A counterstance locks one into a duel of oppressor and oppressed; locked into mortal combat, like the cop and the criminal, both are reduced to a common denominator of violence. The counterstance refutes the dominant culture’s views and beliefs, and, for this, it is proudly defiant. All reaction is limited by, and dependent on, what it is reacting against. Because the counterstance stems from problems with authority -- outer as well as inner – it’s a step towards liberation from cultural domination. But it is not a way of life. . . . The possibilities are numerous once we decide to act and not react (Anzaldúa 1999, pp. 100-1).

I. Introduction

The field of social movement theory has undergone numerous changes over the past half-century, which can be charted through a teleological narrative of the critiques and transformations of positivist and phenomenological social movement theories. The positivist\(^1\) tradition of social movement theory, which arose in the United States in the 1950s, sought to explain how social movement actors mobilize. These theories – collective behavior theory, resource mobilization theory, and political process theory (PPT) – are objectivist: each posit the theorist as an external observer of social phenomena that seeks to establish necessary conditions for the emergence of social movements that can therefore be empirically verified.\(^2\)

Firstly, collective behavior theory explains social movements as individual and collective psychological coping mechanisms, “therapeutic” responses to external (structural) uncertainties. Yet, due to its structural determinism and privileging of the

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\(^1\) See: Kaplan (1964).

\(^2\) The majority of these works thus rely on a great deal of quantitative research. For example see: McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1996).
psychological over the political, this theory has been critiqued for presenting social movements as *emotional reactions*. Therefore, in the 1970s resource mobilization theory emerged as an attempt to explain social movements as the product of *rational actors*. This theory defines social movements as organized political *groups* of individuals who are marginalized in political culture\(^3\) that make collective rational decisions based on strategic interaction and cost-benefit calculations derived from the availability of resources in order to increase their influence on institutionalized politics. Yet, this tradition’s U.S. centricity, structural, and economic bias lead it to conflate social movements with social movement organizations (SMOs). Thus it defines social movement influence in terms of proximity to elites and successes and failures in terms of political cultural reforms. In order to highlight other structural factors PPT emerged.\(^4\) Its proponents argue that social movements arise due to the emergence of political opportunities and the existence of mobilizing structures, and that they rely on cultural framing processes for internal and external legibility\(^5\) and the recruitment of new actors. Recent works by McAdam (1999) and McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001) have made significant efforts to incorporate the insights of phenomenological social movement theory, namely the positionality of the researcher and “cultural” processes which influence and shape social movements. Nonetheless, PPT has not been fundamentally re-

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\(^3\) My use of political culture is distinct from Almond and Verba’s (1963) formulation. I instead draw on the definition of political culture formulated by Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar (1998 pp. 8). As “the particular social construction of in every society of what counts as ‘political’. In this way, political culture is the dominant practices and institutions, carved out of the totality of social reality, that historically comes to be considered as properly political.”

\(^4\) Some political process theorists are former resource-mobilization theorists, namely McCarthy, Tilly and Zald.

\(^5\) I am using this term as formulated by Scott (1998).
visioned. As Goodwin and Jasper (2004, p. 4) explain, for these theorists “‘structural’ factors are seen and emphasized more readily than others – and non-structural factors are often analyzed as though they were structural factors.”

In the 1980s a distinct social movement theory arose in Western Europe, not in direct response but clearly in conversation with the aforementioned critiques of positivist social movement theories. New social movement theory reflects a phenomenological epistemology and therefore seeks to explain not only how, but also why social movement actors mobilize. This tradition is subjectivist: social movement theorists are implicated in the theory that they create to understand the internal processes by which social movement actors understand themselves, the world around them, and thus their ability for individual and cultural political change. New social movement theory therefore argues that social

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6 “Re-vision” is used, rather than “revision” or “change,” in order to signal the ways in which each social movement theory reflects a particular epistemological lens. Therefore, the vision of the world that each theory and theorist ascribes to creates particular methodologies, categories, and objects of study; epistemology and empirical focus are mutually constitutive. This term is “borrowed” from Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar (1998).


8 My understanding of cultural politics is drawn from the work of Jordan and Weedon (1995), Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar’s (1998), Kelley (1994), and Scott (1990). Jordan and Weedon (1995, p. 5-6) explain that “cultural politics fundamentally determine the meanings of social practices and, moreover, which groups and individuals have the power to define these meanings. Cultural politics are also concerned with subjectivity and identity, since culture plays a central role in constituting our sense of ourselves. Cultural struggles often reflect and/or produce deep emotional feelings – feelings of patriotism, elitism, racism, sexism, anti-racism and so on. In other words, they are necessarily connected to subjectivity. The forms of subjectivity that we inhabit play a crucial part in determining whether we accept or contest existing power relations. Moreover, for marginalized and oppressed groups, the construction of new and resistant identities is a key dimension of a wider political struggle to transform society.” This definition is formative, yet as Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar (1998, pp. 6) argue, though it is “tempting” to see cultural political struggles as those relegated to the explicitly “cultural” sphere, by maintain a dominant notion of “popular culture” and “mass media” Jordan and Weedon (1995) overlook “the fact that in Latin America today all social movements

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movements are *processes* that arise based on the desire for recognition\(^9\) of individual and collective *identities*. This theory implicates the social movement theorist in various asymmetrical power relations by arguing that the recognition of a “social movement” is always already an analytical construction that refers to the complex interactions between cultural, political, and social contexts and processes of collective identity that results in a particular form of collective action. Moreover, phenomenological social movement theory has persuasively argued that social movements are knowledge producing subjects rather than empirical objects.

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\(^9\) There is a vast literature that discusses the politics of recognition, constituting various formulations of Hegel’s master/slave dialectic. See: O’Neill (1996) and Fanon (1967).
Yet, Cohen and Arato (1992, p. 526) claim that new social movement theory, in an attempt to remedy the structural bias of positivist theories, privileges the normative aspects of the “politics of identity” or “the redefining of cultural norms, individual and collective identities, social roles modes of interpretation, and the form and content of discourses” (Cohen & Arato 1992, p. 526). Therefore, Cohen and Arato (1992) present a civil society based social movement theory in order to address the limitations they signal in both resource mobilization and new social movement theories. They argue that neither tradition can address the “interface”\textsuperscript{10} between civil society and political society. Though Cohen and Arato (1992) are comprehensive, in their desire to provide a grand theory they do not account for the incommensurability of positivist and phenomenological epistemologies and are also dismissive of the structural sensitivity of new social movement theorists.

This typology of the field of social movement theory highlights its contributions to the study of social movements. Yet, in concert with Bevington and Dixon (forthcoming, p. 7), I argue that “the biggest problem with contemporary social movement theory is that it is not particularly relevant to the very movements it studies.” Though the disconnection of the field of social movement theory from the movements it studies “presents a stark picture of the current status of the field, it also points to a promising path away from the current quagmire in social movement theory: \textit{movement-relevant theory}.” By recognizing the theoretical contributions of social movement movements themselves, social movement theorists and actors can theorize collaboratively across and through various political cultural and cultural political spaces to formulate a movement-

\textsuperscript{10} For a discussion of the “interface,” also see: Arato (1989).
relevant social movement theory that can bridge the gap between the academy and “the grassroots,” without fetishizing the grassroots as an unproblematic idyllic space.\textsuperscript{11}

This field statement will argue that active listening provides a framework through which to re-vision social movement theory. Active listening is distinct from speaking to or at. It requires participants to consciously articulate their positions – epistemologies and empirical categories – and to dialogue – to culturally translate their positions so that they are legible to others. Moreover, it requires participants to be self-reflexive, critical, and open to change – they must question what they take for granted, learn from the positions of others, and leave open the possibility to transform their position through this dialogue.\textsuperscript{12} Therefore, I, as an aspiring social movement theorist,\textsuperscript{13} will develop a movement-relevant social movement theory by actively listening to feminist social movement(s).\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{11} For a discussion of the fetishization of “the grassroots” see: Grewal (1998).
\textsuperscript{13} Though I see myself doing much more than simply theorizing, this work is an effort to articulate a methodology in which to study social movements that can spur more self-critical action on the part of social movements themselves. Therefore, movement-relevant theory is not only a necessity for the field but a work that develops praxis in a way that allows me to bridge my work in the academy and “on the ground.” Bevington and Dixon (forthcoming, p. 7) argue that engagement can in fact bring greater clarity to social movement theory. “It is not enough to simply identify with a movement or study a movement. Instead, there is a distinct process that involves dynamic engagement with movements in the formulation, production, refinement, and application of the research. Moreover, the researcher need not and in fact should not have a detached relation to the movement.”
\textsuperscript{14} The use of feminist social movement(s) attempts to articulate the praxis of feminism(s). Alvarez, Bueno-Hansen, Huerta, Rastegar, And Zepeda (forthcoming) argue that women of color lens (methodology) cannot be separated from its political project. In this vein, I will argue that feminist social movement(s) provide methodologies, which enable, inform, and are informed by political projects.
Firstly, through Sandoval’s (2000) cultural topography, I will present a complex genealogy of feminist social movement(s), that illustrates the contributions and limitations of hegemonic feminisms, the contributions of U.S. third world feminism, and feminist social movement(s)’ linkages with other social movements. Next, I will highlight the promises and pitfalls of positivist, phenomenological, and civil society based social movement theories. Positivist theories illustrate the importance of affect, resources, formal organizations, political opportunities, informal organizing spaces, and political cultural translation for feminist social movement(s) political cultural struggles. Yet, feminist social movement(s)’ theoretical production is illegible if read through a bounded positivist lens which sees social movements as empirical phenomena. New social movement theory, on the other hand, signals both the subjectivity of the theorist and social movements. This theory highlights the way in which identity informs feminist social movement(s). Moreover, Cohen and Arato’s (1992) attempted synthesis highlights the ways in which feminist social movement(s) seek to influence political culture and enact cultural politics. Yet, though Melucci (1996) and Cohen and Arato (1992) ostensibly recognize social movements as knowledge producers, they overlook the important intellectual contributions of feminist social movement(s). By relying on socialist feminism’s understanding of equality based on sameness, they understand and call for a “women’s movement” that accounts for rather than works through the differences among feminists.

