under this mandate, the people were obliged to respect and obey China's emperor, provided that he ruled justly. However, the people were bestowed with the right to rise against the ruler if the ruler proved unjust (Blakely 61, 63). Therefore, China's tradition created a special place in society for protestors. However, this right to protest created an important drawback, in that any expression of protest or dissent would be perceived as a direct threat to a government or dynasty's legitimacy. This put pressure on dissenters because they faced harsh consequences if their cause did not succeed. Throughout Chinese history, many protestors risked and lost their lives for their beliefs (Goldman 4). Therefore, mobilization for movements such as the Democracy Movement of 1989 posed a great challenge, because many people feared (with good reason) that the government would take harsh action against supporters of protests.

Another thing that affected the course of the Democracy Movement is the way in which children are traditionally reared in Chinese society. Unlike the United States, in which youth is valued and children are, for the most part, encouraged to develop into individuals with their own ideas, China has a collectivistic, group-oriented society. In China, the wisdom of elders is highly valued, and children are trained to emulate them,

accept their dominance, and to depend on their knowledge (Solomon 50, 149). Solomon writes, "Children are made to feel that they are incompetent to develop their own opinions, that they 'don't understand' and lack sufficient experience in society and hence should rely for guidance on the adults who do have the proper understanding and experience" (49). This notion, embodied in childhood, is carried with many individuals into adulthood. Their subservient attitude towards elders is also transferred to models of authority, such as officials in government. Thus, people's involvement in politics is often a rare occurrence, due to their upbringing (Solomon 149).

Another issue unique not only to China, but also to other communist countries, is that the protesters had to work under the constraints of an authoritarian regime. To challenge a regime directly is extremely dangerous, so protestors, throughout Chinese history, have resorted to an allegorical form of protest. Therefore, indirectness was strongly present throughout the protests, and many of the protest tactics were symbolic and abstract. One example of this phenomenon was provided by Shen Tong, a protestor who created a leaflet reading *Yaobang yiyang: Ado wuguo*. This means, "Hu Yaobang's last words were Ado rules the country." Ado was a fabled character, the stupid son of a king who inherited the throne because of his family connections. The allusion referred to Li Peng, who was able to achieve his highly ranked position because of family connections as well (Shen 170). Interestingly, China's political leaders also had to use abstractness in order to deal with the arising dissent and conflict (Goldman 7). Goldman points out that in most cases, "political leaders...feared that open confrontation would undermine the regime" (7). Another issue that arises when dealing with an authoritarian regime is that free speech is usually not tolerated because of possible threat to the

government's rule. This was the case in China. As previously stated, any signs of dissent are interpreted as a direct challenge to an authoritarian government's legitimacy and risk for dissenters is very high.

The issue of "face" was another unique circumstance prevalent throughout the 1989 Democracy Movement. Although it can be justifiably argued that "face" is important to all cultures, in Chinese culture, the concept is carried into an entirely different realm. To lose face in the West is to sustain damage to one's self esteem, but the damage is usually not permanent. In the East, losing face is a challenge to one's social identity.

Face is intricately connected to almost all concepts of Chinese culture. It may be one of the single most important elements in Chinese social interaction. Arthur H. Smith maintains that face is derived from the Chinese people's strong "dramatic instinct" (16). He believes that Chinese people have a strong tendency to act and think "in theatrical terms" (16). This tendency carries over into social interactions, creating a behavioral "role" for differing social situations. In China, face will be lost if a person's actions are inconsistent with their socially prescribed role.

As Smith writes:

If a fine speech has been delivered at the proper time and in the proper way, the requirement of the play is met...Properly to execute acts like these in all the complex relations of life, is to have 'face.' To fail of them, to ignore them, to be thwarted in the performance of them, this is to 'lose face' (17).

Face is largely integrated into Chinese politics. When dissent or a political debate arises, the opposing sides enter into a contest to determine who can persuade the public

that they are the morally superior side. Each party seeks to shame the other into submission by causing them to lose face. One of the key ways to appear morally superior to another party is not to give up, give in, or compromise with an opponent. Compromise or abandoning the rhetorical battle is akin to admitting that the opponent is morally superior. (Pye 340-341). Fear of losing face was likely a key factor in why the protests became so extreme. Once the students started protesting, they could not back down, because doing so would demonstrate that the students had been wrong.

Along with face comes the aspect of revenge. If face is lost, that loss needs to be avenged or else it is indirectly admitted that the side who lost face was wrong. Therefore, when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) lost face as a result of the students' actions, it was only natural that it would also try to make the students lose face (Pye 331). This was also true in the case of the students. As Craig C. Calhoun writes, "One of the salient emotions driving the student protesters in Beijing was a shared, recurrent sense of insult" (Calhoun 116). Therefore, any time the government said anything negative about the students, they would lose face, and the knowledge that they had lost face drove them to extreme measures to try to regain the face they had lost.

During the course of the protests, China's government was extremely concerned with saving face. If they did not appear in control of the protest situation, they feared that they would project a bad image. Ruling authorities must make it appear as though they hold all power in all circumstances. When a regime is questioned, it loses face. One of the CCP's primary arguments against the students' actions was that the protests would cause China to lose face in front of other countries (June 4 55). The students also had to work against the facial constraints imposed against them. If they had not done this, they

would have violated their role of conduct in society, resulting in a loss of face (Solomon 109). Because they were engaged in such a risky action, the students, especially in the beginning of the protest movement, took great care to show respect and deference to their political leaders. This was instrumental in gaining legitimacy for the movement.

Solomon writes that if a person or group “feared ‘losing face’ before relatives or peers or was anxious to ‘acquire face,’ an individual could observe with exaggerated correctness those ritualized forms of behavior which would publicly indicate his desire to assume his social obligations” (Solomon 110).

Face also played into the protests because the students felt that they had to live up to the standards of other students that had protested before them, even if it meant risking and/or losing their lives. This is one reason why the students were willing to take such great risks in the name of their movement. Calhoun writes that the students “themselves were on models of such high standards of courage and struggle that failing to accept the danger would have meant a collapse of personal identity or at least a bitter wound” (118).” The historical context upon which the students were modeling their movement demanded that they demonstrate great courage and bravery for their country, even if it meant martyrdom.

During the late 1980s, the situation was quickly becoming ripe for protest. The Chinese people were becoming very disillusioned with the Chinese government, a feeling that had been consistently growing since the late 1970s. The Communist government’s promises of equality and fairness were not being fulfilled, corruption among government officials was rampant and well-known, there was no freedom of expression, and Deng Xiaoping’s latest reforms had created a tremendous amount of economic disparity



between different groups of people (Schell 11). In addition, Deng's reforms had caused people to raise their expectations and hopes for prosperity. When these expectations were not met, bitter disappointment arose. What aggravated this disappointment was that officials and people with connections always had the most money and opportunity (Zuo and Benford 134).

Deng's reforms had other consequences as well. According to Brook, Deng's technological and economical reforms "robbed the Party of its reason to exist...The ideology of Communism had become meaningless...young men and women looked elsewhere to compensate for the poverty of ideas and values that overtook them in the post-Mao secular age" (19-20).

During the 1980s, China's exposure to Western influence had increased as the Party's rigid control had begun to relax. This exposure brought Western ideas of affluence, technology, human rights, religion, and democracy to the Chinese people (Zuo and Benford 135-136, Brook 20). This, combined with the anniversaries of the May 4 Movement, the French Revolution, and the founding of the PRC made 1989 a particularly volatile year. China's people began to question why China was behind the West in terms of technological development and relative affluence. They realized that China was not living up to the promises made by the leaders of the Communist Revolution and the May 4 Movement (Zuo and Benford 135). For answers, they began to question the current ruling party.

Instances of official profiteering and corruption among officials were widely known, and were made more so by the media's increasing reports of corruption (Zuo and Benford 134, Brook 20). Chinese intellectuals were becoming more vocal about the

absence of political freedom. Students were angry about the lack of government spending on education, the inadequate university facilities, and the fact that they had virtually no input in determining what job they would hold (Zuo and Benford 134-135, 142).

Beginning in the 1970s, protests were held sporadically in Beijing. The Democracy Wall Protests of 1978 and 1979 dealt with “discussions of new ideas concerning democracy and the arts” (Spence 35). 1986-1987 involved students “protesting the Party’s refusal to allow valid elections or any other actions that would allow meaningful discussions of the nation’s shaky discourse” (Schell 11). The students wanted an end to corruption within the Chinese government and they desired more political freedom (Perry 3).

With tension already brewing due to corruption and unfair reforms, all that was needed was an event to provoke the people into action. Shen Tong, a student protest leader from Beijing University, wrote:

We all knew that a major political event would trigger demonstrations, which would snowball quickly into a nationwide movement. Nineteen eighty-nine was a year of significant anniversaries: the tenth anniversary of the Beijing Democracy Wall, the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the PRC, the seventieth anniversary of the May 4 movement, and the bicentennial of the French Revolution. If we missed this year, however, we also knew that we might have to wait for a long time. All of us waited anxiously for an opportunity to come.

