STRATEGIC NONVIOLENCE AND HUMOR:
THEIR SYNERGY AND ITS LIMITATIONS:
A Case Study of Nonviolent Struggle led by Serbia’s Otpor

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1 Introduction

The marginal individual, through the magic of his wit, in turn marginalizes the world that he targets. It is now no longer the world, but a world—and a ridiculous one at that. This marginalization—or, one could say, relativization—of the world is what makes wit dangerous, potentially subversive.”
-- Peter L. Berger, Redeeming Laughter, 1997, p 152

“The essence of politics is actually having people do things that they wouldn’t do otherwise. That is sometimes done through persuasion. It’s sometimes done through coercion. It’s sometimes done through different ways, but the idea here is that you have to establish relationships with certain people...that includes the members of the regime...You need them to step out from the regime in order to reduce its viability.”
– Ivan Marović, Otpor leader, in phone interview December 4, 2009

“Criteria (for choosing targets) was their public unpopularity, as well as their personality-because we could count on their reaction after being targeted, and that pushes them into ‘dilemma action’ loop. Their egos just couldn't stand being ridiculed from bunch of kids…”
– Ivan Popović, Otpor leader, in February 6, 2010 e-mail response

1.1 Research Question and Scope

My original focus of inquiry was to understand how humor has been utilized by agents of social change who endeavor to change their societies and the world without using violence, but instead by using strategic nonviolence, which relies upon psychological, social, economic, and political methods and usually circumventing established routes of change such as lobbying. I wanted to study humorous strategic nonviolence aimed at altering relationships within a political activist group of an oppressed society; these activists’ relationships with members of the oppressed group not involved in activism and their relationship with oppressive authorities, are henceforth referred to as the opponent group. After completing the literature review, I refined my
focus to also include the following question: Which variants of humor, in target, focus, and other factors, can in the confrontation stage enhance the contrast between the activists and their opponent without doing irreversible damage to the dignity and relationships of either party? Because political authority can be held within an individual, the policies the authority promotes, the authority position itself, the institution in which the position is nested, and in the larger social system (Paletz, 1990), activists can attack or provoke any of these entities relating to the opponent group. Answering these questions is important not only to civil society activists, but also to the students and practitioners of conflict transformation at large. I endeavor to expand needed scholarship regarding humor’s influence on relational dynamics, which is particularly relevant as the use of humor in strategic nonviolence appears to be increasing around the globe (Hart 2007).

My methodology is a single case study of Otpor’s relationships and strategic efforts from October 1998 to October 2000 using qualitative data and analysis.

1.1.1 The Thesis’ Research Niche

Conflict transformation, in contrast to conflict management, aims to change relationships and system structures, in part by relying upon strategic nonviolence. Nonviolent activists fight with psychological, social, economic, and political methods and most often circumvent established routes of change such as lobbying. Gene Sharp, author of the most exhaustive survey of strategic nonviolence, a three part volume entitled *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* identifies “humorous skits and pranks,” “taunting officials,” “mock awards,” and “reverse trials,” as but four of 198 methods of
nonviolent action in that work’s original printing and also in its 2005 updated edition, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle* (Sharp 1973; 2005). Sharp does not elaborate on the uses of humor in strategic nonviolence and only over the last couple decades have social historians begun to document and analyze the many important roles humor has played in social movements (Hart 2007, 2). For example, Shepard distinguishes humor as one element of “the new community organizing” in his study of the global peace and economic justice movement around the change of the millennium (2005). When utilized as part of a nonviolent campaign, humor may help build collective identities and a sense of community among activists, prevent “burn-out,” and educate and mobilize bystanders (Sorensen, 2008; Branagan, 2007; Shepard, 2005). It can also balance power, actually changing the relationship between oppressive authorities and nonviolent activists (Sorensen, 2008; Branagan, 2007; Shepard, 2005). In this literature review, I synthesize these and many other theories regarding the roles humor has played sociologically. In addition, I describe scholars’ views of how humor has contributed to the development of viable nonviolent strategies, particularly those that aim at altering the relationship between oppressive authorities and the people they claim to govern. At times, I integrate examples from Otpor, but leave most of the examples for the Analysis chapter.

1.1.2 Conflict Transformation

Conflict transformation is “more than a set of specific techniques” (Lederach 2003, 9). It is a way of looking for and understanding the dynamics of social conflict (Lederach 2003, 9). The three lenses of conflict transformation reveal a) the immediate situation, b) underlying patterns and context and c) a conceptual framework (Lederach
Lederach’s definition of conflict transformation is “to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships” (2003, 14).

1.1.3 Strategic Nonviolence and Models of Political Power

Strategic nonviolence is a set of tactics intended to nonviolently bring about social change through social, psychological, economic and other means. It is also often taken up as a way of life as and a behavioral outgrowth of inner values or principles such as life is sacred therefore I will not kill and will work to minimize my negative impact and increase the positive impact I have on other people. Many, if not most people view political power as being solely and solidly held by an individual or group of specific individuals. This is called the monolithic model of power. Nothing can be changed regarding the power structure except the person or people at the top (Popović et al 2007, 26). Those authorities can be removed and possibly replaced through a “revolution, a war, or a coup - but the model remains the same: whoever gets to the top of the mountain ends up controlling all power in society” (Popović et al 2007, 26). Thus positive change can only occur if there is a good person or persons in authority positions. Activists who use and teach strategic nonviolence reveal the fallacy of this model of power. They promote a pluralist view of power and educate people about the dispersed nature of political power in all the individuals who make up a society (Popović et al 2007, 27). If these individuals decide to make a change, they can exert their own power, especially
when they act collectively and strategically. “Rulers only have that power which people provide to them” through obedience, whether willingly, unwillingly through coercion or through relinquishment because of apathy (Popović et al 2007, 27).

George Lakey, whose work provided the foundation for Sharp’s research, illustrates the pluralist power base as a series of pillars supporting any authority, without which that authority would collapse (2004). The “pillars of power” often include the military, police, teachers and educational administrators, laborers, state-run media proponents, business leaders, and religious institutions (Lakey 2004). Any sector of society can be a pillar if its contributions are necessary for the society to function according to the authority’s desire. Pragmatic nonviolent activists typically do not distinguish between the oppressive authority and the oppression carried out. What is more a concern to these activists and allied scholars is a strategic, task-driven, goal-oriented and (likely retributive) justice-oriented use of nonviolence. Removing the “pillars of power,” or rather encouraging them to remove their own support, can be done regardless of whether or not anyone’s inner values change. Pragmatic activists are not diametrically opposed to winning over their opponent, they simply do not consider conversion to be the best means of social change. According to Sørensen, “most practitioners of nonviolence today are much more pragmatic, and would not have any problem using…aggressive and hostile humour if it would help them achieve their objectives” (2006, 16).
1.1.4 Uncertainty as Power to Provoke or Transform

Incongruity, an essential element of humor, suggests an experience of uncertainty. Thomas Schelling determined that one form of power is the ability to create uncertainty, to which Curle adds, by economic, psychological, physical or other means (Curle 1971, 6). Initially, this view of power seems purely coercive, a form of “power over.” This is how Curle interprets Schelling’s argument as he discusses the significance of balance and the extent to which “one party to a relationship is able to dominate another” (Curle 1999, 6). From another perspective, however, uncertainty is a plane of openness to previously unconsidered ideas. It is necessary to unsettle oneself in order to learn something new, especially if this new knowledge conflicts with one’s current viewpoints. Uncertainty is also a necessary experience if humor is to be received because humor is essentially an experience of incongruity (Berger 1997, 208). Anytime one experiences humor, he or she has likely experienced some degree of uncertainty, but has often still found the humorous experience to be pleasant demonstrating a non-coercive application of uncertainty.

Because of this multi-dimensionality, activists drawing out uncertainty can tap either into “power over” or “power with.” These techniques for using power are oppositional: “power over” involves a forced subjugation of another’s will while “power with” is a collaborative, empowering pursuit. In my study of Otpor, I observed the use of both techniques with humor, which I term provocation and transformation respectively. Provocation’s focus is the opponent’s characteristically self-destructive response while transformation’s focus is the alteration of peoples’ paradigms of reality. Put another way, provocation seeks to damage the opponent’s image while transformation seeks to disturb
contentment with the status quo and abolish paradigms that hinder social change. Many of Otpor’s actions, graphics, and slogans were both provocative and transformative. Some were viewed as strongly one or the other, though this would vary according to the cultural background (urban or rural) of the observer and his or her personal preference. With these dual functionalities, humor outshines other tactics or conflict mediums restricted to either aggressive or collaborative modes. Violence, for example, almost always operates under a dichotomous divide of people into “Us versus Them,” “the good versus the bad,” however untrue this is in reality. The enemy must be dehumanized to some degree for violence, especially lethal violence, to be viewed as acceptable. Violence leaves no room for collaborating with the opponent. It is thus restricted to being used aggressively. Though humor can be used to dehumanize, dehumanization is not a necessary element of humorous provocation. Humor can also be used to highlight similarities between activists and their opponents and therefore unite these originally opponents. And it can release tension for activists and the opponent, freeing members of the opponent group from their own oppressive paradigms.

1.1.5 My Definition of Humor

I have chosen to introduce my own working definition of humor alongside the other overarching elements of this thesis as opposed to in the literature review, in which I synthesize many different characteristics and functions of humor. Humor is a creative expression that reveals reality as multifaceted because of the unavoidable incongruities of life. It is a mode of communication in which alternate perceptions of individuals, situations and even reality, itself are explored. Humor is also an experience with
emotional, intellectual, spiritual and physical components. Finally, humor is a *shift* away from the dominant serious mode and often away from rationality toward a view of incongruity as fallow ground for a variety of experiences including enlightenment, amusement and motivation that can be used to achieve social change or to reinforce social norms.

1.2 **Social Context: Recent Serbian Culture, Politics and History**

To foster understanding of Otpor’s humorous strategies, I present a grim, though unembellished profile of President Slobodan Milošević’s Socialist Party (Socijalistička partija Srbije; SPS)\(^1\) and the environment of Serbia out of which Otpor emerged in the following sub-sections.

1.2.1 **President Milošević’s Regime and Its Strategy for Self-Preservation**

Supporters referred to Milošević and the SPS as carrying the legacy of former president Josip Broz Tito, being attentive to long-neglected Serbian national interests and as an iconic model for twenty-first century socialism (Gordy 1999, 7). However, Serbian and non-Serbian opponents of Milošević and the SPS declared them a militarist (and often fascist) dictatorship, comparing Milošević to Joseph Stalin and Saddam Hussein (Gordy 1999, 8). Milošević’s foreign policy was markedly dominated by multiple

\(^1\) SPS (Socijalistička partija Srbije) and the League of Communists—Movement for Yugoslavia (Savez komunista—Pokret za Jugoslaviju—SK-PJ) were successors of the Serbian Communist Party (Savez komunista Srbije-SKS). Both the SPS and the SK-PJ were brought into existence in 1990. The SPS was “founded” and headed by Milošević and the SK-PJ, originally the “general’s party” was headed by Mirjana Marković. In 1995, the United Yugoslav Left (Jugoslovenska udružena levica-JUL), a coalition party was formed “with Marković’s SK-PJ as the dominant member” (Gordy 1999, 7, 25). When Marović described the political relations between these parties, he did not talk of the SK-PJ, but rather the coalition party, the “Yugoslav Left.” He spoke of the Yugoslav Left as though it were Marković’s main political party. I thus refer to the SPS and the Yugoslav Left.
attempted military conquests. Domestic “order” was held through a dominant police force with both a larger personnel force and a larger budget than those of the Serbian military (Gordy 1999, 15).² Founded in 1990, the SPS never once earned a majority vote in any election of Serbia’s parliamentary system (Gordy 1999, 25, 1). The party instead led Serbia into three losing military conflicts; produced over 500,000 refugees whose interests it had promised to protect, plunged Serbs into the largest hyperinflation crisis in modern history and broke its vow to unite “all Serbs in one state” (Gordy 1999, 1).

Milošević then succeeded a series of nonentities as president of Serbia, commanding a strong public personality while rising to power in part because he presented clear succinct messages unlike his opponents (Gordy 1999, 9, 26). His response to a police riot against Serb protestors at Kosovo Polje in 1987 was one of the first public proclamations by a leading politician to offer “an idea that everybody could understand and [that] went so far as to encapsulate the message in a single comprehensible sentence” (Gordy 1999, 26). Milošević ironically proclaimed, “[F]rom now on, nobody has the right to beat you!” (Gordy 1999, 26). Typical political discourse at the time revolved around complex explanations of Yugoslavia’s “unnervingly opaque system of ‘workers’ self-management”’ (Gordy 1999, 26). As political and economic conditions worsened, Milošević made fewer appearances in public and only voiced opinions in the most formalized ways such as prepared press releases (Gordy 1999, 9). In fact, every major political decision of his regime was “announced, defended, and removed from the agenda by surrogates” and even ceremonial duties were most often carried out by others (Gordy

² The Serbian military was demoralized after several purges of the officer corps and defeats in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Hercegovina (Gordy 1999, 15).
1999, 17). This way, Milošević could claim to never have advocated unpopular or conflicting positions (Gordy 1999, 17). He lacked transparency and authentic connection with those he claimed to govern.

Thus, Milošević did not maintain himself by mobilizing opinion or public sentiment in his favor (Gordy 1999, 2). Conventional scholarly conclusions regarding the longevity of Milošević and the SPS’s blame demagogic nationalist rhetoric, war hysteria, and mobilization of ethnic hatred (Gordy 1999, 1, 2). Gordy contends that these strategies provide some explanation, but do not get at the heart of Milošević’s approach. He argues that the regime preserved itself “by making alternatives to its rule unavailable…attempting to close off avenues of information, expression, and sociability” as well as political alternatives (Gordy 1999, 2). This destruction of alternatives plus an often “rapid-fire” oscillation of ideological positions (from Communism to “modern European socialism” to nationalism and back again) produced a culture of apathy and political resignation (Gordy 1999, 2). Stojan Cerović, a political commentator for VREME, a popular independent weekly magazine in Serbia wrote: “I have nothing against the regime, except that I consider it responsible for the war, the sanctions, for poverty, theft crime, and the strangling of the free press. It does not seem to me that anybody in the opposition would be any better, only less effective” (Gordy 1999, 7). The unending ideological shifts caused confusion leading to further resignation, political passivity and often escape into private life, serving as a coercive maneuver on the part of the regime (Gordy 1999, 7, 22). According to psychologist John Monahan, a common

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3 “[M]any observers (of Serbia in the late 1990s) describe their attempts at following the regime’s ideology as producing ‘dizziness’ (vrtoglavica)” (Gordy 1999, 16).
basic psychological trait of people is that “[w]e will do more to avoid pain than we will
do to seek pleasure” (De Becker 1997, 93, 94). This principle was in full force in Serbia
at the time of Otpor’s immergence. It is easy to understand from this context why “there
is an almost ‘British like’ appetite for ‘black and ridiculing humor’” in Serbia.4

1.2.2 Nationalism and Communism

Yet Serbian culture was not and is not homogenous. Milošević sought those who
were most willingly subordinate from Serbia’s rural communities, “mostly older, less
highly educated” Serbs (Gordy 1999, 14, 2). He knew they had complied with Tito’s
regime and believed that they would likely comply with whatever regime set about to
command them (Gordy 1999, 9). A decent-sized number of urban and intellectual elites
also resigned just as a certain portion of activists rose up from rural areas to create their
own branches of Otpor. Milošević’s regime was nationalist-authoritarian, meaning the
regime subjugated citizens’ individuals freedoms to the regime’s will, the regime was not
being held constitutionally accountable and the regime justified its self-preservation
through nationalist rhetoric (“authoritarian”; Gordy 1999, 8). Serbia had a two-fold
political identity under Milošević: one inherited from the Communist era, which in Tito’s
time was more allied with urban (intellectual) elites, and one that developed later under
nationalism, more born of rural Serbia (Gordy 1999, 8). The Communist side of
Milošević’s regime provided comfort for a number of Serbians who were accustomed to
the relatively liberal Communist regime that governed Yugoslavia beginning in 1945
(Gordy 1999, 8, 9). Despite the common cultural rift between urban and rural

4 E-mail correspondence from Srdja Popović, February 5, 2010.
communities, there was a correlation in Serbia between nationalist tendencies and desires for Communist restoration and for authoritarian forces in institutions like the military and the academy (Vujačić as quoted by Gordy 1999, 6). The regime’s nationalist side fit snugly with the patriotism of Serbian peasantry, which was against the idea of equality of nations and people and against the urbanist, modernizing tendencies of Communism (Gordy 1999, 9).

1.2.3 The Main Characters: Otpor and “the Opponent” Group

Despite a mass exodus of urban dwellers, including young adults, from Serbia to Western Europe, the Americas and Australia, those who stayed were able to rally a grassroots opposition force willing to risk persecution. According to the Belgrade headquarters of Otpor, the organization was comprised of 60,000 activists in October 2000 (Ilić 2000, 4). The student protests of 1996 and ’97 were the first protests to directly feed the birth of Otpor. Many of Otpor’s founders were involved in those protests. According to a study by Ilić, which involved 604 active Otpor members, 41 per cent of the sample were between 19 and 24 years of age and 30 per cent were 18 years old or younger and 61 percent of the sample were men and 39 percent were women (2000, 5). Otpor’s political goals at its outset were to oust Milošević and to help Serbia become a democracy like the nations of the European Union (Cohen 2000, 118; Paulson 2005, 325). Otpor’s philosophy of “Live the Resistance” meant its activists did not really

5 Major migration out of Serbia’s cities began even before 1980 (Gordy 1999, 10).
6 Though considerably higher figures have been quoted by the press, these estimates were considered to be exaggerated by pollsters “who sought information from relevant people in various Otpor offices” (Ilić 2000, 4).
7 There were also student protests on March 9, 1991 (Gordy 1999, 24).
want nominal members, people joining simply to carry a title.\textsuperscript{9,10} They wanted people who would use whatever means they had at their disposal to resist the regime and its systematic oppression on a day-to-day basis. This expansive view of political space, also characteristic of the “new community organizing strategy” described by Shepard, meant that activism was not limited to planned public actions or to stock slogan print-outs (2005). “Live the Resistance” was expressed physically too, as Otpor performed public actions in a variety of public places from street corners to city ponds, a technique often referred to as “guerrilla theatre.” Otpor thus, reclaimed public space as “the people’s” space.

I use “the opponent” to collectively refer to the following authority figures and groups: Milošević, his wife Mirjana Marković, the Socialist Party of Serbia, the League of Communists—Movement for Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav Left, and Milošević’s top political officials, police commanders and officers and any other individual or group authority that publicly renounced Otpor is part of the opponent group.\textsuperscript{11} The military is not included in this opponent group because the “[m]ilitary was not a primarily coercive pillar of support for Milošević, as Serbian Military consisted mainly of conscripts, meaning 18-21 year boys VERY supportive of Otpor and the opposition.”\textsuperscript{12} Popović

\textsuperscript{9} Phone interview with Ivan Marović, November 5, 2009.
\textsuperscript{10} “Although Otpor has defined itself as a popular movement” with obvious political goals, many Serbs joined Otpor for more personal reasons such as “amusement, leisure, making friends and social promotion” (Ilić 2000, 5).
\textsuperscript{11} Deciding upon which pronoun to use when referring to “the opponent” was challenging. I have seen “it” used to refer to “the opponent,” but I find “it” to be distracting and somewhat inaccurate. Neither “he” nor “she” accurately reflect the plural or group nature of “the opponent” nor would either represent the co-gender nature of the group. “He or she” simply feels too wordy. I have therefore chosen to use “they.” Though occasionally grammatically incorrect, “they” reflects the group nature of “the opponent” and is gender neutral.
\textsuperscript{12} Popović e-mail, April 15, 2010.
continued, writing that the military maintained a “neutral stance” during most of the nonviolent struggles of the 1990s in Serbia.\textsuperscript{13} In 1991, the military did, for the first time since World War II, attack protesting civilians (Gordy 1999, 37), but by the late 1990s, however, Popović said it was obvious that even high-ranking military officials installed by the regime were unable to coerce the “military machinery to go against the people.”\textsuperscript{14} Sørensen observed a notable degree of variation in how Otpor activists viewed their opponent.\textsuperscript{15} Variation was particularly strong with regards to the police. Some activists held very strong negative views of the police (i.e. “police are vicious”) while others thought, “You know, they’re human beings that have a job…Not all of them want to be aggressive toward us.”\textsuperscript{16} Therefore the military was primarily composed of unallied bystanders and supporters of Otpor.

Popović, a representative of Optor, defined targets as “subjects of ridicule,” persons and groups who were decisively and widely selected to be ridiculed with public actions.\textsuperscript{17} Though ridicule can certainly be done in the serious mode, the public actions discussed in this thesis are humorous. “Widely selected” means if not across the whole nation of Serbia, then over a large section of Serbia, for example, a rural province or large city. Popović identified the police, judiciary, and bureaucracy as the divisions of authority Otpor chose to attack, but he also said police were “only a tool in [the] game” of humorous nonviolent struggle, not the “real target” or core opponent.\textsuperscript{18} Going beyond

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Phone interview with Sørensen, November 7, 2009.
\textsuperscript{16} Sørensen Interview.
\textsuperscript{17} Popović e-mail, February 6, 2010.
\textsuperscript{18} Popović e-mail, April 15, 2010. And Popović e-mail, February 5, 2010.
the Otpor case, Gordy wrote that police forces “represent only instruments of power—and they are not always dependable instruments” meaning their allegiance can waiver and realign (1999, 15). Yet Gordy still considered the Serbian police force along with the Serbian state television network to be the two institutions most pivotal to the SPS and Milošević’s rule (1999, 37). Marović, like Popović, discussed police and bureaucracy as targets, but he made a clear distinction between Milošević and his pillars of support, which included the police and entire political bureaucracy.19 Thus, the opponent is an umbrella term for a group that includes the “subjects of ridicule,” (often symbolic) individuals who Otpor chose to target with provocative humor.

1.2.4 Timeline of Otpor’s Development

In November 1996, two bodies arose to successfully oppose the SPS theft of local elections: the Zajedno (“Together”) coalition, whose local election wins were not being certified by Milošević’s party members and students who also vouched for the Zajedno candidates and who also wanted top University of Belgrade officials to resign (Paulson 2005, 316).20 A year later, Milošević “installed himself” as President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in (Gordy 1999, 17). Student protestors realized they needed to go beyond University walls and in October 1998, a small group of activists founded Otpor (“Resistance!”), choosing a horizontal, decentralized leadership structure and voicing a commitment to nonviolence (Paulson 2005, 317, 318). Their first demands were for “free and fair elections in Serbia; a free university; and guarantees for

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19 Marović interview, November 5, 2009.
20 After 55 days of protest and a negotiation between a student delegation and government officials, Zajedno politicians took their rightful offices (Paulson 2005, 317). After another 51 days of protest, the rector and the dean of the University resigned (Paulson 2005, 317).
independent media” (Paulson 2005, 317). They carried out their first nationwide public action on December 17, 1998, a march from Belgrade to Novi Sad “passing through as many small rural communities as possible” (Paulson 2005, 318). Early in 1999, a massacre of Kosovo civilians instigated a 78-day-long bombing campaign by NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization; made up of the United States, Turkey and most nations of Europe) (York and Zimmerman 2001). According to Marović, damage to civilian infrastructure was much greater than military damage.21 “United by their suffering, many Serbs rallied around Milošević,” but many other Serbs rallied together in protest (York and Zimmerman 2001).

1.3 Thesis Profile

My Research Design (Chapter 2) details the nature of my primary and secondary data, the constant comparative method of analysis, which I applied to my primary data (Maykut and Morehouse 1994), the selection and profiles of my informants, and the modified posture of indwelling I undertook as part of cross-cultural research. Also in Chapter 2, I briefly discuss the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research, namely the phenomenological approach and view of “human-as-instrument.” My two methods of data collection were one-on-one interviews and document collection. I discuss a variety of obstacles to the interviewing process that I anticipated and for which I did my best to prepare, and I overview the strengths of interviews as a data collection method. Importantly, I discuss the formation of my interview questionnaires, which are

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21 Marović interview, November 5, 2009.
presented in Appendices B and C. And I briefly discuss how I used documents such as book chapters and a documentary to supplement and cross-check my primary data.

In the Literature Review (Chapter 3), I synthesize existing theories of humor’s sociological functions as well as theories of humor’s uses within strategic nonviolence. Strategic nonviolence is a group of conflict escalation and resolution strategies for waging social conflict including psychological, economic, and political methods that typically circumvent established means of social change (i.e. lobbying) and are sometimes guided by ethical principles and taken up as a lifestyle (Sharp 2005). To make these theories more easy to understand, at times I integrate examples from Otpor. Throughout this thesis, my perspective is shaped largely by the field of conflict transformation, which, in contrast to conflict management and conflict resolution, aims to change relationships and systematic structures, in part by relying upon strategic nonviolence. The two parties whose relationships I am most interested in discussing are those involving nonviolent civil society agents of social change (“the activists”) and oppressive authorities (“the opponent”) who claim to govern these activists and non-demonstrating citizens. Other themes discussed in this chapter include types of social power, target selection, incongruity as an essential element of humor, activists’ view of the opponent, recent global trends in strategic nonviolence, sequential models of conflict and a rather ironic link between self-suffering and humor. I also present a few arguments which

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posit that (political) humor is incapable of catalyzing social change though not without also presenting counter-arguments.

