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# SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: Changing Paradigms and Forms of Politics

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■ **Abstract** Theories of collective action have undergone a number of paradigm shifts, from “mass behavior” to “resource mobilization,” “political process,” and “new social movements.” Debates have centered on the applicability of these frameworks in diverse settings, on the periodization of collective action, on the divisive or unifying impact of identity politics, and on the appropriateness of political engagement by researchers. Transnational activist networks are developing new protest repertoires that challenge anthropologists and other scholars to rethink conventional approaches to social movements.

## INTRODUCTION

The worldwide political effervescence of “the long 1960s” (Isserman & Kazin 2000) contributed to a paradigm crisis in social scientific thinking about collective action. This prolonged decade of extraordinary upheaval in New York, Chicago, Berkeley, Paris, Rome, Berlin, Tokyo, Mexico City, Prague, Beijing, and elsewhere was the most intense period of grassroots mobilization since the 1930s. Civil rights and antiwar movements, youth and student rebellions, mobilizations in defense of regional autonomy and the environment and for the rights of women, gays and lesbians, the elderly, the disabled, and a host of other emergent groups, identities, and causes converged with an unprecedented wave of anticolonial and antiimperial insurgencies in poorer regions of the globe. Social scientists of various orientations concerned with geopolitics and revolution had ready-made categories (“national liberation,” “subversion”) for analyzing events in the “Third World.” But the turmoil in the developed North highlighted the inadequacy of existing social scientific frameworks and gave rise to new and rich debates.

Even though anthropologists were well represented as participants in this tide of unrest and their 1960s sensibilities contributed to new conceptualizations of “interstitial politics” and of power, gender, colonialism, and the state (Vincent 1990), they remained to a large extent on the periphery of social scientific theorizing about collective action. One notable exception was the Vietnam-era agrarian studies tradition

(Roseberry 1995) pioneered by Wolf (1969), a work that was an outgrowth of the teach-in movement. In part, anthropologists' marginal involvement in discussions of collective action reflected an academic division of labor that assigned them peasants, the urban (especially Third World) poor, ethnic minorities, and millenarian or syncretic religious sects and allocated other types of mobilization (and national-level phenomena) to sociologists, political scientists, or historians. Also important by the mid-1980s, in the United States at least, was anthropologists' fascination with "everyday" as opposed to organized resistance and with microlevel analyses of power à la Foucault (Burdick 1995). Ethnographic research on social movements, moreover, tended to resist "grand theoretical" generalizations because close-up views of collective action often looked messy, with activist groups and coalitions forming, dividing, and reassembling and with significant sectors of their target constituencies remaining on the sidelines.

This article tells four long stories in a short space. The first is an account of the post-1960s paradigm shift in social scientific studies of collective action, which, though overly abbreviated and canonical, is necessary for examining the state of the field today and particularly what transpired when theory traveled beyond Europe and North America. The second is an appraisal of how ideas about periodization shaped competing post-1960s analytical frameworks. The third concerns the centrifugal and centripetal, or fragmenting and unifying, impacts of identity politics, the disproportionate attention social scientists devote to movements they like, and their infrequent efforts to theorize right-wing movements. The fourth story involves new developments in social movements themselves, particularly an intensifying transnational activism, a disenchantment on the part of diverse activists with identity politics, and a resurgence of varied kinds of struggles against inequality.

One of the most striking features of the collective action field is its continuing intellectual compartmentalization. Debates have tended to occur along parallel and disconnected tracks, reflecting different disciplinary personal networks and forms of socialization and inquiry and a major divide separating case study and grand theory practitioners. One recent effort at synthesis notes that scholars of revolutions, strikes, wars, social movements, ethnic mobilizations, democratization, and nationalism have paid little attention to each other's findings (McAdam et al 2001). Students of right-wing movements rarely engage theories about other kinds of collective action. Despite frequent gestures toward transgressing academic boundaries (and notwithstanding occasional successes), anthropologists on the one hand and sociologists and political scientists on the other have had little impact on or awareness of each other's efforts to understand social movements.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>One of the few non-regionally focused anthologies on social movements edited by U.S. anthropologists is indicative of this mutual unfamiliarity, despite the inclusion of case studies—virtually all first-rate—from a range of disciplines. While it may be true that "the study of protest outside the industrial North is largely under-theorized" (Boudreau 1996, p. 175), Fox & Starn (1997) suggest—seemingly unaware of a substantial literature

A short article of broad scope can obviously invoke only some theorists and works (and movements). I emphasize recent work and allude sparingly to the “classics” of the field and more briefly than I would prefer (or not at all) to various relevant issues. Anthropologists, for reasons noted above, are less well represented than scholars from other disciplines. Geographically, the emphasis of this review is on the Americas and Europe, not because significant social movements have not occurred elsewhere, but because these have been prominent sites of pertinent theoretical production. Academic books and specialized journals—including those devoted to collective action studies, such as *Mobilization* and *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*—have been key fora for many debates. Because activists and scholars engage each other (and sometimes are each other), some of the most provocative analyses of social movements’ visions, strategies, and practices appear in nonacademic media: hybrid activist-scholarly publications, small journals of opinion, ’zines, web pages, organizing handbooks, and manuals by those who seek to control particular kinds of movements.

## A CONVENTIONAL STORY OF SHIFTING PARADIGMS

In the early 1970s, functionalism still held sway in U.S. sociology. Park and the Chicago School had, since the 1920s, juxtaposed “social organization”—institutionalized, conventional patterns of everyday life—to “collective behavior,” a category that included crowds, “sects,” fashions, and mass movements, all of which they saw as simultaneously symptoms of societal disequilibria and harbingers of new patterns of social relations (Park 1967). Smelser (1962) rejected the notion of “disequilibria” as “too strong” and attributed collective behavior to tensions that exceeded the capacity of a social system’s homeostatic mechanisms and that constituted a source of new bases of Durkheimian-style solidarity. Related psychological theories explained the rise of totalitarianism as a mass response to economic crises and “magnetic leaders” by individuals with a “mob mentality” (Arendt 1951) or an “authoritarian character” (Fromm 1941). These theories about totalitarianism were of limited use in analyzing turmoil in largely democratic, affluent polities in the 1960s. Olson (1965) advanced a notion that remains a point of departure for much theorizing. An economist, Olson rejected theories based on the irrationality of individuals [although he also stated it would “be better to turn to psychology” than to economics to understand “fanatic” or “lunatic fringe” movements “in unstable countries” (1965, pp. 161–62)]. Instead, he posited individuals

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on contentious politics—that “we still know relatively little about the ample and charged territory between the cataclysmic upheaval of revolutionary war and the small incidents of everyday resistance, . . . social struggles where people enter into open protest yet do not seek the total overthrow of the social order” (p. 3). Moreover, apart from a few individuals in each group whose work genuinely engages historical documentation and scholarship, the vast literature by historians on collective action tends to be surprisingly underutilized.

so rational they would not participate in collective endeavors—a rather odd premise for the turbulent 1960s—because each could benefit from others’ activity as a “free rider,” pursuing low-risk self-interest at the group’s expense. Like the “tragedy of the commons” model, which was later criticized (Prakash 1998) as divorced from culture or—alternatively—as a caricature of a historically specific *homo economicus*, this perspective explained collective action as the sum of strategic decisions by individuals, who could only be induced to join a group effort through incentives or sanctions. Given the stability of North America and Western Europe and the high risks many 1960s activists assumed—arrests, police beatings, ruined careers—“rational choice” did not appear to be a promising avenue of interpretation.

Marxism, still in or close to the mainstream in European universities in “the long 1960s,” viewed conflict in capitalist societies as revolving around the fundamental contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In all but the most heterodox Marxist (Thompson 1971) tendencies, class interest and historical agency derived unproblematically from class position (although classes “in” and “of” themselves raised less easily resolved issues of consciousness and hegemony). This framework too was of little use in making sense of movements in the 1960s that frequently had largely middle-class leadership and multiclass constituencies.

By the mid-1970s, two distinct perspectives emerged that attempted to fill the apparent theoretical vacuum: the “identity-oriented” or European paradigm [also widely termed new social movements (NSMs)] and the “resource mobilization” or American paradigm (Cohen 1985, Della Porta & Diani 1999, Foweraker 1995, Garner 1997, Laraña et al 1994, McAdam et al 1996a). Neither comprised an entirely coherent “school,” but for heuristic purposes the differences between them constitute a suitable, if conventional, point of departure.

