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Supplement E

Social Movements and Cultural Change: What, Why, and How?

Although numerous social movement scholars have examined the political consequences of social movements (see Amenta and Caren 2004), social movement scholars have historically paid much less attention to the cultural consequences of social movements (see Earl 2004; Giugni 2008). Yet, because of a confluence of events, including the cultural turn in the social sciences (Sewell 2005) and the growing cross-pollination of ideas between cultural sociology and social movement studies (Polletta 2008), researchers have increasingly shown interest in social movement–induced cultural change.

In this supplement, I review existing literature on the cultural consequences of social movements, focusing on the following three questions: (a) What types of cultural change do social movements produce? (b) Why do social movements produce cultural change? and (c) How do social movements produce cultural change? I not only summarize literature that addresses these questions but also assess the strengths and weaknesses of various conceptualizations of, assumptions about, and explanations for social movement–induced cultural change. As I argue, although scholars of social movement–induced cultural change were previously focused on the ways that social movements generate new artistic products or subcultures, scholars are increasingly documenting the ways that social movements promote shared understandings more

broadly. As I show, social movements sometimes promote cultural change as a means to separate political ends or as an end in itself; however, when social movements transform the shared understandings that inform the way public policies are crafted or societies are organized, cultural change can actually constitute political or structural change itself. Political process and field theories provide potential ways to explain social movement–induced cultural change.

The supplement builds on Earl’s (2004) earlier review of literature on cultural consequences of social movements in several ways. First, I provide an updated understanding of how scholars are conceptualizing cultural change. Although Earl similarly reviewed scholars’ studies of social movement–induced artistic and subcultural change, she also identified a “social psychological approach” identifying the “values, beliefs, and opinions” changed by social movements; I instead identify a more comprehensive approach that conceptualizes culture not only as the values, beliefs, and opinions in people’s heads, but also as the broader shared understandings that undergird social institutions (Polletta 2004). Second, I review scholarly insights into the purposes for which social movements transform culture, a question not systematically addressed by her review. Third, I review cutting-edge explanations of social movements–induced cultural change, including Fligstein and McAdam’s (2011) recent theory of strategic action fields. Finally, I focus primarily on scholarly literature published after (or otherwise not surveyed in) her review. The supplement thus provides readers with the latest insights on social movements and cultural change.

Question 1: What Types of Cultural Change Do Social Movements Produce?

Building on insights from the sociology of culture and cultural sociology, social movement scholars have identified several cultural impacts of social movements. First, and most

commonly, social movement scholars have examined how social movements create or inspire specific artistic products, including pictures, songs, and books. Second, other social movement scholars have explored how social movements create or inspire new subcultures. Finally, still other social movement scholars have begun to examine how social movements produce shared understandings or shared meanings more broadly, including symbols, frames, ideologies, and worldviews. I discuss each of these conceptualizations of social movement–induced cultural change below, noting the strengths and weaknesses of each conceptualization.

Culture as Artistic Products

Within the sociology of culture, sociologists following the production of culture and reception of culture perspectives often examine culture as an “institutional sphere devoted to the making of meaning,” separate from other institutional spheres such as the political sphere, economic sphere, and civil society (Sewell 2005, 156, 158). Many social movement scholars have followed their lead, analyzing how social movements create specific products of this institutional sphere, such as art, music, and literature.

For example, the impact of social movements on visual arts has been a growing area of research in social movement studies (Adams 2002; Everhart 2014; Halfmann and Young 2010; Isaac 2008; McCaughan 2012; McLaren 2013; Morrison and Isaac 2012; Reed 2005). Adams (2002) has examined how women in Chile during the regime of Augusto Pinochet created and sold *aripilleras* (cloths with decorative pictures) that conveyed information about oppressive conditions inside Chile. This artistic practice soon spread to human rights organizations working in other countries. Elsewhere, Morrison and Isaac (2012; Isaac 2008) have discussed how labor contention in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century provided fodder for an emerging

artistic form, editorial cartoons. The cartoons were drawn both by labor activists (e.g., in newsletters published by the International Workers of the World) and by critics of the labor movement (e.g., in mainstream weeklies such as *Harper's* and *Frank Leslie's*) and contributed to the adoption of editorial cartoons by newspapers nationwide.

