Commerce, Spontaneous Order, and Gender Freedom Movements

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Abstract: Various social norms and legal restrictions limit individuals' autonomy based on their gender. Some of these restrict the romantic and sexual relationships individuals may pursue. Others restrict gender expression. Still others restrict the freedom to work, own property, or participate in the political process. Many scholars have studied the role of intentional political activism in combating these restrictions. Less explored, however, is how spontaneous order within market economies created opportunities for this type of activism. Individuals who are seeking private gains rather than social change can nonetheless contribute to social change that they do not intend.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Gender plays an important role in our lives, both subjectively and intersubjectively. Subjectively, gender is a key part of many people's identities. Intersubjectively, gender roles serve as institutions. These are largely informal institutions, but they are sometimes codified in formal law. As Lachmann (1971; 1979) argues, institutions help individuals orient themselves and coordinate their plans with one another. For instance, individuals have used gender roles as points of orientation to guide and align their expectations in situations such as romantic courtship and the division of household labor. However, individuals are diverse and hold heterogenous values, beliefs, and identities. Gender roles that help some individuals coordinate their plans can be constraining, onerous, and oppressive for others. Historically, gender roles have been enforced through violence, both the formal violence of the state's legal system and various forms of informal violence wielded by non-state actors.

Individuals deserve freedom and dignity, regardless of their gender. However, individuals have often been restricted based on their gender. This can take a variety of forms. Women have been barred from bodily autonomy, employment opportunities, access to property rights, and rights to free contract (Salmon 1986; Warbasse 1987; Zaher 2002; Lemke 2016; Skwire and Lemke 2023). This was particularly severe for married women. Throughout the 18th and early 19th century, the doctrine of coverture forbade married women from making contracts, controlling their own property, starting businesses, and exercising various other rights (Lemke 2016). Even after these restrictions ended, marriage was still viewed as consent to sex, which meant that marital rape was treated as legal. Marital rape was not criminalized

in all fifty states in the United States until 1993 (Bergen 2016). Until 1973, Irish law required women to retire from the civil service once they married (Foley 2022). Members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community have also been restricted based on gender. Until the U.S. Supreme Court's 2003 ruling in Lawrence v. Texas overturned sodomy laws, state and local governments could criminally prosecute people for having consensual sex with individuals of the same gender (Weinmeyer 2014). Similarly, same-gender marriage was illegal in the United States for many years. It was gradually legalized on a state-by-state basis until the last remaining state laws prohibiting same-gender marriage were overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court in the 2015 Obergefell v. Hodges ruling (Rosenfeld 2017). Transgender and gender nonconforming individuals have faced both formal and informal restrictions that pressure them to conform with expectations associated with the gender they were assigned at birth. For instance, transgender and gender non-conforming people have been involuntarily confined in asylums and psychiatric facilities for deviating from gender expectations (Lobdell 2011; McCloskey 1999; Novak 2015, p. 16). In many places, these various gender-based restrictions have given way to increases in freedom. How did these expansions of freedom come about?

Perhaps the most visible cause of these changes involves the deliberate, intentional work of activists engaged in collective action to expand freedom and equality. Together, they formed social movements such as the women's suffrage movement, the Women's Liberation movement, the feminist movement, the Gay Liberation movement, the transgender rights movement, the #MeToo movement, and other similar efforts to challenge formal and informal restrictions that limited autonomy based on gender. But this intentional collective action was not the only factor that helped challenge such restrictions.

Intentional efforts at collective action occur within a particular social context. The options available to activists, the incentives they face, and the relationships they can form with others to build their movement will all vary depending on their social context. For instance, activists who live in cities may meet more people they might organize with than activists in small towns. The circumstances in which they meet will depend upon which public spaces exist in their area. Once they meet, the culture and language in their region will shape how they discuss politics and eventually organize. No one person or organization planned all of these features of the surrounding social context. Instead, they result from the interactions of many individuals, creating patterns that were not intended by any single individual. In other words, the social context within which activists act is a *spontaneous order. Classic examples of spontaneous orders include language, social customs, the common law, and market processes*. Each of these social phenomena display orderly patterns that were not designed by any one person. In this paper I focus on the role of market processes in shaping the context where activists act. Individuals within markets act to pursue a variety of individual aims. For instance, they may seek to purchase goods and services they value, or to make profits by investing in business ventures, or to earn wages. Individuals within a market pursue their own plans. Some individual plans may be complementary, and dovetail well with one another, while others might involve incompatible ends that give rise to rivalrous conflict. However, the feedback provided by prices, profits, and losses results in a tendency towards coordination among these diverse plans, guiding individuals to pursue projects that mutually benefit themselves and others in their society. This coordination is a spontaneous order that was not planned, and could not be planned, by any individual.