For Touraine (1988), among the first and most prolific advocates of a NSMs approach, the issue of social movements has two dimensions, loosely derived from aspects of Marx’s and Weber’s thought. The first is the notion of a “central conflict” in society; for Marx, this was the struggle between labor and capital in industrial society. But, Touraine argues, with the passage to a “postindustrial” society, labor-capital conflict subsides, other social cleavages become more salient and generate new identities, and the exercise of power is less in the realm of work and more in “the setting of a way of life, forms of behavior, and needs” (1988, p. 25). The main Weberian element in Touraine’s approach is the concept of “the actor” as key protagonist of “social action.” In postindustrial society, diverse collectivities have a growing capacity to act on themselves and to struggle for “historicity”—“the set of cultural, cognitive, economic, and ethical models . . . through which social practices are constituted” (1988, pp. 40–41). Touraine thus posits the “way of life” as the focus of contention; struggles that seek to affect the relations of domination characteristic of the “way of life” (with its forms of knowledge, mores, and investment) are “social movements.” He explicitly excludes from this category, however, forms of “collective behavior” that “defend” the social order or “social struggles” directed at the state. Melucci (1989) argued that social movements have three important dimensions: actors’ recognition of commonalities and

shared identities, objectives, and understandings; adversarial relations with opponents who claim the same goods or values; and actions that exceed the tolerance limits of a social system, thereby pushing it to change. Melucci did a doctorate under Touraine in the 1970s at the *École Pratique des Hautes Études*, but this definition suggests a move beyond his professor's stress on the structural preconditions of forms of collective action in postindustrial society. Instead, adopting Habermas's (1981) terminology (though not his emphasis on "defensive" movements), Melucci pointed to how the state and market rationalize the private sphere, generating new social groupings and collective action that illuminates "the silent and arbitrary elements of the dominant codes" and "publicizes new alternatives" (1989, p. 63).

Touraine, Melucci, and other advocates of NSMs theory (Laclau & Mouffe 1985) delineated characteristics they saw as particular to the NSMs and that contrasted with the "old" labor or working-class movement. Although the "old" labor movement upheld class as the primary social cleavage, category of analysis, organizational principle, and political issue, the NSMs emerge out of the crisis of modernity and focus on struggles over symbolic, informational, and cultural resources and rights to specificity and difference. Participation in NSMs is itself a goal, apart from any instrumental objectives, because everyday movement practices embody in embryonic form the changes the movements seek. The NSMs diffuse "social conflictuality to more and more numerous relations." This proliferation of "points of antagonism" produces "new social subjects" whose "multiple social positions" complicate interpretations of political agency based on a single, privileged principle of identity (Laclau & Mouffe 1985).

If NSMs theorists in Europe tended to explain collective action as a response to "claims," grievances, or postindustrial society, on the other side of the Atlantic a growing coterie of social scientists pointed out that the mere existence of discontent, which was presumably omnipresent, could not explain how movements arose in particular times and places. Several authors in particular (McCarthy & Zald 1977, Zald 1992, McAdam et al 1996b) argued for a focus on "resource mobilization." This "strategy-oriented" paradigm (Cohen 1985) took Olson's rational-actor postulate as "one of its underlying problems" (McCarthy & Zald 1977, p. 1216) but professed to have solved the "free rider" puzzle by analyzing the resources—material, human, cognitive, technical, and organizational—that movements deployed in order to expand, reward participants, and gain a stake in the political system. Resource mobilization (RM) theory, with its focus on the construction of "social movement industries" made up of "social movement organizations," regarded collective action mainly as interest group politics played out by socially connected groups rather than by the most disaffected. Movement "entrepreneurs" had the task of mobilizing resources and channeling discontent into organizational forms. Resource availability and preference structures became the perspective's central foci rather than the structural bases of social conflict (as in Touraine's version of NSMs) or state and market assaults on the private sphere (as in Melucci's and Habermas's versions).

In underscoring the importance of mobilization processes and well-endowed organizations (and competition among the latter), the RM paradigm tended to disregard situations in which social movements, usually of the very poor, emerged with few resources or where overt organization—in contexts of extreme inequality, severe repression, and hopeless odds—endangered participants, producing “shadowy” (Piven & Cloward 1977), “submerged” (Melucci 1989), or “hidden” forms of resistance (Scott 1990) that might or might not lead to collective action (Burdick 1998). By viewing social movements as interest group politics, the paradigm understood “success” primarily as the achievement of policy objectives rather than in relation to broader processes of cultural transformation. RM proponents eventually conceded as well that their framework did not deal adequately with “enthusiasm, spontaneity, and conversion experiences” or the “feelings of solidarity and communal sharing” that rewarded movement participants (Zald 1992, pp. 330–31).

Several scholars influenced by the American paradigm advocated incorporating a focus on states and on “political opportunity structure” (POS) into the RM model’s concern with the internal dynamics of organizations. The POS approach tended to examine movement strategizing in the context of the balance of opportunities-threats for challengers and facilitation-repression by authorities (Tarrow 1998). Some POS scholars who worked with European case materials emphasized a diachronic approach, studying the frequency of contentious events over long durations (with methods influenced by *Annales* historians’ “serial” history and their distinction between “events,” “conjunctures,” and “*longues durées*”) (Shorter & Tilly 1974, Tilly 1986). Other Europeanists (Tarrow 1989) examined the opening and closing of POSs over much shorter periods. A complementary approach involved analyzing conflicts occurring around the same time in relation to space, within a given region or nation (Shorter & Tilly 1974), or as part of a cross-national comparison (Gamson & Meyer 1996). This synchronic approach had antecedents, not always acknowledged, in European studies of early industrial-era protest, such as Hobsbawm & Rudé (1968), who analyzed, for 1830–1832, types of repression and disturbances according to frequency, geographical location, categories of persons targeted, and damages inflicted.

Critics noted that the POS perspective gave little attention to discursive aspects of identity, gender, the social construction of POS itself, or its local and international aspects (Abdulahadi 1998). They further charged that POS was too broad and imprecise, “a dustbin” (Della Porta & Diani 1999, p. 223) or “a sponge that soaks up virtually every aspect of the social movement environment . . . an all-encompassing fudge factor . . . [which] may explain nothing at all” (Gamson & Meyer 1996, p. 274). Increasingly, POS proponents came to see it as one element of a broader political process, which included greater emphasis on the cultural-historical sources of discontent, protest, and mobilization (and which was distinct from—and apparently incognizant of—the similarly named perspective that evolved out of Manchester anthropology). By the 1990s, proponents of the political process approach echoed Cohen’s (1985) call for fusing the European and American paradigms

and professed to have an “emerging synthesis.” This included “political opportunities,” “mobilizing structures,” and “framing,” a category encompassing the ways in which collective identities arose, as well as the interpretative, discursive, and dramaturgical practices that shaped movement participants’ understandings of their condition and of possible alternatives (McAdam et al 1996a, 2001; Tarrow 1998). By the end of the decade, political process enthusiasts could claim that the model occupied a “dominant” (Garner 1997) or “hegemonic” (Giugni 1999) place in the study of social movements.

## INTERROGATING THE CANON

It is remarkable how little attention has been devoted to understanding why contrasting approaches originated on different sides of the Atlantic. Melucci attributed the rise in the United States of RM theory, with its presumption of rationality and metaphors about “entrepreneurs,” to the “unprecedented development of organization theory in the analysis of business and administration” and to the weakness of Marxist or radical thought in U.S. sociology (1989, p. 194). Della Porta & Diani (1999) indicate that in the 1980s, rising disillusion with a strong Marxist intellectual tradition in Europe contributed to a search for new non-class-based dimensions of conflict. Foweraker (1995), looking at the sociopolitical context of theory, suggests that in western Europe the “social democratic consensus,” developed welfare states, and powerful labor organizations and corporatist traditions contributed to making NSMs look genuinely “new” and to producing explanations that stressed major societal transformations. In contrast, in the United States, in the absence of a strong labor movement or a social democratic class pact, outsider groups (the civil rights movement was the paradigmatic case for RM theorists) had to mobilize resources to gain representation in the political system (McAdam et al 2001, Morris 1999). A further cause of trans-Atlantic differences was the isolation in which theorists of the two traditions worked; only in the mid-1980s were there sustained contacts between and joint conferences of social movements scholars from Europe and North America (McAdam et al 1996a).

