NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORIES

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This article offers an overview and assessment of the utility of new social movement theories for analyzing contemporary forms of collective action. The article begins with a brief overview of the origins of new social movement theory and a description of some of the general tenets of this approach. Next, I consider the contributions of four major theorists (Castells, Touraine, Habermas, and Melucci) to this paradigm. The heart of the article provides a critical discussion of the central debates that have emerged within this paradigm. I then propose a typological distinction between "political" and "cultural" versions of new social movement theory. In the conclusion, I assess new social movement theory as a whole and situate the paradigm with reference to other paradigms for the study of social movements.

Over the last twenty years, resource mobilization theory has become the dominant paradigm for studying collective action in the United States. With its characteristic premises of rational actors engaged in instrumental action through formal organization to secure resources and foster mobilization, this paradigm has demonstrated considerable theoretical and empirical merit for understanding social movements (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tilly 1978). More recently, however, some have questioned the utility of this perspective for understanding at least some kinds of movements and constituencies, while others have lodged important criticisms against this approach (Buechler 1993). These developments have created an intellectual space for complementary or alternative perspectives for analyzing social movements. One such alternative is social constructionism, which brings a symbolic interactionist approach to the study of collective action by emphasizing the role of framing activities and cultural processes in social activism (Snow and Benford 1992; Gamson 1992; Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994). This article examines another alternative to the resource mobilization perspective that has come to be known as new social movement theory. In what follows, I describe this perspective, summarize the work of some of its major theorists, discuss the central debates associated with it, offer a distinction between political and cultural versions of the theory, and provide an assessment of this paradigm for understanding collective action.

New social movement theory is rooted in continental European traditions of social theory and political philosophy (Cohen 1985; Klandermans 1991; Klandermans and Tarrow 1988; Larana, Johnston, and Gusfield 1994). This approach emerged in large part as a response to the inadequacies of classical Marxism for analyzing collective action. For new social movement theorists, two types of reductionism prevented classical Marxism from adequately grasping contemporary forms of collective action. First, Marxism's economic reductionism presumed that all politically significant social action will derive from the fundamental eco-

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nomic logic of capitalist production and that all other social logics are secondary at best in shaping such action. Second, Marxism's class reductionism presumed that the most significant social actors will be defined by class relationships rooted in the process of production and that all other social identities are secondary at best in constituting collective actors (Canel 1992). These premises led Marxists to privilege proletarian revolution rooted in the sphere of production and to marginalize any other form of social protest. New social movement theorists, by contrast, have looked to other logics of action based in politics, ideology, and culture as the root of much collective action, and they have looked to other sources of identity such as ethnicity, gender and sexuality as the definers of collective identity. The term "new social movements" thus refers to a diverse array of collective actions that have presumably displaced the old social movement of proletarian revolution associated with classical Marxism. Even though new social movement theory is a critical reaction to classical Marxism, some new social movement theorists seek to update and revise conventional Marxist assumptions while others seek to displace and transcend them.

Despite the now common usage of the term "new social movement theory," it is a misnomer if it implies widespread agreement among a range of theorists on a number of core premises. It would be more accurate to speak of "new social movement theor*ies*," with the implication that there are many variations on a very general approach to something called new social movements. As a first approximation to this general approach, however, the following themes may be identified. First, most strands of new social movement theory underscore symbolic action in civil society or the cultural sphere as a major arena for collective action alongside instrumental action in the state or political sphere (Cohen 1985; Melucci 1989). Second, new social movement theorists stress the importance of processes that promote autonomy and self-determination instead of strategies for maximizing influence and power (Habermas 1984-1987; Rucht 1988). Third, some new social movement theorists emphasize the role of postmaterialist values in much contemporary collective action, as opposed to conflicts over material resources (Inglehart 1990; Dalton, Kuechler, and Burklin 1990). Fourth, new social movement theorists tend to problematize the often fragile process of constructing collective identities and identifying group interests, instead of assuming that conflict groups and their interests are structurally determined (Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994; Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994; Klandermans 1994; Melucci 1989; Stoecker 1995). Fifth, new social movement theory also stresses the socially constructed nature of grievances and ideology, rather than assuming that they can be deduced from a group's structural location (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994; Klandermans 1992). Finally, new social movement theory recognizes a variety of submerged, latent, and temporary networks that often undergird collective action, rather than assuming that centralized organizational forms are prerequisites for successful mobilization (Melucci 1989; Gusfield 1994; Mueller 1994). Many of these themes signify a divergence from both classical Marxism and resource mobilization theory as well as some points of convergence with social constructionism. But once again, various new social movement theorists give different emphases to these themes and have diverse relations with alternative traditions, thereby warranting a language that speaks of new social movement theories (in the plural).

Beyond these themes is another defining characteristic of new social movement theories that warrants special emphasis. In differing ways, all versions of new social movement theory operate with some model of a societal totality that provides the context for the emergence of collective action. Different theorists operate with different models (referring variously to pos-

tindustrial society, an information society, advanced capitalism, etc.), but the attempt to theorize a historically specific social formation as the structural backdrop for contemporary forms of collective action is perhaps the most distinctive feature of new social movement theories. Having offered a first approximation to this paradigm, it will be helpful to consider several scholars who exemplify the range of thinking among new social movement theorists.

SOME MAJOR THEORISTS

This overview of major new social movement theorists will serve several purposes. First, it will illustrate the range of orientations that may be found in this area, as well as the distortion that is introduced when these very different perspectives are referred to as a single paradigm. Second, it will provide a foundation for a more detailed examination of the major debates associated with new social movement theories in the next section. Third, it will suggest the need for some organizing typology that summarizes but does not oversimplify the diversity of social movement theories. Four theorists best exemplify the range of new social movement theories in the context of their own intellectual traditions: Manuel Castells (Spain), Alain Touraine (France), Alberto Melucci (Italy), and Jurgen Habermas (Germany).

Castells's focus is the impact of capitalist dynamics on the transformation of urban space and the role of urban social movements in this process. He argues that urban issues have become central because of the growing importance of collective consumption and the necessity of the state to intervene to promote the production of nonprofitable but vitally needed public goods. It is in this context that Castells sees the rise of urban social movements in a dialectical contest with the state and other political forces seeking to reorganize urban social life. He thus approaches the city as a social product that is a result of conflicting social interests and values. On the one hand, socially dominant interests seek to define urban space in keeping with the goals of capitalist commodification and bureaucratic domination; on the other hand, grassroots mobilizations and urban social movements seek to defend popular interests, establish political autonomy, and maintain cultural identity. While arguing that class relationships are fundamental, Castells recognizes that they exist alongside other identities and sources of change, including the state as well as group identities based on gender, ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship. For Castells, urban protest movements typically develop around three major themes. First, some demands focus on the forms of collective consumption provided by the state, thereby challenging the capitalist logic of exchange value with an emphasis on the provision of use values in community contexts. Second, other demands focus on the importance of cultural identity and its links to territoriality, thereby resisting the standardization and homogenization associated with bureaucratic forms of organization by establishing and defending genuine forms of community. Finally, still other demands express the political mobilization of citizens seeking more decentralized forms of government that emphasize self-management and autonomous decision making. For Castells, the goals of collective consumption, community culture, and political self-management may be found in a wide variety of cross-cultural settings that warrant the concept of urban social movements.

