

NEW AND OLD SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Read the following fragments about “New Social Movements” and try to elaborate your own definition of what a “new” and “old” social movement is. After that, describe a short example about a new and an old social movement, explaining your reasons.

New Social Movements.

New social movements theory can help explain the nuanced practices and organizational forms undertaken by activists to oppose exploitative forces of economic globalization. NSMs refer to diverse arrays of collective actions that have presumably displaced the old social movement of proletarian revolution due to the presumed transcendence of industrial capitalism (Buechler, 2000).

The cultural version of NSM theory rejects the Marxist vision of the centrality of the system of production and class-based struggle as the engine of social change. Instead, it focuses on the decentralized nature of both power and resistance. This perspective sees collective actions as based on a plurality of identity-oriented issues (Della Porta and Diani, 1999). Unlike the workers' movement, these movements do not limit themselves to seeking material gain. Rather than advocating for redistributive struggles in the conventional political sphere, post-materialist values emphasize the quality rather than the quantity of life (Habermas, 1987; Offe, 1985). In their defense of personal autonomy, they oppose state intervention in daily life to guarantee security and well-being (Porta and Dianni, 1999). They also partake in cultural and symbolic forms of resistance along side or in some cases in place of more conventional political forms of contestation (Cohen, 1985).

One advantage of this version is that it places the importance on the actor and individual agency. It also has the ability to capture the innovative characteristics of movements which no longer define themselves principally in relation to the system of production (Brecher, et. al., 2002). Critics of the cultural version, however, argue that it “... leaves unresolved the analysis of mechanisms which lead from conflict to action” (Porta and Diani, 1999:13). Often ignored or glossed over are the structural conditions under which social contention is likely to arise, how social actors are able to mobilize resources for successful mobilization, some of the constraints that they face, and the repercussions of mobilization efforts (see for example Tarrow, 1998; Tilly, 1996).

Politically-oriented NSM theorists seek to update and revise conventional Marxist assumptions. They argue that the working class as a revolutionary force organized through the labor movement is still alive. They envision a global social movement that can provide a systemic counter-balancing force, or a ‘globalization from below,’ in response to corporate-led globalization (Brecher, et. al, 2002; Falk, 1993). However, the exclusive proletarian responsibility for the movement is replaced by multiple class- and identity-based struggles, which are beginning to converge against “globalization from above.” They advocate for an alternative global system in which issues such as equity, dignity, well-being, and sustainability are as important as profitability and capital accumulation.

Though the central focus of the struggle is centered on advanced capitalism, they see an important role for new constituencies in social activism based on race, gender, nationality, etc. However, these must work in conjunction with worker-based movements. Therefore, the greatest potential for proactive, progressive change is through the formation of alliances and coalitions between class-based and nonclass-based movements, and to ultimately create a global civic movement (Buecheler, 2000:48).

What is agreed upon between the two branches of NSM theory is that the organizational and participant structure of activism has changed, whether they are classed-based constituencies or more culturally/socially-oriented struggles. NSMs tend to be more encompassing in that individuals can participate in them directly, whether or not they are formally affiliated through organizations (Brecher, et. al., 2002). The organizational form of NSMs tends to be decentralized, egalitarian, participatory, and work in an ad hoc fashion (Gusfield, 1994; Mueller, 1994). They typically organize for specific battles while constantly maintaining movement visions and values (Buechler, 2000). Because the ties between social movements are flexible, actors are able to reach wide and heterogeneous audiences that can organize from different angles to form broad coalitions across various movement domains (Rucht, 1999). Keck and Sikkink (1998) use the term “advocacy networks” to describe these emerging types of organizations that are voluntary, and through which there are “reciprocal and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange,” “operating beyond national boundaries and motivated primarily by shared principled ideas or values. The actors involved may include NGOs as well as local social movements, the media, churches, trade unions, consumer organizations, intellectuals, parts of regional and international governmental organizations, and parts of the executive and/or parliamentary branches of governments”

(Pp. 8, 30). They argue that in these novel forms of mobilization activists can act back on their states and induct policies and institutional and procedural change.

It has been these types of networks that have been most effective in resisting exploitative forces of economic globalization in the case studies examined here. However, before exploring this in more detail, it is important to first examine other types of organizational strategies – what might be called “mobilization from above.” These tend to be top-down policies and institutional arrangements that originate at the macro level in an attempt to address micro-level, or local concerns.