How did NSMs and POS theories fare when they traveled outside Europe and North America? Latin America, in particular, has been fertile territory for studies of collective action, though largely by scholars and scholar-activists influenced by NSMs (Escobar & Alvarez 1992, Alvarez et al 1998) or historical-structural perspectives (Eckstein 1989).<sup>2</sup> Even though RM and POS perspectives on movements’

<sup>2</sup>“Historical-structural” approaches “show ideology, values, traditions, and rituals to be of consequence and trace the importance of culture to group, organization, and community dynamics and to other features of social structure. Yet they never presume that protest is mechanically determined by social structure. They show the patterning of defiance to be contingent on historical circumstances” (Eckstein 1989, p. 3).



interactions with states were pertinent in Latin America (Foweraker 1995), they had less appeal outside developed northern democracies because it was difficult, especially under authoritarian regimes, to imagine political opportunity as a significant explanatory category; tellingly, in the few works on Latin America that make explicit use of a POS perspective, such as Schneider's (1995) ethnographic tour-de-force on Chile's urban poor under the Pinochet dictatorship, the theoretical framework is understated. Davis (1999, p. 586) argues that NSMs theory's emphasis on civil society appealed "to the lived experience and normative ideals of Latin American intellectuals." Also important, however, were the ties to Latin America of NSMs theorists in Europe. Touraine, who spent the mid-1950s at the University of Chile and developed his ideas about "historicity" in dialogue with Latin American sociologists in the early 1970s (Touraine 1973), has had continuing ties to the region. The writings of Laclau, a native of Argentina established in Europe who shifted from Althusserianism to a poststructuralism that drew selectively and idiosyncratically on Gramsci (Laclau & Mouffe 1985), have been widely read in Latin America since the early 1970s. It is likely, furthermore, that in the 1970s and 1980s visceral anti-U.S. sentiments (especially in Mexico and among exiles there) and a strong Europhile streak (particularly in Buenos Aires) predisposed Latin American intellectuals to embrace NSMs perspectives and to ignore those from U.S. academia. Anthropologists were drawn to NSMs perspectives for similar reasons, as well as for the central role that NSMs accorded to cultural practice as a force for political transformation (Alvarez et al 1998, Escobar & Alvarez 1992).

Within Latin America, recent studies of collective action cluster geographically, mirroring the concentration of earlier social scientific production in certain selected places. The 1994 Zapatista uprising in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas has inspired an extraordinary outpouring of scholarly work, much of it directed at informing a sympathetic public or mobilizing solidarity. Drawing on three decades of work on Chiapas, Collier (1994), produced less than a year after the Zapatistas' rebellion, remains an essential reference. Emphasizing agrarian rather than indigenous sources of insurgency, especially the constitutional modifications that effectively ended land reform, Collier describes how community factionalism and population growth generated an exodus of disaffected migrants to remote jungles in eastern Chiapas. Although the Zapatistas condemned the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and warned of its deleterious consequences for Mexico's peasantry, linking the insurrection to NAFTA, Collier says, was a "pre-text," because other grievances had kindled the movement during years of clandestine organizing. In 1994, the origins of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) were unclear. Harvey (1998), whose research began nearly a decade before the uprising, details the multiple strands of peasant, indigenous, and student organizing that eventually coalesced in the EZLN. In analyzing the Zapatistas' struggle on behalf of Chiapas Indians and the Mexican poor in general, Harvey maintains that the construction of democracy in Mexico often depends on informal local and

regional, rather than formal national-level processes.<sup>3</sup> Womack (1999) introduces a first-rate collection of primary documents on Chiapas and extends inquiry forward and backward in time. He relates the erratic course of EZLN-government negotiations and also traces the notorious intransigence, venality, and bigotry of contemporary highland elites to their conquistador ancestors' schemes to defraud the Crown of tribute and to racialize space in their urban centers. Drawing on a decades-long involvement with Chiapas, Nash (1997) indicates how Zapatista outreach campaigns are elements of a broader project of mobilizing civil society and of redefining modernist notions of democracy in a pluriethnic Mexico.

The Zapatista case is significant not only for its reverberations within Mexico, but also because it figures as a prototype for sometimes rhapsodic claims about a new period characterized by "informational" (Castells 1997) or "post-modern" (Nash 1997) movements and "democratic" (Touraine 2000) guerrillas. Most Zapatista internet activity is carried out by a small number of sympathetic individuals and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but their presence on the net has allowed them to communicate demands, foster alliances, and represent themselves as part of a global struggle against neoliberal capitalism. Among the most in-depth and singular treatments of this phenomenon is a U.S. Army-funded RAND Corporation study (Ronfeldt et al 1998) that provides a glimpse of how counterinsurgency planners view this new form of politics.

Apart from the high-profile Zapatistas, diverse Latin American struggles led social scientists to reconsider approaches to collective action and NSMs theory, in particular. Two outstanding anthologies (Escobar & Alvarez 1992, Alvarez et al 1998), among the few in which anthropologists (as well as Latin America-based scholars) are well represented, provide a useful guide to the field as it developed in the 1990s.

Despite the wide scope of these anthologies, which range from examinations of the state (Fals Borda 1992) and democratization (Calderón et al (1992) to cyber-politics (Ribeiro 1998) and grassroots (Baierle 1998; Yúdice 1998) and transnational (Alvarez 1998) organizing, two broad areas are conspicuously absent, or nearly so. Peasant movements receive relatively short shrift, apart from Starn (1992). This is perhaps surprising, given that in Mexico outside Chiapas (Paré 1994, Williams 2001), in Central America (Edelman 1998, Edelman 1999), and elsewhere, these have been in the forefront of opposition to neoliberalism and that in Brazil social movements research has concentrated heavily on struggles of small farmers and the landless (Houtzager & Kurtz 2000, Maybury-Lewis 1994, Pereira 1997, Stephen 1997). Right-wing movements are another area largely ignored in these volumes, reflecting in all likelihood a reluctance on the part of

<sup>3</sup>This parallels Rubin's (1997) innovative work on the leftist Zapotec movement COCEI in Juchitán, Oaxaca. Both works critique state-centered understandings of Mexican politics (Castells 1997).

NSMs scholars to acknowledge that conservative responses are also an outcome of proliferating social tensions, rapid cultural change, the advance of democratization, and the progressive movements themselves (Calhoun 1994, Payne 2000, Pichardo 1997).

When NSMs perspectives traveled outside of social democratic Europe, the inclusion in their purview of major movements in Latin America—human rights and democratization, indigenous and minority peoples, Christian-based communities, the urban poor, street children—entailed a recognition of economic and power inequalities as key dimensions of collective action. This did not mean a resort to an obsolete, unidimensional class analysis, however, because the actors in motion went way beyond the traditional proletariat and because investigations of real movements nearly always uncovered participants from a range of class origins and intense contention over issues of identity and representation. This continued significance of class or distributive conflicts led many Latin Americanists to eschew NSMs terminology altogether and to speak instead of “popular” (literally, “people’s”) movements (Foweraker 1995).

## PERIODIZATION DEBATES: SO WHAT’S NEW?

One irony of the stress on newness of NSMs was that emerging movements of women, environmentalists, gays and lesbians, and oppressed minorities, as well as anticolonial forces in the Third World, sought to uncover hidden histories of their political ancestors in order to fortify their legitimacy and forge new collective identities. This rediscovery of the complexity of old and first-wave social movements was part of wider efforts to theorize periodizations of collective action through examining “origins,” “waves,” “cycles,” and “protest repertoires.” The discussion of movements in terms of origins has occurred chiefly in relation to environmentalism. Two recent works highlight what is at stake (Grove 1995, Judd 2000). Efforts to theorize the Northern environmentalist movements that arose in the 1960s, while acknowledging their diversity, usually argued that affluence and urbanization produced an appreciation and need for natural amenities. Melucci, in an uncharacteristically blunt declaration, insinuated that contemporary environmental movements are offspring of a “new intellectual-political elite” living in a “gilded but marginalizing ghetto” (Melucci 1996, p. 165). Similar “postmaterialist” premises extended to explanations of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century conservation campaigns as projects of “enlightened elites” or even of “a gentry overwhelmed by industrialization” (Castells 1997, p. 121). Against this predominant outlook, Grove (1995) attributes the rise of environmentalism to Europe’s encounter with the tropics and to the devastation caused by rapacious plantation economies. Judd, focusing on rural New England, also challenges the thesis of the elite origins of conservation, which he says derives from a “tendency to glean evidence of rising concern about forests from federal publications, national journals, or writings of prominent thinkers” (2000, pp. 90–91). In a meticulous study

of local sources, he finds a pervasive conservation ethic, rooted in common uses of forest, pasture, and farmland, which superseded private property rights until well into the nineteenth century. After 1870, "conservation took on class overtones" (2000, p. 178) as genteel anglers, hunters, and federal bureaucrats took up the cause, reshaping notions about the place of "nature" in agrarian landscapes, as well as nature itself. The thesis of conservation's upper-class origins, Judd maintains, contributes to demagogic efforts today to paint environmentalism as an elite conspiracy unfairly implemented at great cost to the working poor.

