1 THE GENESIS OF REBELLION

1.1 Introduction

This book is a study of social order and rebellion in the Royal Navy in the period between 1740 and 1820. There have been previous scholarly books on naval mutiny, but for the most part they are disappointing. Although mutiny has long been regarded as a metaphor for social revolution, it usually has been treated on a case-by-case basis. Scholars have never systematically compared ships that experienced mutinies to those that did not.[1] This inattention to comparison makes dramatic sense, for each mutiny is unique and its story can be told by focusing on the nature of the Captain's leadership, the heroic – or dastardly – character of the ringleaders, and the loyalty of those seamen who resisted the mutineers. Yet this case study research strategy can shed little light on the nature of mutiny and, in particular, on the general circumstances that are likely to make it more probable.

A second family of studies compares the common features of naval rebellion across a range of mutinies. Since these studies are limited to instances in which mutiny occurred, however, they cannot determine what made these ships different from others that did not experience mutiny. Although comparative studies of mutinies can be insightful and well informed, they are unable to make causal claims.[2] As purely descriptive natural histories of mutiny, they cannot analyze their genesis.[3]

Because we regard mutiny as *rebellion* – that is, as an important instance of high-risk collective action – this book adopts an alternative form of analysis, one that combines systematic comparison of ships that experienced mutiny and those that did not with in-depth case studies of dozens of mutinies that allow us to make generalizations across different occurrences.

1.1.1 Revisiting the Mutiny on the *Bounty*

There is no mutiny more famous than the one that took place onboard HMS *Bounty* in April 1789. As an incident of British imperial or naval history, the mutiny on the *Bounty* is of trivial importance. What is important about the case is that, then and now, it has captured the popular imagination. Thanks to a host of books and several feature films, mutiny has become practically synonymous with the story of that ship.[4] More important for the questions that drive this book, however, the *Bounty* seems to encapsulate much about how we understand the genesis of rebellion.

In the wake of his misadventures in the South Seas, William Bligh, commanding Lieutenant of HMS *Bounty*, published an account of the mutiny. Bligh paused in his narrative to note that "It will very naturally be asked, what could be the reason for such a revolt?" He blamed it all on a conspiracy led by Fletcher Christian, a vain and unsteady junior officer, and comprised of seamen besotted by "female connexions" that they made on Tahiti. The mutineers had "flattered themselves with the hopes of a more happy life among the Otaheiteans, than they could possibly enjoy in England." Bligh argued that the revolt was facilitated by opportunities for rebellion that the mutineers had exploited: to wit, that the ship was isolated and his command included no Marines who could have come to his aid. Even so, given that mutiny was a capital offense, his readers no doubt assumed that his subordinates were driven by the strongest of grievances. But Bligh was at pains to assure them otherwise: "Had their mutiny been occasioned by any grievances, either real or imaginary, I must have discovered symptoms of their discontent."[5]

Bligh's critics, including some of the men subsequently captured and tried for the mutiny and backed by influential supporters, painted a different story. They claimed that the crew had been pushed

to rebel by the injustice and deprivation that prevailed aboard the small ship. Bligh had shown little sympathy for the crew during a trying outward voyage that featured a fruitless, month-long effort to round Cape Horn in the teeth of severe winter storms. Having given up on that quicker but more perilous route, the ship then sailed eastward around Africa, reaching Tahiti only after a voyage that lasted more than ten months. Through it all, Bligh was said to be an erratic and overbearing commander. His frugal economizing deprived his men of adequate food and water even as he fiercely guarded his own petty privileges. Witnesses testified that Bligh relied on bullying and flogging to maintain shipboard order. Bligh's irascibility led him to demote his Sailing Master, John Fryer, replacing him with Fletcher Christian, who, in turn, later suffered Bligh's disfavor and became the chief ringleader of the mutiny.

These accounts portrayed the mutiny as being made by men who had reached the breaking point. Yet Bligh had patrons and supporters of his own: they contended that Bligh had been betrayed by weak and ungrateful subordinates. He and a handful of loyal seamen had returned to England thanks to an intrepid feat of survival and seamanship that included a harrowing passage of more than three thousand miles in an open launch. Having suffered betrayal and rebellion and lived to tell of it, some saw Bligh as a national hero. So was he a naval hero or a petty tyrant who drove his men to desperation? Two centuries later, neither depiction is especially convincing.[6]

The accusations lodged by Bligh's foes have resonated with audiences then and now because they match the conventional understanding of rebellion. The idea that rebellion occurs because suffering people are pushed to rebel when tyranny and oppression are severe and other ways out are blocked is widespread.[7] Injustice and deprivation are treated as causes of all manner of rebellion, ranging in scale from strikes and prison riots to revolutions and civil wars.[8]

One important elaboration of this idea is that rebellion is driven by relative deprivation. When people expect things to be getting better and they do not, or when the members of some important reference group are faring better than they are, frustration builds and can be channeled into aggression. Sometimes this occurs after sustained periods of improving conditions are followed by a downturn. It need not be the case that material conditions have actually worsened much or fallen to levels below

those that previously had been endured peacefully. On the contrary, rebellion occurs because rising expectations have been thwarted. De Tocqueville noticed this in the coming of the French Revolution and it has been observed in other periods of rebellion as well.[9]

