

the practical puzzle of how microlevel agents can initiate and promote transformation in macrolevel structures that both constrain and facilitate their efforts. Each strategy and tactic is thus a hypothesis that is tested by subsequent practice and thereby informs a movement's theory of social order and change. Examining the relation between movements and contexts would put questions of agency/structure and micro/macro at the center of sociological investigation (Kriesi, 1988), and provide an empirically manageable means of studying what otherwise remain hopelessly abstract and arcane disputes. Commenting on how the study of collective action can help transcend such abstract theoretical dichotomies, Melucci has noted that

this branch of knowledge and inquiry provides a useful training for those who wish to address the central problem of social theory concerning the relationship between the actor and the system. In no other area of sociology does the dualistic tradition handed down to us from the nineteenth century clash as evidently with the object of study. (Melucci 1996a:381)

Seen in this way, social movements are ongoing experiments that speak to central issues in sociological theory if we can learn to listen to them.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of a renewed appreciation of the role of social movements would be the opportunity to reengage sociological discourse with the fundamental moral, civic, and political questions of the age. Even when some of the classical theorists created intellectual justifications for an emerging capitalist order, they did so out of deep moral and political commitments. This engagement with the world evaporated with the scientization of sociological theory most clearly represented by the ascendancy of Parsonian structural-functionalism (Seidman, 1994). Even though functionalism's theoretical hegemony is long since past, its model of theory—abstract, generalized, universal, objective, deductive, and positivist—has shaped the discipline and its subfields in myriad ways. The price of adopting this model of theory, and of establishing “theory” as a distinct subfield in its own right, has been a profound disengagement from contemporary practical, political, moral, and civic issues; the price has also been the increasing irrelevance of professional sociology to practical questions (Seidman, 1994). Greater attention to the role of social movements—not merely as a specialized subfield but as a constitutive force in shaping the modern world and constructing alternative futures—would help sociology replace its highly abstract and scientized discourse with a renewed engagement with the social world that comprises its subject matter. For all these reasons, a family reunion between the estranged siblings of sociology and social movements is long overdue.

2

Social Movement Theory *A Sociology of Knowledge Analysis*

Despite their role in shaping modernity and sociology, social movements have received only intermittent sociological attention. This variability in theorizing about movements is best understood through the sociology of knowledge, which suggests that the “story of social movement theory can be told only together with the story of social movements themselves” (Garner, 1997:1). Indeed, the prevailing view of social movements at a given historical moment reflects not just existing movements but also the larger sociohistorical climate, the dominant sociological paradigms, and the biographies of scholars themselves. From this perspective, the twists and turns in social movement theory reflect societal and disciplinary trends as much as they mirror collective action. Like other subfields in sociology (and other disciplines as well), the history of social movement theory is less the story of cumulative scientific progress than one of paradigm shifts (Kuhn, 1962) that qualitatively redefine the central issues in the field, rendering old questions uninteresting and new ones compelling. The last major paradigm shift in social movement theory occurred in the 1970s, in response to the social activism of the 1960s as well as broader societal trends. What changed was not just the prevailing view of collective action, but also the sociohistorical climate, dominant theoretical paradigms, and typical scholarly biographies. It remains to be seen whether these developments will lead to a more profound reconceptualization of the discipline itself.

This chapter provides a brief sketch of this theoretical history. In some respects, it parallels a recent interpretation of social movement theory by Roberta Garner (1997) that identifies three processes that have contributed to paradigm shifts in social movement theory. Internal imperatives refer to unsolved intellectual puzzles within existing paradigms. External pressures include changes

in larger intellectual currents and changes in movement phenomena themselves. Based on these factors, Garner divides the past 50 years of social movement theory into three periods. In the first period (1940s and 1950s), she detects a negative orientation toward movements, a tendency to explain them in terms of social psychology, and a preoccupation with the irrational origins and nature of movements. The second period (1960s and 1970s) brought a more positive orientation toward movements, which were increasingly seen as purposive organizations comprised of rational actors pursuing strategic goals. The third period (1980s and 1990s) brought more ambivalence toward movements, as right-wing countermovements displaced progressive movements and intellectual shifts toward postmodernism undermined the privileged role of movements in a narrative of historical progress (Garner, 1997). Although this account overstates the differences between the second and third periods, it is a very helpful overview of recent changes in social movement theory.

My own version of this history is somewhat different, and it is meant to serve three distinct purposes. First, I want to provide a primer in social movement theory that captures the dominant themes of different conceptual frameworks in successive historical moments. Second, I hope to suggest the plausibility of a sociology of knowledge approach that links these dominant themes to their respective sociohistorical climates and theoretical paradigms. Third, I intend to use this overview of social movement theory as the basis for a critical evaluation of the latest developments in the field and an argument for the approach to be developed in the remainder of this book. Most of the chapter is therefore organized around a fundamental conceptual and historical distinction between classical collective behavior theory and modern social movement theory.

CLASSICAL COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR THEORY

Classical collective behavior theory rests on several core assumptions. First, collective behavior is a unitary concept that may be manifested in a variety of ways but can ultimately be understood by a single explanatory logic. Panics, crazes, crowds, and movements are thus seen almost as interchangeable manifestations of collective behavior that can be analyzed in the same way. Second, collective behavior is seen as essentially noninstitutional, in sharp contrast to the patterns and rhythms of normal daily life. There is thus a tendency to view this phenomenon as formless, shapeless, unpatterned, and unpredictable. Third, collective behavior is understood as a reaction to societal stress, strain, or breakdown that serves as the fundamental catalyst for such behavior. Such breakdown is presumed to create a state of anomie, which in turn may promote various forms of collective behavior. Fourth, the direct causes of collective behavior are seen as rooted in individuals who are experiencing various forms of discontent or anxiety. By locating primary causation in individuals, the challenge is then to explain the translation of individual discontent into genuinely collective action. Fifth, collective behavior is seen as essentially psychological rather than

political in nature. This assumption contains an implicit challenge to the legitimacy of collective behavior by reducing its core elements to the psychological level (McAdam, 1982). Finally, collective behavior is sometimes taken to be a dangerous, threatening, extreme, or irrational form of behavior. This carries another challenge to the legitimacy of collective behavior by preemptively denying the purposive, goal-directed nature of at least some collective behavior.

Although specific theories or schools may not endorse all of these assumptions, they collectively constitute a distinctive theoretical lens for studying collective behavior. Virtually all of these assumptions were ultimately challenged by critics of the collective behavior model. But of all these assumptions, it is the first one (that collective behavior is a unitary concept) that created the greatest difficulties. In the words of one critic, "collective behaviour is too general a container, bringing together under its categorical unity a great multitude of different empirical phenomena ranging from 'spontaneous' panic to planned revolutions" (Melucci, 1996a:19). The insistence that social movements can be analyzed with the same theoretical tools as crowds, panics, and crazes represented a kind of conceptual overreach that took plausible ideas about some types of collective behavior (noninstitutional, psychological, anomic, etc.) and extended them to all types of collective behavior. The emergence of modern social movement theory began with the dissolution of the unitary concept of collective behavior and the insistence that social movements comprise a different phenomenon requiring a different set of theoretical tools. Both the popularity and the retreat of the classical collective behavior model are best understood through the sociology of knowledge. The distinctive assumptions of this model were a direct reflection of the larger theoretical paradigms from which they were developed, the sociohistorical climate of the era, and the biographies of the theorists. Far from mirroring actual collective action in a pure and undistorted way, it was preexisting theoretical investments and social world views that led theorists to see collective behavior through distinct conceptual frameworks.

Collective Behavior Theory I: Symbolic Interactionism

One version of collective behavior theory is closely intertwined with the paradigm of symbolic interaction as synthesized by George Herbert Mead and further developed by Herbert Blumer. This intertwining provides one illustration of a sociology of knowledge approach because this version of collective behavior theory was as much a reflection of symbolic interactionism's core premises as it was a representation of episodes of collective behavior. As a general orientation, symbolic interactionism underscores the importance of fluid and dynamic social processes rather than fixed and static social structures. In so doing, it also emphasizes the active and creative role of individuals in symbolically defining their world and selecting courses of action within that world. In Blumer's classic formulation, the core ideas of the symbolic interactionist tradition can be expressed in the form of three assumptions: that people act toward things on the basis of the meanings the things have for them; that mean-

ings arise out of social interaction; and that meanings are created, sustained, and transformed through an ongoing interpretive process (Blumer, 1969). These specific premises and this general orientation led to a highly distinctive version of collective behavior theory.

For Blumer, collective behavior refers to forms of group activity that are not regulated by social rules or common understandings, but rather are spontaneous, unregulated, and unstructured. Elementary collective behavior is the basic unit of analysis. This behavior is rooted in circular reaction or interstimulation whereby social actors who are copresent react to one another in a way that amplifies and reinforces some initial stimulation or state of arousal. Given the premises of symbolic interaction, it is ironic that Blumer sees this process as nonreflective and mechanistic; at one point he utilizes the metaphor of a herd of cattle in a state of alarm to enliven his description of this process (Blumer, 1951:170). Circular reaction and interstimulation are most likely to occur when there is some disturbance in standard routines and rhythms of everyday life. When circular reaction becomes contagious, it can give rise to social unrest, with elements of randomness, excitability, apprehension, irritability, and increased suggestibility. This social unrest is the crucible out of which new forms of organized activity may eventually emerge, including social movements. The specific mechanisms that produce social unrest are threefold. Milling establishes rapport among actors. Collective excitement elevates emotional arousal and renders people more unstable and irresponsible. Finally, "social contagion refers to the relatively rapid, unwitting, and nonrational dissemination of a mood, impulse, or form of conduct; it is well exemplified by the spread of crazes, manias and fads" (Blumer, 1951:176). Although collective behavior may eventually assume different forms and degrees of organization, it begins with these processes of elementary collective behavior.

Such behavior gives rise to elementary collective groupings of several different types, including acting crowds, expressive crowds, the mass, the public, and social movements. Consistent with this theoretical logic, movements begin as amorphous, poorly organized, and formless, although they may develop into virtual minisocieties with many of the features of complex organizations. General social movements remain vague, indefinite, groping, unorganized manifestations of broad cultural trends, whereas specific social movements consist of well-defined goals, explicit organization, designated leaders, a division of labor, and a distinct we-feeling. Specific social movements develop through distinct mechanisms. Agitation provides arousal and direction by translating inequality or powerlessness into action. The development of *esprit de corps* organizes feelings on behalf of the movement, including a new sense of identity based on in-group-out-group relations, informal fellowship, and ceremonial behaviors that create group enthusiasm. Morale provides persistence and determination to a movement through a set of convictions and a faith in the rightness of the cause or certainty of victory. Group ideology specifies the purpose of the movement, condemns the status quo, and provides justifications of the movement's beliefs and myths. Finally, tactics address how to gain and hold adherents and reach movement objectives. Specific social movements are ex-

pected to follow a standard life history through the stages of social unrest, popular excitement, formalization, and institutionalization. In addition to these stages of development, Blumer distinguishes among revolutionary, reform, or expressive movements based on the degree and the locus of the changes they seek in society.

Although Blumer's analysis of social movements sounds quite conventional, it is distinguished from other approaches by his insistence that all forms of collective behavior (including but not limited to social movements) are built up out of the elementary processes described earlier. This same claim may be found in the later work of Turner and Killian, who carried on the Blumerian tradition through three editions of their seminal text *Collective Behavior* (1957, 1972, 1987). Like Blumer, Turner and Killian see collective behavior as the spontaneous development of norms and organization that contradict those of the larger society. Collective behavior is sparked by changes in social organization, and especially by processes of social disintegration, that provoke diverse individual reactions to critical unstructured situations. These diverse responses eventually coalesce around new, emergent norms that develop through collective behavior, but Turner and Killian emphasize that this can happen only if there is some shared image of a better future and some we-feeling in the group. Social contagion is essential to this process as people search for socially sanctioned meaning in a relatively unstructured situation; the search is carried out through milling, which Turner and Killian suggest is best seen as a process of communication. They insist that crowds do not just react to stimuli but rather develop and interpret symbols to orient their action. They see this as an interactive and "rational" process of communication that confers meaning on the environment and on the crowd itself. With these variations, they apply their theory to a wide range of collective behavior, including crowds, masses, and publics.