The spontaneous order generated by market processes impacts the opportunities available for alert entrepreneurs to pursue their ends. This applies to both commercial entrepreneurs seeking pecuniary profits and to various non-market entrepreneurs seeking non-pecuniary ends. Entrepreneurs act in a manner that drives processes of change. Following Kirzner (1973) I define entrepreneurship within market processes in terms of alertness to profit opportunities. Entrepreneurship within social movements can take at least two forms: social entrepreneurship and political entrepreneurship. The definitions of both terms are contested. Boettke and Coyne (2009, p. 171) define "social entrepreneurship as entrepreneurship driven by social considerations—peer recognition, appreciation, strengthening social ties and bonds, etc.—rather than economic (profit) or political (power) considerations." They define political entrepreneurs as "individuals who operate in political institutions and who are alert to profit opportunities created by those institutions"

(Boettke and Coyne 2009, p. 180). I argue that the changes wrought by market entrepreneurship can create new opportunities for social movement activity initiated by political and social entrepreneurs. Conversely, the changes wrought by social movement activity can create new profit opportunities for commercial entrepreneurs acting within the market process. This can then give rise to an iterative process, in which the entrepreneurs who seize those profit opportunities create a new set of opportunities for social and political entrepreneurs. I argue that the spontaneous order generated by the entrepreneurial market process created opportunities for social and political entrepreneurs to form movements that challenged formal and informal restrictions that have limited individuals' autonomy based on gender.

By explaining this bidirectional influence between market processes and social movements, I synthesize insights from several literatures. One is the literature on entrepreneurship and the market process (Kirzner 1973, 1992; Lachmann 1976, 1986; Holcombe 1998). Another is the literature on non-market entrepreneurship (see Lucas 2019), which includes both social entrepreneurship (see Storr, Haeffele-Balch and Grube 2015; Haeffele and Storr 2019) and political entrepreneurship (see Holcombe 2002; McCaffrey and Salerno 2011). By explaining the connections between these types of entrepreneurship, this paper complements the literature on entangled political economy, which focuses on the dynamic connections between political and economic enterprises (Aligica and Wagner 2020; Novak 2018; Wagner 2016). In addition, I contribute to the literature on social movements (Ammons and Coyne 2020; Chong 1987; Lichbach 1994, 1995; Rojas 2007; Novak 2021; Chenoweth 2021; Chenoweth and Stephan 2012) by exploring how such movements are shaped by the entrepreneurial market process. This analysis complements the work of King and Soule (2007), who examine social movement activists as "extra-institutional entrepreneurs" that impact the stock prices of major corporations. Within the literature on social movements, I contribute to the literature on social movements for women's rights (Friedman 2003; Hosterman et al. 2018; Hossein and Hooman 2022) and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights (Duberman 2019; Feinberg 1998; Spade 2015). More broadly, I contribute to the literature on how gender roles, gendered legal restrictions, and gender disparities change over time (Goldin 1991, 2006; Goldin and Katz 2000, 2002; Mammen and Paxson 2000; Lemke 2016). My central contribution to these disparate literatures is to emphasize how the spontaneous order generated by the entrepreneurial market process has enabled social entrepreneurs to build movements aimed at intentionally altering gender norms, as well as the iterative nature of the interaction between markets and movements.