Castells's analysis of urban social movements exemplifies several new social movement themes while also bringing a distinctive framing to these themes. The emphasis on cultural identity, the recognition of nonclass-based constituencies, the theme of autonomous self-management, and the image of resistance to a systemic logic of commodification and bureaucratization all serve to illustrate dominant strains in new social movement theories. At the same time, Castells remains closer to some of the concerns of conventional Marxism than many

other new social movement theorists, and he does so by offering a "both/and" rather than an "either/or" stance toward some familiar social movement dichotomies. Thus, rather than counterpoising "old" class-based movements with "new" nonclass based movements, Castells recognizes the roles of both class-based and nonclass-based constituencies in urban social movements. Rather than contrasting "political" and "cultural" orientations, he recognizes that urban social movements contain a dialectical mixture of both orientations that finds expression in civil society and the state. Rather than dichotomizing between "instrumental" strategies and "expressive" identities, Castells acknowledges the mutual interplay between these themes in many urban social movements. Because of this more catholic and inclusive approach, Castells's version of new social movement theory is more attentive to the role of the state than some other versions of the theory that appear to eschew instrumental action altogether. As a result, he is more likely to recognize the role of political dynamics, such as changing political opportunity structures, than some other scholars of new social movement theory. Finally, Castells's approach suggests the compatibility of a certain style of neo-Marxist analysis with at least some versions of new social movement theory.

Alain Touraine argues that with the passing of metasocial guarantees of social order, more and more of society comes to be seen as the product of reflective social action. The growing capacity of social actors to construct both a system of knowledge and the technical tools that allow them to intervene in their own functioning—a capacity Touraine calls historicity—makes possible the increasing self-production of society, which becomes the defining hallmark of postindustrial or programmed society. The control of historicity is the object of an ongoing struggle between classes defined by relations of domination. Such classes take the form of social movements as they enter into this struggle. In postindustrial society, the major social classes consist of consumers/clients in the role of the popular class and managers/technocrats in the role of the dominant class. The principal field of conflict for these classes is culture, and the central contest involves who will control society's growing capacity for self-management. As the state becomes the repository of society's ever increasing capacity to control historicity, there is reason to believe that the central conflict in postindustrial society will come to center around this institution. In a recent formulation, Touraine (1992) locates new social movements between two logics: that of a system seeking to maximize production, money, power, and information, and that of subjects seeking to defend and expand their individuality.

Touraine's work anticipates several of the major debates associated with new social movement theory. One debate considers the likely constituency for such movements. In an empirical study of the workers' movement in France, Touraine and his associates (Touraine, Wieviorka, and Dubet 1987) reiterate his distinctive claim that there is one central conflict in every type of society. In industrial society, this conflict centered around material production and the workers' movement posed the obvious challenge. With the coming of postindustrial society, Touraine and his associates still expect one principal adversarial movement, although they remain uncertain about whether new social movements will fill this role. In a 1988 work, Touraine suggests both that there is no single class or group that represents a future social order and that different oppositional social movements are united simply by their oppositional attitude. Touraine's inability to define the constituency for collective action, despite his insistence that each societal type has a single central conflict, underscores the difficulties that new social movement theorists have in identifying the constituency for such movements. In Touraine's case, this uncertainty may be related to a second debate anticipated by his work con-

cerning the seemingly apolitical nature of these movements. He sees contemporary social movements as evidence of a displacement of protest from the economic to the cultural realm, accompanied by the privatization of social problems. The typical result is an anxious search for identity and an individualism that may exclude collective action (1985). In another context, Touraine (1985) suggests that movements based on difference, specificity, or identity may too easily dismiss the analysis of social relations and the denunciation of power, and in still another work he (1988) suggests that appeals to identity are purely defensive unless they are linked with a counteroffensive that is directly political and that appeals to self-determination. As we shall see, this uncertainty over the political status of new social movements is a defining theme within this paradigm.

Jurgen Habermas (1984-1987) proposes the most elaborate theory of modern social structure by distinguishing between a politico-economic system governed by generalized media of power and money and a lifeworld still governed by normative consensus. Whereas the system follows an instrumental logic that detaches media like money and power from any responsibility or accountability, the lifeworld follows a communicative rationality requiring that norms be justifiable through discussion and debate. The problem for Habermas is that in modern society, system imperatives and logic intrude on the lifeworld in the form of colonization, resulting in the media of money and power coming to regulate not only economic and political transactions but also those concerning identity formation, normative regulation, and other forms of symbolic reproduction traditionally associated with the lifeworld. Habermas suggests that the relationship of clients to the welfare state is a model case for this colonization of the lifeworld, in that the welfare state monetarizes and bureaucratizes lifeworld relationships as it controls the extent and kind of spending on welfare policy to fit the imperatives of money and power. More generally, Habermas argues that the process of colonization alters each of the basic roles that arise from the intersection of the politico-economic system and public and private lifeworld: employee, consumer, client, and citizen. In each case, these dynamics locate more and more decision-making power in the hands of experts and administrative structures, which operate according to the system logic of money and power and whose decisions are correspondingly removed from contexts of justification and accountability within the lifeworld.

Given this conception of social structure, Habermas locates new social movements at the seams between system and lifeworld. This location leads him to identify two features of these movements that have shaped further debates within new social movement theory. First, Habermas seems to imply that new social movements will have a purely defensive character: at best, they can defend the lifeworld against the colonizing intrusion of the system and sustain the role of normative consensus rooted in communicative rationality that has been evolving within this sphere throughout the process of societal modernization. But Habermas offers little evidence that new social movements can contribute to any broader social transformation, particularly concerning the dominance of system over lifeworld and the dominance of generalized media of exchange like money and power in the system world. As we shall see, while no one sees new social movements as bringing about complete societal transformation, many of its theorists envision a more extensive and progressive role for movements than simply defending the lifeworld. A second Habermasian theme, which is more broadly accepted among new social movement theorists, concerns the nature of the goals or demands associated with these movements. For Habermas, as for many others, the conflicts in which new social movements engage are less about material reproduction and more about cultural reproduction,

social integration, and socialization. The new movements bring with them a new politics concerned with quality of life, projects of self-realization, and goals of participation and identity formation. Many of these movements are united around the critique of growth as a central ideological foundation, with ecology and peace movements playing central roles. Because these are not traditional distributional struggles, Habermas implies that they cannot be channeled by political parties or allayed by material compensation. The implication is that under some circumstances, the conflicts associated with new social movements may contribute to the larger legitimation crisis that Habermas (1975; 1984-1987) associates with advanced capitalism.

