

producers and quickly shucks them off if they are not—as the fortunes of competitive public contracts themselves change dramatically from year to year. Sonia understands this. People survive in such turbulent enterprises only so long as they have the capability and energy to adapt to currents of change.

We have used this example to illustrate several issues about work and the changing economy. Question: Do you know people who (1) prepared for particular careers and succeeded, (2) had plans that didn't quite turn out as well as expected, or (3) were successful in some strange and unexpected ways? Beyond personal characteristics, how do you think these examples were affected by social change?

2. Take another look at some of the expanded functions of governments mentioned in this chapter. Which ones do you think we could do without? Now think not about your own personal desires and benefits, but about the social consequences for persons living increasingly in densely populated urban environments, as do the majority of people. For example, should we be able to own as many dogs as we wish? If you lived next to us in a city, should we be able to run a commercial kennel living next door to you?

We tried this exercise out on an economist friend very committed to private market solutions and found, to our surprise, that he didn't want governments to give up much of what concerns them now. But he did complain a lot about lack of efficiency and waste and had a lot of different ideas about the levels of governments that should do things. When you listen to most people talk about politics, what kinds of things do they dislike about politics and governments?

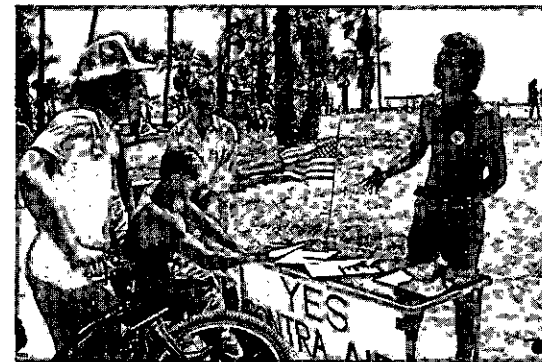
3. Organize a discussion among classmates or friends. If you could choose between what we called the Anglo-American political economy and the continental European model of political economy, which would you prefer? Why? Good luck. If you do this seriously, you are in for an exciting conversation. And one probably full of ideological quicksand.

NOTE

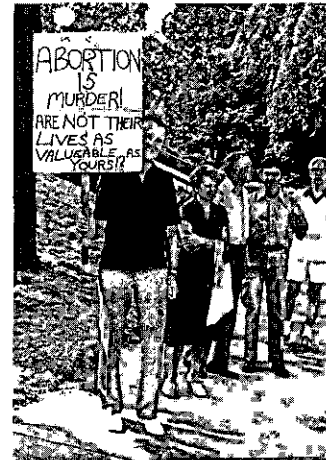
1. In 1917, President Woodrow Wilson proposed, and Congress enacted, a sharply progressive tax code that levied an 83 percent tax on the incomes of the wealthiest Americans. That was eroded during the 1920s, but by 1935 it was back up to 79 percent and was coupled with a hefty tax on inherited wealth. At that time public opinion largely endorsed a progressive tax, but it was gradually eroded first by exemptions and loopholes and then by inflation, which pushed lower-wage workers into higher tax categories. Progressivity almost disappeared with the leveling "reforms" of the 1980s, and by 1990 America's income tax on its wealthiest citizens was the lowest of any industrialized nation (Reich 1991, 246). At the same time Social Security taxes, property taxes, and user fees—all forms of taxation that take bigger bites out of the paychecks of the poor than the rich—also increased.

Chapter 7

Social Movements



Social movements of all kinds try to enlist the support of the wider public to gain the attention of elites.



The anti-abortion movement is one of the more active social movements in contemporary America.

In Chapter 3 (theories of change), we suggested that human agency is important in understanding social change. Contemporary societies abound with groups of people who organize attempts to promote or prevent change from taking place. There have been movements with an amazing variety of contradictory goals: to protect the environment, to save the whales from extinction, to promote more spending by the government, to promote less spending by the government, to reform the tax system (in a variety of ways!), to restrict the possession of handguns, to remove restrictions on handguns, to restrict abortion, to preserve freedom of choice about abortion, to restrict the areas where people can smoke, to change traditional gender and family relationships, to restore traditional gender and family relationships, to restore prayer in the public schools, to prevent the restoration of prayer in the public schools, to find missing children, to promote the rights of minorities, to end job discrimination

for homosexuals, to ban homosexuals from teaching and public employment, to address such social problems as hunger, poverty, domestic violence, and drugs, and to remove public funding from programs that address such problems. As if this is not enough, there have been (as always in America) a bewildering variety of cults, sects, and messianic movements that propose to save the world! This list could go on and on. *But you get the point.*

Social movements are basic avenues by which social change takes place in societies like the United States. They are often the carriers of innovation, particularly in nontechnical realms. They shape attitudes, define public issues, and affect social policy in a variety of ways. They may seek to affect only the lives of individuals, but most become political at some point in their career. Social movements are becoming more important in other parts of the world as communications media and cybermobilization publicize the plight of peoples and causes in far corners of the earth and draw the attention of affluent first world citizens and consumers (Castells 1996; Melucci 1996; Reuters 2004).

This chapter addresses two issues: (1) *What are social movements?* and (2) *How and why do they develop?* In the first part of the chapter, we will define social movements more precisely and describe various types of movements, and in the second part of the chapter, we will discuss various perspectives about the origins and causes of social movements. Most sociological studies of movements have focused on the second issue (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1988, 728). In the next chapter, we will examine more concretely how social reform movements have transformed American society. Chapter 9 focuses on social revolutions and illustrates them with an extended discussion of the collapse of communism that began to unfold in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, and the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

WHAT ARE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS?

Social movements can be distinguished from other social forms because they (1) exist outside the institutional framework of everyday life and (2) are in some way oriented toward a degree of social change (Hannigan 1995, 437). More formally, social movements are unconventional collectivities with varying degrees of organization that attempt to promote or prevent change (adapted from Wood and Jackson 1982). A *collectivity* is a collection of people that is not as structured as a group. There are, to be sure, organizations associated with social movements, but movements also include broader populations of sympathizers, adherents, and publics that are only loosely connected to movement organizations.

Social movements usually address issues surrounded with intense emotion and typically produce conflict with other movements and causes. They may not be overtly political causes (for example, religious movements or enthusiasms, such as jogging and love of nature), but any movement can become politicized if public controversy about its goals and activities becomes intense. The Sierra Club, for instance, has evolved from a movement organization of nature lovers into a highly

politicized part of the environmental movement. And motorcycle enthusiasts have organized public political crusades in some states to prevent the passage of mandatory helmet laws.

Descriptively, social movements are different from more integrated structures and organizations in several ways:

1. They develop multiple *segmental organizations* that compete for the loyalties of sympathizers in a *multiorganizational field*.
2. They recruit sympathizers in face-to-face encounters in small groups and, increasingly, online. Large rallies and demonstrations publicize the issues of the movement, but they are not the settings that make converts.
3. Adherents are motivated by strong personal commitments rather than by external rewards like money.
4. They develop ideologies that articulate their rationales, goals, and causes.
5. They seem to need opposition—real or imagined—that provides external pressure to create solidarity within the movement (Gerlach and Hine 1970).

Both political and religious movements seem to need an image of opposing evil and villains. Before discussing types of movements, two clarifications are necessary.

It is important to distinguish between movements and the particular organizations that develop in relation to them. A *movement* includes all the people who are concerned about an issue: sympathizers, supporters, adherents, and activists. Within a movement, there may be collections of people (or publics) with more specific concerns. For example, the broad ecology and environmental movement has sympathizers in general, but is also composed of collections of people with more specific concerns, such as those seeking to preserve biodiversity, oppose nuclear energy, save the whales, and control pollution. These collectivities create or are mobilized into specific *social movement organizations (SMOs)*, such as the Clamshell Alliance (a New England-based antinuclear group that opposed a specific power installation), the Union of Concerned Scientists (an organization to mobilize scientific support for energy efficiency and against nuclear weapons), and Greenpeace (an organization devoted to saving whales and aquatic mammals). Such specific SMOs are part of a multiorganizational field of related movement organizations having somewhat different goals, ideologies, strategies for change, and constituencies. They may cooperate, but they also compete for members and financial support among vaguely defined “sympathizers.”