Carty, V. (2003): “New Social Movements and the struggle for workers’ Rights in the Maquila Industry”. *Theory & Science*. In http://theoryandscience.icaap.org/content/vol004.002/02_carty.html

New Social Movement Theory.

New Social Movement Theory developed initially in Europe to help explain a host of new movements that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s that did not seem to fit a model of Marxian class conflict that had been the predominant model in much European social movement theory. The “newness” of the putatively new social movements is said to consist of such things as a greater emphasis on group or collective identity, values and lifestyles rather than or in addition to developed ideologies, and a tendency to emerge more from middle than working class constituencies. The Green Party in Germany with its emphasis on environmental and peace issues, feminism, and alternative non-consumerist lifestyles is often portrayed as the umbrella group representing a synthesis of new social movements aimed at a broad, general social liberation. Some new social movement theorists emphasize a change in the economic structure of the First World from an industrial, heavy manufacturing based “Fordist” (after Henry Ford’s assembly line) to a “post-industrial,” “postmodern” or “post-Fordist” economy centered more around the service sector (i.e. fast food restaurants) and computer-based information industries as a structural force shaping the new movements. See Mayer and Roth, “New Social Movements and the Transformation into a Post-Fordist Society,” in Darnovsky, et al. eds. *Cultural Politics and Social Movements* (1995).

<http://www.wsu.edu/~amerstu/smc/glossary.html>

The term **new social movements** (NSM) refers to a plethora of [social movements](#) that have come up in various western societies roughly since the mid-1960s (i.e. in a [post-industrial](#) economy) which depart significantly from the conventional social movement [paradigm](#). New social movement theory looks at various [collective actions](#), their [identity](#) and on their relations to [culture](#), [ideology](#) and [politics](#). [Kendall 2005]. Buechler argues that there is in fact no single new social movement theory, but a set of new social movement theories, each a variant on general approach to “something called new social movement”, which he cautiously defines as a “diverse array of collective actions that has presumably displaced the old social movement of [proletarian](#) revolution”. [Buechler 1999]

These movements differ from traditional social movements that had previously been seen, following [Marxist](#) paradigm, as centered on [economic concerns](#), such as the [labor movement](#). [Buechler 1999] The new social movements include the [women’s movement](#), the [ecology movement](#), [gay rights movement](#) and various [peace movements](#), among others. Thinkers have related these movements with the [postmaterialism](#) hypothesis as put forth by [Ronald Inglehart](#). Important contributors in the field include [sociologists](#) such as [Alain Touraine](#), [Claus Offe](#), and [Jürgen Habermas](#). Many of these NSMs tend to emphasize [social changes](#) in lifestyle and culture, rather than pushing for specific changes in public policy or for economic change. Some NSM theorists argue that the key actors in these movements are members of the “new [middle class](#)”, or service-sector professionals (such as academics).

Unlike pressure groups that have a formal organisation and ‘members’, NSMs consist of an informal, loosely organised [social network](#) of ‘supporters’ rather than members. [Paul Byrne](#) (’97) described New Social Movements as ‘relatively disorganised’^{[[citation needed](#)]}. Protest groups tend to be single issue based and are often local in terms of the scope of change they wish to effect. In contrast, NSMs last longer than single issue campaigns and wish to see change on an (inter)national level on various issues in relation to their set of beliefs and ideals. A NSM may, however adopt the tactic of a protest campaign as part of its strategy for achieving wider-ranging change.

Some sociologists, like [Paul Bagguley](#) and [Nelson Pichardo](#), criticize NSM theory for a number of reasons, including 1) these movements existed (in one extent or another) during the industrial period and traditional movements still exist today, 2) there is a lack of [empirical evidence](#) showing the differences between these movements, 3) NSM focuses almost exclusively on [left-wing](#) movements and does not consider [right-wing](#), 4) the term “new middle class” is amorphous and not consistently defined, and 5) might be better viewed as a certain instance of social movement theory rather than a brand new one.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (Redirected from [New social movement theory](#))

Old social movements are thought to comprise local/national alliances that are forged with a view to attaining shared political objectives; and their goals are seen to supersede the individual advocates. So the good of the organisation takes pre-eminence; and movements in this vein include trade unions, socialism, and the suffragettes. Here the individual is but a mere cog in a system, which he or she must subjugate their personal proclivities to. Equally important is the fact that emphasis is on the collective goal/s which are pursued on the premise of values that are seen to be universally applicable (1982).