Alberto Melucci argues that the (post-)modern world brings new forms of social control, conformity pressures, and information processing to which new social movements respond. The movements are triggered by new sites of conflict that are interwoven with everyday life; the conflict itself involves symbolic codes, identity claims, and personal or expressive claims. Melucci would thus concur with Touraine that the political status of new social movements is unclear, but he is less troubled by this fact than Touraine. While these conflicts are far removed from the conventional political sphere, they are not without structural effects that are central in Melucci's argument. In a society increasingly shaped by information and signs, social movements play an important role as messages that express oppositional tendencies and modalities. The very focus on personal, spiritual, or expressive aspects of modern life typical of new social movements is an implicit repudiation of the instrumental rationality of the dominant society. Perhaps the most important systemic effect of new social movements is to render visible the peculiarly modern form of power that resides behind the rationality of administrative procedures; in this way, collective action emphasizes the socially constructed nature of the world and the possibility of alternative arrangements. Melucci's positive view of these movements and their messages underscores the importance of free spaces between the level of political power and everyday life in which actors can consolidate collective identities through both representation and participation.

Melucci's work also helps to define some of the central issues of new social movement theory. One such issue concerns the role of identity in modern collective action. Melucci's starting premise is that in modern society, the pace of change, the plurality of memberships, and the abundance of messages all combine to weaken traditional points of reference and sources of identity, thereby creating a homelessness of personal identity. This means that people's propensity to become involved in collective action is tied to their capacity to define an identity in the first place (Melucci 1988). It also means that the social construction of collective identity is both a major prerequisite and a major accomplishment of the new social movements.[1] The fluidity of identity in the modern world and in its social movements is related to the fragility of organization in such movements. Melucci is insistent that new social movements be seen as ongoing social constructions rather than as unitary empirical objects, givens or essences, or historical personages acting on a stage. In contrast to these conceptions, whatever unity movements may achieve is a result of ongoing efforts rather than an initial starting point for collective action. On another level, Melucci steers attention away from formal organization by stressing that much collective action is nested in networks of submerged groups that occasionally coalesce into self-referential forms of organization for struggle—but often on a temporary basis. He thereby suggests that we speak less in terms of movements and more in terms of movement networks or movement areas to capture the transitory nature of much contemporary mobilization.

These sketches hint at some of the main contours of new social movement theory while also suggesting its diversity. This diversity derives in part from the different national settings in which theorists like Castells,Touraine, Habermas, and Melucci have operated, as well as the rather different histories of social protest within each nation. This diversity also derives from the different theoretical traditions that inform the work of these theorists: Castells extends Marxist analyses of collective consumption, Touraine builds on his pathbreaking work on postindustrial society, Habermas works out of the German tradition of critical theory, and Melucci introduces some semiotic and postmodern elements. As suggested earlier, this diversity warrants speaking of "new social movement theor*ies*" rather than a unitary "new social movement theor*y*." Yet there are important threads of continuity across these thinkers. Despite their differences, all concur that their societies have moved into a distinct social formation that might be designated as postindustrial, advanced capitalism and that the structural features of their societies have shaped the kinds of current collective action as decisively as the structural features of liberal capitalism shaped the dynamics of proletarian protest. While these sketches have hinted at some of the issues that define the paradigm of new social movement theory, a more systematic presentation of these debates is now in order.

THE MAJOR DEBATES

Many of the issues raised by new social movement theories may be framed in terms of four major debates that typify this general approach. The first concerns the meaning and validity of designating certain movements as "new" and others (by implication) as "old." The second debate involves whether new social movements are primarily or exclusively a defensive, reactive response to larger social forces or whether they can exhibit a proactive and progressive nature as well. The third debate concerns the distinction between political and cultural movements and whether the more culturally oriented new social movements are inherently apolitical. The fourth involves the social base of the new social movements and whether this base can be defined in terms of social class. These debates involve overlapping issues and are ultimately interconnected in various ways. The second and third debates are closely related because they hinge on the ability to provide meaningful definitions of increasingly problematic terms like "progressive" or "political." The first and the fourth are also related in that the definition of new movements implies the ability to designate a social base other than the old working class. While acknowledging these connections, each debate is sufficiently complex to warrant separate analytical treatment here.

What's New about New Social Movements?

A central dispute that has attracted considerable attention concerns the extent to which new social movements really represent something demonstrably new, with critics suggesting that these movements are not as distinct as proponents of the paradigm suggest. Thus, David Plotke (1990) argues that new social movement discourse tends to overstate their novelty, to selectively depict their goals as cultural, and to exaggerate their separation from conventional political life. Sidney Tarrow (1991) points out that many new social movements aren't really all that new, because they often have grown out of preexisting organizations and have long histories that are obscured by new social movement discourse. In Tarrow's analysis, the supposed newness of these movements has less to do with the structural features of advanced capitalism and more to do with the fact that these movements were studied in their early stages of formation within a particular cycle of protest in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The

implication is that with the ending of this cycle of protest and the political realignments it promoted, social movement activity has decreased and returned to more conventional forms; the proponents of "newness" thus mistook a temporary and cyclical phase for a new historical stage of collective action. The most sweeping critique of this sort is offered by Karl-Werner Brand (1990), who suggests that "new social movements" are the latest manifestation of a cyclical pattern that has been evident for well over a century. In this argument, new social movements and their predecessors appeared in cyclical phases in response to cultural crises and critiques of modernization. In the latest cycle, a mix of moral-idealistic and aesthetic-countercultural critiques of modernization, along with a pessimistic civilization critique, provided the stimulae for new social movements. However, Brand argues that similar periods of culture critique prompted similar movements around 1840 and 1900 in Britain, Germany and the United States. In various ways, these critics suggest that new social movements are continuous with past movements and are simply the latest manifestation of a cycle or a long wave of social protest movements. These critics see all these movements as romantic, cultural, idealistic, and even antimodern responses to patterns of societal evolution and modernization, rather than being new.