Therefore, there is a fundamental incommensurability between feminist social movement(s)’ theoretical production and the field of social movement theory. Moreover, as Schutte (2000, p, 54) explains, “the incommensurable something not
subject to perfect cultural translation – may actually be the most important part of the
message.” ¹⁵ In fact, the intersectional methodology developed by U.S. third world
feminists – which is not audible to positivist social movement theorists who see social
movements as objects of study or phenomenological social movement theories that
articulate a socialist feminist understanding of “the women’s movement” – argues that a
complex equality based on difference may be the most important part of feminist social
movement(s)' message. Therefore, we must actively listen to the theory produced by
U.S. third world feminists in order to fundamentally re-vision social movement theory as
a field. Through this dialogue, a movement-relevant social movement theory can be
articulated which “fleshes”¹⁶ out new social movement theory’s formulation of the
multiplicity and fluidity of collective identity and address Cohen and Arato’s (1992)
interface. By understanding feminist social movement(s) as coalitions which work
through collaboration and conflict to create temporary coalitions based on a solidarity
rooted in the negotiation of the inherent multiplicities of individual and relational
identities, this movement-relevant social movement theory can more fully explain
feminist social movement(s), see feminist social movement(s) as knowledge producers,
and their internal and relational differences as productive. This movement-relevant

¹⁵ Schutte’s (2000) discussion of cross-cultural (North-South) communication and
dialogue highlights that mistranslation and incommensurability are always already
present. The goal is to take advantage of these spaces of possibility.
¹⁶ The non-schizophrenic sense of multiple identity Melucci (1996) and Eyerman and
Jamison (1991) hope to explain exists is not “new”. It exists, as Moraga’s (1983)
explains, “in the flesh” of women of color. Moreover, the theory produced by U.S. third
world feminists has developed a complex methodology of the oppressed that explains and
works through the multiplicity and performativity of a non-essentialist understanding of
subjectivity.
social movement theory is informed by, and can thus inform social movements who desire a complex equality based on equity rather than sameness.

II. Feminist Social Movement(s)

Feminist social movement(s) have been identified and explained in a variety of ways. Feminist social movement(s) have a complex genealogy, that can be understood through Sandoval’s (2000) cultural topography, which present the hegemonic women’s studies understanding of feminism(s), the contributions of U.S. third world feminists, and the feminist social movement(s)’ relationships with other social movements. This multiplicity is often overlooked by social movement scholars, which leads to the erasure of women of color themselves as well as their potential contributions to social movement theory.

A. Hegemonic Women’s Studies Feminisms

Firstly, in Methodology of the Oppressed, Sandoval (2000) presents the hegemonic women’s studies view of feminism: a four-part typology in which each is distinct and isolated from each other and other social movements. This is the way in which many scholars understand feminism(s) and therefore the predominant way in which feminist social movement(s) are presented to others (both in texts and in the classroom).

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17 In this section I will discuss hegemonic and U.S. third world feminisms but in section VII I will explain the ways in which feminisms developed in relation to other social movements and how differential consciousness provides a method to move through the various registers of hegemonic feminisms and other social movements.
This typology begins with “liberal” feminism, whose central claim is that woman is equal to man. Sandoval explains that its goal is to “prove that ‘differences between women and men are exaggerated,’ and should be ‘reduced’ to a common denominator of sameness” (Sandoval 2000, p. 48). Therefore, “liberal” feminists are consumed by sexual difference maintaining the privileged position of “male” within a male/female binary system: simply asking for “woman” to be included in the category “man”. These feminist struggles can be understood as calls for “equal rights” and “equal pay.”

Second, are “Marxist” feminists who posit instead that “‘women’s lives are different from men’s,’” with a goal of restructuring “old society . . . so that it becomes incapable of subordinating the differences that the class of women represent” (Sandoval 2000, p. 49). “Difference” is conflated with class; the male/female binary is maintained and the “enemy” is capitalist system rather than men. Thus, Marxist feminists have seen gender as a secondary struggle; gender differences will be eliminated or can be addressed after the dissolution of capitalist relations, which produced them in the first place.18

The third hegemonic feminism is “radical”19 feminism. In this theory and its related organizing, feminists invert the binary: women are superior to men. “It is men, 18 Collins (1990, p. 229) explains that the Marxist tradition identifies class as the most important axis of domination and therefore others will be eliminated through class struggle. “‘If only people of color and women could see their true class interests,’ they argue, ‘class solidarity would eliminate racism and sexism.’” In essence, each group identifies the oppression with which it feels most comfortable as being fundamental and classifies all others as being of lesser importance.” This line of argument has been developed at length by various feminists in this tradition, see: MacKinnon (1982).

19 I want to problematize hegemonic feminist understanding of “radical” as equated with a fundamentalist exclusion of men. Radical has been used in another, more productive way, by women of color, specifically in the foundational text This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color (2002). Anzaldúa and Moraga (2002, p. liii) state in their 1981 Introduction, “We named this anthology ‘radical’ for we were interested in the writings of women of color who want nothing short of a revolutions in
not women, who become ‘the Other’” (Sandoval 2000, p. 49, my emphasis). This theory produced “consciousness raising” circles and other strategies to enable women to organize separately from men with the goal of developing of autonomous institutions.20

Yet, each of these three feminist theories and their related struggles raised (and continue to raise) various concerns among those implicitly or explicitly excluded and/or troubled by the inherent limitations of these formulations. In fact, these feminisms only reflect a particular kind of woman. “This schema does not provide the opportunity to recognize the existence of another kind of woman – to imagine another, aberrant form of subjectivity, aesthetics, politics, feminism. That is why U.S. feminists of color argued that each hegemonic feminist phase tended to generate its own equivalent forms of racist ideology” (Sandoval 2000, p. 195). Feminists of color cannot simply fit in any one category and these three feminisms do not recognize the other subject positions,

20 This three-part typology has been developed in various texts, see: Jaggar (1983) and Eisentein and Jardine (1980), and Showalter (1985).
struggles, and coalitions women of color engage in.\textsuperscript{21} Hence white feminists, through consciousness raising groups and other strategies, became aware of their oppression but not of their privilege. Collins (1990, p. 229) explains that “although most individuals have little difficulty identifying their own victimization within some major systems of oppression – whether it be by race, social class, religion, physical ability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age or gender – they typically fail to see how their thoughts and actions uphold someone else’s subordination. Thus white feminists routinely point with confidence to their oppression as women but resist seeing how much their white skin privileges them.” Therefore, the critiques of feminists of color began to unsettle these three dominant forms of feminism, when it became increasingly clear that women were not all the same.

In order to account for the differences among women, the fourth hegemonic feminism, “socialist” feminism, arose. Sandoval (2000, p. 50) explains that it “became the added-on phase of hegemonically constructed four-category taxonomy of feminist consciousness, the unachieved category of possibility wherein the differences represented by race and class could be (simply) accounted for.” Thus, in socialist feminism difference is recognized but not worked through due to the desire to achieve an equality based on sameness. More specifically, women are seen as a “racially divided class,” bound together by a feminist consciousness (Sandoval 2000, p. 51).\textsuperscript{22} The fact that the majority of women’s studies departments utilize this formulation reflects its dominance.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{21} For example, the existence of racial oppression did not allow women of color to men as “the Other” because men of color were “the Other” according to dominant culture.

\textsuperscript{22} The work of Kaplan (1985) and Jaggar (1983) are some of the most cited of this phase.

\textsuperscript{23} Recent moves in many women’s studies departments, such as U.C. Santa Cruz’s recent transformation into feminist studies, reflect concerted efforts to undermine this
As we will see, it is also adopted by new social movement and civil society based social movement theorists.

**B. U.S. Third World Feminism(s)**

As articulated above, socialist feminism arose in order to address the differences among women that were increasingly being voiced by feminists of color, lesbians, and others who were explicitly or implicitly excluded from the previous hegemonic feminist oppositional consciousnesses. Yet, socialist feminism does not adequately address women of color’s differences, they are recognized but only to be erased. Women of color were essential participants in the previously mentioned feminist struggles, yet they were obliged or forced to sacrifice essential elements of their identity to do so. Hegemonic feminist ideologies and tactics do not recognize their privilege and inherent racist tendencies. Instead they rely on an additive model of oppression, which Collins (1990, p. 223) explains:

is firmly rooted in the either/or dichotomous thinking of Eurocentric, masculinist thought. One must be either Black or white in such thought systems – persons of ambiguous racial and ethnic identity constantly battle with questions such as “what are you, anyway?” This emphasis on quantification and categorization occurs in conjunction with the belief that either/or categories must be ranked. The search for certainty of this sort requires that one side of a dichotomy be privileged while its other is denigrated. Privilege becomes defined in relation to its other.

Therefore, there is no room in these spaces for women of color to give voice to the ways in which their identities preclude their ability to claim a singular fundamentalist identity of “woman”. “U.S. feminists of color did not feel comfortable with the ‘essence’ homogenization of feminism(s) and its concomitant formulation of unity based on sameness.
(of woman) being formulated. If ethical and political leadership should arise only from that particular location, then for U.S. feminists of color, who did not see themselves easily inhabiting a any form of female subjectivity identified so far, Sojourner Truth’s lingering question ‘Ain’t I a woman?’ sounded even more loudly” (Sandoval 2000, p. 195). This additive approach of hegemonic feminism implicitly forces feminists of color to prioritize their gender identity. The ways in which racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and other identities inform their understanding of gender is not recognized. As Crenshaw (1991, p. 1242) states, “When practices expound identity as woman or person of color as an either/or proposition, they relegate the identity of woman of color to a location that resists telling.” Therefore, women of color coalitionally developed a feminist praxis that would not equate solidarity and unity with the erasure of difference.