Turner and Killian's analysis of collective behavior thereby follows Blumer's lead, but with a somewhat greater emphasis on communication and rationality. Emergent norm theory may thus be seen as a more elaborate alternative to Blumer's circular reaction theory (Turner, 1996). Their analysis of social movements is considerably more detailed than Blumer's, however. They define a movement as a collectivity acting with some continuity to promote or resist change. They see movements following standard life cycles, and they acknowledge that movements can become institutionalized when they have an ongoing function to perform and when they continue to provide benefits to members. They provide a somewhat different typology of movements. For instance, value-oriented movements promote a publicly understood program; their success requires promises of social betterment along with immediate benefits, a clear hierarchy of goals, resonance with socially accepted values, and appropriate tactics. Whereas value-oriented movements sound benign, power-oriented movements strike a more ominous chord. These are exemplified by control movements whose main goal is to dominate a larger group; they are often authoritarian in nature and based on a belief that the end justifies the means. Power-oriented movements may also take the form of separatist movements

devoted to maintaining some group identity; these typically arise through factionalism within existing movements and can become quite sectarian in nature. The last major category is participation-oriented movements whose main purpose is member satisfaction rather than external goals. Such movements may prepare people for coming changes, provide status to their members, or foster personal goals, and they are especially attractive to marginal or outcast groups seeking validation.

In the most recent edition of their text (Turner and Killian, 1987), the authors propose a theory of social movements based on three distinctive features: a disposition to bypass established structures; the translation of perception, feelings, and ideas into action; and the collectivizing of that action. Bypassing normal channels requires emergent norms within the movement that convey a sense of necessity or obligation to take action. In the most common cases, the emergent norm defines some social practice as unjust, but the question of how and why this definition emerges for some practices and not others remains open. The translation of perceptions, feelings, and ideas into action requires a sense of feasibility and timeliness; the former suggests that it is possible for a situation to be changed whereas the latter conveys a sense of urgency that it must be changed now. Finally, the collectivization of action generally requires membership in some preexisting group of people with cooptable networks that can be redirected to movement purposes as well as a sense of fraternal relative deprivation that defines the problem as collective rather than individual. Although these three elements are described in isolation, they operate as an interactive process in which the timing of the elements is crucial to the actual emergence of collective behavior. The latter is thus best understood through life cycle or interactive spiral models of action that are attentive to the processual nature of collective behavior.

From Blumer's initial formulation to Turner and Killian's last word, this version of collective behavior theory faithfully reflects its roots in the broader perspective of symbolic interactionism. This is a paradigm that emphasizes fluid processes over static structures, creative agency over structural determination, and the symbolic creation and interpretation of meanings as central to human life. It is precisely these concerns that are echoed in this tradition of collective behavior, with its emphasis on spontaneity, contagion, circular reaction, suggestibility, interaction, communication, keynoting, and emergent norms. From a sociology of knowledge approach, it is evident that this theoretical tradition for studying collective behavior is as much a reflection of its broader theoretical heritage of symbolic interactionism as it is a mirror of empirical instances of collective behavior.

Of the three versions of collective behavior theory discussed here, the symbolic interactionist approach remains the most vital and its practitioners continue to make important contributions to the study of collective behavior. This was foreshadowed in Blumer's (1971) later work on social problems as collective behavior, which provides a bridge between classical collective behavior theory and contemporary social constructionism. The productivity of this paradigm is evident in recent work on crowds and crowd behavior (McPhail, 1991;

Snow et al., 1981), on cults (Lofland, 1977), on moral panics (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994), and on the role of emotion in protest (Lofland, 1985); it is also reflected in the continuing centrality of Turner and Killian's (1987) classic text on collective behavior. Scholars in this tradition have also responded effectively to the common charge that collective behavior theory presumes irrational actors by distinguishing between earlier and later work in this tradition and by clarifying the distinction between emotion and irrationality (Killian, 1994; McPhail, 1991; Turner, 1981). Finally, proponents of this tradition have been active participants in the ongoing debate over recent paradigm shifts by identifying the parallel assumptions that can sometimes be found in different approaches and arguing for the ongoing connections between collective behavior and social movements (Aguirre, 1994; Turner, 1981).

Collective Behavior II: Structural-Functionalism

Close connections between a broad theoretical paradigm and a specific theory of collective behavior are also evident in a rather different variant of classical collective behavior theory derived from structural-functionalism. The latter rests on a metaphor between societies and living organisms in which both are seen as complex and bounded wholes consisting of interrelated parts, each of which fulfills some necessary function and thereby contributes to the stability and survival of the larger entity of which it is a part. This venerable tradition received its most elaborate formulation by Talcott Parsons, who conceptualized social order as a series of interrelated action systems in which the social system organizes interaction through status-role complexes, the personality system organizes needs and decision-making capacities, the cultural system provides common, integrative values, and the biological organism provides the prerequisites of intelligent action. When operating smoothly, these four action systems become stable structures that fulfill four essential functional prerequisites of social stability and system survival: adaptation of each system to its broader environment, goal attainment within each system, integration of the various elements of each system and subsystem, and latent pattern maintenance and tension management of each system (Parsons, 1951).

Because functionalism was centered on problems of social order, it took longer to address collective behavior than some other paradigms. But the challenge to do so was met with the publication of Smelser's *Theory of Collective Behavior* (1962). Firmly grounded in Parsons's elaborate conceptual scheme of society as a social system, Smelser extended this theoretical apparatus to non-institutional forms of action that served as the defining benchmark of collective behavior. The result was a complex, value-added theory of the emergence of collective behavior through a series of stages. Despite its complexity, the theory was clear about several key points. First, for analytical purposes, social movements were one type of collective behavior alongside others such as panics, crazes, and fads. Linking all these types was the connotation of spontaneous, short-lived, disorganized, and deviant behavior. Second, as with all the other forms of collective behavior, participants in social movements subscribed

to fundamentally irrational beliefs that short-circuited appropriate channels of social action. While symbolic interactionism and structural-functionalism are worlds apart in their fundamental theoretical assumptions, there are some remarkable parallels and similarities in their conception of collective behavior. Despite very different theoretical ancestry, both theories partially converge on a view of collective behavior as noninstitutional, spontaneous, short-lived expressions of behavior that rests on shared beliefs and ranges from panic to revolution (Melucci, 1996a:14).

Smelser's version of the theory is distinguished by claims of logical rigor. He proposed that all forms of collective behavior emerged through an identical, value-added process of individually necessary and collectively sufficient steps. The first step is structural conduciveness, which refers to a set of structural conditions that permits or encourages (but does not determine) some form of collective behavior. The less conducive a given set of structural arrangements, the less likely that any form of collective behavior will occur. The second element is structural strain, referring to ambiguities, deprivations, conflicts, and discrepancies. Although Parsonian functionalism had acknowledged social strain, what distinguishes collective behavior from "normal" responses to strain is that it compresses or short-circuits levels of social action, giving collective behavior a crude, excessive, eccentric, impatient quality when compared to routine and institutionalized social action. The existence of social strain alongside structural conduciveness thereby increases the likelihood of collective behavior. The third element is generalized beliefs that supply meaning, motivation, and orientation to potential actors in collective behavior. If strain creates ambiguity, generalized beliefs reduce ambiguity in a short-circuited manner that prepares people for action. The generalized nature of such beliefs refers to their compressing or collapsing of levels and components of social action; as such, generalized beliefs are inherently irrational cognitive responses to structural strain that can nonetheless provide powerful incentives for action. Generalized beliefs can take differing forms, including hysteria, wish-fulfillment, hostility, norm-oriented beliefs, or value-oriented beliefs.

The final three elements of the value-added process receive less explicit attention but are analytically as crucial as the other elements in episodes of collective behavior. The fourth stage involves precipitating factors, which are specific events or actions that provide direct catalysts for collective behavior. Such factors serve to condense prior elements of conduciveness, strain, and generalized beliefs into a potent manifestation of the problem that provokes collective behavior. The fifth stage is the actual mobilization of participants for collective behavior, when all the prior environmental and ideational factors are finally translated into concrete action by those participating in the episode of collective behavior. The sixth stage concerns the operation of social control, which must be at least temporarily absent or disabled if the incipient collective behavior is to manifest itself fully. While identified last, this factor is relevant to every previous stage because various kinds of social control could preclude any of the prior, value-added elements from occurring and adding momentum to the emergence of collective behavior. An episode of collective behavior may

thereby be read as signifying the relative absence of various social controls that might have precluded such an episode in a more smoothly functioning social system. Given Smelser's value-added logic, collective behavior emerges only when all six of these elements occur in conjunction with one another; when they do, some form of collective behavior is inevitable.

The same theoretical logic is used to explain five distinct forms of collective behavior: panics, crazes, hostile outbursts, norm-oriented movements, and value-oriented movements. Norm-oriented movements (NOMs) attempt to restore, protect, modify, or create norms in the name of a generalized belief; value-oriented movements (VOMs) attempt to do the same for values. NOMs are more likely to emerge when social structures are conducive to moderate reform movements that allow gradual change to take place; the absence of such possibilities will generate VOMs (if any form of collective behavior emerges). Smelser relies on each of his value-added elements to offer a differential analysis of the emergence of NOMs and VOMs, and emphasizes that in both types of movement the process of mobilization for action is more complex than in the more elementary forms of collective behavior (including relations between leaders and followers, organizational dynamics, and the like). Although his value-added scheme is rather cumbersome, the scope of Smelser's theory is impressive in its ambition to link broad, structural background factors to the dynamics of specific instances of collective behavior. But just as Blumer, Turner, and Killian used collective behavior as a unitary concept that linked movements to elementary collective behavior that could be understood only through the lens of symbolic interactionism, Smelser has his own unitary concept of collective behavior, which places movements on the same analytical plane as panics and crazes and seeks to explain them through the same structural-functional theory of collective behavior.

Mass society theory is an important variant on functionalist approaches to collective behavior that deserves brief mention here as well. Structural-functional and mass society approaches both share a common ancestry in the work of the classical French theorist Emile Durkheim. In Durkheim's analysis of modernity (1893), social evolution led from the mechanical solidarity and *conscience collective* of traditional societies to the organic solidarity and division of labor of modern societies. There were distinctive dangers in this process if individualism became too prominent. The problem of anomie referred to a lack of normative regulation in rapidly changing social circumstances, whereas the problem of egoism involved a lack of social integration that would otherwise anchor individuals in groups. Durkheim's diagnosis of the problem of egoism in particular provides a link to modern mass society theory (Kornhauser, 1959). For this perspective, modernity is distinguished by the emergence of large-scale social structures but the disappearance of mid-level groups that would provide social anchors for individuals. With the demise of smaller scale social groups, modern society becomes a mass society in which isolation, depersonalization, and alienation become prevalent. It was the distinctive prediction of mass society theory that the most isolated and alienated individuals would gravitate toward participation in collective behavior because it offered one of the few avail-

able social anchors for such individuals. Although this prediction was spectacularly unsuccessful (because isolated actors are no more likely to join collective behavior than any other collective undertaking), the assumptions of the theory echoed those of structural-functionalism: social order normally precludes collective behavior, which must be explained in terms of social strain or breakdown that leads to psychological discontent, irrational ideation, and extreme, deviant, or short-circuited behavioral responses.