These critical challenges have forced proponents of new social movement theories to specify convincingly wherein the newness may be found, and several responses have been forthcoming. For Russell J. Dalton and Manfred Kuechler (1990), new social movements may draw on a long-standing humanistic tradition but their genuinely new aspects include their postmaterialistic value base, their search for pragmatic solutions, their global awareness, and their resistance to spiritual solutions. For Claus Offe (1990), the newness of these movements involves their postideological, posthistorical nature as well as their lack of a positive alternative and specific target in the form of a privileged class; because of these features, they deny accommodation to existing power and resist standard forms of co-optation. For Klaus Eder (1993), new social movements are inherently modern because only in modernity can their distinctive challenge to the cultural orientation of society be formulated. In his view, new social movements provide an alternative cultural model and moral order that both defends normative standards against the strategic, utilitarian, and instrumental goal seeking and decision making of elites and points in the direction of a more democratic formulation of collective needs and wants within society. For Russell J. Dalton, Manfred Kuechler and Wilhelm Burklin (1990), these movements are new in their advocacy of a new social paradigm that challenges the dominant goal structure of Western societies by advocating postmaterialist, antigrowth, libertarian, and populist themes. In addition, the political style of these movements involves a conscious avoidance or rejection of institutionalized politics and a careful distance from established political parties. For these authors, it is the combination of ideological bonds and political style that distinguishes new social movements. Jean Cohen (1983) argues that new social movements can be distinguished from utopian and romantic movements of the past in terms of their visions or goals for social development. Whereas utopian and romantic movements typically sought the de-differentiation of society, economy, and state into a premodern utopian community, new social movements presuppose and defend the structural differentiation of modern society and attempt to build on it by expanding the social spaces in which nonstrategic action can occur.

As these responses indicate, while there is no consensus among new social movement theorists about what constitutes the newness of these movements, there are plenty of candidates for that category. Given the diversity of empirical, philosophical, and political frameworks

that these authors bring to this debate, there is little prospect that it can be resolved in any definitive way. But such debates are instructive even if unresolvable. One of the lessons here is that the term new social movements inherently overstates the differences and obscures the commonalities between past and present movements (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994; Melucci 1994). The term had a strategic value in trying to break from the Marxist tradition of looking to the "old" labor movement as the primary agent of history, but the unintended result of shifting the focus to other constituencies has been to imply that they somehow have no history prior to the cycle of protest in the 1960s. In point of fact, there are no social movements for which this claim can be plausibly defended. Whether the movements involve students, women, racial, ethnic, or sexual minorities, and whether they involve peace, ecology, or justice themes, all have important historical predecessors that span at least the twentieth century and sometimes reach much further back into the nineteenth century. Hence, there is more continuity between supposedly old and new social movements than is typically implied (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994; Johnston 1994; Larana 1994; Shin 1994; Taylor 1989). The term also suggests a false dichotomy between new movements and old forms of labor organization that obscures compelling evidence for the new social movement character of many nineteenth-century labor movements (Calhoun 1993; Tucker 1991). The danger here is that the terminology we adopt can become a conceptual straitjacket that precludes certain lines of inquiry. Thus, while there are distinct combinations of genuinely new elements in the social movements emphasized by this perspective, these can only be carefully specified by locating these movements and their predecessors in their appropriate sociohistorical contexts and by looking for both similarities and differences woven throughout such histories.

Are New Social Movements Reactive or Progressive?

A second set of debates in new social movement discourse concerns both the extent to which these movements are characterized as either defensive or progressive and the extent to which they are seen as carrying a liberatory potential. The disagreement over the newness of these movements carries over into this second debate, with few unambiguously convincing arguments on either side. One strand in this debate begins with Habermas (1984-1987), who has characterized the new social movements as primarily defensive reactions to the colonizing intrusions of states and markets into the lifeworld of modern society. As vital as this role may be, Habermas has said relatively little about the prospect that new social movements can or will assume a larger and more progressive role in societal transformation. Other theorists working within this tradition have been somewhat more forthcoming. Thus, Dieter Rucht (1988) argues that, although movements are likely to emerge during qualitative breakthroughs in societal modernization (understood in Habermasian terms of increasing differentiation between and within the system and lifeworld), they may be proactive, reactive, or ambivalent with respect to these patterns. Rucht implies that modernization in the lifeworld produces conflicts around democratization, self-determination, and individualization and that the expressive, identity-oriented movements this provokes have a progressive character. At the same time, modernization in the system tends to provoke a more defensive kind of protest against the side effects of technological, economic, or political changes that can have an antimodernist cast. This vision of new social movements as progressive with respect to lifeworld rationalization and as defensive with respect to system intrusion is one logical way of addressing this debate from a Habermasian perspective.

Another response is offered by Jean Cohen (1982, 1983), who also expresses dissatisfaction with the somewhat marginal role envisioned by Habermas for social movements. In her view, this is because movements interest Habermas not in terms of their substantive claims but rather as carriers of universalistic cultural potentials. Thus, social movements are granted significance only if they become vehicles of societal modernization and cultural rationalization. Cohen argues that both past and present movements have played a vitally important role in helping to institutionalize civil society as a sphere that is both differentiated from and connected to the state and that gives social actors the space to translate lifeworld concerns into systemic priorities for change. This can be grasped through neither systems theory nor action theory but rather requires analysis of the process of institutionalization by which movements have contributed to civil society and the creation of new associational and democratic forms, thereby building up the space that allows them to operate more progressively as change agents. In her view, social movements can be more than defensive, antimodern reactions precisely because they have established a foothold in civil society in which they can pursue larger goals of progressive social change. These goals include both the self-defense and the further democratization of society, and Cohen implies that these are best seen as complementary rather than contradictory imperatives of new social movements.

Analysts of new social movements from a more traditionally Marxist perspective have not necessarily arrived at clearer answers or more internal agreement on these questions. For example, Joachim Hirsch (1988) argues that new social movements must be understood as part of the crisis of Fordism. Fordism was itself a response to an earlier capitalist crisis that introduced mass production and consumption, a Keynesian and corporatist welfare state, and a broader "statification" of society that extended surveillance and control throughout the society. These developments promoted the commodification and bureaucratization of social life, and new social movements are a response to these developments. These movements thereby seek to overcome alienation and regulation by promoting individual emancipation and the recovery of civil society through a radically democratic form of politics. Despite this seemingly progressive agenda, Hirsch argues that the organizational forms and ideological premises of many new social movements still reflect the fundamental contradictions of the Fordist period to which they are a response. As a result, they transcend the conventional dichotomy between left and right, or progressive and conservative. Hirsch expects these movements to play complex and contradictory roles during the transition from the Fordist mode of accumulation to a new strategy of accumulation in advanced capitalism: they may simultaneously embody genuine opposition to the old order and become unconscious vehicles for establishing a new order (Steinmetz 1994). Colin Mooers and Alan Sears (1992) are more pessimistic about the prospects for new social movements. In their view, the focus on civil society is consistent with a political agenda of lowering the horizons and range of possibilities to what can be achieved within the limits of the existing market and state. To the extent that the new politics of social movements does indeed accept capitalist social relations and turns away from confronting the capitalist state, this politics is simply a new reformism in their view.

These debates are difficult to resolve. One difficulty is the diversity of stances adopted by new social movements, but a greater obstacle is that the conceptual yardsticks that frame the debate are breaking down. That is, notions of progressive or reactionary and the traditional dichotomy between left and right all presuppose (to one degree or another) a metaphysics of history and a directionality to social change that has become untenable in late modernity. Yet a third trouble is in the abstract frames in which these debates are conducted. Movements

exist in specific sociohistorical circumstances such that the same movement and the same agenda may well be characterized as progressive or reactionary (to the extent we can define these terms meaningfully) depending on the context in which it is embedded. Perhaps for these reasons, some theorists have come to rely less on the goals or ideologies of a given movement than on its potential for democratization as a yardstick for judging movements.