The point of “origin” of U.S. third world feminism(s) cannot be definitively located. In my previous field statement I discuss the ways in which this methodology can be traced back to the work of Ella Jo Baker. Moreover, I also highlighted that here too Miss Baker, and others who embodied a yet unnamed feminism, drew from a much longer history of radical humanism and a recognition of interdependence. The recent work of Blackwell (2005, forthcoming) and of Alvarez, Bueno-Hansen, Huerta, Rastegar,

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24 For example, Angie Chabram-Dernersian’s (1999) theoretical autobiographical work illuminates the problems with the additive model of oppression and feminists of color inability to fit within it. She highlights an interaction with a colleague in Chican@ Studies as a defining moment in her struggles to define as a Chicana Riqueña! “I had voiced my plurality as a way of formulating a connection, not a disruption. Implicit in his statement was the idea that I had to be one or the other, a Chicana or a Puerto Rican, but not both, certainly not a hybrid – hybrids aren’t authentic, they have no claim to an ethnic identity” (Chabram– Dernersian 1999, p. 266). Thus, when she claimed a complicated and multiple identity, she was asked to pick either/or. Yet, Chabram– Dernersian (1999) refused.
and Zepeda (forthcoming) offer developed genealogies of this movement, yet for the purposes of this paper, I will signal a moment at which this form of activism and theorization took collective shape. The debates and coalitions, which formed at the 1981 National Women’s Studies Association Conference entitled “Women Respond to Racism,” provide a good entry point into women of color as a methodology and political project.\(^{25}\) In order to address the racism of the conference itself and the need for coalitions more broadly, here women of color came together not out of a false sense of unity but through a profound recognition of their multiple forms of difference.\(^ {26}\)

Sandoval (1990, p. 67) explains that:

> We wondered if we could create a new flexible movement capable of listening, hearing and transforming with difference. . . We will not naively repeat the same mistakes as the women’s movement by erasing our own internal differences through gathering them up into one single unity which will then stand against all other categories. . . Our differing opinions seemed to place us in opposition to one another. We managed this seeming conflict by considering our differences, not as idiosyncratic and personal, but as rich sources of tactical and strategic responses to power.

Therefore, women of color and U.S. third world feminism argues that hegemonic (often “white”) articulations of feminism can never represent “all” women. These activists, scholars, and scholar-activists call for a feminism based on difference – the fundament necessity of recognizing and working through multiple subject positions. As Anzaldúa (2002, p. xxxvii) states, “Liminality, the in-between space of nepantla, is the space most of us occupy. We do not inhabit un mundo but many.” This requires the

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25 The work of Alvarez, Bueno-Hansen, Huerta, Rastegar, and Zepeda (forthcoming) argues that a woman of color lens (methodology) cannot be separated from its political project.

26 The work that the participants engaged in at the 1981 conference drew both explicitly and implicitly from previous feminist and other social movement organizing and theoretical production. For further discussion of this conference, its historical context and importance, see: Sandoval (1990).
recognition of how one can be simultaneously oppressor and oppressed and therefore no one form of struggle or identity can be applicable to all women or circumstances.

The multiplicity of oppression that U.S. third world feminists experience has been theorized in various ways. In section VII, I will develop Crenshaw’s (1990) theorization of intersectionality through Collins’s (1990) “matrix of domination” and Sandoval’s (2000) differential consciousness to highlight the ways in which the methodology of the oppressed goes beyond naming of individual forms of oppression. I will argue that the theory produced by feminist social movement(s), offers social movement theorists a way to explicate multiple subject positions which interact and overlap that defy unitary definitions (or representations) of individual or collective identity, singular enemies (neither exclusively internal or external), or fundamentalist forms of struggle. Thus developing a movement-relevant social movement theory that enriches the understanding of feminist social movement(s) as fluid coalitions that negotiate differences in order to influence political culture and enact cultural politics.

III. The Promises of Positivist Social Movement Theories

The previous discussion of feminist social movement(s)’ will allow for a grounded discussion of the contributions and oversights of collective behavior theory, resource mobilization theory, and PPT. Though positivist social movement theories have not explicitly addressed feminist social movement(s), they still offer valuable tools for doing so. Firstly, collective behavior theory can be used to highlight the affective

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27 It must be noted that though these theorizations are rooted in the embodied experience of women of color, theorization from experience is problematized. See: Mohanty (2004) particularly chapter 3.
dimensions of feminist social movement(s). Secondly, resource mobilization theory can highlight the rationality of feminist social movement(s), the ways in which external resources affect collective action, and the importance of formal structures and proximity to elites in order to affect political culture. Lastly, PPT can be used to see the internal and external environmental opportunities and/or constraints that shape feminist social movement(s), the organizing which occurs in informal spaces, and the ways in which feminist social movement(s) work through “common sense” for internal and political cultural legibility as well as the recruitment of new actors.

A. Classical Social Movement Theory - Collective Behavior

The tradition of classical social movement theory consists of various social-psychological models firmly rooted in the positivist tradition that arose from the Chicago school in the late 1950s and early 1960s; namely mass society, collective behavior, status inconsistency, rising expectations, relative deprivation, and Davies’ J-curve theory of revolution. Though as McAdam (1999, p. 7) explains, these models are “not

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28 Both collective behavior’s “generalized beliefs” and PPT’s “cultural framing” are intimately related to Gramsci’s (2003) notion of “common sense,” or “the traditional popular conception of the world – what is unimaginatively called ‘instinct’, although it to is in fact a primitive and elementary historical acquisition” (Smith 2003, p. 199). He further defines it as a collective set of beliefs. “‘Common sense’ means the incoherent set of generally held assumptions and beliefs common to any given society” (Smith 2003, p. 323). Therefore, “common sense” constitutes our political culture. Thus, social movements must work through ideas, language, rhetoric, and values that are dominant in political culture in order to be “political” – to gain the necessary recognition by the wider public and institutionalized political actors to engage in “politics”. This revolutionary project is theorized by Gramsci (2003) as “a war of position” and Marcuse (1972, p. 55) as the “long march through the institutions,” both recognize that the work that is done on the political cultural level is mutually constitutive of the work that is done through the enactment of cultural politics.

29 See: Arendt (1951), Broom (1959), and Kornhauser (1959).
interchangeable,” their differences are “relatively insignificant” to the extent that they all rely on a general causal model of social movements: “structural strains” produce a “disruptive psychological state” which leads to the emergence of a social movement. Because of their similarity, I will focus on the most common variant: collective behavior theory. Formulated by scholars Smelser (1962), Lang and Lang (1961), and Killian and Turner (1961), this model sees social movements as individual psychological coping mechanisms, “therapeutic” responses, to external (structural) uncertainties.

Collective behavior theory explicitly elaborates the casual sequence articulated above. Firstly, it posits that social change, such as “industrialization, urbanization, or a rapid rise in unemployment” disrupt social relations and cause structural strains (McAdam 1999, p. 8). According to sociologist Smelser (1962, p. 47), its most famous proponent, “writers on collective behavior assume almost universally that people enter episodes of such behavior because something is wrong in their social environment.” Therefore, “some form of strain must be present if an episode of collective behavior is to occur. The more severe the strain, the more likely an episode is to occur. No direct causal link exists, however, between a particular kind of strain and a particular kind of collective episode” (Smelser 1962, p. 48, my emphasis). These strains produce a

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30 For a detailed discussion and diagrams of the various models, See: McAdam (1999).
31 Jean Cohen (1985, p. 671) states, “the variants that received the most attention and criticism by contemporary theorists have been mass-society theories and Smelser’s structural-functionalist model of collective behavior.” For more on the variants and criticism, see: Cohen (1985).
32 These problems are referred to as “strains,” a general term that refers to all forms of strain. Collective behaviorists argue that the particular causes identified by the other classical theorists, such as Durkheim’s (1951) “anomie” and Kornhauser’s (1959) “alienation and anxiety” are too specific.
negative psychological effect, namely “feelings of anxiety, fantasy, hostility, etc.” (Smelser 1962, p. 11).

Collective behavior theorists draw explicitly on the work of U.S. psychologist Herbert Blumer whose work on collective behavior emerged in 1934. A year after Hitler rose to power, he attempted to explain how crowd behavior could lead to fascism. Moreover, he aimed to signal more positive aspects of emotional group responses.33 Collective behaviorists were also rooted in the positivist tradition. As Kaplan (1964, p. 30) explains, “The problems which the existential dilemmas pose cannot be solved at all, but only coped with; which is to say, we learn to live with them.” Therefore, a social movement is a coping mechanism. It is a group of disturbed individuals who coalesce and collectively act in an attempt to rationalize changing events through “generalized beliefs” which are “akin to magical beliefs” (Smelser 1962, p. 8). Smelser (1962, p. 83) explains the way one such general belief, rumor functions. “Rumor and related beliefs restructure an ambiguous situation by explaining what has happened, by reporting what is happening, and by predicting what will happen . . . [Thus] rumor and other generalized beliefs are better understood as necessary conditions that become effective when structural conduciveness and strain are present.” Therefore, in collective behavior theory, structural strains produce psychic unrest and individuals act collectively in order to survive.

This theory draws attention to the affective dimension of feminist social movement(s). It shows the ways in “which spontaneous gatherings of individuals serve as the basis for an emergent collective identity which cannot be explained merely with its

33 His most comprehensive work is Blumer (1951).
individual members” (Eyerman & Jamison 1991, p. 13). Though collective behaviorists do not explicitly address feminist social movement(s), its notion of solidarity through proximity is important. For example, the previously mentioned 1981 conference enabled a group of women of color to come together, spurring their recognition of a particular, coalitional and tactical, collective identity. The affinity bonds that often are seen in feminist social movement(s) are made possible due to particular events. Therefore, this theory in some ways can help us to explain the ways in which particular spaces and crises produce particular emotional responses and affinities that form collective identities. Though as we will see, affect is only one facet of this complex process.