Some SMOs are *inclusive*; that is, they require only minimal commitments from their members—a pledge of support or contribution with few specific duties. They attempt to create as broad a base as possible. Others are *exclusive* and seek a narrow base of support from those with intense commitments to the cause who will invest heavily of their time and energy. Social movement organizations can grow or decline in relation to the size of their potential base of support in the movement or broader population. Whether they grow or not also depends on whether popular interest in them is favorable, neutral, or hostile. They can die as the movement that gives rise to them diminishes or can survive, as in the case of American labor unions, as

stable organizations without much of a movement at their base (Skocpol 2003; Zald and Asch 1966; Zurcher and Curtis 1973). The important point in all of this is that *social movements are related to, but distinct from, particular organizations that may grow in relation to them.*

The second clarification we want to make is about social movements and their political environments. Social movements are usually understood as creating change from the bottom up, originating from widespread desires for change among significant numbers of ordinary people and contending groups that stimulate responses from social and political leaders. However, the development of social movements may be facilitated or retarded by changes in the broader social and political environment and in particular by the interests of elites and powerful political leaders.

One of the clearest examples of manipulation of popular frustrations and movements by elites is the case of the rise of Nazism in Germany before World War II. It grew from the widespread frustrations of the German people about their humiliating defeat in World War I and economic problems of inflation in the 1920s and the Great Depression during the 1930s, but the movement was extensively manipulated by Hitler and the Nazi elite to gain political power. What they did was to define, channel, and frame those grievances in particular ways. The relationship among popular movements, political contexts, and elite interests is a complex one. We simply want to raise the issue here in a preliminary way.

TYPES OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

There are (at least) three important overlapping dimensions to describe differences among kinds of movements. One broad distinction is between reform (or moderate) and revolutionary (or radical) movements. *Revolutionary movements* seek fundamental changes of the system rather than within the system. Most familiar are political revolutionary movements that seek change in the total system, but focus particularly on the political system as the key to larger system change. But there are also less encompassing radical movements that seek radical change in a particular social phenomenon or subsystem of society (for example, radical movements against environmental destruction, racism, or sexism). Even among religious movements, millenarian movements seeking the second coming of the kingdom of God can be viewed as more radical than other religious movements. The fact that radical or revolutionary movements seldom succeed at total system change is beside the point: Their intention to do so shapes their strategies and development, and they often have broad and pervasive impacts anyway.

The latest manifestation of the long-festered Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a good example of a revolutionary movement. The Intifada began following the September 2000 visit of Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, a location occupied by Islamic holy shrines (the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock) and archeological site of the first and second Jewish temples. The resulting political crisis swept Sharon to power as prime minister of Israel in early 2002, and the years that followed were marked by more or less continuous

violence in the form of suicide bombings by Palestinians followed by Israeli army offensives looking for Palestinian militants responsible for the violence. The resulting cycles of violence and retaliation took their toll on the ruling Palestinian Authority, the faction led by then Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian prime minister. The Israelis were so stymied by the ability of suicide bombers to infiltrate Israeli society and target popular civilian public places that they began the construction of a security wall to separate Palestinian neighborhoods from Israel proper. Abbas resigned from the Palestinian cabinet, only to return after Yasser Arafat's death to win a clear mandate from Palestinian voters to negotiate with Israel and the United States over the future of a Palestinian state. The two sides have declared an end to hostilities as of February 2005, and there were signs of hope to an end to the violence (including the decision by the Sharon government to abandon Jewish settlements on the Gaza Strip, a narrow piece of land occupied by Israel that is close to the Egyptian border). However, Hamas (a Palestinian group favoring more direct confrontation with Israel) won the 2006 Palestinian elections and expelled Fatah (Abbas's political party) from the Gaza Strip (a small area under Palestinian control bordered by Egypt, Israel, and the Mediterranean Sea). The Israelis subsequently engaged in a failed invasion of Southern Lebanon in an attempt to expel Hamas, and the Palestinian cause appears to be mired in conflict between the more secular-minded Palestinian Authority (governed by Abbas) and the more militant Hamas movement.

Reform movements, by contrast, seek more modest changes within the existing system. They are likely to aim at specific issues rather than total transformation. Such movements that seek to reform politics, medicine, education, and other areas are far more common, at least in democratic societies, and seem more likely to succeed. In Chapter 8, we examine reform movements more in depth in the American context, and Chapter 9 focuses on revolutions.

A second distinction is between instrumental and expressive movements. *Instrumental movements* seek to change the structure of society. Examples of instrumental movements would be the civil rights movement and contemporary environmentalism. *Expressive movements*, on the other hand, address problems and needs of individuals or seek to change the character of individuals and individual behavior. They are still social movements because if they change the behavior of a lot of individuals they may, without intending to do so, change the nature of society. Examples would be religious revivals, the rapidly growing Christian Evangelical movement of the early 1980s, religious cults and the New Age movement (mentioned in Chapter 5), as well as the popular psychological self-improvement (or human potential) movements that flourished in the 1960s and 1970s. They also include popular cultural enthusiasms, such as jogging and sport bicycling. These examples are so unorganized, diffuse, and sometimes short-lived that they are certainly at the boundaries of what can be considered social movements. We think you can usefully consider them as social movements, but many movement scholars group them under the broader heading of *collective action*.

Finally, it is important to note that the same movement may contain both instrumental and expressive wings. Contemporary feminism, for instance, contains

	Instrumental	Expressive
Reform: Permutations of existing social arrangements and culture	1. REFORMATIVE Labor movement, NAACP, ERA, tax reform, antiabortion	3. ALTERNATIVE Christian evangelicalism, human potential movement various "enthusiasms" (Star Trekkies, joggers)
Radical: Significant departure from existing social arrangements, may have esoteric knowledge	2. TRANSFORMATIVE Bolsheviks, Islamic fundamentalism (classic revolutions)	4. REDEMPTIVE Millenarian movements, cults, People's Temple, Synanon, (isolated environments)

FIGURE 7-1 Types of Social Movements.

SMOs, such as the National Organization for Women, which seeks instrumental and political change, as well as many expressive movement organizations devoted to "consciousness raising" among individuals.

Now consider how some of these distinctions overlap. There are, for example, radical movements that are instrumental (the second Intifada) and radical movements that are expressive (for example, co-ops attempting to put an end to corporate farming). Similarly, there are reform movements that are instrumental and those that are expressive. Using the combinations of these two dimensions (radical-reform and instrumental-expressive), Wilson (1973) has described four types of combinations: (1) reformative, (2) alternative, (3) transformative, and (4) redemptive. See Figure 7-1 for a schematic representation of these types with examples.

There is one further distinction among types of movements that is useful. That is between Progressive (or "left wing") and conservative (or "right wing") movements. *Progressive movements* have been described as future-oriented or utopian. They typically seek to bring about historically unprecedented conditions and often seek to improve the conditions of submerged groups. In this sense, the Russian Revolution, the American ecology reform movement, and the gay liberation movement can be described as progressive movements. *Conservative movements*, by contrast, seek to prevent further change or perhaps to resurrect the past. Examples of such movements include the Islamic and Christian fundamentalist movements and the conservative political and intellectual movement—with their organizations, foundations, and think tanks—that developed with the conservative turn of American politics in the 1980s. If Progressive movements are utopian, conservative movements are usually oriented around the vision of some partly mythical "golden age" of the past. Conservative political movements may represent the interests of the dominant groups in society, but conservative cultural (or expressive) movements may appeal to people of lower social and economic status (more about this later). While we are not happy with these old political labels because they are often used in a

pejorative sense, it does seem important to recognize that a key dimension of social movements is whether they are oriented toward a vision of the golden past or a brighter tomorrow.

EXPLAINING THE ORIGINS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

We now turn away from these descriptive issues to address issues that have been major concerns of analysts of social movements: How and why do they develop? What are the conditions that stimulate the development of social movements? In this section, we will review various perspectives about the origins of social movements, including individual explanations, microsocial explanations, and macrostructural explanations.

Individual Explanations

Individual explanations of social movements focus on the psychological characteristics of individuals. These explanations, among the oldest and the most recent explanations of the origins of movements, are basically collective psychology perspectives that argue that the emergence of social movements is caused by the shared dispositions of individual participants.