Two rather different examples may be cited. In a discussion of how and when resistance movements (which may arise out of conservative impulses and responses to external threats) become liberation movements (which make radical demands for change), Richard Flacks (1988) suggests that the critical step in making this transition is the cultivation of democratic consciousness. This consciousness seeks to narrow the gap between "everyday life" and "making history," thereby drawing the largest possible number of people into the process of history making. Reflecting a very different theoretical tradition, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) offer their own version of an argument about the liberatory potential of new social movements that also emphasizes the centrality of democratic discourse to such liberation. If these disparate examples are at all typical, then the older debate over the progressive or defensive nature of the new social movements is being gradually displaced by new discussions focusing on the potential of these movements for expanding the range of democratic participation both within movements and within the larger society.

Are New Social Movements Political or Cultural?

A third set of debates (not unrelated to the first two) revolves around the question of whether new social movements are "political" in nature or are better classified in some other way (e. g., as "cultural"). One danger in these discussions is that such terminology can create and perpetuate unfortunate dichotomies that obscure more than they reveal about movements. That is, all movements rest on cultural foundations and play some representational or symbolic function—hence all movements are cultural in some basic way (McAdam 1994). Similarly, all movements take explicit or implicit political stances, and it can be argued that even those which opt out of any conventional contestation for power have taken a political stance of quietism—hence all movements are political in an equally basic way. These considerations should be taken as reminders that such distinctions can be no more than sensitizing devices that highlight features of movements that are inevitably more complex than any such binary classificatory system. Nevertheless, the discussions about the political dimension of new social movements tap profound questions about their transformative potential. The operative definition of political in most of these discussions seems to involve two fundamental dimensions: political movements are at least in part focused on influencing or altering state power, and such movements must thereby have some explicit strategy aimed at transforming power relations.

One way of challenging the political nature of new social movements is to argue that they are about something larger than conventional politics; Brandt (1986) thereby casts new social movements as providing a metapolitical challenge to modernity through a new historical type of protest. He sees these movements as carriers of a classical critique of modern civilization as well as the very project of modernity. Even though he classifies them as metapolitical, he identifies them as having discrete, political effects in terms of consciousness-raising, political socialization, and the politicization of decision making. The more standard critique of new social movements is that they are an apolitical or at least a prepolitical form of social activism. These critiques typically use the protests of the 1960s as a positive benchmark, when move-

ments combined political and cultural dimensions in a desirable balance that still attempted to transform power relations. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, some of these movements shifted to a predominantly cultural orientation in which questions of identity and "identity politics" became predominant. With this change, the notion of "the personal is political" became deformed in such a way that excessive attention to personal life came to substitute for any sustained form of political action aimed at institutionalized power, and lifestyle politics thereby replaced previous movement politics aimed at social transformation. As a result, such movements and their participants jettisoned any concern with influencing or altering state power, abandoned discussions of strategy, and withdrew into cultural cocoons of personal lifestyle issues as a replacement for a previously political orientation (Boggs 1986; Carroll 1992; Epstein 1991). In the sharpest version of this critique, L. A. Kauffman (1990) argues that such antipolitics of identity leads to apolitical introspection, an emphasis on politically correct lifestyles, and the substitution of personal transformation for political activity. Despite the radical veneer that may cover such stances, Kauffman argues that they actually mirror and promote the values of the marketplace.

The most interesting rejoinder to these arguments can be derived from the work of Alberto Melucci (1989), whose stance is not that the new social movements are political (in any conventional sense of the term) but rather that it is just as well that they are not. If the new movements were more political in the conventional sense of that term, they would be playing by sets of rules that benefit existing power-holders and they would in all likelihood be much easier to co-opt through the normal channels of political representation and negotiation. Hence, their apolitical or antipolitical stance should be regarded as a strength rather than a weakness. However, to be apolitical in this sense does not mean a retreat into excessively individualist orientations for Melucci. Although he operates with a culturalist reading of new social movements, he also believes that such culturalist movements can pose major challenges to existing social relations. In part, this is because these relations have come to be defined more and more in the cultural language of symbolic representation. Thus, if power has become congealed, particularly in media messages and administrative rationality, the most profound challenge to such power may come from cultural movements that challenge these messages and rationality. By rendering power visible and by repudiating the instrumental rationality of the dominant society, cultural movements may be more effective than conventionally political movements at, in Melucci's terms, breaking the limits of compatibility of the system.

Like other issues already discussed, this debate is about more than one issue, and sometimes it is not about the same thing. For example, the sharpest critics of the apolitical turn in some new social movements are writing in the context of the United States, while Melucci and new social movement theory generally has emerged from a European context. Hence, a peculiarly American factor—such as individualism as a dominant cultural theme—may be the target of these critics. The critics also tend to be affiliated with a New Left strain of democratic socialism that provides them with an implicit model of which political stances movements ought to take and forms the benchmark for their critiques of the movements that fall short of this standard. But the positions in this debate ultimately reflect the theoretical stances of its participants as well as the way their stances conceptualize the dominant society and its recent changes. Those who criticize the apolitical nature of (some) new social movements tend to see modern society as predominantly capitalist. Although they may have transcended traditional Marxist positions on the role of "old social movements," they remain wedded to a

conception of capitalism as a systemic form of domination that must ultimately be challenged in political terms. Those who defend the apolitical or cultural dimensions of new social movements appear to subscribe to a different theory of modern society that leans more heavily on postmodern, semiotic, or generally culturalist themes. Thus, each theoretical school can claim to have identified the more fundamental kind of (political or cultural) challenge that new social movements might offer to the dominant society, but these claims reflect their prior theoretical stances as much as any consistent set of observations about the movements themselves.

What Is the Class Base of New Social Movements?

A fourth set of debates reflects yet another basic premise implicit in the notion of new social movements. If old social movements presupposed a solidly working-class base and ideology, then new social movements are presumed to draw from a different social class base. However, there is no consensus on how this social class base should be defined or even whether the concept of class should remain central to the definition of a movement's base. Thus, one line of argument suggests that any attempt to answer this question in class terms is itself a residual effect of an economistic reading of social movements in which a movement's social base is automatically defined by class structure. Part of what makes new social movements new is precisely the fact that class becomes much less important in determining the base, interests or ideology of the movement than in the older economistic reading. It is only by jettisoning such economistic notions that we can appreciate the extent to which new social movements are defined by the dynamics of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, or age—social divisions that may well have transcended class in their relevance for shaping collective action. While this logic is compelling as a means of dispelling the lingering influence of economistic readings of sociopolitical activism, it is not a sufficient way of dealing with the question of class. While new social movements may not be economically determined in the straightforward manner that old social movements were presumed to be, they nevertheless have what a Weberian would call "economic relevance." For example, the goals and policies pursued by a movement may have a very different impact on diverse social classes, just as differing class positions are likely to shape people's definition of a grievable issue in the first instance. If movements can no longer be reduced to class, neither can they be understood apart from class, as one among several salient structures and identities in contemporary forms of collective action.