**B. Resource Mobilization Theory**

Resource mobilization theory also emerged from a positivist framework in the U.S. It defines social movements as organized political groups of individuals that are marginalized in political culture, which make collective rational decisions based on strategic interaction and cost-benefit calculations derived from the availability of resources. Jenkins and Perrow (1977, p. 250) state that, “giving rise to insurgency, is the amount of social resources available to unorganized but aggrieved groups, making it possible to launch an organized demand for change.”

Firstly, resource mobilization theory is a response to relative deprivation theory. Turner and Killian (1972, p. 251) explain that, “there is always enough discontent in any society to supply the grass-roots support for a movement” because of the exclusion of various actors from institutionalized political cultural spaces. Thus, social movements

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34 When combined with PPT, particularly political opportunities, this idea gains more saliency.
“are not a form of irrational behavior but rather a tactical response to the harsh realities of a closed or coercive political system” (McAdam 1999, p. 20). Unlike collective behavior theorists, resource mobilization advocates see social movements as inherently “political.”35 In fact, it is the distance from political cultural power that forces marginalized actors to collectively organize in order to amass sufficient resources and therefore political cultural recognition, to engage in institutionalized politics. Because resource mobilization understands individuals as rational actors that make cost-benefit calculations, on the individual and collective level, to maximize their interests, they argue that individuals and collectives will only engage in collective action if there are there are significant benefits.

Resource mobilization theory focuses on the benefits and costs associated with collective action, which are inherently tied to material resources and proximity to elites, and therefore collective action is based on the “selection of incentives, cost-reducing mechanisms or structures, and career benefits.” (McCarthy & Zald 1987, p. 18).36 Though individuals are able to pool resources, marginalized political cultural actors are usually too poor to undertake action without “a healthy input of resources from some external ‘sponsor’” (McAdam 1999, p. 22). According to Oberschall (1973, p. 214), “One must realize that a negatively privileged minority is in a poor position to initiate a social protest movement through its own efforts alone.” Moreover, because resource mobilization theory posits that social movements must be formally recognized as political

35 This theory focuses exclusively on contestations of political culture and is therefore limited to explanations of reactive social movement actions aimed at influencing and reforming institutionalized politics. This limitation will be developed at length in the following sections.
36 For further discussion, see: Oberschall (1973).
cultural actors, they argue that social movements must be formally organized to ensure stability and the continual supply of vital resources. Therefore, this theory conflates social movements with social movement organizations (SMOs), social movements may be composed of various SMOs, but social movements are only able to mobilize if they are equipped with significant economic resources, elite support, and a formal organizational structure.

This theory also never explicitly analyzes feminist social movement(s). Nonetheless, it can be helpful in doing so. For example, the political cultural gains of first and second wave feminists made were related to their proximity to political cultural elites and the development of sustainable organizational structures. In fact, SMOs such as National Organization of Women (NOW) allowed particular feminists to enter institutional political cultural spaces at many levels. “By the mid-1970s, women’s movement organizations took up every political avenue to change policy. They approached political parties, Congress, the courts and the executive branch; they used constitutional amendment, legislative lobbying, and political protest” (Cohen & Arato 1992, p. 552). Feminist SMOs have been and are important actors in the political cultural realm, yet there are many other avenues through which feminist social movement(s) affect political culture and enact cultural politics.

C. Political Process Theory

Political process theory (PPT) emerged from a critique of resource mobilization theory and its tendency to conflate SMOs with social movements. PPT theorists argue that neither clear grievances nor extensive resources are sufficient explanations for the
emergence or effectiveness of social movements. These theorists instead posit that social movements arise due to the emergence of political opportunities and the existence of mobilizing structures, and that they rely on cultural framing processes in order to be recognized as political cultural actors by the public and institutionalized political cultural actors and thus engage in “politics.”

Firstly, political opportunities are the catalyst for social movements. According to Sydney Tarrow (1998, pp. 7, 2), “Contentious politics is triggered when changing political opportunities and constraints create incentives for social actors who lack resources on their own.” He specifically defines political opportunities as “consistent—but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national – dimensions of the political struggle that encourage people to engage in contentious politics” (Tarrow 1998, pp. 19-20). McAdam (1996, pp. 24-27), in attempt to bring “greater analytical clarity” to this concept, establishes a clear set of criteria by which movements and theorists can recognize and take advantage of political opportunity: 1) The relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system, 2) The stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically under gird a policy, 3) The presence or absence of elite allies, and 4) The state’s capacity and propensity for repression. Therefore, political opportunities constitute the external factors and resources that allow social actors engage in political cultural struggles. These theorists contend that political opportunity is a necessary, yet not sufficient, condition for the emergence of social movements.

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37 He also distinguishes between structural opportunities (formalized political cultural structures, elite power relations, and state repression) and cultural and/or interpretive opportunities.
In fact, in order for social movements to take advantage of political opportunities they must be organized, but PPT expands resource mobilization’s formulation of SMOs (i.e. formal organizations). They propose that it is through mobilizing structures, “those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action,” that social movement actors organize and communicate (McAdam, McCarthy & Zald 1996, p. 3). Hence, both formal and informal networks can facilitate action. Tarrow (1998, p. 123) identifies mobilizing structures as networks, which form the “connective structure” of social movements and SMOs. Tilly’s (1998) discussion of social movements’ action repertoires, argues that cultural political actions and even identities are necessary preconditions for the development of the autonomous social and political spaces, which allow for collective action in response to political opportunities. Therefore, as Cohen and Arato (1992, p. 499) explain, this theory “allows civil society to appear as the terrain but not the target of collective action.”

Lastly, PPT argues that social movements engage in cultural framing, a process by which information and ideas are “packaged” to coherently communicate and represent themselves both internally and externally. Snow and Benford (1992, pp. 136-7) explain that framing “denotes an active, process-derived phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction . . . An interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the ‘world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one’s present or past environment.” Tarrow (1999, p. 21) explains that cultural framing provides for internal

38 For further elaboration of his theory see: Tilly (1978) and Tilly, Tilly, and Tilly (1975).
39 Snow and Benford (1992, pp.137-8) define packaging as the ability “to articulate and align a vast array of events and experiences so that they hang together in a relatively unified and meaningful fashion.”
cohesion, by positioning those inside the social movement and/or SMO in relation to “others”. Framing “defines the ‘us’ and ‘them’ in the in a movement’s conflict structure.” Moreover, the framing process makes social movements legible to outsiders (particularly the media), and seeks to resonate with spectators in order to induce participation. Snow and Benford (1992, p. 141) state, “The frame strikes a responsive chord” if it “rings true with extant beliefs, myths, folktales and the like.” Therefore, cultural frames relate to collective behavior theory’s understanding of “generalized beliefs.” It is the ability of social movements and/or SMOs to tap into common sense notions of political culture that allow them to be internally and externally legible as well as channel and encourage mobilization.

Like the other two positivist social movement theories, this framework has not been used to explain feminist social movement(s). Yet, PPT’s emphasis on mobilizing structures can signal the ways in which feminist social movement(s) organize in and politicize the “private” sphere. Whereas resource mobilization theory’s objectivist lens reifies social movements and therefore only saw formal feminist organizations, PPT allows one to recognize the ways in which feminists organize in and through informal spaces. Yet, as will be discussed below, if one were to employ this model alone, feminist

40 There is a distinction between collective action framing and master framing which is discussed at great length in the literature. Collective action frames serve four functions. They politicize particular circumstances to raise “consciousness’ and political efficacy, allow for identification, means of resolution (detailing a plan of action and those responsible for undertaking such action), and finally enable activists to “package” meanings (group in an articulate fashion). Master frames are more “generic” and are used to in a variety of ways, such as to internalize or externalize blame (identifying an internal or an external “enemy” responsible for issues or problems of concern), in order to mobilize disengaged actors (Snow & Benford 1992, pp. 137-141).

41 Though as will be discussed in section IV C, it has been extended to explain newer social movements such as the civil rights movement.
informal organizing networks informal organizing would merely be seen as enabling political cultural struggles. This ignores the important ways in which feminist social movement(s)’ cultural political enactments are inherently political because they seek to transform what is recognized as “political”.

IV. The Pitfalls of Positivist Social Movement Theories

Though these theories offer tools to study feminist social movement(s), they nonetheless inherently view social movements as objects of study, which are engaged primarily in political cultural struggles. Collective behavior theory privileges the psychological over the political, is overly deterministic, and thus renders social movements emotional reactions. Moreover, resource mobilization theory’s U.S. centricity conflates social movements with SMOs. Lastly, PPT revisions have added an analysis of “culture” that is too bounded to explain feminist social movement(s)’ enactments of cultural politics. Therefore, these theories reflect a positivist epistemology that posit social movements as empirical data rather than knowledge producing subjects and therefore see social movements actions as adversarial (primarily engaging in political cultural struggles) and their identities essentialist (either as SMOs or notable events and figures).
A. Collective Behavior Theory

Many critiques of collective behavior theory have been presented throughout the years.^{42} Yet, there are three clear tensions that must be addressed. Firstly, because of its psychological underpinnings, collective behaviorists explain that the “social movement is effective not as a political action but as therapy” (McAdam 1999, p. 11). Though Smelser (1962) argues that this theory is sociological rather than psychological, its reliance on psychological categories nonetheless sees social movements as coping mechanisms rather than inherently political. Because it also is rooted in a positivism, the emotional aspects of collective action are necessarily extra-political (i.e. non-rational).