Irrationality and Crowds. The oldest of these is a *crowd psychology* explanation that emphasizes the irrational nature of social movement participation. The contrast is drawn between individual behavior (viewed as rational and restrained) and crowd behavior, viewed as irrational and impulsive (Hoffer 1951; Le Bon 1896/1960; McCormack 1951). The participants in social movements are argued to be compensating for frustrated lives. In a study of movement activists and extremists, Hoffer (1951) described the "true believer syndrome" in what has come to be called the *riffraff theory* of movement participation. Hoffer argues that movement activists are misfits and losers whose participation is fueled by the futility of wasted lives (this is not exactly neutral scientific language!). The ideal converts are those who feel inadequate and who attach themselves to movements to enhance their self-esteem and hope: The types of movements or goals they pursue are interchangeable, according to Hoffer; paramount is their need to belong.

When viewed in social context, these assumptions became compatible with the mass society theory, which we have encountered before. The irrationality and suggestibility of people who form mass movements are viewed as consequences of the breakdown of traditional structures in modern societies and "social atomization," which results in widespread alienation and anxiety (Kornhauser 1959, 32). This view of the origins of social movements as the work of frustrated and irrational individuals in mass societies was particularly popular after the growth of communism and fascism in the 1930s and during the early cold war period of the 1950s.

Rational Choice and Social Movements. In contrast to this older view emphasizing irrationality and frustration, more recent individual approaches suggest

rational calculative involvement of actors in social movements, and they see social movements as mechanisms of collective problem solving (Friedman 1983; Oberschall 1973). These perspectives, which derive from the influential work of economist Mancur Olson (1965), argue that individuals will organize and participate in social movements if there are enough incentives or rewards for doing so. These can be both calculated benefits for groups to which people belong as well as individual gains and can involve avoiding bad things as well as gaining good things (Knoke and Laumann 1987). Social movements do not, in short, result from the accumulation of extraordinary and irrational frustrations or alienation, but from the same sort of motivation that underlies stable, structured social behavior: the calculation of rewards and costs attached to membership and participation. Participation in social movements (both expressive and instrumental ones) represents alternate ways of getting things that cannot be obtained through the established and stable structures of society, but participants' motivations are not different from ordinary social participation.

In sum, individual perspectives attempt to explain the development of social movements by telling us something about the underlying motivations, or psychic states, of individual participants. We have described two dramatically different perspectives, and both have intuitive appeal in describing the attraction and recruitment of individuals to movements. But studies have not found much evidence that individual-level perspectives are useful in predicting the participation of people in movements. For example, Muller's exhaustive review of studies concludes that "psychological attributes of individuals, such as frustration and alienation" have little usefulness for explaining the occurrence of movements per se (1980, 69). On the basis of reviews of empirical studies, others also have concluded that individual predispositions are at best insufficient to account for collective action in social movements (Wilson and Orum 1976, 189).

Microsocial Explanations

Microsocial explanations focus on the small-scale (micro) level, as opposed to the large-scale (macro) level. The focus is often *social-psychological*, because they examine the relationship and interaction between individuals and group or social settings and conditions. There are a variety of micro-level theories about the origins of social movements, but here we will describe only three perspectives: (1) relative deprivation, (2) status strains, and (3) microstructural mobilization contexts.

Relative Deprivation. Some scholars argued that *absolute deprivation* is a motivating force in the generation of social movements (Fanon 1968; Toch 1965). Absolute deprivation includes such material deprivations like hunger, illness, and lack of safety, which bring people close to the minimal conditions of survival. These analysts argued that changes in objective social conditions, such as extreme poverty and rises in the price of food, are the causes of collective behavior and social movements. Yet, it is obvious that until recently such absolute deprivation was the lot of *most* of humanity and often did not produce social movements directed at change. An additional problem with this approach is that much social

movement activity is *not* directed at alleviating absolute deprivations such as those mentioned earlier.

Thus, many scholars reject objective conditions or deprivations *themselves* as an explanation for the origins of movements and argue that relative deprivation (or subjective deprivation) is the social-psychological condition underlying the emergence of movements (Davies 1969; Gurr 1970). *Relative deprivation* exists when a significant gap exists between valued expectations and outcomes or, in simpler language, between what people expect and what they get. It has little to do with either individual psychological traits or absolute deprivations, but rather with subjective feelings of *being deprived relative to expectations*. Relative deprivation explanations imply that there are *reference groups* that are the source of such expectations. People feel satisfied or deprived by comparing their condition to relevant categories of others. With their concern for changing social definitions about expectations and perceptions of reality, you can understand the relative deprivation explanation of movement participation as rooted in interpretive theory contexts that we discussed in Chapter 2. Relative deprivation explains why (1) protest movements are often common during periods of sustained improvement in objective conditions (expectations rise faster) and (2) people involved in movements are often not the most objectively deprived people.

Relative deprivation has been used to explain the development of urban protests among African Americans during the 1960s. In spite of objective improvements in social conditions, there was still a gap between blacks and whites, and the perception of that gap was most intense among middle-class African Americans, who in fact organized and led the civil rights movements. According to Pettigrew (1964), during the 1950s blacks began to contrast their situation with that of similarly educated whites, rather than with their own history of slavery and extreme deprivation. Thus, "this approach focuses on the comparative deprivation between groups. . . . Groups can be reasonably well off in terms of wealth, power, and prestige, yet still feel deprived relative to other groups. When this occurs, the underprivileged groups are likely to protest" (Wood and Jackson 1982, 37).

There are limitations to the relative deprivation approach. Like the individual explanations, it is intuitively appealing, but existing evidence from systematic research has not found it to be a sufficient or even a necessary precondition to explanation of the emergence of movements. Summarizing studies from the 1960s, McPhail concludes that "there is considerable reason for rejecting the notion that relative deprivation and ensuing frustration . . . is the root cause of rebellion" (1971, 106). Other assessments of research evidence also find only mixed support for relative deprivation theory (Gurney and Tierney 1982). But although not as popular as it was in the 1960s, relative-deprivation theory still has some usefulness in understanding the origins of movements for a number of reasons: (1) It is conceptually clearer than older arguments about "mass discontent"; (2) it does not involve a derogatory view of participants as riffraff enraptured by the irrationalities of crowd behavior; and (3) it has some utility when combined with other approaches, but is not seen as a necessary or complete explanation of the origins of social movements (Gurney and Tierney 1982; Wood and Jackson 1982).

Status Strains. Other scholars argued that the motivation to participate in social movements results from threats to one's status in society. Such threats, or *status strains*, are likely to arise when one's status is threatened by social change (for example, demographic change, immigration, occupational, or political change), when there is an increasing influence of formerly subjugated groups, or when there is an erosion of a cultural perspective that supported the prestige, power, and privilege of status groups. Since status strains theory deals with threats to privilege, it has mainly been used to explain the attraction of people to right-wing movements, which seek to preserve or restore the traditional status order.

Lipset and Raab (1970) documented the relationship between status strains and the emergence of a variety of right-wing movements in American history. We will mention three of their examples only briefly. The nativist movement (and its major organization, the American Protective Association) emerged in the late nineteenth century; it attempted to protect the political and cultural dominance of the "old Americans" (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants or WASPs) from growing Catholic and immigrant influence in the urban Northeast. Similarly, the Ku Klux Klan developed after the civil war to protect the political privilege of southern whites in the wake of the postwar Reconstruction period. The movement revived during the 1920s to protect the interests of rural white Protestants who were losing influence to urban immigrants. It thus became an anti-Catholic and anti-Jewish as well as a white racist (antiblack) movement. The Klan revived again in the 1960s and the 1980s. Indeed, the Klan—along with its "fellow traveler" movements—such as the neo-Nazis, Aryan Supremacists, and young skinheads, have been small but visible since the early 1980s (Langer 2003). Like the militias we noted earlier, these groups are diverse but have high concentrations of people with low education stuck in low-paying jobs or careers (Stern 1996). Collectively, the SMOs that coalesce from this social stratum comprise a small, noisy, vocal, and frightening perennial feature of the American social landscape; they are a breeding ground for domestic terrorists like Timothy McVeigh. (We will discuss professional SMOs later in the chapter.)