That opportunity came on April 15, 1989, with the death of Hu Yaobang, former general secretary of the CCP (June 4 3-4). Hu had been denounced and removed from his

position in 1987 because he was deemed “too liberal” and too lenient in dealing with the 1986-1987 student democracy demonstration (Yu and Harrison xv, 11). Hu had played a crucial role in orchestrating the reforms of the 1980’s. For example, he stood up for intellectual interests and restored names damaged during the Cultural Revolution. Students admired him for his actions. As Brook commented, “He was held in respect for having sacrificed his position as Party secretary-general on behalf of protesting students in 1987. He had taken a fall for them” (21). According to Schell, “students from several schools of higher education in Beijing...seized on Hu’s death as the symbolic moment to vent their long pent-up dissatisfaction...” (11).

After being expelled from the Communist Party, Hu became a martyr to the students. This martyrdom was heightened after his death (June 4 4, Perry, “Casting”, 78). During the protests in 1989, Zhao Ziyang was also dismissed from the CCP, and after his dismissal, he too became a martyr (Perry, “Casting”, 79). Esherick and Wasserstrom suggest that Zhao and Hu’s martyrdom came into being largely because they were dismissed from the Communist party, the controllers of which were infamous for corruption (34). According to Esherick and Wasserstrom, China has “a rich tradition of political martyrs” (55). This is because the spirit of martyrdom encompasses principles that are highly valued in Chinese culture, such as selflessness and promoting the good of the country (Zuo and Benford 139).

Another reason that Hu became a martyr to the students was because of his honesty and liberal views. Many students believed that he would eventually be able to return to the CCP to help China progress (Shen 166-167). With his death died the hopes of his return to power. Tiananmen Square filled with students, wreaths, flowers, and

large character posters, commemorating Hu for his integrity and calling for reform within the CCP (June 4 4-6). It may seem unusual that the students would use death and a funeral ceremony to voice protests against the government, but in China, funerals are a place to express emotion, and therefore they provide an opportunity to express dissent. As Pye explains:

It is very Chinese to make grieving over death into a public spectacle...Funeral rituals provide one of the few opportunities Chinese have for publicly displaying emotion. The gap between public grieving and carnival is thus very small...In Chinese culture, public greiving can legitimize the expression of sentiments that are only vaguely related to any sense of personal loss (333-334).

In commemorating Hu, the students were also indirectly challenging the CCP (Shen 167). The students' intent was not to fight against the CCP or overthrow the current leaders, but merely to point out problems with the Chinese government and call for reform. However, the government interpreted the movement as a direct challenge to its authority (Brook 25, Wakeman 59, and Zuo and Benford 142). In response to the mourners, police were dispatched to the square to keep order (June 4 7). The students presented a petition to the Chinese government, asking for Hu's position and honor to be restored, for freedom of speech and of the press, for an increase in government spending for education, for an end to corruption within the government, and for the right to demonstrate peacefully (June 4 5-6). The students also began to stage sit-ins, in the Square, demanding that the government listen to their requests (Ming Pao News 8, Pye 337).

On April 20, in what later became known as the Xinhua Gate Incident, police beat up students and journalists who were peacefully trying to enter Tiananmen Square. A class boycott began on April 21 to protest the brutality against students and reporters. By the evening of April 21, 200,000 to 400,000 protesters had filled the square. Participants included students, workers, and peasants (June 4 7-12).

Speakers at the protest used the Monument to the People's Heroes, located in Tiananmen Square, as a platform to call for the democratic reform of China's government (June 4 13). The Monument to the People's Heroes was constructed to commemorate China's people who died for revolutionary causes (Spence 18). By placing themselves by this monument, the students were suggesting that they stood on the same ground as those who had previously given their lives for China, and that they were also willing to make that sacrifice.

Contributing to the dissent, 47 intellectuals signed a pro-democracy, anti-corruption petition and tried, unsuccessfully, to present it to the CCP Central Committee. The petition was then delivered to the Standing Committee Office of the People's Congress (June 4 13).

On April 22, a memorial service was held for Hu Yaobang at Tiananmen Square in the Great Hall of the People. Over 200,000 students and citizens arrived at the square to commemorate him. In response, a police force was dispatched (June 4 13). After the memorial service, the students demanded Premier Li Peng hold a dialogue with them. Three representatives went to the Great Hall of the People to deliver a petition to Premier Li. The students' presentation of the petition was consistent with the Chinese tradition of "aggrieved parties wailing before the Yamen door, of publicly dramatizing their

unhappiness by petitioning officialdom” (Pye 337). One of the students kneeled and placed the petition on his head, replaying the presentation of a petition to the Guangxi emperor by students during the summer of 1898 (June 4 13-14, Richard Bohr). By presenting the petition in this way, the students were using exaggerated rituals of respectable conduct so that they would not lose face. Their actions demonstrated deference and humble acceptance of the current government’s authority. They were also presenting the authorities with a highly ritualized and dramatic rhetorical situation, in which the authorities would have to accept the petition or lose face. This is because when student petitions were handed to the government in 1918 and 1931, the government had established a ritually correct response of accepting the petition, thus diffusing a potentially volatile situation (Esherick and Wasserstrom 39-40). In 1989, Li Peng neglected to “play the role of the good magistrate of old and refused to come out” (Pye 337). A low-ranking official rejected the petition, the CCP lost face, and the Chinese people were furious at the arrogant attitude of the government (Esherick and Wasserstrom 50 and 77 June 4 14).

The issue of face surfaced again with the rejection of the students’ petitions. Face made it impossible for the movement to dissolve without incident, for if it did, the students would be admitting that they had been morally in the wrong. The government’s rejection of the petition shamed the students, and the fact that the students even presented the petition to officials had shamed the government. As previously mentioned, in Chinese culture, complaining about the government challenges the government’s morality, and therefore, its right to rule. Chinese tradition holds that just rulers who hold the Mandate of Heaven possess superior morals. By challenging the government’s

decisions and therefore appearing morally superior, students caused the government to lose face. The government felt the students had gone too far and therefore it had to teach them a lesson to regain the face it had lost (Pye 337-338).

Hence, the protests became a battleground over moral superiority. In essence, part of the protests became a contest of parties trying to “outshame” the other. Chinese culture uses the Confucian principle of shame to attack enemies. The government wanted to shame the students publicly, making them lose face to compensate for the face that they had caused the government to lose (Pye 331).

On April 24, 35 colleges participated in a “no limit class boycott” in Beijing, protesting the police brutality involved in the Xinhua Gate Incident. They also protested news censorship and called for freedom of the press (June 4 20).

The students’ actions were greatly supported by their professors. One hundred fifty-nine professors from the People's University signed a letter in favor of the students and the movement. Others gave speeches supporting the movement. By doing this, the professors demonstrated that they were also committed to the students’ cause, because if the movement failed, the professors could end up in as much trouble as the student protesters (June 4 22-23, Chen 54-60).

During this time, groups of students went out into the streets to publicize the movement and to raise money and public sympathy. The strategy of gaining support from the people is also historically significant. In fact, “Go to the street” i.e. “get the support of the common people,” became a popular slogan during the Sino-Japanese War (Hung 273). Chairman Mao and the Communist forces also used this strategy to gain espousal

with the people prior to the Communist Revolution in 1949. The people's support was an vital ingredient to success (June 4 20).

Meanwhile, the students protested the false reporting in other Chinese newspapers by burning copies of the People's Daily, the Beijing Daily, and Qiushi magazine (June 4 22). To combat the false news being published about the movement, students implemented a one-person, ten-letters tactic to inform people throughout China of the truth. In addition, the Federation of All-Beijing College Students raised money in hopes of sending 200-300 students to 15 cities across China to rally other students for a nationwide May 4<sup>th</sup> strike, in memory of May Fourth Movement (June 4 23).

A small victory occurred for the movement when the April 23<sup>rd</sup> issue of the Science and Technology Daily News broke censorship laws and reported the student movement (June 4 20). Another newspaper, the World Economic Herald, published what was really happening in the movement. The government confiscated the papers until the editor removed the story. Rather than creating a filler article to take the original article's place, the editor published the newspaper with a blank space, showing that an article had been confiscated (June 4 22).

Deng Xiaoping retaliated against the mounting dissent by an appearance before Beijing's mayor on April 24. Deng claimed that "[The student's] aim is to overthrow the Communist Government and make the future bleak for China" (Deng 60). However, this statement was a direct contradiction the students' actions and intent (Pye 339).

On April 26, the government tried to shame the students into submission, by publishing an insulting editorial in the People's Daily, a government-controlled Chinese newspaper, (Pye 338). The article was written by Hu Qili, an ally of Zhao Ziyang whose



loyalty to the CCP was under suspicion by fellow party leaders. Hu's appointment to the task may seem strange, but in China, the assignment of writing articles such as the one in the People's Daily is typically delegated to those who are under suspicion. The suspected person will either compose a particularly nasty article to prove himself loyal, or his leniency will confirm the suspicions held against him (Pye 338-339). The language of the article repeated exactly what was said to denounce the 1987 protests (Pye 339). The article accused the students of creating turmoil and suggested that a small number of people with "ulterior motives" were behind the movement (June 4 26-27). It also accused the students of being unpatriotic (Calhoun 116). In response to the article, the Federation of Beijing Student Unions (Interim) (FBSUI), policy-maker of the student movement, held a press conference at China University of Political Science and Law (June 4 25). During this conference, the students again presented their demands: The government should talk to the students on a basis of equality, the police brutality at the Xinhua Gate incident should be investigated, and the press should be allowed publish the truth without repercussions (June 4 25). Demands similar to these had been presented during the 1919 May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement (Spence 22). In addition, the students demanded that the government apologize for the April 26 People's Daily editorial and recognize the student movement as patriotic. The students' concern with the government's accusations against them again brings to light the issue of face (Calhoun 116). In Chinese politics, insults that have been publicly delivered must also be publicly withdrawn, which explains why the students pursued an apology from the CCP so adamantly (Pye 339). To combat accusations of anti-patriotism, students sang China's national anthem, *The Internationale*,

and carried posters of early Chinese Communist leaders during many of their protest activities (Esherick and Wasserstrom 33).