One strategy for side stepping the issue of class is thus to argue that the group identities undergirding collective action have shifted from class to status, race, gender, ethnicity, or nationality. Another theoretical strategy that marginalizes the role of class is to argue that new social movement constituencies derive more from an ideological identification with certain issues than membership in some homogeneous social base. An example of this strategy may be found in Dalton, Kuechler, and Burklin (1990). They argue that the defining characteristic of new social movements is their advocation of a new social paradigm that challenges the dominant goal structure of Western societies. In their account, such movements draw on a socially diffuse base of popular support rather than any specific class or ethnic base. They see this as a shift from group-based politics rooted in instrumental interest to value-based politics rooted in ideological support for collective goods. The shift from interest to ideology may therefore be a reflection of the fact that in advanced capitalism, many deprivations and forms of domination have acquired a relatively classless character because their effects touch mem-

bers of many different social groups and classes (Steinmetz 1994). Hence, movements responding to these effects will not have an exclusive class character but will recruit across a variety of social groups.

Despite these two theoretical strategies that shift attention away from class, the most common strategy within the new social movement literature is to argue that these movements do indeed have a social class base that can be conceptualized as a middle-class base in contrast to the working-class base of old social movements. Erik Wright's (1989; 1985) concept of "contradictory class locations" provides one promising analytical tool for addressing the complexity of contemporary class structure and its implications for movement mobilization. While Wright has not specifically addressed the issue of new social movements, Claus Offe (1985) has. He suggests that the social base of new social movements is threefold: the new middle class, elements of the old middle class, and "decommodified" groups outside the labor market. This unusual combination of groups derives from the structural features of advanced capitalist society, which include a broadening of the negative effects of the system beyond a single class, a deepening of the methods and effects of social control and domination, and the irreversibility of problems and crisis potentials in the society. These effects create a tripartite constituency for new social movements whose only common feature may be their distance from the old poles of capital and labor. The new middle class is a modern, class-aware group whose goals are more general than those of traditional class politics. The old middle-class elements and the decommodified elements more often draw upon premodern, particularistic ideologies that shape their role in new social movements. As a result, the complex politics of new social movements will depend on which of these three factions becomes dominant at any given movement, as well as the alliances that such groups might pursue with other political actors. The possibilities range from maintenance of the old, growth-oriented paradigm to a new form of corporatism to a genuinely new challenge to the prevailing social order. The latter, in Offe's view, would require new social movements rooted in new middle-class elements, which then ally with the traditional left and proceed to establish a positive relation with peripheral and decommodified groups. Only this alliance could effectively challenge the old paradigm of growth-oriented politics and replace it with a new paradigm rooted in distinctively new social movement values and goals.

A multifaceted response to the question of class and social movements may be found in the work of Klaus Eder (1993). His general approach to these questions is informed by the assumptions that class and collective action have been decoupled in advanced capitalism, that culture plays an increasingly important intervening role between class structure and collective action, that all collective actors are socially constructed rather than structurally determined, and that Pierre Bourdieu's concept of a class habitus is a useful guide to the social construction of class actors and collective action. Based on these premises, Eder constructs his argument about the middle-class base of new social movements. Because this class has an intermediate position between upper and lower social classes, it blends bourgeois individualism and plebeian particularism in a class-specific defense of individualization and the middle-class lifeworld. Such a habitus can generate new social movements, but it can also generate moral crusades and political pressure groups. New social movements—as opposed to other forms of collective action—are most likely to derive from those niches of contemporary society that preserve old communitarian traditions and radically democratic projects while also seeking new social relations that transcend moralism and power (Eder 1985). In a more recent essay, Eder (1993) proposes a theory of middle-class radicalism that sees new social move-

ments as a class-specific response to the middle-class realities of upward mobility, cultural capital, and the lack of a clear group identity. For Eder, new social movements are not class movements in the traditional sense, but they manifest a new type of class relationship in which the making of the middle class as a group with a distinct identity and consciousness is dialectically intertwined with the mobilization of new social movements.

A more finely textured version of this argument is proposed by Hanspeter Kriesi's (1989) study of new social movements in the Netherlands. Building on Wright's (1985) approach to classes, Kriesi identifies antagonisms within the new middle class between technocrats with organizational assets and specialists with professional identities. He proceeds to distinguish between occupational segments, offering a broad contrast between "social and cultural specialists," on the one hand, and "administrative and commercial personnel," "technical specialists," "craft specialists," and "protective services," on the other. It is the social and cultural specialists with professional identities but without organizational assets who constitute a genuinely new class, which is formed out of the underlying antagonism between technocrats who favor administrative rationality and specialists who seek noninstrumental uses for their knowledge. The struggles of new social movements, in turn, may be seen as both expressing and contributing to the formation of this new class. Kriesi thereby suggests that the notion of a generic oppositional new middle class is both too broad and too narrow. It is too broad because it is not the class as a whole but only the younger generation of social and cultural specialists that tend to support new social movements. It is too narrow because there are other groups beyond the middle class who often provide support to new social movements as well. Kriesi concludes that if new social movements indeed have such deep structural roots in a segment of the new class, then they cannot be dismissed as temporary, conjunctural phenomena but must be seen as fundamental manifestations of advanced societies.

Offe's, Eder's, and Kriesi's analyses also hint at a subterranean issue related to the broad question of the social base of new social movements. If it is generally accurate to see new social movements as rooted in some type of middle-class base, this raises the possibility that these movements may not be unrelated to the older class politics as much as they may operate in opposition to traditional working-class interests. This possibility is exemplified by the supposed trade-off between environmental protection and job creation that appears to pit the interests of ecologically oriented new social movements against those of traditional labor union movements. While the framing of such demands as mutually exclusive alternatives may tell us more about elite strategies of control than about the positions of movements themselves, beyond all the divide-and-conquer strategies there are likely to be significant and enduring conflicts between the class base of new and old social movements. If new social movements are really dedicated to a postmaterialist paradigm of limits to growth, and if older social movements remain tied to growth-oriented policies in which workers share in the benefits of such growth, then we would expect to see significant fissures between these movements. On the other hand, some have argued that rather than seeing an inevitable conflict between old worker movements and new social movements, it is possible to see the latter as expressing other needs of workers above and beyond their roles as laborers (Carroll and Ratner 1994).