You can interpret the resurgence of evangelical religious right-wing movements of the 1970s to the 1990s as originating in status strains. Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority was the most publicly visible SMO of the 1970s. A movement of vast proportions compared to the fringe groups just mentioned, evangelical Christianity as a political and social force was a response to modernity and sociocultural changes of the 1970s (such as changes in gender roles, affirmative action programs, and welfare state programs). These changes threatened traditional statuses and lifestyles. Studies of historical and contemporary religious right-wing movements suggest that their support was disproportionately found among those whose social status and prestige was most threatened by the incorporation of new or previously subjugated groups and by growing American multiculturalism (see Gannon 1981; Simpson 1983; Yinger and Cutler 1982). Religious movements recently have mobilized over the issue of legalizing gay marriage in response to court decisions and state legislative activity on the issue (most publicly represented by Proposition 8 in California, the recently passed referendum to ban same-sex marriage), and the question of whether the U.S. was founded as a Christian nation reflected in the controversy over new

history and social studies textbook adoptions by the Texas State Board of Education (see *The Economist*, 2010b).

In spite of its appeal, there are many problems with the status strains perspective as a *general* theory of movement origins. *First*, it is primarily an intriguing theory of right-wing movements, and it is not clear how it could be applied to other types of movements. *Second*, like the individual irrationality perspective discussed earlier, the theory is reductionistic: The overt claims of protest groups are not taken as real, but as a kind of sublimation for status difficulties. *Third*, in spite of the studies mentioned here, other systematic studies, primarily on support for the New Religious Right, have in general concluded that participation is at best only weakly related to status strains—if status strains are interpreted as threats to hierarchical statuses (Harper and Leicht 1984; Page and Clelland 1978; Simpson 1983). These studies suggest that the support for the New Religious Right is as much related to defense of a *cultural lifestyle* as threatened social, economic, and political statuses. This suggests a *fourth* weakness of the perspective: It is conceptually muddled—that is, it conflates threats to cultural tradition, social prestige, political power, and economic class. And as sociologists ever since Max Weber have cautioned, these different dimensions of stratification do not have an automatic equivalence in complex societies. In sum, we think that status strain theory is a useful but limited perspective.

Microstructural Mobilization Contexts. Both the relative deprivation and status strains approaches assume sources of personal frustrations that provide a *predispositional push* that propels individuals toward movement activism and participation. However, appealing they may be, the summaries of empirical studies mentioned here give them little or at best highly qualified support. Such approaches have been abandoned not only because of this evidence, but also because of the growth of the rational choice perspective (mentioned earlier), which does not view social movement activism as motivated by extraordinary predispositions, but rather by ordinary goal-seeking behavior. More recent understandings of social movement emergence and participation focus not on predispositional pushes (or in simpler language, the motivations of participants), but on the structural pulls that may mobilize people for participation in social movements. What are some of these structural mobilization contexts? At least three have been identified by researchers.

First, the factor that has shown the strongest connection with movement activism is *the existence of interpersonal ties between movement "recruits" and participants*. This is a most recent explanation for the recruitment of new members into terrorist groups (see Sageman 2004). In Sageman's study of terrorist networks, the most pervasive determinant of joining a militant terrorist group was not social and economic deprivation, but having existing interpersonal ties with current and existing members. In a study of two peace SMOs, for instance, Bolton found that most of the recruits to peace movement organizations "were already associated with persons who belonged to or were organizing the peace groups, and were recruited through these interpersonal channels" (1972, 558). Comparisons of recruitment into two Asian religious movements in America, Nichiren Shoshu (a Buddhist sect) and the Hare Krishna movement (derived from Hinduism), also

suggest the importance of interpersonal ties for understanding movement affiliation. The Nichiren Shoshu movement grew remarkably, claiming about 350,000 adherents during the 1980s, and 82 percent of their converts reported having friends or relatives in the movement. The Hare Krishna movement, which makes more extensive use of anonymous street recruitment, remains small, claiming approximately 5,000 adherents in the 1980s (see Snow, Zurcher, and Eklund-Olson 1980). Even the growth of Christianity, one of the five world religions (along with Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism) has been explained by examining the interpersonal connections of first-century Christians as a potential recruiting base (see Stark 1996).

Similar findings have been reported about the significance of existing interpersonal networks and participation in civil rights demonstrations and movement organizations (McAdam 1986). Snow, Zurcher, and Eklund-Olson found that of nine studies of activism in social movements all but one identified prior interpersonal contact as the single richest source of movement recruits (1980).

Second, there is a well-documented connection between membership in organizations and movement activism. The more organizations one belongs to, the more one is likely to participate in social movements. There are three possible reasons why this may be so. First, there is long-standing evidence that organizational membership increases feelings of personal efficacy, and it may be that members of organizations are simply more optimistic about whether movement activism is worth the effort (Snow, Zurcher, and Eklund-Olson 1980). You should note that this evidence is in direct contradiction to the assumption of the mass society approach that sees movement activism as a consequence of isolation, alienation, and estrangement. Second, it may be simply that organizational members are likely to be better informed about public issues and about the possibilities of collective action in movements. Third, it may be that organizations are simply an amplification of the network factor mentioned earlier. That is, organizations are associated with movement activism because they represent dense concentrations of overlapping interpersonal networks (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1988, 708).

Many examples illustrate the powerful role of organizations that act as breeding grounds for social movements. In the 1960s, campus organizations were connected to the emergence of student activism in civil rights, antiwar, and ecological movements. Orum (1972) found a consistent positive relationship between involvement in the black student sit-in demonstrations and the number of campus activities students belonged to. Or consider the role of religious organizations as breeding grounds for political movements: Many have noted the important role of African-American churches as settings for the mobilization of the early civil rights movements (Morris 1984; Oberschall 1973). Similarly, the connection between membership in fundamentalist churches and mobilization into the New Religious Right political movement (the Moral Majority) of the 1970s has been documented (Harper and Leicht 1984; Shupe and Stacey 1982). And in an entirely different setting, Snow and Marshall (1984) noted the important role of Islamic mosques in organizing the Iranian revolution of 1979 and Islamic militant movements expressing alienation with Western culture and norms (see also Sageman 2004). More recently, scholars

have noted the important role that the Catholic Church played in the development of the Solidarity movement in Poland (cf. Kubik 1994).

A *third* micromobilization context that affects individual movement activism is *the biographical availability of individuals*. In addition to the structural pull of interpersonal networks and organizational membership, the circumstances of a person's life may facilitate or impede movement participation and activism. To put it quite simply, many people have relationships and obligations, such as full-time employment, marriage, and family responsibilities that increase the costs and risks of movement participation and constrain movement activism (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1988, 709). Persons who are not so encumbered with social bonds, obligations, and commitments are more likely to have the freedom and the discretionary time and energy to participate actively in social movements.

This is why students and young adults, autonomous professionals, and single people are disproportionately found among the ranks of movement activists. This has been documented for the civil rights movement, the environmental movement, the new religious ("cult") movements, and even recruitment of new recruits into violent Islamic groups (McAdam 1986, 83; Snow and Rochford 1983, 3; *The Economist*, 2005f).

In sum, microsocial perspectives explain the origins of social movements by pointing to the ways that personal characteristics or circumstances and social factors interact to produce movement participation, activism, and mobilization. They may explain why individuals participate, but there are broader questions about the underlying grievances, organizing issues, and the timing of movement emergence that no microsocial perspective can deal with adequately. For instance, why was the 1960s a rancorous, conflict-ridden decade in which so many protest movements flourished (the Black Power movement, the youth counterculture, the antiwar movement, the ecological movement, and so forth)? Most observers would agree that it was a decade of movements, particularly in comparison to the relatively tranquil Eisenhower years of the late 1950s. Why so, particularly when there is little convincing evidence of pervasive increases in relative deprivation, status strains, or significant growth in the density of micromobilization contexts that would explain difference between the 1950s and 1960s? Is the difference merely historical myopia? We don't think so. Something was different about the 1960s, and that difference is not explained by microsocial theories. For this, you need macrostructural perspectives that seek explanations among the broader social, economic, and political force of change.