Guha & Martínez-Alier (1997) trace early environmentalism to the destruction wrought by the industrial revolution at home and in colonial territories and to a heterogeneous collection of thinkers, such as Aldous Huxley, Mahatma Gandhi, and urbanist Lewis Mumford. The main contribution of the work, however, is its trenchant critique of developed-country overconsumption and its elaboration of commonalities and distinctions between movements. They find postmaterialist environmentalisms in the "empty-belly" South ("essentialist eco-feminism," which sees poor women as embodying intrinsic "naturalness," and "deep ecology" tendencies, which revere biotic integrity more than human needs), as well as ones in the "full-stomach" North (environmental justice movements), which deploy the language of class and, at times, race to organize. "Social conflicts with ecological content" include struggles against "environmental racism" (siting dumps in minority communities), "toxic imperialism" (waste disposal in poorer countries), "ecologically unequal exchange" (based on prices which do not reflect local externalities), the North "dumping" subsidized agricultural surpluses in the South (to the detriment of small farmers there), and "biopiracy" (corporate appropriation of genetic resources without recognition of peasant or indigenous intellectual property rights).

Within feminism, the periodization discussion has been cast in terms of "waves," a convention that reveals and conceals key continuities and ruptures in forms of exclusion and of women's collective action. The demands of different national "first-wave" women's movements are usually said to have centered on suffrage and political rights [although it is also clear that issues of sexuality and male violence were important in contexts as varied as Germany (Grossmann 1995) and Puerto Rico (Findlay 1998)]; "second-wave" movements in the 1960s and 1970s demanded equity in the workplace and domestic unit, exposed the political foundations of seemingly personal circumstances, and championed a range of new rights, from access to abortion to protection from sexual harassment; and "third-wave" feminists, generally born after 1963 and active in the 1990s and after, take cultural production and sexual politics as key sites of struggle, seeking to fuel micropolitical struggles outside of formal institutional channels.

Historians who located first-wave feminism in the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century usually did so provisionally, concerned that such clear-cut categorizations obscured significant antecedents as well as major variations between, say, the United States and Norway, or India and France (Sarah 1983); indeed,

arguments for the inclusion of women in “the rights of man” reach back to the French Revolution (Scott 1996) and the early abolitionist movement (Keck & Sikkink 1998, Lerner 1998), although they were not always backed by collective action. Discussions about third-wave feminism, in contrast, reflect the emergence (in the United States, at least) of a deeply felt generational identity defined against both older second wavers and conservative postfeminists of the 1980s (Baumgardner & Richards 2000, Heywood & Drake 1997).

The waves formulation is problematical in that it privileges political generations and tends to mask variation among movement participants and organizations along lines of age, class, race, and sexual orientation, as well as between- and after-wave activity. In the United States, for example, linking the first and second waves were the elite-led National Women’s Party (which provided many alumnae to the second wave) and the Communist-dominated Congress of American Women, which for 5 years following World War II boasted some 250,000 members (several of whom were leading historians of the first wave and activists of the second wave) before it dissolved during the 1950s red scare (Rosen 2000). Whittier (1995) points out that numerous local radical feminist collectives were active during the hostile 1980s interval between the second and third waves but that their rejection of mainstream politics often rendered them invisible to social movements scholars whose main focus was national organizations.

Political process theorists did not generally draw sharp distinctions between waves or between new and old movements but some nonetheless posited a significant break between the “parochial,” defensive forms of collective action characteristic of Europe up to the mid-nineteenth century (charivaris, machine-breaking, field invasions, food riots) and the modern repertoire of contention that flowered after 1848 with the consolidation of nation-states. Tilly (1986, p. 392), for example, described the social movement as a challenge to the state that employs a protest repertoire of public meetings, demonstrations, and strikes and that attempts to bargain with established authorities on behalf of its constituency.

Tarrow (1998), also employing a political process perspective, shared Tilly’s notion of a fundamental shift in protest repertoires around the mid-nineteenth century. For Tarrow, however, the principal concept for periodization was the “protest cycle” [which in later work (1998) he termed cycle of contention], a time of heightened activity typically involving more than one movement.

Although the claims of some 1980s NSMs enthusiasts that NSMs represented a fundamental rupture with a putative, unitary old movement were quickly recognized as “spurious” (Escobar & Alvarez 1992), even recent work sometimes maintains a marked new-versus-old distinction, arguing, for example, that the traditional Left did not consider the relation between culture and politics a “central question” (Dagnino 1998, p. 34). Such assertions, likely rooted in social scientists’ curious underutilization of the “vast number of accounts by historians . . . on the cultural activities of political movements” (Eyerman & Jamison 1998, p. 12), became difficult to sustain as sympathizers of the 1960s movements recovered earlier, forgotten histories of activism. Some pointed to the identity-based dimensions of

old working-class movements, which in the United States (Calhoun 1993, Flacks 1988, Freeman 2000; Mishler 1999) and elsewhere (Fisher 1999; Waterman 1998) took up such issues as child labor, work environments, women's status, housing, health, community life, education, and access to public services. The middle class, the supposedly distinctive source of new movements, was also prominent in many older ones, notably campaigns in Europe and the United States for abolition, prohibition, reproductive rights, and suffrage (Grossmann 1995, Lerner 1998, Pichardo 1997).

How, though, were these earlier versions of cultural politics forgotten in the initial enthusiasm about NSMs? Some scholars believe that "the specific tactics and methods of state repression" and their impact on movements "have received little systematic attention" (Carley 1997, p. 153).<sup>4</sup> Adam (1995) traces the sources of some NSMs theorists' "amnesia" about earlier militant traditions to both the crisis in Marxism, which allowed leftist scholars to "see" non-class-based activity they had previously overlooked, and to the impact of totalitarian regimes in Europe and the Cold War red scare in the United States, which destroyed diverse progressive movements.

Although some collective action theorists deplore the lack of "a theory that explains the relationship between preexisting protest traditions and the rise . . . of new social movements" (Morris 1999, p. 536), evidence abounds of activist continuities from one era to another and across movements. Among the approaches in the literature on the United States are those that emphasize broad cultural transformations, the life trajectories of groups of activists, the role of institutions and organizations, and the reinventing of musical and other traditions. Flacks (1988, p. 181) notes that as the U.S. New Deal generation retreated politically in the 1950s and concentrated on family life, many tried to apply humanistic and democratic values in the home, producing offspring predisposed to question mainstream culture.

Together with a "vibrant semi-underground current of anarchistic mockery of conventional authority" (Flacks 1988, p. 181) embodied in the Beat poets, *Mad* magazine, risqué satirists like Lenny Bruce, and rock and rhythm-and-blues music, which discredited "the notion that creativity obeyed a color line" (Isserman & Kazin 2000, p. 19), this quiet cultural shift laid the groundwork for rebellion in the 1960s. Some accounts of the 1960s argue that future student activists "grew up with little or no contact with a previous generation that had been radicalized by the Depression" (Fraser et al 1988, p. 17). However, veteran radicals disillusioned with earlier traditions—Communism, pacifism, Trotskyism—had by that time often discarded old dogmas while retaining political ideals, contacts, and skills that contributed mightily to the civil rights, antinuclear, anti-Vietnam War,

<sup>4</sup>Hart (1996, p. 238), in a magnificent study of the Greek Resistance, makes a similar observation but then goes on to provide an impressive oral historical account of Cold War-era political repression. Usually, however, such assertions reflect intellectual and political isolation from those (Arditti 1999, Feldman 1991) who have made repression a central object of study.

and women's movements (Freeman 2000, Rosen 2000, Whittier 1995). Institutions that survived McCarthyism also served as bridges between the protest cycles of the 1930s and 1960s (Horton et al 1990). The rediscovery and nurturing of musical and other artistic traditions are important features of social movements' action repertoires and continuity (Eyerman & Jamison 1998), although expressive culture has also sometimes constituted a source of intramovement contention (Monson 1997).

## IDENTITY-BASED AND ANTI-IDENTITY POLITICS

The "invention and creation of new rights" (Dagnino 1998, p. 50; Melucci 1989), rooted in the struggles of emergent social groups, clearly accelerated in "the long 1960s" along with the mass adoption and refashioning of views and practices that were earlier peculiar to small cultural and political avant-gardes (Flacks 1988, Fraser et al 1988, Isserman & Kazin 2000). For Castells (1997) as for his mentor Touraine, "identity" is a process through which social actors construct meaning on the basis of cultural attributes that are given priority over other potential sources of meaning. Calhoun (1994) historicizes the category in relation to the rise of individualism since the Protestant Reformation, the advent of nation-states, and Enlightenment appeals to nature as a "moral source." Whether and under what conditions the recent proliferation of particular identities produced opportunities for new alliances or merely political fragmentation remains much debated, as are the related tendencies of identity-based movements to oscillate between down-playing and celebrating differences from majority groups or to lose their political character altogether.