Chapter 4, the Analysis, is the pinnacle of the thesis as a culmination of the findings. Themes that emerged during this process included humor as an offensively provocative weapon, as an emotionally and intellectually transformative entity, and as a social force for encouraging collaboration. Secondary themes were creating an image of innocence, and degrees of otherness as they relate to the view of the opponent and selection of targets. I conclude this chapter with a final sub-section discussion of humor’s limitations within the context of real-world nonviolent struggle.

Chapter 5, the Conclusion, is sub-titled “Strategic Considerations in the Otpor Case and Beyond.” In it, I synthesize my findings from the analysis chapter, focusing on overarching strategies, some aspects of which I can only identify with Otpor’s efforts and other aspects of which I can extrapolate to nonviolent activists at large. To provide the fullest analytical setting for these findings, I merely preview my findings here leaving the details for chapters 4 and 5.

Strategic changes in approach are necessary according to the attitude changes of different members of the opponent group. There are three major strategies (transformation, provocation and collaboration) and two major approaches (offensive and collaborative) that can be used. The strategy of transformation cross-cuts the categories of activist, opponent, and bystander laying the intellectual and emotional foundations for social change. The duration and depth of use for provocation and collaboration needs to vary according to the dynamics of the social climate within which activists are operating.
For example, there are different approaches to balancing power with humor, such as (humorous) coercive dilemma actions, a favorite of Otpor, and collaborative joking that encourages members of the opponent group to recognize similarities between themselves and the activists, encouraging collaboration. My findings suggest that efforts toward trust-building and collaboration through fraternization were more needed than Otpor activists either knew or desired, though this is not to say that relations between police and Otpor activists did not progress positively in many if not all parts of Serbia. Otpor focused more energy upon coercively provoking their opponent. Nonviolent coercion is the use of force to compel or restrict the opponent’s options (Sharp 2005, 19). To provoke means to act in a way that instigates a self-destructive reaction of another person or group. Coercive provocation is needed in nonviolent struggle, but must be done without entirely alienating the opponent group members from their fellow citizens. Only those who choose to remain antagonistic and loyal to unjust systems must be left outside the circle.

Also in Chapter 5, I discuss why humorous strategic nonviolence cannot achieve all the compulsory goals of agents of social change. And I give suggestions for future research. Lastly, the timeline re-commences with a dramatic climax of the reinvigorated Serbia, a final grand expression of the paradox of repression and finishes with a discussion of the legacies and disappointments of Otpor.
2 Research Design

2.1 Methodology, Research Question and In-dwelling

Humor is highly contextual. It therefore makes sense to use a methodology that is context-sensitive and a research paradigm that proffers the world as complex, full of multidirectional, mutually shaped realities (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 13, 14). My overarching methodology is therefore a case study of Otpor’s relationships and strategic efforts from October 1998 to October 2000. A single case study is a rich narrative of a distinct unit or units of analysis and is quite useful for exploratory research (Yin 2003, 22, 23). Exploratory research is guided by a general focus of inquiry that asks descriptive questions with a purpose of “deeper understanding of experience from the perspectives of the participants” rather than a generalization of results (though broader lessons may still be discernable) (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 44). The phenomenological approach views events as often being mutually shaped; it places less emphasis on causality than the dominant positivist approach does. This orientation is appropriate for exploratory research (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 13).

To review briefly, my original focus of inquiry was to understand how humor has been utilized by agents of social change who endeavor to change their societies and the world without using violence, but instead with strategic nonviolence using psychological, social, economic, and political methods and usually circumventing established routes of change (i.e. lobbying). I wanted to study humorous strategic nonviolence aimed at altering

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24 Hancock, Dr. Landon. “Research Design I: Cases & Evaluations.” CACM 42020-001: Qualitative Research in Conflict Management, course lecture, Kent, OH, October 1, 2009.
relationships within a political activist group of an oppressed society; these activists’
relationships with members of the oppressed group not involved in activism and their
relationship with oppressive authorities. After completing the literature review, I refined
my focus to also include the following question: Which variants of humor, in target,
focus, and other factors, can in the confrontation stage enhance the contrast between the
activists and their opponent without doing irreversible damage to the dignity and
relationships of either party?

In order for this study to be most accurate, I have worked to understand the
cultural and political context of Serbia during and prior to the focus period. My posture of
indwelling\textsuperscript{25} is modified because I was unable to spend an extended amount of time with
former Otpor activists or in Serbia. Though my ability to indwell in Serbian culture was
geographically limited, I did read scholarly journal articles and portions of books about
Serbia’s modern cultural and political history, two from an anthropological perspective. I
also remained quite vigilant for any patterns that emerged from the data that were not
identified by the theoretical frameworks included in my literature review. In remaining
open to alternate perspectives, I maintained the perspectival researcher approach (Maykut
and Morehouse 1994, 16). In choosing the perspectival rather than the objectivist
approach, I was able to more fully discover how Otpor activists and others viewed
humor’s functions within different relationships (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 16).

\textsuperscript{25} Indwelling is the psychological stance that social scientists need to uphold when doing research. It
requires an interactive spirit, empathy and personally reflective analysis (Maykut and Morehouse 1994,
25). It is classically achieved through staying with the social unit or individuals being studied for some
length of time.
2.2 **Data Collection Methods**

My main method of data collection was one-on-one interviews. I sought information regarding humor’s functions within different types of relationships during nonviolent struggle. I carried out qualitative research, gathering peoples’ thoughts and feelings through their words and the meanings ascribed to those words. I examined relationships, events, and materials as Otpor activists and others experienced and created them. Interviews allow researchers to utilize the multifaceted lenses of human perception. Viewing a person as “human-as-instrument” for data collection and analysis is most appropriate for qualitative research because a person is the “only instrument which is flexible enough to capture the complexity, subtlety, and constantly changing situation which is the human experience” (Polanyi as quoted by Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 26). Therefore, I studied peoples’ perceptions as well as my own thoughts and reflections. I include my own observations and reflections as well because I am a human-as-instrument also. I as “the knower” am interdependent with “the known,” the knowledge I seek (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 11). Interviews, particularly semi-structured and unstructured questions, are also most appropriate for the phenomenological approach of exploratory research.

More specifically, I sought examples of Otpor’s humorous actions and materials and of how the humorous elements of these were perceived to function. One example of information I sought included words that can aid in categorizing humor according to its level of provocation (from indirect to direct) and other distinctive characteristics. Qualitative researchers doing exploratory work do not predetermine which data are
important to the same degree that researchers compiling explanatory work do; therefore I utilized inductive rather than deductive reasoning in pursuing such information (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 44).

2.3 Informant Selection and Profiles

My informants can be categorized as either 1) Otpor activists or 2) academic and professional experts familiar with Otpor's work. The criteria for inclusion in the activist group were: active within Otpor between October 1998 and October 2000; Serbian in nationality; over the age of 18; and comfortable speaking English. The criteria for inclusion in the "expert" group: peer-acknowledged scholarship and/or documented familiarity with Otpor's work; over the age of 18; and comfortable speaking English. Both of my activist informants were part of Otpor’s core leadership that emerged out of the protests of 1996 and 1997. Initially, I chose to interview Ivan Marović because he was a willing volunteer and an easily verifiable part of the leadership core. Marović proved to be an exceptional informant because as a leader and an intellectual, he was able to share in-depth personal experience with public actions and to articulate the guiding principles of Otpor’s strategies and culture with ease. His candidness and willingness to share unflattering information increased my trust in his credibility. For

26 The age limit of 18 years is to help simplify the review done by Kent State University’s Institutional Review Board in refraining from involving minors. I specified English-speaking to help insure that I would fully understand my informants’ responses and to eliminate time it would take to translate responses from another language to English.

27 Marović contributed to the “Bringing Down a Dictator” (BDD) documentary with on-screen commentary. BDD also includes video footage of Marović leading a public action.

28 He was both a founding member of Otpor and Otpor’s representative in the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS), the coalition that chose the candidate who would win against Milošević in 2000 (York et al 2000). After the ousting of Milošević, he consulted multiple pro-democracy groups around the world, becoming a leading trainer in the field of strategic nonviolence (York et al 2000). He also founded the Center for Nonviolent Resistance in Serbia (York et al 2000).
example, Marović, admitted that, he was at one point skeptical enough of Otpor’s strategies to achieve social change that he actually stopped doing activism with Otpor for a few months starting in December 1998.29 He also shared how he was repeatedly too scared to say much of anything during interrogations by the secret police except to answer their questions directly and how he did not resist the draft partially because he was afraid.30

In addition, knowing that Marović had created support materials for nonviolent activists with an American company, I reasoned that he would be quite capable of illuminating Serbian culture to an American like me.31 My second activist informant, Srdja Popović, was also quite willing to be interviewed and was also easy to identify as a leader of Otpor.32 Though he has never lived in the United States, Popović is still sufficiently familiar with American culture, and studied and translated literature on strategic nonviolence, including books by the American scholar Gene Sharp, using these to write training manuals (York et al 2000). He was nicknamed Otpor’s ideological commissar, in sarcastic reference to Yugoslavia’s communist past (York et al 2000).

30 Ibid.
32 Popović headed human resources and trained activists in nonviolent action theory and practice (York et al 2000). “He was elected to the Parliament of the Serb Republic in late 2000 where he also served as environmental affairs advisor to the Serbian Prime Minister, Zoran Djindjic until Djindjic’s assassination in March 2003 (York et al 2000). In late 2003, he left Parliament and co-founded the Center for Applied Nonviolent Actions and Strategies (CANVAS), a group that supports nonviolent democratic movements through education (York et al 2000). Popović is one of three authors of the book “Nonviolent Struggle: 50 Crucial Points,” which is an accessible handbook for activists seeking to learn about and use nonviolent strategies for the sake of social change. He was also featured prominently in the “Bringing Down a Dictator” documentary.
In regard to relevant “experts,” I interviewed Majken Jul Sørensen, a Peace and Reconciliation scholar from Denmark, and Dr. Daniel Calingaert, the liaison between Otpor and the International Republican Institute (IRI) beginning in October 1999 (Cohen 2000, 45). Sørensen interviewed thirteen Otpor activists to compose a case study for her master’s thesis, “Humour as Nonviolent Resistance to Oppression.” It was easy to recognize that interviewing Sørensen as well as reading her thesis would deepen my theoretical understanding of Otpor’s work. I also hoped to indirectly widen my interviewee base with knowledge gained from her interviews that was relevant to my focus of inquiry. Dr. Daniel Calingaert, the program officer at the IRI kept in close contact with Otpor activists during their largest period of growth and activity. He met with some of their leaders regularly and organized technical and material support for specific Otpor campaigns. The primary advantage that Dr. Calingaert brought to my informant pool is a window into the U.S. view on Serbian humor and to bring me comparative knowledge between Milošević’s dictatorship and others in the world.

2.4 Protocol Formation

Interviews allow researchers to clarify and summarize data on the spot and to make corrections to their own interpretations using active listening skills. I developed semi-structured interview questions to gather informants’ understanding of the roles of humor in nonviolent action. For my personal application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I compiled two slightly different protocols, one for the activist group of

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33 Phone Interview with Dr. Calingaert, November 12, 2009.
34 Dr. Calingaert Interview.
informants and the other for the “expert” group. I constructed open-ended questions regarding each of the three different groups of relationships identified in my focus of inquiry and for information regarding public actions and graphics because I am doing exploratory research. Next, I formulated a new protocol that consisted mainly of the questions from my original protocols with slight phrasing modifications and a few new questions that seek to uncover the conceptual relationship between humor and provocation in the context of strategic nonviolence. I incorporated data obtained from the first two interviews with Marović. The new questions were also to gather words that could be used to categorize types of humor. This new protocol was approved by Dr. Landon Hancock, as part of his fall 2009 course on Qualitative Research in Conflict Management. I used the original protocols to interview Marović, Sørensen, and Dr. Calingaert. I also used the subsequent protocol to e-mail interview Popović and the new questions from the subsequent protocol with Marović, also. In addition, I asked both activist informants follow-up questions via e-mail as well in late 2009 and early 2010.

The initial interview protocols for both the activist group and the “expert” group are available in Appendix B, while the modified and expanded protocol that was e-mailed to the activists is given in Appendix C.

Constructing the content and form of these questions was a learning process. Regarding content, I sought to understand humor’s roles within the relationships of Otpor (intragroup relations), between Otpor and the Serbian public, and between Otpor and sections of President Milošević’s security forces that came in direct contact with the activists, namely the police. I had special interest in the relationship between Otpor and
security forces and therefore also asked about the function of humor coined by Sørensen as "turning oppression upside down," which is discussed in the Literature Review. I initially sought more information regarding this function of humor because Sørensen argues that this threefold function is unique to humor. I do believe that the relationship between activists and their authoritative opponent is the most difficult to manage effectively out of the three types of relationships I examined and thus requires more research.

Regarding form, I chose non-leading semi-structured questions, which can gain data that may not have ever crossed the minds of researchers (Gorden 1992, 34). This form of questions can also minimize ego-threat (Gorden 1992, 35). Throughout my interviews, I asked impromptu follow-up questions along the spectrum of structure, from more open-ended questions to those that elicit short answers and sometimes a simple “yes” or “no.” More structured or close-ended questions save time, help reduce forgetting and may supply chronological order to help informants answer more easily (Gorden 1992, 36). An obstacle I anticipated in obtaining certain parts of my data set through interviews included the telescoping effect, which is that people forget more over time and tend to project the present onto the past.35 This was particularly challenging for my study as I was asking people about events that occurred a decade ago. To overcome this obstacle, I offered the interview protocol to the participants at least four days prior to our interviews so that they had time to think through their answers. I prefaced my interviews with Marović and Sørensen by stating my objective of writing a rich narrative so as to

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35 Hancock, Dr. Landon. “Interviewing.” CACM 42020-001: Qualitative Research in Conflict Management, course lecture, Kent, OH, October 22, 2009.
invite them to share as much relevant detail as possible and set a relaxed, no rush tone. 36

I begin the interviews by asking my informants if they had a particular question they would like to answer first and when each said, “no,” I suggested they begin with a question asking for description of public actions or to describe their first memory of something to help ease them into the rich narrative, story-telling mode. Another obstacle to obtaining data with interviews is peoples’ ego-saving desire to frame even negative events positively and to share only the actions or occurrences for which they feel proud (Gorden 1992, 24, 25). I built rapport with informants via e-mail and with Marović through dialogue and follow-up interviews. For each interview I also sequenced the questions so that positive memories were elicited first followed by those with less flattering answers. I felt and believe I was perceived to be empathetic, with a humble, non-judgmental tone. I gave encouragement and helped at least one informant save face after this person shared some character-revealing decisions and frightening experiences.

An advantage to having a relatively small informant pool is that I was more able to do follow-up interviews (at least via e-mail) with all each informant. A small sample also encourages the researcher to obtain detailed accounts from a few rather than less deep accounts from many. A particular weakness of interviews not done in person or with web-cams, is the loss of many nonverbal cues (i.e. eye contact, facial congruency, body posture). To compensate for this void, I paid extra attention to voice intonation, speed of speaking and other verbal cues.

36 This was not so much possible with Dr. Daniel Calingaert, who had only about a half an hour to speak with me. During our interview, we were interrupted twice so that he could have a quick conversation or answer questions for a colleague. And the e-mail interviews with Srdja, inherently allowed more time to think, but likely limited some detail-sharing since typing can be more energy intensive than speaking.
Interviews do not necessarily provide a complete or accurate recollection of actual behavior, but of interpretations of behavior.\(^{37}\) I therefore supplemented my interviews by collecting documents, documentaries and other materials, focusing those that were created during or soon after 1998-2000.

### 2.5 Interview Mechanics

I conducted phone interviews with Marović, Sørensen, and Dr. Calingaert using Skype, and supplemented these with e-mail correspondence. I interviewed Popović solely through e-mail and was thus able to learn about the advantages and disadvantages between the two mediums of phone and e-mail for data collection.\(^{38}\) With written and/or oral\(^{39}\) permission from each of my interviewees, I recorded the phone interviews with a digital audio recorder and transcribed them using a foot pedal apparatus. I took handwritten notes during the interviews to help in paraphrasing their responses back to them for clarification and to develop follow-up questions. All three interviews with Marović lasted between an hour and an hour and a half and took place in November and December of 2009. The interview with Sørensen lasted just over an hour and the interview with Dr. Calingaert lasted approximately 25 minutes. Both took place in November 2009. Written responses from Popović totaled about five typed, single-spaced pages and were received

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\(^{37}\) Hancock, Dr. Landon. “Interviewing.” CACM 42020-001: Qualitative Research in Conflict Management, course lecture, Kent, OH, October 22, 2009.

\(^{38}\) E-mail interviewing is more conducive to direct answers; gives informants more time to ponder their answers; eliminates the need to transcribe informants’ answers and to find a mutually satisfactory time to speak together. This last point was particularly relevant to my interviewing Popović because he was travelling frequently during my time of inquiry. E-mail interviews however, lack much in the ability to communicate tone and to build rapport, an essential part of asking potentially ego-threatening or otherwise sensitive questions. These two points are two of the greatest strengths of phone interviews.

\(^{39}\) Oral permissions were recorded using digital audio recorder while written permissions were e-mailed via Word document consent forms.
in February 2010. I also received follow-up responses from Marović and Popović at other times.

### 2.6 Document Collection

I collected a purposive sampling of the documents as well. My document sources included scholarly journal articles; books by and about Otpor; both print and online popular press materials; the online archives of the Center for Nonviolent Action in Belgrade; a documentary on Otpor; published interviews with activists; photographs of Otpor and their actions; and print materials produced by Otpor. These sources provided both new data and a way to verify or cross-check findings from the interviews. As with the informants, the document sources constituted a purposive sampling because they expanded the variability of the sample by having a common thread (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 45). That common thread is information regarding various types of humorous actions Otpor used; perceptions as to why Otpor chose those specific actions; and both observable and perceived relationship dynamics (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 45).

Document collection has the advantage of sometimes being produced during the focus time period and of potentially being a primary source. Some documents have also already been peer-reviewed and are therefore considered quite reliable. On the other hand, document collection is weak in that archives and other sources, such as that of Otpor’s website, are no longer in operation. I tried to address this weakness by asking interviewees and contacting organizations (i.e. The Center for Nonviolent Action Belgrade and International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, Washington D.C.) for sources
that may once have been available online. Document collection is also weak in that it has variable validity.\textsuperscript{40} To overcome this weakness, I relied more heavily upon books and articles that were peer-reviewed, I cross-checked my sources and I supplemented my findings from documents with e-mail correspondence and interviews. Personal documents and editorials were searched for perceptions; factual data was only drawn from these sources if they were verifiable elsewhere.

The use of two methods of data collection (interviews and document collection) increase the validity of my research. The main and possibly the only weakness of using multiple methods is time-intensiveness. I believe that the benefits outweigh the costs in this regard.

2.7 Data Analysis

I analyzed my primary data of interview transcripts and my e-mail exchanges with informants using the \textit{constant comparative method}. This method requires unitizing or identifying chunks of meaning in the data (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 128). Each meaningful unit of data is then compared to the other units of meaning and is subsequently grouped (coded) with similar units of meaning (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 134). These categories are collectively termed a \textit{codelist}. These codes or categories are made internally consistent through the writing of \textit{rules for inclusion} that are written for each category (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 138). The \textit{rules for inclusion} are refined by being written in a \textit{proposition}, which is a general statement of fact grounded in the

\textsuperscript{40} Hancock, Dr. Landon. “Unobtrusive Measures (of Qualitative Research Methods).” CACM 42020-001: Qualitative Research in Conflict Management, course lecture, Kent, OH, November 5, 2009.
data (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 139). Propositions are then examined to see which ones stand alone and which ones form patterns or are related in some way (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 144). Once a researcher has reached a “theoretical saturation point,” she or he can write up a conclusive integrating report of outcomes (Strauss and Corbin in Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 144, 45).

I used this form of propositional coding first with notes from my first two interviews with Marović in November 2009. About two months later with a fresh mind open to new themes, I read through paper print-outs of the transcripts and manuscripts of all my interviews, taking basic notes on emerging themes. From these notes I added to my original propositional codelist. As I began the final line-by-line coding of my first interview with Marović, I discovered the need to add codes that were not propositional, those that were less analytical such as “examples of public actions,” “examples of repression,” “significant events,” explicit “targets of humorous actions,” and times when an informant specifically identified “decreasing fear” as a function of humor and to then develop propositions from trends within these categories. My final codelist consists of 25 categories, each with guiding rules of inclusion, which were refined throughout the coding process and completed after each section of coded data could be read on its own terms.

Finally, I set my mind to understanding and articulating the propositional statements as individual concepts with many branching ideas (i.e. humor as a weapon branches to dilemma actions, the element of surprise, and different types of provocation) and relationships between different propositions (i.e. provocation and collaboration were
both major goals of Otpor, but provocation was more emphasized by the group). I began by creating detailed outlines, using direct quotes, paraphrased quotes, and my ideas of how they related to one another. During the formation of the detailed outlines, some ideas formed directly into complete sentences and even short paragraphs while other ideas were simply stated as short phrases or a single word. As I began to flesh out the detailed outlines into full paragraphs and sub-sections, I often stopped to re-write portions of the outline as the articulation of ideas into complete, cohesive units facilitated a different understanding of the data’s relationships at times. Sometimes after writing an entire section or chapter, I would write a new outline from the written section to help me check the flow and balance of that section. Writing a detailed outline also helped when I needed to reduce my page count and cut large portions of all my chapters down. Consequently, some of my propositions changed during the writing phase. Writing and analyzing went hand-in-hand, at times smoothing out the kinks in one another and at other times, challenging my own assertions. Through months of questioning, clarifying, trimming, elaborating and even re-evaluating some of my data, the processes of analysis and writing were reconciled and the final thesis birthed.

This chapter covered how I collected and analyzed my data. In it, I also discussed who my informants were, what types of questions I asked them and how I formulated those questions. In the next chapter, I discuss the scholarship on which I built and some of which I challenged with my analyses. I lay a theoretical foundation upon which the reader can better understand the fields of conflict transformation, strategic nonviolence and humor as they relate to one another.
3 Literature Review

3.1 Humor’s Sociological Functions

Though humor is difficult to define, sociologist Marvin Koller articulates the complex phenomenon as the “universal human quality that finds events, circumstances, behavior, situations, or the expression of ideas to be funny, joyous, absurd, ludicrous, hilarious, laughable, amusing, clever, and possibly instructive” (1988, 3). Koller acknowledges that this definition opens up semantic debates of what “absurd” and the other adjectives actually mean and so to strengthen the definition, Koller presents Arthur Koestler’s threefold schematic model of humor: “Ha-Ha,” “Aha,” and “Ah” (Koestler in Koller 1988, 6). The “Ha-Ha” nature of humor is the purely emotional quality of “unequivocal enjoyment,” usually expressed in a large grin or hearty laughter (Koller 1988, 6). The “Aha” nature involves learning, enlightenment, the discovery of new knowledge (Koller 1988, 6). And the “Ah” nature is akin to human wit, intellectually appreciated even savored as those who encounter it understand more outside their own limited experience (Koller 1988, 6, 13). This definition complements the one presented by Koller because the multiple variants of humor are cohesively identified on a continuum that draws together the emotional and intellectual aspects of humor (Koller 1988, 6).

To further sharpen his definition, Koller identifies thirteen sociological functions humor can serve: social bonding, relief from stress and strain, expression of aggression or hostility, celebration of life, self-effacement, social correction, upholding honesty over
sham, provoking thought, balancing pain, reinforcing or undermining stereotypes, therapy or catharsis, defense against attacks or threats and the conceptual function that subsumes all the previous functions, survival (Koller 1988, 18, 26). Majken Jul Sørensen, a scholar of peace and reconciliation, highlights four of Koller’s functions relevant to nonviolent resistance: social correction, social bonding, upholding honesty over sham and defense against attacks or threats (Sørensen 2006, 10, 11, 13, 17). These are the four I choose to discuss. Humor used as social correction works to upset the status quo and thereby liberate those who are oppressed within the current political or social system (Sørensen 2006). In order to do so, humor encourages critical reflection on society and the authorities that govern them, often exposing incongruities and deceit. Humorists upholding honesty over sham reveal the discrepancy between what people (i.e. politicians) say and what people (i.e. citizens) experience in reality. Humor serves to unite people and define community boundaries, socially bonding people (Koller 1988, 18). Humor defines boundaries by revealing “who may laugh and smile together and…who may disagree, quarrel, and reject the qualities that others cherish” (Koller 1988, 19). In the last of these four functions “defense against, counter, or parry attacks or threats,” humor can thwart an opponent’s intentions by using their own energy (words and deeds) against them (Koller 1988, 25). Any combination of these functions may come alive in a humorous action or graphic.