Like the structural-functionalism from which it originated, Smelser's theory of collective behavior (and the mass society variant) has come in for heavy criticism. Like the structural-functionalism that was its basis, Smelser's theory incorporates a conservative, status quo bias that privileges existing social structures and defines departures from them as irrational, dangerous, extremist, and deviant. For my purposes, however, the specific criticisms of this theory are less crucial than the manner in which this theory of collective behavior was logically derived from the larger conceptual framework of Parsonian structural-functionalism. Alongside the symbolic interactionist version of collective behavior, we now have two examples of collective behavior theories that analyzed social movements vis-à-vis their larger theoretical assumptions and developed theories whose derivation and content have as much to do with those larger theoretical commitments as with consistent, concrete, empirical instances of social movement activism. This is exactly what a sociology of knowledge approach would lead us to expect, and it is also evident in the final variation on classical collective behavior theory.

Collective Behavior III: Relative Deprivation

A third variant of classical collective behavior theory may be found in approaches that emphasize relative deprivation as the motivating force behind participation in collective behavior. Such approaches rely on a smattering of mainstream sociological concepts with a decidedly social-psychological twist. The tradition of role theory (Merton, 1968; Linton, 1936) and the specific concept of reference groups provide examples here. Reference groups are external groups to whom people refer to judge their own position. When people judge themselves as lacking resources enjoyed by their reference group, relative deprivation may be said to be present. The concept of relative deprivation thus accentuates the role of subjective elements in this process. Indeed, the concept emerged and certainly has functioned to explain cases in which people make judgments that do not necessarily accord with those of neutral observers or objective data. Such judgments are rather based on sentiments, feelings, and perceptions about the reference groups that comprise the foundation for judgments of relative deprivation. Although theorists of relative deprivation do not explicitly describe these processes as irrational, their emphasis on the role of subjectivity and emotional factors implies that these judgments are nonrational. Though arrived at by different means, the resulting social-psychological image of the individual is not that different from that of the other branches of classical collective behavior theory discussed above.

The path by which the concept of relative deprivation entered the field of collective behavior illustrates how it sought to account for nonobvious social situations and conditions. The simplest logic linking motivation to action suggests that the most absolutely deprived groups of people have the greatest incentive to engage in collective behavior to alter their situation. Such a logic would predict that absolutely deprived groups are much more likely to engage in collective behavior than groups that are somewhat better off. It is against this logic that relative deprivation theorists argue that it is not the most absolutely deprived groups that typically revolt or rebel, either because their time and energy must be devoted to sheer survival or because their situation breeds a fatalism and passivity that preclude collective behavior on their behalf. It is precisely the somewhat better-off groups who are historically more likely to engage in such behavior. Since such an occurrence cannot be explained in terms of absolute deprivation, the concept of relative deprivation provides a convenient mechanism for explaining this behavior, and the differential probability that various groups will engage in collective behavior.

The seminal article that linked relative deprivation with collective behavior sought to explain the timing of revolutionary activity (Davies, 1962). Davies describes two preexisting theories that appear contradictory. The "degradation thesis" holds that people's propensity to revolt increases as their condition worsens; the "improvement thesis" claims that as people's situation improves, they are more likely to revolt. Although there is some evidence to support both claims, Davies argues that these factors are best understood as acting in conjunction in a certain historical sequence. His synthesis in the form of the "J-curve" theory predicts that when a prolonged period of economic and social development is followed by a sudden and sharp reversal, rebellion is most likely to occur. The reasoning involves the subjective factor of relative deprivation. That is, people's expectations are shaped by the relatively long period of gradual improvement, and they project these expectations onto a future state of ongoing improvement. When a sudden, sharp reversal occurs after this long history, the result is a substantial gap between what people have come to expect and what they are actually receiving (and expect to receive in the future based on their deteriorating situation). This acute sense of deprivation relative to their expectations (based on a history of gradual improvement) is sufficient to motivate people to participate in collective behavior to alter their situation.

Although the J-curve describes the most acute form, it is by no means the only form that relative deprivation may take. In addition to this "rise and drop" pattern, at least four other patterns of relative deprivation have been identified (Geschwender, 1968). Despite the variations, Geschwender (1968) claims that each rests on the same underlying social-psychological condition of cognitive dissonance. More specifically, each variant of relative deprivation gives rise to the following cognitions. First, there is an image of a state of affairs that the actor believes is possible to attain. Second, there is a belief that the actor is entitled to that state of affairs. Third, there is the knowledge that the actor is not currently enjoying that state of affairs. Cognitive dissonance theory argues that the dissonance between multiple, equally plausible cognitions, perceptions, and

beliefs is psychologically painful, and that people will act to reduce this psychological pain. Although there are multiple ways of reducing cognitive dissonance, Geschwender's argument implies that when collective behavior does occur, we are likely to find elements of cognitive dissonance and relative deprivation among the causes of that behavior.

The most elaborate use of the relative deprivation approach may be found in a major study of political violence. Gurr (1969) posits a primary causal sequence in which relative deprivation fosters discontent, which is first politicized and then actualized in political violence. While Gurr recognizes a variety of factors that promote relative deprivation and a diversity of forms of political violence that result from it, it is relative deprivation that provides the crucial link between background conditions and political violence. Relative deprivation, in turn, derives from some rather simplistic psychological assumptions about the connections between frustration and aggression. Thus, even though he seeks to explain phenomena as complex as revolutions, his ultimate explanatory mechanisms are the social-psychological principles of relative deprivation, frustration, threat, and aggression. His emphasis on the subjective elements of how people define a state of relative deprivation implies that it is a nonrational process that flies in the face of objective measures of well-being. Although the tone of his book is that of neutral social science, there is no mistaking the subtext of value judgments that equate collective behavior with political violence and depict both as dangerous, extremist, illegitimate threats to prevailing social order. Indeed, given the sociohistorical climate in which it was written, it is hard not to interpret this as a primer in social control and counterinsurgency. Although the concept of relative deprivation need not lead to these judgments, Gurr's work provides a potent example of the inescapably political subtext of theories about collective behavior.

The Limits of Classical Collective Behavior Theory

Each variant of classical collective behavior theory reflects its respective origins in symbolic interactionism, structural-functionalism, and social psychology. Given the fundamental differences between these broad paradigms, there is remarkable convergence in their imagery of collective behavior. This imagery depicts collective behavior as taking a wide variety of forms, ranging from panics, crazes, and fads to social movements and revolutions. It depicts this behavior as noninstitutional, with the implication that it is spontaneous, unstructured, formless, and short lived. It argues that the structural origins of collective behavior involve social disorganization, strain, disorder, or disruption. And it ultimately argues that the individual's response to strains is the proximate cause of collective behavior, implicitly reducing collective behavior to a social-psychological phenomenon. This focus also paves the way for explicit arguments or implicit suggestions that collective behavior is fundamentally nonrational or irrational behavior that can assume dangerous and extreme forms. Each variant of the theory brings different emphases to these core assumptions, and not every variant is subject to each of the criticisms of the classical model.

But there is enough consensus to warrant evaluating the generic classical model on its own terms.

McAdam (1982) still provides the most concise critique of the classical model of collective behavior; it is directed at several core assumptions of this approach. For example, the claim that social movements are a response to social strain is deeply problematic. It ignores the larger political context in which movements arise and it assumes a mechanistic and linear relationship between macrolevel strain and microlevel behavior. The identification of individual discontent as the proximate cause of social movements constitutes a second problem. In at least some versions of the theory, this presumes an abnormal psychological profile that sharply distinguishes participants from nonparticipants in collective behavior. But aside from this difficulty, the individual level of analysis invoked here can assume away the central social process of translating individual mental states into genuinely collective phenomena. Finally, the individualistic emphasis denies the political dimension of collective behavior by implying that it is nothing more than a "convenient justification for what is at root a psychological phenomenon" (McAdam, 1982:17). When such an assumption guides the analysis, collective behavior is more likely to be perceived through the lens of deviant behavior than political action. Although many other criticisms have been lodged against the classical model, these go to its core by demonstrating how its key assumptions operate as conceptual blinders.

McAdam links his critique of collective behavior theory to the prevalence of pluralism as a political theory. If students of collective behavior adopt a pluralist perspective that presumes the political system is open and accessible to all groups, they will see collective behavior as an unwarranted, illegitimate, "short-circuited" response to problems that are better solved by working through appropriate channels. But there is even more at stake. Although it is true that the assumptions of classical collective behavior theory resonate with a larger set of assumptions defining pluralist political theory, pluralism itself is nested in even larger values that reinforced the plausibility of the classical model of collective behavior. In the postwar "long decade" from the late 1940s to the early 1960s, the social sciences established close links with the dominant institutions of the society. In the guise of value neutrality, many disciplines and their respective conceptual frameworks implicitly adopted a top-down, pro-system world view. Within sociology, it was Parsonian structural-functionalism that most clearly reflected these biases at the same time that it claimed scientific objectivity. It was not surprising that this era culminated with the ultimate ideological claim that we had reached the "end of ideology." The sociology of knowledge suggests that the prevalence of the classical model of collective behavior was not just a reflection of pluralist political philosophy but of a much broader, consensualist, intellectual world view that prevailed during the 1950s.

The sociology of knowledge suggests even more. The foundational assumptions of specific theories are not just related to broader intellectual standpoints. They also resonate with material conditions that define distinct, historically specific, sociopolitical eras. The long decade of the 1950s was variously characterized as one of affluence, progress, and prosperity. The "American cel-

eburation" of the "American Century" so trenchantly critiqued by C. Wright Mills (and very few others) typified many of the taken-for-granted assumptions of everyday life for large sectors of the population. In an era in which relations between management and labor appeared harmonious, when race relations had yet to "heat up," when images of marital bliss and familial harmony pervaded gender arrangements, when unprecedented educational and housing opportunities were becoming available to untold millions of Americans, when images of technological progress and material affluence were ubiquitous, and when the United States was the indisputable leader of the "free world," there was simply no room in the American celebration for recognizing deeply rooted, highly politicized conflicts of interest. It was not that there were no enemies, but rather that the enemies were defined as external because such a society could not be seen as generating its own opposition. If the opposition is external, the major threat is infiltration. McCarthyism's hysteria over this prospect and the undermining of the American way of life by communist agents was another expression of the image of America as a place of undisturbed harmony that could be jeopardized only from the outside. It is more than a little ironic that the conceptual tools of collective behavior theory find considerable applicability in the analysis of McCarthyism; the imagery of hysteria rarely found a more congenial home than in the anticommunism of the 1950s.

My purpose in adopting the sociology of knowledge to understand theoretical development is not to mechanistically reduce intellectual production to material conditions. It is rather to point out the resonance between material, social, political, ideological, and intellectual processes that give historically specific periods their unique identities. Both the prominence and the demise of the classical model of collective behavior can be understood only from this perspective. The dominance of the collective behavior paradigm resulted from a complex mix of scientific value, empirical validity, and its fit and resonance with a distinctive intellectual climate and specific sociohistorical conditions. Collective behavior theory was a piece of this larger puzzle that fit snugly because it explained what might otherwise have remained inexplicable. As long as the puzzle remained the same, the piece continued to fit. But when the puzzle of the larger intellectual and sociohistorical climate began to change in a fundamental way, the piece known as collective behavior theory lost its home.

RECENT SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY

The social and political activism of the "long decade" of the 1960s made the biggest single contribution to changing the intellectual and sociohistorical climate in which sociology and social movement theory existed. Beginning with civil rights activism in the 1950s, new forms of collective action were eventually taken up by other racial and ethnic groups, by students and youth in general, and by women and gay and lesbian activists. In various ways, these constituencies responded to oppressive discrimination, capitalist intrusions, bureaucratic domination, unrestrained militarism, and environmental devastation.