Among the dramatic shifts occurring out of struggles for new rights is the changing view of disability. Charlton (1998) chronicles how people considered disabled in southern Africa, Asia, and the Americas organized, often against the wishes of paternalistic, able-bodied advocates, to make notions of normality more inclusive and to "break with the traditional perception of disability as a sick, abnormal, and pathetic condition" (p. 10). Disability oppression has interrelated sources: poverty and powerlessness, resulting from both economic exclusion and underdevelopment (four fifths of the world's disabled live in poor countries); views of the disabled as degraded and aberrant, which legitimize exclusionary practices; and internalization by the disabled themselves of attitudes of self-loathing and self-pity, which hinder understanding of their situation and organizing around it. To perhaps a greater extent than with other movements, the aspirations of the disabled intersect with struggles against other forms of discrimination and for housing and veterans' rights, a ban on land mines, the democratization of technology and scientific knowledge, and the creation or preservation of workplace opportunities and social safety nets. They also, however, complicate the demands of other movements in ways outsiders seldom anticipate. Saxton (1998), for example,

in a searing critique of assumptions about prenatal diagnosis and selective abortion, challenges the belief that the quality of life for disabled people is necessarily inferior and that raising a child with a disability is an undesirable experience.

The reproductive rights movement emphasizes the right to have an abortion; the disability rights movement, the right *not to have to have* an abortion.

(p. 375; emphasis in original).

Other identity-based social movements have found expanding mainstream conceptions of normality a source of internal contention. This is dramatically illustrated in the course of gay and lesbian politics since the 1969 Stonewall rebellion. Early gay liberation movements practiced consciousness raising, exalted long-repressed sexualities, contested the dominant sex/gender system, openly occupied public space, and struggled for nondiscrimination and the depathologization of homosexuality. The "assimilationist" advocacy groups that emerged out of more radical and inclusive gay liberation movements of the early 1970s engaged in a denial of difference intended to gain access to mainstream social institutions and in positing an artificially homogeneous "gay essence" intended to build political unity (Cohen 2001). With the advent of AIDS and rising homophobia in the 1980s, and a shift to confrontational tactics spurred by "the urgency of impending death" (Hodge 2000, p. 356), activists attempted to destabilize the "gay white middle-class identity," which had dominated the movement and to ally with a wider range of sexually, economically, and racially marginalized collectivities. In contrast to the assimilationists, this involved an assertion of fundamental difference with "heteronormativity," as well as a greater acknowledgment of how gay and lesbian identities were plural, socially constructed, and inflected by race, class, and national origin (Adam 1995, Stein 1997). This "queer" challenge to earlier gay activism professed to have resolved a central conundrum of identity politics by privileging "affinity," a shared opposition to class-, race-, and gender-based power and a common AIDS catastrophe rather than particular varieties of sexual desire. Some scholar-activists, however, maintain that academic "queer theory" is still mired in privilege, fails to follow the lead of the radical street movement, and gives scant attention to political-economic aspects of power at all levels, from the state and social class structure to the everyday practices that shape public space (Hodge 2000). The latter misgiving is shared by critics who question whether the category "queer" is an "overarching unifier" or just "another fraction in the overall mosaic of contemporary gay and lesbian organizing" (Adam 1995, p. 164).

The danger that identity-based politics could become a form of "narcissistic withdrawal" impelled by aspirations for individual self-realization and "political tribalism" (Melucci 1989, p. 209) has produced similar commentaries from various directions. Claims of difference can fortify demands for new rights, but they can imply an abdication of rights as well. In a scathing attack on "cultural" or



“difference” feminism, di Leonardo (1998) points out that journalistic and New Age “women’s culture tropes” ignore political-economic dimensions of gender oppression and presuppose an immanent and superior female morality and nurturing capability that is held up as an alternative to the destructive militarism and environmental ruin caused by aggressive, patriarchal men. The implication of such arguments is that women deserve a place in society not because of any inherent right but because of their innate capacity to make things better, a stance that no other oppressed group is required to take.

“Beneath the current black-female-student-chicano-gay-elderly-youth-disabled, ad nauseam, ‘struggles,’” Reed (1999) proclaims in an acerbic yet cogent analysis of postsegregation African-American politics, “lies a simple truth: There is no coherent opposition to the present administrative apparatus” (p. 55). He attributes the “atrophy of opposition within the black community” to the breakdown of the civil-rights-era consensus, a media-anointed leadership so enamored of “authenticity” and “corporate racial politics” that it is incapable of acknowledging class and interest-group differentiation within the supposedly unitary “community,” and an “academic hermeticism” that is isolated from political action and disinterested in distinguishing challenges to socioeconomic hierarchy from politically insignificant “everyday resistance” fads (1999, pp. 56, 151). Although it would not be hard to take issue with Reed’s categorical gloom (or his indifference to other struggles in his ad nauseam inventory), his larger point—that class dynamics arise from and operate autonomously within and across identity-based collectivities—remains an unavoidable limitation on the emancipatory potential of movements defined in purely identity or difference terms.

A related pitfall of identity-based mobilizations is the facility with which many become little more than fodder for lucrative corporate marketing crusades. In an astute discussion of how branding practices have generated anticorporate activism, Klein (1999) maintains that “diversity” is now “the mantra of global capital,” used to absorb identity imagery of all kinds in order to peddle “mono-multiculturalism” across myriad differentiated markets (p. 115).

Warren’s (1998) insightful study of pan-Maya activists, however, highlights complications both of identity-based mobilization and of calls for a new class politics. Beginning in the mid-1980s, in the aftermath of genocide and in the midst of continuing civil war, alongside and sometimes against popular movements that demanded social rights (land, freedom to organize, an end to military impunity), pan-Maya intellectuals launched an unabashedly essentialist cultural project that includes revitalizing Indian languages, revalorizing ancient calendrical and numerical systems (and more generally, ethnically specific epistemologies, spiritualities, and leadership practices), and overturning received Ladino versions of history with new readings of indigenous and Spanish chronicles. Their movements claim a privileged authority in representing Mayan peoples, and strive for a “pluricultural” nation in which they have collective, as well as individual, rights. The pan-Maya movements’ carving out of political space via essentialist practices leads Warren to argue for a middle ground in the analysis of identity politics, focusing

on "the coexistence of multiple politics and histories...hidden by the antagonism of . . . anthropological constructions" (1998, p. 179).<sup>5</sup>

Transcending such constructions in the pursuit of a grounded analysis of multiple politics is a challenging task. Chhachhi & Pittin (1999) question approaches that either consider the primacy of one identity over another or simply "add together gender, ethnicity and class" (p. 68). Instead, they suggest viewing women's possibilities for action through the prism of time, space, and place in order to understand how their "very multiplicity of roles and plethora of pressures may provide both the impetus and the necessary networking" for them to press demands at various work sites (p. 74). They suggest that "the question of women's consciousness" remains an "underdeveloped" area in theorizing identity politics. A considerable ethnographic literature on women in situations of national conflict, however, suggests that this project is further along than Chhachhi & Pittin believe. Hart's (1996) oral historical account of women in the Greek Resistance, Abdulhadi's (1998) examination of Palestinian women's efforts to carve out autonomous space within a larger nationalist movement, Aretxaga's (1997) work on gender politics in Northern Ireland, and Arditti's (1999) study of grandmothers of the disappeared in Argentina are notably successful efforts to move beyond formulaic "additive" approaches and to comprehend how multiple identities emerge from and configure each other and political action, subjectivity, and memory. Debates continue over the limitations and potentialities of multiple politics (Stephen 1997), including mobilizing around motherhood and the extent to which this implies essentialist notions of womanhood (Gledhill 2000).