In regards to music, Roscigno and Danaher (2001) and Roy (2010) have written about the creation of music during the 1930s- and 1940s-era labor movements, and Eyerman and Jamison (1998), Reed (2005), Rosenthal and Flacks (2012), and Roy (2010) have discussed the production of music in the 1960s civil rights movement. Certain songs that were written or developed in the labor movement actually diffused into the civil rights movement (such as “We Shall Overcome”), and many songs survived the movements themselves, fueling the popularity of the folk music genre (Eyerman and Jamison 1998; Roy 2010). Elsewhere, Corte and Edwards (2008) have shown how racist social movements, seeking to counter the popularity of left-wing music festivals like “Rock against Racism” (Roberts and Moore 2009), encouraged the creation of white power music. Such music was influenced by skinhead, punk, and death metal music and cohered around a white supremacist message.

Finally, in regards to books and literature, Isaac (2009, 2012) has shown how increases in strikes and unionization over the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (alongside other trends such as the rise of realism in fiction) contributed to the emergence of a new literary subgenre, the labor problem novel (also see Coley [2015], Denning [2011], and Mai [2016] for more on the cultural production of the labor problem). Another scholar, Williams (2016), discusses how the women’s suffrage movement contributed to a unique subgenre of cookbooks known as “community cookbooks” by pooling their cooking recipes and publishing cookbooks to raise money. The suffrage community cookbooks were a particularly innovative and

subversive take on the subgenre of community cookbooks, as they contained recipes for goals like voting rights (e.g., a “Pie for a Suffragist’s Doubting Husband” instructed readers to include “1 qt. milk human kindness” and “8 reasons: war, white slavery [prostitution], child labor, 8,000,000 working women, bad roads, poisonous water, impure food”; Williams 2016, 155).

What are the benefits and shortcomings of conceptualizing culture as artistic products for the purposes of understanding the impact of social movements on culture? Perhaps the most obvious benefit is that an artistic product can be easily grasped theoretically and easily measured empirically. For example, to decide whether a social movement has made a significant impact on culture, one might simply count the number of pictures, songs, and novels produced by a social movement or perhaps measure how popular a certain movement-induced artistic subgenre has been and how long a movement-induced artistic subgenre has survived. Nevertheless, this strict conceptualization of cultural change prioritizes meaning that is created in certain institutional spheres or that can only be found in certain products (Sewell 2005). Cultural sociologists increasingly see all of human life as infused with meaning and thus seek to understand the role of culture in inspiring action in all arenas of life. At best, then, examining culture as artistic products offers an incomplete view of the cultural consequences of social movements.

Culture as Social Movement Communities

Other sociologists of culture have understood culture to be a relatively coherent “system of symbols and meanings” that “belong[s] to or [is] isomorphic with a ‘society’ or with some clearly identifiable subsocietal group” (Sewell 2005, 156). Many social movement scholars have taken this view of culture, attempting to identify whether social movements inspire subcultures or communities with distinct symbols, values, identities, and practices.

Some sociologists have examined how the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s inspired distinct “social movement communities,” or “networks of individuals and groups loosely connected through an institutional base, multiple goals and actions, and a collective identity that affirms members’ common interests in opposition to dominant groups” (Taylor and Whittier 1992, 107). For example, the feminist movement inspired women’s communes, often composed of those who identified as “lesbian feminist,” implying an identification with or loyalty to women at emotional, sexual, social, and political levels (Taylor and Whittier 1992, 109). These collectives also led to the elaboration of radical feminist ideologies and the pioneering of new ways of living. Similarly, several of the 1960s movements (including the civil rights movement, student free speech movement, antiwar movement, and even libertarian movements) contributed to the emergence of the counterculture (Klatch 1999; Zimmerman 2008). As activists spread out from various social movement gatherings—including the 1964 Freedom Summer Project in Mississippi, where white activists were able to experience communal living, engage in premarital sex with individuals of other racial groups, and experiment with drugs (McAdam 1988)—alternative lifestyle practices took root in local communities across the United States. Participants in the counterculture adopted a common collective identity (“hippies”), along with symbolic markers that located them in these communities, such as longer hair, new clothing styles (such as tie dye garments), and new physical expressions (such as the peace sign) (Zimmerman 2008).

Kelner (2008) examined how the U.S. movement to free Soviet Jewry impacted Jewish culture. As the Soviet Union carried out “an undeclared policy of cultural annihilation” against Soviet Jews (Kelner 2008, 5), Jewish organizations in the United States formed the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry to coordinate mass demonstrations and protests against the

Soviet Union. During these protests, Jewish organizations often drew on traditional Jewish rituals, and eventually protest practices such as new liturgical appeals, new rituals for Passover seders, and alterations to life-cycle ceremonies diffused out of the streets and into Jewish homes and synagogues. Kelner (2008, 30) argues that the movement created a “historically and generationally specific American Jewish” political culture bound by new or revised symbols, identities, and practices.