Secondly, collective behavior theory’s causal model makes a understanding of the process of change difficult. Though Smelser (1962, p. 48) acknowledges that “strain can persist for long periods without necessarily leading to social change,” this theory signals structural crisis as the motivating force for collective mobilization. Lastly, collective behavior theory only explicitly addresses defensive social movements. Because of its causal argument, social movements can only arise in reaction to changing external phenomena. As John Wilson (1973, p. 90) explains, it assumes “that structural conditions ‘push’ people into protest groups. But social movements are not a simple knee-jerk response to social conditions.” Therefore, this theory cannot adequately explain the complexity of feminist social movement(s).

^{42} In addition to those I will explicitly refer to here, see: Gamson (1975), McCarthy and Zald (1973), and Oberschall (1973).
B. Resource Mobilization Theory

Like collective behavior theory there are many tensions present within resource mobilization theory. Its focus on political culture and political cultural elites, material resources, and formal organizational structures derives from its economistic, positivist underpinnings as well as its U.S. empirical focus. It “can be characterized as specific to the United States’ context of PACs and pork-barrels, where the mutual permeation of Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) and government agencies make social movements barely distinguishable from interest groups” (Foweraker 1997, p. 70).

In addition, resource mobilization’s reliance on Olson’s (1963) model of rational action leads to the conflation of economic and institutional political power. Social movements are explained “by the continuing ability of the outside groups to mobilise resources and gain representation within the system” (Foweraker 1997, p. 65). Thus, resource mobilization theory posits that social movements must enter the institutionalized political realm in order to be effective. This reduces (if not ignores) non-material agency and the multiple ways feminist social movement(s)’ seek informal influence and enact cultural politics.

Lastly, this theory does not grant much agency to social movements themselves. If they are able to engage in political culture it is through the help of external actors (i.e. political cultural elites). Moreover, it does not recognize the agency of the social movement theorist, the ways in which an economistic lens is a political choice that determines how social movements are understood. Resource mobilization theorists do not understand the cultural political and political cultural aspects of their own ostensibly “rational,” objective, and empirical categories. “Social movements must be seen equally
and inseparably as struggles over meanings as well as material conditions . . . Are economies not cultural forms, anyway?” (Escobar 1992, p. 69). Political structures and elites are inherently informed and related to cultural political processes. Therefore, resource mobilization requires a cultural political analysis to understand itself and the social movements it seeks to explain. Though feminist social movement(s) often, and arguably must, engage in the institutional political realm; these actions occur simultaneously with longer-term goals and meaning making processes. Therefore, resource mobilization offers important insights about feminist social movement(s) but it is not sufficient. “The approach focuses on the expansion of ‘political society’ to include new actors or to increase the power of old ones. Certainly this is an important dimension of contemporary collective action, as is success defined in terms of inclusion in policy and increased benefits. But this is hardly the whole story” (Cohen 1992, p. 509).

C. PPT

Much the same can be said of PPT. Though, its theorists have made many attempts in recent years to account for “culture,” nonetheless, its structural bias cannot recognize or explain the ways in which feminist social movement(s) enact cultural

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43 Rakka Ray (1999) argues of that feminists engage in multiple political fields that cannot be understood through this theory. She posits that to understand women’s movements in India, we must address the ways power interacts with political culture (creating various political fields). “In the literature on social movements, discussions about political environments are usually limited to a social movement’s political opportunity structure. . . . It is only recently that attempts are being made to recognize that culture may exert independent effects on social movement organization, or even that culture should be considered an integral part of an organization’s political opportunity structure. The concept of field adds to these attempts to provide a corrective to the overly resource-oriented paradigm of the political process model by recognizing the crucial explanatory power of cultural factors and by insisting that action is relational” (Ray 1999, p. 7).
politics. Though mobilizing structures look to informal relations that affect social mobilization, an understanding of process is lost because they primarily address political cultural spaces. As was discussed in section III C, Tilly (1978) explains that civil society is an important “terrain” of action but only so far as it enables his causal structural argument. Feminists organizing in “private” and informal spaces is therefore seen as feminist social movement(s) creating and taking advantage of political opportunities in order to engage in political cultural struggles.

Moreover, the analysis of culture presented in cultural framing is understood by these theorists through an essentialist framework in which social movement actors understand themselves, and the social movements they are a part of, in terms of a singular identity in binary opposition to a distinct “other”. Yet this notion of identity is too fixed to understand the multiple identities of feminist social movement(s). Moreover, cultural framing does not adequately address the ways in which cultural politics are mutually constitutive of political cultures. In fact, cultural framing “which is their best effort to include culture actually leaves out most culture” (Goodwin & Jasper 2004, p. 5). Though the most recent reformulation of PPT presented in Dynamics of Contention (2001) attempt to develop this mechanistic view of “culture” by emphasizing “combinations of causal mechanisms” and “a range of dynamic processes” this contribution simply reiterates many of new social movement theorists’ insights with less analytical complexity (McAdam et al. 2001, p. 13). This reformulation privileges structure and does not allow for an analysis social movements as processes.44 “A number of factors have been added to political opportunities in recognition of the influence of non-

44 Also see their previous collaborative work for a detailed critique of PPT. See: Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta (2001).
structural variables – but without being accurately theorized as non-structural. . . .

Process theorists tend to wash the meaning and fluidity out of strategy, agency, and culture so that they will look more like structures” (Goodwin & Jasper 2001, p. 4). Therefore these recent additions recognize the limitations of PPT but are not re-visions.

PPT does not address feminist social movement(s) as an empirical case, but McAdam’s (1999) work on the civil rights movement reveals that PPT revisions overlook the importance of process. He attempts to incorporate many of the critiques aimed at PPT, but because of its inherent structural bias, the multiplicity of civil rights actions and goals as well as the “ordinary people” that defined it are overlooked. Thus, even recent revisions of PPT, like collective behavior theory and resource mobilization theory, posit social movements as objects rather than knowledge producers and therefore cannot recognize or theorize the dynamism and multiple political fields of action of feminist social movement(s).

V. Promises and Pitfalls of New Social Movement Theory

Arising in Western Europe from the phenomenological tradition, new social movement theory, seeks to explain how and why social movement actors mobilize. These theorists see social movements as analytical categories and knowledge producers.

45 For example, McAdam (1999) focuses primarily on the leaders and “big events” of the civil rights movement. He romanticizes particular events such as Freedom Summer and overemphasizes the work of white college students (Eyerman & Jameson 1991, pp. 40-1). Though both the event and volunteers were crucial, the work of Ransby (2003), Payne (1995) and my previous field statement illustrate that it was relationships, “ordinary” people, latent feminism, multiplicity, and dynamism that was the movement. Moreover, civil rights organizations such as the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) saw particular political inclusion and reform projects, such as voter registration and civic empowerment, as tactics in order to democratize democracy in the U.S.; cultural political enactments (means) not ends in themselves.
Moreover, it presents a complex understanding of the multiplicity of identity that can explain a great deal about the composition and struggles of feminist social movement(s). Yet, because Melucci (1996) relies on a socialist feminist understanding of “the women’s movement,” he is not open to the ways in which an intersectional analysis, based on difference, could strengthen his theorization of identity.

A. Social movements as complex processes

New social movement theory attempts to bring movement to social movement theory. As Eyerman and Jamison (1991, p. 60) state, “The distinctiveness of social movements, indeed their very historical significance, lies in their impermanence, disorganization, transience, in short in their motion.” This phenomenological theory draws for the most part on the Marxist tradition.46 It arose in Western Europe in the 1980s to explain “new” social movements, which though difficult to define, exhibited “post-industrial” and/or “post-materialist” values that were not adequately addressed if not rendered invisible by positivist theories.47

46 Melucci (1996) and Eyerman and Jamison (1991) draw directly from critical theorists and the Frankfurt school, such as Theodor Adorno, Jurgen Habermas, Max Horkheimer, Georg Lukács, and Herbert Marcuse. See: Eyerman and Jamison (1991, pp. 49-59).
47 Whereas Offe (1985, p. 832) argues “new” social movements are not necessarily novel. Melucci (1996, p. 5) persuasively contends that the dispute over the relevance of the term “new,” “strikes one as futile.” In fact, I would liken this struggle to that over the “newness” of globalization which often erases the significant material impacts of neoliberal capitalist expansion, technology, migration, and other aspects associated with “globalization” have on the lives of people, the configuration of boundaries, and ability to make political cultural claims and enact cultural politics. Like “globalization” debates, this novelty debate has the dangerous potential to overshadow the important contributions of the issue at hand: both new social movement theory and “new” social movements themselves.
Though it was not a direct response to the previously mentioned theories, new social movement theory did have a distinct political project of granting agency to social movement actors (and theorists). “The dominant groups always tend to define movements as simple reactions to crises, that is, to a dysfunctional mechanism of the system. Admitting that they are something else would entail recognition of collective demands that challenge the legitimacy of power and the current deployment of social resources” (Melucci 1996, p. 23). Moreover, it was argued that in order to recognize social movements, their existence cannot be taken for granted. “The empirical unity of a social movement should be considered as a result rather than the starting point, a fact to be explained rather than something that is already evident” (Melucci 1996, p. 40). Thus, new social movement theorists seek to explain how and why social movements arise.

New social movement theory has many variants, but for the purpose of this paper I will develop Eyerman and Jamison’s (1991) cognitive praxis and Melucci’s (1996) theory of collective action. These theorists present complementary models that argue social movements are processes, not empirical phenomena. In fact, the reflexivity of new social movement theorists is essential. In contrast to positivist’s objective formulation of the observer, new social movement theorists acknowledge the complex relationship between knowledge and power. Melucci (1996, pp. 21-22) argues that the subjectivity of the theorist is “an epistemological requirement” and therefore social movements are never things in themselves. “Social movement” is an analytical category, “objects of knowledge constructed by the analyst” to describe a particular form of collective action, the conjecture of collective identity and environment. The naming process allows for the signaling of particular configurations within the complex interaction of social movement
actors and their environment that produces temporary and multiple collective identities. Thus, social movements are “impermanent, transient phenomena” that can never be fully captured by the analyst or her analytical categories (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p. 65).