Although much of this activism had explicit political goals, a great deal of it spilled beyond the polity into a countercultural challenge to the "American way of life." Much of the power of this wave of collective action derived from its multifront character. It was a fundamental political challenge to the legitimacy of the central institutions of the society that dovetailed with a cultural challenge to the hegemony of the core values of the society. Although these movements experienced a combination of successes and defeats on particular issues, their greatest impact was a broader shift in the social, political, and cultural climate evidenced by chronic legitimation deficits and ongoing cultural experimentation. Indeed, the most bittersweet evidence of the extensiveness of the challenge posed by 1960s activism is the depth and power of the conservative and reactionary backlash to it that has dominated the national political scene since 1980 and shaped the "culture wars" of the late 1980s and 1990s.

It was perhaps inevitable that sociology would change in response to these developments, but the parallels between social change and disciplinary change are nevertheless striking. The postwar American celebration found its echo in Parsonian structural-functionalism. The imagery of a social system whose subsystems were smoothly and harmoniously integrated resonated strongly with societal proclamations of an age of affluence and the end of ideology. By the late 1950s, there were modest challenges to this paradigm by analytically oriented conflict theory, but even these challenges did not escape functionalism's foundational assumptions. Not until the social, political, and cultural changes of the 1960s did serious theoretical reexamination occur within sociology. This led to a proliferation of innovative paradigms that directed attention away from the conceptual imagery of functionalism in several ways. At the microlevel, a revival of symbolic interactionism and related perspectives was evident in developments in dramaturgical sociology, social constructionism, phenomenological sociology, and ethnomethodology. Although such developments can hardly be explained in terms of the social movements of the 1960s, their voluntaristic, actor-centered imagery resonated with the ways in which movements were demonstrating the efficacy of individual and collective action. At the macrolevel, the linkages between social change and social theory were certainly stronger. Social activism in society prompted theoretical development in sociology, as a rich diversity of neo-Marxian and neo-Weberian approaches put issues of power, domination, conflict, inequality, and change at the center of sociological theory once again. In these ways, the sibling relationship between social movements and sociology was particularly evident in this era of social and theoretical change.

It was in this context of broad social conflict and related disciplinary development that social movement theory underwent a qualitative change in the 1970s. This change was "cosponsored" by an older generation of scholars who advocated new ideas and a younger generation of sociologists who had been movement activists and subsequently received their professional training during this theoretical turmoil in the discipline. Their efforts to conceptualize the progressive movements of the 1960s challenged the accepted wisdom about collective behavior in at least four ways. First, new theories challenged the sub-

sumption of social movements under collective behavior and suggested that the former were different enough from the latter to warrant their own mode of analysis. Second, social movements were seen as exhibiting enduring, patterned, institutionalized elements, thereby challenging the traditional classification of them as noninstitutional behavior. Third, newer approaches explicitly argued that participants in social movements were, in the words of one theorist, "at least as rational as those who study them" (Schwartz, 1976:135), and this premise of the rational actor became a cornerstone of social movement analysis. Finally, the newer approaches accentuated the political dimension of social movement challenges by conceptualizing them as rooted in collective understandings of group interests; this political interpretation has largely displaced the earlier psychological interpretation of collective behavior. Taken together, these challenges constituted a fundamental paradigm shift in the sociological analysis of social movements. At the broadest level, this shift can be understood only through a sociology of knowledge attentive to the interplay of sociohistorical change, disciplinary development, and historically situated biographies.

The theoretical strands that constituted these challenges came to be known as resource mobilization theory, and this has been the dominant paradigm guiding social movement analysis since the late 1970s. Although it has been the target of some important criticisms, resource mobilization theory has fundamentally altered the terrain for studying social movements by establishing this topic as an independent domain of social analysis. The divorce between collective behavior and social movements has not gone completely uncontested, however, as some have called for a rapprochement between the symbolic interactionist approach to collective behavior and the resource mobilization approach to social movements (Marx and McAdam, 1994). This case has been most effectively made by one of the major rivals to resource mobilization theory known as social constructionism. At the very least, this rivalry has restored some appreciation of the socially constructed aspects of social movements that resource mobilization theory tended to ignore. The other major rival to resource mobilization theory has come from the European tradition of new social movement theory. Although sharing some premises with social constructionism, new social movement theory has sought to reintroduce a macrolevel, sociohistorical dimension to the analysis of social movements. In what follows, I offer a brief, critical overview of each of these perspectives. The goals of this overview are to provide a concise summary of each approach, to assess the state of the art in social movement theory, and to suggest how this theory might evolve most productively in the future.

The Resource Mobilization Paradigm

Resource mobilization theory emerged in the 1970s as a distinctively new approach to the study of social movements. According to this perspective, social movements are an extension of politics by other means, and can be analyzed in terms of conflicts of interest just like other forms of political struggle. Movements are also seen as structured and patterned, so that they can be analyzed

in terms of organizational dynamics just like other forms of institutionalized action (Oberschall, 1973; McCarthy and Zald, 1977, 1973; Tilly, 1978). In sharp contrast to the collective behavior tradition, resource mobilization theory views social movements as normal, rational, institutionally rooted, political challenges by aggrieved groups. The border between conventional politics and social movements thus becomes blurred, but does not disappear altogether. Whereas established special-interest groups have routine, low-cost access to powerful decision makers, social movements must pay higher costs to gain a comparable degree of influence within the polity. Resource mobilization theory thereby redefined the study of collective action from an example of deviance and social disorganization to a case study in political and organizational sociology.

Resource mobilization theory also takes a distinct position on questions of recruitment, motivation, and participation. Based on a rational actor model, individuals are viewed as weighing the relative costs and benefits of movement participation and opting for participation when the potential benefits outweigh the anticipated costs (McCarthy and Zald, 1977). When movement goals take the form of public goods that cannot be denied to nonparticipants, the free-rider dilemma is created because it is individually rational for each actor to let others win the goal and then share the benefits without the costs. In response to the free-rider dilemma, organizations may offer selective incentives for active participants that can be withheld from nonparticipants (Olson, 1965). This logic has been criticized as economistic by those who argue that collective, moral, purposive, or solidary incentives often motivate people to join movements even if they could theoretically "ride free" on the efforts of others (Fireman and Gamson, 1979). The role of different incentives remains a subject of debate, but the debate assumes rational actors on the individual level just as it assumes the normality of movements on the collective level.

Resource mobilization theory may be roughly divided into two camps. McCarthy and Zald (1977, 1973) are the originators and major practitioners of the entrepreneurial version of the theory, whereas Tilly (1978) and McAdam (1982) provide examples of the political version of the theory. The entrepreneurial model entered social movement theory through a distinctive critical wedge by arguing that grievances had little if any explanatory value in accounting for movement origins. The standard argument was that many groups in many times and places have had grievances but have not created social movements; hence, grievances cannot be the critical factor in generating social movements. What has been more variable, and more closely correlated with collective action, is group access to and control over the various resources necessary for effective social movement activism. The assumption of constant or ubiquitous grievances thereby made the variable factor of resources the central explanatory mechanism of social movement activity. Thus, the first principle of this approach is that the aggregation of resources is crucial to social movement activity. Resource aggregation, in turn, requires some minimal form of movement organization without which protest will not occur. A third principle is that the role of outside groups is often crucial in determining the flow of re-

sources toward or away from a given protest group. More broadly, it is principles of supply and demand that influence the flow of resources toward or away from a given social movement organization. And finally, the involvement of both individuals and organizations in protest is best explained in terms of the balance of costs and rewards (McCarthy and Zald, 1977).

The entrepreneurial version of resource mobilization theory thereby blends economic and organizational theory to understand collective action. The basic concepts reflect this emphasis. Social movements (SMs) are defined simply as opinions or beliefs that represent preferences for change in society, thereby putting the premium on social movement organizations (SMOs), which are complex or formal organizations that identify their goals with the preferences of a social movement. These SMOs, in turn, are grouped into social movement industries (SMIs) that include all the SMOs with overlapping goals that reflect the same SM. All SMIs, in turn, comprise the social movement sector (SMS) of society, implying that collective action has become a permanent and institutionalized part of modern, complex societies. In this model, SMOs operate like small businesses competing for resources and followers. Because survival is dependent on resource acquisition, the accent falls on the role of external resources from government, foundations, wealthy elites, or conscience constituents who bankroll movement activities. For the same reason, the role of leaders and entrepreneurs is critical because they often function as fundraisers seeking to create a sustained flow of resources into the SMO. These tasks have in turn promoted a high degree of professionalization in the leadership of SMOs; many leaders essentially have entire careers as professional organizers or entrepreneurial leaders of SMOs (McCarthy and Zald, 1977). The entrepreneurial version of resource mobilization theory thereby brings a very distinctive economic and organizational spin to the general premises of the theory, and it has much to tell us about a number of moderate, reform-oriented movements with a middle-class base. It is less informative about informally organized movement forms such as social movement communities (Buechler, 1990) or loosely structured collective action (Oberschall, 1993), but these formations are somewhat better handled by the other version of resource mobilization theory.

If economic relationships provide the guiding metaphor for the entrepreneurial version of the theory, power struggles are the guiding metaphor of the political version of the theory. One example is provided by the work of Tilly (1978), whose core assumptions are conveniently summarized in two models of collective action. The polity model describes a bounded population such as a nation-state that is internally divided between polity members and challengers. The former have routine, low-cost access to powerholders, whereas the latter must engage in collective action to have any influence. This model serves as a critique of pluralist images of power and also underscores the importance of alliances between polity members and challengers. The mobilization model identifies the key elements involved in collective action. The first element consists of group interests, conceptualized as the gains and losses for a group resulting from its interaction with other groups. The second element is organi-

zation, involving the intersection of categories and networks of people so that the highest degree of organization occurs when people of similar status interact intensively with one another. The third element consists of mobilization, which is a function of both the resources under group control and the probability that they will actually be delivered in an episode of collective action. The fourth element is opportunity, which is subdivided into three components identified as repression/facilitation, power, and opportunity/threat (Tilly, 1978). Although Tilly relies on some economic logic, the dominant imagery here is one of tactical, strategic, and instrumental power struggles among competing groups. The result is a model that adheres to the core assumptions of resource mobilization theory, but with a very different spin on those assumptions from that of the entrepreneurial model.

Another example of this political version is provided by McAdam's political process model (1982). Although he offers this as an alternative to resource mobilization theory, his real foil is the entrepreneurial version of the theory; his alternative is best seen as another illustration of the political version of resource mobilization theory. McAdam is critical of the entrepreneurial version for overstating the role of elites, underemphasizing the importance of the mass base, and oversimplifying the nature of grievances. In McAdam's model, the essential elements of collective action begin with the structure of political opportunities. Although this is an external factor not under the direct control of activists, it nevertheless shapes their potential for success. Political opportunities improve when the power discrepancy between authorities and challengers is reduced and the bargaining position of challengers improves. The second factor shaping collective action is indigenous organizational strength. This internal factor is largely under the control of activists, and it is a product of the interaction between members, leaders, incentives, and communication. The third element involves what McAdam calls cognitive liberation. This subjective factor refers to a change in group consciousness whereby potential protesters see the existing social order not only as illegitimate, but also as subject to change through their own direct efforts. It is the interaction of these three factors that shapes the emergence of social movements; their persistence, in turn, is a function of processes that sustain organizational strength and the social control responses of authorities. As with Tilly's model, the dominant imagery here is more of political struggle than economic entrepreneurship, illustrating again the diverse interpretations that have been placed on the core assumptions of resource mobilization theory.