By contrast, Bligh's account of the mutiny on the *Bounty* has something that has more in common with the revisionist explanations of rebellion that took hold in the 1970s. Bligh blamed private incentives (the attractions of Tahiti), elite divisions (a rift between the officers) and favorable opportunities (the ship lacked Marines, it was alone in the South Seas, and so on) for the outbreak of rebellion on his ship. Prevailing theories of collective action similarly emphasize private incentives in motivating collective action.[10] The resource mobilization school of social movements discounts the causal role of grievances altogether, regarding political opportunities and resources instead as the key factors responsible for generating collective protest.[11]

In writing this book we sought to move beyond both the Bligh-like understanding of rebellion as a product of personal incentives, resources and opportunities, as well as the view that inequality and material deprivation are primary drivers of rebellion. What is at stake in the mutiny on the *Bounty* and the dozens of other mutinies that we will analyze, is less the personalities of a commander and his antagonists than the quality of governance. When seamen regard the governance of the ship as incompetent, reckless or heedless of their welfare, they are more likely to rebel. Every mutiny contains dramatic narrative details and takes place in the unique social ecology of a sailing ship. This alone makes the study of naval insurrection fascinating, but understanding mutiny sheds light on the general class of events known as rebellion.

1.2   What Is Mutiny?

The Royal Navy characterized mutiny broadly and imprecisely, variously defining it in the Articles of War as any form of individual or collective defiance of command, or any communication or planning to that effect.[12] What today we would consider to be relatively minor acts of defiance or refusal of duty could be construed as mutiny in the Articles of War. At one extreme, Captain Thomas Troubridge, known for the mutiny on HMS *Culloden*, declared, "Whenever I see a fellow

look as if he was thinking, I say that is mutiny."[13] We are not interested in individual acts of insubordination, however broadly commanders defined it. Mutinies are classic examples of collective action. Collective action describes situations in which groups of people have to decide whether to undertake costly action that they believe would improve their shared situation. When collective action takes the form of rebellion against the state, the potential costs are especially high.

Our particular concern is with those mutinies that took the form of a *collective insurrection against the constituted order of a ship*.[14] We narrow our focus to mutinies that passed beyond the mere planning stage, in which the crewmen seized their ship or halted its operations by acting collectively. In some mutinies, the ringleaders sought to escape from naval service, whereas in others they wanted to compel their commanders or other naval authorities to redress their grievances. This book analyzes both types of mutiny.[15]

Full-fledged mutinies of this kind were rare (and dangerous) events, but they happened with enough frequency to have been a part of the shared experience of the sailing navy and its institutional ecology. Between 1756 and 1806, more than five hundred cases of mutiny (not including those of striking a superior officer) were tried by naval courts-martial, resulting in nearly four hundred convictions.[16] Most of these mutinies did not rise to the level of taking a ship or halting its operations – the forms that we shall study – but collective insubordination was a continual threat that concerned naval legal institutions and had a considerable influence on governance. The threat of mutiny influenced relations between seamen and officers, how commanders ran their ships and ultimately became an important impetus to legal and administrative reforms.

Studying mutiny in the Royal Navy enables us to understand the roles of governance, on the one hand, and grievances, on the other, in accounting for rebellion. The thorough record-keeping of the Navy makes it possible to track ships and their crews over time. This allows us to study scores of rebellions occurring in the same institutional setting in which practices and expectations about good governance were understood by seamen and officers alike.

At first glance, one would expect that seamen's grievances would be of little help in explaining mutiny. After all, it is widely understood that conditions in the Royal Navy were brutal. Sailors and

Marines in the Navy were subject to harsh conditions – as Samuel Johnson famously described their lot:

> No man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into jail; for being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned ... A ship is worse than a jail. There is, in a jail, better air, better company, better conveniency of every kind; and a ship has the additional disadvantage of being in danger.[17]

If grievances were so ubiquitous, as Dr. Johnson colorfully suggests, why did most ships never face an insurrection and why did most seamen never take part in a mutiny?

Dr. Johnson, a man with no maritime experience, certainly exaggerated. Even so, conditions onboard naval ships were notoriously hard. A standard battleship of seventy-four guns was only about a hundred and sixty feet in length but bore up to five hundred men. This resulted in crowding, privation and a substantial risk of accident and disease. The officers were the lords of the ship and many infractions were punishable by flogging or, more casually, by a blow from a knotted rope or cane (this was known as "starting"). The quality and supply of food and drink often deteriorated during long voyages. Many seamen died of illnesses and shipwrecks. Seamen's pay was poor and its general rates had been set in the middle of the seventeenth century. Their liberties were routinely negated. For instance, commanders frequently denied seamen customary shore leave for fear that they would abscond. During wartime, the Navy relied on impressments to fill the ranks, and terms of service were indefinite.