Nevertheless, something can be said. In fact, new social movement theorists attempt to explain why a particular confluence, “a social movement,” occurs through an analysis of the complex process of collective identity formation. Firstly, Eyerman and Jamison’s (1991, p. 4) theory of cognitive praxis recognizes a multiplicity of influences. “Social movements are the result of an interactional process which centers around the articulation of a collective identity and which occurs within the boundaries of a particular society. Our approach thus focuses upon the process of articulating a movement identity (cognitive praxis), on the actors taking part in this process (movement intellectuals), and on the contexts of articulation (political cultures and institutions).”

Melucci’s (1996) theory of collective action is similar. He argues that there are multiple forms of collective action, of which a particular form can be analytically called a social movement. Therefore, social movement “designates that form of collective action which (i) invokes solidarity (ii) makes manifest a conflict, and (iii) entails a breach of the limits of compatibility of the system within which the action takes place” (Melucci 1996, p. 28). He carefully defines a myriad of terms in his work but I will focus on the locus of solidarity: collective identity. Like Eyerman and Jamison (1991), for Melucci (1996, p. 67) this is a fluid category intimately related to structural constraints and opportunities. “The process by which collective identity is constructed, maintained, and adapted always has two sides to it: on the one hand, the inner complexity of an actor, its plurality of orientations; on the other, the actor’s relationship with the environment (other actors,
opportunities/ constraints).” Thus, both theorists understand social movements as the result of complex processes.

In fact, it is the inherent multiplicity of collective identities that makes them appear coherent. “It is through tensions between different organizations over defining and acting in that conceptual space that the (temporary) identity of a social movement is formed” (Eyerman & Jameson 1991, p. 55). Melucci (1996, p. 86) emphasizes that collective identity also must be seen as a useful though not sufficient analytical category. He argues that identity denotes a sense of fixidity, which is the paradox of identity. It signals the “contradictory necessity of permanence in the continuous constructive process. At any given time, when requested its identity, a collective actor is able to provide an answer through its many mouths in a definite way. Any such stable definition, however, is at the same time the outcome of constructive processes.” Therefore, collective identity is a simultaneously active and socially constructed process.

Though Melucci (1996) is unsatisfied with the term of identity because of this paradox, it allows him to go quite far in his explanation of the multiplicity of the feminist social movement(s). He argues “the woman’s movement” highlights the multiplicity of new social movement terrains as well as the fluidity of collective identities. To begin with he portrays “the women’s movement” as a political cultural and cultural political struggle. “For women, their profound memory of subordination and entrapment in a body ‘other’ than that of the dominant culture makes a struggle for emancipation an important, and quantitatively perhaps the most significant, component of the movement’s action. However, collective action by women is structured not only around the campaign
for equal rights, but for the right to be different as well” (Melucci 1996, pp. 140-1). In fact, he recognizes multiple feminisms and labels “the women’s movement” a:

“Network of networks connecting the tensions between groups centered on the transparency of internal affective needs and the professional groups committed to conquering a public space for feminine difference; between the groups producing female culture for internal consumption and those engaged in the production of services for the broader society; between the groups centered on self-reflective activities and individual differences and those which put the accent on sorority and women’s solidarity” (Melucci 1996, p. 144).

Therefore, unlike positivist theorists, new social movement theorists can see and appreciate the “double-level (visibility/latency)” of feminist social movements (Melucci 1996, p. 144). Agency is recognized not only by political cultural interventions but also in women’s everyday activities that transform and enact “new” understandings of gender as a political category. Melucci (1996) therefore offers a complex theory accounting for hegemonic feminisms. Yet, by employing a socialist feminist lens, he cannot recognize the ways in which his uncomfortabiltity with the paradox of identity is the result of the unquestioned centrality of his white, Western, male subjectivity and how this has been theorized and can be worked through with the methodology of the oppressed.

B. The pitfalls of a Socialist Feminist Understanding of Feminist Social Movements

New social movement theory is quite comprehensive and accounts for the internal as well as external processual interactions which coalesce in particular, temporary, formations of collective identity that analytically denote a social movement. Melucci (1996) also presents a socialist feminist understanding of feminist social movement(s).

As regards its symbolic appeal, in the long run the women’s movement seems destined to deny itself as a specific social actor, becoming one pressure group
among all the others. By giving everyone the chance to be different, it cancels out its own separateness. In their collective action, women seem to repose in a paradoxical way the ‘maternal’ drama and symbol of femaleness, that of being for others, while being themselves (Melucci 1996, p. 144).

Therefore, he sees internal differences, within “the women’s movement” as detrimental to the construction of a coherent collective identity that can present itself as adversarial or “separate”. Yet, the knowledge produced by feminist social movement(s) can strengthen Melucci’s (1996) understanding of the multiplicity of identity without calling for a unity based on sameness. In fact, U.S. third world feminists’ theorization of individual and collective identity as inherently multiple and productive articulates Melucci’s (1996) paradox of collective identity, a fluid and performative process which negotiates and tactically utilizes specific identities. Through this theory and its embodied practice, feminist social movement(s) can be seen as coalitions that rely on a complex notion of equality: a model of solidarity based on collaboration and conflict which strives for equity rather than sameness.

VI. Cohen and Arato’s Dualistic Synthesis

Cohen and Arato (1992) formulated a civil society based social movement theory in order to address the limitations they found in both resource mobilization and new social movement theories. Though comprehensive, this theory is dismissive of the structural sensitivity of new social movement theorists and it does not recognize the incommensurabilities of positivist and phenomenological epistemologies or the theory produced by feminist social movement(s).
A. Promises of dual logic

Cohen and Arato (1992) provide a coherent and systematic critique of the inherent limitations of resource mobilization and new social movement theories. Firstly, they argue that resource mobilization theory only allows for an understanding of the “politics of inclusion,” which “targets political institutions to gain recognition for new political actors as members of political society and to achieve benefits for those whom they ‘represent;’” and the “politics of reform,” which is “the further democratization of political and economic institutions” (Cohen & Arato 1992, p. 526). Therefore, they argue that resource mobilization theorists are not able to explain the whole story of “the feminist movement.” As has been highlighted above, the structural bias of these theories does limit their explanatory power. By focusing primarily on singular events, the actions of elites and/or particular notable individuals these theories cannot adequately account for the ways in which social movements relationally enact cultural politics. Secondly, Cohen and Arato (1992, p. 526) claim that new social movement theory in an attempt to remedy this structural bias, privileges the normative aspects of the “politics of identity,” which is “the redefining of cultural norms, individual and collective identities, social roles modes of interpretation, and the form and content of discourses” (Cohen & Arato 1992, p. 526). Though they discuss the complexity of Touraine’s (1981) theory, they argue that the identity-based political focus of this theory cannot adequately account for the importance of institutionalized politics. “The struggles on the part of social actors to ensure the influence of democratic institutions in and over the political system and the economy” (Cohen & Arato, p. 520). Cohen and Arato (1992) rightly argue that strategic interactions with political cultural elites and institutionalized politics are fundamental to a
complex understanding of social movements, yet they do not recognize the ways in which new social movement theory would agree with them.

Therefore, Cohen and Arato (1992) argue that social movements are both offensive and defensive and the insights of each school should be combined to explain this “dual logic”. Whereas resource mobilization theorists only explain the politics of inclusion and reform, new social movement theory becomes preoccupied with the politics of identity. “There is thus no reason why the various logics of collective action should be seen as incompatible, so long as they are not construed as the sole form of rationality of collective action to the exclusion of others. Moreover, on the basis of this analysis, one can see that movements can struggle simultaneously for the defense and democratization of civil society and for inclusion within the expansion of political society” (Cohen & Arato 1991, p. 523). When joined, dominant schools of social movement theory can account for the “dual face” and “dual organizational” logic” of social movements (Cohen & Arato 1991, p. 524). They provide their civil society based model to account for the “interface” between civil society and political society through their notion of “politics of influence,” social movement struggles “aimed at altering the universe of political discourse to accommodate new need-interpretations, new identities, and new norms” (Cohen & Arato 1992, p. 526).

Cohen and Arato (1992) provide “empirical evidence” to support this theory through a discussion of “the women’s movement.” They argue, “the dual logic of feminist politics thus involves a communicative, discursive politics of identity and influence that targets civil and political society and organized, strategically rational politics of inclusion and reform that is aimed at political and economic institutions” (Cohen & Arato 1992, p.
In fact, they illustrate that feminists are involved in the politics of reform (i.e. Legislative bills), inclusion (i.e. entry to “public spaces”), identity (i.e. consciousness raising groups) and influence (i.e. discourse of “gender”). They conclude, “almost all major analyses of the feminist movement (in the United States and Europe) have shown the existence and importance of dualistic politics” (Cohen & Arato 1992, p. 550).

This work through its understanding of feminist political movements and feminist methodology presents a much more complex notion of identity. In their discussion and rebuttal of Nancy Fraser’s (1985) critique of Habermas, Cohen and Arato (1992, pp. 542-3) state that they “maintain that gender is a generalized form of communication or, rather, the code of such communication. . . . Power operating in the code of gender delimits not only what one understands as natural/unnatural, male/female, feminine/masculine, attractive/unattractive, and appropriate/inappropriate sexual objects and aims, but also constructs the meanings of bodies and operates upon them.” Therefore, they address many of Evers’ (1992, p. 55) concerns regarding the “naming” process, which threatens to essentialize identities by placing them within what he calls the “firm ground of established reality.” Their formulation of dual logic allows them to maintain (the majority) of the tensions between the boundedness and fluidity of identity through their recognition of “the feminist movement” as a confluence of interests rather than a static empirical category.