These diverse interpretations have promoted some important debates between the two versions of resource mobilization theory about the role of entrepreneurial leaders, the value of external resources, and the variability of movement grievances (McAdam, 1982; Morris, 1984). The same issues have provided targets for critics of the resource mobilization paradigm as a whole. Perhaps the most common criticism is that the theory oversimplifies the role of grievances and downplays the role of ideational factors in general. The theory has also been criticized for overstating the importance of formal organizational structures as opposed to informal or decentralized networks. The model

of the rational actor has attracted criticism for its hyperrational assumptions about movement participants and for its individualistic orientation to what is essentially a collective process. For the same reason, resource mobilization has been inattentive to the role of collective identity in movements, and it has done little to acknowledge the internal diversity of many movement groups. In the broadest theoretical terms, the resource mobilization framework emphasizes instrumental action oriented to political and economic domains and ignores the cultural and symbolic life world that necessarily underpins such strategic action (Habermas, 1987, 1984). Put differently, resource mobilization's concern with resources and organization leads it to ignore the role of culture in collective action. If we take culture to refer to symbolic systems of meaning construction, it encapsulates many of the specific criticisms already discussed. Given this, it is no accident that both social constructionism and new social movement theory have sought to bring cultural processes back into social movement analysis [see Buechler (1993) for a more detailed discussion of these criticisms of the resource mobilization paradigm].

Although these criticisms have become widely known, less critical attention has been directed to the level of analysis at which resource mobilization theory operates. Research within this tradition initially focused on the mesolevel to the relative exclusion of both macro- and microlevels of collective action. This is a logical extension of resource mobilization's emphasis on the role of organization and the mobilization of resources as central to understanding such action. Given an historical context of sociological theories that traditionally approached collective behavior as a microlevel phenomenon to be explained in social-psychological terms or as the manifestation of macrolevel social disorganization and breakdown, the establishment of the mesolevel of analysis was an important step forward. However, there was a tendency within this framework to focus so exclusively on the mesolevel of organizational analysis that larger questions of social structure and historical change and smaller issues of individual motivation and social interaction received scant attention. The result was an image of movement organizations as disembodied and reified social actors detached from larger structural constraints and historical contexts as they engaged in collective action. In the last decade, however, much work has been done on bridging the meso- and microlevels of collective action through various studies of micromobilization.

Although there has been a sustained effort to move from the mesolevel to the microlevel, much less attention has been paid to the macrolevel (Mueller, 1992). Research in the organizational tradition may give fleeting attention to the macrolevel to explain movement origins through changes in the availability of resources, but the subsequent analysis typically ignores this level. Research in the political tradition is somewhat more attentive to how macrolevel change alters political opportunity structures for collective action, but once again the subsequent analysis tends to focus on the mesolevel. Despite a difference in degree, both versions of the theory take an eclectic, ad hoc approach to structural issues, and neither offers any systematic theory of how macrolevel organization affects movements (and vice versa) beyond resource availability or

opportunity structures. Systemic power relations and structural inequality thus tend to be ignored by this approach (Canel, 1992; Mueller, 1992). Without such a macrosociological theory, the resource mobilization framework can say little about how group interests, the stakes of conflicts, or even resources themselves are defined prior to collective action; such accounts can quickly become tautological as a result (Kitschelt, 1991). Since these processes can be theoretically understood only over significant periods of historical time, insensitivity to the macrolevel results in a distinctly ahistorical approach to the study of social movements as well. The consistent tendency of the resource mobilization framework to ignore macrostructural, historical contexts has limited its analysis of collective action.

There has been no major effort to resolve this problem and theorize the macro-meso link in the way that some have theorized the meso-micro link. A rare exception to this claim is a highly atypical article on the "Political Economy of Social Movement Sectors" (Garner and Zald, 1987) that situates social movements in a context of class structure, dual labor markets, a consumer economy, and a global system. This article may be read as an open invitation for scholars to integrate the macrolevel into social movement analysis, but the subsequent literature suggests that few have taken the invitation seriously. Five years later, Zald identified resource mobilization theory's strengths at the meso- and meso-micro levels and acknowledged that the theory had not done enough to analyze class structure, epochal cultural crises, or macrotheories of change (Zald, 1992). This inattentiveness to the macrolevel is particularly curious because contemporary social theory offers several promising approaches to the macrolevel and to addressing multiple levels of analysis (Ritzer, 1996; Collins, 1988; Giddens, 1984). Social movement theory is a particularly fruitful area for such work because movements are microcosms of individual action embedded in larger, sociohistorical contexts. The fact that resource mobilization theory has not made these moves to date suggests the outer limits of this perspective, as well as the inherently partial nature of all theoretical perspectives. It remains a sharp tool for certain questions, but it is also a very blunt instrument for other questions about social activism.

In retrospect, the rise to prominence of resource mobilization theory seems almost overdetermined. New social conflicts were rapidly emerging across the social landscape; the classical model of collective behavior seemed unable to account for the most distinctive features of these conflicts; social theory in general had shifted away from a dominant concern with stability to new interests in conflict, power, and struggle; and many young sociologists who helped develop this approach were former activists themselves. It was this historically specific conjuncture of forces that not only precipitated a crisis for the older paradigm of the classical model, but also made the newer paradigm of resource mobilization appear as a compelling alternative. Just as the collective behavior tradition fit the sociohistorical puzzle of the 1950s, resource mobilization theory was an equally good fit for a later sociohistorical puzzle. For almost a decade, resource mobilization theory was so compelling that it virtually crowded

out other explanations of collective action. By the late 1980s, however, two other perspectives began to establish themselves.

Social Constructionist Theory

Although social constructionism is presented here as an alternative to the resource mobilization paradigm, it also signifies a revival of the symbolic interactionist version of collective behavior theory that predated the rise of the resource mobilization paradigm. There is a certain irony in the fact that although symbolic interactionism is often criticized for being inattentive to power dynamics, this theoretical tradition has itself been engaged in a decades-long struggle against structuralist approaches in sociology. Although the demise of functionalism in the 1960s created more space for symbolic interactionism, some of that space was filled by newer structuralist approaches (both Marxist and mainstream) that continued to deny the central premises of symbolic interaction. This general theoretical battle also occurred in the specific domain of social movement theory. Even during the prominence of the classical model of collective behavior, the symbolic interactionist version was at loggerheads with functionalist versions as well as relative deprivation approaches. With the rise of resource mobilization theory, there was a tendency for all of the versions of the classical model to be collapsed, critiqued, and rejected; this tendency ignored the different theoretical underpinnings of these models and obliterated their subtleties and nuances. But of the three versions, the symbolic interactionist one has the most resiliency, as indicated by the prevalence of its key premises in contemporary social constructionism (Gusfield, 1994).

Symbolic interactionism's premises also ground criticisms of other approaches to collective action. For example, the insistence on interaction as the appropriate unit of analysis is said to avoid problems of psychological reductionism, structural determination, and reification. If interaction is the appropriate unit of analysis, the most important process that occurs on that level is the use of symbols. Whether construed as meanings, interpretations, definitions, or identities, symbols are central to the communication processes and interaction networks that comprise society in general and collective action in particular. Such premises link symbolic interactionism, its classical model of collective behavior, and social constructionism. Despite this common heritage, there are some differences between the latter two approaches. Contemporary social constructionism is more attentive to social movements than to elementary forms of collective behavior; it recognizes that collective action can be sustained over time and patterned in its organization; it is more attuned to the cognitive dimensions of motivation and recruitment into social movements; and it places more emphasis on the role of networks and organizations as conduits of collective action. Although these premises locate social constructionism at some distance from the collective behavior tradition and in some proximity to the resource mobilization approach, social constructionism remains insistent that every aspect of collective action must be understood as an interactive, symbolically defined and negotiated process among participants, opponents, and

bystanders. These emphases are evident in the seminal contributions of this paradigm.

Some of the central concerns of social constructionism were foreshadowed by the concept of cognitive liberation (Piven and Cloward, 1977; McAdam, 1982) and calls for a new social psychology of collective action (Klandermans, 1997, 1984). These issues recur in the social constructionist concept of framing, borrowed from Goffman (1974). Framing means focusing attention on some bounded phenomenon by imparting meaning and significance to elements within the frame and setting them apart from what is outside the frame. In the context of social movements, framing refers to the interactive, collective ways that movement actors assign meanings to their activities in the conduct of social movement activism. The concept of framing is designed for discussing the social construction of grievances as a fluid and variable process of social interaction—and hence a much more important explanatory tool than resource mobilization theory had maintained. Grievances are framed in at least three ways (Snow and Benford, 1988). Diagnostic framing identifies a problem, including attributions of blame or causality so that the movement has a target for its actions. Prognostic framing suggests possible solutions and remedies, often including tactics and strategies that are appropriate to the target identified. Taken together, these accomplish consensus mobilization (Klandermans, 1988) by creating the mobilization pool from which movements recruit; such pools are socially constructed rather than structurally guaranteed. Activating mobilization pools requires motivational framing that issues a call to arms and a rationale for action by providing a vocabulary of motives that compels people to act (Benford, 1993b). In sum, successful framing translates vaguely felt dissatisfactions into well-defined grievances and compels people to join the movement to do something about those grievances.

Although motivational framing may supply a sense of urgency, movements must engage in additional frame alignment processes to maximize recruitment efforts. Frame alignment refers to linking together the interpretive orientations of individuals and social movement organizations, so that individual interests, values, and beliefs are congruent with the activities, goals, and ideologies of social movement organizations (Snow et al., 1986). This further specification of how movements achieve both consensus and action mobilization involves four distinct frame alignment processes. Frame bridging is the most minimal process; it involves movement organizations reaching people who already share their orientation to the world through publicity efforts and organizational outreach to let people know that there already exists a group that shares their views on a given issue. Frame amplification appeals to deeply held values and beliefs in the general population and links those values and beliefs to movement issues; in this way, people's preexisting value commitments provide a "hook" that can be used to recruit them into the movement. Frame extension involves enlarging the boundaries of an initial frame to include issues of importance to potential participants, positioning the movement as a logical response to preexisting concerns of some segment of the population. The most elaborate process is frame transformation, in which the creation and nurturance of new values,

beliefs, and meanings induce movement participation by redefining activities, events, and biographies as requiring people to become involved in collective action. Although not all movements engage in all frame alignment processes, virtually every movement engages in at least some of these tactics to define grievances and recruit participants. This conceptual repertoire thereby provides a powerful language for analyzing the social construction of collective action. At the same time, frame alignment tends to be a top-down perspective on the relation between leaders and followers. In the words of one critic, "we are never told how the potential audience reacts to the marketing pitch of social movement organizations, and how this reaction affects the interpretative process" (Aguirre, 1994:268).

As the concepts of individual and collective identity became more central in social movement theory with the rise of new social movement theory, practitioners of the framing perspective demonstrated its applicability to questions of identity as well (Hunt et al., 1994). For example, protagonist framing involves a fundamental distinction between an in-group and an out-group that identifies the allies of the movement and helps to maintain its solidarity. Antagonist framing identifies the enemies of the movement by specifying the source of the problem and villainizing the people framed as responsible for the problem that the movement is addressing. Finally, audience framing identifies the relevant bystanders to a given conflict and their potential for joining either the movement or its opposition. Audience framing may also involve strategies for recruiting support or neutralizing opposition. The framing processes involved in defining grievances, recruiting participants, and shaping identities are obviously intertwined in the ongoing daily activities of social movements, but the conceptual distinctions are nonetheless important in underscoring the socially constructed nature of these processes in collective action.