## RIGHT-WING AND CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENTS

Even though identity-based movements sometimes walk a fine line between celebrating particularities and promoting exclusivity or intolerance, the former dimension has received vastly more attention than the latter. NSMs scholars have largely skirted the issue of right-wing collective action, in part due to Touraine's (and others') limiting of the field to movements that seek "historicity" and in

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<sup>5</sup>In this she echoes feminists who call for "risking" essentialism in the formative stages of movements (Calhoun 1994). Although Warren locates the origins of pan-Maya movements in 1940s Catholic activism and in the crisis of the Guatemalan state in the 1980s, Forster's (1998) reconstruction of ethnic labor migration streams in the 1940s points to a proto-pan-Mayan blurring of specific indigenous identities in the piedmont plantation belt. Grandin (2000), who traces pan-Maya ideology to the nineteenth-century indigenist liberalism of K'iche' elites, argues that "the danger faced by many of the current proponents of Mayan nationalism has to do with their trading in the sort of universalisms that will render the creation of an indigenous identity meaningless to the majority of rural, poverty-stricken Maya" (pp. 228–29).

part because researchers overwhelmingly choose to study “attractive” movements with which they sympathize (Calhoun 1994, Hellman 1992, Pichardo 1997, Starn 1999). Political process theorists typically emphasized Western civic movements and largely sidestepped in-depth analysis of troubling questions raised by the “violent, sectarian, and self-enclosed identity movements” of the 1990s (Tarrow 1998, p. 204). Apart from some attempts to systematize concepts such as backlash and reaction (Hirschman 1991) or to view conservative movements as merely reactionary mirror-images of identity-based NSMs (Garner 1997), studies of the right constitute yet another parallel universe in collective action research, with inconsistent connections to larger traditions of social movement theory.

The exceptions suggest a variety of moves to specify the objects of study. For Ginsburg (1998), “conservatism” involves “a complex balancing act between a libertarian celebration of individualism, economic freedom, and capitalism, and a traditionalist emphasis on community, moral order, and the like” (pp. 47–48). She describes fieldwork with pro-choice and antiabortion activists—surely itself a balancing act—and charts the changing composition of the right-to-life movement, as evangelical Protestant men—many inclined to violence—displaced the moderate women who had been local leaders in North Dakota. Diamond (1995), in a far-reaching analysis of U.S. right-wing politics, objects that conservatism implies reticence about change and thus fails to capture what many self-described conservatives are about. “To be right-wing,” she argues, “means to support the state in its capacity as *enforcer* of order and to oppose the state as *distributor* of wealth and power downward and more equitably in society” (p. 9, emphasis in original). Berlet & Lyons (2000), in a landmark study of American right-wing populism from Bacon’s rebellion in 1676 to the militias of the 1990s, note that classifying populist movements (which make antielitist appeals to “the people”) along a right-left spectrum is often misleading. In contrast to Diamond, they stress that some rightist movements have advocated downward distribution of wealth and power, though not to everyone, and that some reject the state altogether and have tried to overthrow it (pp. 5–6). In an examination of putschist military officers in Argentina, homicidal landowners in Brazil, and violent paramilitary bands in Nicaragua, Payne (2000) defines her object as “uncivil movements,” which employ deliberate violence and threats, as well as more conventional tactics and appeals to threatened identities, to advance exclusionary policies in democratic polities. Echoing Melucci’s discussion of NSMs, she declares that uncivil movements “emphasize identity over interests. They use cultural symbols to empower new movements” (p. 17).

The emergence of antiimmigrant movements in Europe is among the cases that indicate the urgency of grasping how the right deploys cultural politics. Stolcke (1995) contends that new “doctrines of exclusion” differ from older varieties of organicist racism in positing irreducible cultural differences and deeply ingrained propensities to fear and loathe strangers and to wish to live among people

of the same national group. This new cultural fundamentalism eschews claims about innate inferiority in favor of a rhetoric of difference. It posits a supposedly generic human attribute—anxiety about the “other”—in order to construct an antiuniversalist politics, assiduously avoiding rhetoric too directly suggestive of fascist and Nazi racism. Stoler (1999), in a brief paper on the far-right Front Nationale (FN) in Aix-en-Provence, calls attention—like Stolcke—to a peculiar situation where racial discourse looms large and is simultaneously effaced or irrelevant. However, in contrast to frameworks that distinguish a new “cultural racism” from earlier “colonial racism,” she indicates that the old racism also spoke “a language of cultural competencies, ‘good taste’ and discrepant parenting values” (p. 33), while the contemporary FN draws from a broader French cultural repertoire that includes a toned-down racism but also patriotic republicanism and anxieties about European integration and globalization. In the United States, a basic theme of right-wing populist narratives is “producerism,” which “posits a noble hard-working middle group constantly in conflict with lazy, malevolent, or sinful parasites at the top and bottom of the social order” (Berlet & Lyons, p. 348). Although the Christian Right employs coded scapegoating to identify social problems with low-income communities of color, far-right white supremacists endorse an explicitly biological racism. Each tends to reinforce the other in public discourse. NSMs theorists, as well as government agencies, media, and human relations organizations, frequently brand right-wing movements “irrational” (Cohen 1985, pp. 666–67). Berlet & Lyons (2000) warn against such “centrist/extremist” interpretations, which see such movements as fringe phenomena. This, they argue, “obscures the rational choices and partially legitimate grievances that help to fuel right-wing populist movements, and hides the fact that right-wing bigotry and scapegoating are firmly rooted in the mainstream social and political order” (p. 14). They give only passing attention, however, to how the ownership and content of communications media shape notions of common sense and facilitate growth of right-wing movements. The impact of hate radio and internet sites seems to have been covered most by scholars interested in monitoring (Hilliard & Keith 1999), rather than theorizing (Castells 1997), reactionary movements.

Stock (1996) considers producerism almost synonymous with the “rural producer radicalism” that (along with a “culture of vigilantism”) has been a constant of U.S. small-farmer politics for 200 years. Early twentieth-century reform liberalism, such as the Farmer-Labor Party of the 1920s, had ties to rural producer radicalism, but more recent “compensatory liberalism” neglected the values of many rural Americans. The U.S. farm crisis of the 1980s gave rise to armed right-wing groups (Stock 1996) and to antimilitarist, conservationist organizations influenced by Christian notions of land stewardship (Mooney & Majka 1995). Clearly, “the roots of violence, racism, and hatred can be and have been nourished in the same soil and from the same experiences that generated rural movements for democracy and equality” (Stock 1996, p. 148).

## TRANSNATIONAL MOVEMENTS: GLOBALIZATION-FROM-BELOW?

At the same time that some U.S. farmers turned to right-wing populism, others gravitated to movements—many of them transnational—influenced by environmentalism, feminism, and opposition to unfettered free trade (Mooney & Majka 1995, Ritchie 1996). From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, farmers' protests at GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) meetings galvanized a growing international movement critical of the lack of democratic accountability of supranational institutions, of the terms under which agriculture was included in free-trade agreements, and of how neoliberal policies and industrial farming threatened rural livelihoods, human health, genetic diversity, and the resource base (Brecher et al 2000). Small-farmer opposition actions and transnational organizing flourished in areas where regional economic integration and supranational governance were making their weight felt at the local level. In France, farmer José Bové demolished a McDonald's, attracting worldwide attention and national acclaim for his denunciations of agribusiness, free trade, and "*la malbouffe*," a word he coined that may be roughly glossed as "junk food" (Bové et al 2000, pp. 77–84). The action of Bové and his collaborators was modeled in part on events in India, where peasants in Karnataka destroyed a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet and ransacked facilities owned by the multinational seed company Cargill (Gupta 1998). In North America, the Canadian National Farmers Union spearheaded links with counterpart groups in Mexico and the United States in order to influence the NAFTA negotiations (Ritchie 1996). In Central America, peasant leaders forged contacts with European, Canadian, and Indian activists, created a regional transnational lobbying organization, and played a major role in the formation of a global small farmer network called the *Vía Campesina*/Peasant Road (Edelman 1998).

In 1993, Falk introduced the phrase globalization-from-below to refer to a global civil society linking "transnational social forces animated by environmental concerns, human rights, hostility to patriarchy, and a vision of human community based on the unity of diverse cultures seeking an end to poverty, oppression, humiliation, and collective violence" (1993, p. 39). Explicitly directed against elite and corporate-led "globalization from above," the multistranded opposition that Falk described involved diverse sectors organizing across borders and raising connections like those that small farmers made between livelihood, health, intellectual property, environment, human rights, and the expanding dominance of supranational governance institutions. The Barbados meetings in the 1970s and after that brought together native activists and anthropologists from throughout the Americas (Brysk 2000), the global women's meetings sponsored by the United Nations in the 1980s and 1990s (Alvarez 1998), the 1992 Earth Summit (Gupta 1998), the NGO forums held in tandem with World Bank, International Monetary Fund, (IMF) and Group of Seven Industrialized countries meetings, and a multitude of similar events connected issues and activists in postmaterialist and identity- and

class-based movements as never before (Adam 1995, Brecher et al 2000, Charlton 1998).