Macrostructural Explanations of Social Movements

Macrostructural explanations may incorporate some of the assumptions of microtheories, but the emphasis is on understanding the development of social movements in terms of broad societal conditions. We will describe macro explanations within both the functionalist and conflict traditions.

Collective Behavior and Functionalist Perspectives. The dominant macro view of the origins of movements that developed in American sociology during the 1950s understood them as outgrowths of a particular kind of social

behavior called *collective behavior*. This way of explaining movements has roots in interpretive theories, but more important, in functionalism and mass society theory (both discussed in Chapter 3). In the text that follows, we will first discuss some assumptions about social movements and collective behavior, and then describe in some detail the most mature and developed statement of this perspective, Neil Smelser's value-added theory.

Most human social behavior is routine in that it takes place in established social relationships and is broadly guided by cultural and social control processes. People often enact established social roles within (imperfectly) integrated groups, organizations, and structures. In some situations, however, there are no clearly defined guidelines, and behavior is novel, spontaneous, volatile, creative, and rather unpredictable. *Collective behavior* is the technical term sociologists use for situations where a significant number of people are acting in the relative absence of social control.

Many *elementary forms* of collective behavior exist, such as the transmission of rumor, crowd behaviors, mobs, panics, and protests. Sociologists have assumed that such elementary forms of collective behavior develop in the context of the breakdown of traditional order (often associated with rapid social change) and always assume some underlying shared source of excitement, stress, anxiety, tension, or frustration. The breakdown of traditional order and restraints was widely viewed to accompany modernization and the emergence of mass society.

Social movements typically begin as "amorphous, poorly organized, and without form" and are characterized by collective behavior "on the primitive level" as well as by mechanisms of interaction that are "elementary" and "spontaneous" (Blumer 1969, 8). In spite of the negative images of protests, mobs, and panics, they may contribute to the creation of new social forms (Blumer 1962). In short, elementary forms that persist may lead to the formation of social movements, and these may evolve into integrated structures and new established forms of behavior (see Table 7-1).

The development of the American labor movement illustrates this process. In the 1890s, the labor movement was often characterized by volatile mob action (on the part of both strikers and the authorities!). As the union movement developed, it evolved into an established set of structures and interests that are now a routine part of the American economic system (in the next chapter, we will discuss the American labor movement in more depth). This illustration should not be taken to mean that

social movements always succeed in evolving new structural forms. Just as the elementary forms of collective behavior are often shortlived, the emergent forms (social movements, with their organizations and publics) often fail to result in any stable forms or produce any meaningful change. Social movements may transform society, but history is also full of the wreckage of lost causes!

The collective behavior perspective was developed by scholars whose large-scale image of change was the transitions from traditional to modern mass societies, and social movements were viewed as adaptive responses to the stresses and strains that accompanied that transition. The perspective emphasizes that the breakdown of traditional patterns of order and social control produce elementary forms of collective behavior and that these may crystallize into ongoing social movements that attempt to promote or prevent further social change. This is broadly consistent with the functionalist image of order and change, in which change is a reaction to disequilibrium and stress.¹

Smelser's Value-Added Theory. This is the most ambitious and elaborate explanation of social movements from the collective behavior perspective in American sociology (Smelser 1962). The *value-added theory* addresses the structural origins of the stresses that motivate actors and the development of the movement in terms of its ongoing interaction with the larger social environment. Smelser argues that there are six conditions necessary for the emergence and development of social movements. Each of these conditions is necessary for the development of movements, but none is alone sufficient. They operate in an additive fashion (hence the name "value-added"), but not necessarily in chronological sequence. The theory is not—strictly speaking—a stage model of the development of movements. Smelser outlines the six conditions as follows:

1. *Structural conduciveness.* Preexisting structures in society are more likely to generate certain kinds of movements than others. For example, a society with racial cleavages is likely to develop racial movements, and free-market societies are likely to develop panics and movements aimed at stabilizing the cycles of the economy. Collective behavior and social movements develop around certain kinds of issues because the structures of particular societies make these issues salient. The structures of particular societies encourage or rule out certain kinds of issues around which collective behavior and movements develop.
2. *Structural strains.* Strains (perceived ambiguities, deprivation, inconsistencies, and tensions) emerge in relation to the way that conducive structures are perceived. For example, the vast inequality in a caste system is a conducive factor that may or may not produce strains. In this case, strains only develop if such inequality is perceived as an oppressive fact. Thus, strains are based on perceptions of the structural order and are inversely related to the perception of its legitimacy. Such strains become relevant to collective behavior when they become collectively shared.
3. *Growth of a generalized belief system.* A preexisting or emergent set of ideas is required to galvanize widespread strains into an ongoing movement. Such idea systems, or *ideologies*, define the sources of strains and point toward solutions that would alleviate them. In America, for example, ideologies that analyzed the sources of restricted opportunities for minorities and women as deriving from a fundamental

TABLE 7-1 COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR AND GROUP STRUCTURE

Elementary Forms of Collective Behavior	More Developed Forms of Collective Behavior	Integrated Structure
<i>Characteristics:</i> lacks structure; fluid, spontaneous interaction, volatile	evolving structure; change oriented, noninstitutionalized	stable structured interaction; institutionalized
<i>Examples:</i> crowds, mobs, protests, panics, rumor networks	social movements, movement organizations, publics, audiences	organizations, bureaucracies, families, stable peer groups

aspect of American culture—racism or sexism—have facilitated the development of the civil rights and feminist movements.

4. *Precipitating events.* Dramatic events sharpen and concretize issues. They can focus attention, galvanize public support and awareness, and draw the attention of media and the authorities. Examples of precipitating events include the Watts riot of 1968 in relation to the Black Power phase of the civil rights movement; the collapse of the French credit system and the Petrograd food riots in relation, respectively, to the French and Russian revolutions; and the Santa Barbara oil spill and the Three Mile Island nuclear disaster in relation to the ecology and antinuclear power movements.
5. *Mobilization of participants.* This includes the emergence of leadership and spokespeople for the movement and the development of organizations as well as general processes of agitation, recruitment, and claims making about grievances regarding the issues that animate the movements.
6. *Operation of social control.* This includes forces in the larger society to respond to the movements. Such responses may be by governmental authorities or by countermovements that develop in relationship to a movement (examples of the latter would be the mobilization of anti-Equal Rights Amendment forces and the anticult movement that developed to combat the influence of religious cults during the late 1970s).*

Smelser identifies three types of responses by the authorities to social movements. *First*, they can open channels of communication and influence, bringing the movement, its issues, and its leaders partly within the framework of the institutional system. This has been called *co-optation*. *Second*, the authorities can, while not co-opting the movement, nonetheless seek to alter the underlying structural conditions that gave rise to the movement. In the German empire of the late nineteenth century, for example, Bismarck did not open the regime to the influence of the socialist movement, but rather created welfare state reforms to deal with the issues that animated it. *Third*, the authorities can attempt to suppress a movement with all the resources of the state.

One of the strengths of Smelser's theory is that it emphasizes the ongoing interaction between the movement and society. This interaction can be a powerful force that shapes the development and direction of the movement. Thus, a radical movement that is successfully co-opted can become more moderate, while a reform movement that is brutally repressed may become more radicalized.

Smelser's intent was to create a theoretical scheme that is like a funnel where the initial abstract variables relate to the macroscopic features of the social order and subsequent variables become more concretely related to specific episodes of collective behavior and movement development. Its comprehensiveness is appealing, but it is also difficult to refute empirically. For example, the causal linkages between the six factors in the model are not clear, and they would not seem to operate in the same way. Structural conduciveness, for instance, is a *permissive* variable and may or may not lead to the emergence of strains.

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Strains, on the other hand, are treated as causally linked to the emergence of generalized beliefs and the mobilization of participants. For example, it is undoubtedly true that certain kinds of structures are likely to generate certain types of movements, but is this more than an airy tautology? What kinds of structures generate which kinds of movements? Smelser's theory is of little help in answering this question. There are similar difficulties with the notion of structural strains. There are no clear "criteria for identifying a 'structural strain' in a real society. . . . Virtually any type of social problem or inconsistency seems to qualify as a strain" (Useem 1975, 9). Smelser is not clear as to whether structural strain reflects an objective condition in the society (for example, disequilibrium or malintegration) or the perceptions of those conditions by its citizens (Berk 1974, 41). Complicating things further, Smelser has even argued that "any kind of strain may be a determinant of any kind of collective behavior" (1962, 49).