Grievances can be causes of rebellion when they are severe and when they can be readily attributed to bad governance. Nevertheless, seamen did not regard *routine* hardship as grounds for mutiny. Eighteenth-century laboring people in England operated under different sets of expectations about their standards of living than do their modern counterparts. What were the relevant considerations? In some ways, conditions on merchant ships were harder than on naval ships. Most types of working people ashore were also poorly paid and faced coercive labor discipline. What seamen did seem to expect was that their commanders would maintain their safety, attend to their welfare, observe maritime occupational norms and rule in a predictable fashion. Incidents that threatened their safety and welfare, and indifferent or inappropriate responses to these

threats, could stir unrest. In making Captains the supreme authorities on ships, the Navy also gave them responsibility for such failures. This made it easy for seamen to attribute blame to commanders for incidents that harmed or threatened them, regardless of the facts of the matter.

Mutiny tells us much about threats to social order and the exercise of command. Yet it not only reveals failures of social order, but also how shipboard cooperation is attained. The social order of a ship depended on cooperation between officers and men and between seamen of different skills and ranks. The scale of the Royal Navy in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is impressive. In the Napoleonic era, the Navy employed more than a hundred thousand men. It was the western world's largest industrial unit, and among the most expensive and administratively demanding enterprises on the planet. Its warships were the technological marvels of the age. Attaining social order in so large and complex an enterprise was no small feat.

Inspired by now-classic explorations of social order at sea, our study explains how order was attained in the Navy and why it sometimes broke down.[18] In addition to correcting many misperceptions about mutiny that traditional approaches have fostered, our book stands solidly in the tradition of historical studies of social order and collective action.[19] It explores why people commit to participate in dangerous collective action, exploring the roles of grievances, coordination, leadership and dynamic mobilization processes. In this, it breaks with much of the literature on contentious politics, which focuses heavily on political opportunities.[20] We also differ from the micro-mobilization perspective adopted by many recent studies of rebellion that puts the emphasis on ideology and transformative experiences.[21] In analyzing the mass mutinies of 1797, our study takes on the arguments made by historians that the diffusion of revolutionary ideologies was the cause of rebellion by seamen, and the claims made by political scientists concerning the dynamic interactions between rebels and regimes that define armed insurgencies.[22]

We understand mutiny as the by-product of relations between the two principal collectivities onboard ship. On one side stands command (the Captain and his officers), and on the other stands the crew (the seamen). Relations between the two are shaped by the officers' ability to provide good governance, on the one side, and by the crew's grievances and its capacity to coordinate collective action, on the other. Mutiny, therefore, is the outcome of the conjunction of demand and supply. The

demand for mutiny resulted from poor governance, especially the provision of insufficient collective goods like security, health and welfare. The failure of governance combined with inadequate monitoring and sanctioning by command led to the erosion of the shipboard social order. The demand for mutiny was shaped by the crew's perceptions that failures of governance were inappropriate and no mere accident.

The supply side of mutiny varies with a crew's capacity to undertake collective action in response to its grievances. Seamen varied in their capacity to act together, especially in so dangerous and uncertain a venture as mutiny. The everyday social practices of seamen, their informal organization and their occupational culture, provided them with resources that they could use in making a rebellion. They were accustomed to teamwork and had experienced shipmates with the skills and authority to act as leaders. In conflicts with command, they developed practices to activate group solidarity and bolster commitment to mutinies. Even so, mutinies were usually only risked when seamen saw shared threats to safety and welfare that were likely to worsen if they took no action. Situations like these naturally enhance coordination and mean that free riding does not pay.[23]

Planning a mutiny and mobilizing seamen to risk their lives represented a supreme test of the solidarity of seamen and their ability to coordinate their actions. Facing violent resistance from the authorities in the struggle to take and hold ships, and facing possible death by hanging in the wake of mutiny, rebellion in the Navy was not something that seamen undertook lightly. Most often, they mutinied when they felt that they had legitimate grievances and no other means of voicing them. Mutiny reflected badly on the governance of the ship by the Captain and his officers.

To evaluate these ideas, we conducted the first systematic study of naval mutiny in the British Navy during the Age of Sail. Unlike many studies of rebellion, ours includes both cases of ships in which documented episodes of mutiny did occur, and a larger set of nonmutinous cases randomly selected from the population of all ships. Our study compares a sample of mutinies that occurred on naval ships from 1740 to 1820 with a random sample drawn from the much larger population of ships that faced no such rebellion. Whereas scholars of mutiny have endorsed such a design, no previous study attempted it.[24] Fortunately, archival records were an excellent resource, providing comprehensive

documentation that allowed us to analyze quantitative data and rich historical evidence about mutiny and its causes.

1.3   Understanding Rebellion

The goal of this book is to explain mutiny and, in so doing, better understand the causes of rebellion. Rebellion has played a central part in history. It has been a feature of human life ever since the emergence of authority in groups. Nevertheless, rebellion has been notoriously hard to predict.[25] De Tocqueville called rebellions the events that most "surprise and terrify" us.[26] This is partly because subordinates usually tolerate deprivation and inequality for a long time before rebelling. Another reason is that rulers seek to avoid rebellion by controlling their subjects. They try to make them dependent on the authorities for their well-being and fearful of punishment for defiance. This can make rebellion so dangerous a prospect that self-regarding people tend to avoid it in spite of their experience of deprivation. Finally, repression and social inequality often create a situation in which rulers know little about the extent or scale of popular grievances because subordinates have avoided voicing them either for fear of repression or because speaking up accomplishes little.[27]