The relatively small amount of research on this issue has typically taken the form of arguing that the success of new social movements will ultimately depend on their ability to form alliances and coalitions with traditional labor movements. Thus, Barbara Epstein (1990) concludes her overview of contemporary social activism by arguing that any successful move-

ment will have to recruit from both the middle and the bottom third of modern society. In a more detailed analysis, Carl Boggs (1986) argues that any successful future social transformation will depend upon building a sustained connection between working-class struggles and new social movements. This is necessary to overcome the Achilles heel of new social movements—their lack of an effective strategy for confronting state power. While such points are well-taken, they side step the difficult questions of how extensive the class conflicts between different social movements really are and the related question of how such conflicts may be contained long enough to foster the kinds of alliances and coalitions envisioned by these theorists.

Thus, while there is no consensus on the question of class and new social movements, this debate provides several important lessons. First, these movements represent a major form of social activism whose social base is sometimes best defined in something other than class terms, whether that be gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, or age. Moreover, new social movements require us to rethink how all collective identities (including class identities) are not structurally guaranteed but socially constructed (Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994; Meyer and Whittier 1994). As such, they do not come in neat, mutually exclusive, one-dimensional packages but rather in dialectically interrelated combinations of positions and identities (Collins 1990; Morris 1992; Omi and Winant 1986; Taylor and Whittier 1992). We therefore need to think in terms of how all these identities may be experienced simultaneously and how that experience will shape movement participation. We also need to think in terms of how one status may influence the perception of another, as when a middle-class position prompts people to see the world in terms of gender rather than class (exemplified by the history of white, middle-class feminism [Buechler 1990]). A second lesson is that some movements may be best characterized not in terms of a social base rooted in conventional statuses but rather in terms of values and goals with which participants agree. Thus, alongside identity-based movements where such statuses are central, there are issue-based movements in which identities are secondary to the question of congruence between individual and movement values and goals. A third lesson is that (despite the first two lessons) there does appear to be an elective affinity between a middle-class location and new social movements. Many have noted the problems of clearly defining the term middle class, which too often serves as a residual category for groups between the traditional poles of capital and labor. To some extent, this problem can be addressed by more careful and systematic research into the constituencies for various new social movements. But the more important point (following Eder's [1993] lead) is to recognize that the conceptual confusion over the term middle class is not just a theoretical shortcoming but rather a mirror image of the fluidity and fragility of contemporary class structures—at least as they affect those "in the middle." If social classes really are socially constructed, and if this process is especially important in the making of the middle class, then our inability to clearly identify the middle-class base of new social movements may simply be an accurate reflection of the fact that the construction project is still underway in advanced capitalism.

A TYPOLOGY OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORIES

The preceding profiles of central theorists and major debates convey some of the complexities in new social movement theory. At one extreme, we may speak in terms of a very general orientation called new social movement theory, based on the tenets identified in the introduction of this article. At the other extreme, we may speak in terms of specific theorists or

positions in debates, producing a multiplicity of new social movement theories with no more than family resemblances to one another. My goal here is to improve on these images of one very general approach and a plurality of particular positions by proposing a typology of new social movement theories. Like all such typologies, this one is offered as an ideal-typical sensitizing construct that cannot capture all the complexities of the field and will inevitably oversimplify some of its dimensions. Nevertheless, such sorting devices would seem to be in order as heuristic tools for improving our understanding of new social movement theories.

The most promising typological distinction in this field is between what I call "political" and "cultural" versions of new social movement theory.[2] This is not a mutually exclusive distinction but rather a matter of the emphasis placed on these differing dimensions. Nevertheless, there appears to be a number of related characteristics that cluster around these different emphases, producing two rather distinct versions of new social movement theory (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. POLITICAL AND CULTURAL VERSIONS OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY

Issue	Political Version	Cultural Version
General Orientation	Pro-Marxist	Post-Marxist
Representative Theorist	Manuel Castells	Alberto Melucci
Societal Totality	Advanced capitalism	Information society
Image of Power	Systemic, centralized	Diffuse, decentralized
Level of Analysis	Macro-, mesolevel, state-oriented	Meso-, microlevel, civil society, everyday life
Movement Activity	Retains role for instrumental action toward strategic goals	Eschews strategic concerns in favor of symbolic expressions
First Debate: View of New Movements	Recognizes their role without rejecting role of working-class movements	Regards new movements as having displaced working-class movements
Second Debate: Movement Orientations	Potential for progressive orientations if allied with working-class movements	Sees new movements as defensive or rejects category of "progressive"
Third Debate: Evaluation of Movements	Sees political movements as most radical, cultural movements as apolitical	Sees cultural movements as most radical, political movements as co-optable
Fourth Debate: Social Base of Movements	Analyzed in class terms via contradictory locations, new class, or middle class	Analyzed in terms of nonclass constituencies or issues and ideologies

The political version of new social movement theory is pro-Marxist in that it draws upon the most promising work in neo-Marxist scholarship and seeks to build upon the strengths of this tradition. Like all new social movement theory, this version has a model of the societal totality in which new social movements arise, but this version is likely to emphasize the (advanced) capitalist nature of that totality over any other designation. In so doing, it is likely

to offer strong claims about the connections between macrolevel structural features of contemporary capitalism and the emergence of new social movements. The political version of new social movement theory is more macro-oriented in general and more state-oriented in particular. It retains a concern with strategic questions and instrumental action as the ultimate goals of social movements while recognizing the importance of identity formation, grievance definition, and interest articulation as intermediate steps in the process of movement activism. Of the major theorists reviewed above, Castells is closest to this ideal-typical political reading, although some of Touraine's work fits into this category as well.

In terms of the first debate over the newness of these movements, the political version of new social movement theory recognizes a role for new constituencies in social activism based on race, gender, nationality, or other characteristics, but it does not jettison the potential for class-based or worker-based movements alongside these other groups. In terms of the second debate over movement orientations, the political version sees the potential for proactive and progressive change if appropriate alliances and coalitions between class-based and nonclass-based movements can be forged. In terms of the third debate over the challenges posed by new social movements, the political version is most likely to be critical of the apolitical nature of more culturally oriented new social movements, which this perspective would see as limiting their potential for producing meaningful social change. In terms of the fourth debate over the social base of these movements, this perspective is most likely to identify the social base of new social movements in class terms through attempts to theorize the complexity of contemporary class structure and its contradictory locations as the backdrop for social activism.

The cultural version of new social movement theory is post-Marxist in that it transcends this tradition by proposing a more radical break between past and present societal types and movement forms than may be found in the political version. Accordingly, while the cultural version still has a model of the societal totality, it does not identify this totality in terms of capitalism but rather in culturalist or semiotic terms as an information society whose administrative codes conceal forms of domination. Its claims about the links between social structure and movement form emphasize the decentralized nature of both power and resistance, so it is not particularly macro-oriented or state-centered but focuses on everyday life, civil society, and the creation of free spaces between state and civil society. The cultural version eschews strategic questions and instrumental action as pitfalls to be avoided, while emphasizing symbolic explorations and expressions of identity that precisely challenge the instrumental logic of systemic domination. Of the major theorists reviewed above, Melucci is closest to this ideal-typical cultural reading, although some of Habermas's work fits into this category as well.