In sum, Smelser's explanation is more descriptive than explanatory and its abstract character, which makes it so universally applicable, also makes it hard to refute. We think it is mainly useful as an orienting framework, since it specifies issues that require explicating in understanding the emergence of any one social movement. It represents the apogee of functionalist-collective behaviorist thinking about social movements, which focused on the psychological reactions of members of mass society to social strain (Hannigan 1991, 316).

Conflict Perspectives. In the 1970s and 1980s, conflict approaches came to dominate the study of social movements by American scholars. Rather than emphasizing the grievances arising from structural strains, these perspectives argued that social movements arise at a particular point in time because of the "changing availability of resources, organization, and opportunities for collective action" (Jenkins 1983, 530). So rather than viewing social movements as emerging from the spontaneous and amorphous mass discontent of collective behavior, conflict perspectives view social movements as special sorts of interest group collectivities that attempt to (1) gain benefits for individuals, (2) produce social reforms, and (3) gain entry into the established structures of society. In what follows, we examine (1) a conflict approach, termed *resource mobilization theory*, (2) what is called *political process theory* and newer variations, and (3) a European conflict approach called *new movement theory*.

Resource Mobilization Theory. This theory focuses on the "role of power and power struggles in mobilizing people for collective action" (Burton 1984, 48). It began with some observations about the 1960s as a "decade of movements" in America. As mentioned earlier, there was a dramatic increase in social movement activity during this period. Why? During the 1960s, there was a sustained growth in both affluence and apparent social conflict. There was no evidence of increase in the rates of participation in voluntary associations and no dramatic increase in individual discretionary time and money that might explain the growth in social movement activity. And there was no evidence that suggested general increases in social alienation or relative deprivation in comparison to the 1950s (Gamson 1974; McCarthy and Zald 1973).

Resource mobilization theorists argued that the increase in social movement activity was related to a number of important trends in American society during the 1960s. *First*, there was the growth of private foundation and church support (financial and moral) for reform causes of all sorts. *Second*, with the thaw in international relations, the mass media gave greater attention to domestic social problems and less attention to the perceived external Communist threat. *Third*, there was extensive government sponsorship of social movements through agencies, such as the Office of Economic Opportunity, the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, and various Commissions on the Status of Women. *Fourth*, there were improvements in the technology of mobilization and fund-raising for social causes, in particular use of cross-listed computerized mailing lists and phone banking. *Fifth*, there was the emergence of career social movement organizers who rejected traditional institutional roles and careers. These were, for instance, ministers, community organizers, and public relations specialists as well as doctors, scientists, and lawyers who opted to work in non-traditional settings for the advocacy of change. *Sixth*, during the 1960s there emerged a special body of literature for social movement organizers.² *Seventh*, and most important, there was the development of professional SMOs.

McCarthy and Zald (1973) described the professional SMOs that developed during the 1960s as follows: They have full-time professional leadership and in comparison to older SMOs they are driven by bureaucratic organizers rather than charismatic leaders or compelling ideology. A large part of their resources originate outside the aggrieved groups that the movement organization claims to represent, and the actual membership base may be small or actually nonexistent. Or it may be a paper membership base of people who receive newsletters and make occasional financial contributions. Such movement organizations attempt to impart the idea that they speak for an aggrieved constituency and to influence public policy.

We think these are important observations about movements in contemporary America. On our desks at any one time are letters soliciting support (and, more important, money!) from the Children's Defense Fund, the Solar Lobby, Nebraskans for Peace, and the Iowa Civil Liberties Union. While we have some sympathy with these causes, they are not movement organizations that we helped to create from deeply personal convictions. Those on other mailing lists get appeals to restore prayer to the public schools or to prevent the regulation of handguns, or to support the multitude of other causes that are being mobilized at any given time.

Resource mobilization theorists argue that the U.S. society now possesses the generalized resources that can be used to mobilize a variety of (contradictory) change efforts that have the appearance of mass-based movements. In their view, there has been a decline in the importance of a mass membership base in the generation of social movements, and "the definition of grievances will expand to meet the funds and support personnel available" (McCarthy and Zald 1973, 23). The development of movements can, to a certain extent, be planned or even manufactured.

Resource mobilization theory *deemphasizes* the role of mass discontent—by treating it as a constant—and *emphasizes* the ongoing transformation of movements through the interaction of competing SMOs in the broader political environment (more about this later). It also assumes a liberal pluralistic political structure. That is,

it assumes a political system where elites are not firmly in control and there is continual political realignment that makes the success of activist movement organizations possible. Hence, it may not be applicable to authoritarian societies where there is less freedom to mobilize.

Critical questions about American society have been raised by resource mobilization theory. For instance, "Does the piper call the tune?" That is, if social movements in contemporary America reflect the influence of professional organizers and movement organizations, to what extent do they reflect their needs and interests rather than those of the broader clientele they purport to serve? And do they channel political discontent in less politically threatening directions (cf. Piven and Cloward 1977)?

There have been a variety of criticisms of resource mobilization theory. It seems too tied to recent trends in the United States (which may be reversible) to be a general explanation of social movements origins. Some research has been critical of the assumption that the relative deprivation and strains related to mass discontent have been relatively unchanging (Law and Walsh 1983; Useem 1980; Walsh 1981). Another limitation of the theory is that it is a better explanation of the social movements of the affluent than those emerging from lower-status groups. Law and Walsh comment that

collectivities at the lower end of the socioeconomic hierarchy are more likely to experience widespread, serious, and chronic discontent while having relatively . . . little organizational leverage. Higher status collectivities . . . have relatively few common grievances and abundant personal as well as organizational resources at their disposal. (1983, 135)

In other words, the resource mobilization perspective has a social class bias. Most critics of the theory argue that it has made an important contribution by emphasizing the role of SMOs, but that it minimizes the continuing role of broader grievances and strains in the emergence of movements.

Political Process Theory. This theory is compatible with resource mobilization theory, but takes a different approach in explaining the ebb and flow of movement activity. It reasserts the primacy of the political by emphasizing not only the existence of generalized resources and emergence organizations, but also, and most important, the existence of favorable "structures of political opportunity" (Eisinger 1973; McAdam 1982, McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; Tilly 1978). *Political opportunity structures* refer to the receptivity or vulnerability of the political system to organized protest by given challenging groups (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1988, 699). When political opportunity structures expand, there are waves of intense movement mobilization and effectiveness.

The expansion of political opportunity structures can take several forms. *First*, it may have to do with the growth of political pluralism or a decline in the effectiveness of repression regarding contending movements (which explains why reform movements generally flourish in democratic but not in authoritarian political environments).

Second, a political opportunity structure for movement mobilization and success exists when the effective power of political elites is undermined by internal fragmentation and disunity. Elite disunity translates into net gain in political opportunity for all organized challengers. At the extreme, elite disunity may become generalized political instability involving a "crisis of regime" where the state's capacity for effective action is paralyzed. Contemporary movement scholars (Habermas 1973; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; Skocpol 1979) argue that this is at the root of successful revolutionary movements (a subject to which we will return in more depth in a later chapter). Even less extreme elite disunity—not involving a complete crisis of regime—can create political openings for the mobilization of movements. In the post-Civil War American South, for example, conflicts between planter and industrial elites that were deadlocked in a struggle to control the politics of the region provided a unique political opportunity for the growth of the agrarian populist movement to mobilize and break the deadlock (Schwartz 1976). The successes of the Nazis in prewar Germany are a more familiar example of how general political instability and elite disunity provides opportunity structures for contending movements.

A *third* way that political opportunity structures may be created for movement mobilization is through the broadening of access to institutional participation in the political process. This can take place through the realignment of inputs into the political process. In the Soviet Union during the late 1980s, for example, elected parliamentarians, representing Communist Party factions as well as other recognized political groups, came to have a larger measure of political power relative to the Politburo. An even clearer example is official recognition of the legality of South African protest movements and the extension of *some* form of political franchise to nonwhites in the 1990s.