There are significant advantages to conceptualizing culture as a relatively bounded community with shared symbols, values, identities, and practices. For example, as with artistic products, social movement–inspired communities and subcultures seem to be easily identifiable, given that they are attached to particular places during specific time periods. In addition, and unlike artistic products, the concept of social movement communities does not restrict culture to its physical embodiments (e.g., artwork, books, and clothing) but also includes the ideas, values, and identities that underlie them. Thus, this conceptualization seems to offer a more comprehensive view of culture. However, this conceptualization of culture also has weaknesses. Perhaps most significantly, cultural sociologists have increasingly disputed the idea that culture is coherent or that culture is necessarily isomorphic with specific societies or subsocietal groups (Sewell 2005); indeed, in her treatment of the counterculture, Zimmerman (2008) questions the degree to which the counterculture was an organized group that was truly opposed to mainstream values. As I discuss below, culture is often deeply contested even within specific subsocietal groups, and the culture produced by one subsocietal group often spreads far beyond its temporal–spatial boundaries. Once again, then, this view of culture provides an incomplete view of the ways in which social movements impact culture.

Culture as Shared Understandings

Still other sociologists have taken a broader view of culture as “shared understandings (emotional, moral, and cognitive) and their embodiments” (Jasper 1997, 44). This definition of culture is inclusive of the previous two, in that it recognizes that shared understandings may be embodied in artistic products and provide bases for communities. However, this definition of culture focuses social movement scholars’ gaze on areas of social life that the previous two definitions of culture do not and thus has the potential to expand social movement scholars’ understandings of possible cultural consequences of social movements.

Before reviewing the ways in which social movement scholars have examined culture as shared understandings, it is important to note two basic dimensions on which these shared understandings can vary. First, shared understandings can range from being explicit to implicit. The most explicit shared understandings are quite easy to identify, whereas implicit shared understandings are often quite difficult to identify because they shape human action in ways outside of human awareness. Second, shared understandings can range from being deeply contested to widely accepted. When shared understandings are deeply contested, culture appears as a kind of “repertoire” or “tool kit” of diverse symbols and meanings, allowing humans to construct unique lines of action (Swidler 1986). However, when shared understandings become widely accepted—for example, when certain symbols and meanings become invested and sustained with resources over time—culture can serve as a powerful, constraining force on human action, defining and restricting the basis on which action can be taken (Sewell 1992).

With these variations in mind, how have social movement scholars studied culture as shared understandings? Jasper (1997) provides helpful examples of shared understandings, listed in order of most explicit and contested to most implicit and accepted: goals and proposals; ideas

and frames; worldviews, master frames, traditions, policy styles, and themes; and common sense, intuitions, and sensibilities (p. 155). This list is reproduced in table E.1 alongside the other conceptualizations of culture. Jasper (1997, 155) defines goals and proposals as “explicit, specific policy proposals or critiques of existing practices.” For example, Hess and Coley (2014) discuss how the environmental movement has increasingly taken aim at green technologies such as smart meters that emit non-ionizing radiation (such as radio waves and microwaves) and have proposed either an opt-out policy or a complete ban on their implementation. Best (2012) discusses how disease advocacy organizations have proposed and sometimes achieved proposals such as increased funding for research on diseases including HIV/AIDS. And Pellow (2014) discusses how the animal rights movement has proposed specific policies for protecting animals, including bans on violence against animals.

Table E.1. Concepts of Culture and Their Empirical Referents

Artistic Products	Social Movement Communities	Shared Understandings
Pictures, songs, books	Symbolic markers: clothing styles, hairstyles, gestures	Goals and proposals
	Collective identities	Ideas, frames
		Worldviews, master frames, traditions, policy styles, themes
		Common sense, intuitions, sensibilities

Next, Jasper (1997, 155) defines ideas and frames as “explicit, contested packages of proposals and critiques that fit together to highlight certain aspects of the issues.” Collective action frames in particular have received a significant amount of attention from social movement scholars (Benford and Snow 2000; Snow et al. 2014). Hess and Coley (2014) discuss how networks of counterexperts have begun to popularize the notion that non-ionizing radiations (not

only from smart meters but also from cell phones, laptops, and other electronic devices) are carcinogens; policies that would allow individuals to opt out from devices that emit non-ionizing radiation might not otherwise be thinkable without this framing. Best (2012) has discussed how advocacy organizations have reframed diseases such as HIV/AIDS as diseases that pose a widespread threat to public health to make public funding for those diseases more palatable. And to promote the protection of animals, Pellow (2014) discusses how activists popularized a total liberation frame, which adds species oppression to the traditional intersectional focuses of racial, class, gender, and sexual oppression (also see Pellow and Brehm 2015).