The students announced that there would be a peaceful protest held against the People's Daily editorial the next day, April 27 (June 4 25). Also during this conference, seven student leaders were introduced, and only democratic methods (i.e. secret ballot) were used to make decisions (June 4 25).

After hearing that a protest was planned, China's government made it illegal to demonstrate without permission, to hold public speeches, to raise money, and to distribute information on the street. It also threatened to punish violators (June 4 25). The fear generated by this announcement created a setback for the movement's mobilization effort. Student leaders from Qinghua University withdrew from the movement and the Student Liaison office at Qinghua University decided not to participate, stating that the threat of violence might scare those who weren't fully committed to the cause, causing the movement to lose their support (June 4 25-26).

On April 27, over 200,000 students from 42 colleges marched to Tiananmen Square, protesting against the accusation of the April 26 People's Daily editorial and staging the biggest demonstration in the PRC's history. Before leaving their respective campuses to join the demonstration, some students wrote out their wills. Students on either side of the parade joined hands when walking to prevent unwanted people from joining their ranks and causing potential disturbances. Supported by over a million people who gave them food, water, and encouragement, the marchers peacefully broke through 18 police lines. Every time a police line was broken, the students and citizen onlookers cheered for the soldiers and shook hands with them, demonstrating that they were not fighting against the

soldiers. They shouted slogans such as "People's police have the love of the people" or "We salute the police". Students carried posters advocating freedom of the press and the right to protest peacefully, as well as carrying banners in support of the CCP (June 4 28-29).

During the afternoon of protests, a State Council spokesman announced that the government had agreed to conduct dialogues with the students, provided that the students return to school, stop the demonstrations, "pass their opinions through proper channels, and adopt a calm and reasonable attitude" (June 4 29). After protesting successfully for 14 hours, the students returned to their respective campuses. Banners were posted reading, "Thank you, Beijing citizens," and "History will never forget April 27" (June 4 28-29). The petition by China's famous poet Beidao recirculated among intellectuals, and over 200 scholars signed their approval (June 4 30). Around the world, other demonstrations occurred in sync with the protest in Beijing on April 27. Supporting protests occurred in Changsha, Taiwan, and even England. In Hong Kong, students cut their fingers and used their blood to create two posters that read: "Glory to the student movement, long live the Democracy," and "Love of country is not criminal; repression of students is a shame." (June 4 32).

On April 28, the FBSUI was renamed the Federation of Beijing Student Unions (FBSU). Wuer Kaixi was democratically elected chairman by secret ballot, along with 6 representatives from universities around Beijing who formed a standing committee (June 4 32).

On April 29, 45 students from 16 colleges met with low party officials for a dialogue (June 4 35). The officials told the students to return to class and to present their demands

through correct channels. Several students left the meetings in protest, claiming that problems could not be resolved because no party officials with any power were present. The students were also angry because they felt they could not represent the concerns of their colleges since they were not elected representatives. Wuer Kaixi received an invitation to attend the dialogue, but was told not to talk, so he refused to attend. Contributors to June 4 summarized his feelings: "He tells reporters that the 'forum' is not a 'dialogue' at all, but a trick of the government to destroy student solidarity, and that the FBSU will persist in asking for a real dialogue with the government..." (35).

A photo exhibition, sponsored by the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, was held on April 30. The exhibition displayed 250 photos taken during past 2 weeks of student movement. Authorities removed photos containing pictures of police beating students during Xinhua Gate Incident. Student leaders such as Wuer Kaixi and Wang Dan did not attend the exhibition because of rumors that they could possibly be arrested (June 4 39-40).

Under the leadership of the FBSU, the students began to prepare for demonstrations on May 4<sup>th</sup>, the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement (June 4 35). On May 4<sup>th</sup>, 100,000 students from 52 colleges in Beijing and over 30 colleges from elsewhere in the country demonstrated in honor of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement. They marched from college campuses to Tiananmen Square (June 4 42). During the entire demonstration, students only encountered one police line, which was easily broken. Students carried signs such as, "Down with censorship", "Support the Economic Herald", "Not chaos, not the Cultural Revolution". Some carried banners ridiculing the inadequacy of previous dialogues that government officials had with students. Again, citizen supporters supplied

the students with cheers, encouragement, food, and drink. Parades from other sections of society also joined students. These included 500 journalists from around Beijing who joined in the protests to advocate freedom of the press. Many carried signs stating, "We want to get the facts out," "Don't force us to lie," and "People have the right to know". This situation was unprecedented in Chinese history. Eventually approximately 200,000 people occupied the square (June 4 43). The FBSU released "The New May Fourth Declaration", advocating democracy "first on campuses, and eventually in the whole society" (June 4 42-43). Meanwhile, other demonstrations sympathetic to the movement occurred throughout China and abroad (June 4 43-44).

The government staged a celebration for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the May 4 Movement as well. During the festivities, Zhao Ziyang delivered a speech in which he attempted to improve relations between the CCP and the students by trying to persuade the students to see the situation from the government's perspective (Brook 35).

After May 4, most schools resumed classes, with the exception of Beijing University and Beijing Normal University. Meanwhile, the FBSU continued to petition the CCP for dialogue with government leaders. In response, the government stalled by telling students they would be informed of a decision regarding a dialogue on May 8<sup>th</sup>, after previously promising an answer by May 7. Students responded by staging another class boycott in support of a dialogue between students and officials (June 4 41, 47-49).

A crucial point in the movement revolved around a planned visit by Russian leader Gorbachev to China. Gorbachev was admired by students because of the political reforms he had engineered in the Soviet Union. His visit was generating worldwide media attention because it would formally end the Sino-Soviet split of 1960 (Brook 36).

The protesting students decided to use his visit to their advantage, planning mass demonstrations and inviting Gorbachev to speak to them upon his arrival in China on May 15 (June 4 54). Through its medium, the People's Daily, the voice of the government warned the students to go back to school and to be reasonable (June 4 55).

At 2:00 p.m. on May 13<sup>th</sup>, the students released a "Fasting Declaration" and announced the beginning of a hunger strike (June 4 57-58). The idea for the hunger strike came not only from Chinese history, but also the use of hunger as a means of protest in countries around the world, such as Ghandi's use of fasting as a protest strategy (Kitigawa and Strong 564-565). The use of the hunger strike played off the historical use of suicide as an honorable means of protest in China (Ming Pao News 55, Latourette 585). In fact, this tactic, the "killing of oneself to attain virtue", was supported by Confucian beliefs (Xiaobo 316). The rationale behind using suicide as a means of protest is the thought that rather than acting against an unjust ruler, a person could turn the aggression he held inward against oneself (Pye 342-343). The students were hoping to use the issue of "face" to shame the government into conceding to some of their demands. As Latourette writes, "By committing suicide an aggrieved party could bring opprobrium upon his enemy and cause the latter costly embarrassment with officials and neighbors" (585). From the moment the hunger strike was declared, compromise with the government became impossible because the movement was now radicalized (Brook 37).

The hunger strike was necessary to gain rapport with the Chinese public. The students had to demonstrate selflessness through self-sacrifice to convince the people that the students were not out for their own good, but that they were fighting for the benefit of the entire country. Like the student protesters before them, the protesters of 1989 had to

include the "spirit of sacrifice," an essential element of Chinese dissent because it succeeded in demonstrating sincerity in their protests which in turn gained the support of the masses (Calhoun 113, Hsiung 102). Their tactic worked. When the hunger strike was announced, thousands thronged to the square in support of the students (Pye 342). According to Esherick and Wasserstrom, "Their acts of self-denial stood in obvious contrast to the self-serving and corrupt leadership they attacked" (55). Some students began to tie strips of cloth around their head that stated "We are willing to die for freedom" (June 4 51). This idea was derived from protestors' use of headbands in South Korea (Perry, "Casting", 88).

Before the strike began, the students' teachers hosted a "Last Lunch", offering support and encouragement to the hunger strikers. Arriving at the square, the students seated themselves at the base of the Monument to the People's Heroes. Some wore headbands that read "fasting", and coats that said "Without democracy, we would rather die" (June 4 55-56). Negotiations between the students and government started the first day of the hunger strike, but the government's adamant refusal to take back what had been said in the April 26 editorial caused the negotiations to end quickly (Brook 38). Other students supporting the hunger strike carried banners to the square and stayed overnight. One banner read, "I like the taste of rice, but I love the taste of democracy" (June 4 58).