Although most of these concepts are couched in terms of interpersonal interaction at the micro- and mesolevels, the concept of master frames addresses general ideological trends at the macrolevel of social order (Snow and Benford, 1992). Master frames refer to the broadest structures of meaning in social movements that define grievances in terms of oppression, injustice, or exploitation and call for liberation, fairness, or equity. Their generality is what allows master frames to be adopted by more than one constituency; multiple groups can find a home under the broad symbolic canopy of a master frame. Because of this feature, Snow and Benford (1992) see master frames as intimately related to cycles of protest. Thus, such cycles may originate with the creation of a new master frame that galvanizes a number of aggrieved groups in ways that were not possible earlier. Movements that appear earlier in a cycle of protest may pave the way for later movements that adopt the same frame, but those same path-breaking efforts may constrain the options or effectiveness of later movements using the same master frame. Master frames thereby influence the goals, tactics, strategies, coalitions, and resources of entire social movement industries. For these reasons, the concept provides a potential bridge between the largely microlevel focus of the framing perspective and macrolevel, ideological questions about public, political, and media discourse.

One model for analyzing multiple social levels is provided by Klanderman's (1992) analysis of the social construction of protest. He proposes that we analyze transformations in collective consciousness as involving public discourse at the societal level, persuasive communication at the interactive level, and consciousness raising at the individual level. Each level is interdependent with the others, as they shape collective beliefs about movement grievances and success expectations. Public discourse and media discourse can create, sustain, or dissolve a collective definition of a situation and the collective identities associated with that definition. Persuasive communication is a form of contestatory symbolic politics that interacts with media discourse to create consensus mobilization or frame alignment. Consciousness raising is often less a predecessor of collective action than an emergent by-product of that action if the appropriate frames are available. This analysis provides an important reminder that the social construction of protest always operates through several interacting levels of social reality.

These interacting levels may be understood as comprising a political culture that provides people with meaning systems and cultural themes for talking about political objects (Gamson, 1988). Political culture relies on interpretive packages that are internally structured by frames that make sense of relevant events; as such, they are critical to successful collective action. Media discourse is one site at which such packages are constructed and disseminated to audiences; this discourse promotes multiple packages, but they all bear the imprint of prevailing media sponsors and practices. Public opinion represents a parallel system for constructing meaning that is shaped but not determined by media discourse since the former admits of personal experience and recognizes people as active creators of meaning. Alongside media discourse and public opinion, personal experience constitutes another basic source of information. Indeed, the most robust collective action frames combine media discourse and experiential knowledge to speak to themes of injustice, agency, and identity; such framings anchor grievances in daily life (Gamson, 1995). The social construction of collective action occurs within this preexisting political culture, as movements borrow, modify, or create frames to advance their goals. One of Gamson's most compelling examples concerns the differential framing of nuclear disasters. The political and cultural climate of the late 1970s made it relatively easy to define events at Three Mile Island as a technological catastrophe. Thirteen years earlier, by contrast, an arguably more serious partial meltdown at the Fermi reactor caused no political fallout in the absence of antinuclear packages that did not emerge until the 1970s (Gamson, 1988; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). The historical contrast nicely illustrates how people act toward things on the basis of the meanings things have for them, and how those meanings emerge from political culture, including social activism.

Because Gamson has done more than anyone else to extend the social constructionist perspective to the macrolevel context of media discourse and public communication, it is all the more significant that in a major programmatic statement he has argued that the "frontiers of social movement theory are in social psychological territory" (Gamson, 1992:74). This theme permeates a

broad ranging discussion of some central concepts of social movement analysis. Thus, collective identity is posed as an expansion of personal identity in a collective setting. Solidarity is described as a linking of individual and social levels. Consciousness raising is represented as the mesh between individual cognition and sense making on the one hand and cultural world views, schemata, and scripts on the other hand. Micromobilization is viewed as connecting these processes to collective action by organizing the lines of action of multiple actors in similar fashion. In each case, a central concept in the analysis of collective action is presented in a social-psychological frame that pulls attention back down from the macrolevel to the microlevel and to micro-mesolevel linkages. Although Gamson is surely correct in arguing that social constructionism has greatly improved earlier social-psychological premises in the collective behavior tradition, his valorization of social psychology as the new frontier of social movement theory leaves little space for a theory of social movements that is attentive to macrolevel social structures and to historical specificity in the analysis of collective action.

As this brief overview suggests, social constructionism has made a number of important contributions to social movement theory since its emergence in the mid-1980s. These contributions have established the paradigm as a major contender in the study of collective action. Despite this newly won status, "no critical review of this approach has been published to date" (Benford, 1997:410). This observation introduces Benford's own "insider's critique" of the social constructionist perspective. His assessment underscores a schism whereby the perspective as a whole has neglected empirical work in favor of conceptual development, but the empirical work that has been done suffers from a descriptive bias (and a proliferation of terms for various frames) that has prevented it from being theoretically grounded. Other problems include static tendencies in the formulation of theoretical concepts and a tendency toward reification that neglects human agency and emotions and anthropomorphizes nonhuman entities. Still other studies fall into the opposite error of reductionism by psychologizing the sociological level of interaction and offering individual-level explanations of social action. An additional problem (not unique to this perspective) is an elite bias that focuses more attention on framing by elites than by rank-and-file members. Most generally, Benford summarizes these problems as monolithic tendencies that oversimplify collective action and neglect "the multi-layered complexities of frames and framing activities" (Benford, 1997:422). Benford's remedies clarify his critique as not only an insider's but also an internalist critique. By this I mean that his criticisms do not challenge the foundational premises of social constructionism as much as they reveal the gap between the potential of those premises and work done to date; his remedies would not move beyond social constructionism as much as they would develop it more fully.

The sociology of knowledge can suggest why social constructionism has attracted relatively little critical assessment. The amount of criticism directed at a theoretical perspective reflects not only its inherent strengths and weaknesses but also its position in a field of competing theoretical frameworks. Dominant

frameworks attract extensive critical attention (perhaps far out of proportion to their actual shortcomings) as a function of their dominance and the resulting lack of theoretical space for alternatives. This is what happened to the classical model of collective behavior when resource mobilization theory came on the scene, and to a lesser extent resource mobilization theory has begun to attract the level and type of criticism often reserved for dominant perspectives. Challenging frameworks, on the other hand, receive less critical attention (perhaps again out of proportion to their actual limitations) simply because they are challengers fighting for theoretical space against dominant theories. There is also a more specific factor at work here. Social constructionism has not presented itself as a totalizing, universal paradigm for understanding collective action as much as it has claimed to offer partial, perspectival contributions toward a more holistic understanding of collective action. This was certainly the spirit expressed in much of the social constructionist literature from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, which argued not that resource mobilization theory was fundamentally flawed but rather that it left certain explanatory gaps that social constructionism was well prepared to fill. Both general and specific factors thereby combine to suggest why social constructionism has attracted relatively little critical attention to date.

My goal here is not to offer such a critique, but rather to underscore social constructionism's impact on the directionality of social movement theory. The classical collective behavior tradition was primarily a microlevel, social-psychological approach to its subject matter (with the partial exception of Smelser's theory that acknowledged structural conduciveness and strain). Resource mobilization theory established the mesolevel of organizational analysis that had been previously lacking in social movement theory. The impact of social constructionism as an alternative to resource mobilization theory has been to valorize the linkages between micro- and mesolevels of analysis and to (in Gamson's words) redefine social psychology as representing the real frontier of social movement theory. The other contribution of social constructionism has been to reinforce a certain style of theorizing in social movement analysis. For all its differences with resource mobilization theory, both paradigms seek increasingly abstract and generalizable theoretical concepts removed from the historically specific contexts in which social movements arise. The combined effect of both approaches has been to direct attention away from historically specific aspects of macrolevel social structures and their impact on collective action. These moves perpetuated gaps in social movement theory that new social movement theory claims to fill. It is to this perspective that we now turn.

New Social Movement Theory

Whereas social constructionism emerged as a "national" rival to resource mobilization theory, new social movement theory appeared as an "international" challenger rooted in continental European traditions of social theory and political philosophy (Cohen, 1985; Klandermans, 1991; Klandermans and Tarrow, 1988; Larana et al., 1994; Pichardo, 1997). This approach is, in large

part, a response to the economic reductionism of classical Marxism that prevented it from adequately grasping contemporary forms of collective action (Canel, 1992). These premises have led Marxists to privilege proletarian revolution rooted in the sphere of production and to marginalize any other form of social protest. New social movement theorists, by contrast, have looked to other logics of action (based in politics, ideology, and culture) and other sources of identity (such as ethnicity, gender, and sexuality) as the sources of collective action. The term "new social movements" thus refers to a diverse array of collective actions that has presumably displaced the old social movement of proletarian revolution. Even though new social movement theory is a critical reaction to classical Marxism, some new social movement theorists seek to update and revise conventional Marxist assumptions whereas others seek to displace and transcend them. Indeed, despite the now common usage of the term "new social movement theory," it is a misnomer if it implies widespread agreement among a range of theorists on a number of core premises. It would be more accurate to speak of "new social movement theories," with the implication that there are many variations on a general approach to something called new social movements (Buechler, 1995).

As a first approximation to this general approach, however, it is possible to identify a number of themes that are prominent in most if not all versions of new social movement theories. First and foremost, most versions of these theories operate with some model of a societal totality that provides the context for the emergence of collective action. Although theorists differ on the nature of this societal totality, the attempt to theorize a historically specific social formation as the structural backdrop for contemporary forms of collective action is perhaps the most distinctive feature of new social movement theories. This restoration of the macrolevel in social movement theory distinguishes new social movement theories from both social constructionism and resource mobilization approaches. A second theme in most new social movement approaches is a causal claim that links these new movements to this societal totality; this often means seeing new social movements as responses to modernity or postmodernity. If modern or postmodern societal totalities are defined by capitalist markets, bureaucratic states, scientized relationships, and instrumental rationality, new social movements are historically specific responses to these features of the modern and postmodern condition. These characterizations often emphasize the extent to which large, anonymous social institutions have become especially intrusive and invasive in the late twentieth century; these "colonizing efforts" (Habermas, 1987, 1984) have prompted many social movement actions in response to the invasive and controlling aspects of social life in late modernity.

A third theme concerns the diffuse social base of new social movements. Some analysts see these movements as rooted in some fraction of the (new) middle classes (Eder, 1993; Kriesi, 1989; Offe, 1985). Others have argued that these movements are no longer rooted in the class structure, but rather in other statuses such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, or citizenship that are central in mobilizing new social movements (Dalton et al., 1990). Still

others have argued that even these statuses are less important than ideological consensus over movement values and beliefs. For all these reasons, the social base of these movements is presumed to be more complex than in older and more conventional class-based activism (Buechler, 1995). This leads to a fourth theme concerning the centrality of collective identity in social protest (Hunt et al., 1994; Johnston et al., 1994; Klandermans, 1994; Melucci, 1996a, 1989; Stoecker, 1995). This theme reflects the uncoupling of activism from the class structure as well as the fluidity and multiplicity of identities in late modernity; hence the ability of people to engage in collective action is increasingly tied to their ability to define an identity in the first place (Melucci, 1996a, 1989). This places a premium on the social construction of collective identity as an essential part of contemporary social activism, and it has led to a belated appreciation of how even "old" class-based movements were not structurally determined as much as they were socially constructed in the mobilization process itself (Thompson, 1963).

A fifth theme involves the politicization of everyday life as the "relation between the individual and the collective is blurred" (Johnston et al., 1994:7) and formerly intimate and private aspects of social life become politicized. The equation of the personal and the political fosters not only identity politics but a life-style politics in which everyday life becomes a major arena of political action. Like many aspects of these movements, this characteristic cannot be understood apart from the social context. For new social movement activists (and most theorists of such activism), it is late modernity that has blurred the lines between the political and the personal through invasive technologies; movements are thus responses to a systemic politicization of life rather than the initiators of such politicization. A sixth theme concerns the values said to typify new social movements. Although some have argued that the sheer pluralism of values and ideas is their defining hallmark (Johnston et al., 1994), others have focused on the centrality of postmaterialist values (Inglehart, 1990; Dalton et al., 1990) in such activism. Whereas materialist values involve redistributive struggles in the conventional political sphere, postmaterialist values emphasize the quality rather than the quantity of life (Habermas, 1987, 1984). Rather than seeking power, control, or economic gain, such movements are more inclined to seek autonomy and democratization (Rucht, 1988). Although the aptness of the "postmaterialist" designation can be challenged, such a focus does make movements less susceptible to traditional forms of social control and cooptation by the conventional political system.