Moving to more implicit shared understandings, Jasper defines worldviews, master frames, traditions, policy styles, and themes as “analyses and underlying images of modern society” (Jasper 1997, p. 155). Phenomena such as worldviews differ from phenomena such as ideas and frames in that they have the potential to change not only people’s opinions about certain issues but also the basis on which people form opinions on issues. For example, Hess and Coley (2014) show how the environmental movement has sought to implement a precautionary principle, or a policy style that “advocates the delay of regulatory approval of a new product or technology if suspected harms are substantial and even if adequate scientific research to prove the suspected harms has not been completed” (p. 689). The implementation of such a principle would mark a radical redirection of regulatory policy in the United States. Best (2012) has discussed how, by achieving direct benefits such as increased funding for HIV/AIDS, disease advocacy organizations have in turn transformed the basis on which all decisions about disease funding are made, such that now that “patients, rather than scientists or the public at large, [are] thought of as the primary beneficiaries of medical research funding, their perceived moral worthiness [has become] increasingly relevant to funding decisions” (p. 780). And Pellow (2014)

discusses how the animal rights movement has advanced certain fundamental analyses of modern society that make a total liberation frame sensible. Specifically, they have made basic critiques of the state, which they view as having a monopoly on violence and social control that disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, and they have critiqued capitalism, which they view as leading to the exploitation of ecosystems and nonhuman and human animals for private gain. They instead embrace anarchism and anticapitalist economic arrangements.

Finally, common sense, intuitions, and sensibilities are the most “implicit cultural meanings, images, and feelings, often an incipient worldview, and sometimes widely shared” (Jasper 1997, 155). Bourdieu (2000) has called these *doxa*, or the “set of fundamental beliefs that does not even need to be asserted in the form of an explicit, self-conscious dogma” (p. 15). Since common sense is so deeply ingrained in humans, social movements do not always recognize or seek to change them. For example, Hess and Coley (2014) argue that even while promoting the precautionary principle, environmental movements continue to participate in “technocratic decision making,” or “the scientization of public policy debate into technical risk assessment,” which does not allow “citizens to raise general issues such as democratic control of industrial power” (p. 689).

The conceptualization of culture as shared understandings is not without its critics. Perhaps most significantly, Zhao (2010) argues that by extending the concept of culture to all areas of social life, we risk creating theories that are nonfalsifiable. Specifically, if scholars argue that culture always explains social movement impacts, culture really explains nothing. However, scholars have made the same charges about the overextension of other concepts in social movement studies; for example, Jasper (1997) points out that some scholars have turned everything in social life (including culture) into a resource or have made everything that plays a

role in social movement success (including culture) into an aspect of political opportunity structures. The challenge, then, is to understand the role of culture in all social arenas, as well as the interaction of culture with other elements of social life, while not turning everything into culture and while providing for the independence of culture. If the analytic independence of culture is ensured, the payoff of conceptualizing culture as shared understandings is that it not only provides a more inclusive understanding of the potential types of social movement–induced cultural changes, but also has the potential to enlarge our understanding of the purposes of movement-induced cultural change. I turn now to a discussion of these purposes.

Question 2: Why Do Social Movements Produce Cultural Change?

Social movement scholars have identified several types of social movement–induced cultural change, but for what purposes do social movements attempt to change culture? One school of thought suggests that social movements create new kinds of culture as a means to political ends; these kinds of social movements are said to be engaging in *instrumental politics*. Another school of thought suggests that social movements produce or transform culture as an end in itself; these kinds of social movements are said to be participating in *expressive politics*. Finally, the most recent work in social movement studies suggests that expressive cultural work is not mutually exclusive to instrumental political work, and in fact that cultural work can be political work; these kinds of social movements are engaged in *multi-institutional politics*. I discuss each of these schools of thought below, arguing that the multi-institutional politics approach offers the most complete view of the purposes for which social movements attempt to change culture.

Instrumental Politics

The idea that social movements engage in cultural work as a means to separate political ends is known as *instrumental politics*. The instrumental politics approach is most commonly employed in studies of citizenship movements that target the state, such as the labor movement, women's suffrage movement, civil rights movement, and human rights movement (see discussion by Jasper 2014). Furthermore, in terms of existing literature on cultural consequences of social movements, the instrumental politics approach is most commonly used in the literature on artistic production in social movements.