While I focus on movements that I believe expand freedom for those previously marginalized, my argument does not imply that market processes only enable movements that expand freedom. Markets create an incentive to cater to unmet demands, which means offering products and services, including social spaces, to those whose demands for such products and services are unmet. These incentives guide entrepreneurs to serve all prospective consumers, not just those I support or approve of. Because gender is subjectively and intersubjectively important as an institution, and because there are heterogeneous beliefs about which gender roles are desirable, there will likely always be those who contest prevailing gender norms. Sometimes they will contest these norms because they restrain the freedom of marginalized people. But in other instances, they may contest these norms because they create space for autonomous actions that disrupt prior meanings and points of orientation associated with other gender expectations. Therefore, while market processes create social spaces and opportunities for social entrepreneurs associated with movements for feminism and LGBT rights, they also create opportunities for social entrepreneurs who wish to strengthen or reinforce traditional or restrictive gender roles for a variety of reasons. In this case, the interaction of the market process with processes of political contestation does not create an inexorable arc of history that bends towards justice. Rather, it creates an open-ended process in which diverse individuals with heterogeneous values engage in political contestation with one another.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 discusses entrepreneurial processes, with particular focus on how entrepreneurship within the market process creates opportunities for social movement activity and vice versa. Section 3 discusses historical examples in which the entrepreneurial market process created opportunities for entrepreneurial activists to build movements that contested prevailing gendered norms, ex-

pectations, and institutions. Section 4 concludes with a discussion of the implications of this analysis and opportunities for future research.

2. MARKET AND NON-MARKET ENTREPRENEURIAL PROCESSES

Entrepreneurship is a human universal (Koppl and Minniti 2008). That is, individuals across institutional and social contexts are alert to previously unseen opportunities and act in a way that drives dynamic change. The patterns and outcomes that arise from this entrepreneurship can vary depending on the institutions within which entrepreneurs act, as well as the type of gains the entrepreneurs seek. However, all sorts of entrepreneurship change the status quo. This change can create new entrepreneurial opportunities. As Holcombe (1998, p. 50) explains, many entrepreneurial opportunities "come from the actions of other entrepreneurs." He offers some illustrative examples of this from within the entrepreneurial market process. For instance, he explains that Bill Gates seized a profit opportunity created by Steve Jobs' entrepreneurship in creating the personal computer. Likewise, Steve Jobs seized a profit opportunity that was only available due to Moore's invention of the microprocessor. This illustrates that "When entrepreneurs take advantage of profit opportunities, they create new entrepreneurial opportunities that others can act upon" (Holcombe 1998, p. 51).

While Holcombe focuses on this within the market process, I argue that entrepreneurship in the market also creates entrepreneurial opportunities for political and social entrepreneurs. Likewise, political and social entrepreneurs within social movements create profit opportunities for commercial entrepreneurs. Each of these forms of entrepreneurship causes changes in society, and those changes create new entrepreneurial opportunities.

To illustrate why this is, it's worth first unpacking the dilemmas that individuals within social movements face. Imagine that a social movement is seeking a large-scale social or political change. For instance, they may be seeking to change a law. If the law changes, however, then everyone who prefers the new law benefits regardless of whether they participated in the social movement. If participating in the movement is costly, then there are incentives to free ride on the actions of other movement participants (Olson 1971; Tullock 1971). To resolve this problem, activists within a movement must provide "selective incentives" that are differentially available to those who have contributed to a movement (Lichbach 1994, 1995). These incentives can take on various forms. Some might involve direct material benefits associated with participating in movement. Others might involve more intangible benefits, such as movement participation enhancing one's reputation in a particular social circle. Crucially, activists are continually facing collective action problems, and to succeed, their movements must provide incentives that encourage participation.

Often, the incentives that encourage movement participation are tied to goods or services produced for profit within a market. For example, suppose that activists within a given social movement frequent a specific bar, coffee shop, or restaurant. Contributing to that movement may increase an activist's reputation among other activists in that movement. By improving their reputation in that social circle, the activist increases the chance that they will be invited to spend time recreationally with others in that social circle. If that recreation time is substantially more enjoyable due to the bar, coffee shop, or restaurant that members of this social circle frequent, then that selective incentive is more valuable. In other words, the value of this selective incentive has been enhanced by the commercial entrepreneurship of the restaurateur, barkeeper, or coffee shop owner.