By now, the movement had reached a climax, and tensions were high. Gorbachev's scheduled visit brought media from around the world to Beijing, and the students had a worldwide stage on which to make their demands. Chinese leaders were at risk of losing face if things appeared out of control, but they were limited from taking

direct action against the students because of worldwide media presence. The issue of “face” had become a critical obstacle for the CCP. According to the contributors of June 4, "General Secretary Zhao Ziyang call[ed] on the students to consider the honor and interests of the country and to be reasonable during Soviet leader Gorbachev's visit" (June 4 55).

At 2:00 a.m., the minister of the State Education Commission and the mayor met with students, telling them that their demands for dialogue would soon be realized, and reminding them to think of their country's image. At 4:00 p.m. on May 14, the Chinese government conceded to holding a dialogue with students (June 4 58). Over 30 students, including leaders Wuer Kaixi and Wang Dan, met with high level government officials, but Li Peng and Zhao Ziyang were not present. The students expressed anger at the government for publishing the April 26 editorial and pressured the government to take back what the article said. The government leaders refused the students' demands, arguing that it would be impossible to take back the article. If the CCP had agreed to take back the article, they would have lost face. The dialogue ended with the frustrated students returning to Tiananmen Square to continue their strike, claiming that the government was insincere in its conduct and demanding dialogue with Li Peng and Zhao Ziyang (June 4 58).

The Beijing Public Security Bureau ordered everyone to vacate the square on May 15 so that a welcoming ceremony could be held for Gorbachev's arrival (June 4 58). The students refused. Their actions and presence caused many of the plans for Gorbachev's visit to be altered, causing great embarrassment and humiliation for the CCP. The Chinese government was also angered the government because media attention and



coverage was turned away from Gorbachev's arrival in favor of the student protests (Brook 38).

Meanwhile, student movements across the country rallied behind the hunger strikers in Beijing. Students in Hong Kong staged a supportive hunger strike, and representatives from Hong Kong Student Union brought 14,000 HKD to Beijing to support the hunger strikers (June 4 61).

By May 15, many students were being taken to the hospital because of exhaustion and starvation. Families, teachers, and intellectuals gathered at the square in support of the students. A "May 15<sup>th</sup> Statement" was issued by intellectuals, stating that students deserved the right to protest safely, that autonomous student unions were legitimate, that the political system needed reform, and that the media should be truthful (June 4 62-64).

Also on this day, a dialogue was held between officials Li Tieying, Yan Mingfu and 22 student representatives (June 4 65). The officials affirmed that they knew the students' intent was positive, but they asked them to consider the implications of their actions upon China's image, and warned them to remain reasonable.

By this time, over 3000 hunger strikers occupied the square, some of whom also began fasting from water. Strikers who had been hospitalized rejoined the movement, along with some university teachers and workers (June 4 65).

The Chinese government began to lose more face as people began to criticize it for its apathy and stubbornness in refusing to meet with the students (June 4 65). One to two million people from all ranks of society went to the streets in support of the students, marching and carrying banners and posters criticizing government (June 4 71, Brook 38-

39). Intellectuals published the May 17<sup>th</sup> Declaration, criticizing the government for not meeting with students and allowing the hunger strike to continue (June 4 75-76).

Finally, on May 18, after Gorbachev's departure, several high ranking members of government, including Li Peng and Zhao Ziyang, visited hospitalized hunger strikers (June 4 76-77, Brook 41). Li Peng and other high officials met with students, including Wang Dan and Wuer Kaixi. However, Li Peng was only willing to discuss how to end the hunger strike and the meeting concluded on bad terms (June 4 76-77, Brook 41).

Meanwhile, 2 million people began to protest in support of the students, blocking roads and jamming traffic (June 4 77). Many of those in attendance were workers who gave speeches to encourage the students (Brook 41).

Early on May 19, Zhao Ziyang and Li Peng visited students in the Square. Zhao was visibly moved, and spoke to the students with emotion. Li Peng remained silent. At 9 p.m. on May 19, the students ended their hunger strike but continued sit-ins at the Square. After the strike was concluded, Li Peng offended students during a speech, demanding that they stop creating "turmoil". In response, 200,000 students in Tiananmen Square staged another hunger strike (June 4 86-88).

Li Peng responded to the students by declaring martial law on May 20 (June 4 89). But this declaration only caused the movement to regain intensity, as more people sided with the students (Zuo and Benford 148, Brook 75). Civilians swarmed into the streets creating both human and artificial blockades to halt the military's advance (Glasco 22, Binyan 44-46, and Brook 54). Hearing that the army was already inside the city, the students called off the hunger strike. Over 1 million citizens, including high-ranking judges and police, demonstrated on behalf of the students and marched again to

Tiananmen Square (June 4 99-100 and Hsiung 42). Citizens organized a "dare to die" corps to protect the students (June 4 117). The dare-to-die corps was reminiscent of the dare to die squads during the Han dynasty (Hsiung 102). Since the troops did not have orders to proceed at all costs, they had nothing to do but sit and wait (Brook 52). Citizens and students gave food and drink to the soldiers and talked with them, demonstrating that they were still a nonviolent protest (Zuo and Benford 148, Brook 55). Many of the soldiers knew nothing of the situation in Beijing. The government had deprived them of any knowledge about the movement by issuing strict orders to stay away from any kind of media during the previous week. Most army units carried weapons, but the majority of them were concealed (Brook 56). Many times older citizens would plead with the soldiers, telling them that their actions were wrong. This had a powerful impact, being that elders are venerated in Chinese society (Brook 76).

After martial law was declared, the students took it upon themselves to maintain order in the city to demonstrate that they still held the moral upper hand. Some of their order-maintaining activities included directing traffic and checking identification (Pye 344). On Sunday, a virtual war of propaganda was in effect between the movement and the government. The press was trying to refrain from printing the official side as much as possible, but neither side could depend on the media to get their full message out. Both the students and the government resorted to printing leaflets (Brook 60). Some of the government-issued leaflets played off people's fears of the Cultural Revolution, suggesting that the students in 1989 would create the same amount of chaos and confusion (Brook 61). Students turned a majority of their appeals to soldiers. One leaflet, mimicking the language of the April 26 editorial, told the soldiers that they were

being used by 'a small group of bureaucrats represented by Li Peng...' (Brook 62).

Another leaflet told soldiers that the invocation of martial law disgraced China in the eyes of the world (Brook 62).

Late Sunday evening, representatives from the China Handicapped Association came to the Square warning students that they should vacate the Square because attacks would be made that night. Ironically, Deng XiaoPing's son, Deng PuFang, was the leader of this organization. He had been permanently injured by Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution. The representatives probably used this organization's name to make the warning sound as though it was coming from an official source. Wuer Kaixi decided to believe the warning, but when it proved false, he was forced to resign from the movement's leadership (Brook 66).

The humiliated troops finally retreated from Beijing on Monday morning due to the civilian blockades (Zuo and Benford 148, Brook 67,76). The students returned to the police all of the weapons that had been confiscated from the soldiers, further affirming their high levels of virtue and morality (Zuo and Benford 148).

Immediately on Monday the government hired workers to start removing the barricades which had blocked the military's first attempt to enter the city. They were clearing a path for a second invasion (Brook 84).

The students resolved to persist in their efforts, writing a "Letter to the Nation" that asked government leaders to hold a dialogue with students to try to resolve the anger that had developed between the groups (June 4 99-100). The PLA Army also wrote a letter entitled, "Letter to Beijing Citizens," emphasizing that they were not there because of the students; they were there to maintain order in the city (June 4 100).

At 6 p.m. on May 22, 200,000 students and teachers took an oath, vowing that: "Heads may roll, blood may flow, but freedom and democracy must be carried on; we sacrifice our blood and lives, in hope of a better tomorrow for the People's Republic." (June 4 107).

A few days later, on May 25, some workers united to form the Beijing Workers Autonomous Association. This perhaps caused the CCP more fear than the student movement itself, because the Party leaders' training in Marxism taught them to fear the mobilization of the working class (Brook 85).

On May 26, Zhao Ziyang was ousted from power because he disagreed with government's treatment of students (June 4 118).

On May 27, Wang Dan, on behalf of the FBSU, announced that the exhausted students would withdraw from square on May 30, after a final protest involving people from all classes and groups in Tiananmen Square (June 4 119, Brook 87). On that day, a symbolic sculpture would be unveiled, representing the 1989 Democracy Movement's ideals (Brook 87). In Hong Kong, a Democracy Concert was held in support of the students.

On May 29, the students decided to postpone leaving the Square (June 4 120, 125). Also on May 29, the CCP tried to regain the moral high ground from the movement by broadcasting a story that civilians had deliberately killed a junior officer on May 23 during the military withdrawal from Beijing. Citizens largely ignored this report (Brook 92).

On May 30, in front of approximately 100,000 people, students unveiled the "Goddess of Democracy Statue" in Tiananmen Square. It was placed on the Square's

axis, facing the portrait of Chairman Mao, serving as a symbolic challenge to the ideologies of Communism. (Glasco 22, Hung 85, Tsing-yuan 144, June 4 128). The Goddess of Democracy was portrayed as a strong woman, her characteristics creating a striking contrast to the elderly and, according to the students, weak, male leaders comprising the Chinese government (Feigon 133). In addition, the statue resembled the United States' Statue of Liberty. This resemblance, as well as the fact that the student's decision to remain in the Square, made the Chinese government furious (Brook 88).