Boiled down to the bone, humor is a perception of incongruity. “[T]here is a widespread agreement that the sense of humor leads above all to a perception of incongruence, or incongruity…In principle, any incongruence may be perceived as
comical…[for example] between the pretensions of political authority and its underlying fallibility” (Berger 1997, 208). Though contradictions are problematic in the serious mode, they are a “necessary feature of the humorous mode…In order for a joke to be funny, it has to turn things upside down and present something in more than one frame at the same time” (Mulkay in Sørensen 2006, 9). Some humor is used defensively, some aggressively, and some benignly. Activists use humor to reveal incongruities, hypocrisies, and alternative ways of perceiving individuals and situations.

3.2 Arguments Against Humor’s Potential Social Impact

The discussion of humor’s functions would not be complete without arguments that posit political humor’s inability to be a catalyst for change. Mulkay writes that political humor simply reinforces the status quo because it can only appeal to those who are already convinced of its message and thus only underscore existing political divisions (1988, 209, 212). Gregor Benton takes a deeper jab at political humor saying that the political joke “creates sweet illusions of revenge,” only momentarily freeing a person from tension, frustration, and uncertainty (Benton in Sørensen 2006, 10). Sigmund Freud believed similarly that satire and jokes may even hinder action because they serve as safety valves, venting frustrations that may otherwise be expressed in political action (Freud in Freedman 2009, 163). Freedman agrees that political satire in democracies may discourage political involvement by increasing cynicism about politics and politicians (2009, 163-164). This may be especially true when humor targets the actions and character of politicians rather than substantive policy issues (2009, 164). However, Freedman also suggests that political satire that attacks politicians’ personal foibles is
relevant when citizens are determining how qualified the politicians may be for office (2009, 164). From this perspective, satire can present a critical view of candidates and thus encourage citizens to think deeply and not frivolously of politics. But in the end, Freedman argues that there are examples across the political spectrum from dictatorship to democracy in which satire and ridicule were thickly used, but were still unable to oust the oppressive authority (Freedman 2009, 163).

There are two types of counter-arguments to those that say humor is incapable of provoking social or political change. The first is that discourse matters. Some studies suggest that Jon Stewart, Stephen Colbert, and other political satirists who are largely uninvolved in strategic nonviolence may attract, educate and mobilize an audience that is otherwise apathetic to or even repelled by politics (Freedman 2009, 164). Even when political humor is not a component of strategic nonviolence, it may still lay the foundation for later change. James Scott lends us the appropriate terminology: the public transcript and the hidden transcript. The public transcript is the informal code of conduct followed by subordinate groups when the oppressor is near, in which they appear and sound to be obedient and compliant; the hidden transcript is how subordinate groups subtly resist, typically without the oppressor’s knowledge (Scott in Sørensen 2006, 15). The hidden transcript can be preparation for overt resistance both mentally and socially. Sørensen believes that prior to political action or a formal resistance movement humor can lay the psychological foundation for revolution against oppression (2006, 33). “The reformulation in a humorous mode shows in itself that something has changed and creates the expectation of further changes” (Sørensen 2006, 33). Hart agree that humor
has revolutionary potential: “[O]ne particular aspect of humour should not be overlooked: through jokes ‘the unimagined’ is made ‘imaginable’; action that may first have been done jokingly may well become a reality later on” (2007, 8). Though some resources are quite limited for oppressed groups, subtle acts of resistance reveal the initial resourcefulness of a people. They wield weapons like covert jabs of mockery, intentionally working less efficiently and stealing small amounts of the oppressive authority’s wealth (Sørensen 2009, 15). These acts of the hidden transcript may be precursors to methods of overt protest and persuasion, which most often precede the higher-risk methods of noncooperation and nonviolent intervention (Sharp 1973, 501).

If humorous discourse is in and of itself a shift of paradigms and energies, how much more influential can humor be when integrated within strategic nonviolence? Sørensen is one of several scholars (i.e. Branagan, Shepard, Sharp and Cevallos) who contend that humor is a viable component of nonviolence. Their work comprises the second group of counter-arguments to those who say that humor is unable to secure social change. These scholars argue that humor can reach beyond the individual level and beyond the moment while recognizing the importance of the individual and the moment to a social movement. Conflict transformation scholar, Adam Curle writes that “even if domination by one group produces the abject submission of another, the relationship (because it is based on inequality) bears the seeds of rebellion. When the level of awareness rises in the dominated group...the seeds germinate” (1971, 2). In the next section of this literature review, I discuss humor’s distinctive ability to enrich the process of raising awareness and effectively mobilize the masses.
### 3.3 Humor’s Functions in Strategic Nonviolence

I have chosen to synthesize the literature of humorous strategic nonviolence by organizing most theories within Majken Jul Sørensen’s master’s thesis framework. Theories that do not fit her framework are discussed afterwards. Sørensen categorizes humor’s usage in strategic nonviolence into three major functions: 1) *facilitating outreach and mobilization*, 2) *facilitating a culture of resistance* and 3) *turning oppression upside down* (2006).

#### 3.3.1 “Facilitating Outreach and Mobilization”

Outreach conductors need to attract attention and garner understanding and support from the largest number of people possible, which is often achieved through the presentation of a simple message. One way Milošević gained legitimacy and popularity in the late 1980s and early 1990s was by becoming a champion of simple, straightforward messages (Gordy 1999, 26). “Political humor is often a type of shorthand. In a joke or story, attitudes and feelings are expressed in concentrated form and much of the impact of a particular episode derives from the collapsing of the complex into the simple” (Pi-Sunyer 1977, 182). Condensing complex realities and perceptions into a simple form that can be easily understood is a major principle in politics, communication and marketing among social disciplines. Berger agrees: “[J]okes can summarize an often complex situation in wondrously economical ways, simplifying and illuminating” (1997, 137). In order to reach a broad swath of Serbs, Otpor drew upon the corporate branding techniques used by multinational companies to create and disperse a simple message of ousting Milošević, loving life, Serbia, and freedom (WNYC Radio). Otpor designed an
easily identifiable logo, a clenched fist, usually stark white against a black background (WNYC Radio; Cohen 2000, 44). The ‘fist’ holds deep satirical meaning, defying the corruption of a political system as it “riffed off the communist imagery dear to Milošević and his wife” (Cohen 2000, 44). Otpor also created numerous succinct slogans such as “Bite the System!” “Resistance - Because I Love Serbia!” and “Freedom!” (York and Zimmerman 2001). One of Otpor’s major slogans, “Gotov je!” meaning "He’s finished!" was a concise assurance to citizens that they have power and that if they would only use that power, he could no longer harm their lives or their country (WNYC Radio). It was a psychological weapon designed to shatter the false veneer that Milošević was invincible (Paulson 2005, 325). Daniel Serwer, Director of the Balkans Initiative at the United States Institute of Peace during focus period of 1998-2000, was one of many who were amazed at Otpor’s simple humor: “It was daring, audacious, bold to say, Milošević, he’s finished! They didn’t even say Milošević. They said, ‘He’s finished.’ Everybody knew what they meant. And they did this over and over with different slogans that had an edge to them. They fit in the society in a remarkable way” (York and Zimmerman 2001).

Simple messaging may be most important during the confrontation stage of the sequential models of conflict identified by Lakey and Curle (Lakey 2004; Curle, 1971). Lakey asserts that the “drama in the streets” created by public actions “cannot carry a complex analysis that requires long dissection and persuasion” (2004, 148). The drama in the streets needs to forthrightly contrast the behavior of activists against the behavior of responding authorities (Lakey 2004, 149). Martin Luther King Jr., the iconic head of the Civil Rights Movement in the American South and a self-described proponent of
principled nonviolence, said that going beyond basic tactics (i.e. economic boycotts) to ‘dramatize’ the injustice is necessary.\textsuperscript{41} Activists need to create or enhance existing contrasts to clarify to undecided bystanders who are in the right (Lakey 2004, 128). Highly emotionally charged events are undoubtedly memorable. Activists want to link these experiences with a simple message or image, as Otpor typically did, creating actions that act as lightning rods for memory and appeal. Even involved humorous public actions can be pithy, striking events covering new issues each day. Otpor’s strategy for contrasting their behavior and character with that of members of the opponent group will be further discussed later in Section 3.7.

Though simple slogans, easily identified logos and memorable moments are major tools of outreach, they alone will not mobilize a people to contribute to mass noncooperation or other means of social change. These tactics must be paired with an educational strategy. Education encourages deeper understanding, going beyond a surface-level awareness of issues. Humor’s enlightening “aha” nature is useful to activists here. Enlightenment for oppressed peoples means coming to understand both how the current political authority is unjust \textit{and} what means of power the people have available to them, including humor. Slogans and logos often become powerful symbols precisely because they are associated with deeper motivating concepts and feelings. “Gotov je!” was believed to elicit deep feelings of empowerment as it symbolized a get-out-the-vote campaign co-led by Otpor, the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS), and dozens of NGOs. These groups united to combat a common tendency of Serbian voters to re-elect

\textsuperscript{41} Martin Luther King Jr. in NBC Meet the Press as viewed in the movie, \textit{A Force More Powerful}. 
incumbents even if they did not like them and to engage Serbia’s young adults, who had a
history of not participating in the electoral process (Paulson 2005, 32; Cevallos 2001, 8).

Public education is the first stage of both Adam Curle’s Model of Peacemaking
and George Lakey’s Strategy for a Living Revolution. “[N]o change will occur, no move
away from passive unpeacefulness, until there is an increase in the level of awareness of
the fundamental conflict of interest” for the weaker party in the unbalanced relationship
(Curle 1971, 20, 175, 176). Such citizens are frequently not fully aware of the injustices
committed against them and even once they are aware, they do not often know how to
face and fight the injustice. Curle indicates that through education, “the weaker party in a
low-awareness/unbalanced relationship gains awareness of its situation and so attempts to
change it” (1971, 20). Lakey includes mass education in his stage of “Cultural
Preparation,” which is often referred to as consciousness-raising or politicization (2004,
140). He asserts that oppressed groups need to collectively “work to discard the
internalized messages that limit them” (2004, 140). Those internal messages may be ones
of ignorance, apathy, vulnerability or fear. Educating the masses means empowering,
enlightening, and motivating them to act. I have already discussed humor’s ability to
enlighten. Next I examine scholars’ views on humor’s ability to motivate and empower.

Marty Branagan, peace studies professor and activist, writes that humor in
community activism works to “enliven popular education through a variety of creative
media and to make messages more palatable for audiences without detracting from the
seriousness of those messages” (2007, 3). Enlivening education is important because a
disinterested individual is not able to absorb much information. Being intrigued proceeds
being enlightened. “Because of its surprising character, humour is always different, and enjoyable news is always preferred to predictable news” (Hart 2007, 18). People are drawn to news that is not the typical tragic or at least negative report. Eliciting a range of emotions draws people in just as it engages an audience in a good theatre production (Branagan 2007, 3). And according to John C. Meyer, jokes often weaken the defenses of listeners, rendering them “more amenable to persuasion” (Meyer in Hart 2007, 8). Some types of humor can also help create a celebratory atmosphere in the midst of frightening repression (Branagan 2007, 7). Thus, blending critical activism and creative presentation; protest’s negativity with celebration’s positivity creates an emotional balance for those involved (Branagan 2007, 11). Keith Cylar, a leader of the “AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power” activist group (ACT UP) said: “You cannot build a movement on anger” (Shepard 2005, 437). ACT UP is widely credited with revitalizing community organizing particularly between 1987 and 1999 (Shepard 2005, 436). The global peace and economic justice movement that has resurged in the 1990s and early 2000s is one of a growing number of modern movements like ACT UP (and Otpor) that utilize what Shepard calls the “new community organizing strategy” (2005, 435). This strategy seeks to elicit joy, justice and pleasure through the use of humor, culture, and carnival in the hopes of motivating people to become politically active (Shepard 2005, 435). Recreating an atmosphere of carnival will be discussed in depth in Section 3.7.

3.3.2 “Facilitating a Culture of Resistance”

This function refers to the activist community, though humor in this function can certainly also reach out beyond the in-group. Gene Sharp writes that casting off and
controlling fear is a “prerequisite of nonviolent action” (2005, 364). A culture of resistance begins by casting off fear. Conquering fear is “not only moral valor, but a practical requirement” (Sharp 2005, 364). Humor can meet this requirement according to a “very simple logic: it is more difficult to be afraid of someone when you laugh at him” (Sørensen 2006, 29). When interviewing some of the core leaders of Otpor, Sørensen found that reducing fear of the regime and police was a major long-standing goal of the group’s humor (2006). Some of her informants stressed the importance of humor spontaneously and all said humor was important in reducing fear when asked directly (Sørensen 2006, 28). Fear induced by war with neighboring nations, severe economic instability and violent repression against Serbian protestors in 1996 and ’97 had a paralyzing effect upon many Serbs, particularly after the NATO bombings (Sørensen 2006, 27). Parents of a Serbian police officer described fear’s influence on their country in 1996: “It was a kind of psychosis. If Milošević goes, everything will fall apart. Somebody will bomb us, the Kosovo Albanians will take our land, all hell will break loose. So we voted to keep [Milošević]” (Cohen 2000, 47).

Reducing fear was not just the first step in mobilizing the Serbian people, but remained a continuing need as Milošević’s regime and the police violently attacked and detained Otpor activists throughout their campaign. In the town of Vladicin Han, people were told to vote for Milošević if they wanted to keep their jobs in the timber, paper, and fruit-juice industries (Cohen 2000, 44). Vladicin Han’s police force was also disreputably known for their beatings of Otpor activists (Cohen 2000, 118). Interrogations and being photographed and fingerprinted were less brutal, but still fear-provoking repressive
actions that ensued after the regime labeled Otpor a terrorist organization (Cohen 2000, 48). According to Paulson, the most common forms of repression Otpor experienced were censorship, arrests and beatings (2005, 323). Ironically, Otpor, like many other nonviolent organizations, came to appreciate repression as citizens poured into their ranks at a higher rate specifically when repression against activists intensified (Paulson 2005, 323). One Otpor activist told Paulson: “We fed on the repression of the regime, and in all towns and cities where they arrested our people, the movement accelerated its growth” (2005, 323). The peoples’ courage was fueled by their fellow citizens’ enduring activism and the reactions they procured from the regime.

Otpor and other activist groups must maintain psychological stability and emotional health amidst repression. When people are alarmed, distracted, or otherwise shaken, they “raise the very drawbridge—perception—that [they] must cross in order to make successful predictions…and evaluate information mindfully” (De Becker 1997, 133). Though injustice and oppression call for anger and frustration, movements fueled solely by these emotions cannot sustain themselves for long. Just as a variety of emotions engage bystanders in public actions, emotional variety helps maintain the psychological stability of the activists. Psychological stability is necessary for activists to remain nonviolent and an uncompromising commitment to nonviolence is essential to a successful campaign. Branagan asserts that humor can help activists maintain such a commitment even under “enormous pressure and provocation” (2007, 7). Neuman’s study of prisoners in Nazi concentration camps and Henman’s study of American prisoners of war in Vietman support Branagan’s claim. Neuman writes that humor can

In addition to directly encouraging psychological health, Branagan suggests that humor increases the creative repertoire activists can draw on, allowing them to switch between more stressful frontline activities (i.e. public actions; imprisonment) and less stressful behind-the-scenes activities (i.e. designing posters, costumes, or slogans) (2007, 10). Changing roles can prevent a hiatus in activists contributing to a campaign while contributing to their personal well-being (Branagan 2007, 10). Similarly, participating in fun or humorous actions can help activists build the resolve necessary for more serious protest (Fydrich in Hart 2007, 19). Overall, humor has the ability to balance the highly critical and often stressful aspects of fighting for justice, peace, and power with light-heartedness, a spirit of joyful resistance, and hope (Branagan 2007, 3; Shepard 2005, 2). Encouraging activists to maintain self-control and nonviolence while being beaten, “tear-gased,” interrogated or otherwise harassed is a mighty feat. Preventing mental health damage is also a great challenge.

In addition to relieving stress, helping maintain nonviolence and providing emotional balance, humor can strengthen feelings of affection and lead to increased solidarity and loyalty between activists (Hart 2007, 12). Solidarity, the cohesion of an
activist group cannot be overemphasized. Reaching and maintaining a critical mass is key to ‘people power.’ Anton Zijderveld, a sociologist who has written much about humor, compares humor’s bonding powers to that of communal marching, dancing, and singing (Zijderveld in Hart 2007, 12). Kathleen Stokker, who studied “quisling humor,”\(^{42}\) found that sharing jokes aided group identity and humor defended activists against Nazi propaganda that tried to convince people that they would stand alone if they did not join their party (Stokker in Sørensen 2006, 11). In this way, humor acts as a major weapon against psychological and social isolation. Henman’s research highlights this function of humor. He found that American prisoners of war in Vietnam risked torture to tell a joke when they believed doing so would cheer up fellow prisoners (Henman in Sørensen 2006, 15).

### 3.3.3 “Turning Oppression Upside Down”

Sørensen considers "Turning oppression upside down" to be a unique dimension of humor because it “directly challenges the relationship (of activists) with the oppressor” (2006, 40). She contends that “Turning the oppression upside down” operates on a different level than the two previous functions because humor that turns oppression upside down is not just a facilitator, but an active agent of change (2006, 43). In addition, humor is able to achieve the following three sub-functions simultaneously while nonviolence is only able to achieve these separately (Sørensen 2006, 40). Because this function is so important and potentially unique, Sørensen further delineates it into the

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\(^{42}\) “Quisling humor” targeted Vidkun Quisling, the leader of the Norwegian Nazi party during World War II.
following three elements 1) escalating the conflict and putting pressure on the oppressor, 2) reducing fear within the activist group and 3) reducing the oppressor’s options for reacting effectively. Each of these elements elicits further discussion. Element one will be discussed last because it yields the most room for further investigation within my study.

The second element, reducing fear within the activist group, was discussed earlier as part of “facilitating a culture of resistance.” Sørensen discusses overcoming fear throughout all three major functions of humor in strategic nonviolence because doing so needs to be a top priority for all three groups she examines: activists, unallied bystanders and the members of the oppressive authority group. By empowering people, humor psychologically balances the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. By strengthening methods of nonviolent noncooperation and nonviolent intervention, humor also helps balance the relationship economically, politically and physically.

The third element, the ability to reduce the oppressor’s options for reacting effectively is derived from an engagement of the “paradox of repression.” The “paradox of repression” is engaged when oppressors use force (physical, psychological, economic, or another type) to coerce nonviolent activists and the force boomerangs, weakening the oppressor’s authority and strengthening their opposition (Smithey and Kurtz 1999, 11). The repression becomes counter-productive because the difference between the behaviors of the two groups is heightened spurring the public to view the violence as unjust and unnecessary. Public opinion sways in favor of the nonviolent activists. This shift often erodes the resolve of members of the oppressive group to continue the repression creating the boomerang effect (Smithey and Kurtz 1999, 111).
Otpor’s dilemma actions often successfully sought to engage the paradox of repression. George Lakey coined the term dilemma demonstration in his book *Strategy for a Living Revolution*. Popović first heard the term dilemma action from Robert Helvey, retired colonel of the U.S. army one of Gene Sharp’s close associates. Helvey consulted/advised the Center for Applied NonViolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS), a later outgrowth of Otpor, in writing CANVAS’s Core Curriculum book. The “paradox of repression” relies on a stark contrast between the behavior of oppressive authorities and the oppressed. One of Otpor’s slogans demonstrates this: “The dictatorship is about death. Otpor is about life” (Lakey, 156). Without a clear contrast, the public may tend to believe that “people get what they deserve and deserve what they get” as Learner’s “just world” hypothesis states (Weber 1993, 270). In order for the oppressed to break through this fateful paradigm, they often must generate and draw attention to an image of innocence for their group and their cause. They need to create circumstances where they are clearly being wrongly persecuted.

There are multiple factors that can contribute to an image of innocence. In the case of Otpor, its members’ relative youth (most initial members were in their teens or twenties) and strict adherence to nonviolence won them the sympathy of the broader population (Cevallos 2001, 6). Lakey writes that the Serbian public got the idea: “They’re just kids having fun and, you know, they’re right about Milošević” (2004, 136). In addition, Otpor’s intentional non-partisan nature contributed a good deal to their innocent image, particularly because Serbian sentiment toward Milošević as well as to the large

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43 E-mail correspondence from George Lakey, April 21, 2010.
44 Popović e-mail, April 19, 2010.
number of political opposition party members was strong mistrust. “To maintain their clean, uncorrupted image, [Otpor] refuse[d] to align with any of Serbia’s political parties” (York and Zimmerman 2001). One of the unique characteristics about humor that is particularly advantageous to nonviolent struggle is that it is typically linked to innocence, even in its most aggressive forms (Sørensen 2006, 33). “[H]owever serious the message is, [humor] has a hint of ‘Don’t take me seriously,’ and ‘I’m not dangerous’” (Sørensen, 33). According to Sørensen, Freedman and Hart, humor is quite capable of masking even its own aggressive elements. “[S]atire, as a condition of its existence, distorts and exaggerates, and is usually malicious—all of which (would normally be limited by codes of ethic) are justifiable on the grounds that the intent is humorous” (Freedman 2009, 164, 165). Hart calls this the “flexible nature” of humor (2007, 19). When repressed, “protestors can always refer to the excuse they were ‘only’ joking; meanwhile, the critical points are made, nevertheless” (Hart 2007, 19). Ironically, conjuring and maintaining an image of innocence is a major way that humor gives an edge to nonviolent tactics. Since an image of innocence is so important to gaining public favor and reaching a critical mass (particularly during the confrontation stage), measuring the aggressiveness or innocence of a humorous action or expression may prove to be strategically wise.45

With its flexible nature, humor presents us with a paradox. Though humor can be used subversively and often with malicious intentions, it is still often viewed as innocent. There is “ambivalence between the innocence and the clear serious message” of humor,

45 This may be particularly true from a conflict transformation perspective because members of this school of thought are concerned with the long-term, interpersonal and group relationships nested within social systems.
which Sørensen argues acts as a camouflage of provocation (Sørensen 2006, 38).

Masking one’s intentions is not likely to be viewed as problematic when the activists’ goals are to create a clear us-versus-them divide and to coerce one’s opponent into submission. However, the potential camouflage of humor is not one that all nonviolent activists desire to wear. A large portion of nonviolent activists desire not to coerce the opponent but rather to escalate the conflict and help it progress to the confrontation stage,\(^{46}\) through conversion.

Examining the ways that nonviolent activists put pressure on their opponents may best begin with revisiting the principled-pragmatic continuum, upon which different schools of thought regarding the view of the oppressor can be placed. These views range from seeking to completely separate the oppressor from the oppression (being from behavior) and viewing the two as more or less the same and equally worth targeting. The former view is held by adherents to principled nonviolence, the latter by pragmatic nonviolent activists. The view of the opponent dictates which *mechanisms of change* activists will choose to influence the opponent (Sharp 2005, 415-417). Conversion is one of the four *mechanisms of change* or processes of an authority conceding power to the nonviolent masses (2005, 415). Conversion entails a true inner change of values; the opponent comes to embrace the ends of the nonviolent actors on account of their actions

\(^{46}\) Both Adam Curle and George Lakey, identify confrontation as a stage of peacemaking/revolution. Lakey says the confrontation stage is a period of overt conflict and rapid growth for the activist group (2004, 145). During this stage, Curle says weaker groups in unbalanced relationships work to decrease the power disparity between themselves and the higher power group so that they can approach the bargaining table confidently (1971, 175, 176). Both say that confrontation must follow education/cultural preparation; and that it proceeds the building of parallel institutions and bargaining, development eventual sustainable peace (Lakey 2004; Curle 1971).
(Lakey in Sharp 2005, 415). Sharp says that activists can appeal to reason, emotion, beliefs, attitudes, and morals to achieve conversion. Conversion is, however, the most difficult and least frequently achieved mechanism of change (Sharp 2005, 416). By contrast, coercion shifts the power in a relationship to “produce the changes sought by the resisters against the will of the opponents, while the opponents still remain in their existing (internal) positions” (Sharp 2005, 418).