Just a few years ago, one of the foremost observers of this process could state that the new internationalisms have been "subject to little strategic reflection" and have "as yet little or no theoretical status" (Waterman 1998, p. 4). Appadurai (2000) recently remarked that "the sociology of these emergent social forms—part movements, part networks, part organizations—has yet to be developed" (p. 15). Research on transnational organizing has, however, flourished in the mid- to late 1990s. Initially, it usually looked at organizations that crossed one or two adjacent borders, such as issue-oriented binational coalitions of U.S. and Mexican activists (Fox 2000), the sanctuary movement that aided Central American refugees (Cunningham 1999), or anti-NAFTA coalitions (Ayres 1998). Increasingly, scholars have examined globalization-from-below in terms of its antecedents, protest repertoires, geographic reach, and theoretical and strategic underpinnings. Risse-Kappen (1995) investigates how international governance structures legitimize transnational activists' efforts, increase their access to national politics, and bolster their capacity to form effective coalitions. Smith et al (1997) analyze a wide range of transnational activism and advance a broader project of relating contemporary organizing to previous cross-border efforts, earlier theories of collective action, and debates about global governance. Waterman (1998) provides a subtle discussion of emerging labor internationalisms, grounded in a thorough understanding of old working-class transnational solidarities. Keck & Sikkink (1998) focus on transnational advocacy networks, which they distinguish from coalitions, movements, and "civil society" by their "nodal" organization and their use of information, symbolic, leverage, and accountability politics. They employ a concept of "network" that potentially includes social movements, but also media, unions, NGOs, and intergovernmental and governmental organizations.

When the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and Jody Williams, the ICBL had to wait for nearly a year to receive its half of the award money because it had no bank account and no address and was not an officially registered organization anywhere in the world (Mekata 2000). Acephalous, horizontal, loosely networked alliances, of which the ICBL was emblematic, have emerged as major actors on the world scene and are frequently said to have important advantages vis-à-vis hierarchical organizations, particularly states, but also supranational governance and financial institutions. Although all-embracing definitions of the term network are common (Castells 1997), more restricted interpretations are most revealing as regards concrete instances of collective action. Among the most developed discussions of networks is the previously cited RAND study of the Zapatistas (Ronfeldt et al 1998). Distinguishing between "chain," "star" or "hub," and "all-channel" networks, depending on the degree and type of interconnection between nodes, the RAND authors are mainly interested in developing a counterinsurgency strategy to replace 1980s "low-intensity conflict" doctrine. Among their concerns are "swarming," when dispersed nodes of a network converge on a target (as human rights NGOs did in Chiapas),

and “sustainable pulsing,” when “swarmers” coalesce, disperse, and recombine for attacks on new targets (as in anti-Maastricht marches in Europe and, one supposes, more recent demonstrations in Seattle and elsewhere). According to RAND, combating networks requires mimicking their form with interagency and multi-jurisdictional cooperation. States seeking foreign investment are most vulnerable to “netwar” campaigns that may damage their image or generate perceptions of instability. Giant corporations that invest heavily in linking brand images to consumer identities may be similarly threatened by informational campaigns, such as the antisweatshop movement, that expose pernicious environmental and labor practices (Klein 1999, Ross 1997).

Fox (2000) specifies with greater clarity than most theorists differences between transnational movements, coalitions, and networks, according to the extent to which they engage in mutual support and joint actions and share organized social bases, ideologies, and political cultures (with movements united along the most dimensions and networks along the fewest). He cautions that although the concepts are often used interchangeably and the categories sometimes blur, such analytical distinctions are necessary to keep in view imbalances and political differences within what might otherwise appear from the outside to be cohesive “transnational movements.” Like Keck & Sikkink (1998), he is circumspect regarding hypotheses about “global” civil society because in their “hard version” such assertions suggest that changing international political norms and new technologies have fundamentally and universally altered the balance of power between state and society.

Appadurai (2000) also points to the limited success that transnational networks have had in “self-globalization” and attributes it to “a tendency for stakeholder organizations concerned with bread-and-butter issues to oppose local interests against global alliances” (p. 17), something amply documented by other researchers (Edelman 1998, Fox & Brown 1998). His assertion that networks’ greatest edge vis-à-vis corporations is that “they do not need to compete with each other” is perhaps less persuasive because networks and their nodes collaborate even as they vie for funding, supporters, and political access, and it is their loose, horizontal structure instead that confers advantages over hierarchical organizations, as the RAND group (Ronfeldt et al 1998) worries. Similarly, the notion that “one of the biggest disadvantages faced by activists working for the poor in fora such as the World Bank, the U.N. system, the WTO [World Trade Organization], [and] NAFTA . . . is their alienation from the vocabulary used by the university-policy nexus” (Appadurai 2000, p. 17) is belied by a range of investigations from various world regions that demonstrate levels of sophistication on the part of grass-roots activists that sometimes exceed those of their elite antagonists (Edelman 1998, Fox & Brown 1998, Gupta 1998). Other power differentials, beyond purely discursive ones, clearly skew contention between activists and these formidable institutions.

“Civil society”—“global,” “national,” and “local”—continues nonetheless to generate considerable excitement and an outsized literature, most of it beyond

the scope of this article. Scholars have devoted extensive attention to the genealogy and boundaries of the concept (Cohen 1995, Comaroff & Comaroff 1999, Walzer 1995), its Gramscian roots (Nielsen 1995), and—more germane in considering social movements—to conservative and progressive variants of “civil society” discourse (Macdonald 1994, White 1994) and to the complicated relations between movements and other organizational forms which make up civil society, particularly NGOs (Alvarez 1998, Edelman 1999, Fox & Brown 1998, Gill 2000), but also political parties (Schneider & Schneider 2001). The key watershed in discussions from a wide variety of viewpoints and regions is the end of the Cold War, which at times is attributed not just to the failure of centrally planned economies to keep pace with informational and technological innovations but also to civil society itself, either its rise in the East (Chilton 1995) or its activities in the West (Tirman 1999). The end of superpower competition opened political space not only in erstwhile socialist societies but also in capitalist states where corruption and authoritarianism in political life could no longer be justified by the struggle against international communism. Weller (1999) shuns the term civil society as Eurocentric and insufficiently attentive to informal community ties in his examination of institutions in Taiwan and China “intermediate” between the state and family. He nonetheless develops a suggestive thesis about how village temples and informal local associations, often led by women and mobilizing around idioms of traditional Chinese culture, energized national-level environmental struggles in Taiwan. He indicates that comparable groups on the mainland already back underreported protest movements and could evolve as components of a gradual process of democratization. Schneider & Schneider (2001) trace the emergence of antimafia civic movements in Sicily, which they locate in the expansion after World War II of urban, educated, outward-looking social groups and the erosion in the post-Cold War era of an anti-Communist landowner-Christian Democratic-organized crime alliance. Like Weller, who emphasizes the political polyvalence of traditional Chinese institutions and the significance of local practices in a rapidly changing national and international context, the Schneiders demonstrate that the struggle to retake social space from the mafia and its allies entails contention in neighborhoods, kin groups, workplaces, schools, and state institutions, as well as nurturing alternative civic sensibilities and debunking assumptions about the ancient roots of the mafia in Sicilian society.

The end of the Cold War, while opening political space for all manner of civil society initiatives, also brought accelerated economic liberalization and pressure on welfare-state institutions in developed and developing countries. Even before the fall of the Berlin Wall, during the free-market triumphalism that swept much of the world in the 1980s, it became increasingly artificial to envision NSMs as unengaged with the state. Indeed, fiscal austerity and draconian “adjustments” in public-sector services made states key targets for forces seeking to safeguard historic social conquests and prevent further rollback of healthcare, education, housing, and transportation programs. It is by now commonplace to indicate how



globalization generates identity politics (Castells 1997), how attacks on welfare-state institutions fire resistance movements (Edelman 1999), and how supranational governance institutions (NAFTA, IMF, World Bank, WTO) are part and parcel of each process (Ayres 1998, Ritchie 1996). It is less frequent to find analyses that link these trends to the expanding movement against corporate power and unfettered free trade which burst into public consciousness in 1999 during the Seattle demonstrations and riots against the WTO.<sup>6</sup>

At first glance the anti-free trade coalition of environmental, labor, and farm activists would seem an unlikely combination of social forces, demands, and political practices. Brecher et al (2000) argue that an “epochal change” is occurring, as disparate movements find common ground and press not just for new rights, but for adherence by corporations, states, and supranational institutions to generally held norms. According to these authors,

the apparent opposition among strengthening local, national, and global institutions is based on a false premise: that more power at one level of governance is necessarily disempowering to people at others. But today the exact opposite is the case. The empowerment of local and national communities and politics today *requires* a degree of global regulation and governance (p. 40).