On May 31, the CCP sponsored a pro-government march in Beijing's suburbs. It also staged demonstrations supporting martial law. Participants received drinks and ice cream, and during the protest, the crowd burned two figures of Fang Lizhi, a well-known Chinese dissenter (June 4 129, Brook 92). Brook explains the logic behind attacking Fang Lizhi: the government needed a scapegoat. He writes, "the government's face-saving formula for crushing the Democracy Movement: arrest a small number of intellectuals who over the past few years had annoyed the Party...and the government could be seen as punishing the protest without having to put the entire student body of Beijing into prison" (93).

The students held a counter-demonstration outside the stadium where the pro-government rallies were being held (Brook 92).

On Friday, June 2, four individuals commenced a final 72-hour hunger strike, sitting on the steps of the Martyr's Monument. The individuals involved included "Hou Dejian, a popular Taiwanese-born singer/songwriter who defected to China in 1983. He was joined by Liu Xiaobo, a literary critic...Zhou Duo, a sociology lecturer at Beida; and Gao Xin, former editor of the Beishida campus newspaper" (Brook 94). Even in this act

of defiance, the four strikers maintained that they were not against the Communist regime. Their hunger strike renewed the energy of the movement once again (Brook 94).

On Friday evening, squadrons of soldiers infiltrating the city were forced to encounter the people. The citizens immediately began to swarm into the streets, setting up both human and inanimate barricades to hinder the PLA's entrance into the city. Many vehicles sat disabled with their windows smashed and their tires flat (Brook 101). Since the soldiers were not under the orders to advance at any cost, they remained trapped for great lengths of time, their military force being halted by mere citizens. The soldiers were forbidden to retaliate against civilian action and many felt humiliated that they could not advance into a city that was supposed to be under martial law. Because of this, many soldiers experienced a significant loss of face (Brook 101). Some theorists have proposed that one of the reasons, although it may have been subconscious, that the People's Liberation Army did fire on the people with such vengeance was to regain some of the face that had been lost (Hsiung 43).

Throughout June 2 and 3, troops and artillery were being sneaked into the city (Yang 125, Wakeman 62, and June 4 140). The Chinese public was able to catch some of the troops, and found "bayonets, machine guns, ammunition, and bags of butcher knives" among the soldiers' possessions (Yang 125). Efforts failed at seizing Tiananmen Square because the crowds of people prevented it, and the soldiers were under strict orders not to retaliate against civilian affronts (Hsiung 42). However, one PAP (People's Armed Police) jeep was reported to have sped into a crowd of people, killing three and injuring another. After this incident, everyone expected another military invasion (Brook 96).

By Saturday afternoon, people were climbing up the poles in Tiananmen Square that held government loudspeakers. One by one, the wires were severed and the voice of the CCP was harder to hear. At 6:00, those loudspeakers that remained out of reach warned that people should vacate the streets and the Square. However, no one paid much attention to these warnings because they had been hearing similar messages since April 26 and the previous messages had all turned into false alarms. At this time over 50,000 troops with tanks and vehicles were preparing to attack the city from all directions in successive waves (Brook 109). Meanwhile, the government was still trying to get the people to believe that the army was in the city only for their protection (Brook 112).

As the army tried to advance, citizens again swarmed to the streets, surrounding and disabling vehicles (Brook 114).

Plainclothes police were everywhere in the city. One of their main assignments, besides spying and stirring up fights, was to clear the streets and Square of foreigners, in preparation for the upcoming attack. The government did not want to risk foreigners getting injured, and they wanted no witnesses for the scene to come (Brook 118-119).

Tanks began to roll down the streets towards that square and people retaliated through rocks, fire, and Molotov cocktails (Brook 127). At 1:00 a.m. the troops began attacking people. Originally they only fired their guns into the air, but when the crowd reacted in anger, they turned their guns on civilians (Brook 129). At first the crowds thought the soldiers were only firing rubber bullets. When they saw people being wounded and killed around them, people reacted in a rage and began to attack the soldiers (Brook 134).



Government loudspeakers now began to announce that anyone caught within the Square would be considered as rebelling against the government.

At this point Hou Dejian, one of the final four hunger strikers, began to negotiate with military leaders for the safe evacuation of students from the Square. However, when an agreement was reached, the students declined to retreat, still afraid that a retreat would demonstrate failure and therefore equal loss of face (Brook 145-146).

At 4:00 a.m. all the lights in the square shut off. At 4:40, they turned again and revealed that soldiers had surrounded all sides of the Square. The soldiers initially shot at student loudspeakers, but then began firing in all directions (Brook 146). Tanks began rolling through the Square, destroying the Goddess of Democracy and crushing tents and barricades in their path (Brook 147, Tsing-yuan 147, and Hung 112). At 4:55, the students began to evacuate (Brook 147).

The movement's aftermath was grim. In the early morning hours of June 4, students carrying flags from their University retreated and relinquished their occupation of the Square, shouting slogans against the government (Beijing Teacher 181). According to Brook, "The Square and the Monument – symbols of national identity and moral legitimacy – were no longer in the students' hands. Now they were in the Army's" (170). Thousands of civilians lined the streets to watch as the students retreated to their universities. On the way back, students shouted in anger at the soldiers. Some responded by firing ammunition over their heads. Others reacted even more violently. Four tanks charged one group of students who were returning home. One tank ran into the marchers. One student who claimed that a tank ran into the marchers, crushing 11 students (Brook 149).

After a few days, the universities emptied. Participants were hiding for fear of government vengeance. Many went away from Beijing and stayed in the homes of relatives or family members (Yang 184). Some had to leave the country altogether.

After the massacre, anchors from CCTV wore black for 3 days. After June 7, no announcers appeared on television at all. The news was simply written across the television screen (Beijing Teacher 183).

Trying to regain face lost during the massacre, the CCP declared that they had not killed anyone. Instead, they focused on soldiers who had been killed or wounded and claimed that if anyone was killed, it was because the soldiers had to defend themselves. However, the government's claims remained largely unaccepted, both by the Chinese people and by the world that watched. Brook writes:

The students had succeeded in controlling more than symbols during their seven weeks in the Square. They had won the hearts and minds of the people. By the time the students were forced to withdraw, they could jettison the symbolism of the Square without losing legitimacy in the eyes of the people. The symbols were no longer important, now that the Army had taken them back (170).

By massacring innocent civilians, the government had violated a basic but important Confucian principle: A ruler must show benevolence to the people (Pye 345).

The question that arises at this point is, "Was the movement a failure?" At first glance it would certainly seem so, and the theories of social movements explored earlier strongly suggest this. However, these theories neglect to take some important elements of Chinese culture into account. We shall return to this question after evaluating the social movement theories presented in light of the Chinese Democracy Movement.

*"Social movements, including that of 1989, are commonly analyzed in terms of underlying conditions, motives, strategies, political opportunity, and the mobilization of resources. All these are important. But even taken together, all these aspects of the production of social movements miss certain crucial aspects of their meaning ...These approaches underestimate culture" (Calhoun 93-94).*

### **Critique of Functionalist Approach**

When comparing basic aspects of functionalist theory to the Chinese Democracy Movement of 1989, many of its assumptions can be challenged and refuted, because they were written by only examining aspects of social movements that have occurred in the United States.

One important issue that the functionalist perspective is not able to adequately explain is the issue of face in Chinese culture. Face was an important motivational force behind the Democracy Movement. Each group kept provoking the other, who would retaliate to avenge lost face and vice versa. For example, as a result of the government publishing the April 26 editorial, the students were encouraged to continue their protests more vehemently. It is possible that in this case, a social movement can be created, challenged, and changed due to issues of face rather than changes in the outside environment, as the functionalist perspective suggests. Since face is an integral part of daily life in China as well as other Asian countries, not taking this essential cultural element into consideration when analyzing social movements opens the door to major misinterpretation.

The functional perspective also maintains that a social movement must continually develop *new* strategies of protest in order to be successful, so that the establishment will not know how to react. While the Chinese student protesters did use a variety of strategies, most were simply replicas of tactics traditionally used by dissenters

throughout China's history. If the students had concentrated on using new tactics, they would not have been able to gain as much credibility with the Chinese public. China's traditionally oriented culture causes its members to place high value on the past. Confucian tradition, a tremendous influence on Chinese society and culture, emphasizes the importance of looking to elders and to the past as sources of wisdom. From birth, children are firmly grounded in these values. Nearly every Chinese person, educated or not, will have a fundamental and familiar knowledge of China's 5000 year history. In fact, the people of China pride themselves on being one of the oldest civilizations and kingdoms of the world. The result is a deep reverence for the past, with the Chinese people emulating their ancestors as well as their ancestors' actions. Because everyone shares the same basic knowledge of history, allusions made to China's past are understood by everybody. Since most people were familiar with Chinese history, the students' use of historical reenactment and protest strategies was an easy way to establish identification with their audience. In addition, the incorporation of the past into protests demonstrated that the students were following the highly revered example of their elders and ancestors, which helped to establish credibility with the audience.