More “principled” nonviolent actors condemn unjust behavior and commend just behavior in the hopes of inspiring the opponent to realize their wrongs and decide to change. These nonviolent actors desire to free the opponent from his or her own oppressive system and thus most often seek to encourage conversion more so than the other mechanisms of change. More “pragmatic” nonviolent actors view the opponent and the opponent’s oppressive behavior as more or less the same. Pragmatic nonviolent activists are open to conversion and other means of changing the opponents’ behavior, including coercion, accommodation, and disintegration.47 Gene Sharp, likely the best known pragmatic nonviolent action scholar and delineator of the mechanisms of change, discusses conversion in a relatively brief manner compared to the other mechanisms of change because it is the most difficult way to influence someone else’s behavior (Sharp 2005, 415). Sharp and other pragmatists often focus on undermining the opponent’s power base, coercing them to submission (Weber 1993, 272).

47 Just as there is overlap in the ways in which nonviolent actors and scholars from the two schools of thought desire change to come about, there is some overlap in their definitive characteristics. Pragmatic nonviolent actors have their own standards and beliefs and principled nonviolent actors have goals they wish to attain. The difference is in where their priorities lie. This is why it is often best modeled as a continuum rather than a dichotomy.
Barbara Demings, a feminist nonviolent activist, draws a helpful illustration of the principled view with the “two hands of nonviolence” (Deming in McAllister 1999, 19). Demings writes that nonviolence utilizes two equally important dynamics that encompass the complexity of human nature (Deming in McAllister 1999, 19). Nonviolent activists seek to simultaneously stop the destructive behavior of violent oppressors and to honor the oppressors’ humanity. Demings argues that this dual strategy creates an effective synergy of two pressures (the two hands) against the opponent: one of defiance and one of respect for life (Deming in McAllister 1999, 19). The defiant hand sends the message: STOP! I refuse to obey or cooperate with you (Deming in McAllister 1999, 19). Nonviolent resisters use this “hand” to interfere with the injustice of the oppressor’s actions. At the same time, the life-respecting hand sends the message: You are not the other, nor am I. I acknowledge you are human as I am human and I trust you can make better decisions than you are making now. We are interdependent and capable of coexisting peacefully (Deming in McAllister 1999, 19). Nonviolent activists offer an invitation to reconciliation and to a balanced relationship with this “hand.” Principled nonviolent activists gently apply pressure (cognitive dissonance) to help coax the opponent to join their side, hoping for the members of the opponent to reconsider their behavior and perspective. They avoid coercion, desiring for the opponent to make their own choice; trying to get the opponent to reconsider what they are doing and choose to convert to the position of the activists.
3.4 Carnivalesque Humor: Its Roots and Current Diffusion

Though Sørensen may have borrowed the phraseology for “Turning the Oppression Upside Down” from the medieval European carnival idiom “World Turned Upside Down” (Peter Burke in Hart 2007, 4), she does not discuss the use of carnival nor the process of conversion in her thesis. During carnival festivities all participants were considered equal and free to socialize with people of different social classes (Mikhail Bakhtin in Hart 2007, 4). Furthermore, these festivities invited political and social protest, as long as the protest was done jokingly. Members of the urban lower classes could openly mock the ruling elite (Hart 2007, 4).

Scholars have noted a major recent shift toward creating a joyful, egalitarian, pleasurable, and humorous carnival atmosphere by modern-day activists (Shepherd 2005, 1, 8). Nonviolent social movements of the Western world have increasingly used carnivalesque humor since ACT UP began in 1987 (Shepard 2005, 435). Many aspects of this increasingly popular approach align with the values of principled nonviolence, whose practitioners prefer to bring their opponent into agreement often through dialogue and persuasion and at times through more strictly emotionally routes (Weber 1993). They respect their opponent’s free will and desire to encourage conversion while avoiding coercion when possible. This type of humor can prove “enormously effective” in reaching a wide swath of the public, “because of its emphasis on the shared human background of the oppressors and oppressed” (Hart 2007, 18).48 Modern carnivalesque humor breaks and often reorganizes social power structures with even less restrictions than carnival,

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48 A well-known example of a nonviolent event utilizing carnivalesque humor is the “alter-globalist” protests in Seattle during the World Trade Organization meeting in 1999 (Hart 2007, 18).
which was limited in location and duration. Carnival lasted a set number of days and was over. Activists using carnivalesque humor point out similarities between themselves and members of the opponent group with the hopes of engaging the police and others in dialogue. Carnivalesque humor often, though not always, employs the life-affirming “hand” of nonviolence that reaches out to the common humanity between peoples. Emphasizing shared humanness rather than antagonism can level power and possibly encourage conversion. Branagan argues that some particular humorous activism can create settings that are conducive to conversion, to convincing one’s opponents that the activists’ cause is right and worth pursuing (2007, 6). He writes that activism characterized by playfulness, experimentation, diversity, freedom, ambiguity, lessened obedience to authority and collective camaraderie may draw members of the opponent group, particularly those who come in direct contact with activists, to sympathize with resisters (Branagan 2007, 6).

3.5 Target and Foci: Understanding Humorous Nonviolent Attack

The prevalence of carnivalesque humor in modern times points to a growing interest in positivity and even in sharing positive experiences with those typically considered to be the opponent. One aspect of a positive experience that relates to waging social conflict is aggression and innocence.
Determining the aggressiveness or innocence of a humorous action or expression may prove to be strategically wise.\textsuperscript{49} The degree of aggression may be determined in large part by examining what or who the nonviolent activists are targeting. I have already mentioned how activists work to contrast their behavior with that of their opponent.

When considering political targets, Paletz proposes a set of target distinctions between five levels of political authority: individual persons, the policies the authority promotes, the authority position itself, the institution housing the position, and the larger political system (Paletz 1990, 485). Otpor’s public action, “It is Rotten, It’s Going to Fall” is a good example of targeting individual political persons. Otpor activists set two pumpkins carved to caricature Milošević and his wife Mirjana “Mira” Marković in a tree and then shook the tree to bring the pumpkins to a doomed fall (Sørensen 2006, 23). Another of Otpor’s actions “Dinar za Smenu” meaning “Dinar for Resignation”\textsuperscript{50} added an additional type of target. This action was repeated in several places around Serbia. Through “Dinar za Smenu,” Otpor activists invited people to donate a dinar so that they could use a stick to hit a barrel plastered with a photo of Milošević on it (Sørensen 2006, 22). In one place, Otpor displayed a sign encouraging people who did not have any money because of Milošević to bang the barrel twice (Sørensen 2006, 22). The police would inevitably come to remove the barrel. Otpor gave press releases stating that the police had arrested the barrel (Sørensen 2006, 22). The action served as a mockery of Milošević’s request for citizens to donate money to help the country’s struggling

\textsuperscript{49} This may be particularly true from a conflict transformation perspective because members of this school of thought are concerned with the long-term, interpersonal and group relationships nested within social systems.

\textsuperscript{50} A dinar is a unit of currency in Serbia. The title could also be translated to mean “Dinar for Change,” or roughly “A Dime for Resignation.”
agricultural sector (Sørensen 2006, 22). I would say that this action targeted an individual (President Milošević) and a policy (request for donations). Sørensen supports the view of aggression as being determined by what or who the activists target: “If it is no longer based on wit and intelligence but too much on provocation, it ceases to be funny, and the general public will lose sympathy” (Sørensen 2006, 40). This is Sørensen’s only statement about measuring aggressiveness of humor. The loss of sympathy she speaks of is likely due to lack of engaging the “paradox of repression.”

Another way to view provocative or aggressive humor is to look at its foci. While the target of humor is who or what level the humor aims to impact, the focus of political humor is the “particular aspect or element of the authority level the humor emphasizes…In the case of individual authorit[ies], the foci tend to be their hollow rhetoric, crass pieties, and…their betrayal of principles” (Paletz 1990, 485). Some foci are more damaging than others, with new or unexpected foci alerting or challenging the public to grapple with the truths of an authority that they may rather avoid (Paletz 1990, 486).

Sørensen’s informants from Otpor did not explicitly distinguish between attacking the oppressive system and refraining from attacking the oppressor as a person. However, Sørensen writes that most of Otpor’s humor was not very aggressive, though “actions like banging the barrel with Milošević’s photo have an aggressive element” (2006, 38). A good example of one of Otpor’s satiric public actions that Sørensen deemed provocative without being aggressive was the group’s response to “Mira” Marković’s statement that the Communists came to power with blood, so they would not leave power without blood
(Sørensen 2006, 23, 38). Otpor activists went to the hospital, donated blood, and gave the statement: “Here is our blood, now you can go” (Sørensen 2006, 23).

### 3.6 The Ironic Link between Carnivalesque Humor and Self-Suffering

There is a rather ironic link between how Gandhi and his fellow principled nonviolent theorists view self-suffering as essential to conversion and how members of the new community activism view joy, pleasure, and humor to be the key to conversion. The common aim of both self-suffering and humor in a carnival setting is the transcendence of rationality. Ghandian theorist Joan Bondurant says the role of self-suffering is to “cut through the rationalized defenses of the opponent” (Bondurant in Weber 1993, 269). Gandhi believed that an “appeal of reason is more to the head, but penetration of the heart comes from suffering. It opens up the inner understanding of man” (Gandhi in Weber 1993, 269-270). Weber concludes that while self-suffering does not often, if ever penetrate the opponent directly, it may still reach their hearts and jumpstart the process of conversion (or lead to accommodation) through the workings of third parties that are capable of shrinking the social distance between the oppressor and the oppressed (Weber, 282). Public opinion and the views of people closer to the oppressor may be impacted by the self-suffering and they may subsequently impact the oppressor. For Gandhi, the sheer force of character and suffering aim to convert the opponent (Weber, 269). Regarding humor, Brigham tells us that there are insights that can only be reached through absurdity, that logic cannot touch because rationality must first be transcended (Brigham in Sørensen 2006, 9). Hart argue that “[c]riticism expressed in a joking manner is more difficult to refute by rational arguments” (2007, 8). Berger
contends that there are similarities between the comic and religious experiences because both transcend differences between different realities (1997). “The comic conjures up a separate world, different from the world of the ordinary reality, operating by different rules. It is a world in which the limitations of the human condition are miraculously overcome” (Berger 1997, x). Making the connection between some humorous expressions and medieval European carnival, Berger points out that humor can achieve social reorganization so profoundly it is as if the comic births a new world, one that operates outside the rules of rationality as indicated by the word “miraculously.”
4 Analysis

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I analyze my primary and secondary data, using the theoretical frameworks laid out in Chapter 3, the Literature Review. To briefly review, just as most theories of humor’s roles in strategic nonviolence can be organized within Sørensen’s threefold theory of humor’s major functions in nonviolent action (Sørensen 2006), my data can be organized according to three major strategies: provocation (Section 4.2), transformation (Section 4.3) and collaboration (Section 4.4).51 The argument is that activists can successfully carry out nonviolent struggle using these strategies, the first of which has an offensive approach and the latter two having a constructive approach. The complementary side of the argument is that humor carries inherent weaknesses and surmountable limitations in the context of real-world strategic nonviolence. I leave my final cumulative analysis for the Conclusion.

The structure of this chapter follows the argument closely. I begin by discussing how activists use humor to offensively provoke their opponent and thus force them to forfeit sources of power, often authority (loss of face) and social capital (supporters and their skills). The offensive was the predominant approach used by Otpor. Otpor activists coerced the opponent most often with their famed dilemma actions, public actions that divert sources of power whether or not the opponent reacts and that often turn the opponent’s reaction against them.

51 A fourth major function is “defense” against fear and repression. I chose not to discuss this function because it is the most widely known function of humor and is less in need of my energies than the other three functions.
Next, I discuss how Otpor activists used humor to transform paradigms and feelings that hinder social change such as the view that political power is monolithic and resulting apathy or fear of social change. Transformation is defined as an internal process resulting in a change from resignation to aspiration and from dominating rationality to freedom from its domination. It applies at both the group and individual level. Transformative humor can either help more deeply engage the rational mind or usurp rationality altogether to generate a more complete experience of the world. Both of these functions are important in fighting injustice and fear.

In the third section, I discuss how activists can use humor and strategic nonviolence to reinvigorate a people and thus operate as a collaborative force. By reinvigorate a people, I mean strategically working to encourage trust and collaboration throughout all sections of society (regime, police, activists, and bystanders). Such widespread collaboration is necessary for large-scale social change during strategic nonviolence and continuing after the fall of the regime when parallel institutions are being built or reinforced. This is especially true for hopeful democracies. I discuss how Otpor used humor to build trust through laughing with police rather than at them, to encourage people to be more open to persuasion, to achieve emotional balance (as a complement to provocative humor) for activists and to draw police officers into dialogue with activists. Otpor activists clearly utilized this approach less fervently than the offensive approach, but some did indeed put forth special efforts to encourage collaboration especially as their campaigns progressed.
In Section four, I analyze humor’s inherent weaknesses and conditional limitations. I discuss Otpor’s strategic responses that overcame some of the conditional limitations. Theoretical frameworks used in this section include culture as bounded, the paradox of repression, Sørensen’s “culture of resistance,” conditional self-worth and the nature of targets (Sørensen 2006; McGee 2003). The data reveal that the inherent weaknesses of humor because of contextual boundaries, the way in which individual activists discounted it when they were isolated from other activists and the risks of directly provocative humor, including its tendency to ostracize those it targets. This section details some ways that Otpor addressed some of these weaknesses successfully with a supportive “culture of resistance,” informal focus groups and continual collection of feedback, and the paradox of repression. And lastly I discuss Otpor’s attempts to reach a balance between humor and seriousness, which suggests that humor alone cannot achieve all the compulsory goals of agents of social change.

4.2 Humor: An Offensive Weapon

This section of analysis relates to Otpor’s use of “power over.” In it, I analyze Otpor’s offensive strategy centering around provocation. According to Marović: “The essence of politics is actually having people do things that they wouldn’t do otherwise. It’s sometimes done through coercion” (Dec 4). To review, Sharp’s definition of nonviolent coercion is the use of force to compel or restrict the opponent’s options (2005, 19). Sørensen said that dilemma actions made it so that “no matter what [responding authorities] do, they will regret it…the police would be forced to become part of the
action.” Likewise, Marović said dilemma actions put the opponent in a position in which “neither choice is optimal.”

Provocation was the backbone of Otpor’s offensive strategy. Maintaining the offensive through proactive attacks is a key element of winning any struggle. The opponent is not going to surrender or change their mind voluntarily or at least not in the amount of time that is typically viewed as acceptable. An effective offensive strategy is necessary for this to occur. Gandhi, who is considered the father of principled nonviolence, said: “An able general always gives battle in his own time on the ground of his choice. He always retains the initiative in these respects and never allows it to pass into the hands of the enemy” (Gandhi in Sharp 1973, 500). My data indicates that Otpor’s offensive strategy took two basic modes: the traditional offensive and the adaptive offensive. The traditional offensive is making an initial provocative maneuver, in part by creating original, unexpected, quickly produced public actions and graphics that are not in direct response to any repression aimed at the activist group. Marović asserted: “Otpor’s tactics were fresh…we want to do something that nobody did before.” The adaptive offensive is using the opponent’s own efforts against him. Though built off of repressive acts by the opponent, activists maintain the element of surprise in the adaptive offensive by deflecting and redirecting their force right back at them. Such deflection of force is also known as “political ju-jitsu.”

52 Sørensen Interview.
53 Marović interview, November 5, 2009.
54 Ibid.
4.2.1 Diverting the Sources of Power

Offensive strategies often aim to attain something the opponent has by taking it from them. This holds true for nonviolent struggle. The goal of both offensive modes is to provoke a self-destructive reaction from the opponent and thus remove their sources of power. According to Sharp, sources of political power can be organized into categories: authority, human resources, skills and knowledge, intangible factors, material resources, and sanctions (2005, 419, 421). I found humor to be especially useful in redirecting the first three of these sources from the authoritarian regime to the people. Authority is the “ability to issue a command and have people submit to it” (Sharp in Popović et al 2007, 28). Authority is also the power of being perceived as legitimate, often in an official manner. Berger asserts that humor “debunks all pretensions, including the pretensions of the sacred. The comic, therefore, is dangerous to all established order” (1997, 16). Otpor continually undermined Milošević’s authority with humorous slogans (“Slobo, save Serbia! Kill yourself!”), actions, and graphics. “Human resources” can be combined with “skills and knowledge” and referred to as social capital because these go hand-in-hand, if one is captured the other comes with it. Social capital includes the number of people and type of skills your supporters have to offer (i.e. marketing). Serbs removed their support and skill from Milošević’s regime and Otpor helped them to realize that they had the power to do so. This serves as evidence that Otpor had succeeded in diverting social capital right from beneath the regime’s nose. And during the opposition’s final campaigns in October 2000, another major diversion of social capital was the willful
strike of 7,500 workers at the Kolubara coal mines 40 miles south of Belgrade who vowed not to return to work until Milošević stepped down (Paulson 2005, 327).

One way to discuss the diversion of authority and social capital is as loss of face. Just as activists often work to produce and maintain an image of innocence, they seek to place their opponent in a position in which they will inevitably lose face. Forced loss of face with the public can be described as subtracting face and forced loss of face with the regime’s own supporters can be described as fracturing because it involves dividing the opponent’s forces. These phenomena are mutually-reinforcing or positively correlated so that when one increases or decreases, the other is likely to do the same. Otpor sought to further widen the rift between Milošević’s supporters and his wife, “Mira” Marković. Even strong supporters of Milošević typically did not like or support Marković or other Yugoslav Left politicians. As both a personal link to Milošević and the leader of the Yugoslav Left, Marović and Popović both said Marković was likely the individual that Otpor targeted second most, only after the dictator himself. Milošević awarded government posts to members of the Yugoslav Left, confusing and aggravating Serbian voters, who knew the Yugoslav Left members had not won the popular vote. Otpor utilized this frustration over political favors. A prime example of Otpor aggravating the relations between Milošević and his supporters with the thorn of Marković was a series of

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55 Marović interview, November 6, 2009.
56 Marović said the Yugoslav Left was ironically filled with “extremely rich people” (Nov 6). Gordy illuminates the context: “Far from having achieved the ‘classless’ society of Marx or even the ‘self-managed’ society promoted in Edvard Kardelj’s revisionism, Yugoslav Communism functioned effectively through cultivating the patronage of political and economic elites, who were often indistinguishable from one another” (1999, 15). Marković was a symbol of the Yugoslav Left and of the corrupt nature of Milošević’s political relationships. Thus, Otpor used her as a wedge in driving apart Milošević’s supporters.
57 Marović interview, November 6, 2009.
get-out-the-vote flyers. The day before the October 2001 elections Otpor handed out flyers that looked like they were produced by the Yugoslav Left. 58 Marković’s (smiling) face was pictured on the front, suggesting people vote for Milošević. 59 Serbs would not take advice from Marković and Otpor knew it. Otpor fomented the frustration over political favors and Marković’s part in them with subtle humor pitting the opponent’s own internal animosities right back at them.

In addition to using Marković as a wedge between Milošević and his supporters, Otpor worked to disband Milošević’s police force. In the public action “Load 2000,” Otpor responded to an earlier police raid of their Belgrade office, in which hundreds of posters, stickers, and office equipment like photocopiers and computers were taken by police without a search warrant (Sørensen 2006, 22; Cevallos 2001, 6). A movement spokesperson announced that Otpor would be receiving a new shipment of materials the next day (Cevallos 2001, 6). When police arrived to confiscate this new “shipment,” they unknowingly seized empty boxes, which embarrassingly flew out of their hands (Sørensen 2006, 22). Marović and Sørensen both said Otpor used this action to reveal a breach in the police’s intelligence and that responding officers attributed the resulting embarrassment to their own leadership getting the facts wrong. 60 Marović said, “[W]e know that they will look silly if they seize empty boxes…when they DID, they weren’t mad at us, because they were like, ‘These are some silly spoiled kids that are driving us crazy,’ but they were really mad at their commanders!” 61 The police were left to wonder

58 Marović interview, November 6, 2009.
59 Ibid.
60 Marović interview, November 5, 2009. And Sørensen Interview.
61 Marović interview, November 5, 2009.
how they could have been so sure this was a real shipment and then be publicly stumped by a bunch of twenty-year-olds. This is but one example of how Otpor encouraged officers’ frustration boiled up the “chain of command” from police officers to commanders to police headquarters and it was hoped, ultimately to regime officials and Milošević. Marović also said that dilemma actions and other demeaning experiences made officers “stop trusting their leadership” as (he believes was) demonstrated by police defections over time.

Delegitimizing the opponent in the public eye by subtracting face is necessary for motivating the silent majority. Intentionally engaging the paradox of repression helps to subtract face, which in turn further frustrates the opponent group. The goal of fracturing is to encourage defections, a release of allegiance to the regime by getting the opponent to delegitimize themselves in the eyes of their own supporters. Fracturing involves turning the members of the opponent group against one another.

Marović and other activists hoped to get even “the closest allies of Milošević” to defect. This was which was a fairly lofty goal considering that the highest risk was for prominent regime supporters (close allies) who defected. Dr. Calingaert indicated that though physical violence against the opposition to Milošević was low compared to repression under other dictators, “the people who were killed were…individuals who had dealings with the Milošević regime or were sort of break-away or even part of it...the

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63 Marović interview, November 6, 2009.
64 Marović interview, November 5, 2009.
65 Dr. Calingaert Interview.
message was going from the regime to their own.”

Thus, as regime supporters began to defect, other regime members became aware of the disappearance of their former colleagues. Despite the high risk of defection for these individuals, many did defect. Twelve days before Milošević’s July 27, 2000 call for presidential election almost a year early, “Otpor received advance word of Milošević’s intentions in secret e-mailed messages from anonymous dissenters within the regime. As a result, Otpor already had more than 60 tons of electoral propaganda ready on July 27” (Cohen 2000, 46).

Additionally, Otpor gained the vital support of enough police commanders and officers that approximately half a million Serbs, many from the provinces, were allowed to peacefully infiltrate Belgrade in May 2000 (Paulson 2005, 334). Despite great odds, Otpor succeeded in fracturing Milošević’s regime and police force.

Otpor often used the same or similar messages to fracture and subtract face. First, Otpor labeled Milošević and his regime as the instigators of Serbia’s suffering. Second and more specifically, Otpor’s actions often implied that police should question their organization’s intelligence and competence. A fairly well-circulated dilemma action illustrates this point.

Otpor’s public actions also consistently implied that the regime and the police were struggling to control themselves. Otpor’s humorous public action, “Load 2000” called into question both the police’s perceived jurisdiction and the integrity of their intelligence. In this action, Otpor both exposed illegal police tactics and highlighted the police’s ineptitude to truly infiltrate Otpor (Cevallos 2001, 6). Otpor encouraged the

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66 Dr. Calingaert Interview.
public to question their arrests by highlighting the contrast between their behavior and that of the police. The regime was perceived as erratic, unfair, even cruel as they arrested, beat, fired tear gas, and otherwise harassed activists doing silly public actions. This draws from the principle of the *adaptive offensive* in that the way to conquer one’s opponent is to “push them out of their balance so that…they don’t look calm anymore. They don’t look like they’re in control. They behave in a way that is erratic.”

Over time, the regime and police, to their detriment, relinquished every factor that allows one to maintain an image of innocence and an air of authority. They thus, with Otpor’s “help,” violated their own public image. “[E]ven those people who were advocating more radical (pro-violence) approach started respecting us because they realized what we were doing, although it looked silly and non-confrontational and it looked maybe weak,… it’s effective.” The effectiveness was demonstrated in the provoked reaction of the regime. “[T]he government pretty much freaked out… using very repressive tactics.” Even some of the strongly pro-violence resisters decided to take up nonviolence and join Otpor. It was precisely because the regime and police took Otpor’s provocative humor so seriously that bystanders began to consider the power of strategic nonviolence and subversive humor.

### 4.2.2 Maintaining the Element of Surprise

The element of surprise is common to both offensive modes. Humor, especially provocative humor as employed by social activists, is almost always based off an

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68 Marović interview, November 6, 2009.
69 Ibid.
opponent’s past actions and decisions. Yet, the exact content and angle with which the comic or humorous activists approach their target can vary greatly, thus taking the opponent by surprise. Otpor took advantage of recent events, often pulling material for jokes and actions from headlines and the regime’s agenda to implicate them further.\footnote{Sørensen Interview.} They even staged actions with same-day material, virtually right after the regime put out a statement, started a project, or dealt out some form of repression. For instance, in late 1999 just after the two and a half month long NATO bombing of Serbia, Milošević began a reconstruction and propaganda project.\footnote{Marović interview, November 5, 2009.} In response, Otpor decided to do its own reconstruction and propaganda project. In Kraljevo, the local Otpor branch hosted a big opening of a birdhouse, thus mocking the grandeur (“the folklore and the performance”) with which Milošević’s regime presented minimal improvements to a ghastly war-torn nation from a war the regime itself had instigated. Meanwhile Otpor activists in Novi Sad contested the regime’s “big victory” by dramatically opening a cardboard bridge over a city pond in the park, which was subsequently demolished by the police.\footnote{Marović interview, November 6, 2009.} The demolition only served to reinforce the message of self-destruction and betrayal.