For example, Adams's (2002) discusses how the *aripilleras* created by women's groups in Chile fulfilled other movement tasks. Most obviously, *aripilleras* served as framing devices, providing information about "bad conditions of life in Chile" to international human rights' groups (pp. 33–39). In addition, the *aripilleras* were a tool for resource mobilization, raising money for the women's groups through sales (pp. 39–40). Roscigno and Danaher (2001) take a similar instrumental approach in their work on music in the southern textile workers' insurgency, arguing that songs played on the radio established collective discontent by relaying experiences in the mills, which eventually led to strikes. Finally, Corte and Edwards (2008) show how white power music allowed racist social movements to cultivate white consciousness, raise money, and recruit participants to their groups.

While a large literature in social movement studies has taken the instrumental politics approach, two implications of this approach should be noted. First, the idea that social movements deploy artistic products as means to political ends implies that any lingering cultural consequences of social movements are unintended consequences of social movements. Thus, this approach produces a blind spot to the ways that social movements might intentionally seek lasting cultural change. Second, and relatedly, the instrumental politics approach implies that

cultural work is secondary to, and perhaps a distraction from, the so-called real work of politics. This second implication has major strategic consequences; as I discuss below, it may lead activists to neglect the way culture underlies seemingly durable political structures.

Expressive Politics

The idea that social movements engage in cultural work as an end in itself is known as *expressive politics*. The expressive politics approach is generally used in reference to postcitizenship movements (or so-called new social movements) that attempt to create change outside the political realm, such as the second- and third-wave feminist movements and LGBT movements (see Jasper 2014). While some work on movement-induced artistic products acknowledges that pictures, songs, and books are ends in themselves—for example, in their rejoinder to Corte and Edwards (2008), Roberts and Moore (2009) show how left-wing punk movements generated new mobilizing structures such as web zines and independent music labels that influenced music itself—the literature on social movement communities perhaps best reflects the expressive politics approach.

For example, Taylor and Whittier (1992) show how, far from being a distraction, women's communities helped fulfill goals of the feminist movement. The feminist movement was presaged on the idea that the “personal is political,” that seemingly private issues experienced in the family and workplace were in reality widely shared problems. Feminists desired safe spaces that would allow women to build community with each other and thus become aware of their shared problems. In regards to the counterculture, Klatch (1999, 141) discusses how many left-wing and libertarian activists embraced alternative lifestyles as a form of “prefigurative politics,” in which activists “embody the values and ways of the ideal society.”

Specifically, for left-leaning individuals, shared living spaces symbolized a rejection of materialist values and a commitment to egalitarianism; for libertarians, the counterculture “symbolized individual freedom, liberty of the mind and spirit, and a stance against institutions, being critical of the system” (Klatch 1999, 150). Thus, for some, the counterculture represented the achievement of major movement goals (but see the contention by Zimmerman [2008] that many within the counterculture lacked substantive political commitments). Finally, in my own work on LGBT religious activism, I have shown how LGBT activists at Christian colleges and universities have formed bridging organizations that have sought, as their primary goal, to “bridge the gap between LGBT and Christian communities” within a safe space (Coley 2014).

Unlike the instrumental politics approach, the expressive politics approach provides a way to account for intended cultural consequences of social movements. However, two potential disadvantages to this approach should be noted. First, the expressive politics approach seems to imply that cultural consequences of social movements are consequences for the social movement participants themselves (unless the wider society adopted the lifestyles of groups like the counterculture, something many participants knew was unlikely). Thus, the expressive politics approach does not account for more widespread cultural consequences of social movements. Second, and similar to the instrumental politics approach, the expressive politics approach continues to imply that cultural work is separate from political work. Yet, in his analysis of the American movement to free Soviet Jewry, Kelner (2008, 30) argues that cultural work can be political work: “the ritualization of protest in the American movement to free Soviet Jews constructed through its very existence a collective mode of religious being that asserted the centrality of the political”; thus, “activists constructed a form of Jewish practice that blurred distinctions between . . . instrumental and expressive behavior.” Recognizing the political

implications of cultural change has major strategic consequences for social movements, because a “bifurcated conception of movement consequences” might lead activists to abdicate “the institutional political sphere in favor of projects of cultural challenge” (Polletta 1997, 447).