Functional theorists argue that if a movement's actions are predictable, the establishment will learn to effectively counter the movement's actions. But even though the students used old tactics and the CCP might have been able to predict the actions of the movement, the issue of face made it impossible for the Chinese government to adequately counter the strategies of the students. The students effectively used highly ritualized actions from past protests to pressure the CCP into reacting in specified ways, knowing well that these references to the past created a script prescribing a specific role

of action that the government could not ignore without losing face. The role was determined by how their predecessors had responded to similar situations in the past. An example of this is when the three students began kowtowing before the Great Hall of the People in order to have their petition accepted by an official. By performing this action, the students were reenacting a piece of Chinese history with which everyone, young and old, was well acquainted. They were also creating a template on which the government had to act, because neglecting to play a designated and prescribed role guaranteed a loss of face to the government.

Social systems theorists seem to assume that social movements will only occur in democratic societies where people have freedom of speech and the right to protest. They argue that a social movement is initially met with little or no resistance, because a government or institution will try to stall in hopes that the movement will fizzle out before it gains any momentum. This is likely to occur in the United States, where the guarantee of free speech means the government usually will not be threatened by signs of dissent. This was not true during the Democracy Movement. Although the CCP at first restrained itself from taking violent action against protestors, it made its presence known by quickly dispatching guards and police when students came to Tiananmen Square to honor Hu Yaobang. One reason that the government felt so threatened is likely due to the importance of history in China's culture. By commemorating Hu, the students were reenacting the protests that occurred after Zhou Enlai died. Both Hu and Zhou had been Communist Party officials, but were officially denounced by the government. After their death, both became martyrs, valued for their integrity and honesty. The students' presence in Tiananmen Square was an indirect challenge to the CCP. The government's

reaction can be summarized by a quote from a Chinese taxi driver who was observing the CCP's reaction to the more recent protests of Falun Gong, a cult that has been outlawed by the Chinese government. He stated, "We're a country where everything has a political meaning, so the government has to see them as a threat" ("Falun Gong" 21). Therefore, any sign of dissent under an authoritarian regime will likely be met with harsh consequences and repression, because unlike democratic societies, people under an authoritarian regime do not have the right to rule.

The social systems approach further states that a key tactic for social movements is the identification of an enemy. However, this was not necessarily the case during the 1989 protests. True, the students were voicing dissatisfaction with the Chinese government, but they were also going to great lengths to prove that their movement was patriotic in nature. They wanted everyone to know that their goal was not to overthrow the government. They only wanted the government to listen to their opinions and work with them to find solutions to the problems that China was encountering. To prove their intent, they regularly sang China's national anthem, "The Internationale" and they carried posters of past Chinese Communist leaders during marches and protests, repeatedly emphasizing the purely patriotic nature of the movement. Even when martial law was instated, the students remained loyal to the CCP. Their behavior was not only influenced by fear of government attack as a result of identifying the government as an enemy, but also because of an important cultural reason. Western cultures generally believe that one should control and dominate over their environment in order to fulfill a person's needs. But other cultures, including China, emphasize placing oneself in harmony with the environment. The students recognized problems within the government, but instead of

identifying the CCP as an enemy and using that as an excuse to undermine its authority or overthrow the regime, they sought to bring both themselves and the government into a harmonious reconciliation.

Related to the identification of an enemy, the functionalist perspective maintains that a social movement will use polarization to differentiate themselves from the opposition. But the students, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, were not necessarily against the government. Rather, they were trying to position themselves on a level equal to that of the government in hopes of working with government officials to create positive change for China. Therefore, polarization would not be necessary and most likely would be detrimental to the students' intent.

Functional analysts also agree that polarization is used to make an issue appear "black-and-white," or as though there is only one right and one wrong answer with no other options existing. This is precisely what the members of the movement did *not* do, because portraying an issue in black-and-white terms would be directly accusing the CCP of wrongdoing, a very dangerous offence. It can be argued that the students were against some aspects of the government (i.e. corruption and repression), but it is important to remember that during the course of the protests, the students were usually very vague about their demands and that they never directly opposed the government. They merely suggested that some changes needed to be made in the way things were being operated. This is due to several cultural reasons. First, Chinese people by nature are very indirect, because they belong to a high-context communication culture. They depend on their listeners to interpret, understand, and decode their meaning. This is in direct contrast to Western cultures, which tend to be quite low context, thus being very direct in their

statements (Hall 74-101 and Ehrenhaus 263-264). Ehrenhaus mentions Gudykunst's observation that, especially initially, high context cultures are more careful and cautious with what they say, while low context cultures are much more open and explicit (Ehrenhaus 265-266). In high context cultures, the context in which a message is based is extremely important in interpreting the information, while in low context cultures, the context of the message is much less important because of the directness and specificity of their verbal and nonverbal messages.

Another cultural reason that the students did not portray the issue in black-and-white terms is likely because Taoism's influence on Chinese culture maintains that in order to achieve harmony, there must be a balance of opposites: the yin and the yang. In other words, everything must be done in moderation. The Chinese shy away from extremes, and therefore, it is unlikely that it would occur to them to portray the situation as black and white. Rather, they sought to work with the current system in hopes of promoting a few changes for what they thought would be the benefit of the country.

Another reason that the issue was not portrayed in black and white was because of the danger of direct opposition to the government. Had the students presented the issue in this way, it is almost certain that the government's crackdown would have happened more quickly, and that it would have been even more harsh. The movement would not have been able to create such a negative portrayal of the CCP, and the government would have been more justified in its repression of the movement. The final cultural component that affected the issue's presentation was the ever-prevalent concept of face.

As stated previously, the Chinese can be very indirect, partly due to their cultural orientation and partly as a face-saving measure. In case someone is wrong, by being



vague and indirect, it is much easier to prevent or at least lessen the loss of face than if one is very direct and firm in standing up for their beliefs. Therefore, by *not* portraying the issue as black and white, the protesting students were able to remain consistent with traditional Chinese norms and values that helped them gain the public's trust and approval. In addition, their decision helped stave off government repression until the movement gained more momentum and was able to cause greater damage to the CCP's reputation and hold on power.

Another concept of this perspective is the use of the tactic of promulgation, or publicizing the movement. Under this falls the subcategory of tactics used to generate media attention. The theorists outlining this tactic state that if a movement can generate the attention of the press, it will have easy access to broadcast a movement's message to a large number of people. What the theorists fail to take into account was the issue of whether or not the media who cover the movement are free or controlled by the government. The latter is true for China. At first, the press was not even allowed to mention the existence of the movement. Later, as word spread and ignorance of the movement became impossible, the government-controlled media began to print out false and insulting information about the students and their protest, through works such as the April 26 People's Daily editorial. Newspapers that tried to print the truth about the movement were censored and/or confiscated. It was only later in the movement, when media from around the world was present in Beijing to cover Gorbachev's visit, that the movement truly had a platform from which to voice their concerns and present their situation clearly and accurately to the world.

The social systems/functional approach states that social movements usually try to persuade as many people as possible into action. One strategy of promulgation is to create a clear we-they distinction between the movement's supporters and opposers. The theory goes on to state that a social movement will often classify people who are not direct supporters as enemies of the movement, no better than those who strongly oppose it. In China, this was not necessarily true. Excluding students, the people who did not openly support the movement were not thought to be enemies of the movement, because it was solely the intellectuals' responsibility to stand up to the government, being endowed with the traditional role of being the voice for all of China's people. It was generally assumed that the students' duty was to be that voice, because the common people did not have the necessary education to make such a decision. This widely accepted assumption has roots in traditional Chinese culture.

Confucianism's impact reached into all facets of Chinese societal order. It envisioned China as an agrarian-based society, with a small number of intellectuals who were in charge of running the country. This system created strict hierarchical divisions within society and taught that rather than striving to move up the social ladder, a person should work at excelling in their particular social position. Therefore, the majority of the population is workers and peasants, usually having no opportunity for education. Educational opportunities and social influence were reserved for a minority, the students and intellectuals, who were given the responsibility of guarding the welfare of their country. Thus, during the Democracy Movement, the main concern of the protestors was to persuade more *students* to join the movement, rather than all of China's people as a whole.

There are reports of workers and “common people” who tried to join the movement but were strictly forbidden by the students. The students, consistent with Confucian values, felt that these other people were breaching their prescribed social “roles”. Sometimes, during marches through Beijing’s streets, the students on the outside lanes of the group would walk with their hands joined to those in front and in back of them, to prevent unwanted participators from entering their ranks. However, the people’s show of support for the movement was warmly welcomed and indeed quite necessary for the movement’s success.

In Chinese culture, the more support is shown for a cause or a movement, the more that members of the movement gain face, and the more the government feels pressured to give in to the demands of the protesters (Esherick and Wasserstrom 59). The Chinese public acted as an important legitimizing source for the movement. When the movement was faced with negative government propaganda, students went to the streets to gain the public’s sympathy and support. Later on in the movement, though, the general public did become actively involved in the protest. Although they still depended on the students to be their voice, they went to the streets to protest the government’s unfair treatment of the students and to protect the students when the government attacked.