Similarly, while Milošević proclaimed himself a “national hero” and worked to have himself officially recognized as such, Belgrade Otpor activists distributed “I’m a national hero” badges to passers-by (Paulson 2005, 326). If Milošević was a “national hero,” anyone could be. Thus, Otpor made swift, surprising attacks.
The unpredictability of humor is not only appreciated by the public and thus absorbed by the media, but is also feared by the opponent. Operating in the humorous mode while arresting or otherwise responding to activists is altogether foreign to many law enforcement officers, whose very titles are intended to command serious respect. Marović said humorous provocations, by their very nature, can be “totally unexpected” by their target. Humor is thus able to operate as a nonviolent weapon, first by simply catching the authority off-guard. The regime and the police were not trained to deal with many responses other than violent retaliation and certainly not trained to handle humorous provocation. Doing what one is not trained to do typically leads one to increased anxiety and experiences of failure, which then cause a loss of enthusiasm and mounting frustration, cycling back to failure and so on. Making the opponent doubt their ability to uphold law-and-order, their chosen field of service, is an example of coercively wielding uncertainty.

4.2.3 The Adaptive Offensive and Political Ju-jitsu

Unlike the traditional offensive, the adaptive offensive may begin with a repressive action directed at the activists by the opponent. Sørensen said the offensive is to “keep pushing…Don’t let them think that they can get away with [oppressing the people]…don’t give them even a minute to sit down and rest.” Activists need to turn every attack of their opponent to their advantage, rarely being satisfied simply with a defensive maneuver. What characterizes the adaptive offensive is putting the opponent in

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73 Marović interview, November 5, 2009.
74 Marović interview, November 6, 2009.
75 Sørensen Interview.
a lose-lose situation that uses the opponent’s own force against them. In nonviolent action, this means allowing or encouraging the violent repression to engage the paradox of repression (Smithey and Kurtz 1999, 111). After each direct attack from the regime, Otpor kept up a steady onslaught of public actions and demeaning graphics, accompanied by press releases. They drew attention to the opponent’s dangerous qualities, destructive decisions, their mistakes, incongruities, and deceit. And yet they conserved their own energies by letting the regime and police make fools of themselves. The “Load 2000” action is a literal example of the energy conserving attack of Otpor upon the police’s public image. Otpor activists simply highlighted the absurdities of the current political system in an often amusing fashion. Otpor’s mock reconstruction projects that were demolished by the police serve as another prime example.

4.2.4 Street Theatre and Dilemma Actions

Nonviolent activists, like all parties in large-scale conflict need to continually monitor the changing political landscape and shift their approach accordingly. According to their strategic analysis, Otpor activists increased the interactive nature of their public actions over time. Otpor’s public actions began mainly with common street theatre. They carved two pumpkins to caricature Milošević and Marković, put them up in a tree and shook them to their doomed fall (Sørensen 2006, 23). These public acts of resistance were funny, media-savvy, and performable just about anywhere. They sometimes invoked the paradox of repression and often generated a positive feedback loop. “If you make fun of somebody and that somebody is really mad because of that and he starts hitting you, you’re not going to hit back, you’re going to continue laughing. Because that
hurts more.” The positive feedback loop created by humorous provocation occurs because activists’ victories and subsequent celebrations foment the opponent’s frustration, which increases activists’ confidence, which continues to frustrate the opponent and so forth. Thus, Otpor used street theatre to escalate the conflict with the regime by gaining more support right beneath the regime’s feet.

Nevertheless, it was Otpor’s ingenuity in designing and implementing dilemma actions that make humorous provocation one of Otpor’s greatest legacies. Marović said dilemma actions were a “natural upgrade to the idea of action…. [W]e never got as much attention from [classic street theatre] as we did from the street theatre that didn’t involve just us, but also the police as representatives of the regime took part unwillingly in the theatre. And that created more interest. So people were, ‘Wow! This is like something completely new!’” For example, in “Dinar za Smenu,” activists placed a barrel plastered with Milošević’s picture on a street corner alongside a sign that said: “If you have a dinar give it for Milošević’s retirement and bang the barrel once. If you don’t have the dinar (because of Milošević) then bang the barrel twice!” (Sørensen 2006, 22). They had a stick at the ready with which to strike (“bang”) the barrel, doing which created a lot of noise, drawing more people in and summoning the police, who once on scene were at a bit of a loss as to how to respond. The police “had to do something about it…so they

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76 Marović interview, December 4, 2009.
77 Ibid.
78 George Lakey coined the term dilemma demonstration in his book Strategy for a Living Revolution (E-mail correspondence from George Lakey on April 21, 2010). Robert Helvey may have adjusted the term to dilemma action. Popović first heard the term dilemma action from Robert Helvey, retired colonel of U.S. army, one of Gene Sharp’s closest associates and president of the Albert Einstein Institution and previous consultant to Otpor (Popović e-mail, April 19, 2010).
79 Marović interview, November 5, 2009.
decided to remove the barrel, which we used then for our ‘production’ that we called it.”\textsuperscript{80} Otpor’s subsequent press release described the police as ridiculously arresting the barrel (as well as activists). Interaction between activists and the police, in which the typically low-power activist group had the obvious lead is intriguing and likely quite refreshing for the vast majority of observers. Marović continued: “[T]he regular actions that we did before were just funny, but they never scared the regime in such a way and they never created this sort of a challenge.”\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Dilemma actions} raised the stakes for the opponent by forcing them into lose-lose situations, often utilizing provocative humor.

Using humor this way disarms foes by revealing qualities or vulnerabilities that they work hard to keep concealed (Koller 1988, 20). The reality that Milošević and his regime had led Serbs into a depressing economic period was brought to a clanging street stage entrance. If an oppressive authority refrains from intervening in a\textit{ dilemma action}, the nonviolent activist group’s original message is successfully disseminated. If authorities choose to disrupt the action they unwittingly become actors in a street play directed by the activists and “citizens will be encouraged to mock [the] opponent even harder.”\textsuperscript{82} The opponent reveals their fear and weaknesses in needing to prevent the activists’ plans from developing. However they choose to react, activists have them trapped in the “‘dilemma action’ loop,” a more complex positive feedback loop than the ones created by regular street theatre actions because it is double-edged. With regard to the “Load 2000” action, if the police had chosen not to confiscate the new “shipment,”

\begin{flushleft}
80 Marović interview, November 5, 2009.
81 Ibid.
82 Popović e-mail, April 15, 2010.
\end{flushleft}
Otpor would likely have received a true shipment soon thereafter and continued to create and disseminate new resistance materials without a problem. And when the police chose to confiscate the new false shipment, they ended up in an embarrassing situation, revealing that their spy had been found out. “Dinar za Smenu” provides a second example. The police took the barrel and arrested activists making for a rather comical discussion in Otpor’s press release about arresting the barrel and a raising of awareness about police oppression. Had the police left the barrel, it is safe to assume that the crowd would have grown even larger and thus more people would have been emboldened to resist.

Marović said the police who responded to “Dinar za Smenu” “didn’t know what to do…more people were coming and banging the barrel and it created even more interest …they had to do something about it. They couldn’t just leave it there.”83 Being uncertain of what to do, yet knowing one needs to respond somehow is a pressure-laden state of being. When faced with such a lose-lose situation, oppressive authorities are rendered unsure of how to proceed and then stunned when activists succeed in their attack. They are coercively struck with uncertainty as Schelling proposes (Schelling in Curle 1971, 6). The high-risk nature of lose-lose situations like dilemma actions likely make members of the opponent group feel locked into their own position or struggling to fight a desire to escape from the pressure of carrying out an authoritarian regime’s oppressive agenda.

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83 Marović interview, November 5, 2009.
4.2.5 Otpor’s Provocative Humor as a Continuum

A significant portion of my primary data came to center around the multifaceted nature of Otpor’s humor. I learned a host of words the activists used and that scholars use to describe their humorous actions and graphics. The major descriptive continuum that emerged ranges from straight-forward humor to subtle humor or wit. Whether direct, indirect, or somewhere in between, all of Otpor’s provocative humor aimed to provoke the regime and to provoke fellow Serbs to engage in the resistance movement. I analyze the details of the continuum here including its nature, the pros and cons of each of its poles and important cultural geographic considerations.

Direct provocation means that the provocative intent of a statement or action is clear to most if not all viewers either because the provocation involves a more personal attack, allusions to violence or mock violence, or some other factor. “Everybody realizes that this is an act of provocation.”\(^{84}\) The humor used to directly provoke was described by my informants as straight-forward, simple, in-your-face and finger-in-the-eye. It relies on widely if not universally understood symbols, ideas and dynamics. When and where straight-forward humor was used, the message was usually: “These people are REALLY bad for Serbia and...just bad in general. They are ignorant, untruthful, and untrustworthy.” For example, one of Otpor’s slogans was “Slobo Save Serbia, Kill Yourself!” A good graphic example of straight-forward humor was a cardboard cut-out of Milošević that was very official and realistic except for a slight alteration of one of his hands to flash the middle finger and an added message bubble saying: “I’ll take care of

\(^{84}\) Marović interview, December 4, 2009.
your future." And the typical, one-sided, punitive response of authorities, to harass and/or imprison activists for such actions ironically reinforced this simple message to the benefit of activists. Highlighting the simplicity of these types of humorous actions is not to say that activists did not have far-reaching hopes for directly insulting actions. On the contrary, these actions worked to strip away the myths that Milošević was untouchable, invincible, or just a part of life in Serbia (Serwer in York and Zimmerman 2001). For Serbians still loyal to the demagogue, it is a toss-up as to whether or not direct insults to Milošević would lead to a *subtracting of face*. But they may have jolted the more ‘neutral’ Serbs from their resigned stupor, goading them to question Milošević and his regime. In the least, over time, directly insulting actions and graphics show that a growing number of people do not trust or want authoritarian regimes and that these people are willing risk persecution so they can say so.

One “straight-forwardly” humorous action, was undertaken by activists in Kragujevac. The activists decided to ‘celebrate’ “Mira” Marković on her birthday with a special living display. They paraded a turkey with a flower in its feathers to resemble “Mira” down the street. In Serbia, turkeys are the archetypal equivalent of pigs in America: stupid, despised animals and “Mira”’s “trademark” was a flower in her hair. The “celebratory” message was that “Mira” could go where she pleased, but she was still a “dumb bird.” Had the insulting action stopped there, it would have been more in the order of classic street theatre, but Otpor had by this point upped the ante to dilemma

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85 E-mail correspondence from Srdja Popović, February 6, 2010.
86 Dr. Calingaert Interview.
87 Marović interview, November 5, 2009. And e-mail correspondence from Marović, April 12, 2010.
actions. So when the police came to arrest the activists and remove the turkey, Otpor protested the “arrest” of the turkey as an animal rights issue. “[W]e suspected the police is going to eat the turkey…we were going to have…to protect the turkey from being eaten.”88 They added another theatrical layer when they put out a press release saying they had sent letters to Brigitte Bardot, a French actress and model turned animal rights activist.89

For Marović, the “Mira is a Turkey” action was not the best example of direct provocation. First, Marović contends that this action was humorous and therefore its inherent image of innocence was enough to make it indirect. Marović stated that the “Mira is a Turkey” action was a good example of humorous provocation because it could incite an incriminating reaction from its target while appearing harmless and silly to the general public. “Nobody else except, “Mira” Marković, Milošević’s wife will be insulted with that [action]. They will call it childish or whatever…she is the one that is mad.”90 Secondly, Marović points out the symbolic nature of Marković. “I'm sure there were people for whom that was ‘going too far,’ but since “Mira” was in a position of authority, humor [that] puts her down seemed appropriate. She wasn't just a lady we were nasty to, she was a first lady and the one that exercised power not because she was elected, but because she was married.”91 Symbolism widens the target or rather increases the range of foci that activists can attack simultaneously. Thus, symbolic targets may depersonalize the provocation. Thus, with this action, Otpor sought to make a statement against non-

88 Marović interview, November 5, 2009.
89 Ibid.
90 Marović interview, December 4, 2009.
91 E-mail correspondence from Ivan Marović, April 15, 2010.
meritocratic processes and eradicate the perceived injustice of giving a position of power to one who has not demonstrated responsible leadership capabilities. Some fore-sighted activists may have seen these actions as a way of preventing “Mira” and the Yugoslav Left from entering the power vacuum that often occurs after an authoritarian regime is overthrown. Despite these factors, I argue that this action is a clear example of direct provocation because it targets a single person, not any policy, ideological system, or even a group of persons.

Marović would likely agree that this next action is clearly an example of direct provocation and straight-forward humor. Sørensen’s informants told her that some Otpor activists would bark like dogs at police passing by “to indicate that the police were behaving like Milošević’s dogs.” The physical stance and jarring nature of barking give a provocative tone. And the action could be interpreted as an allusion to violent dog attacks. Sorensen describes the following brief action as one of Otpor’s rare acts of aggression. The action focused on the police themselves, not specific behaviors, but upon dehumanizing the police by comparing them to animals, beings that are less than human. It insinuated their unequivocal obedience to Milošević was bad, but did not clearly state their behavior as the problem or attempt to show why their obedience was detrimental to the people. Thus, this “Milošević’s Dogs” action is an example of direct provocation with police as both the target and the focus of the ridicule.

The “Dinar za Smenu” action exhibited both subtle and straight-forward humor. Marović’s reflection on the action: “[I]f you put the barrel in the street and you do you

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92 Sørensen Interview.
93 Ibid.
know, crazy, silly things and you get arrested, then people are going to say: ‘They are arresting people that are not dangerous.’ That’s another level of provocation, the same as stepping on somebody’s foot.” Marović believed strongly that Otpor’s image of innocence was powerful enough to mask the action’s provocative intent or at least to contrast with the police’s behavior. He focused on the humorous, “crazy silly,” aspect of the action as the foundation for its image of innocence and upon the paradox of repression. I consider “Dinar za Smenu” to be a hybrid or middle of the continuum action because it combines both subtle and straight-forward humor. Hitting a barrel with a picture of Milošević’s face plastered to it is outright personally insulting. Even viewers unfamiliar with Milošević, Otpor, and the cultural context of Serbia could recognize this act as insulting. The wittiness comes in as activists encourage passersby to support Milošević’s retirement with funds as opposed to his suggestion of supporting the agricultural sector. The action encouraged people to ask just what Milošević was doing with the money he was already collecting and how had the country gotten into one of the most horrible inflation problems of the twentieth century. This action’s message to Milošević: “You will help the agricultural system and all of us if you leave. So get outta here!” The action’s message to the public: “We’re better off without Milošević. He’s a liar and a cheat.” Combining both clearly provocative and subtle, contextually-based elements made this action popular and memorable. Middle-of-the-continuum actions may engage the most people (compared to purely subtle or purely straight-forward actions) if other determining factors (i.e. location of the action) are conducive as well.

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On the opposite end of my descriptive continuum, indirect provocation requires a more complex analysis to determine the intent of the humorous action or graphic. No doubt, these actions required more familiarity with their political and cultural context and often for full effect, access to daily (sometimes local) news. Therefore not all viewers had equal ability to understand and appreciate subtly humorous actions. Humor used to indirectly provoke was described as witty, on the edge, bright, straight-to-the-head, intellectual, even non-confrontational and charming by my informants. An excellent example of one of Otpor’s indirectly provocative, witty public actions was when the activists proclaimed they were going to join the Socialist Party. Marović described the action as “doing things that look perfectly serious, but there is a deeper humor behind it.”95 In the spring of 2000, Otpor activists announced that they were going to collectively join the Socialist Party. At first glance, one might think that the activists were truly joining the Socialist Party as a way of appeasing the Socialist Party. Perhaps, Otpor had diplomatically come to understanding with the party. A more likely reaction was probably to look a little harder, to inquire: What are they up to this time? Viewers were drawn in, desiring to know why the activists were trying to join the Socialist Party, the very party whose leader they’re trying to oust. Activists actually went to the local offices of the Socialist Party and asked to enlist. They were refused membership by local party officers, Marović believes “because they didn’t know what (else) to do” and yet a week after the attempted join, Otpor would issue a press release saying: “We managed to get

95 Marović interview, November 5, 2009.
like 500 people in.” 96 Otpor was able to irritably provoke some party officials, possibly amuse others and engage the public’s curiosity. Marović said “the provocation was put to a much bigger level” with this action because it elicited more thought and went beyond such messages as: “You are a bunch of turkeys! (and therefore we think you’re stupid)!“97 “[I]nstead of saying, ‘We don’t like you’…We say, ‘We like you’.” The ambiguity of sarcasm “actually helped us win over people who were not decided…because it wasn’t confrontational on our side…we looked kind of charming to them,” likely unallied bystanders.98 Such indirect provocation that required some thinking was strongly believed by Otpor activists to help Otpor win people over, especially the undecided.

Subtle humor in conjunction with nonviolence was more recognized by my informants as appealing to the Serbian public than straight-forward humor. There is now a stark contrast not only between nonviolence and violence, but also between the depth of intelligent planning displayed by the activists’ actions and the comparatively shallow, sometimes seemingly haphazard responses of the police and regime. “Otpor as a movement looked like somebody who is smart enough to outsmart the police.”99 Sørensen agreed: “[G]enerally I would say that ‘aggression’ is not what makes the humor work, or make it productive…what is really useful…is to show you are more clever than they are. To use wit and it’s like turning the words and twisting the words…that’s

96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
actually what people prefer in my impressions." Marović explained: “[H]ow can you be polite and the other to be erratic? The way to do it is to make a soft humorous provocation” that angers or otherwise riles up the targeted person, but that others will not recognize as offensive. Likewise, Marović also suggested that indirect insults should be used so that repression does not look “justified.”

Preferences for different types of humor are culturally and therefore also often geographically influenced. Otpor’s different branches chose humor that would have local appeal for their actions. “[I]f we talk about more subtle and more intellectual humor that was more in Belgrade and Vojvodina. And in south Serbia, it was more what can be called like ‘peasants’ humor.” Urban branches of Otpor typically produced more subtle, witty humorous actions and graphics than did rural branches of Otpor. Rural branches may have produced more straight-forward humor than the urban branches, but likely to a lesser extent because understanding such humor is not limited to a certain (elite) group. It is less appreciated by some, but even those who disapprove of straight-forward humor can understand it so straight-forward humor can be used to reach a wider group of people than subtle humor. Marović’s consistent discussion of the image of innocence, indirect insults and the overall impression I got from Marović as an intellectual, himself, leads me to believe that he preferred witty actions to straight-forward ones and was likely involved with more of the former than the latter. Yet interestingly, Marović still defended the usage of straight-forward humorous actions and

100 Sørensen Interview.
102 Marović interview, November 6, 2009.
minimized the face damage that may have been done by this type of humor simply because the weapon used was humor. Though he acknowledged that many intellectuals disliked such straight-forward humor, Marović never said that he disliked it. Marović, himself, laughed at the “Mira is a Turkey” action.103 Indeed, the increasingly clever layers of this dilemma action may have been the redeeming quality for Marović as an intellectual. For example, the press release about letters being written to Brigitte Bardot may not be described as strongly witty, but certainly as clever and creative.

It is also possible, and I hold this to be true, that straight-forward humor is not only found to be funny or appealing by peasants, but also by some if not many intellectuals. Activists from rural areas of Serbia may enjoy and share more straight-forward humor than intellectuals and urban elites do because they have a freedom not available to elitists. Peasants like other individuals from lower social status need not fear being catapulted from the top of the social ladder simply for saying something other elitists consider crass. Therefore, straight-forward humor can be seen not only as a champion of simplicity, but also an ironically deep expression of freedom from class maintenance. Peasants, young people and others with lower social status can say things that those with higher status may want to say, but are unable to say without a loss of face. This is not to say that subtly, indirectly provocative humor does not have its own strengths and my informants certainly all agreed that in their experience, more Serbs, at least urban Serbs, preferred this type of humor. And as I will later explain, I believe that subtle humor also risks less serious danger than directly provocative humor.

103 Marović interview, November 5, 2009.
4.3 Humor: A Transformative Entity

Conflicts are rooted in the philosophy that there are collective patterns of thinking and interacting that need to be radically transformed in order for sustainable peace to be established (Lederach 2003, 21). Structural transformation, which is typically a long-term endeavor involves both individual and group change. This section of analysis relates to Otpor’s use of “power with” and at times “power over” to transform peoples’ paradigms of social order and in so doing expand their experience of reality. Drawing from Lederach’s definition of conflict transformation, transformation as it is used here is the collaborative process by which peoples’ paradigms of reality (worldviews) change from resignation to aspiration, from a plane dominated by rationality to one free from its tyranny.

This section relies on the theoretical framework of “power with,” a phoenix-like metaphor of necessary death to create new life through targeting impersonal entities and people. Successful transformation allows people to go beyond their limited personal experiences and to dream up alternative possibilities. Transformative humor conjures up a “counter-world.” Activists can take one of two angles toward rationality. They either engage the rational mind more deeply or usurp rationality altogether. With the former, illogical situations are viewed as purely unsolved, but yet solvable puzzles that can be understood rationally with the right humorous angle. With the latter, humorists

104 To review, Lederach’s definition of conflict transformation is “to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships” (2003, 14).
marginalize or relativize rationality, revealing its limits and suggesting that it must be surpassed entirely.

4.3.1 Humor: From Death to Life

Marović described much of Otpor’s humor as sardonic. The word “sardonic” stems from a Sardinian plant, which when eaten causes rigorous laughter, but eventually kills the person who eats it (“sardonic”). This at first morbid botanical fact creates a useful analogy in explaining transformative humor. Otpor projected sardonic humor at targets (select members of the opponent group) and at peoples’ relative comfort as well as their paradigms of authority. Take for example, Otpor’s first national convention, which parodied the Socialist Party’s convention (York and Zimmerman 2001). Those in attendance included “major opposition party leaders…a few journalists willing to risk prosecution for publicizing an illegal organization” and Otpor activists representing over 70 cities around Serbia (York and Zimmerman 2001). “Storm-trooper uniforms and trench coats…black leather coats…And dimmed lights!” set an atmosphere of suspense, mystery and toughness to match any opponent even a ruthless dictator. The imagery was reminiscent of Lenin’s socialist revolutionary speeches (likely of his “April Theses” manifesto) in St. Petersburg, Russia, a familiar historical event for many Serbs.

Marović describes this atmosphere as a “provocation that people found funny because…

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105 Marović indicated that “sardonic humor” was a much more appropriate phraseology than the “aggressive humor” term I had suggested. Sardinia is an island in the Mediterranean Sea.
106 Also called Otpor’s founding Congress held on February 17, 2000 (Paulson 2005, 319; Marović in York and Zimmerman 2001).
107 Serbia’s Socialist Party held its fifth Congress to re-elect Milošević as its president, claiming a democratic election that was widely known to be fake (York and Zimmerman 2001). Otpor held their first national convention on the same evening (York and Zimmerman 2001).
109 Marović interview, November 6, 2009.
they felt very uneasy about it…It’s sardonic humor.” Similarly, the narrator of “Bringing Down a Dictator” describes the setting as “shock therapy…sinister but it’s all part of the show” (York 2001). While serious resolutions were adopted including a request of all Otpor branches to “cooperate with other local democratic forces…independent media, unions and NGOs,” the humor was not lost on Otpor. One Otpor activist, Milivojevic, who declared with all seriousness to the Convention: “I am a hooligan and a punk walking at night across a country of death notices, disturbing the public by putting up posters that say, ‘Resistance, because I love Serbia.’ I am a drug addict. I am addicted to freedom and every day I need more of it!” (quotation translated from Serbian to English, York 2001). Otpor’s theatrically sardonic presentation hooked the attention of the nation, at once shockingly drawing attention to their blind eye for corrupt politics and still expressing the serious intentions of their campaign.

Some argue that tactics less dark and biting than sardonic humor work better to achieve social change. Gandhi, for example, warned against provoking or humiliating the oppressor since doing so can increase the chances of a violent response (Gandhi in Sørensen 2006, 38). Are not fear, embarrassment and surely humiliation forms of psychological pain, a means of coercing someone to do something against their will? Yes, creating cognitive dissonance, however minimal, can be a form of coercion. Yet, two analytical frames are important in response.

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First, much depends upon the exact messages that are being promulgated. Though sardonic humor “has a double meaning (and) there’s nothing funny like about it,”\textsuperscript{111} it does not necessarily have to attack persons or even paradigms of oneself. Activists can use sardonic humor to express contempt for political systems and scorn ideologies without directly deriding those responsible for these systems. Otpor’s first “National Convention,” for instance, focused much less on attacking Milošević as an individual and much more upon the Socialist Party’s charade of electing Milošević as their representative. The event had to do with contrasting the values, accountability to the people and authentic enthusiasm of Otpor activists with the hypocritical stoicism of the Socialist Party, who claimed to want the oppressive status quo to continue. Transforming paradigms to make way for social change means the passing away of old paradigms and associated feelings. Specifically, emotional paralysis (resignation as demonstrated by the Socialist Party members who concede) and I will argue the modern view of the world through predominantly rational lenses. With the “National Convention,” Otpor challenged the paradigm of the Socialist Party as the only nationally cohesive organization. The activists showed themselves as having the clout of 70 cities, the uniting force of defined goals and strategies and all in a creative and memorable presentation. The sardonic imagery and messaging sought to squeeze Serbs out of their comfort zone. In presenting both a challenge to viewers and a strong alternative to the Socialist Party, Otpor made way for further social change. The “National Convention” is one example of how death of paradigms and associated psychological pain is the necessary fallow ground

\textsuperscript{111} Marović interview, November 6, 2009.
for renewed hope in justice and motivation to resist. Sardonic humor among other types can thus function as transformative humor.