Multi-Institutional Politics

Whereas the instrumental politics approach views cultural work as a means to political work, and whereas the expressive politics approach views cultural work as an end in itself, an emerging *multi-institutional politics* approach to social movements argues that cultural consequences of social movements are closely tied to political consequences of social movements and vice versa (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008; Polletta 1997, 2004, 2008). This is because cultural schemas are embedded in political power structures, and thus achieving political goals often requires transforming culture (Hess 2016, ch. 2). As Armstrong and Bernstein (2008, 86) argue: “We suggest that scholars abandon efforts to classify whole movements, or even particular movement goals, as ‘expressive’ or ‘instrumental.’ Instead, scholars might examine the ways in which challenges that appear to be primarily about distribution are also over social honor, and the ways in which contestations over meaning are critical to the fate of struggles over resources.”

Scholars who take the multi-institutional politics approach generally conceptualize culture as shared meaning, and several of the studies discussed in the previous section illustrate the approach well. For example, the anti-smart meters movement, disease advocacy organizations, and the animal rights movement all seek specific policy goals, such as the ability to opt out of smart meters, the increase of research funds for specific diseases, and the banning of violence against animals (Best 2012; Hess and Coley 2014; Pellow 2014). Yet, at the same time, these movements recognize that achieving policy goals requires the challenging of deeply held

social beliefs and mores, such as the place of humans vis-à-vis animals in the world, the value of technology, and the morality of certain disease victims.

Proponents of the multi-institutional politics also view cultural schemas as embedded in a wide range of institutions outside the political sphere (hence the term “multi-institutional politics”). As Hess (2007) discusses, academic science has long been dominated by an ethos of objectivity that encourages scientists to pursue knowledge for the sake of science rather than for the sake of political goals. Yet this ethos of objectivity has led scientists to ignore the ways in which their research agendas have been shaped by powerful funding sources, namely, the U.S. military and corporate industries. A range of social movement organizations and civil society groups have sought to promote alternative norms of beneficence, sustainability, precaution (rather than risk), and so on, which is leading scientists to study topics they might have otherwise ignored, such as the effects of wartime technology (Moore 2008), genetic toxins (Frickel 2004), breast cancer (Frickel et al. 2010), and pollution (Frickel et al. 2010).

One advantage of the multi-institutional politics approach is that proponents are able to account for both intended cultural consequences of social movements (e.g., the promotion of new norms for research or policymaking) and unintended cultural consequences of social movements (e.g., the redirection of research or policy agendas in ways that movements might not anticipate). Furthermore, the multi-institutional politics approach treats culture as constitutive of institutions, helping us understand that cultural change is not a distraction from political work but rather an achievement of political goals. Of course, an overreliance on the multi-institutional politics perspective and on the importance of meaning to the boundaries of political structures could lead researchers to ignore the importance of material resources, which combine with culture to reproduce political structures (Sewell 1992); thus, the lessons of the multi-institutional politics

perspective could be overlearned. Still, potential explanations of social movement–induced cultural change such as field theory allow for the importance of both material resources and meaning, and it is to a discussion of such explanations that I finally turn.

Question 3: How Do Social Movements Produce Cultural Change?

The sections above addressed the questions of what types of cultural changes social movements produce and why social movements produce cultural change. But how do social movements achieve cultural change? Relatedly, why are some social movements more effective in transforming culture than others? Explanation of cultural change has generally been a weaker aspect of social movement studies, but in this section I assess the utility of two theoretical frameworks, political process theory and field theory, for explaining the impacts of social movements on culture.

Political Process Theory

By far the most popular theoretical framework in social movement studies is political process theory (McAdam 1982). To explain outcomes of social movements, political process theorists have made three arguments. First, social movements achieve victories when political opportunity structures are “open” rather than “closed.” Political opportunity structure refers to the nature of the “power relationships that define the political environment” (McAdam 1982, 40), including the openness of the “institutionalized political system,” the stability in the “broad set of elite arrangements that typically undergird a policy,” the presence of “elite allies,” and a “state’s capacity and propensity for repression” (McAdam 1997, 26). An open political opportunity structure thus means that the institutionalized political system is open to challengers, elites are

divided over a policy or are favorable to the policy a movement advocates, elite allies are available to the movement, and the state does not repress the movement.

Second, social movements achieve victories when they have access to resources, including human resources (participants, leaders), physical/spatial resources (buildings, meeting spaces), and financial resources. McAdam (1982) argues that resources indigenous to the movement are most valuable, lest movements put themselves at risk of co-optation or neglect, although resources may also come from elites.