B. Pitfalls of dual logic

48 For a further elaboration of this argument see: Fraser (1993).
Yet this theory presents three distinct problems. Firstly, it is dismissive of more recent new social movement formulations. As argued in section V A, Eyerman and Jamison’s (1991) and Melucci’s (1996) theories account for their “politics of influence.” Though Melucci’s previous work may have been less comprehensive, his recent work does not fall into the trap of narrow identity politics. Yet, because these revisions came after Cohen and Arato’s (1992) work, we can arguably not fault them for their reduction. Yet, Eyerman and Jamison (1991) incorporate Cohen’s (1985) critiques of new social movement theory. Whereas, some new social movement theorists such as Boggs (1985), Gorz (1982), and Bahro (1984) ignore many of the structural interactions that shape collective identity, this critique cannot be aimed at new social movement theory in general. New social movement theory has faults, but its more complex variants do not ignore political culture.

Secondly, Cohen and Arato (1992), like Melucci (1996) present a socialist feminist understanding of feminism. Though there are clear solidarities among various feminisms it is a mistake to collapse them. Cohen and Arato (1992, p. 550) acknowledge the geographical bias of the their claim that “all major analyses of the feminist movement have shown the existence and importance of dualistic politics, ” they do not address the analysis, contributions, or existence of women of color and their theoretical contributions. Therefore, like new social movement theory, this civil society based social movement theory does not actively listen to the knowledge produced by feminists that argue differences are crucial to feminism and social change in general. In fact, a movement-relevant social movement theory which actively listens to U.S. third feminists can explain
and illustrate the ways in which feminist social movements engage the interface without erasing difference.

Lastly, Cohen and Arato (1992) call for the combination of positivist and phenomenological traditions but do not address the incommensurability of these social movement theoretical schools. Contextual specificities are reflected in theoretical production, and both positivist and new social movement theories come from distinct contexts.

While Cohen’s synthesis remains attractive at the level of theory, it fails to address the substantial methodological and contextual difficulties that stand in the way of its realization in research practice. A mere combination of approaches would lead to a loss of the particular contributions that each approach has provided to the understanding of social movements. What would be gained in grand theory would be lost in empirical research (Eyerman & Jamison 1991, p. 27).

Eyerman and Jamison (1991, p. 28) argue that “due to a number of interrelated historical and cultural factors, derived from both the external and internal intellectual contexts” these theories are incompatible. Though the tools of these theories provide useful ways of understanding social movements, simply combining them does not address the fundamental epistemological problems inherent in positivist theories that make them incapable of recognizing social movements as subjects. Nor does it address the ways in which new social movement’s socialist feminist understanding of feminist social movement(s) blinds it to the inability to recognize the productive aspects of difference. Therefore, Cohen and Arato (1992) are correct that feminist social movement(s) engage in both political cultural and cultural political struggles. Yet, in order to explain and theorize this interface, social movement theory must be re-visioned by actively listening to and theorizing with feminist social movement(s).
VII. A Movement-Relevant Social Movement Theory

If one uses positivist social movement theory, feminist social movement(s) are viewed as objects of study. Though new social movement theory and civil society based social movement theory provide an understanding of social movements as knowledge producers, by urging feminist social movement(s) to simply account for their differences they erase the productivity of difference. By actively listening to U.S. third world feminists’ methodology of the oppressed – specifically Crenshaw’s (1991) “intersectionality”, Collins’s (1990) “matrix of domination”, and Sandoval’s (2000) “differential consciousness” – I will present a movement-relevant social movement theory that develops Melucci’s (1996) and Eyerman and Jamison’s (1991) theorization of collective identity and Cohen and Arato’s (1992) interface.

A. Intersectionality

Crenshaw’s (1991, pp. 1242-44) formulation of intersectionality has become a prevalent model for articulating the interaction of multiple identities. In writing “Mapping the Margins,” Crenshaw (1991) sought to interrogate legalistic frameworks that dismissed the particularities of women of color experiences of domestic violence and rape. This work also allowed her to develop a larger framework that highlighted how reductionist formulations of identity produce incomplete understandings of women of color and insufficient strategies for intervention. Therefore, this work has justly been

49 In fact, she shows that race and gender are complicated by multiple factors such as language, residency status, and class.
recognized as a significant contribution to the understanding of the complexity of identity.

Yet, as Angela Davis (2004) has articulated, the increased popularity of this term has often erased the complex genealogy of women of color feminist theorizing and social movement organizing, from which intersectional analysis collaboratively emerged. Crenshaw (1991) is within this tradition but intersectional analysis cannot be equated with her work. Kobena Mercer (1992, pp. 425-6) explains that this and other moves can lead to uncritical intersectional analysis, or “the race, class, gender mantra.” The idea that “serial acknowledgement of various sources of identity is sufficient for an understanding of how different identities get articulated into a common project or don’t.” This flattens the particularities of context and the ways in which multiple forms of oppression interrelate, become more apparent in particular circumstances, and differ based on particular individual and group affiliations. Intersectional analysis is useful for articulating individual expressions of oppression based on multiple group membership, but it does not fully theorize interlocking systems of oppressions and internal and relational contradictions. Therefore, in order to “flesh” out the complexity of multiple identity, specifically that embodied by women of color, it is important to look at other theoretical contributions.

B. “Matrix of Domination”

50 This quote is found in Chabram-Dernesian (1999, p. 288). For more a more developed discussion of this term and the way in which it functions, see Mercer (1994).
51 This is often done in “progressive” circles, yet those who use this word often have not internalized an intersectional feminist analysis. This often leads to a discussion of how race/class/gender are important but does not thoroughly reckon with the complexity of this insight.
Collins’ (1990, p. 225) theory of the matrix of domination posits that “replacing additive models of oppression with interlocking ones creates possibilities for new paradigms.” She theorizes the particular intersections of race, class, and gender that constitute the oppression and activism of Black feminists in order to highlight the multiple ways in which dominant systems oppress and also create “subjugated knowledges” which inform cultures of resistance (Collins 1990, p. 228).

Race, class, and gender represent the three systems of oppression that most heavily affect African-American women. But these systems and the economic, political, and ideological conditions that support them may not be the most fundamental oppressions, and they certainly affect more than many more groups than Black women. . . . One significant dimension of Black Feminist though is its potential to reveal insights about the social relations of domination organized along other axes such as religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and age.

Therefore, this analysis reveals the ways in which varying forms of social domination affect particular groups and people in specific, complex, and often contradictory ways. The matrix of domination looks at the ways in which “people experience and resist oppression on three levels: the level of personal biography; the group or community level of the cultural context created by race, class, and gender; and the systemic level of social institutions” (Collins 1990, p. 227).

In the first instance she explains that no two individuals are the same and therefore relations between individuals have the possibility to be both liberating and confining. This grants agency to individuals; individuals interact with systems of oppression and are not merely victims of it. Therefore, consciousness raising entails more than the signaling of power but also reckoning with the complexity of one’s complex implication within it. “Depending on the context, an individual may be an oppressor, a member of an oppressed group, or simultaneously oppressor and oppressed”
(Collins 1990, p. 225). Secondly, the collective level allows us to understand the ways in which individual multiple identities inform and are informed by community and group affiliations. Dominant and subjugated knowledges interact, leading those who affiliate with a particular group identity to believe and undertake particular actions, some of which may appear contradictory. Lastly, social institutions (such as schools, churches, and the media) structure social spaces and often further normalize dominant group identities. “Institutions expose individuals to the specialized thought representing the dominant group’s standpoint and interests. While such institutions offer the promise of both literacy and other skills that can be used for individual empowerment and social transformation, they simultaneously require docility and passivity” (Collins 1990, p. 228). Thus, the matrix of domination accounts for the multiple ways in which power and resistance operate in the creation and replication of multiple (and often contradictory) individual and collective identities.

C. Differential consciousness

Sandoval’s (2000) cultural topography and differential consciousness also presents a complex U.S. third world feminist methodology for understanding the multiplicity of identity. As explained in section IIA, her cultural topography begins by laying out the four hegemonic oppositional consciousnesses. She explains that U.S. third world feminism and organizing strategies cannot be understood through this narrow typology. Therefore, she shows the ways in which these hegemonic feminisms are

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52 Dominant standards of beauty often influence African-American women to dislike or attempt to change their physical appearance. “Similarly, internalizing Eurocentric gender ideology leads some Black men to abuse Black women” (Collins 1990, p. 228).
related to other social movements and their organizing strategies. Liberal feminist demands for formal equality are linked to the larger civil rights movement.

“Aesthetically, the equal-rights mode of consciousness seeks duplication; politically, it seeks integration; psychically, it seeks assimilation” (Sandoval 2000, p. 56). Secondly, “Marxist” and “socialist” feminists consciousness can be grouped with other “revolutionary” movements that seek to change the entire system, such as “the Black Panther Party, American Indian Movement and the Brown Berets” (Sandoval 2000, p. 57). Third, “radical” feminism can be placed under the rubric of “supremacist,” where difference is claimed and seen as superior. This is inclusive of various “‘nationalisms’ of every racial, ethnic, gender, sex, class, religious, or loyalist type” (Sandoval 2000, p. 57). The fourth ideology is “separatism,” movements that aim “to protect and nurture differences that define its practitioners though their complete separation from the dominant social order” (Sandoval 2000, p. 57). Thus, difference must not only survive but also thrive. Therefore, in addition to their strategic interaction with political cultural elites and political cultural institutions, feminist social movement(s) interact and are informed by other social movements. As Anzaldúa (2002, p. xxxiv) states, “social movements cross borders – ours is no different.”