What is clear – at least to us – is that grievances lie at the heart of rebellion. Nevertheless, a lot of previous scholarship suggests that grievances are *not* useful for explaining popular unrest. Inequality, it has been asserted, is the objective, material foundation of grievance. Yet inequality is ubiquitous and rebellion unusual. Trotsky remarked that if grievances were enough to cause insurrection, the masses would always be in a state of revolt.[28] If grievances are to be inferred merely from evidence of systematic inequality, then the relationship between them and social unrest is weak. A host of cross-sectional and cross-national empirical studies finds scant evidence that material grievances – understood as objective material deprivation – are linked to rebellion.[29]

Today, there is a renaissance in thinking about grievances. Some have argued that rebellion is one of the most important levelers of inequality.[30] Others argue that it is the only kind of voice that oppressed and exploited people have in seeking an improvement of their lot, and that authoritarian rulers only make concessions when they fear an

imminent rebellion.[31] Around the world, unrest occurs in response to discontent with the provision of public goods, the removal or reduction of food subsidies and other threats to popular welfare.[32] In practice, the amelioration of collective grievances seems to be the main payoff that people who take part in rebellions expect.[33]

Part of the confusion about grievances lies in conflating an explanation of rebellion with the study of revolution. Rebellion may result in revolution, war or state collapse but it need not.[34] In fact, even if those macro-level events frequently begin with uprisings, rebellion is far more common than those outcomes. Since many factors besides the inception of rebellion explain why revolutions occur or states collapse, grievances might be thought of as mere background conditions. Explaining the *genesis* of rebellion means studying situations in which potential rebellions do and do not occur, as well as events that never rise to the level of a revolutionary assault on the social order. This is why studying mutinies in the Royal Navy is so valuable.

Another reason is that in studying mutinies we can observe the constitution of social order and its collapse in detail. Ships at sea are worlds in microcosm. Each ship has a political, social and cultural system in which authority must be enacted, compliance won and cooperation attained. Like the cultural historian Paul Gilroy, we are fascinated by "The image of the ship – a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion," a sociological site with an underappreciated theoretical and historical importance.[35] Understanding the governance of ships and the establishment of social order, on the one side, and explaining why grievances flourish and social order breaks down, on the other, can teach us much about the genesis of rebellion across places and times.

1.4   Grievances and Governance

We argue that mutiny is the outcome of the conjunction of poor governance, the crew's perception that their situation requires concerted action to prevent decrements to their welfare, and their capacity to coordinate in response to their grievances. The conditions facing seamen in the Navy were not fundamentally different from those that face rebels today

in circumstances as diverse as armed insurgencies, prison uprisings and militant strikes. Our study will show that two related factors, *grievances* and *governance*, explain the outbreak of mutiny in the Royal Navy and the genesis of rebellion in many other times and places.

A grievance is a wrong or hardship that the afflicted believe to be legitimate grounds for complaint. Rebellion is driven by grievances of different kinds. It is a response to perceptions of injustice, unfairness and failures of governance. We argue that grievances have an especially combustive potential when long-standing and suddenly imposed grievances have been combined in a particular time and place. In these moments, people urgently demand redress and may be inspired to rebel against the governing authorities whom they hold responsible for their situation but who are inattentive to their plight.

Governance is constituted by the structure of authority, social relations and the institutions used by those in positions of command to attain social order and produce collective goods. It refers to an authority's capacity to make and enforce rules and to deliver collective goods.[36] The conception of governance that we develop in this book, however, includes not only executive capacity and governmental outputs, but also the manner in which power is exercised. Governance is a set of techniques and institutions to achieve social order. One of the fundamental issues in human affairs is how to combine the actions of different people in a social setting to generate collectively beneficial outcomes.[37]

Governance shapes rebellious collective action because governing institutions help determine the shape that opposition to authority takes. Good governance provides routine mechanisms that allow for feedback from subjects. To the degree that authorities are isolated from their subjects and deny them meaningful and effective voice, the odds of rebellion increase. Of course, there are other factors besides poor governance and mounting grievances that determine whether discontent inspires rebellion. Would-be rebels usually have to perceive opportunities to act in effective ways. They have to share a common understanding of their situation that helps them to interpret their hardships and injuries as legitimate complaints deserving redress. They may be influenced by events elsewhere that change their perceptions about their situation and the vulnerability

of their rulers. They have to be able, at least in a minimal way, to coordinate their actions behind a collective challenge to their rulers.

That poor governance and grievances are central factors in the genesis of rebellion is by no means a novel or counterintuitive argument. Nevertheless, systematically analyzing their contribution to the incidence of rebellion has often proven difficult. Governance is a notoriously difficult concept to measure. Even if we can measure the inputs invested in governing, that tells us little about the outputs of governance. Capturing the effects of governance means measuring performance and documenting shortfalls.[38] The excellent administrative data preserved in British naval archives provide us with an unusual opportunity to measure the performance of governance.