In both of these cases, the broadening base of political input created unprecedented opportunities for the mobilization of waves of protest movements among contending groups, thus triggering cycles of social movement activity very much related to both the tumultuous changes and eventual collapse of communism in the USSR (Tarrow 1991) and to the collapse of the South African apartheid system in the 1990s. Besides changing the structure of inputs into the political process or enlarging the legal definition of political franchise, political access has been broadened in the United States by the incorporation of previously marginal groups through public voter registration drives among minorities and immigrant communities. McAdam (1982) has attributed the widespread expansion of the African-American protest movement activity in the 1950s and 1960s to the growth of the black electorate and its incorporation into the Democratic Party.

A *fourth* way that political opportunities expand is when political elites (usually in a competitive arena) curry popular support by providing public legitimation and legal and administrative support for movements. Indeed, there is an almost symbiotic relationship between successful waves of movement activity in U.S. history and elite support or facilitation. It is difficult to account for the successes of the American labor movement without taking into account facilitation by sympathetic presidential administrations of Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin

D. Roosevelt or of the successes of the civil rights or feminist movements in the 1960s without the support of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Gale (1986) has documented the top-down sponsorship of the environmental movement by political agencies sympathetic to the movement.

In retrospect, the liberal-left coalition that dominated American presidential politics between the 1930s and the 1960s created a broad political context that facilitated the emergence and successes of a wide variety of progressive or leftist movements (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1988, 700). And the apparent attenuation of those movements in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s surely has to do with the shift to a more conservative political environment and administrations. Those administrations not only withdrew sponsorship and worked to retard the efforts of progressive reform movements, but also sponsored conservative movements more to their liking (for example, Evangelical religious and pro-life movements). The reasons for elite sponsorship of social movements in political democracies are not difficult to understand: Franklin Roosevelt sought electoral support among workers, Kennedy and Johnson among minorities and women, and Reagan and Bush among conservative religionists.

The strength of political opportunity structure theory is that it addresses the issue of the timing of emergence and success of movements in a way that no other perspective does. It explains why social movement activity often comes in waves or cycles, and why movements that have been unsuccessful for an extended period of time suddenly appear to grow and succeed (for example, the Bolshevik revolutionary movement in czarist Russia and the American labor movement in the 1930s). But, like resource mobilization theory, the political opportunity structure perspective can be criticized for minimizing or treating as a constant the role of grievances and strains in the emergence of movements.

A different criticism is that the theory, along with the micromobilization contexts and resource mobilization perspectives, represents a shift among American movement scholars to a narrowly structural focus that ignores not only the role of shared grievances, but also the role of culture and ideas shaping the issues that are at the core of movements. Most movement scholars recognize the relevance of ideas (ideology, class consciousness, or generalized beliefs). Yet, it is odd that social movement scholars gave the role of ideas, culture, ideologies, and consciousness little attention until recently.

More recently McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001; Davis, McAdam, Scott, and Zald 2005) attempted to transcend this neglect of ideas, culture, ideologies, and consciousness by developing a broader theory of *contentious politics*. In this framework, political contention is dynamic and best analyzed "in motion" as different actors change their claims and identities while perceiving different opportunities and threats (see Figure 7-2). In this formulation, social movement activity is part of a broader subset of contentious political activity that can range anywhere from getting petitions signed to ban gay marriage to carrying out and publicizing a political assassination. Opportunities and threats are not objective categories, but depend on collective attribution that involves social movement members and leaders as well as actors outside of formal movement organizations (including public opinion). These threats lead to the appropriation or creation of mobilizing structures (not necessarily

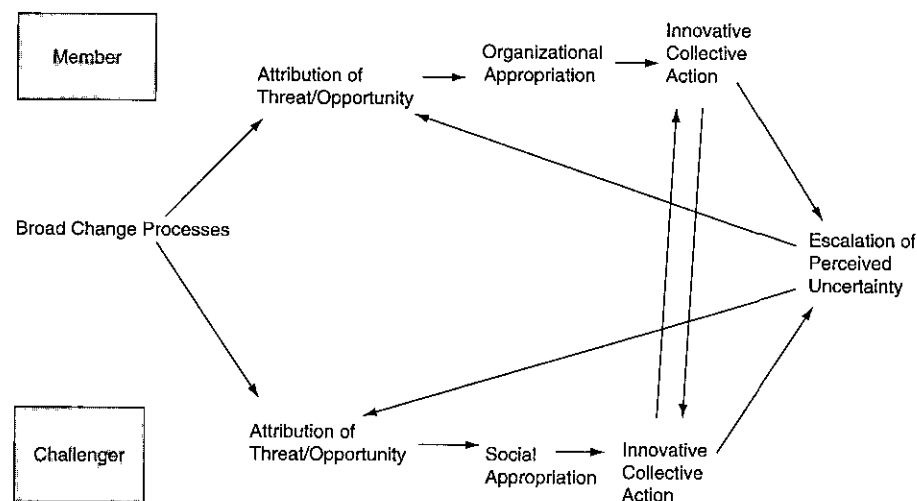


FIGURE 7-2 The Dynamics of Contention.

organizations) as vehicles for carrying out struggles. But the identities, actors, and actions are created and labeled as the action progresses, and innovative political action gains attention, adds new complexity to the field of interaction, and increases uncertainty among all parties in the conflict. Mobilization (and remobilization) occurs throughout different episodes of contention, and the episode is defined by the principals involved in the conflict.

If this sounds rather complex, it is. But McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly's more general point is that political opportunities, identities, and even SMOs don't exist in a vacuum. They exist in relation to other potential social movements and identities, existing cultural practices and trends, and real existing governments and nation states with extensive or limited resources to channel and repress conflicts. And what is considered a threat to one's social standing or position at one moment might not be considered a threat at the next. For example, McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly suggest that one of the reasons for the vibrance of the civil rights movement in the 1960s was the certification of the movement by the Kennedy administration, which viewed the movement as a way to mobilize African Americans in the wake of their razor-thin victory in the 1960 presidential election.

New Movement Theory. This perspective gives more emphasis to consciousness and culture and focuses specifically on movements in contemporary modern societies. It is applicable to understanding American movements, but it has a very different flavor because it was developed by European movement scholars (Klandermans 1986; Kriesi 1988; Melucci 1980; VanderLoo, Snel, and Steenbergen 1984).

They begin with the observation that we made earlier about the waves of diverse movements that emerged in the 1960s and continue in some fashion into the

1990s (such as the feminist, environmental, peace, antinuclear, gay rights, and New Age movements). These movements emerged in a short time span in Western nations that have different cultural traditions and national structures of political opportunity (using the terms of the perspective discussed earlier). Why? The diffusion of movements as innovations among nations might explain some of the mechanisms of cross-national transmission (see Chapter 10), but not the circumstances that would make different nations receptive to the diffusion of similar movements.

New movement theory provides a plausible answer about why these cultural and protest movements emerged in a similar time span in a variety of Western nations. Abstractly, they are *all* viewed as *reactions to the modernizing process in advanced industrial capitalist societies*. They are reactions to the erosion of traditional ways of family and work life in Europe after World War II and in particular to the rise of welfare state intrusion into previously private spheres of life (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1988, 701). Thus, for diverse movements, the overriding issue is the issue of life space and the struggle to regain control of private spheres of life from state bureaucratic regulation. If this sounds familiar to you, it should: Although it comes from movement scholars rather than literary critics, it is similar to the reaction against modernity that we discussed as post-modernism in Chapter 4.