The second frame that is important in determining whether transformation is coercive or seeking conversion is that sardonic humor is a common thread in the fabric of Serbian culture. As Popović wrote: “[S]erbs are capable of producing and distributing a joke about almost any event in just hours or days after it’s happened…there is almost ‘British like’ appetite for ‘black and ridiculing humor.’”¹¹² It is plausible to assume that sardonic humor is not as likely to offend a Serb as a non-Serb, especially if the humor is aimed at an oppressive authority figure with whom he or she is already far from enamored. The saturation of one’s culture with sardonic humor does not automatically mean that the humor is being used to encourage conversion or for the health of a society. It may still be causing harm to those using it and those they target. The prevalence of such humor means that using it is less likely to upset most members of that culture simply in being sardonic.

4.3.2 Transformation as Group and Individual Processes

From a sequential perspective, transformative humor completes the initial necessary philosophical foundation-laying necessary for social change. Thinking precedes action and public education precedes social change. There is a need to raise awareness of the wrongs being committed and the systematic way in which they are being committed. This is Curle’s public education stage and Lakey’s cultural preparation stage (Lakey 2004; Curle 1971). Then, activists can gather enough “people power” to

¹¹² Popović e-mail, February 5, 2010.
escalate the conflict with various means of confrontation, based in strategic nonviolence (Lakey 2004; Curle 1971). Public education and cultural preparation can be likened to a sort of mass or group conversion. To review, conversion is a paradigm shift resulting in alignment with the nonviolent activists’ values because of the activists’ actions (Lakey in Sharp 2005, 415). According to Sharp, this shift can be emotionally, intellectually or morally based, or a mix of these (2005, 416). Though activists and others can certainly encourage their opponents to convert with intentions of later coercing them, the voluntary nature of individual conversion still stands. Genuine transformation is a form of conversion and thus must occur voluntarily.

4.3.3 Transformation as an Emotional Experience

Transformation has intellectual, emotional, sociological, and spiritual components. I first discuss the emotional components and then move to a discussion of the intellectual and sociological components. I do not discuss the spiritual part of transformation first because my informants did not speak of this dimension of transformation and secondly because of having limited space. I suggest that transformation distinctively cuts across the division between activists and their opponent. Every member of a nation or group needs some degree of paradigm shifting to make way for revolution. Though all experience incongruity (cognitive dissonance), peoples’ experiences of transformation will differ according to socioeconomic and cultural factors, occupation, and most importantly their relative dependence on the regime and involvement in the current power structure. Marović said that “some people laugh and some people are ashamed or you know feel uncomfortable. Best humor is when some
people laugh and some people are mad as hell.” 113 Activists must come to discern the individual circumstances and feelings of those they wish to influence.

Ridicule and dilemma actions likely encourage bystanders to resist, but are more likely to enrage or frustrate members of the opponent group being ridiculed or used to attack the regime. Though anger and frustration were often not directed at Otpor activists but rather to their higher-ups, ridicule and lose-lose dilemma actions were still not likely to encourage members of the opponent group to join the resistance movement. Thus, Otpor created other dilemma actions that actually worked towards building common ground with police. These public actions are the focus of section 4.4, Humor a Collaborative Force. Authorities whose reign and superiority are being questioned will become annoyed if not immediately frustrated and angry. Members of the opponent group may not initially experience transformation as joyful or pleasurable. However, the possibility of eventual reconciliation with activists and others of the low-power group is certainly a joyful experience. Relief, peace and joy are evoked by transformative humor as a result of shedding “internalized oppression” and discord between people. Thus, transformative humor can elicit joy and even set oppressors free.

Marović described an experience of humor linked to paradigm transformation:

“[Y]ou’re very uncomfortable with the fact that people are not behaving the way that you would like them to behave and that is your worldview so because of this uneasiness the only thing you can do is laugh.” 114 The trench-coat-laden, Lenin-like revolutionary atmosphere had to have elicited unease from many Serbs, who had become comfortable

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113 Marović interview, December 4, 2009.
114 Ibid.
in their political resignation and isolated private life. But without an internal unsettling, there would be no motivation to expel Milošević. Reconsidering one’s own worldview can be unsettling and/or refreshing. It is certainly challenging as power, self, world and universe are suspended, examined, and potentially discarded, and replaced. Nonviolent activists need to be willing to invite discord into their own and others’ minds in order for social change to occur and hopefully elicit joy from all involved.

Some members of the opponent group will likely undergo some of the same emotional and intellectual changes as bystanders especially as they become less aligned to the regime. Their greater degree of allegiance to the regime makes paradigm shifting and behavioral changes more difficult. This is because choosing to resist the regime will likely lead to a greater loss of material and psychological well-being. A Serbian couple with a son in Milošević’s police force explained their reason for voting for Milošević in 1996: “It was a kind of psychosis. If Milošević goes, everything will fall apart…all hell will break loose” (Cohen 2000, 47). With the job market weak and fear of being overtaken by Kosovo Albanians, these Serbs like others clung to the only cohesive authority they knew. Fear is likely often an even greater obstacle to joining the opposition for regime supporters than for bystanders because of this increased risk. For prominent regime supporters, disowning the regime was an extremely dangerous, quite possibly fatal and understandably frightening decision. The paralyzing nature of fear born of rationally determined risk is a central reason activists must work to transform paradigms of rational reality.
4.3.4 Transformation as an Intellectual Experience

Personal experiences are said to shape our “reality,” to inform us of what occurrences are possible or probable and what we are capable of doing. But if all that can be hoped for is determined by what has been previously accomplished or witnessed, progress is severely limited. The ability to dream up possibilities beyond our current repertoire of experience is vital for hope and social change. Transformative humor makes such aspirations possible. Sørensen asserts that the “reformulation (of an experience) in a humorous mode shows in itself that something has changed, and creates the expectation of further changes” (2006, 33). Hart explain: “Action that may first have been done jokingly may well become a reality later on” (2007, 18). And Berger writes that wit exposes the truth that “things are not as they seem, which further implies that things could be quite different from what is commonly thought” (Berger 1997, 151, 152). Transformative humor can transform an oppressive authority or ruthlessly violent dictator into a conquerable opponent.

Take for example, Otpor’s national convention and its proclamation of joining the Socialist Party. Of the former action, Marović said: “We did everything like we are a massive movement. We made a Congress like…we cover whole Serbia. And then after the Congress we did cover whole Serbia. We said we are a people’s movement although we were just a bunch of students. But after that we became a people’s movement and everyone came to us” (York and Zimmerman 2001). The idea to parody the Socialist Party’s convention was developed in the humorous mode, its activist creators’ were thinking outside the box. The box has corners and edges and walls, all boundaries. They
did not allow their relatively small size, lack of non-student supporters, nor threat of repression to hinder making plans for Otpor’s future. They discarded the illusion of power as monolithic and began to reformulate how they could memorably challenge their fellow citizen’s paradigm of authority. They thought grandly in the humorous mode and then grandly introduced their humorous ideas for the whole serious world to see. And when Otpor activists went to the Socialist Party’s local offices to sarcastically request membership, they went entirely against the tide, doing something they would never have planned in the serious mode and then carrying it out with a serious façade to the bewilderment of those they approached. Both the national convention and the joining the Socialist Party actions communicated that the activist group was “powerful enough to infiltrate the ranks” of the regime and to play on the turf of the regime as an equal.\footnote{Marović interview, November 5, 2009.}

It is extraordinary how humor can simplify complex situations and yet reveal entirely new aspects of reality. Berger wrote that there are similarities between the comic and religious experiences because both transcend differences between different realities (1997). Marović says that humor helps us understand the great complexity of the world, to experience the fullness of the world that surrounds us. One way to more fully experience reality is to engage the rational mind more deeply. Marović asserts that “in every irrationality, there is a higher rationality…a paradox is only a paradox when you look at it on one level…When you look at it on a higher level then you see the reason for it and it’s not paradoxical anymore.”\footnote{Marović interview, December 4, 2009.} The assumption here is that the illogical is purely an unsolved, but yet solvable puzzle. In time and with the right (humorous) angle, one
can come to rationally understand many, if not all aspects of reality. This is why if a joke is to be good, “it has to be really relevant to what’s going on in the reality. Otherwise, it’s a silly-stupid joke, which has no…relevance (and) usually dies.”\(^\text{117}\) Simply put, good humor has “real-world meaning.”

Otpor activists knew they needed to be relevant to local culture; the Kragujevac branch provides a prime example. Kragujevac is a town in central Serbia with one of the oldest factories in the Balkans and [it] was the first town in probably the whole region where the red flag was raised back in the nineteenth century.”\(^\text{118}\) Blue-collar and factory workers were the backbone of this historically Communist town. Thus, Labor Day (May Day) celebrations have a particularly personal meaning for Kragujevac townspeople. When it came time for Labor Day celebrations, the local Otpor branch went to the same square where in Tito’s time the May Day celebrations were centered. Instead of posting a large back-drop picture of Tito on one of the buildings, the activists put up a giant picture of their clenched fist logo. In doing so, they linked their organization’s cause with that of Tito’s message, a fight for “the people’s,” often the working class peoples’ rights.\(^\text{119}\) They also drew attention to Milošević’s incessant switches from Communism to “modern European socialism” to nationalism and back again and demonstrated their own stable democratic position while still respecting their communist roots. Thus, this action serves as an example of Otpor helping a largely resigned population to jumpstart their minds and stop ignoring the “internal inconsistencies of the ideological platform of the regime.”\(^\text{120}\)

\(^{117}\) Marović interview, December 4, 2009.  
\(^{118}\) Marović interview, November 6, 2009.  
\(^{119}\) Ibid.  
\(^{120}\) Marović interview, November 5, 2009.
4.3.5 Ousting Rationality

A more divergent angle than using humor to deeply engage the rational mind is using humor to usurp rationality altogether. The assumption is that viewing the world rationally all the time is, in and of itself, inherently absurd, especially for those living under oppression. Engaging the rational mind more deeply can be cumbersome even for intellectuals. Humor highlights the experience of incongruities in an often freeing manner, revealing a “counter-world, an upside-down world,” in which rationality is ridiculous (Berger 1997, 207)! Brigham tells us that there are insights that can only be reached through absurdity, insights that logic cannot touch because rationality must first be transcended (Brigham in Sørensen 2006, 9). Bondurant, a Gandhian theorist asserts that transcendence of rationality (“rationalized defenses”) is key to conversion of persons and Weber asserts to the changing public opinion at large (Bondurant in Weber 1993, 269). And Berger adds: “The marginal individual, through the magic of his wit, in turn marginalizes the world that he targets. It is now no longer the world, but a world—and a ridiculous one at that. This marginalization—or, one could say, relativization—of the world is what makes wit dangerous, potentially subversive” (1997, 152). Marginalizing “the world” or the predominant paradigm of reality does not inherently mean marginalizing the individuals within that world. Marginalizing the world does, however, mean transcending conventional boundaries like rationality.

One habit of rationality, or rather “decision-making” is doing cost-benefit analysis. \(^{121}\) Will the action being considered result in more favorable outcomes than less

\(^{121}\) Marović interview, December 4, 2009.
favorable outcomes? Is the action worth the amount of effort and resources it requires? Is it logical to believe that the results hoped for can be accomplished? Doing such a calculation can be self-defeating because the odds are so clearly against them according to their current understanding of reality (i.e. political authority is monolithic; held by one or a few persons). Thus, rationality can easily hinder creative problem-solving and even tyrannically keep people from acting on their own behalf. The two major obstacles that rationality often presents are the “fight-or-flight” response and resource disparity.

For most people, it does not seem smart to allow someone to beat, unjustifiably arrest, or otherwise cause you bodily harm. Self-defense and escape are not only logical, but natural responses. “[J]ust tell me any irrational emotion and I will give you a rational reason for the existence for that emotion.”122 In essence, Marović is saying that emotions and logic together play a part in decision-making. Intuition is emotional perception based on initially imperceptible rational thinking. Our gut feelings are logical, but not always helpful. Obeying this internal impulse one way or the other is thus an outgrowth of rationality. Marović admitted that particularly when there were large crowds of activists (mixed with non-activists), violent retaliation by some activists against police was inevitable.123 Some got to a point where “all the ideology and the political big story, political big picture, doesn’t matter anymore, you know, ‘This hurts! And I wanna kick his butt!’”124 Maintaining a strict nonviolent discipline required subduing a survival instinct and making decisions according to a framework other than rationally accepted

122 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
perimeters. Even fully believing in the power of strategic nonviolence to be an effective means of “fighting,” activists must continue to ward off fear and resist the urge to retaliate violently or flee. To act bravely is not to be without fear, but to strive toward one’s goal despite the fear threatening within.

In addition to the “flight-or-fight” response, completing a mental comparative inventory of resources is another rational step that likely prevents people from joining nonviolent opposition movements. For most people, it is easy to deem nonviolence and humor as insufficient means of overthrowing a dictator who has what appears to be a firm grasp on a wide variety of social and material resources and no remorse over using them lethally. Milošević and his regime convincingly held a monopoly not only over Serbian politics and law enforcement, but also over information systems, music, and even sociability (Gordy 1999, 2). Even if the inventory was restricted just to physical means of fighting, the count would be quickly devastating. Otpor and the vast majority of Serbians did not have access to guns or other weaponry and they likely had little to no useful military training. If Serbs had made a rational and likely paralyzing calculation of their access to some resources and training, they may never have come to see the day when Milošević would be forced to step down. Otpor used transformative humor to empower people and to educate them about a variety of sources of power already in their possession if they would only work together strategically. Actions that humorously mocked the regime by mimicking their activities (i.e. the national convention and “I’m a National Hero” declaration badges) sent the message that power did not emanate from Milošević, but from the people who had till that point been obedient to him. Those people
were no longer looking to Milošević as the source of their political power, but to one another as a collective force.

4.4 **Humor: A Collaborative Force**

Collaborative strategies\(^{125}\) have been little discussed in research findings of the Otpor case. This could be for a few reasons. One, Otpor simply did not put much effort into trust-building. Though all Otpor activists knew who the essential pillars of support for Milošević were (i.e. the police), not all Otpor activists may have recognized building trust as essential or fully possible prior to Milošević’s deposition. The “Us-versus-Them” view may have had too strong a hold for some. Two, though Otpor worked to build trust with some members of the opponent group, all of my sources appeared to prefer offensive strategies over collaborative strategies. Even though I asked about building trust or rather “common ground,” my informants still shared more information on coercive dilemma actions than on fraternizing humor. Despite having a much smaller amount of data regarding collaborative tactics than offensive tactics, my research supports the assertion that a successful offensive strategy also requires a collaborative strategy.

This section relies upon the theoretical frameworks of Lakey’s suggested “community strategy” and constructive methods of social change, Deming’s life-respecting “hand” of nonviolence, and again “power with” (Lakey 2004, 139; Deming in McAllister 1999, 19). I also discuss possible reasons that collaborative strategies have

\(^{125}\) By collaborative, I mean working to build trust not only with unallied bystanders, but also with most members of the opponent group.
been overlooked previously in the Otpor case. In this section, I present data that suggests that a successful offensive approach requires a collaborative approach. With this data, I assert a *theory of necessary equilibrium*, which states that social actors must strategically shift their approach over time from offensive to collaborative coinciding with multiple, sometimes non-linear shifts in power-balance. They must find a balance between humor and seriousness, ridicule and respect, coercion and conversion discerning when and with whom to use each. The degree to which Otpor created this balance is introduced in this section and then fully fleshed out in my concluding chapter.

4.4.1 “The People” and Challenges to Their Unity

When any agent of change wants to remove allegiance from an authority, that agent must also offer an alternative source of stability, security, and resources. Doing so supplies needs and builds trust, a necessary and continual component of healthy relationships and sustainable peace. Otpor explicitly stated their desired alternative source of authority, “the people” through democracy (Cohen 2000, 148). Democracy requires a great degree of collaboration and trust of “the people” by “the people.” Even if democracy is not the final, hoped for political system, collaboration across many if not all sectors of society is necessary for nonviolent noncooperation to be effective. And after mass nonviolent noncooperation, “the people” must continue to collaborate in forming parallel institutions to swiftly replace the authoritarian regime (Lakey 2004, 152-154).

Serbia presented a slew of challenges to collaboration and democracy around the turn of the century. The major, long-standing social divides that dominated Serbia at that time were between urbanites and peasants, between older and younger generations, and
more generally between open cosmopolitan and closed national orientations (Gordy 1999, 4, 6). Dictatorial strategies, national homogenization, international isolation, and war intensified these social divisions (Gordy 1999, 7). One common dictatorial strategy is dehumanization of opposition activists. Dehumanization is any act that seeks to diminish the worth of a person to below personhood or that tries to erase inherent similarities between peoples.

4.4.2 Equilibrium: Dove-tailing Strategies

Empowerment of an oppressed people and trust-building is especially important because their fear of the unknown often outweighs their desire for a better life. Activists who desire democratic governance must inspire the people to trust in themselves and their fellow citizens. They must restore faith in citizenry’s ability to work together. Marović said social change can occur through a variety of means including coercion and persuasion, “but the idea here is that you have to establish relationships with certain people…that includes the members of the regime, however crazy these relationships are, you need them to defect. You need them to step out from the regime in order to reduce its viability. In order to reduce the number of supporters, etcetera, etcetera.”126 Significantly, Marović’s view, which is potentially representative of other Otpor activists’ views, is that defections depend upon how well one builds relationships with members of the opponent group more so than on coercing them to concede. Sørensen edified the goal of creating common ground with one’s opponent, saying “it’s actually a really good question…[building common ground] could have been a good idea. If you look back at it,

maybe [Otpor activists] could have achieved a lot by doing that.”127 From Sørensen’s research, she concluded that Otpor activists “were very focused on this ‘good guy-bad guy’ divide.”128 She could not remember any examples of actions or graphics that Otpor used to create common ground with members of the opponent group. Because “the people” includes members of the opponent group, social capital cannot be gained through an offensive strategy based on coercion alone. This view aligns with Lakey’s assertion of the necessity of “constructive methods” of social change and for political strategy that is also “community strategy” (Lakey 2004, 139). It also coincides with Deming’s second “hand” of nonviolence, the one that reaches out to the opponent offering (Deming in McAllister 1999, 19). Adding to Marović’s assertion, I suggest trust-building as part of a collaborative strategy that dovetails with an offensive strategy to reach a necessary equilibrium. The necessary equilibrium I propose is a balance of strategic shifts over time coinciding with shifts in power-balance.129 Agents for social change need to secure a balance between humor and seriousness, ridicule and respect, coercion and conversion. Tactically, this means balancing dilemma actions with fraternization. They must also foster an acute relational sensitivity so that they can wisely determine what approach to use with whom and when.

127 Sørensen Interview.
128 Ibid.
129 Trust-building is typically only possible where and when the power between two parties is balanced. The exception to this is relationships that inherently carry a power imbalance, but can still be healthy despite the imbalance such as parent-child, teacher-pupil, and potentially government-citizen.
4.4.3 Adding to the Image of Innocence

Activists have to reverse the oppressive authority’s efforts to degrade them in the eyes of the public. They can, as Otpor did, use humor to debunk intimidating, hateful, dehumanizing messages. In response to the regime’s declaration of Otpor as a terrorist organization, activists decided to give a public profile: “We are here reporting from in front of the Niš Police station. And here is an example of a terrorist, on the border between Serbia and Montenegro. The terrorist is about six feet tall, and he is wearing a T-shirt of the terrorist organization, Otpor. He is wearing eye glasses, which means he reads a lot. It’s dangerous to read a lot in this country, so beware” (York and Zimmerman 2001). The Niš activists humorously pointed out the obvious and then added a little social commentary about reading, showing that Otpor activists were neither dangerous nor extremist.

Milošević’s regime made sustained efforts to paint Otpor as an aggressive, violent, and all-around destructive organization. Marović said that all factors supporting Otpor’s image of innocence helped prevent backfire, that is irrevocable damage to future relations with the police. Though Otpor’s dilemma actions did create tension between Otpor and the police, police could still rest assured that Otpor activists would remain nonviolent. Also, the same dilemma actions were not used in all places or at the same time. Otpor activists determined how local police officers felt about Otpor and then tailored their approach accordingly. If activists saw that police were becoming more sympathetic or open to Otpor, activists could choose a more collaborative and inviting approach. If the police in a particular area were still being hard-headed and cruel, Otpor
would likely choose to engage them in humbling dilemma actions. Yet, their nonviolent stance stayed consistent. Marović explained that the police “got to like [Otpor] because….they usually deal with really bad people. So when they deal with people who are very civil and very polite and they’re doing something fun…You kind of let off your guards.”\textsuperscript{130} The components of Otpor’s image of innocence lessened the degree of fear police had to overcome and thus promoted positive relations between Otpor and police.

In choosing strategic nonviolence and adhering strictly to it, Otpor worked against the dominating perception of otherness in Serbia and towards respect and reconciliation. As Deming points out, nonviolent activists using the life-respecting “hand” express a willingness to reconcile and to further embrace members of the opponent group (Deming in McAllister 1999, 19). They express hope for healthful interdependence with their opponent after a balancing of power (Deming in McAllister 1999, 19). If a strategy of nonviolence includes additional trust-building measures, like carnivalesque humor, these may help soothe pre-existing relational brokenness. Because Otpor chose not only to use provocative humor, but directly provocative humor, I argue that intentional expressions of respect beyond those in the image of innocence were essential. Expressions of respect Otpor gave included non-provocative humor; acknowledgement of the basic need for pride in one’s work and the ultimate expression of respect, an invitation to collaborate. Non-provocative humor is the focus of this section of analysis and its major variants are discussed next.

\textsuperscript{130} Marović interview, November 5, 2009.
As learned from Branagan’s research, blending critical activism and creatively affirming presentation can create an emotional equilibrium for those involved by balancing protest’s negativity with celebration’s positivity (2007, 11). All humor is creative, but not all is collaborative. Directly provocative humor is not collaborative or constructive and if over-used may pose a threat to sustainable peace. However, humor that does not personally attack human targets or have a target at all poses little risk and is capable of enhancing the conciliatory nature of nonviolence. One type of humor that encourages collaboration is carnivalesque humor. Carnivalesque humor can prove “enormously effective” in reaching a wide swath of the public and the opponent “because of its emphasis on the shared human background of the oppressors and oppressed” (Hart 2007, 18). Essentially, carnivalesque humor is power-balancing, inviting, and typically showy. It disregards or re-organizes the social hierarchy in such a way that all are somehow equal. It can attract large crowds of people and invites them to join in whether simply by laughing or by voluntarily taking a larger role in activists’ humorous drama.

An excellent example of carnivalesque humor was Otpor’s “Pick the Police Day” action. “Pick the Police Day” was an “official holiday” in April involving “fraternizing marches” and "invasions" of police stations all over Serbia.\textsuperscript{131} Hundreds of female activists, including mothers with children brought cakes, cookies and flowers to the police, who responded in a number of different ways. In Belgrade, police blocked the front door of police stations so activists could not enter. However, in Kragujevac and “many other cities,” police invited activists to enter and celebrate with them, “sharing

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
cakes and drinks, even singing with them!"132 The warm response by many police units may validate Branagan’s claim that humorous activism can create settings that are conducive to conversion of one’s opponent (2007, 6). Interaction with activists characterized by playfulness, ambiguity and freedom (all characteristics of humor) help decrease obedience to authority and may win over members of the opponent group (Branagan 2007, 6).