Finally, social movements achieve victories when they collectively adopt ways of understanding the world in terms of the injustices that movements face, the solutions to those injustices, and the need for collective action to achieve those solutions. McAdam (1982) labeled the process by which groups adopt these ways of understanding the world “cognitive liberation,” although social movement scholars are now more apt to discuss the ways that social movements promote specific diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational collective action frames in a process known as *frame alignment* (Benford and Snow 2000).

A few studies have drawn on political process theory to explain cultural consequences of social movements; mostly, these studies adopt the instrumental politics approach to social movements. For example, Roscigno and Danaher (2001) argue that an open political opportunity structure (e.g., the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and widespread sympathy toward the working class during the Great Depression) facilitated the diffusion of textile workers’ music across radio stations. However, other studies of cultural consequences of social movements seem to contradict political process theory and its emphasis on open political opportunity structures. For example, in expressive politics studies of movement-induced subcultural formation, scholars like Taylor and Whittier (1992) and Klatch (1999) argue that social movement communities

formed precisely because the surrounding environment was hostile to activists, and collective identities crystallized precisely because of activists' differences from individuals in the wider society.

The contradictory effects of political opportunity structures on cultural change pose one problem for those seeking a comprehensive explanation of social movement–induced cultural change, but the problems run deeper than this. First, as Armstrong and Bernstein (2008) and others have noted, political process theory was developed with the assumption that all social movements target the state—hence the emphasis on policies and policymakers. Yet, scholars examining cultural work by social movements increasingly recognize that social movements may target all sorts of social arenas, meaning political process theory does not provide a conceptual tool kit that is easily applied to arenas like academic science. Second, political process theory has a markedly structural bias, treating political opportunity structures and resource allocations as factors outside of social movements' control, and leaving room for culture and agency only in the construction of frames. Yet, as Polletta (1997, 433) notes, political opportunity structures “reflect not just different political systems [such as] limits on the executive branch and a system of checks and balances but also different conceptions of the proper scope and role of the state.” Similarly, Jasper (2014) argues that culture guides the acquisition and selection of resources, because culture influences what kinds of resources are viewed as meaningful or useful. Because the very goal of many social movements is to challenge the schemas that undergird political opportunity structures or resource allocations, political process theory does not seem to be helpful for understanding many cultural consequences of social movements.

Field Theory

While political process theory restricts the range of social movement–induced cultural changes that we can explain, field theory provides ways for sociologists to account for many cultural consequences of social movements. Although many variations of field theory exist (see Martin 2003), I primarily focus on Fligstein and McAdam’s (2011) theory of “strategic action fields” and, similarly, what Martin (2003) has called Bourdieu’s theory of “fields of organized striving.” Fligstein and McAdam (2011, 3) define strategic action fields as “meso-level social order[s]” that serve as the “fundamental unit[s] of collective action in society.” In contrast to political process theory, Fligstein and McAdam (2011) acknowledge that the boundaries and shapes of these meso-level social orders are very much socially constructed. Specifically, they describe “four kinds of meanings that underlie strategic action fields”: “First, there is a diffuse understanding of what is going on in the field, i.e., what is at stake”; “second, there is a set of actors in the field who can be generally viewed as possessing more or less power (incumbents and challengers)”; “third, there is a set of shared understandings about the ‘rules’ of the field”; and “finally, there is the interpretive frame that individual and collective strategic actors bring to make sense of what others are doing” (Fligstein and McAdam 2011, 4). Combined, these four kinds of meanings provide what other field theorists often call “institutional logics” (Fligstein and McAdam 2011, 4).

Because the shape and boundaries of strategic action fields are socially constructed, individuals have an opportunity to challenge them and produce cultural change. However, transforming the logics that guide strategic action fields is a challenging process. One reason is that certain actors have gained power in the field through the acquisition of resources (e.g., what Bourdieu [2000] has called economic capital, symbolic capital, and so on). Unlike political process theory, field theory points out that these resources have meaning and utility only because

of the logics of the field. Thus, because “the purposes of the field are shaped to their interests, the positions in the field are defined by their claims on the lion’s share of the resources in the field, the rules tend to favor them, and shared meanings tend to legitimate and support their privileged position within the field,” these powerful actors will vigorously defend the logics of the field (Fligstein and McAdam 2011, 5–6). A second reason is that even actors who do not benefit from the established rules are nevertheless socialized into these logics and come to take these logics for granted, thus acquiring fundamental beliefs that Bourdieu (2000) has called *doxa*.