How are new movements different from social movements in previous decades? Scholars have suggested three differences. *First*, new movements have ideological contexts that make them different. Instead of articulating claims about fundamental economic justice or human and political rights (about, for example, voting or freedom of speech), new movements are framed by concerns about individual and cultural rights, such as the right to be different and to be protected from particular risks, such as nuclear or environmental hazards (Hannigan 1991, 320). Put differently, the ideological backdrop of new movements is shaped by values about self-actualization, community, and personal satisfactions (versus occupational satisfaction) (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1988, 701). A *second* way that they differ from previous movements is in their preferred action forms. The new movements are distrustful of politics; they favor small-scale, decentralized organizations, are anti-hierarchical, and advocate direct democracy (Klandermans and Tarrow 1988, cited in Hannigan 1991, 320). A *third* difference is that while many previous movements were identified with the grievances of lower-status and economic groups, such as workers or minorities, the new movements are associated with the rise of a new middle class of educated professionals, particularly those whose expertise is social or cultural rather than technocratic (these would be, for example, ministers, professors, journalists, and bureaucrats in public and nonprofit organizations). Having high levels of education and a firsthand view of the cracks in contemporary society, this new middle class is said to have special insight into the threat posed to the pursuit of nonmaterial goals (individual lifestyles) by the material conditions of production and the institutional framework of the welfare state (Hannigan 1991, 320; Kriesi 1988, 357).

New movement theory makes important contributions about understanding movements in contemporary Western societies, but as with other perspectives it is

important that you understand some of its limitations. First, its attractiveness in explaining similarities of diverse movements as life space movements in contemporary welfare states *is also a limitation*. Because of this broad, abstract focus, this theory underspecifies the social and political contexts in which the new movements appeared—which could have helped to explain the variations in outcome from one movement and country to the next (Tarrow 1991, 14).

Second, it is important to note that while new movements are important, social movements in contemporary Western societies are of more diverse types than those described earlier. For example, many Western societies do have movements for autonomy about group rights, not just individual life space (for instance, movements among the Basques in Spain, the French in Canada, or Native Americans in both the United States and Canada), and there continues to be movements among both marginalized and middle-class groups about basic human rights and entitlements (such as wage adequacy and tax equity, education, and child care and health care). Indeed, an important segment of the feminist movement in the United States is concerned with these more than lifestyle issues (Freeman 1979). European scholars might be excused for not noting the social importance of the Evangelical Christian and Religious Right movements because they are so peculiarly American, but Europe in 1991 saw a frightening resurgence of hybrid Klan-neo-Nazi movements among young people (based not only on anti-Semitism, but also on hostility toward immigrants). The point is that these movements *do not* look at all like the postmodernist new movements just described. They are based in a different part of the population and have different ideological master frames and forms of collective action. Perhaps they are also reactions against modernity and welfare state intrusions, but in very different ways than those described as new movements.

Ideas, Frames, and Social Movements. Partly because of the influence of new movement theory, the role of ideas and the *social constructions of reality* is now taken more seriously by scholars who study movements. Snow and colleagues examined the way that different cultural or ideological rationales, or *frames*, are used in mobilizing support of persons for social movements (1986). Such frames are hammered out within movements and are always subject to dispute. Ideological master frames, such as “democracy” or “human rights,” often serve as underlying rationales for diverse movements (Benford 1993; Snow and Benford 1988). Frames also empower individuals to act and legitimize the use of public power. Thus, through movements people begin to understand the social world as mutable and develop a sense of their responsibility to pursue social change (Smith 1990). And the rhetorical assertions of social movements become a part of the “rhetorical struggle” that is a part of politics and defining the “public good.”

As our presentation in Chapter 2 made clear, framing also helps to explain why some definitions of grievances explode into social movements and others do not, even though objective conditions appear similar. The ideological frames of social movements are a cultural resource for social transformation (Snow and Marshall 1984). Consider, for instance, the different cultural frames of reality by fundamentalist

religionists and feminists and their impacts on the larger political process in the United States. Social movements operate at the middle levels of social reality, between the micro levels of the face-to-face interaction that recruits and mobilizes persons for action and the more macro political opportunity structures for changing society (Tarrow 1991).

Social movement framing is part of a broader set of attempts to explain collective action. These analysts take as problematic the ways that individuals in radically divergent, globalized worlds define common worldviews and attempt to act on them through social movements (see Castells 1998; Melucci 1996). These analysts bring us back full circle to the original questions that drove early social movements research. What are the sources of collective action? The major differences between these latest attempts to develop theories of collective action and prior incarnations (which we discussed under irrationality and crowds, status strains, relative deprivation, and value-added theory) are that recent theories are more sophisticated and less likely to define social movements as symptoms of system dysfunction or as responding to amorphous system “needs.”

IN CONCLUSION

We have come back to where this chapter began: Social movements are important processes by which human agency becomes manifest in producing social and cultural change. We began by defining social movements as collective action to produce or prevent change that is outside the established institutional framework of society. We distinguished between social movements and SMOs that grow within them. We also described three broad and relative distinctions between different kinds of movements: those between radical and reform movements, instrumental and expressive movements, and progressive and conservative movements.

Most of this chapter dealt with perspectives for explaining the cause and origins of movements. We described several varieties of individual explanations, microsocial explanations, and macrostructural explanations. These derive from either the broader functionalist or conflict theoretical perspectives discussed in Chapter 2. We ended by describing the shift of thinking about movements into interpretive theory contexts that emphasized the importance of their cultural definitions and frames. There are structural perspectives about movements that emphasize the significance of the social environment on the kinds of movements that emerge and interpretive perspectives that underscore the role of persons in defining and modifying shared definitions of reality that motivate and legitimize action and policy. They both tell pieces of the whole story about social movements.

But one question has vexed social movements researchers for decades, *do social movements matter and (if so) in what ways?* (see Burstein 2002, 2003, 2007; Meyer 2003). Some researchers argue that social movements do shape public policy, but often in unintended ways and many times not directly. Social movements may throw into sharp relief the plight of different groups of people and present their circumstances in stark moral terms. Governments may create new bureaucracies

and institutions in direct or indirect response to social movement demands—the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and Environmental Protection agency come to mind here. And movements change the actors associated with them and make a broad and diverse segment of the population active in ways they would not have been otherwise (Meyer 2003). Other researchers question whether social movement activities and organizations can be distinguished from other types of political interest groups or even public opinion generally. One thing seems certain—people join social movements for a variety of reasons, almost all vibrant political systems create them, but the effects they have, both directly and indirectly, are not easily measurable.

This survey of theories about social movements has been selective but fairly rigorous, examining movements at different levels of analysis, but also roughly in the chronological order of their development by scholars. We hope that our criticism of each has not left you frustrated and looking for the “best” theory, because each has been useful in posing different questions in different historical contexts as the understanding of movements evolved. The next two chapters focus on the kinds of changes that social movements cause, both in America and in world contexts. We will use these perspectives freely in those discussions.

THINKING PERSONALLY ABOUT SOCIAL CHANGE

You can think of social movements as partly organized causes in which people become involved. Investigate some of these causes as they exist today.

1. Read newspapers, magazines, and watch the television news to identify some movements and movement organizations that are visible in society and perhaps in your community at this time. If you can, talk with some people knowledgeable about at least one of them.
2. How are movements and movement organizations described in magazine, newspapers, and the TV news? How are movement organizations different from other organizations (like clubs, companies, or government agencies)? What are some of the kinds of causes around which people organize? Of these, identify aspects that intend to change the world in some way, and other aspects that mainly address individuals' feelings, self-understandings, needs for dignity, desire for aesthetic life, or other kinds of personal needs.
3. What kinds of people tend to become involved in movements, as contributors, leaders, or sympathizers? Why do you think they became involved? Has a movement organization ever asked you to donate money or time to work for a cause? Did you? Why or why not? For those you found appealing, were there barriers to your participation? What are some contemporary movements you find repulsive? Why?
4. How do other people and organizations respond differently to different movements and movement organizations? What do your acquaintances and friends think of them? In your understanding, what are some different ways that community and national leaders respond to them?

NOTES

1. While collective behaviorists argue that the breakdown of order means that actors are “under the dominance of restlessness and collective excitement” (Blumer 1969, 11), we think it is important to emphasize that such collective states of tension are not necessarily irrational states of individuals. Such states may be rational ways of responding to frightening and frustrating aspects of the way that the social world is organized or disorganized.
2. Here are a few of the titles to give you the flavor of this literature, which reflects the issues and the mood of the 1960s:

Political Action: A Practical Guide to Movement Politics;

How People Get Power;

Rules for Radicals: A Manual for Direct Action; and

The Organizer: A Manual (McCarthy and Zald 1973, 24).