An entrepreneurial process perspective, however, should draw our attention to another key feature of social movement organizing, namely that activists discover opportunities to advance their cause, rather than simply starting from a predefined plan for social change. It's not as though prospective activists are simply deciding whether to contribute to a predefined social movement. Instead, they may at times be ignorant of the opportunities for social movement activity. If they are unaware that other people share their political perspective or social grievances, they may never consider collaborating with them on activist projects. For instance, they may feel uncomfortable with current gendered norms and expectations, but not

realize that anyone else finds these norms similarly onerous and constraining. Businesses such as coffee shops, bars, bookstores, and social media sites that provide social spaces (Storr 2008; Haeffele and Craig 2020) and action spaces (Ikeda 2012) for like-minded people therefore do more than just increase the value of a selective incentive to participate in a social movement. They also enable people to discover opportunities for social and political entrepreneurship that they may have otherwise been unaware of.

Commercial entrepreneurship can therefore contribute to a spontaneous order that enables social and political entrepreneurship in social movements, both by providing social spaces where social and political entrepreneurs can discover entrepreneurial opportunities and by creating goods and services that can be used as selective incentives for movement participation. This makes it clear that commercial entrepreneurship shapes social movements. What about influence in the other direction?

Social movements can create profit opportunities for commercial entrepreneurs in a variety of ways. Consider the point about social interactions among movement participants again. Repeated interactions among movement participants may alert them to profit opportunities associated with exchanges they can make with one another. For example, Chong (1987) explains that during the Jim Crow era many black businessmen grew their business through contacts that they met via their participation in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). These profit opportunities provided a selective incentive to participate in the NAACP, and they also enabled entrepreneurs to act on profit opportunities that they discovered during their participation in the NAACP.

Movements create symbols, slogans, and ideas that their supporters wish to express. This creates a profit opportunity for commercial entrepreneurs to sell products that express support (or opposition) to the movement. When a movement popularizes a slogan, such as "Trans Rights Are Human Rights," this creates profit opportunities associated with selling clothing, signs, stickers, buttons, and other consumer goods emblazoned with that slogan.

Another way that social movements can alert entrepreneurs to profit opportunities is by making entrepreneurs aware of a previously underserved clientele. For example, if the Gay Liberation movement resulted in more people coming out as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT), this likely alerted more entrepreneurs to the presence of a clientele that they may have otherwise not marketed to.

To alleviate the collective action problems associated with social movement organizing, political and social entrepreneurs may develop new technologies or tactics. For instance, they might invest in encryption techniques to protect themselves and their allies from government surveillance. Doing so reduces the expected risk of legal repression for activists, which all else equal would incentivize a greater willingness to participate in movement activities. However, the encryption technologies developed by activists in a non-price environment may then be able to be commercialized by entrepreneurs in the market, who could sell them to a variety of consumers that are willing to pay for encrypted communications. Innovation carried out to address the context-specific dilemmas that social movement participants face may therefore create entrepreneurial opportunities for profit-seeking entrepreneurs interacting within the market process.

We have discussed several mechanisms by which commercial entrepreneurship can create opportunities for social movements and entrepreneurship within social movements can create profit opportunities for commercial entrepreneurs. These can build upon one another in an iterative process. For instance, commercial entrepreneurship may create a social space where a social movement then organizes more effectively. That social movement organizing could then result in a new technology, which commercial entrepreneurs could then commercialize for profit. The commercial form of that innovation may then be useful to other social movement entrepreneurs in their organizing. The next section discusses historical examples in which these types of entrepreneurial processes contributed to movements for gender freedom.

3. MARKET PROCESSES AND MOVEMENTS FOR GENDER FREEDOM

To illustrate this theory of social movements and market processes, it is important to examine how these processes have unfolded historically. This section focuses on two illustrative examples from gender freedom movements. The first is the role that gay bars, most notably the Stonewall Inn, played in the early stages of the Gay Liberation movement. The second is the role that Twitter played in the #MeToo movement.