The obstacles to measuring legitimacy have led many to question the utility of the concept. The difficulties of capturing the dynamics of grievances have led some to treat them as constants, and therefore incapable of explaining rebellious collective action across different times and places. Others have erred by only studying outbreaks of rebellion and revolution.[39] Whereas they have been able to catalog a host of grievances in their anatomies of such cases, this approach cannot explicate how these situations differ from similar ones that did not lead to rebellion.[40]

Analyzing the role of grievances in the genesis of rebellion is complicated by several factors. The first is a tendency to start with known episodes of rebellion. Once a rebellion has begun, it is easy to find the grievances that putatively inspired it. Many of them will be long-standing. What made these grievances suddenly intolerable? Have similar grievances been tolerated in other times and places? If we want to make claims about grievances as causes of rebellion it is far better to have dynamic measures of grievances prior to the onset of rebellion, and to observe them in groups having different grievances.

A second problem, alluded to above, is the tendency to regard grievances as irrelevant for understanding rebellion. For a long time social scientists – rather counterintuitively – regarded grievances as ubiquitous; if so, they could not explain why rebellion breaks out in some times and places as against others. A constant cannot account for variable outcomes. Yet it seems obvious that grievances must lie at the heart of collective action. Unless there is some substantial payoff to the often dangerous and uncertain business of rebellion, why would people

ever undertake it? The possibility of improving one's situation or remedying some kind of deprivation are the most common ends that participants seek in making a rebellion.

It strikes us that part of the problem has been reliance on an inadequate understanding of grievances. Too frequently, studies focus on those grievances that are assumed to flow from objective disparities between individuals and groups, rather than on participants' subjective interpretation of these disparities. Grievances are often inferred from observed intergroup differentials in income, health, incarceration or other measures of well-being.[41] The issue is that the members of many groups that suffer substantial forms of absolute deprivation tolerate it or see rebellion as a hopeless venture. Long-standing deprivations can create a sense of fatalism or despondence that often demobilizes aggrieved people. This means that in many instances rebellion and inequality are weakly related or wholly uncorrelated. Without dynamic measures of a range of grievances, including observations before and after incidents that sharpen existing grievances or create new ones, we lack the leverage to understand how and why they matter. Moreover, combinations of long-standing and immediate grievances – sometimes induced by accidents or unforeseen events – can increase one's sense of deprivation and help trigger rebellion.

We will show that combinations of grievances with different temporal frames inspire rebellions. Inadequate or unjust responses to suddenly imposed or incidental grievances reorient deprived people around a common focal point, providing ready targets in incompetent, corrupt or indifferent leaders.

1.5   Grievances and Collective Action

This book advances a grievance-based theory of collective action holding that groups of people who *share* grievances due to their subordinate positions in social and political structures are more likely to mobilize to enhance their welfare than those who bear *private* grievances, no matter how severe the sum of such grievances might be.[42] Grievances cannot generate collective action on their own, however. The immediate impetus to collective action is cognitive. Successful collective action

proceeds from a significant transformation in the collective consciousness of the actors involved. Activists – sometimes motivated by private grievances – use collective grievances to construct legitimating accounts – or frames – to support their activism.[43]

Governance and grievances are linked because what transforms a hardship into a grievance is the perception or belief that the hardship is illegitimate. Governing institutions create the normative expectations that inform these beliefs. Because poor governance generates grievances, governance shapes rebellious collective action. Of course, grievances are far from unusual. Some are purely private, such as those feeding personal grudges. But others matter more because they are shared among people who belong to the same community or occupy the same social category. For a variety of reasons, people often feel that their group has been neglected or deprived, whether due to the circumstances they are compelled to inhabit or to the actions of others.

How can these shared grievances be measured? Sometimes they can be measured *directly* in sample surveys, but such studies are geographically and historically limited and liable to suffer from selection bias.[44] *Indirect* measures – based on the assumption that grievances can be inferred from individuals' subordinate positions in a social structure – can be used to study grievances arising from stratification and inequality across greater geographic and temporal space. For example, one can assume that political and economic inequalities affecting entire ethnic, class or racial groups tend to fuel resentment and justify attempts to fight perceived injustice.[45] Moreover, shared grievances are likely to have an emotional valence that makes collective identities more salient.[46]

In practice, however, structural variables often prove to be flawed predictors of collective action. For example, the poorest and most deprived people are usually not the most prone to rebellion, and crushingly bad oppression and poverty can be endured indefinitely without significant unrest. Does this mean that grievances can be ruled out as causes of rebellion? There is no warrant to believe that structural variables provide the *only* measures of grievances. Grievances can also emerge from a quite different source. Thinkers as diverse as Max Weber, Emile Durkheim and G. H. Mead all held that incumbency in a social role entails a set of behaviors that individuals are obligated to enact. For Weber, patrimonial rulers were obliged not to exceed the traditional limits to their power.[47] Serfs' existence was grim, but masters also had

certain obligations toward serfs – providing access to the commons, and sharing food during famines – and any lord who failed to honor those obligations courted trouble. Likewise, Durkheim explained that individuals in nineteenth-century European societies had little expectation that their fortunes could exceed those of their parents. In consequence, they accepted (with resignation) norms about their place in the stratification system.[48] Last, Mead insisted that social roles made individuals act as if they were characters in a play or athletic contest. Given a set of rules of the game, everyone's action is normally oriented toward that of the other participants in predictable ways. The failure to honor these expectations is jarring: shortstops should not field a hit and throw it to the right fielder rather than the first baseman.[49]