A seventh theme involves the role of cultural and symbolic forms of resistance alongside or in place of more conventional political forms of contestation (Cohen, 1985). For many movements, this embodies their philosophical or spiritual rejection of the instrumental rationality of advanced capitalist society and its systems of social control and cooptation. This cultural emphasis rejects conventional goals, tactics, and strategies in favor of the exploration of new identities, meanings, signs, and symbols. Although some have criticized this orientation as apolitical, such criticisms may ignore the importance of cultural forms of social power. As Nancy Whittier (1995) has argued, if hegemony

is an important form of social power, the culturally oriented, antihegemonic politics of many new movements is a valid form of resistance. The ability to envision and symbolically enact new and different ways of organizing social relationships can itself be a potent challenge to dominant social arrangements (Melucci, 1996a, 1989). A final theme in new social movement activism is a preference for organizational forms that are decentralized, egalitarian, participatory, prefigurative, and ad hoc (Melucci, 1989; Gusfield, 1994; Mueller, 1994). For these movements, organization is less a strategic tool than a symbolic expression of movement values and member identities. New social movements function less as standing armies than as cultural laboratories that vacillate between latency and visibility (Melucci, 1996a, 1989) as they episodically organize for specific battles and then revert to politicized subcultures that sustain movement visions and values for the next round of explicitly organized activism.

Although these themes distinguish new social movement theories from other approaches, it is also possible to internally distinguish a "political" and a "cultural" version of such theories. The political version draws on the most promising neo-Marxist scholarship to argue that the central societal totality is advanced capitalism and that there are strong connections between advanced capitalism and the emergence of new social movements. The political version of new social movement theory is macro oriented in general and state oriented in particular. It retains a concern with strategic questions and instrumental action as the ultimate goals of social movements while recognizing the importance of identity formation, grievance definition, and interest articulation as intermediate steps in the process of movement activism. It recognizes a role for new constituencies in social activism based on race, gender, nationality, or other characteristics, but it does not jettison the potential for class-based or worker-based movements alongside these groups. It emphasizes the potential for proactive, progressive change if appropriate alliances and coalitions between class-based and nonclass-based movements can be forged. The political version tends to be somewhat critical of the "apolitical" nature of more culturally oriented new social movements because it limits their potential for producing meaningful social change. And finally, this perspective identifies the social base of new social movements in class terms by analyzing the complexity of contemporary class structure and its contradictory locations as the backdrop for social activism.

The cultural version of new social movement theory is post-Marxist in presuming a more radical break between past and present societal types and movement forms. The cultural version identifies the societal totality in cultural or semiotic terms as an information society whose administrative codes conceal forms of domination. It emphasizes the decentralized nature of both power and resistance, so it is not particularly macro oriented or state centered but rather focuses on everyday life, civil society, and the creation of free spaces between state and civil society. The cultural version eschews strategic questions and instrumental action as pitfalls to be avoided, while emphasizing symbolic expressions that challenge the instrumental logic of systemic domination. The

cultural version not only recognizes new social constituencies but also argues that the old worker-based constituencies for social activism have been transcended along with industrial capitalism. The cultural version views activism as a defensive reaction to domination that can potentially challenge systemic imperatives, but it eschews the language of "progressive" movements as invoking an unwarranted metaphysics of history. This approach also rejects the apolitical label often attached to culturalist movements by arguing that political movements are the most easily coopted and that cultural movements fighting on symbolic terrain can do more to expose contemporary forms of power than more conventionally political movements. And finally, this version is more likely to identify the social base of new social movements in nonclass terms that identify other statuses or distinctive values and ideologies that define movement constituencies. This typology is no more than an ideal-typical sensitizing device, but it helps to organize a variety of issues into two relatively coherent positions with a fair degree of internal consistency (Buechler, 1995).

Whereas social constructionism has received remarkably little critical attention, the same cannot be said for new social movement theory. The sociology of knowledge suggests a common thread in the reception of both theories, however. Just as the gentle reception for social constructionism reflects its modest positioning as a partial, complementary orientation in the field of social movement theory, the harsher response to new social movement theories reflects their much grander claims about the changing nature of society and social movements. In some cases, these claims are totalizing narratives that seek to displace rather than complement existing perspectives. This was obscured for a time by the cliché that resource mobilization theory explained the "how" of movement mobilization whereas new social movement theory explained the "why" of such mobilization (Klandermans and Tarrow, 1988). The implication that because they answered different questions they could somehow be combined was simplistic and optimistic at best. The subsequent work of American sociologists suggests that although they continue to utilize resource mobilization theory to understand how movements operate, the question of why is at best secondary and new social movement theory is at best a poor relation of resource mobilization theory. As the comparison with social constructionism suggests, however, the chilly reception of new social movement theory reflects its style of theorizing and its positioning relative to dominant perspectives as much as it reflects its intrinsic theoretical merit.

If the style of theorizing made this perspective suspect, the claim of "newness" provided an explicit target for critics. The argument that there is a defensible category of "new" movements sufficiently like each other and demonstrably different from "old" movements to be the foundation of a whole new theoretical approach to social movements has drawn the most criticism. The "newness" of new social movements has been challenged by criticisms that the category overstates their novelty (Plotke, 1990), ignores their organizational predecessors (Tarrow, 1991), mistakes an early position in a cycle of protest for a new type of protest (Tarrow, 1991), ignores long-standing historical cycles of cultural critique (Brandt, 1990), and misinterprets a generational phe-

nomenon as a categorical shift in collective action (Johnston et al., 1994). The most injurious critiques have come from historical studies of nineteenth-century labor movements (the quintessential "old" movement) that reveal them to possess most of the supposedly distinctive features of "new" social movements (Calhoun, 1993; Tucker, 1991). Although defenders have attempted to specify the newness of new social movements (Cohen, 1983; Dalton and Kuechler, 1990; Eder, 1993; Offe, 1990), many concede that there is more continuity between supposedly old and new movements than this terminology implies (Johnston et al., 1994; Johnston, 1994; Larana, 1994; Shin, 1994; Taylor, 1989). The combination of a grandiose theoretical style and a dubious categorical foundation has thereby made new social movement theory an easy target for its critics.

Like many criticisms, however, these rest on certain interpretations of the claims of new social movement theorists in the first place. Given the multiplicity of theorists and claims, interpretations can quickly become misinterpretations of the paradigm as a whole. Melucci's response to critics is instructive in this regard. As an early advocate of new social movement theory, Melucci was always careful to present the concept as nothing more than a fluid, sensitizing device for exploring contemporary forms of protest. Despite this, most critics and some practitioners of new social movement theory have imputed much more to this category by reifying, ontologizing, and essentializing the term into a fundamental category of analysis that then becomes subject to all the critiques mentioned above (Melucci, 1996a, 1995a, 1989). Although Melucci's response to critics has become well known, there is another (mis)interpretation of new social movement theory that has received less attention. This is the widespread tendency to divorce new social movements from the social structures that generate them and to analyze (or criticize) them in isolation. In my view, the most distinctive feature of new social movement theories is their attempt to identify the links between (new) social structures or societal totalities and (new) forms of collective action. Hence, the newness that is the focus of the theories is not so much a quality of movements in isolation as it is a quality of the social structures to which movements respond, and which they inevitably reflect. To whatever extent this is correct, many standard critiques of new social movement theory misconstrue the theory and ignore this relationship between collective action and its social environment.

There are several noteworthy examples of new social movement theories for which the connections between societal totalities and social movements are crucial. For Melucci (1996a, 1989), the emphasis falls on the semiotic aspects of a postmodern information society and the numerous ways in which these elements are reflected in contemporary activism. For Castells (1983), it is the capitalist transformation of urban space alongside the state's role in collective consumption that provokes important forms of collective action. For Habermas (1987, 1984), it is the tendency in advanced capitalism for a systemic political economy to instrumentally dominate and colonize a communicative life world that provokes new forms of social resistance. For Touraine (1985, 1981), the nature of postindustrial, programmed society is at the root of contempo-

rary collective action as movements challenge authorities for control of what Touraine calls "historicity." Each of these rather different theories makes reference to "new social movements," but the newness and distinctiveness of these movements cannot be understood apart from the equally new, historically specific, social structures to which they respond. It is precisely these connections that are often ignored by critics, and even by sympathetic interpreters of new social movement theories. It is instructive that in the introduction to their oft-cited reader on new social movements, Larana et al. (1994) identify eight characteristics of such movements; none makes any reference to the historically specific societal totalities that these movements inhabit. The resulting interpretation of new social movement theories filters out the macrolevel claims of the theories to focus on symbols, values, and identities. Although these are important elements of new social movement theories, this is a very selective reading; it is as if new social movement theories were being viewed through a social constructionist lens for an American audience.

A fuller consideration of the holistic nature of new social movement theories would not save them from criticism. All of them are problematic in a variety of ways, and some of them seem especially susceptible to criticism. Touraine's work is instructive here for its brilliance in analyzing contemporary society and social activism alongside very dubious claims about how each social formation contains one central contradiction and thereby generates one predominant social movement that responds to this contradiction. Such essentialism seems to preserve the worst of the Marxist tradition, with its designation of the proletariat as the universal class and inevitable gravediggers of industrial capitalism. Although some holistic versions of new social movement theory are admittedly difficult to defend, this does not warrant eliminating an entire level of social analysis from social movement theory. It would seem more promising to explore more flexible versions of the insight that there are connections between historically specific societal totalities and forms of collective action, and that as the former change so do the latter. This is the task that I will undertake in the second part of this book. In so doing, I regard new social movement theories as highly provocative but deeply flawed preliminary efforts to locate social movements within historically specific societal totalities.

The State of the Art

Contemporary social movement theory is characterized by a proliferation of perspectives. Whereas market forces like pressure on young academics to produce something "new" may help explain the number of approaches (Lofland, 1993), their specific content and historical trajectory require a more subtle analysis. The period from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s was dominated by resource mobilization theory, exemplified by the political (Oberschall, 1973; Tilly, 1978) and the entrepreneurial (McCarthy and Zald, 1977) versions of the theory as well as the political process variant (McAdam, 1982). By the mid-1980s, two very different challengers appeared, and they were very much in evidence by 1990. Social constructionism and the framing perspective (Snow et

al., 1986) was both a revival of the symbolic interactionist version of collective behavior theory and a fresh challenge to some of the premises of resource mobilization theory. As such, it represented the main "domestic" rival to resource mobilization theory. At about the same time, new social movement theory appeared as the main "international" rival to resource mobilization theory, as more and more of the work done by European theorists became accessible to U.S. scholars. Compared with many other theoretical disputes, this one initially appeared quite productive because practitioners of different approaches seemed willing to reexamine their premises and entertain the claims of rival paradigms. Many resource mobilization theorists acknowledged the complexity of grievances and the role of framing that were central to the social constructionist perspective. They also seemed receptive to the European import of new social movement theory. Klandermans and Tarrow (1988) were especially instrumental in initiating a transatlantic dialogue around the notion that resource mobilization theory explained the "how" and new social movement theory explained the "why" of mobilization.