3.1 Gay Bars and the Gay Liberation Movement

For much of the 20th century, both homosexual activity and unconventional gender presentation were socially stigmatized. In addition, homosexual sex was criminalized via sodomy laws (Weinmeyer 2014), and many American cities enforced laws prohibiting cross-dressing (Redburn 2022). This mix of formal and informal institutions would deter open expression of homosexuality and gender nonconformity. However, some gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender people, and gender non-conforming people such as drag kings and queens still wanted to express themselves and find camaraderie with others. Demand for this type of experience created profit opportunities associated with catering to gay clientele. Even if business owners shared the anti-gay prejudices popular at the time, discrimination by some business owners implies a set of profit opportunities for others (Becker 1957). In this case, the story may be a bit more complicated, simply because many customers may share homophobic prejudices, which means catering to gay audiences could drive away homophobic heterosexual customers. However, even in situations where customers, not just owners, prefer to avoid a marginalized group, entrepreneurial processes can still erode discrimination. Coyne, Isaacs, Schwartz, and Carilli (2007) carefully document how this type of entrepreneurial process contributed to the racial integration of Major League Baseball. That said, entrepreneurs who founded gay bars were typically not desegregating gay patrons from straight patrons, but instead creating havens where gay patrons could interact in a manner largely free from the judgment of heterosexuals.

LGBT bar patrons faced not just prejudice on the part of producers and consumers, they also faced restrictive laws such as sodomy laws that prohibited consensual homosexual sex and laws that criminalized wearing clothing deemed inappropriate based on one's sex or gender. Catering to a crowd that skirts the law can be costly and risky for a business. Even in states where homosexuality itself was legal, government intervention placed barriers in the way of businesses that catered to LGBT patrons. The PBS program American Experience notes:

> In the early 1960s, while homosexuality was legal in the state of New York, establishments openly serving alcohol to gay customers were considered by the State Liquor Authority (SLA) to be "disorderly houses," or places where "unlawful practices are habitually carried on by the public." The SLA refused to issue liquor licenses to many gay bars, and several popular establishments had licenses suspended or revoked for "indecent conduct." Businesses that remained open were frequently raided by the police (American Experience n.d.).

However, some business owners were already taking on costs associated with defying the law. For example, the mafia owned a variety of businesses. As they were already acting unlawfully, the relative price of engaging in additional unlawful activity was lower for them. Moreover, members of the mafia had experience bribing police, which is a useful skill when engaging in prohibited activity. It should therefore be unsurprising that they were major operators of gay bars at the time (Duberman 2019 [1993]; American Experience n.d.). The mafia already specialized in providing extralegal security services, which are especially useful for defending a criminalized and stigmatized clientele from both private and public predation. For instance, at lesbian bars in Greenwich Village "Mafia thugs at the door…were supposedly there to keep out straight men keen to convert a 'lezzie'" (Duberman 2019 [1993], p. 53). One mafia-operated gay bar that would become especially important to the burgeoning Gay Liberation movement was the Stonewall Inn, located on

Christopher Street in Greenwich Village. Until 1966, the Stonewall Inn was a bar and restaurant that catered to heterosexual audiences. The bar was not bringing in much revenue, which created a profit opportunity for Tony Lauria, or "Fat Tony," of the Genovese crime family. He purchased the Stonewall Inn and converted it into a gay bar. He took several types of precautions to evade existing laws. One such precaution was bribing the local police. In addition, he classified the Stonewall Inn not as a public bar, but as a private "bottle club." Visitors signed in, often under pseudonyms, in order to affirm that they were members of the club. This process made it easier to prevent police from entering. An additional advantage of being a "bottle club" rather than a bar was that a liquor license was not required to operate (American Experience n.d.).

While the mafia offered valuable services to members of the LGBT community by running gay bars, their relationships with LGBT clients were sometimes marred by conflict and hostility. For instance, in addition to profiting by selling alcohol to patrons, members of the mafia also gathered revenue through blackmail. Due to the stigma against homosexuality, some closeted patrons were willing to pay a great deal to keep information about their sexuality private. "This practice eventually became the most profitable aspect of the Mafia's club management" (American Experience n.d.). Likewise, the mafia members who provided security also sometimes turned away and denigrated black patrons and others they perceived as "undesirable" (Duberman 2019 [1993]: 53). For the mafia, running gay bars was a profit-seeking business venture, not a social justice effort. To paraphrase Adam Smith (1776), "It is not from the benevolence of…[the mafia]... that we expect our… [gay bar]..., but from their regard to their own interest."