Although duly cognizant of the divisions that afflict social movements, they point to successful campaigns to secure debt forgiveness for underdeveloped countries, to derail the proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment, to secure ratification of a global climate treaty and a protocol regulating genetically engineered organisms, and to stall the WTO Millennium Round as examples of how grassroots pressure may establish and enforce new norms of conduct that better balance the public interest and special interests.

With a lucidity and empirical foundation far beyond anything by Habermas or Melucci, Klein (1999) examines how market-based invasions of public space and individuals’ “life-worlds” have become an impetus for anticorporate activism. Global corporations’ outsourcing of production had allowed them to concentrate on branding and on efforts to insinuate brand concepts into the broader culture via sponsorships, advertising, and “synergies” with the sports, arts, and entertainment worlds. In North America and elsewhere, this was taking place alongside privatization of services, forcing schools, neighborhoods, museums, and broadcasters to turn to corporations for support, thus commercializing what remained of the public sphere. Superstore-studded malls were reshaping communities into newly privatized pseudo-public spaces. Branding became so entangled with culture, space, and identities that consumers increasingly felt bombarded and

<sup>6</sup>The sudden media attention to anti-free-trade activism in the aftermath of the Seattle demonstrations raises the question of the effectiveness of social movements’ use of disruptive and violent versus moderate tactics, about which there has long been substantial debate (Giugni 1999, Piven & Cloward 1977, Tarrow 1998).

complicit in and threatened by corporate wrongdoing. High-profile events in 1995–1996 that pitted environmental and human rights activists against some of the world's most powerful corporations—the “McLibel” trial of anti-McDonald's activists in England, Aung San Suu Kyi's denunciations of labor conditions in Burma, Nigerian Ken Saro-Wiwa's execution during the Ogoni people's mobilization against Shell Oil—led growing numbers to link particular problems to a broader corporate assault on democracy, on communities, on cultural production (concentration of culture industries, restrictions on artisanal foods), and on the environment. The new willingness of established human-rights and environmental organizations to protest corporate malfeasance further fed the “rising bad mood” regarding transnational corporations and supranational governance institutions.

## CONCLUSION

Recent writings on collective action suggest several areas of potential cross-fertilization that could invigorate social movements research. Political process and NSMs theorists could benefit from a greater sensitivity to the historical and cultural processes through which some of their main analytical categories (frames, submerged networks, movement culture) are constructed, as well as a more genuine appreciation of the lived experience of movement participants and nonparticipants, something that is accessible primarily through ethnography, oral narratives, or documentary history. Ethnographic analyses of social movements have been most persuasive when they transcend the single-organization or single-issue focus of much collective action research in favor of broader examinations of the political and social fields within which mobilizations occur. Although ethnographers have often provided compelling, fine-grained accounts of collective action, they have been less consistent when it comes to developing dynamic analyses of either the larger political contexts in which mobilizations occur or the preexisting militant traditions and the organizing processes that constitute movements' proximate and remote roots. To anthropologists, some of the issues (rationality, free riders) that continue to engross the grand theorists of contentious politics may appear misplaced or peculiarly devoid of cultural content, but others of their concerns certainly merit greater attention (cycles of contention, protest repertoires) if anthropologists are to avoid reverting to their traditional disciplinary predilection for advancing ahistorical pseudo-explanations for phenomena with profound historical roots.

The role of ethnography in the study of social movements has been significant but seldom theorized. Ethnographers—like historians who work with documentary or oral sources—may have privileged access to the lived experience of activists and nonactivists, as well as a window onto the “submerged” organizing, informal networks, protest activities, ideological differences, public claim-making, fear and repression, and internal tensions, which are almost everywhere features of social

movements. Some of these aspects raise questions that can be addressed only through ethnographic or ethnographically informed historical research. Weller's (1999) study of how environmentalism emerged from local temples in Taiwan, Whittier's (1995) specification of how lesbian communes contributed to keeping radical feminism alive in the 1980s, and the Schneiders' (2001) attendance at rural Sicilian picnics where mafiosi and antimafiosi feasted together, uneasily aware that they were antagonists in a larger cultural-political struggle, are merely a few examples of the kinds of processes available to ethnographic observers but largely invisible to those working at a temporal or geographical distance from the activities they are analyzing. As a collection of methods, however, ethnography alone—as traditionally conceived—is hardly sufficient for studying the deep historical roots or wide geographical connections of most contemporary mobilizations. Nor does ethnography necessarily inoculate researchers against the common pitfalls of overidentification with the movements they study, accepting activist claims at face value, or representing “movements” as more cohesive than they really are (Edelman 1999, Hellman 1992).

If anything has distinguished anthropological, as opposed to other, students of social movements, it may well be a greater preoccupation with the researcher's political engagement, from the “reinvented” anthropology of the early 1970s to the “barefoot” anthropology of the 1990s (Burdick 1998, p. 181). For some, the “committed” stance is an unproblematic matter of preexisting ethical-political principles, as when one U.S. anthropologist—newly arrived in South Africa—identified herself in a squatter camp as “a member of the ANC [African National Congress]” (Scheper-Hughes 1995, p. 414). An astute scholar of rural Mexico (Paré 1994, p. 15) observes,

For many of us it turned out to be impossible to record acts of repression and forms of exploitation and to witness the difficulties the peasant organizations had in making their voice heard without taking sides. . . . Participation—whether directly in the organization, in advising groups, in collective analysis with the organizations themselves, in negotiations, in publicity, in solidarity, in communications, or in the government as a planner, functionary or technician—necessarily implies taking a position, a “committed” vision.

Ethnographers of social movements who share these sensibilities frequently indicate that their own political involvement (Charlton 1998, Cunningham 1999, Schneider 1995, Stephen 1997, Waterman 1998) or their location in groups perceived as sympathetic or suffering a similar oppression (Aretxaga 1997, Hart 1996) is precisely what permits them access to activist interlocutors. Yet unproblematic versions of this position potentially mask vital movement dynamics and may even limit researchers' political usefulness for activists. Real social movements are often notoriously ephemeral and factionalized (Brecher et al 2000, Tilly 1986), manifest major discrepancies among leaders and between leaders

and supporters (Edelman 1999, Morris 1999, Rubin 1997), and—probably most important—rarely attract more than a minority of the constituencies they claim to represent (Burdick 1998). To which faction or leader does the ethnographer “commit”? What does that commitment imply about hearing dissenting or uninterested voices or grasping alternative histories, political projects, or forms of cultural transformation? If commitment is a *sine qua non* of social movements ethnography, how are we to understand movements about which we do not feel “intensely protective” (Hellman 1992, p. 55) or which we may, in fact, not like at all?

The tendency of collective action scholars to focus on groups and organizations with explicit programs for change is, as Burdick suggests, in effect an acceptance “of the claim of the movement to be a privileged site in the contestation and change in social values.” Elevating the question of lack of participation to the same level of importance as mobilization, he charges that much “sociological writing on the ‘freeloader’ problem ring[s] a bit hollow and even a bit arrogant in its presumption . . . that social movement organizational action is the only, or best, social change game in town” (1998, pp. 199–200). In a candid account of his efforts to place research findings at the service of his activist interlocutors, he argues that accompanying a movement may, for the ethnographer, most usefully entail “reporting the patterned testimony of people in the movement’s targeted constituency who on the one hand held views and engaged in actions very much in line with movement goals, but who on the other hand felt strongly put off, alienated, or marginalized by one or another aspect of movement rhetoric or practice” (1998, p. 191). In order to accomplish this, though, it is not the movement itself that becomes the object of study, but rather the broader social field within which it operates (cf. Gledhill 2000).

The widening of social fields implied by the rise of transnational activism suggests that this challenge will be even harder to meet in the era of globalization-from-below. Over the past three decades, theorists have had to scramble to keep up with the rapidly evolving forms of contentious politics. From identity-based movements that allegedly eschewed engagement with the state, to mobilizations that targeted neoliberal efforts to decimate social-welfare institutions, to more recent struggles against corporate power and supranational governance and international financial institutions, “scholars have come late to the party” (Keck & Sikkink 1998, p. 4). Part of the difficulty is recognizing transformative moments as they are being lived and even what comprises “movement activity.” The new anticorporate activism, for example, employs an action repertoire that combines decidedly postmodern elements (informational politics, cyber-attacks, and “swarming”) with others that hark back to early nineteenth-century forms of direct action, albeit with global rather than local audiences (uprooting genetically modified crops, ransacking corporate franchises). Whether or not we are on the verge of a new cycle of NSMs, it is already evident that understanding today’s mobilizations will require new conceptions of what constitutes ethnography, observation, participation, and certainly engagement.

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