This classical insight has been elaborated in recent social psychological research. For social psychologists, no compelling causal account of mobilization into rebellion can exclude grievances.[50] But there are at least two different kinds of grievances. *Structural* grievances derive from a group's disadvantaged position in a social structure, but *incidental* grievances arise from wholly unanticipated situations – incidents – that put groups at risk. Unlike structural grievances, incidental ones – like unexpected disasters, major court decisions and state repression – enhance a group's capacity to coordinate.[51]

This is because these two types of grievances have different psychological implications.[52] The incumbents who are confined to subordinate positions in a social structure tend to tolerate grievances like poor wages, difficult working conditions and political exclusion *so long as they remain at routine and predictable levels.* Norms and settled customs establish baseline expectations about the treatment that subordinates will encounter.[53] If they understand that bearing routine indignities is their lot in life, they are not likely to seek redress unless the magnitude of those grievances increases sharply. Under normal conditions structural grievances foster stable expectations that tend to discourage protest in spite of deprivation. The fear and shame associated with occupying lowly and degrading positions in a status hierarchy is ordinarily demobilizing. Moreover, since the members of oppressed groups typically are skeptical about whether their protest will accomplish much, they are all the more difficult to mobilize even when conditions are objectively poor.

When incidental grievances are severe, however, they are manifest to all affected and challenge expectations. Thus, it is easy for the victims of these unforeseen events to develop a collective identity.[54] So long as the group has some shared conception of fairness, injustice framing is relatively straightforward. The simultaneous experience of the same threat, injury or insult improves coordination by providing a common focal point among disparate actors, a substitute for formal organization that is especially powerful in socially dense settings.[55] For groups that lack many of the resources that enable collective action, incidental grievances help trigger rebellion even in the absence of formal organization or detailed planning.[56]

1.6   Coordination and Commitment in Collective Action

Grievances may be serious enough to trigger rebellion, but how are rebellions made? For large-scale rebellion to occur the members of aggrieved groups have to engage in collective action. Two principal obstacles stand in their way. The first is the tendency of people to stand on the sidelines of collective action, contributing nothing and expecting others to do all the work. This free-rider problem is most pronounced in situations in which everyone would enjoy access to a group good if it is achieved, regardless of his or her own contribution. If enough members of the group take this posture, the success of collective action is put in doubt, and the rebellion may never take off or simply sputter out for lack of participation. In situations in which the prospective collective action is dangerous and uncertain, the tendency for group members to free ride is even greater. Certainly, mutineers faced these conditions in the context of the sailing navy.

The second obstacle confronting would-be rebels lies in coordinating collective action. Even if grievances are widely shared and there is little interest in free riding among the members of a group, the failure to coordinate may make rebellion ineffective; it may never take off or quickly dissolve for lack of direction or concentrated effort. When group members can coordinate around shared grievances, employ similar tactics, adopt a common strategy and focus their efforts, their rebellion is much more likely to succeed. The problem is all the more acute in situations in which there is uncertainty about the outcome and

in which participation is costly and potentially dangerous. In such situations, prospective rebels want to be assured that if they act, others will also act so that the costs and danger will be shared.[57] Again, these were precisely the circumstances facing mutinous seamen in the sailing navy.

Seamen were acutely aware of the obstacles and the dangers that they faced when they mobilized a rebellion against their commanders. Large-scale collective action is rarely easy even under favorable circumstances. The conditions that obtained in the Navy were especially unfavorable, however. Military discipline applied to seamen who were denied any form of organized response to grievances. Aboard ships, officers exercised surveillance and control over seamen. All forms of insubordination and the planning of insurrection violated naval statutes and could be harshly punished, including by hanging. Even if seamen managed to seize control of the ship or halt its operations, their success in redressing their grievances was anything but certain. All in all, from the perspective of seamen's collective action, the resources and opportunities enabling mobilization were few and far between.

In this book we argue that communal bonds and the cultural practices of seamen made it possible for them to attain solidarity. Informal organization, reinforced by face-to-face relations and social ties that knit seamen to one another helped to overcome free riding by creating community sanctions for those who exploited their shipmates. Informal organization facilitated coordination. The skill and authority that experienced seamen and petty officers acquired made them natural leaders, capable of coordinating a common response to grievances and mobilizing seamen's participation in mutiny.

Although on some ships seamen failed to engage in mutiny despite harsh conditions and poor governance, on others they overcame the barriers to collective action. We will show that this is because seamen possessed forms of social capital that enabled collective action, particularly the sense of community that developed among them on many ships. Impressively, seamen were sometimes able to attain the solidarity it took to mobilize a rebellion and stick with their shipmates in the face of danger and uncertain prospects for achieving their ends.

1.7   Outline of the Book to Come

Beginning with the example of the mutiny onboard the warship *Panther*, Chapter 2 describes how social order aboard naval vessels emerged as the joint product of governance and hierarchical control and more spontaneous cooperation among seamen. Despite the creation of a surprisingly flexible social order built on sound governance and the informal institutions that allowed seamen to organize themselves, social order in the Royal Navy also had its fragilities. When governance failed and grievances mounted, the everyday forms of social order that seamen created for themselves became resources that enabled rebellion.