Venal, self-interested profit seeking by members of the mafia established the Stonewall Inn as a gay bar. In 1969, it would also become a symbol, a key part of a collective narrative (Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2011), around which the burgeoning Gay Liberation movement would coordinate for years to come (Armstrong and Crage 2006). Despite the owners' precautions to avoid police raids, the police raided the Stonewall Inn on June 28th, 1969. The patrons did not passively accept the raid. Instead, they fought back, engaging in what quickly became known as the Stonewall Riots.

These riots prompted the formation of several new Gay Liberation organizations. One year later, the first ever gay pride parades were held in several American cities, including New York and San Francisco, to commemorate the riots. While similar riots had occurred elsewhere, there were activists in New York ready to seize the entrepreneurial opportunity associated with commemorating the Stonewall riots:

> Gay liberation was already underway in New York before Stonewall, which enabled movement activists to recognize the opportunity presented and to initiate commemoration (Armstrong and Crage 2006, p. 725).

Pride parades and festivals continue to be held annually in June all over the world and are both major celebratory events and major sites of LGBT rights activism. The opportunity to resist police repression of LGBT bar patrons, and the opportunity to coordinate social movement events inspired by that resistance, would not have been possible without a gay bar. In other words, activists seized a series of social entrepreneurial opportunities that were available because members of the Mafia had engaged in profit-seeking entrepreneurship by purchasing a bar and converting it into a gay bar. The Mafia's members did this not out of any commitment to toleration or a political agenda of Gay Liberation, but out of the desire for profit. This market process is not a panacea, and it does not always promote desirable outcomes. But it does create incentives to make mutually beneficial exchanges with underserved minorities. Even when institutional barriers, such as legal prohibitions, stand in the way of serving a marginalized group, entrepreneurs will often discover creative ways to evade these restrictions (Coyne and Leeson 2004; Elert and Henrekson 2016; Thierer 2020).

3.2 Twitter and Gender Freedom Movements

In 2006, activist Tarana Burke began efforts to connect and mobilize survivors of sexual harassment and assault using the phrase "Me Too" as a rallying cry (Mosley 2021). Yet that rallying cry became much louder over a decade later, when it was used as a hashtag on Twitter. On October 15, 2017, "actor Alyssa Milano tweeted a request to her followers in response to the sexual assault allegations against movie producer Harvey Weinstein: 'If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet'" (Hosterman et al. 2018, p. 69). This tweet prompted extensive conversation about sexual assault and sexual harassment across multiple social media sites. It quickly became a trending topic on Twitter, and eventually both millions of tweets and millions of posts on other social media sites, such as Facebook, used the hashtag (Ibid).

The discussion prompted by the #MeToo movement raised awareness of sexual assault and harassment, altered collective narratives and social norms, and helped survivors of sexual assault build a movement to assert their rights and dignity. While the #MeToo movement began in the United States, it spread to at least 85 countries (Trott 2021; Kermani and Hooman 2022). Even women living under authoritarian governments that repress feminist activism were inspired to engage in these types of online efforts to speak out against perpetrators of sexual assault. In Iran, for instance, the hashtag Tajavoz, a Persian term that translates to "rape," was used by thousands of women to speak out against sexual abuse (Tafakori 2020; Kermani and Hooman 2022).

These movements against sexual assault were able to expose abusers and shift collective narratives using social media, especially Twitter. Social media sites like Twitter are themselves commercial products that result from a market process. However, Twitter itself resulted from an iterative process, in which social movements shaped markets, and then markets shaped movements.

To understand how Twitter emerged from both social movements and market processes, we need to consider the type of problem that Twitter's predecessor was developed to solve. Street protests can be difficult, stressful affairs. Especially in unpermitted marches, protesters may find it challenging to coordinate their movements and maintain strength in numbers. Protesters may face violence from police and from counter-protestors. When this happens, they may wish to communicate with one another so that their compatriots can avoid the worst of this violence. They may also wish to document, share, and eventually publicize information about this violence. Doing all of this in real time can be quite challenging.