One could argue that the activities of “Pick the Police Day” did not encourage police to convert or resist the regime, but that they rather revealed which police units were already sympathetic to the resistance movement and which were not. A geographic revelation, that is knowing the location of one’s allies, is still strategically important though not as revolutionary as winning new allies. It is also quite possible that Otpor’s niceties on “Pick the Police Day” were experienced by some police as emotionally coercive. The same activists they had beaten, imprisoned, and otherwise harassed were now inviting them to celebrate. Police officers may have felt guilty for mistreating activists who were now returning kindness for abuse. These officers may have thus seen the activities and gifts of “Pick the Police Day” as a guilt-tripping measure. Even without guilt, the action could be viewed as coercive because police had to decide whether or not to trust the activists and whether or not to remain loyal to the regime. Engaging positively with activists may have put them at risk of punishment from higher-ups or the regime. And relinquishing a tough, in-charge, focused law enforcement image may have been seen as detrimental to their public image as well. What differs about “Pick the

132 Popović e-mail, February 6, 2010.
Police Day” from Otpor’s dilemma actions and the reason I maintain it is collaborative, however, is that police were not under risk of being humiliated by the activists. If they were embarrassed, it would clearly be due to internal tensions (between officers) over whether or not to join in. I find “Pick the Police Day” to be rather clever and at least in some areas, successful in building trust and securing defections. In part because of Popović’s upbeat description of this action, I believe that it was intended to genuinely respect and reach out while diverting social capital. Popović even today believes that positive responses from many police units demonstrates how “this type of ‘dilemma action’ can take your opponent ‘off guard’ and cause cracks within (the) until then ‘monolithic’ pillar of police force.”133

In addition to carnivalesque public actions, many of the jokes that activists shared with regular police (as opposed to the secret police) were power-balancing like coercive dilemma actions except in a dignity-honoring manner, showing that activists and police could find the same joke funny, thus expressing a shared membership in a particular cultural community. Though I do not have a specific example of such jokes to share, Marović did speak of sharing such jokes and humorous materials with the regular police more than once. “[W]hen I was with the regular police, I would crack jokes…you can loosin’ in up a little bit. Crack a joke or two and then they laugh a little bit and you know, you’re much better off after that.”134 “[D]uring interrogations (with regular police), [the police] would get the portion of our official (humorous) propaganda. So in that sense I

133 Popović e-mail, February 6, 2010.
Laughing *with* the police as opposed to laughing *at* them expresses respect and inspires camaraderie just as laughing did within Otpor. Carnivalesque humor *builds community*, one of the sociological functions of humor identified by Koller (1988, 19). Another word for intentionally building community is fraternization.

### 4.4.4 Fraternization

Though some people enthusiastically approached Otpor during public actions, asking for T-shirts and wanting to know how they could get involved, others needed time and additional reasons to warm up to Otpor. This was true for bystanders as well as police. Some police were already sympathetic to Otpor’s cause prior to interacting closely with Otpor. “We have spoken to police many times before those actions and understood that most of ‘common policeman’ were not reluctant to our message” Yet before many police officers and others would commit themselves to active resistance and alliance with Otpor, activists had to persuade them that doing so would be worth the risk.

From the perspective of seeking balance between one’s different strategies, fraternization signals a strategic switch from confrontation and escalating the conflict to collaboration and trust-building, off the drama in the streets into dialogue in prisons, police stations, and homes. Dialogue is necessary to deepen understanding. It is two-way with both active listening and speaking. The complexities of political realities and peoples’ feelings can be explored in a sit-down discussion in a way that they cannot be

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135 Marović interview, November 5, 2009.
136 Marović interview, November 6, 2009.
137 Popović e-mail, February 5, 2010.
while out on the streets in the drama of a dilemma action. The speaking part of the dialogue for activists was likely often persuasive in nature. Persuasion can be viewed broadly as an attempt at conversion through verbal and often primarily intellectual means. Humor can enhance persuasion. John C. Meyer wrote that jokes often soften barriers, rendering listeners “more amenable to persuasion” (Meyer in Hart 2007, 8). Happy jokes and laughing help listeners “loosen up.” Similarly, Branagan wrote that humor can help “make messages more palatable for audiences without detracting from the seriousness of those messages” (2007, 3). Jokes enlighten, that is transform paradigms, and thus “loosen up” a listener’s intellect. At the very least, people must be intrigued before they can be enlightened. Some degree of interest and attention are necessary for learning. Popović confirmed that humor was an “important bridge to get attention and later sympathies from many pillars of support.”¹³⁸ Popović wrote that Otpor activists believed they must persuade police that they were far from terrorists and increased fraternization with police was “only way” to do this.¹³⁹

Relationships evolve over time, so too did Otpor’s tactics of persuasion. All aspects of cultural preparation, that is transformation on the front-end of the nonviolent struggle, made way at various rates across the nation for fraternization and dialogue (Curle 1971). For example, introducing police to the pluralist model of power prepared them to re-consider from where authority us derived and how they would come to interact with activists later. Cultural preparation and expressions of respect helped give people a reason to trust Otpor and to desire relationship with its activists. Otpor used slogans and

¹³⁸ Ibid.
¹³⁹ Ibid.
single images; lists of statements like Otpor’s “100 FAQs” and when the time was ripe, a full exchange of ideas and explanations in conversations with police officers and commanders.\textsuperscript{140} The “100 FAQs” was an outreach tool that drew together Otpor’s essential positions and demands, was “not really 100 FAQs…it’s basically like maybe a dozen questions. They’re just in different forms, so that we made them into 100…you kind of get the same message, over and over again in different ways.”\textsuperscript{141} Activists put a humorous and creative spin on an age-old tactic, repetition, good for memory and helpful for persuasion. Exaggerating the number of statements to one-hundred was a taste of non-intellectual humor and many of the facts/positional statements were undoubtedly humorous. The “100 FAQs” of Otpor were distributed in the form of a pamphlet, though Marović said that Otpor activists encouraged each other to create their own spin-offs of the basic messages. Marović explained: “even when [Otpor activists] don’t have a specific answer you know, to a question they would know how to make up one.”\textsuperscript{142} Otpor sought to accomplish message coherence, while still allowing flexibility of specifics. Activists were free to create new messages within a framework of core values and goals. In interrogations, Otpor activists gave a “portion of [their] propaganda against the regime” often using the “100 FAQs” to guide their answers. They worked to educate police and encourage them to join the resistance movement. Every day, Otpor activists were arrested and therefore every day, police officers learned about Otpor’s goals, demands and reasoning for their demands. “[I]ronically by the time of elections, police

\textsuperscript{140} In reality, progression from the simpler tactics to the more complex was not linear.
\textsuperscript{141} Marović interview, November 5, 2009.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.
force was the best informed” sub-group of the Serbian population. The “100 FAQs” made way for more involved and fraternization that used carnivalesque humor such as the afore described “Pick the Police Day.”

4.5 **Humor’s Limitations**

In this section, I discuss the inherent limitations and weaknesses of humor in helping to achieve social change. I also provide a discussion summary of the disapprovals and perceived limitations of humor that Otpor was able to overcome and that I have detailed throughout the other sections of analysis. Some of the limitations apply only to directly provocative humor.

4.5.1 **Humor is Context-bound**

Inevitably, not all people will like all humorous actions or all types of humor. Sørensen contends that choosing a segment of the population or sub-culture to which you want to appeal means letting go of other potential groups. I believe this is especially true in individualistic societies like Serbia because there is great variation in cultural values and commitments. Berger points out that despite humor’s cross-cultural ubiquity, humor is fragile, fugitive, and mysterious (Berger 1997, xii). Humor’s reception depends upon the social geography of the humorist, the audience and its content as well as its temporal relation to both personal and public events. “What seems funny in one moment may suddenly take on a tragic quality in the next moment” (Berger 1997, xii). Fortunately, Otpor’s aim was not always to be funny, but to transform paradigms,

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143 Ibid.
144 Sørensen Interview.
provoke the opponent, and promote collaboration as was discussed in the previous sections of analysis. Yet, because humor (like innocence) is often contextual, activists need to be aware of the risk of using humor inappropriately and thus deterring potential supporters. In English, humorists are referred to as having “good taste” or “bad taste,” the former meaning the humorist shares culturally acceptable humor, the latter culturally unacceptable humor. Not all Serbians’ liked the “tastes” of Otpor’s various types of humor. “Bad taste,” was one of two major disapprovals Otpor faced. Particularly in urban areas, which typically have a large community of intellectuals in Serbia, Otpor’s straight-forward humor and directly provocative humor were not well-received. Their disapproval does confirm that Otpor activists did use straight-forward humor to attempt to reach urbanites and must have believed that it was effective in reaching at least some of that audience since they continued to produce this type of humor.

Another cultural boundary that Otpor faced was age. Otpor struggled to attract middle-aged citizens (30 to 59 year-olds) throughout much of their campaign, though exactly why this was so is still unclear. Marović believes these Serbs most likely dismissed the organization as “irrelevant or as trivial.” Senior citizens were also not much attracted till late in the campaign. When I asked when and why older citizens came to join Otpor, Marović replied: “I think they were drawn towards Otpor after their children and grandchildren joined the movement.” The influence of grandchildren and children on their elders, if true, could demonstrate the impact of youth on the image of

145 Marović interview, November 5, 2009.
146 I know this because Marović said that “bad taste” was an on-going disapproval in urban areas against straight-forward humor.
147 Marović interview, November 6, 2009.
148 Marović e-mail, April 12, 2010.
innocence. Yet, it remains that the older generations were not swiftly drawn to Optor. Sørensen said that “pensioners” or senior citizens were actually “pushed away by this humor.”149 Though I neglected to ask Sørensen why she thought this was so, my data and short study of Serbia leads me to hypothesize that A) older citizens were likely further entrenched in a history of complacency and maybe bitterness and B) older citizens may have found the sexually allusive provocative humor that some Otpor branches used to be repulsive. Otpor did not much succeed in overcoming the generational gap.

At least one of Otpor’s strategic responses to the cultural boundaries of humor was to use informal focus groups and feedback from individuals to perform political quality control.150 Otpor activists first sought the opinions of non-Otpor persons such as family members and acquaintances and then other Otpor activists. They asked these individuals open-ended questions and encouraged sharing of free association, thoughts and feelings triggered by images and phrases. Through these questions, they explored the psychological impacts of their work.151 Otpor’s branches were thus able to create graphics, texts and actions that suited the local culture.152

4.5.2 Trivial Tricks or Powerful Paradox

Many people believe that humor and nonviolence are too weak to successfully create social change in the face of repression. People often believe that only violence can conquer violence. Talking and being funny is not going to create a sufficient “force.” This view was held by many Serbs at the time of Otpor’s creation. Marović said there

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149 Sørensen Interview.
151 Ibid.
152 Marović interview, November 6, 2009.
was a “group of people that disapproved of using humor in general. And these were people who believed that the only thing that can work against Milošević’s regime is to radicalize the protests to use violence.” These Serbian opposition supporters were not so much promoting the use of arms or the organization of a violent guerilla movement, but rather “when the police arrest us, that we should actually fight back… usually using clubs and fists and stones…” Some resisters and likely also unallied bystanders disapproved of humor because “in their view it trivialized the struggle.” Trivializing the struggle could mean making a joke of oneself or it could mean making light of things that should not be made light of, such as immense suffering. Particularly for Serbs whose culture was and is characterized by sarcasm, ridicule and “black humor,” but whose experiences were continuing to add to a long history of oppression, believing in humor to be a force for social change was probably a stretch. Humorous bickering and jesting had not gotten them far in the past. The challenge for Otpor was to show that humor could be used to actually strengthen the methods of strategic nonviolence that do indeed produce social change. And do so without degrading the seriousness of peoples’ suffering.

The view that humor is weak and trivializes the struggle diminished as people witnessed the regime’s reactions to Otpor’s humorous actions. Some of the “hard-core opponents of Milošević who wanted to stay a fight” remained unhappy with Otpor’s commitment to nonviolence. Yet many, including many pro-violence resisters, changed their minds after witnessing how the regime responded to Otpor’s humorous actions. The

153 Ibid.
154 Ibid.
155 Ibid.
The paradox of repression and political ju-jitsu came through full-force. A high-profile example of the paradox of repression involves the popular Belgrade-based magazine Vreme. Though *Vreme (Time)* was founded in 1990 by anti-Milošević journalists, its editors did not publish a single article or blurb about Otpor until “the crackdown” of May 2000.\(^{156}\) It was during this month, that the regime declared Otpor a terrorist organization charging Otpor with treason, terrorism and fascism (Ilić 2000, 40). The regime used the declaration to justify intensified repression against Otpor activists including beatings, even more arrests and imprisonment. Marović explains the significance of engaging the paradox of repression: “Vreme was one of the most prominent of independent newspapers… They never mentioned Otpor until May 2000 …this is even worse than had *Vreme* criticized us…at least they would have acknowledged our existence.”\(^{157}\) Though I can only speculate as to why *Vreme*’s editors chose not to write about Otpor until the crackdown. I believe they, too, thought that humor and nonviolence were too weak to motivate Serbs to oust Milošević. “[A]fter the crackdown, they published like a big story about Otpor and then like few weeks later, they called me and asked me to write a piece for *Vreme*.”\(^{158}\) Marović believes that the editors of *Vreme* were not convinced that Otpor’s “form of struggle” would be successful or at least worth following until “the crackdown” and Otpor’s growth spurt proved otherwise.\(^{159}\) I agree. Despite the regime’s efforts to intimidate Otpor, it succeeded only in bringing the group closer to its intended goal of overthrowing Milošević. Even if an authoritarian regime does not take the bait

\(^{156}\) Ibid.  
\(^{157}\) Ibid.  
\(^{158}\) Ibid.  
\(^{159}\) Ibid.
and the paradox of repression is unengaged, humor is still a creative tool that often
garners attention if not attraction, is viewed as inherently innocent and is very difficult to
inhibit.

4.5.3 Not with Humor Alone

Humor was not Otpor’s communication method, per se, though it did figure
prominently in Otpor’s strategies and contrasted with the dry approach of other
opposition proponents. In fact, many of Otpor’s actions were serious and the literature on
Otpor focuses more on the “serious” aspects of their strategies than the humorous ones.
Seriousness was necessary to combat fear and apathy as well as to persuade and build
trust. I had hypothesized a potentially strategic balance of humor with seriousness prior to
conducting the interviews. An April 15, 2010 e-mail response from Popović clearly
confirmed my hunch. He said one of the major challenges Otpor faced in using humor
was avoiding the “impression of ‘not being serious.’” Otpor had to create a balance
between “We were just kidding. It was innocent fun” and “This is serious. Milošević and
his politics have got to go.” Popović wrote: “The art is to combine humorous actions with
‘more serious’ methods of communication.” Though Popović was suggesting that serious
graphics like slogans, posters and banners be combined with “humorous actions like
street theatre,” it is not erroneous to state that this type of combination is also applicable
to interpersonal relationships. There were times when Otpor cornered police into
dilemma actions and other times when activists respected police and took them seriously.
“Combining humor with ‘seriousness’ gives best results in affecting…members and
supporters, wider audience, potential allies and international community.” The switch between the two also helps keep the opponent off balance. The key is to continually re-evaluate the social and emotional landscape.

Taking someone seriously means acknowledging his or her psychological needs such as accomplishment and purpose. In order for the police to feel they were being taken seriously, Otpor had to act seriously. This is especially important because of the nature of law enforcement. Police officers, who happened to be the sub-group of the opponent with whom Otpor most often interacted, typically have an elevated sense of duty, service, and self-sacrifice. Public law enforcement is a highly value-centered and identity-driven occupation across cultures. To be sure, police positions in Serbia were voluntary (unlike its military.) So Otpor drew attention to the regime’s disregard of police officers’ desire and need for meaningful work. The regime ordered police to arrest a bunch of people doing silly, mostly non-destructive acts. Marović said: “[T]hey wanted to do real police work. They wanted to arrest people who were dangerous…criminals or whoever else, terrorists….So, they were frustrated in the end.”

Popović agreed that being assigned to arrest Otpor activists frustrated police “because they want[ed] to actually be arresting true law-breakers, not play ‘hide and seek’ with clever Otpor students for the sake of the establishment.” Otpor honored the police by choosing not to resist arrest. And finally when they felt the time was ripe, Otpor activists offered individual officers and police units a clear invitation to join the opposition movement. It is often said that imitation is

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160 Popović e-mail, April 15, 2010.
161 Marović interview, November 5, 2009.
162 Popović e-mail, February 5, 2010.
the highest form of flattery. A genuine invitation to collaborate as equals is arguably an even greater form of admiration and respect as it implies the ‘invitor’ considers the invitee to be worthy mutual contributors. In doing so, Otpor addressed the basic psychological human desire (need) for acknowledgement, accomplishment, and purpose.

4.5.4 Limited by Isolation

There were times and environments in which the serious mode was consistently deemed more appropriate than the humorous mode. One such setting was interrogations with the secret police. “You could loosen up some and crack jokes with the regular police,” but this was not the case with the secret police. Once separated from the support of fellow activists, humor was no longer the preferred mode of communication. Marović, not only refrained from joking with the secret police, but actually “admitted everything.” He feared being killed or seriously injured. “I was scared shitless. And I didn’t crack a single joke…with these guys, I just didn’t dare…This is not a romantic novel about French resistance against the Nazis…The Gestapo tortures them and they don’t reveal any secrets.” After surviving the first couple interrogations fairly unscathed, Marović’s fear lessened, but interrogations were certainly never pleasant and Marović decided to tell Otpor colleagues not to discuss sensitive information around him so he could not leak sensitive information.

A similar threat of isolation was also presented in Serbia’s military recruitment. Two weeks before the October 2000 elections, Marović was drafted, called to

163 Marović did say he believes other activists who were interrogated were probably braver than he was and may even have still been humorous.
164 Marović interview, December 4, 2009.
165 Ibid.
compulsory service in the Serbian military. Despite the fact that most people in Otpor suggested he refuse the draft, Marović agreed to go. Marović originally described his acceptance of the draft as an act of respect for the state and law as a principle. The draft was representative of aspects of the state and Serbian culture that were regarded too highly to be ridiculed without significant complications. “I decided to go because I knew that we can turn it into our advantage more if I go because we show that we respect the institutions of the state…”166 I believe respect for the law as a principle was Marović’s main reason for accepting the draft mainly because he continued to work as a soldier well after Milošević was ousted, completing the expected one-year commitment. Yet, Marović later said his initial acceptance of the draft was partially an act of conceding to fear. He said, “I can also put it that I joined the army because I was scared what would happen if I don’t join the army.”167 The draft signified a sort of dilemma action initiated by the regime. If one accepted the draft and entered the army, he would not be around to participate in the resistance and he risked potential harassment by regime-appointed military officials without the support of fellow activists, but if he refused the draft he could be imprisoned and labeled as unpatriotic. Because Marović had been imprisoned several times before and did not express great fear or painful memories of being imprisoned (especially in contrast to his experiences with secret police), I believe it was the fear of being imprisoned by himself, without fellow activists beside him that made this threat of imprisonment so daunting. I do not know whether or not obligatory military service was a commonly used formed of repression against proponents of the opposition

166 Marović interview, November 6, 2009.
movement. One piece of potential supporting data is Popović’s description of the Serbian military as consisting “mainly of conscripts, meaning 18-21 year boys VERY supportive of Otpor and the opposition” and thus not easily ordered to attack them.\(^{168}\) However, neither my primary nor secondary data, however, strongly support this idea. Whether or not military service was used systematically as a form of oppression “it’s very tricky to refuse.”\(^{169}\)

Fear of isolation was primarily overcome by a supportive “culture of resistance” (Sørensen 2006). A great example of activist in-group support prior to expected repression is the going away party that the Belgrade branch of Otpor threw for Marović when he chose to accept his draft call. Even though many of his colleagues disagreed with Marović’s decision, they still “organized a big celebration in central Belgrade with people bringing [him] presents…totally ridiculous (presents)...like wool socks...and...I got (little laugh burst) like....a fan in case it’s too hot. It was like a HUGE, big fan that I couldn’t carry with me.”\(^{170}\) The gifts expressed a lot of “internal jokes,” jokes that only activists who knew Marović could fully appreciate. Yet, the going away party intentionally had a public element. Marović said “a lot of people gathered just to see” the party and gifts. He even described the party as a public “action” and a “public display.” A public setting was chosen to send a warning to the regime. Marović explained: “[I]t helped me kind of lower my fear when I was going to the army because I knew that the leadership in the army and people who were going to be in charge were going to get that

\(^{168}\) Popović e-mail, April 15, 2010.

\(^{169}\) Marović interview, November 6, 2009.

\(^{170}\) Ibid.
message that I should be left.”\textsuperscript{171} Even though the danger of isolation was not averted, burdensome fear was averted as Marović’s Otpor colleagues rallied around him.

### 4.5.5 Directly Provocative Humor Can Cut New Wounds

Several peaceful societies, use humor as a primary medium of their conflict resolution systems.\textsuperscript{172} Bruce Bonta summarizes and synthesizes several different scholars’ research regarding how humor is used in such societies. His summary includes: to defuse tension, to express anger in an \textit{acceptable manner}, to call attention to another’s faults \textit{in a facetious manner}, and “to confront problems \textit{with enough ambiguity} that grievances are ‘aired \textit{without fear of provoking others}’” (1996, 407, 408). These purposes all have \textit{boundaries}.

Some of my data suggests that Otpor did not set such boundaries in a consistent fashion, at times causing pain that they would later have to work to reconcile. In fact, much of Otpor’s humor was intended to shear away pride, often cutting into to peoples’ personal regard and sense of being. Many people determine their worth or dignity (to some degree) according to others’ opinion of them and according to how they, themselves, perform or face up to personal standards (McGee 2003). Thus, personal security is based upon conditional factors. Because of this conditionality, humor that mocks, ridicules, or otherwise directly attacks a person can easily (or unintentionally) cut new wounds through embarrassment or more deeply through humiliation. Such humor can thus be counter-productive to laying a foundation for forgiveness, reconciliation, and

\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{172} Bonta (1996) defines “peaceful” as having an extremely low or nonexistent history of violence and an institutionalized usage of nonviolent means of conflict management.
sustainable peace. In the least, directly provocative humor will affect different parties differently and some parties negatively as Popović acknowledged: “Mocking unpopular persons in the way we have mocked “Mira” Marković always brings good feedback from your supporters, but may unintentionally make wider social distance between your organization and neutral audience, even more (social distance between you and) the audience supporting your opponent.” Popović boldly asserted that the “only real danger” of provocative and ridiculing dilemma actions is in possibly “going too far with public audience” or in other words losing face. Thus, the use of directly provocative humor (“mocking”) is, at least sometimes, counter-productive even to a specific goal of Otpor, mobilization of the people. Even if the “only real danger” of using directly provocative humor is in losing face and mobilization, this is a rather heavy risk. Sørensen also cautions against the use of direct provocation: “Potentially the humour can become too aggressive and focus on the oppressor instead of the oppression. If it is no longer based on wit and intelligence but too much on provocation, it ceases to be funny, and the general public will lose sympathy” (2006, 40).

The implications of conditional personal security mean activists need to critically analyze how their tactics may affect peoples’ self-esteem. Critical analysis here includes such questions as: Which variants of humor, in target and focus can in the confrontation stage enhance the contrast between the opponent group and the opposition without doing irreversible damage to peoples’ (especially targets’) dignity and relationships? How, if at all, is it possible to refrain from damaging peoples’ personal security when using

173 E-mail correspondence from Srdja Popović, April 18, 2010.
174 Popović e-mail, February 5, 2010.
provocative humor? How can activists strategize with the post-dictatorship society in mind? I address these questions and others in the next, concluding chapter.
5 Conclusion

5.1 A Holistic Approach to Examining Otpor’s Strategies

I have worked to contribute a holistic approach to examining Otpor’s strategies through my collection and analysis of how Otpor activists used humor to provoke their opponent, to transform paradigms of reality and authority, and to build trust with members of the opponent group. Including both humor’s strengths and weaknesses also contributes to fullness of the research approach. As is the case with many aspects of human systems, there is no universal formula to determine exactly how or how often any approach should be used by activists. Activists need to be acutely sensitive to relational needs and transitions so that they can tailor their approach accordingly. They must work to understand when and with whom to take either an offensive or a collaborative approach. Again, the shift from an offensive approach to a collaborative approach tactically means changing from dilemma actions and ridiculing jokes and graphics to fraternization and jokes that highlight similarities between activists and members of the opponent group. The scene changes from public places like street corners to more private areas such as homes and police stations.

The process of transformation acts as an explanatory bridge between offensive and collaborative approaches, showing how both destruction and construction are vital parts of social change out of oppression and towards sustainable peace. In Section 4.3. Humor: A Transformative Entity, I also examined more of the emotional and intellectual (the inner) changes that occur in social change while the two approaches and respective
sections of analysis are more socially (and outwardly) focused. Through my synthesis of others’ research (Gandhi, Weber, Hart, and Shepard), I discovered transcendence of rationality as the ironic link between self-suffering and some forms of humor. From an inductive stance towards my primary data, I discussed how humor can both more deeply engage the rational mind and how it can totally usurp rationality. Marović did indeed identify transcendence of rationality as a goal of humorous nonviolence.

Conflict transformation has a long-term focus that makes it impossible to overlook the future of relationships as one analyzes and makes suggestions for the conflict escalation phase. Though the temporal focus of this paper is October 1998 to October 2000, some consideration of the post-dictatorship society is innately a part of the conflict transformation perspective. Relational dynamics must be considered past the immediate conflict escalation phase to the building of parallel institutions and finally to the refining of these institutions after the overthrow of the dictator. The implications of conditional personal security mean activists need to critically analyze how their tactics may affect peoples’ self-esteem, which will impact how they interact after the dictator is ousted.