The social systems approach claims that movements end with the stages of Maintenance and Termination. However, there are discrepancies between these assumptions and what actually happened in the Democracy Movement itself. First of all, it is debatable whether or not the Democracy Movement ever went through the Maintenance stage, depending on whether or not one chooses to see the movement as

terminated. If one does believe that the movement is indeed over, I argue that the movement never went through the Maintenance stage, because it did not last long enough. As the movement carried on into May, it was obvious that the students were becoming tired, discouraged, and frustrated, all symptoms of the impending end of the Enthusiastic Mobilization period. But it often seemed that when the movement was about to shift from Enthusiastic Mobilization into Maintenance, the CCP would do something that would provoke the students, infusing the movement with renewed energy (Hsiung 43).

For example, when the students ended their hunger strike, Li Peng insulted them by accusations of creating "turmoil." In anger, the students resumed their hunger strike, to which Li Peng responded by declaring martial war. Another time, when the movement's energy began to fade again, troops began to sneak weapons into the city. When discovered, the common citizens grew very angry and retaliated, and the CCP responded with the Tiananmen Square Massacre. From these actions, it could be argued that the CCP was trying to provoke both the students and the citizens in such a way as to provide justification for crushing the movement.

Another reason why this perspective fails to accurately depict the Chinese Democracy Movement is because one main focus of the maintenance stage is retaining the intensity of the movement, while continuing to fight for its principles in courtrooms through the judicial system. In China, this is certainly untrue. The Chinese people do not have the right to bring an issue to the courts, unlike people in a democratic society. In China, the authoritarian CCP controls everything and makes all of the decisions. In fact, I argue that the movement is most likely still in existence today, although it had to remain underground for a time or risk facing harsh government action against its members. The

political backlash that occurred after the protests were quelled made it impossible for further planning of the movement's progress to continue at the time and made it seem as though the movement was ended, but Stewart et al. writes that total abandonment of a cause is unlikely, a statement with which I agree. I believe that the movement is going through a quasi-Maintenance stage right now. Although the Chinese Democracy Movement does not completely work with the Maintenance description given by social systems theorists, evidence of some Maintenance activity can be found. In freer countries, many books and videos have been created and published by advocates who are trying to raise awareness of the cause as well as to expose what really happened during the early hours of June 4. It is also possible that, rather than being on a linear time frame, as social movement theory seems to indicate, the life cycle of the Chinese Democracy Movement is actually cyclical, and that in years to come, the movement will actually recycle through all the stages repeatedly until the issue is finally solved. This idea is explored in greater detail during the conclusion of this thesis.

Regarding a movement's termination, Stewart et al. writes that a movement is crushed when a majority of the public sees it as a danger to society (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 84). But in China, many people had sympathy for the movement's cause, felt protective of the students, or actually became actively involved in the student-led movement, sometimes even dying for its cause. Although in traditional China, it was only the intellectual's place to protest, in this case, the movement grew so large and had so much support that the people's getting involved could not be helped. The movement was not crushed because of popular opposition, it was crushed because China's authoritarian government felt threatened.

## Critique of Rhetorical Approach

At first glance, Burke's dramatisitic theory of social movements seems to fit quite nicely with the Democracy Movement of 1989. The Chinese people's tendency to see life as a drama and to act in theatrical terms is very similar to what Burke hypothesized. I believe that his theory is very helpful in beginning to assess the student movement, but a problem arises because of the Westernized, Christianity-based language that is used in his theory, making it difficult to accurately analyze non-Western cultures and/or cultures not based on Christianity. And although the dramatic aspect of his theory is helpful in analyzing the Democracy Movement because it relates to the dramatism embedded in Chinese culture, it would fall short when evaluating other, less theatrical cultures.

Dramatism is useful in helping to explain the Chinese concept of face. The Chinese are a dramatic, theatrical group of people who tend to see everything in terms of theater (Smith 16). Everyone in Chinese society is expected to play certain roles that vary depending on the social situation, and just as Burke suggested, these roles reinforce hierarchy. This role variation is similar to the Greek theatrical concept of *persona*. Using a *persona* means that an actor plays a role specific to the character of the mask that he is wearing. Roles vary and change, and once an actor is finished with one role, he simply discards the mask he was using and replaces it with another. Relating this back to the Chinese example, since there are different social situations that a person must encounter, a person must adopt and play different roles depending on the social context. Inadequate role-playing results in loss of face. Dramatism also is well-suited to explaining the concept of face because it, like the narrative approach, talks about the influence of people's perceptions of morality upon their actions. Face, too, is largely grounded in

morality. When one's morals come into question, they are in danger of losing face. That is why, when face is being threatened, the Chinese will resort to a highly ritualized, scripted mode of action that, if successful, will prevent the "role-player" from losing face because the audience will be reassured of their morality.

One major problem with Burke's dramatisitic theory is that the theory is based on the Christian salvation experience. Rueckert observes that "What [Burke] has finally done in his dramatisitic theory...is to systemize a naturalistic, linguistically oriented, secular variant of Christianity" (133). Burke's focus on guilt, redemption, deity, and salvation clearly mirrors the Christian cultural principles and consubstantiality on which almost all Western cultures have been based. However, *not all* social movements occur in cultures with a Christian background and connection. The Democracy Movement certainly did not. Chinese culture is largely based on the principles of Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Communism, and Nationalism. The one exception that might be able to draw a parallel to Christianity is Buddhism, which still has some very fundamental differences from Christianity. Buddhists, rather focusing on concepts of redemption and salvation, see life as a continuous cycle of rebirth. In order to escape this cycle, full of hardship and suffering, one must discover, through right living and good deeds, a state of spiritual enlightenment called Nirvana (Kitigawa and Strong 539-543). But China is not the only culture with which a Christianity-based rhetoric does not fit. Many other non-Christian cultures, including India, Korea, and the Middle East, have had social movements as well. How can a rhetoric of redemption, salvation, and guilt be incorporated into the cultural context of a country based on principles that have little or nothing to do with Christianity?

One concept of Burke's dramatic approach maintains that human behavior comes from learning to act out certain social dramas or roles that pertain to a person's position in society. This is very true in Chinese culture, due to the way children are raised and the ever-prevalent concept of face. From childhood, children are taught to depend on authority for direction, including clues to social behavior. If they neglect to discern their correct position in society, they will ultimately lose face. Therefore, the majority of Chinese do not venture outside their prescribed social roles.

Burke maintains that the established institution relies on symbols to reinforce its power and legitimacy over society. Stewart et al. Summarizes Burke's perspective: "Social order, therefore, is legitimized through symbols grounded in nature, man, society, language, or God" (Stewart et al. 150). Part of this is true for Chinese culture.

Traditionally, the legitimacy and power of the Chinese ruling party has been based on a Confucian concept, the Mandate of Heaven. Leaders for centuries have relied on this mandate to ensure their rule over the people. However, Burke's theory cannot account for cultural elements like the mandate. Under the Mandate of Heaven, the ruler of China remains responsible to the people. If the ruler proves to be unjust, the people have the right to rebel and to establish a new leadership. Hence, the Chinese students as well as a majority of the rest of the Chinese people, felt that the Chinese Communist Party had lost the mandate, and they were justified in their protests and demonstrations.

The narrative approach suggests that narrative visions create social reality and that people will make decisions based on the degree to which a narrative is consistent with their beliefs and expectations. But advocates of this theory fail to take into account some important constraints that can heavily impact their decision. One of these constraints is



the presence of an authoritative government. It is unlikely, when threatened by a repressive government, that people would even attempt to follow leaders whose ideas they find rational and that they can identify with, if these ideas go against the government's stance. Similarly, an authoritarian government does not need to rely solely on people sharing its rhetorical visions or believing its narratives in order to maintain social order and reinforce the existing hierarchy. A government can always resort to force and violent suppression to preserve its power. Further, when children have been raised with the idea of meekly submitting to authoritative figures, it is difficult for them to question an authority's leadership and power. When I speak of this, I am referring to China's "common" people, the non-intellectuals who are assumed not to possess enough knowledge to participate in politics and are therefore discouraged from joining in any dissenting movements. In sum, other factors than what the narrative approach suggests contribute to whether or not an idea is accepted by people.

However, the narrative approach also has some components that are consistent with Chinese culture. For example, it suggests that society is structured through the telling and retelling of stories. This is very true when looking at China's traditionally oriented culture, where historical anecdotes and scenes govern many actions of today's people. When university students protested at Tiananmen Square, something much more deeper than the obvious was occurring. From the principle of qingyi to the May 4 Movement of 1919, China's history had caused the students to see the protests as their duty. They were bound to voicing the concerns of the general public to the government through centuries of tradition. Demonstration and protest were solely the responsibility of the intellectual.

Also, consistent with Chinese politics, the narrative approach as well as the dramatistic approach suggest that a social movement is a battle in which each side tries to persuade the majority of the audience that they are in the moral right. During the Democracy Protests, the students and government entered into the rhetorical battle described above, in which both sides were trying to convince their audience, the general public, that their opposition was immoral.

Another aspect of both the dramatistic and narrative approaches that correlates to Chinese culture is identification. First, establishing identification with an audience is necessary for issues concerning face. The act of face-saving is essentially a drama. A person or group whose face is threatened will usually fall back onto elaborate, dramatic rituals of conduct with which the audience is very familiar. The person or group uses these familiar rituals of “good” conduct that reinforce traditional societal values. By doing this, identification is established with an audience because the “actor” is adjusting their behavior to be consistent with the audience’s frame of reference, values, and cultural assumptions. This consistency will make the actor seem more credible. If successful at playing this “face-saving” role, the actor will convince the audience of his or her morality, and thus fend off any affront to their identity.