In terms of the first debate reviewed above, the cultural version of new social movement theory not only recognizes new social constituencies but also argues that the old worker-based constituencies for social activism have been transcended along with industrial capitalism. In terms of the second debate, the cultural version tends to view activism as a defensive reaction to systemic domination that can potentially challenge systemic imperatives but it eschews the language of "progressive" movements as invoking an unwarranted metaphysics of history. In terms of the third debate, this version rejects the apolitical label often attached to culturalist movements by arguing that political movements are the most easily co-opted and that cultural movements fighting on symbolic terrain can do more to expose contemporary forms of power than the more conventionally political movements. In terms of the fourth debate, this version is more likely to identify the social base of new social movements in nonclass terms, by

referring either to other statuses and identities or to values and ideologies that define movement constituencies, rather than by class locations.

The advantage of this typological distinction between political and cultural versions of new social movement theory is that it appears to organize a variety of diverse dimensions and debates into two more or less coherent positions with a fair degree of internal consistency across various issues. The disadvantage is that some major theorists defy easy classification. Thus, differing aspects of the work of both Touraine and Habermas can be located in both schools of thought, emphasizing that such typological distinctions should not become conceptual straitjackets that deny the complexity of such theorists. On the other hand, if used properly, such typologies may also aid in identifying contradictions and inconsistencies in these and other theorists, as well as identifying shifts in their positions over time.

CONCLUSIONS

Having examined the diversity of new social movement theories by way of an overview of the major theorists and debates and offered one means of organizing this diversity through the distinction between political and cultural versions of new social movement theories, it remains to evaluate the overall status of this paradigm as a general approach. The core claim of all versions of this approach concerns the appearance of demonstrably new social movements, but this claim is problematic. The central conceptual question is whether the designated new movements are similar enough to one another and different enough from others to support the distinction. As we have seen, these movements differ from each other in terms of their issues and constituencies, so the claim for newness often comes down to something like postmaterialist values, informal organization, and a certain cultural orientation. At this point, the category can be challenged from the other direction by suggesting that many movements not designated as new social movements nonetheless share these features. Thus, it is not difficult to find earlier movements which were at least non- (if not "post-") materialistic, that shunned formal organization, or that articulated predominantly cultural themes. The claim for newness can also be challenged by pointing both to the historical predecessors of new movements, and to how the category of new social movement obscures continuities and exaggerates differences between past and present movements. When all the criticisms have been lodged, a handful of movements remain that closely approximate the ideal type suggested by the category of new social movements, but they are a very small proportion of the forms of collective action found in modern society.

While it is relatively easy to challenge the concept of new social movements in this way, it would be a mistake to dismiss the category prematurely. The very same sensitivity to the history of social movements that undermines any sharp distinction between past and present movements also supports the idea that something new *is* happening in collective mobilization in the late twentieth century. In part, this "something new" has to do with the public and at least quasi-political expression and exploration of supposedly private and subjective problematics, such as identity. But we need more subtle ways to capture this shift. It is not so much that one distinctive type of movement has replaced or been added to others as it is that many more movements have begun to explicitly thematize the kinds of issues identified by new social movement discourse. There has thus been a shift in emphasis and orientation in many (though not all) social movements, along with the appearance of a very few movements closely corresponding to the ideal-typical new social movement. These shifts in emphasis and orientation are not unrelated to changes in the macrolevel organization of contemporary soci-

ety, such as the blurring of the distinction between public and private and the greater penetration of systemic imperatives into lifeworld contexts. While no single theoretical account has captured these shifts precisely, more work on these questions is warranted with an emphasis on greater specificity and a richer contextualization of the character of new social movements in modern society.

A final means of assessing new social movement theory as a general approach involves identifying its characteristic strengths and weaknesses relative to other theories. At the most general level (as numerous commentators have noted), new social movement theory is better at explaining the "why" than the "how" of social movement activism (Melucci 1985; Klandermans and Tarrow 1988). Put differently, new social movement theory is a powerful tool for understanding the macrolevel social structures that shape contemporary activism. By offering historically specific formulations of societal totalities and the forms of domination they entail, new social movement theory has much to tell us about the roots of contemporary social activism and the dynamics of movement emergence. In the context of these general premises, the particular emphases on symbolic action, self-determination, postmaterialist values, collective identity, grievance articulation, and self-referential organization reflect fundamental features of contemporary social activism and the structures they challenge.

When seen from different angles these strengths also appear as limitations. Thus, the very historical specificity that gives new social movement theory much of its analytical power means that the theory (in all its variants) only applies to a limited number of movements in Western societies with mobilization biases toward white, middle-class participants pursuing politically or culturally progressive agendas. Alongside this empirical limitation is a theoretical one involving the type of questions new social movement theory has addressed (at least to date). By virtue of its focus on the "why" of movement emergence, new social movement theory has said relatively little about the "how" of ongoing movement processes. It also has not been particularly helpful in understanding the "when" or "where" of intermittent social movement formation across structurally similar societies (Tarrow 1994, p. 83). Like all theoretical frameworks, new social movement theory illuminates some issues while leaving others in the dark.

These double-edged strengths and limitations mean that new social movement theory can make its greatest contribution to understanding collective action when situated alongside other theoretical schools. In the most general terms, it may be that different theories speak most effectively to different levels of analysis. Thus, new social movement theory speaks to the macrolevel of structure and context; resource mobilization theory addresses the mesolevel of organization and strategy; and social constructionism accounts for the microlevel of identity and grievances. Theoretical progress within and between these paradigms is most likely to occur by identifying points of convergence and divergence between these levels and framing critical questions across these paradigms. This overview of new social movement theories suggests some linkages. The more political version of new social movement theory is more macro-oriented and has distinct affinities with some aspects of resource moblization theory, while the more cultural version of new social movement theory is more micro-oriented and has equally strong affinities with social constructionism. By exploring the links across levels and paradigms, our theoretical understanding and empirical analysis of collective action are likely to be enhanced. New social movement theory promises to be a vital part of this process.

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NOTES

1. In a somewhat similar argument, Anthony Giddens (1991) has proposed the concept of "life politics" to capture the inevitably political dimensions of self-actualization and identity formation in post-traditional contexts. In contrast to an emancipatory politics that challenges exploitation or oppression, life politics flows from the reflexive project of the self and emphasizes the interconnectedness of personal and global survival in late modernity.

2. In my earlier discussion of major debates, the contrast between political and cultural was used to refer to a specific debate about the political or apolitical nature of new social movements. In the present context of a typological distinction, this contrast is used to refer to a broader pattern of interrelated differences that includes all the debates as well as other foundational assumptions that appear to cluster around political or cultural approaches to new social movements.

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