* By the early 1990s, the rival perspectives of social constructionism and new social movement theory provided a major culturalist challenge to resource mobilization theory. In rather different ways, both questioned the instrumental, political, rationalist cast of resource mobilization theory by underscoring the expressive, symbolic, socially constructed, and prefigurative dimensions of much of contemporary social activism. For a time, it appeared that studies of resources, organization, and mobilization had all but disappeared in favor of frames, discourses, and signs, leading some to comment that "[t]he pendulum of Kuhn's normal science now seems to swing toward culture, gathering speed in what may well be a paradigmatic shift" (Johnston and Klandermans, 1995a:3). This remark introduced a reader on *Social Movements and Culture* (Johnston and Klandermans, 1995b) that contains papers presented at a 1992 conference on the same theme; both the conference and the volume conveniently symbolize the culturalist challenge in social movement theory that typified the early 1990s. Whereas the "old guard" of resource mobilization theorists may have temporarily been put on the defensive by the "young Turks" of the culturalist challenge, there has also been much talk of the value of cross-fertilization and synergistic advances toward a possible new synthesis in social movement theory based on these developments.

By the mid-1990s, there had been a fair amount of cross-fertilization (and a great amount of cross-citation), but there was no grand synthesis emerging. Indeed, an impressionistic survey of recent literature suggests rather different tendencies. One is a reassertion of mainline resource mobilization approaches that is striking against the extensive attention paid to cultural questions in the early 1990s. Several examples illustrate this trend. McCarthy and Wolfson (1996) explored the factors that influence the types and amounts of resources mobilized by collective actors in the movement against drunk driving. Their investigation of agency, strategy, and organizational structure is classic resource mobilization analysis with no hint of competing paradigms or premises. Cress and Snow (1996) analyzed similar questions for a different movement by ex-

amining distinct resource configurations among homeless social movement organizations and their differential consequences for organizational viability. This is also classic resource mobilization theory; it is perhaps all the more remarkable that David Snow (a leading social constructionist) is co-author of this mainline resource mobilization article. Meyer and Staggenborg (1996) examined the interaction of movements and countermovements as a function of shifting political opportunities and the intervention of the state in social movement dynamics. This mesolevel organizational analysis typifies the resource mobilization approach and responds to an earlier plea from Zald and Useem (1987) for more exploration of countermovements within the resource mobilization approach. Finally, Robnett (1996) used the concept of micromobilization to examine the role of African-American women as an intermediate layer of leadership in the civil rights movement, offering an analysis that falls clearly within mainstream resource mobilization theory. It is striking that all of these articles appeared in the same year in either *American Sociological Review* or *American Journal of Sociology*, and that they are all classic resource mobilization analyses without a trace of competing paradigms. These articles collectively testify to a resurgence of mainline resource mobilization theory that does not easily fit proclamations of a synthesis in social movement theory.

Although it is not difficult to find mainline resource mobilization analyses, this is perhaps not the dominant trend. Even more prevalent are articles that explicitly address more than one theoretical framework, but do so in a fashion that might be called "conceptual poaching." Whereas genuine theoretical synthesis implies moving beyond preexisting paradigms to create something new, conceptual poaching means appropriating the language and issues of a different paradigm and incorporating them as a minor theme in a preexisting paradigm that undergoes no fundamental change in the process. Such poaching is evident in several directions across various theories. Diani's (1996) study of regional populism in Italy acknowledges the interaction of political opportunities and mobilization frames, but opportunity structures carry the weight of the argument whereas framing activities are seen as altering the effectiveness of resources in preexisting opportunity structures. Gamson and Meyer (1996) fire a salvo in the opposite direction by arguing that the concept of political opportunity structure is deeply problematic because it is used in so many differing ways; their solution is to recognize that opportunity is itself a function of framing and that opportunities are as much a matter of intersubjective definition as objective reality. Another poach is evident in Williams's (1995) argument that movement rhetoric about the public good often functions as a cultural resource with instrumental and strategic value to movements that deploy such rhetorical strategies; seemingly expressive or cultural elements of movements can thereby be accommodated to the resource mobilization perspective after all. A similar argument is implicitly made in Bernstein's (1997) study of "identity deployment" as a form of strategic collective action in the lesbian and gay movement. A final example is provided by the poach of the concept of identity by Hunt et al. (1994). They acknowledge the role of new social movement theory in making the concept of identity central in social movement analy-

sis, but they proceed to critique such treatments of identity and argue for the superiority of framing approaches to identity. Without denying the value of this work or the possibility of genuine synthesis, these examples collectively suggest not theoretical synthesis but rather conceptual poaching in which practitioners of established paradigms selectively incorporate the concerns of competing paradigms with little fundamental change in the original theoretical model.

The results of this three-way theoretical contest are becoming clear. Resource mobilization theory has survived a major challenge to its theoretical dominance and is now reasserting itself, with ritual nods to rival contenders. Social constructionism has carved out a solid if subordinate niche that suggests it will persist for some time as the legitimate "alternative" approach in the analysis of social movements. New social movement theory, on the other hand, has been relegated to the sidelines of the contest. Although elements of this approach (e.g., the concept of collective identity) have become common in social movement analysis, they have also been detached from the core assumptions of new social movement theory to become welded to other approaches in piecemeal fashion. Against this backdrop, claims of an emerging synthesis across perspectives must be evaluated with some care. One of the most coherent such claims may be found in the argument of McAdam et al. (1996a) about an emerging synthesis in social movement theory around the concepts of political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing processes. There is an implication that these three concepts represent the input of new social movement theory, resource mobilization theory, and social constructionist theory, respectively, and an additional implication that this synthesis represents the macro-, meso-, and microlevels of analysis. But as the authors acknowledge, the concept of political opportunity derives more from resource mobilization theory than from new social movement theory (although the concept has recently been the focus of research by new social movement theorists). In addition, the distinctive claims of new social movement theory about the links between societal totalities and collective action are entirely absent from this synthesis; the macrolevel is solely represented by a limited notion of the political opportunity structure. The resulting "synthesis" is really revived resource mobilization theory complemented by social constructionism (Giugni, 1998b:373); the analysis remains primarily oriented to the mesolevel of mobilization and organizational dynamics as well as meso-micro links where the role of framing plays a more prominent role.

The difficulties in arriving at a genuine synthesis in social movement theory are formidable. Much of the talk about the possibility of synthesizing theories rests on a somewhat facile and oversimplified understanding of theories and their domain assumptions. Thus, theories are sometimes portrayed as merely addressing different levels of analysis or abstraction (Klandermans, 1997: Chapter 8), with the implication that they are therefore compatible candidates for synthesis because they address different problems through a theoretical division of labor. To take another example, theoretical disputes are sometimes portrayed merely as a focus on different variables, in another version of the argument that we are dealing more with a division of labor than with theoretical contestation

(Lofland, 1996:372-373). Although Lofland's (1993) call for "answer-improving" over "theory-bashing" is welcome, and although he would doubtless regard this analysis as a prime example of "theory-bashing," my contention is that there are more than different variables or levels of analysis at stake in these theoretical disputes. My own view of the theories at issue is that they are holistic, organically related entities, and that their power comes precisely from these features. Even when theories do not explicitly address a given variable or level of analysis, there is usually an implicit stance toward that variable or level of analysis within the theory. In addition, the fact that a variable or level of analysis is ignored or marginalized is itself a theoretical statement on its importance. Finally, different theories often subscribe to different metatheoretical orientations, ranging from positivist explanation to interpretive understanding to critical analysis to textual deconstruction. If synthesis means nothing more than detaching elements from differing organic theoretical frameworks and lumping them together, the resulting "synthesis" is likely to be of very limited value.

In any case, the trajectory of social movement theory in the United States is not surprising from a sociology of knowledge perspective. The staying power of resource mobilization theory reflects its style of theorizing and its domain assumptions. The style of theorizing involves the development of middle-range theory through hypothesis testing and empirical generalization (Kitschelt, 1991); as such, resource mobilization theory reflects mainstream sociological theory more generally. This theoretical style is accompanied by an empiricist bent that

has also tended to restrict the American horizon to those aspects of social movements that can most easily be observed and measured: large, professional social movement organizations rather than more diffuse activities, networks or subcultures; individual attitudes as expressed in surveys rather than structural cleavages, ideologies, or collective identities. (Kriesi et al., 1995:239)

Despite this empiricist bent, the ultimate goal of this style of theorizing is generalizable, social-scientific, law-like statements about the causes and consequences of social activism; this also reflects the paradigm's roots in the instrumental, utilitarian, natural science tradition (Mueller, 1992). Each step toward generalization, however, is also a step away from historical specificity. At best, it produces a type of knowledge that is broad but thin. At worst,

[t]he content of such work tends to assume a movement so lacking connection to a particular time and place that its existence may well be doubted. This movement *sui generis* tends to be scrutinized as if it can be understood without much reference to its particular social roots or its distinctive goals but instead by utilizing an array of generic concepts. (Darnovsky et al., 1995:xv)

The longevity of this perspective also reflects certain domain assumptions. Even though resource mobilization theory is a middle range theory, it contains implicit assumptions about the macrolevel context in which activism occurs. These assumptions reflect the historical and national specificity of U.S. social

movements and their distinctive political environment. This is an environment that is shaped by powerful elites but nevertheless provides numerous opportunities for open, pluralistic, single-issue, interest-group activism in which the entire population of citizens provides a potential mobilization pool. In short, the domain assumptions of resource mobilization theory mirror the liberal, formally democratic political environment of social activism in the United States (Mayer, 1995). It is no small irony that resource mobilization theory really is an (unacknowledged and implicitly) historically specific theory of social activism at the same time that it explicitly seeks to develop abstracted empirical generalizations applicable to all times and places. Although both factors limit the utility of resource mobilization theory, they simultaneously help to explain its ongoing theoretical predominance in the United States.

The same factors that produced a congenial fit between resource mobilization theory, U.S. sociology, and U.S. society have permitted an accommodation with social constructionism while deflecting the distinctive claims of new social movement theory. The accommodation with social constructionism within social movement theory mirrors the larger accommodation with symbolic interactionism in sociological theory more generally: it provides an agency-centered, processual, pragmatic, interactive counterweight to theoretical tendencies toward reification and determinism. And finally, the deflection of new social movement theory is another reflection of styles of theorizing and domain assumptions in sociological theory here and abroad. New social movement theory derives from broader traditions of continental social theory that tend to be holistic, philosophical, and critical in precisely those places in which American social theory has historically been elementarist, empirical, and objective. Such a theoretical style does not bode well for either acceptance or genuine synthesis within a U.S. context. The same may be said for the domain assumptions of new social movement theory. In the words of one practitioner,

[t]he main focus of the European tradition is on broad social-structural changes. . . . Within the European debate, the concept of "new social movements" occupies a central place. Typically, these movements are seen as carriers of a new political paradigm and heralds of a new era labeled postindustrial, postmaterialist, postmodern or postfordist. . . . In the United States, on the other hand, not even the concept of "new social movements" has been able to gain currency, and little attention has been paid to the macrodevelopments that are central to the European discussion. (Kriesi et al., 1995:238)

This remarkable observation from a major new social movement theorist underscores the distance remaining before this theory becomes part of any genuine theoretical synthesis in U.S. social movement theory.

The sociology of knowledge is no substitute for theoretical debate and empirical investigation across different theoretical perspectives. My use of this perspective is not intended to obscure the strengths of resource mobilization theory or the problems with new social movement theories. But the sociology of knowledge is a powerful tool for understanding the extrascientific factors—political, cultural, epistemological, and disciplinary—that shape distinct theoreti-

cal traditions in specific sociohistorical contexts. As I have argued throughout this chapter, the sociology of knowledge helps explain both the rise and the persistence of resource mobilization theory in the United States. But this theoretical dominance has exacted a price by confining social movement analysis to a certain theoretical style and particular sets of questions. My goal in the remainder of this book is to open up social movement analysis to a different theoretical style and a broader set of questions.