Second, both Burke and Bormann maintain that identification is necessary to persuade an audience. Both the students and the government attempted to establish identification with the Chinese public by reenacting or alluding to Chinese history. Much of the students’ rhetorical tactics included references to China’s past that validated their complaints as well as their position to complain. The government also attempted to establish identification with the Chinese public when it likened the students’ protests to

the “turmoil” that existed during the Cultural Revolution in order to portray the student movement as harmful and dangerous to society. The students and government also used identification when trying to save or preserve face. In the instances where the students and government fell back into elaborate, dramatic rituals to preserve face, they were using identification because these rituals depicted historical situations of excellent behavior with which the common public was familiar.

However, there were other instances where it seems obvious that the students and government did not care to or did not try to create identification. Rather than portraying themselves as one of the members of the general public, a strategy of establishing identification, both groups maintained a strict boundary between themselves and the general public. One example of this occurring was when the students demanded that a worker stop giving a speech in favor of the movement because he was not one of their ranks and it was not his place to be engaged in active protest. The government also engaged in this behavior by remaining aloof and distant from the general public, not only during the protest but also during times of peace. In Western cultures, this behavior is frowned upon, but this type of conduct is accepted in China, where Confucianism’s influence makes hierarchy very rigid and important in generating respect.

So there remains some inconsistency in the behavior of both the students and the government. While at times they were engaged in heavy competition over who could establish the most identification with an audience, they also took time to reinforce their higher positions over the general public.

Sometimes identification does not work at all with the situation presented by the protests of 1989. Theorists state that leaders depend on identification with followers to

maintain their power (Stewart et al. 173-174). While this is obviously true in some cases, the CCP did not use identification, they used sheer force. Again, the theorists are assuming that the social movement is occurring in a democracy where the government is likely to be more lenient towards dissenting movements. Therefore, identification, while useful in evaluating social movements in Western cultures, fails to completely explain social movements in the East.

### **Conclusion**

Was the Chinese Democracy Movement a failure? The answer is evasive. I would argue that the movement has not been completed yet. The CCP's authoritarian regime does currently hold the power over the ruling of China, but its grip is considerably weaker. If the Democracy Movement had failed, would the social movement have the ability to leave such a permanent impact on the establishment's power? As previously mentioned, Cathcart pointed out that if an establishment does not react appropriately to a situation, its morality will be questioned, as will its right to hold power (270). Massacring unarmed civilians could not possibly be considered an "appropriate response". Hsiung supports this conclusion:

Military suppression does not automatically remedy the fundamental problems that sparked off the student unrest in the first place. Hence, if left unresolved, the same issues may come back to fan the fires of a third wave of protests yet to come" (43).

Chinese culture, influenced by philosophers like Laozi and Confucious, has always despised rulers who need to resort to violence to maintain their control (Brook 8 and 13).

In reality, the massacre of civilians by the government probably will aid the movement's cause in the long run. The brutal attack on citizens exposed the CCP's "evil nature" and turned people against it. Yan Jiaqi represented the feelings of many Chinese people after the Tiananmen Square Incident, writing, "The lesson we must draw from this bloody event is that political reform is absolutely essential in China...The day will come when Li Peng steps down. At that time, the constitution will be rewritten and the democracy movement of 1989 will be vindicated" (Fairbanks et al. 212).

One element that both the Rhetorical and Functional perspectives assume, I believe incorrectly, is that every movement will have a specified beginning and an end. As I indicated earlier, these perspectives are obviously written from a Western cultural perspective where time is viewed as a linear entity. However, in cultures that have a cyclical perception of time, movements would appear to move through a set of stages and eventually recycle, appearing again. This cyclical explanation could certainly be true in the case of China. Other, less dramatic Democracy Movements have appeared in China's recent history. In 1978 and 1979 there was a Democracy Wall Movement (Cheng 124 and Fairbank et al. 11). In 1986 and 1987, the democracy issue arose again, with intellectuals and students asking for political and economic reform, democracy, and freedom of the press (Cheng 92-93 and 123). It appears as though the issue keeps resurfacing. As Cheng writes, "The large-scale demonstrations in 1989 may be considered to be a continuation of earlier movements" (123). Today it can be said that the Democracy Movement has been reincarnated in the form of the recent Falun Gong demonstrations. Although Falun Gong is not openly asking for Democracy, they are asking for religious freedom, which is at least an element of democracy. I believe that the

issue of democracy will keep reappearing until it is eventually resolved, either through compromise with the CCP or the eventual demise of China's Communist government.

Continuing with the question of whether or not the Democracy Movement was a failure, it is difficult to a movement's success when it is protesting against an authoritarian regime. The social movement theories mentioned earlier seem to take for granted the existence of a government that permits free speech. It is relatively impossible to compare movements that occur in different governmental situations, because the protesters and the social movement are in many cases, encountering very different situations. A non-authoritarian government will most likely be more tolerant of dissent, while dissent against an authoritarian regime can easily lead to death. In fact, with the threat of death over their heads, it is amazing that the students were able to persuade such a large percentage of the population to publicly advocate their cause (Zuo and Benford 149). Anyone who did so risked very harsh punishment. In fact, maybe the movement could be judged successful just because of the amount of mobilization and support that it achieved.

One student from Beida University admitted, "We all knew from past experience that every one of the many student movements in modern China's history had ended in failure. Our only hope was that each new movement might help ever so slightly to change China's fate" (Brook 34).

Some people have argued that the students were irrational in using some of the tactics employed during the protest. However, they also claim that the students were provoked by the government that inspired the irrationality of the movement (Fairbank et

al. 210). As one person wrote, "It was the irrationality of the government that inspired the irrationality of the movement" (Fairbank et al. 210).

Liu Binyan, a Chinese journalist wrote:

"Deng Xiaoping regards the massacre at Tiananmen Square as a great victory because hundreds of thousands of dissident students and their supporters were brought under control, and order has been restored to the streets of Beijing. The truth, of course, is that the uprising was the greatest show of democratic force in over forty years of Communist rule in China. It gave the Chinese people confidence in their strength and exposed the deep rifts with the Party leadership. The movement ended with the old ruling clique returning to the old political system, but its grip on the country is more feeble than ever. The extraordinary power and potential of China's democracy movement is now clear" (Fairbank et al. 212).

Current social movement theory seems to make failure or success appear one-sided, so that in every battle, there is a winner and a loser. But even if a social movement is "defeated," what about the effects of their negative rhetoric on the establishment they were attacking? Usually attacks would not be beneficial to its reputation and status in society. Or, hypothetically speaking, what if both sides lose, with the public's support going towards an entirely different outlet? I believe that these questions highlight a major area that current social movement theory neglects to examine. Perhaps "success" of a movement should be evaluated along a continuum, taking into account the circumstances that a movement is against as well as what it achieved, including the degree to which it was able to change attitudes and damage the establishment's reputation.

My findings suggest that social movement theory is written in a manner that neglects cultural aspects of social movements. These findings are only the beginning, however. They suggest that changes need to be made in current social movement theory that will make it easier to take into account both the obvious and hidden cultural influences upon social movements. Further, theories need to be developed that take into account not only the cultures in Asia, but also African, South American, and European cultures, to mention a few. This seems to be a daunting task, but I find it very worthwhile and necessary. This exploration of the Democracy Movement alone revealed many hidden complexities and elements behind the movement, and I believe that this would be the case for nearly every movement that takes place in a culture different from that of the United States or the West in general.

I am not arguing that the functionalist and rhetorical perspectives are worthless because the neglect to consider cultural influences. They provide a very important framework upon which to begin an analysis of social movements. However, they are not suitable to be used as they are, at least in the analysis of movements occurring in other cultures. These theories could be expanded to include the influence of culture in their analysis. Or, these theories could be used in conjunction with another, more culturally oriented theory. I believe that either of these approaches would result in the creation of an excellent method of social movement analysis. A more culturally oriented theory would need to consider questions such as: What types of people are involved in the movement? What is their status in society? How does the government respond to dissent? Is the government authoritarian, democratic, or other? How does history affect people's actions? Is the culture traditionally oriented, present-oriented, or future-



oriented? Are the people group-oriented or is their society individualistic? What have social movements achieved in the past in this country or culture? Is the culture oriented towards youth, elders, or middle-aged people? What is the history of this country or culture? What do the people value, or are the values inconsistent through society? How many social levels exist, and how rigid or flexible is the hierarchy? Do the people have freedom of speech, and if so, to what extent? Does the culture advocate working actively towards the fulfillment of one's desires, or does it emphasize resignation and acceptance of fate? To what degree was the social movement able to achieve change, either through the establishment or in the people's attitudes?" What damage did the movement's rhetoric cause to the establishment?

Obviously, these represent only a small portion of the questions that an accurate social movement analyst needs to address. But they are *essential* to consider. By using this theory in conjunction with the rhetorical or functional approach, or possibly in conjunction with both of them as Bowers and Ochs do, the likelihood of a successful, thorough interpretation increases dramatically.

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