Transforming the meanings that underlie a strategic action field is thus a matter of what Fligstein and McAdam (2011, 7) call “social skill,” or the “highly developed cognitive capacity for reading people and environments, framing lines of action, and mobilizing people in the service of these action ‘frames.’” In some ways, social skill requires that actors retain at least some meanings within the field so that their “frames” will be interpretable—for example, environmental activists often stick with the language of technocratic decision making. Nevertheless, actors still have the ability to challenge existing meanings in such a way that the logic of resource acquisition and distribution could become altered and thus powerful actors could become dislodged from their positions. For example, the promotion of norms such as beneficence, sustainability, and precaution would reorient the goals of scientific fields and potentially weaken the influence of powerful actors such as corporations and the military.

In many ways, field theory reflects political process theory—actors work within larger meso-level orders that shape the parameters of social action (as with political opportunity structures), actors compete for resources, and actors develop and promote frames that help to bring about change. Unlike political process theory, however, field theory provides a vocabulary

that can be applied to social movements that do not target the state. Furthermore, and most significantly, the work of social movements that attempt to transform schemas underlying power structures now becomes sensible through the language of field theory. For these reasons, field theory seems to provide a promising framework for developing explanations of cultural consequences of social movements. Although a growing number of studies within the related field of sociology of science employ field theory (see Frickel and Moore 2006; Hess 2007, 2016), most studies of cultural consequences of social movements do not draw on field theory, so its application to research on social movement–induced cultural change provides a promising direction for future research.

Conclusion

This supplement has reviewed recent developments in the scholarly literature on cultural consequences of social movements, addressing three questions: (a) What types of cultural change do social movements produce? (b) Why do social movements produce cultural change? and (c) How do social movements produce cultural change? As I have shown, researchers are thinking more inclusively about the ways in which social movements impact culture, from the creation of artwork or subcultures to the transformation of shared understandings that underlie social life. This inclusive understanding of cultural change has the potential to significantly reshape the way scholars think about the purposes of social movement–induced cultural change, such that cultural change is understood not as distinct from political change but as constitutive of political (and other structural) change. Although social movement scholarship has been weaker in developing explanations of social movement–induced cultural change, new developments in the area of field

theory provide conceptual tools that can be fruitfully applied in future scholarship on cultural consequences of social movements.

The review contributes to scholars' understandings of social movement–induced cultural change in several ways. First, I have synthesized recent insights from the cultural sociology of social movements on the types of shared understandings generated by social movements, affirming Polletta's (2004) contention that culture is “not just in your head” but can also underlie social institutions. Second, I have demonstrated the relevance of the multi-institutional politics perspective for the study of social movement–induced cultural change. While the multi-institutional politics approach has often been reduced to a focus on the non-state institutions targeted by social movements (see discussion by Steinman 2012), it can shed light on the ways that social movements change the meanings that underlie any institutions (whether state or non-state). Finally, I have drawn on sociological theory on strategic action fields to suggest a framework for explaining social movement–induced cultural change. Scholars working within the new political sociology of science and technology (Frickel and Moore 2006) have already drawn on insights from field theory to explain the impacts of social movements on scientific knowledge and practice, and social movement scholars would do well to learn from their work.

This review, of course, does not cover all potential cultural impacts of social movements. Social movements generate many artistic products (e.g., movies, plays, musicals, poems, and nonfiction books), facilitate the rise of many subcultures (e.g., LGBT communities), and shape the substance and boundaries of many fields (e.g., the media and the economy) not covered here. Similarly, sociologists have certainly devised explanations for social movement–induced cultural change not examined here, including by drawing on theories in the sociology of culture (e.g., production of culture theories) and cultural sociology (e.g., cultural ecology approaches) (Isaac

2009). Although necessarily limited to a sample of work on social movements and cultural change, the review provides a general framework for understanding the types, purposes, and potential explanations for social movement–induced cultural change from which future research can proceed. Social movement scholars have not yet fully explored the implications of the multi-institutional politics perspective for our understanding of social movements and cultural change, and scholars have only begun to apply field theory to the study of social movements in general, so work drawing on these perspectives would be a promising direction for future research. There is also still much work to do in developing more rigorous causal models demonstrating the impact of social movements on culture (see Earl 2004, 525), and scholars might seize on the promise of “big data” to test the links between social movements and cultural change (see Bail 2012, 2014). In short, there has never been a better opportunity for social movement scholars to develop theoretically sophisticated and methodologically rigorous accounts of social movement–induced cultural change.

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