Understanding coercive and collaborative approaches, conditional personal security and symbolism should lead one to careful target and foci selection when using provocative humor. I argue for selecting broader targets whenever possible and when a

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symbolic individual must be targeted, I suggest focusing on their behavior rather than their personhood.

5.2 The Offensive Approach—Determining What Must Be Destroyed

It is necessary, at least sometimes, to break the prideful stance of the opponent with coercive nonviolence like dilemma actions. Some members of the opponent group are simply not open to other forms of communication. I argue that activists should use the least coercive measures first to determine how particular members of the opponent group truly feel about activists. I expand Sørensen’s assertion that humor should be more focused on the oppression than the oppressor by discussing different types of provocation, organized on a continuum. Directly provocative humor, which is clearly recognized by most if not all viewers as coercive provocation, is useful in communicating complex ideas in a simple manner, such as breaking the façade of a dictator’s invincibility by telling him “He’s finished!” This type of provocation can also be an ironically deep expression of freedom from class maintenance. However, directly provocative humor risks focusing too much energy and blame on a few rather than focusing on the responsibility of the many. It also risks crossing identity-deep boundaries, offending people by attacking their very being. Indirectly provocative humor does not present such a degree of risk if any, though it does require more contextual knowledge. All of my informants asserted that indirectly provocative humor was favored by Serbs, at least urban Serbs.

Coercion cannot directly lay a foundation for collaboration with the individuals who had formerly been coerced. Collaboration is not a result of the offensive strategy nor
is it a result of passively waiting for the opponent to reach out to you. It requires a deliberate set of strategies and tactics, such as fraternization, carnivalesque actions and jokes, humor as aid to persuasion, respect communicated in the serious mode, and acknowledgement of the needs and wants of members of the opponent group.

5.3 *The Collaborative Approach-Why and How*

My examination of how Otpor used humor to fraternize with police and to encourage collaboration between activists and members of the opponent group adds a new analytical line to the Otpor case. Encouraging collaboration between activists and members of the opponent group prior to the dictator’s fall are especially important because the vast majority of the opponent group will not be extradited to the Hague\(^{177}\) or any other place of law and accounting, but will continue to live alongside activists. It is of practical as well as moral importance to refrain from alienating (i.e. humiliating) one’s opponent as much as possible, to acknowledge the inclusivity of “the people” needed to form parallel institutions and a democracy. Building trust in fellow citizens and simultaneously fighting for justice is crucial to building sustainable peace. As Lakey says it, political strategy must also be “community strategy” (2004, 139). According to Curle, peace, itself, is “harmonious and constructive collaboration” that is mutually beneficial for all parties involved (Curle 1971, 1).\(^{178}\) The sooner activists, members of the opponent group and others collaborate, the more time they have to lay a solid foundation for the

\(^{177}\) The Hague is architectural home of the International Criminal Court in the Netherlands to which Milošević became the first national leader to be successfully extradited and put on trial.

\(^{178}\) Conversely, Curle says “unpeacefulness” exists “whenever an individual’s potential development, mental or physical, is held back by the conditions of a relationship” even if social relations are otherwise “peaceful” (1971, 2).
post-dictator society. Through peacefulness, Curle contends, people are able to achieve fullest development both personally and socially (1971).

I argue that collaborative tactics, such as carnivalesque humor, can divert sources of political power as suggested with “Pick the Police Day” action. Fraternization and carnivalesque humor can actually shift social capital and thus maintain an offensive stance without coercion. And activists with a collaborative approach can maintain the element of surprise particularly if members of the opponent group largely obey or appear to obey the dictatorial regime, but are still collaborating with the activists. The secret e-mails from regime members who anonymously alerted Otpor to Milošević’s plan to call an early presidential election serve as a prime example of such activity (Cohen 2000, 46). Conversely, coercive provocation cannot build relationships between activists and those they target. This is why the least coercive measures should be taken first.

The collaborative approach also embraces seriousness as well as humor in waging nonviolence. Feminist principled nonviolence lends an important frame to understanding why seriousness is needed in addition to humor when striving for social change. Seriousness is typically necessary to communicate respect among other things. Genuine respect cannot occur at the same time as ridicule. Acknowledging and respecting others’ psychological needs such as accomplishment, recognition, connection with others, control over our lives, and avoidance of loss cannot be entirely done in the humorous mode. In order for the police to feel they were being taken seriously, Otpor had to act seriously.
5.4 Recap of Humor’s Weaknesses and Limitations

The necessity of serious dialogue in addition to humor is one example of a limitation of humor. Humor has both inherent weaknesses and conditional limitations in the context of real-world strategic nonviolence. Cultural boundaries such as the age gap and the urban-rural divide were especially notable in Otpor’s nonviolent struggle. Though Otpor attracted tens of thousands of young adults and teenagers, it struggled to attract Serbs over the age of thirty-five. And particularly in urban areas, which typically have a large community of intellectuals in Serbia, Otpor’s straight-forward humor and directly provocative humor were not well-received. My data support the assertion that humor’s acceptance depends upon social geography of the audience as well as its temporal relation to personal and public events. Otpor worked to extend the cultural acceptance of their humor by using informal focus groups and collecting feedback from open-ended questions designed to help free association.

The conditional limitation of humor that was most prominent in Otpor’s nonviolent struggle was the accusation that humor is too weak to fight violence and it trivializes the struggle, making light of the issues at hand, suffering or the society at stake in the struggle. Otpor’s engagement of the “paradox of repression” through high-lighting the regime’s violence against nonviolent activists and through contrasting their clever humor with the regime and police’s rote violence and unjust imprisonment resulted in thousands of Serbs joining Otpor and the overall opposition to Milošević. It is important to note a distinction between the importance of nonviolence and of humor here. Combining answers from my informants with knowledge in my literature review, I
conclude that humor presupposes nonviolence in creating and maintaining a successful nonviolent struggle. *Nonviolence must be continuously maintained while the type of humor actually needs to fluctuate.* Nonviolence aided by humor overcame the accusation of trivialization.

The isolation of individual activists through interrogations by the secret police and through compulsory military service in isolated areas of Serbia reveals another weakness of humor. Once taken from the support of fellow activists, humor is less capable of protecting the psyches of activists, creating bridges to collaboration with members of the opponent group and provoking the opponent to deligitimize themselves. However, fear of isolation was somewhat overcome by the supportive culture of “resistance” identified by Sørensen. This weakness of humor also points to the presupposition of nonviolence because strategic nonviolence is to be done, collectively by more than one person.

The final inherent weakness of humor applies to a specific type of humor, directly provocative humor or humor that both targets and focuses upon an individual. This type of humor often seeks to dehumanize the targeted individual and it is therefore counterproductive to the pursuit of sustainable peace. Further details of this weakness were integrated into Section 5.2.

### 5.5 Strategic Target and Foci Selection

It would be erroneous to say Otpor singled out Milošević as the lone source of oppression and decay. Yet, its activists did focus heavily on Milošević. The symbolic nature of a target like Milošević has the benefit of consolidating issues, making them
understandable to larger portion of the overall population, and literally putting a face to abstract issues. Targeting symbolic individuals likely helps to rally activists and their allies in a very time-efficient manner by simplifying deeper political angles and ideologies. ¹⁷⁹ However, relying on symbolic targets has its own downfalls. “[Milošević] was really a symbol of what was happening…it also becomes a problem, if you put the whole responsibility on one person…people thought, ‘Oh we’ll get rid of Milošević!...and then everything will be perfect!’ And they didn’t think that of course, but they think that it would be so much better….people were just so disappointed because in many aspects, this system of dictatorship had survived.”¹⁸⁰ Marović admitted that the heavy focus on Milošević was likely detrimental, at least to Otpor’s longevity.¹⁸¹ Thus, relying primarily on symbolic targets may lead people to overlook the responsibility of other members of the opponent group and their own responsibility; the multiplicity of their nation’s problems; the systematic nature of the injustices and the complexity of the transition from dictatorship to a less authoritarian form of government, most likely a democracy.

If pursuing the line of thought that Milošević, even as a symbol, was too narrow a target, then what would be an appropriately sized target? Sørensen suggests the politics of the Socialist Party. She said that Otpor’s most successful attacks would be ones that “actually get at the politics that Milošević was having, which was the problem.”¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Everyone can agree that the current official(s) are unjust and need to go. It is not as easy for many people with differing values to agree upon particular political policies especially in the heat of severe political repression.
¹⁸⁰ Sørensen Interview.
¹⁸¹ Marović interview, November 6, 2009.
¹⁸² Sørensen Interview.
Sørensen believes that focusing more energy on targeting the politics of the Socialist Party and less on any single person or small group would have been more beneficial for Serbia in the long-term. However, she also acknowledged the difficulty of uniting Serbia’s large number of political opposition parties and the myriad of political opinions these parties represent. Along with different constituencies and personalities, Serbia’s political opposition groups held an array of different ideologies. Ousting Milošević was possibly the only goal around which all these different peoples could unite. And uniting around Milošević as the target may have been the most time-efficient strategy. From this viewpoint, it was quite wise to target Milošević more frequently than anything or anyone else. Putting more energy and time into devising actions and campaigns around wider or abstract targets may have taken much longer to reach a critical mass of activists and thus protracted the conflict. This very well could have meant more damage to Serbia and its people. Sørensen suggests that ousting Milošević was the first step in the transitional process. She believes determining how to transform Serbian culture from that of an oppressive system to a fair and free democracy could only occur after removing the dictator.

I agree with Sørensen’s suggestion that broader and less personal targets should take the brunt of activists’ provocative and transformative forces. This is not only beneficial, but also quite possible. Combining Paletz’s theoretical framework of targets and foci with the concept of conditional self-worth and the use of symbolism, I make the following suggestions. First, activists should strive to target the broader levels of political

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183 Ibid.
184 Ibid.
authority identified by Paletz: policies, the authority position itself, the institution housing the position, and the entire socio-political system as much as possible (1990). Secondly, because symbolic individuals and groups may be used to help target the larger and less concrete levels of political authority, I advise still targeting these individuals, but doing so with strategic consideration. When targeting individuals, I suggest focusing on their behavior rather than their personhood. Focusing on behavior rather than on personhood encourages people to see that the health of their society is not simply the responsibility of a few. The “Milošević’s Dogs” action could easily have alienated the targeted police officers while other actions, i.e. “Load 2000” actually alienated the police from each other, fracturing officers from commanders. The main difference between these two actions is their foci. “Milošević’s Dogs” and other directly provocative actions both targeted and focused on the police, specific officers and the police in general. These are in-your-face actions that shoot to the core of officers’ public servant identity. It was true that many Serbian police officers’ were either not questioning their orders or were not acting upon their reservations until Otpor and other opposition forces put some coals under the fire. It was necessary to draw attention to their unquestioning obedience. However, directly provocative actions do not draw attention to specifics acts of harmful obedience, nor do they invite people to examine why their obedience is harmful. In the “Milošević’s Dogs” action, activists simply worked to dehumanize the police by comparing them to easily trained animals. Conversely, “Load 2000” targeted the police, but focused on their behavior. Otpor highlighted the officers’ detrimental and unjust behavior right when the police were committing the crime. There may not have been pre-
existing tensions between the police and their commanders, but tension certainly existed afterwards. The action put the police in a dilemma and instigated police to question the intelligence of their organization and the responsibility of their own comrades. “Load 2000” expanded the view of those responsible for oppression or at least for the embarrassment of seizing empty boxes. The particular politicians and law enforcers in office are not the only individuals capable of such criminal activity nor are they the only ones responsible for a nation’s well-being. All citizens, whether in a democratic society or not, are responsible to some degree for their country’s well-being. This is the pluralistic view of power motivated to action.

In addition to promoting shared responsibility for one’s society and accountability of authorities, focusing on behavior may help protect targeted individuals from unnecessary pain and damage to their self-worth. For example, there is a notable contrast between the birthday public actions for Milošević and Marković. Belgrade’s branch of Otpor targeted politics using Milošević as a symbol when they ‘celebrated’ Milošević’s birthday on August 20, 1999 (Popović et al. 2006, 68). They created a large fake ‘birthday cake’ with separate slices, each labeled with a major crime Milošević had committed (Popović et al. 2006, 68). “The cake signifies our country which fell apart. And like all those pieces of cakes are falling apart and they’re eaten by Slobo” (Marović in York and Zimmerman 2001). The “Mira is a Turkey” action, however, does not appear to have any connection to a policy or even to a specific statement Marković made. Activists simply mocked her, insinuating she was dumb and disdained by the public.

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185 Discussed in Section 4.2.
Conversely, the activists who created the “Birthday Cake for Milošević” action criticized Milošević as well as his detrimental policies. They drew attention to Milošević’s behavior, the ways in which he had violated the rights of the people and the activists thus invited dialogue over Milošević’s criminal activity and unjust policies. Targets need to be challenged emotionally and elsewise; their pride, selfishness and unjust behavior should not go unchecked. They do not, however, need to be personally attacked. Their pride and selfishness can be attacked through focusing on behavior rather than the target’s overall personhood. More specifically, I suggest focusing on exact aspects of behavior as much as possible while still drawing attention to patterns of unjust behavior.

5.6 Suggestions for Future Research

There are many more possible research questions related to the topics of this thesis. A few questions I suggest include: A) How did activists’ complex relationships with police help or hinder the transition to a healthy and efficient democratic society? B) How did Otpor’s provocative humor help or hinder their relationship with police? C) How can humor help lay the foundation for the transition from dictatorship to democracy? and D) How can humor play a role in the growing number of identity-based political conflicts? Regarding scope, a weakness of a single case study methodology is that its findings are not often or easily able to be generalized to a wider population (Hancock 2009). The ability to generalize results could be done by combining the findings of this study with that of other comparable case studies of humorous nonviolent action groups in countries under dictatorial rule. My original research proposal outlined a comparative case analysis, but this was too large an endeavor for my current senior
honors thesis. A comparative case analysis would be a worthwhile research project with more available time and relevant social resources.

5.7 The Dramatic Climax and Resolution of Serbia’s Nonviolent Struggle Against Milošević

A progressive though often covert warming in how police treated Otpor provided a reason to hope for further change and fuel for continuing the struggle. Initially, when police arrested Otpor activists, they forced the activists to silently face the prison walls all night. As the struggle progressed, Otpor activists experienced a sense of growing camaraderie not only with each other, but also with the police. Marović said “towards the end, the treatment of Otpor became very different than in the beginning…they would serve us coffee when we were arrested and they were really polite and there were no provocations (from police toward activists) anymore.” In the last few weeks before the Serbian people converged on the capital and ousted Milošević, “some police commanders started saying openly that they’re not going to be…loyal to the to the regime.” Prominently, “the commander of the anti-terrorist unit….said that he is sick and tired of the regime. He is not going to be used as the tool of the regime.” The conglomeration of increasingly positive responses validates the assertion that common ground was successfully built with police.

On July 27, 2000 Milošević called presidential elections to be held early (September 24 of 2000 as opposed to July of the following year) in an attempt to thwart

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186 Marović interview, November 6, 2009.
187 Marović interview, November 6, 2009.
188 Ibid.
the opposition (Paulson 2005, 325). Otpor initiated two campaigns, “Gotov Je!” (“He’s Finished!”) and the non-partisan Get-Out-the-Vote campaign “Vreme Je!” (“It’s Time!”), promptly to help the Democratic Opposition of Serbia’s presidential candidate, Vojislav Koštunica win the election. On election day, September 24, 2000, eighty percent of voters came out and Koštunica won the majority of votes. However, two days after the election, Federal Election Commission under the influence of the regime, accepted Milošević’s second place-win, but denied that Koštunica had achieved enough votes to win outright. Thus the Commission called for a runoff election to be held on October 8, 2000 (Paulson 2005, 325-327). The Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) leaders called for mass demonstrations in major Serbian cities. A series of demonstrations commenced with Koštunica supporters forming the largest opposition demonstration in Serbia’s history since the Second World War in Belgrade’s Republic Square. Tens of thousands of more protestors gathered in several other cities: Novi Sad, Niš and Kragujevac. The next day, the DOS coalition leaders announced a three-part campaign to last 10 days and include A) challenge the official poll results in court, B) pressure the regime with mass acts of protest and civil disobedience and C) encourage more of Milošević’s political and military pillars to desert him (Paulson 2005, 327-328). State television workers, students, artists and actors, business people and laborers were among the groups who chose to strike. The strike of 7,500 workers at the Kolubara coal mines that fueled the production of nearly half of Serbia’s electricity became the “focal point” of the national struggle (Paulson 2005, 329 and 332). The mine workers promised not to resume working until Koštunica was recognized as president (Paulson 2005, 329).
Milošević’s top military commander and Chief of Staff, Nebojsa Pavkovic, was sent to the Kolubara mines to coerce workers to end the strike. When his efforts failed, special police forces were sent to the Kolubara mines to occupy the facility, arrest strike leaders and beat back demonstrators, but workers still refused to leave, signaling nearby opposition forces so that 20,000 people came to the mines, removed police barricades and flooded into the mines to claim victory. The special police force left entirely by the following morning (Paulson 2005, 333-334).

October 2, 2000 became D-Day as a nationwide general strike began to shut down Serbia’s normal functioning with road blocks, strengthening of strikes at other key industrial sites and the closing of schools and businesses (Paulson 2005, 329, 330). Opposition leaders announced the strikes would continue until all involved would converge on Belgrade in a mass rally on October 5, 2000. Milošević appeared on nationwide television to accuse opposition leaders of working for foreign governments and NATO to buy, blackmail and scare citizens and “stop life in Serbia.” The head of the Belgrade public transport union, Dragoljub Stosic, was arrested and a human blockade of the bus garage was forcibly removed. Arrest warrants were issued for eleven leaders of the Kolubara strike and two opposition politicians on allegations of “sabotage.” And finally, the regime generated an assassination list of 40 opposition leaders including Srdja Popović and initiated rolling blackouts in opposition-controlled districts blaming the Kolubara strikers. However, many police were now overtly siding with the opposition, allowing protesters to block roads and otherwise carry out their plans and the sheer force of dissenting non-law enforcing citizens was enough to keep Milošević’s accusations
from rallying his few supporters (Paulson 2005, 331-332). On October 5, the nonviolent invasion commenced as massive motorcades of all sorts of vehicles and a half a million Serbs swamped Belgrade. Invading protestors, often encouraged by Otpor’s nonviolent stance, often peacefully talked drivers blocking their way into moving aside and pushed trucks out of the way. Led by Cacak’s mayor, Velimir Ilić, and several police officers, many of the peaceful invaders went to seize the Federal Parliament building and the broadcasting studios of Radio Television Serbia. The next morning Russia, formerly a supporter of Milošević, sent its Foreign Minister, Igor S. Ivanov to meet with Koštunica and Milošević and to tell Milošević that if he conceded power now, the world would not press charges of war crimes against him. The Constitutional Court suddenly reversed their previous decision, validating Koštunica’s victory and Milošević subsequently conceded the presidency to Koštunica on October 6, 2000 (Paulson 2005, 334-337). “The people” of Serbia had successfully waged peace with strategic nonviolence, ousting a violent dictator. Just as Otpor activists ushered in the struggle against Milošević with humorous jesting and a sarcastic logo, their ultimate triumph came with the voices of hundreds of thousands of Serbs chanting “Gotov Je! Gotov Je! Gotov Je!” (“He's Finished!”) all on one accord.


censorship around the world from Beerbohm to Borat. Westport, Massachusetts: Praeger.


Appendix A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR ACTIVISTS

1) How did the target of Otpor’s nonviolent action influence the group’s choice of what type of humor to use (in form and in degree of aggression)? For example, were you more likely to be aggressive when targeting Milošević or when targeting the police?

2) Please describe times when provoking or ridiculing the police, military, or Milošević’s regime backfired, if it ever did. What did you learn from these instances?

3) Were there humorous actions that created common ground with the police, military, or other pillars of support or did the actions focus solely on heightening the contrast between the “good guys” (Otpor and citizens) and the “bad guys” (Milošević’s regime and its pillars of support)? If there were actions that created common ground, please describe them.

4) How did Otpor use humor to help activists who were imprisoned, beaten, intimidated, or otherwise personally oppressed?

5) What reactions from the public reinforced the belief that humor was making an impact for Otpor as your campaign progressed?

6) Did you ever witness bystanders who appeared to disapprove of the humor? Please describe their reactions and how you and other Otpor activists responded to their disapproval.

7) Please describe examples of “Dilemma Actions” like “Dinar za Smenu” and how responding authorities engaged in the dilemma.

8) Were there actions or graphics Otpor considered doing, but decided not to do? Please describe them and explain why you chose not to do them.

9) How can I obtain more information on and graphics of Otpor’s (humorous) flyers, slogans, songs, marches, actions, etc.?
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL “EXPERTS”

1) How did the target of Otpor’s nonviolent action influence the type of humor the group used (in form and in degree of aggression)? For example, were Otpor activists more likely to be aggressive when targeting Milošević or when targeting a police unit?

2) Please describe times when Otpor provoked or ridiculed the police, military, or Milošević’s regime and doing so backfired, if it ever did.

3) Are you aware of any of Otpor’s humorous actions that created common ground with the police, military, or other pillars of support or did their actions focus solely on heightening the contrast between the “good guys” (Otpor and citizens) and the “bad guys” (Milošević’s regime and its pillars of support)? If there were actions that created common ground, please describe them.

4) How did Otpor use humor to help activists who were imprisoned, beaten, intimidated, or otherwise personally oppressed?

5) What reactions from the public reinforced the belief that humor was making an impact for Otpor as the group’s campaign progressed?

6) Are you aware of any bystanders appearing to have disapproved of any of Otpor’s humorous actions? Please describe their reactions and how Otpor activists responded to this disapproval.

10) Please describe examples of “Dilemma Actions” like “Dinar za Smenu” and how responding authorities engaged in the dilemma.

7) How can I obtain more information on and graphics of Otpor’s (humorous) flyers, slogans, songs, marches, actions, etc.?

8) What did international organizations that supported Otpor think of Otpor’s use of humor?
Appendix B

PROTOCOL USED FOR E-MAIL INTERVIEWS WITH ACTIVISTS

1) What are your earliest memories of Otpor?

2) How would you define provocation in the context of nonviolent struggle?

3) What does it mean for humor to be provocative? Feel free to give examples. Follow-Up: What does it mean for humor to be aggressive? Please give examples.

4) What criteria did your quality control focus groups have for a graphic or action to be approved?

5) Please compare and contrast how the police reacted to your subtle humor and sarcastic actions with how they reacted to your obviously ridiculing actions?

6) What limited various segments of the Serbian public from getting involved in political action until Otpor?

7) How did Otpor encourage people to live the resistance and not just watch what Otpor did?

8) What helped Otpor activists to stay committed to nonviolence? Follow-Up: Did humor help Otpor activists maintain non-violence? If yes, how?

9) What repression did you personally experience as a member of Otpor? Follow-Up: How did humor help you?
Appendix C

CONSENT FORM
[Consent form on KSU departmental letterhead]
Consent Form: DMPNEO

I am conducting research on the formulation of nonviolent action strategies using humor. I want to better understand how humor has influenced the relationship between oppressive authorities and nonviolent resisters; the relationships within the activist group; and the growth of the activist group. I would like you to take part in this project. If you decide to do this, you will be asked to answer several questions about your participation in Otpor’s nonviolent actions or study of Otpor’s work. The interview will last approximately forty-five (45) to ninety (90) minutes and a follow-up interview may be scheduled if necessary and agreed upon by both interviewee and interviewer.

If you take part in this project you will be helping us better understand humor’s role in conflict transformation. Taking part in this project is entirely up to you, and no one will hold it against you if you decide not to do it. If you take part, you may stop at any time.

If you want to know more about this research project, please call me at 419-410-4937. The project has been approved by Kent State University. If you have questions about Kent State University's rules for research, please call Dr. John West, Vice President of Research, Division of Research and Graduate Studies (Tel. 330.672.2704).

You will get a copy of this consent form.

Sincerely,

Anne M. Lucas
Senior Honors Undergraduate
Center for Applied Conflict Management
B. CONSENT STATEMENT(S)

1. I agree to (take part)/(let my child take part) in this project. I know what (I)/(he or she) will have to do and that (I)/(he or she) can stop at any time.

________________________________________________________________________

Signature       Date

To help me maintain the accuracy of your interview, I would like to either video recording or audio recording our session using computer software.

I agree to video and/or audio recording

at________________________________________________________
on__________________________________________.

Signature       Date

I have been told that I have the right to hear the audio recordings or see and hear the video recordings before they are used. I have decided that I:

_____want to hear or see the recordings _____do not want to hear or see the recordings

Sign now below if you do not want to hear the recordings. If you want to hear the recordings, you will be asked to sign after hearing them.

Anne Lucas and other researchers approved by Kent State University may / may not use the recordings made of me. The original recordings or copies may be used for:

_____this research project _____presentation at academic or professional conferences

Signature       Date