To help protesters cope with these types of real time challenges, Tad Hirsch, who was then a graduate student at the MIT Media Lab, developed an open-source app called TXTmob that would allow protesters to communicate with one another during protests. He explains that he "initially developed the project with the Bl(a)ck Tea Society, an ad-hoc group of activists that organized demonstrations at the July 2004 Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Boston" (Hirsch 2020). TXTmob was developed to address a specific political context, in which activists embraced autonomous street protest tactics in the face of militarized policing. To reduce their vulnerability to police, activists engaged in actions throughout a city rather than in a single location in which police could conduct mass arrests or other repression. But to coordinate these dispersed actions, they needed to communicate with each other. TXTmob allowed them to communicate anonymously with other activists about conditions on the ground.

Hundreds of activists used TXTmob to coordinate with each other during the DNC protests. After the DNC protests, Hirsch collaborated with activists to improve TXTmob in hopes that it could be even more useful during the upcoming Republican National Convention (RNC). These improvements enabled activists to use TXTmob in protests for several years. The updated app was used to coordinate protests at the RNC as well as various other protests around the world. TXTmob was far from perfect. As Sasha Costanza-Chock (2020) explains:

> it used a clunky hack to send SMS for free: it took advantage of the email-to-SMS gateways that nearly all mobile operators made available at the time. Indeed, if hundreds of thousands of protest-

> ers had all signed up for TXTMob, the tool quickly would have been blocked by mobile service providers once they noticed the volume of messages being sent without payment.

This is a serious limitation, and it meant that TXTmob could never operate at the scale that later services like Twitter operated at. However, it was a worthwhile trade-off given the constraints that protesters faced at the time.

After the RNC protests concluded, Hirsch (2020) "released the TXTmob source code under an open source license to enable other activist organizations to host their own TXTmob-like services without my approval or involvement." He also attended the Ruckus Society SMS Summit, an activist conference where he met several activist coders and discussed his insights about SMS tools such as TXTmob. His intention was to make this type of application more accessible to other activists. In the process, he inadvertently revealed a profit opportunity for entrepreneurs. This is because several of the developers he met with worked for a podcasting startup called Odeo. After Apple announced their own podcasting service as part of iTunes, it became clear that Odeo's main product would not be competitive in the marketplace. To adapt, employees at Odeo brainstormed a variety of new product ideas at a demo session. At that demo session, coders discussed TXTmob, its previous performance, and the potential to develop a similar tool commercially. This demo session then led to further work, which led to the development of TWTTR, which was later renamed Twitter (Costanza-Chock 2020).

So acts of social entrepreneurship meant to facilitate protest activities within a social movement resulted in the creation and refinement of technology. Employees at a for-profit firm saw that by modifying this technology they could create a profitable commercial product. Entrepreneurship within social movements thus created profit opportunities that entrepreneurs seized, creating one of the most successful social networking websites of all time.

The story of Twitter illustrates the iterative nature of this process, as it has also been used for activist activity since its creation as a commercialized social network. There are some ways that Twitter is worse for activist activity than TXTmob. Part of Twitter's business model relies on gathering user data to target advertisements. This means that if police or prosecutors want to acquire information about an activist who tweeted from a protest, there may be a significant amount of information for them to acquire. TXTmob, on the other hand, was designed with privacy concerns in mind, as Hirsch (2020, n.p.) explains:

> TXTmob placed a premium on protecting activists from police surveillance and retaliation. TXTmob collected very limited user data, left control over personal information in users' hands, and separated message archives from users' data to obscure which individuals sent or received particular messages. It turned out that these were not idle concerns as I was eventually subpoenaed by the City of New York to supply records pertaining to 2004 RNC protests. Happily, much of the requested data did not exist and in any case I successfully fought the subpoena with the help of probono lawyers.

Despite TXTmob having significant privacy advantages over Twitter, however, Twitter can host a much higher volume of activity and is more user friendly. It should therefore be unsurprising that social movements around the world, including the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, #MeToo, and Black Lives Matter, have used Twitter to share information, spread their messages, and coordinate their activities (Tufekci 2021). The #MeToo movement, as well as the related movements that it inspired, were able to challenge sexual assault largely because they could benefit from an iterative process in which activism shapes markets and vice versa.