Chapter 3 begins with the mutiny aboard the *Culloden*, an event in which the great body of seamen rebelled against a Captain whom they accused of poor governance, seized control of their ship and stuck together until betrayed in negotiations with naval authorities. We show why in cases like this seamen managed to cooperate in planning a mutiny and committing to the rebellion. Analyzing the different forms that mutinies took and the dominant strategies behind them, we document the central role played by Petty Officers and Able Seamen in mobilizing and leading their shipmates. Seamen used specific commitment mechanisms, including oaths and round-robin letters, to ensure that their shipmates would take part and stick with a mutiny.[58] We find that social ties among seamen helped bring them into rebellion and the extent to which private grievances heightened collective ones.

The point of entry into Chapter 4 is the infamous case of the *Hermione*, the bloodiest mutiny in the history of the Royal Navy. On that ship, poor governance by a tyrannical commander drove seamen to massacre their officers and sail the ship into enemy hands. The story of the *Hermione* is surely exceptional in its bloodiness, but the grievances that drove seamen to rebel in other cases may have been similar. To find out, we analyzed hundreds of pages of court-martial documents and official reports to uncover the motives that drove mutinies. Going beyond qualitative evidence, we test our propositions about the causes of mutiny by analyzing a random sample of hundreds of ships. We find strong evidence that backs our distinction between structural and incidental grievances and shows their additive

effects in situations in which external conditions intensified the effects of poor governance.

The dynamics of large-scale insurgency and the problem of commitment are the focus of Chapter 5, which begins with the career and ultimate fate of Richard Parker, a seaman aboard the battleship *Sandwich* convicted of being the principal mutineer in the great naval insurrection at the Nore. We study the causes and outcomes of the mass mutinies at the fleet anchorages of Spithead and the Nore in the spring and summer of 1797. We show that a political and economic crisis, the failure of naval institutions to address seamen's mounting grievances and the capacity of seamen to coordinate explain why the mutinies occurred. But why did the mutiny at Spithead succeed while its counterpart at the Nore was a spectacular failure? Both insurrections were motivated by strongly held grievances and sealed by oaths, but the ships' companies under the control of the mutineers at the Nore varied dramatically in their commitment to the seaman's cause. Defection hastened the demise of the mass mutiny at the Nore. Many of the same processes that explain the decay of social order and mutiny in the Navy more generally explain why the leaders of the mutiny had trouble sustaining an armed insurrection against an intransigent government.

Chapter 6 is a study of discipline and punishment in the Royal Navy. It begins with the case of the frigate *Nereide* and the conflict between Captain Robert Corbet and his crew. Corbet sought to assert his authority and improve the efficiency of his command through frequent and severe flogging of his men. His men rebelled, leading to a trial of accused ringleaders and of Corbet himself for cruelty and excessive punishment. At trial, Corbet stated his confidence in the power of penal severity to attain compliance and improve his ship's performance. We show that Corbet's beliefs were anything but eccentric in the wake of the French Revolution aboard naval vessels, when the notion that severe discipline was necessary to maintain order became widespread among officers. Studying the disciplinary records of a sample of hundreds of ships, we find that flogging became more frequent and severe after 1789. The irony of the increasing reliance on flogging in the Navy was that, rather than making officers more secure from the threat of Jacobin radicalism, it increased the odds that seamen would rebel against excessive discipline.

If mutiny was a reflection of poor governance, did mutiny, or the threat of mutiny, motivate naval authorities to make reforms? In

Chapter 7, we begin with the incredible hardships endured by the crew of the *Wager* that motivated a rebellion to explore the consequences of mutiny. Although mutinies frequently did result in the redress of grievances, we show that despite the understanding among naval officials that mutiny was a symptom of poor governance, they often erred on the side of command. In the wake of rebellion, commanders who were primarily concerned with social order often insisted on zealous prosecution of accused mutineers. Surprisingly, the institutions of naval justice balanced the demand for revenge with adherence to the rule of law. Although seamen had no effective lobby, mutiny sometimes led to major reforms including improved pay and provisions, better attention to health and welfare and tighter controls on the discretion of commanders to impose summary punishment by flogging at will. In this sense, the indirect effects of mutiny improved the welfare of seamen and the operational performance of the Royal Navy.

We conclude by showing the implications of the book for the study of collective action, make a case for pursuing the link between governance and rebellion and consider what mutiny has to teach us about contemporary social unrest, insurgencies and revolutions.

Notes

1. See, e.g., Frykman 2010; Pack 1964; Pope 1963, 1987.
2. For surveys of naval mutiny see, among others, Gilbert 1983; Guttridge 1992; Hathaway 2001; Lammers 1969, 2003; Neale 1985; and Woodman 2005.
3. Jack Goldstone 2003, pp. 55–6, observes this of the natural history approach to the study of revolution, "Scholars working from this perspective aimed to study revolutions the way that the biologists studied natural history, namely, by gathering specimens, and detailing their major parts and processes. However, despite uncovering persistent patterns in the course of major revolutions, this approach failed to present a convincing reason why revolutions should occur at certain times and places but not others." The same approach has limited progress in the study of mutiny and many other domains of collective action.
4. For nonfictional accounts see, e.g., Alexander 2003 and Dening 1992.
5. See Bligh [1792] 1962, pp. 134–41.
6. We regard Bligh as a deficient leader who relied too heavily on the lash and unintentionally intensified grievances among his men. Personal conflicts were an important factor in the mutiny but we do not go so far as the eminent naval historian Nicholas Rodger (2004, p. 404), who contends that "Lieutenant Bligh was an outstanding seaman with an ungovernable temper and no idea how to get the best out of his officers; Fletcher Christian was a weak and unstable young man who could

not stand being shouted at." Poor governance intensified such clashes and created the grievances discontented officers could exploit.