Conversely, new social movements are seen to have an inherent preoccupation with issues of individuality and self-realisation; the subject is crucially important; movements in this arena include anti-racist, feminist (post-1960s), anti-nuclear, and environmentalist movements. These issues would be seen as secondary by the old social movements; they would be viewed as symptomatic of problems that were already being addressed, and therefore of less importance (1989, 1982).

My argument is that there is a significant difficulty in maintaining the old/new distinction as up against substantial analysis, it appears rather tenuous. New social movements have not occurred out of a historical or political vacuum. They are the result of a perceived need to alter existing social structures, which it must be remembered have antecedents. Thus problems of racial discrimination in the post-1960s were around prior to that period, and challenged in many forms such as with the ANC against Apartheid in South Africa.

Moreover, the goals that are lobbied for within the 'new' model are also predicated on universally applicable values. Thus environmentalists want to save the entire planet from human destruction; not just their local neighbourhood, feminists want equal rights for women globally, not just in their own nation. And those who are against the proliferation of nuclear weapons seek multilateral, international disarmament, not just the decommissioning of one or two nation states. Issues of 'individualisation' are inexorably connected to the 'holistic' concerns of the old social movements.

Here we will observe the constitution of social movements in relation to Malcolm X and the black Muslims, a separatist group he popularised in the 50s. The 'Black Muslim' movement, later known as the 'Nation of Islam', might be regarded as a 'new' social movement, in the sense that has been discussed above. However, I will show that up against rigorous analyses, that distinction is highly problematic.

The depression in the 1930s gave rise to widespread poverty in America, but especially for black communities. Racism was at its height, with vehement and violent opposition to black/white integration, and that trend continued through subsequent decades. Black people were discriminated against in terms of jobs, housing, and access to the other resources afforded to white citizens. The majority of them were living under the poverty line and this trend continued through to the end of the 1960s. Malcolm X emerged in opposition to this state of affairs. Quite legitimately, he was branded an extremist, and accepted that label, insisting that his approach was a legitimate response to the grossly unequal circumstances faced by many of his fellow African-Americans. Here, I will examine his core principles, and there will be a discussion of his relationship with Elijah Muhammad as that will shed some light as to where he derived many of his beliefs. This approach to black identity, which was adopted by the followers of the Nation of Islam, relies on essentialist notions of self-hood. The following section will examine the implications of such approaches for the identity politics of authenticity in black music. Using the work of Paul Gilroy (1993), we will examine some of the problems raised by such strategies.

What are Social Movements?

Eyerman and Jamison observe positive potential within social movements. They are troubled by what they view as a constraining affect that traditional approaches to the latter have taken; they argue that by bringing social movements into the language of academia ('academic control'), they have simultaneously, attenuated their subversive potential by brining them into political control. Moreover, they view social movements as formative of collective identities (1991: 2-3) Central to their model is what they refer to as the consciousness of movement. That is its ideological leanings, worldviews, and the ways in which it believes society should be altered. This is termed the cognitive praxis, and it also relates to the societal 'problems' that the movement has identified, and the resolutions that the members advocate. Eyerman and Jamison are swift to point out that a number of scientific fields, and political identities derive from social movements. Another important characteristic of social movements is their longevity, which has an inverse relationship to their success. Eyerman and Jamison argue that successful social movements atrophy when their ideas are adopted by the established political culture. Conversely, the longer a social movement lasts, the less likely it is to be really 'successful' because it remains on the periphery of the established political culture.