Note that social movements advocating progressive or freedom-expanding changes to gender norms are not the only movements whose members use Twitter to advance their ends. For instance, Ahmed and Pisoiu (2021) analyze how several far-right groups in Germany, such as the Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany), the Autonomous Nationalists (AN), and the Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland

(Identitarian Movement Germany—IBD) use Twitter to advance their ideas. All three of these far-right groups use Twitter to condemn feminists and the LGBT community. Where feminist and LGBT movements have sought autonomy and the erosion of old gendered restrictions, these far-right movements seek to restore rigid gender roles that would significantly constrain the autonomy of many people. The iterative process of commercial and social entrepreneurship that I analyze in this paper will not be used for just one set of political goals. Instead, it opens a wide arena of political contestation, creating a dynamic process in which current meanings and institutions regarding gender will be contested, for good and for ill.

CONCLUSION

This paper has only scratched the surface of movements for gender freedom. The examples we discussed are far from the only examples. However, what these examples illustrate is that social movements are shaped by a broader social and economic context, a context that results from human action but not from human design. The spontaneous order of the market process creates incentives for commercial entrepreneurs to establish businesses that then create social spaces. These social spaces enable individuals who are disaffected with the status quo to meet, network, share their grievances, and begin the process of collective action. While these movements are not the only mechanism that erodes gendered restrictions on autonomy, they are one important mechanism. Understanding the background role that market processes have played in such movements can help us understand gender, freedom, collective action, and social movements. Future research could use analytic narratives (Bates et al. 1999; Skarbek and Skarbek 2023) to illuminate other historical movements for gender freedom by carefully studying the institutional context within which these movements took place, the incentives facing activists, and the role of social and economic entrepreneurship in shaping these movement.

Because of the important subjective and intersubjective role gender plays in many people's lives, gender issues are likely to remain a topic of significant political and social contestation. Gender is a deeply personal part of many people's lives, and therefore the perceived meaning of gender is crucial to feeling that their own self-understanding and identity is respected. When gender roles or expectations clash with individuals' projects, purposes, and plans, they can become stultifying and oppressive. At the same time, gender expectations can serve as points of orientation around which people coordinate their plans, so contestation of gender expectations can disorient those whose plans relied upon gendered expectations. This creates situations where some level of dissatisfaction with prevailing gendered expectations is likely, often from multiple directions. Markets create incentives to satisfy the diverse consumer demands of individuals with a range of views on gender issues. In the process of satisfying these demands, entrepreneurs will create social spaces where individuals can meet others who share their values. This creates opportunities for social entrepreneurs to discover opportunities for collective action and political contestation. Dynamic change in the market process thereby gives rise to similar change in the political process, in which entrepreneurs continually discover new commercial and non-commercial ways to reorganize and reshape the social world. With gender, as with all other spheres of social life, we should expect change, as we live in a "kaleidic society, interspersing its moments or intervals of order, assurance and beauty with sudden disintegration and a cascade into a new pattern" (Shackle 1972, quoted in Garrison 1987). Moreover, just as we should expect some commercial entrepreneurs to succeed and many more to fail, we should likewise expect some social movement entrepreneurs to succeed and many more to fail. Markets create opportunities to meet like-minded people and engage in collective action with them, but they do not guarantee that the movement that arises will last or successfully achieve its political ends.

In a dynamic, entrepreneurial society, it is unclear ex ante which movements will succeed and which will fail. It is therefore also unclear which gendered institutions and expectations will exist in the future. Future research could examine how institutional arrangements and market structures shape the *direction* of changes in gender roles, perhaps giving rise to observable long-run tendencies. Relatedly, future research could contrast case studies of successful and failed entrepreneurial efforts within social movements, to bet-

ter understand the feedback and selection mechanisms that impact these social entrepreneurs' ability to carry out their plans. In addition, future research could examine the interactions between entrepreneurial gender expression that occurs outside of collective social movements (see Kuznicki 2023; Malamet and Novak 2023) and the types of collective contestation and social entrepreneurship that this paper emphasizes.

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