7. See, e.g., Davies 1962, 1969; Gurr 1970; Simmons 2014; Useem 1998.
8. Carrabine 2005; Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug 2013; Godard 1992; Goldstone and Useem 1999; Goodwin 2001; Useem and Kimball 1991.
9. Davies 1962, 1969; Gurr 1970; de Tocqueville [1856] 1955.
10. See, e.g., Lichbach 1998; Olson 1965; Popkin 1979.
11. On the insufficiency of grievances for the rise of social movements, see, e.g., Jenkins and Perrow 1977; McCarthy and Zald 1977; and Oberschall 1973. For overviews of resource mobilization theory and its extensions, see, e.g., Jenkins 1983; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; and Tilly 1977.
12. Gilbert 1983; Rodger 1982.
13. Quoted in Woodman 2005, p. 100.
14. See, e.g., Dwyer 2017, pp. 16–17.
15. Eighteenth-century naval mutinies can be divided between those whose purpose was to seize a ship and escape from naval service (e.g., the *Bounty*) and others resembling a special kind of armed strike whose purpose was to gain leverage against naval authorities in pursuing the redress of grievances. In Chapter 3, we analyze the logic of these different kinds of mutiny.
16. Gilbert 1976, pp. 82–3.
17. Boswell [1791] 1934–50, p. 438.
18. See especially Lavery 2010; Rediker 1987; and Rodger 1986.
19. Important studies of social order and rebellion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries include Calhoun 1982; Gould 1995; Sewell 1980; and Tilly 1998.
20. On the political process model and its extensions, see McAdam et al. 1996; McAdam et al. 2001; Tarrow 1998; and Tilly 1977.
21. See, e.g., Loveman 1998; Viterna 2013; and Wood 2003.
22. Kalyvas 2006; Weinstein 2007.
23. Goldstone and Useem 1999; Kalyvas and Kocher 2007.
24. See, e.g., Lammers 2003 and Rodger 1986.
25. Finer 1997.
26. De Tocqueville [1856] 1955, p. 62.
27. Kuran 1997.
28. Trotsky [1932] 1959, p. 249.
29. Collier 2000; Fearon and Laitin 2003.
30. On violence as one of the "great levelers" in human history, see Scheidel 2017.
31. Acemoglu and Robinson 2006; Boix 2003; Gandhi and Przeworski 2006.
32. DeJuan and Bank 2015; DeJuan and Wegner 2017; Hendrix and Haggard 2015; Thomson 2017; Wallace 2013.
33. Medina 2007.
34. On the distinction, see the discussion in Tilly 1993.
35. Gilroy 1993, p. 4.
36. See the useful discussion of the concept of governance and a call to better specify it in empirical research in Fukuyama 2013 and 2016.
37. Hechter 2018 and Hechter and Horne 2009.
38. "We have little information about the inputs of governance that might allow us to judge the performance of governments … we can infer little from the quality of government from how much governments are spending and where they are putting their money. Big government may not be better or worse than small government" (Gerring 2012, p. 182).

39. The technical term for this explanatory sin is sampling bias.
40. Goldstone 2003.
41. See, e.g., Goldstone et al. 2010. Scheidel 2017 offers a recent example.
42. Also see Cederman et al. 2013: ch. 2; such grievances may arise from members of dominant or privileged groups, often stemming from the perception of diminishing status-group advantages – see McVeigh 2009.
43. McAdam 1982, p. 34; see also Benford and Snow 2000; Gamson, Fireman and Rytina 1982; Walder 2009.
44. Indeed, the era of opinion surveys only began in 1948; see Bethlehem 2009.
45. Scheidel 2017.
46. Hechter 1978; Kemper 2001; Østby 2008; Stewart 2008.
47. Weber [1918–21] 1978, p. 227.
48. Durkheim [1897] 1966, pp. 249–50.
49. Mead 1934.
50. Klandermans 1997, p. 205.
51. Turner and Killian 1972: ch. 4; Useem 1998; Walsh 1981. Goldstone 2014 similarly makes the distinction between structural and "transient" or "accidental" grievances and finds that both are necessary to motivate rebellion.
52. Bergstrand 2014; Tausch et al. 2011; Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013; Van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears 2008.
53. Kahneman 2011.
54. Klandermans 1997, p. 40; see also Gould 1995 on the activation of protest identities.
55. As Schelling 1960, p. 90, notes, "The role of 'incidents' can thus be seen as a substitute for overt leadership and communication."
56. As the historian E. P. Thompson (1971, pp. 78–9) observed of the disorganized English crowds of the eighteenth century, "An outrage to legitimate (moral) assumptions, quite as much as actual deprivation, was the usual occasion for direct action."
57. Lichbach 1998 calls this set of problems the "rebel's dilemma."
58. See Elster 1984 on commitment mechanisms.