Melucci observes social movements as heterogeneous collectivities and stresses the importance of their internal dialogue, which gives meaning and direction to their activism. Importantly he touches upon this

old/new distinction albeit implicitly (1989: 5-8). He outlines various distinguishing characteristics concerning what he hesitantly terms the new¹ social movements. Firstly, it is argued that the production and consumption of material goods in 'complex' societies is reliant on the production of signs, and the replication of the existing social order. Therefore, relations of power and subordination are inconspicuous. Additionally, within such societies all aspects of human life are regulated including emotional relationships, life, birth, death and so on. As a result, new social movements are preoccupied with identity and the relationship between society and its natural environment. Secondly, the new social movements are not concerned with inequities in the distribution of material resources. They are preoccupied with symbolism, information and communication (as these are the pillars of complex societies), and their concerns range from the rights of citizens to factual information concerning the ecological damage caused by industrial spills to sexist advertising. The third distinguishing characteristic is that mere participation is a sign; through their dress, comportment, and the conventions guiding their interpersonal relationships, members represent the kind of society that they seek. And because they are concerned with the present, and not the future, their goals are temporary and replaceable.

New social movements come about because of a fundamental contradiction in complex societies. On the one hand, large organisations seek to control people; yet those same organisations provide resources of knowledge, money and communicative faculties which endow individuals with a plethora of possibilities through which they can experience and form their identities. So for Melucci, complex societies give people the opportunity to experience individuality in novel ways and new social movements aim to promote and facilitate that process with a view to allowing people to attain their individual potential. Finally new social movements appreciate the interdependence of the world, and the ways in which public policies taken at a domestic level can and often do have damaging consequences internationally. Here Melucci is thinking of peace and ecological movements which highlight the fragile nature of the planet, and the potentially self-destructive relationship between human beings and their natural environment (ibid.:6).

Melucci suggests that new social movements are suspicious and reticent of politics because they believe that the parameters of its mechanisms are insufficient to address their concerns. He advocates the creation of independent, public forums that are non-partisan, autonomous from state regulation, and constitutionally recognised. He argues that these spaces would allow a plethora of different voices to be heard, and the adoption of democratically created social policies, which were consistent with the will of the people as opposed to the interests of political parties.

¹ Melucci draws a distinction between 19th century (old) and 20th century movements (new)

Malcolm X & Elijah Muhammad

Born Malcolm Little in Omaha in 1925, Malcolm X was the son of a Baptist preacher. With the early death of his father in 1931, he went to live in a foster home in Lansing, Michigan where he grew up. Subsequently, he lived in various places in the US finally settling in Harlem New York where he worked for a time as a waiter. There he began to engage in criminal activity, which included drug dealing, and burglary to serve his cocaine addiction. His criminality led to a sentence of ten years imprisonment in 1946. In prison, he became a follower of Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam sect known as the Black Muslims. Paroled in 1952, he spent the next decade touring (the U.S primarily) and speaking on behalf of the Black Muslim movement; and it was at this time that he jettisoned his surname in favour of the X as it was deemed to represent the enslavement of his forefathers. Because of a disagreement with Elijah Muhammad, he left the Nation of Islam in 1963 resulting in a feud between his followers and Elijah Muhammad's.

Malcolm X was criticised by the 'more moderate' civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King for his anti-white views and advocacy of violent protest. In 1964, Malcolm X set up his own movement, the Organisation of Afro-American Unity, and renounced his former anti-white stance, encouraging international brotherhood instead. This new movement had a small following when he was assassinated in 1965, by black Muslims while addressing a rally (2001a).

In the formative years of his involvement with the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X held overtly anti-white views. And they derived from his total acceptance of Elijah Muhammad's historical and Islamic interpretations. In subsequent years, the

Terry Heart Solomon (2003): "The Difference Between Old and New Social Movements: Malcolm X & The Nation of Islam".

<http://www.theimageofblack.co.uk/Social%20Movements%20-%20Terwase%20Bala%20Unongo.pdf>

For instance: Old and New Social Movements

	<i>Classic Labor Movement</i>	<i>New Social Movements: feminism, pacifism, anti- globalization...</i>
<i>Where?</i>	<i>Towards politics</i>	<i>Civil Society</i>
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Social integration, social justice</i>	<i>Change in social value, styles of living, quality of life...</i>
<i>Internal organization</i>	<i>Formal, hierarchy</i>	<i>Networks</i>
<i>Action</i>	<i>Political mobilization</i>	<i>Direct action – cultural innovation</i>
<i>Social Class</i>	<i>Labourers</i>	<i>New middle class</i>
<i>Social base</i>	<i>Homogeneous</i>	<i>Heterogeneous</i>