Therefore, Sandoval (2000) explains feminist social movement(s) as offensive, defensive, and coalitional. Differential consciousness is the fifth mobile gear of her cultural topography, which can never be clearly defined nor bounded. “The differential resides in the place where meaning escapes any final anchor point, slipping away to surprise or snuggle inside power’s mobile contours” (Sandoval 2000, p. 180). It is ever changing and its fluidity is its essence and power. Sandoval (2000, p. 4) explains that
differential consciousness allows for social dreaming to be rooted in the historically specific present material conditions while “functioning on an altogether different register.” Its opposition is not in relation to a particular defined “enemy,” “to name the theory and method of differential consciousness ‘oppositional’ refers only to the ideological effects its activity can have” (Sandoval 2000, pp. 197-8). Differential consciousness uses the four previous modes of opposition tactically, but recognizes they are not “a way of life” (Anzaldúa 1999, p. 101).

Differential consciousness theorizes how fluid shifting of identities and strategies are mobilized based on one’s (an individual and/or group’s) ability to identify the possibilities and constraints within particular configurations of power. Sandoval (2000) argues that this tactical selection process is made possible through cognitive mapping. One surveys the social, historical, political, and cultural context in order to locate one’s self (or social movement) in relation to concentrations of power and therefore determines the most effective point of intervention. “It operates as does a technology - - a weapon of consciousness that functions like a compass: a pivoting center capable of drawing circles or varying circumference, depending on the setting... [It] allows one to chart out the positions available and the directions to move in a larger social totality” (Sandoval 2000, p. 30).53 She claims that the bridges, identities, goals that are created in this process are always temporary. “Differential cognitive mapping would engage consciousness, ideology, citizenship, and coalition as a masquerade. It requires a consciousness that perceives itself at the center of a myriad of possibilities all cross-

53 Sandoval (2000) argues that the citizen-subject can cognitively map from within as well as beyond a particular place, though she calls for constant attention to the particularities of context and social constructions of subjectivity.
working --- any of which is fodder for one’s loyalties” (Sandoval 2000, p. 31, my emphasis).

Differential consciousness therefore sees U.S. third world feminist identity as performative. Like Butler (1993), Sandoval distinguishes between performance and performativity.

In no sense can it be concluded that the part of gender that is performed is therefore the ‘truth’ of gender; performance as bounded ‘act’ is distinguished from performativity insofar as the latter consists in a reiteration of norms which preclude, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer’s ‘will’ or ‘choice;’ further, what is ‘performed’ works to conceal, if not disavow, what remains opaque, unconscious, unperformable (Butler 1993, p. 234).

This distinction allows Sandoval (2000) to avoid the traps of disembodied post-modern performance. By reading postmodern theory through the methodology of the oppressed, Sandoval (2000) highlights how the simultaneity of oppression creates an understanding of identity that is socially constructed and constrained and enabled by particular structural and institutional forms of power.

D. “Fleshing” out collective identity

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54 For example, Paula Moya (1997, p. 131) rightly points to Haraway’s (1990) misappropriation of women of color theory in her “conflation of cyborgs with women of color.” Moya (1997, p. 135) explains that identity can never be thought of completely outside the material world and structural constraints. “The difficulty is that people do not live in an entirely abstract or discursive realm. They live as biologically and temporally limited, as well as socially situated, human beings. Furthermore, while the ‘postmodern’ moment does represent a time of rapid social, political, economic, and discursive shifts, it does not represent a radical break with systems, structures, and meanings of the past. Power is not amorphous because oppression is systematic and structural.” Thus identity is socially constructed and “real.”
The theory produced by feminists enables a movement-relevant social movement theory that recognizes the complexity and fluidity of feminist social movement(s) and collective identity as a whole. Intersectionality explains how individual’s various subject positions defy fundamentalist and additive definitions of identity. Collins’ (1990) discussion of the infinite forms of privilege and subjugation develops Melucci’s (1996) theory of collective identity. Black Feminist Thought (1990) speaks to the multiplicity of oppressions beyond that of African-American women. “Placing African-American women and other excluded groups in the center of analysis opens up possibilities for a both/and conceptual stance, one in which all groups possess varying amounts of penalty and privilege in one historically created system” (Collins 1990, p. 225). Thus, there are infinite ways in which, on the three conceptual levels, various axes of oppression interact. Each person, community, collective, social movement, etc. is located within numerous power relations in particular and specific ways. “Race, class, and gender constitute axes of oppression that characterize Black women’s experiences within a more generalized matrix of domination. Other groups may encounter different dimensions of the matrix, such as sexual orientation, religion, and age, but the overarching relationship is one of domination and the types of activism it generates” (Collins 1990, p. 226).

Socialist feminists, Melucci (1996), and Cohen and Arato (1992) claim that tensions among feminists can, and should, be reduced (or eliminated) by uniting based on a sameness rooted in sexual difference. Yet, Collins (1990) illustrates that the inherent multiplicity of feminists’ individual and collective differences must be recognized in order to reduce the replication and perpetuation of oppression that are enabled by relying on dominant knowledges and erasing the importance of subjugated knowledges which are
rooted in difference. For example, hegemonic feminist struggles and ideologies created their own racist ideologies because they were based on a particular racial, gender, class, sexuality, and other privileges. Therefore, if hegemonic feminists recognized their particularity and multiple subject positions, the problems with their universal definitions of “woman” and fundamentalist organizing strategies may have become evident, and reduced their racist and classist tendencies. Though this is a difficult and continual process, the matrix of domination offers essential tools for self-reflexive social movement theorizing and organizing.

Sandoval (2000), like Collins (1990), argues that through the recognition of particular axes of oppression we can find the tools to move towards a fluid understanding of identity that is related to, but not reliant on particular forms of subjugation. In fact, she argues that the connotation of identity as a stable category, can be equated with the unquestioned centrality of the white, Western, male subject position. Through a critique of Fredric Jameson’s (1984) articulation of post-modernism as the death of the modern subject,55 she shows that post-modern nostalgia and despair for the loss of fixed identity is a reflection of privilege. “‘Fragmentation is neither an experience nor a theoretical construct peculiar to the poststructuralist or postmodern moments. Indeed, the fragmentation or split subjectivity of subjection is the very condition against which a modernist, well-placed citizen-subject could coalesce its own sense of wholeness”

55 Jameson (2000) has a clear articulation of the transformation of space, place, and identity that signal the post-modern moment. Yet, for the purpose of this paper, I highlight his discussion of subjectivity. He argues that post-modernity fundamentally upsets a fixed notion of self and undermines modern certainty: the “time and place where it was possible to know exactly who you were and where you stood . . . When it was possible to apprehend clearly who were the rulers and who the ruled and to look clearly into the face of one’s enemy” (Sandoval 2000, 23-24).
Therefore, consciousness of multiple subjectivity is not novel, marginal subjects have long existed and theorized from this space. Yet, recently those who were previously centered, and relied on their identity as distinct from racialized, sexualized, ethnicized, etc. others are being displaced. Sandoval refers to this process as the “democratization of oppression,” it is this moment of recognition that though we may be in positions of varying privilege there is no “whole” citizen-subject.

It is no longer the ‘outside’ who bears the burden of such recognitions . . . All citizen-subjects are becoming strangely permeated, transformed – and marginalized. In this respect, the industrial working class, the so-called proletariat, can never again be viewed as the only revolutionary ‘subject of history’ any more than can the indomitable and transforming presence of the third world, of peoples of color, of lesbians, gays, queers, women, or the subordinated. There has been an upheaval under neo-colonizing postmodernism that has transferred a potentially revolutionary apparatus into the body of every citizen-subject, regardless of social caste (Sandoval 2000, p. 36).

Melucci (1996, p. 85) hopes through his work to bring “identity” “to its limits,” but his discomfortability with the rigidity this concept is related to the maintenance of the

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56 Also see Mohanty (2004) chapter 1 and 9 for a development of this argument.
57 This space has been called *nepantla* (Anzaldua 1999) and third space (Perez 2000). Sandoval (2000, pp. 69-70) argues that “it is no accident that over the last twenty years of the twentieth century new terms such as “hybridity,” “nomad thought,” “marginalization,” “eccentric subjectivity,” :situated knowledges,” “schizophrenia,” “la facultad,” “signifin’,” “the outsider/within,” “strategic essentialism,” “différance,” “rasquache,” “performativity,” “coatlicue,” and “the third meaning” entered into intellectual currency as terminological interventions meant to specify and reinforce particular forms of resistance to dominant social hierarchy. Taken together, such often seemingly contending terms indicate the existence of what can be understood as a cross-disciplinary and contemporary vocabulary, lexicon, and grammar for thinking about oppositional consciousnesses and social movements under globalizing postmodern cultural conditions. Oddly, however, the similar conceptual undergirding that unifies these terminologies has not become intellectual ground in the academy for recognizing new forms of theory capable of advancing interdisciplinary study. This divisive and debilitating phenomena plagues intellectual production, and it is not unlike the division that plagues the rest of the social world, the academic manifestation of which can be recognized as a ‘racialization of theoretical domains,” itself another symptom of the twenty-first century biopolitical race and gender wars predicted by Foucault.” discusses various other articulations.
Theories produced by those within feminist social movement(s)’ present identity as an always already multiple analytical category. Therefore, feminist social movement(s), when recognized as knowledge producers, both flesh out an understanding of collective identity – the external constraints and opportunities that interact with individual and collective multiple identities to formulate fluid collective identities – and the ways in which these collective identities have and can be performed temporarily and strategically in the pursuit of particular goals.

**E. Highlighting the Interface**

Unlike Cohen and Arato’s (1992) civil society based social movement theory, movement-relevant social movement theory informed by U.S. third world feminists, is rooted in difference. Therefore, it can theorize the ways in which feminist social movement(s) engage in political cultural struggles *and* enact cultural politics without erasing the empirical specificity of particular actions. Mohanty (2004, p. 226) explains that differences are important and have been used by U.S. third world feminists to build a solidarity based on a complex equality. “Differences are never just ‘differences.’ In knowing differences and particularities, we can better see the connections and commonalities because no border or boundary is every complete or rigidly determining. The challenge is to see how differences allow us to explain the connections and border crossings better and more accurately, how specifying difference allows us to theorize universal concerns more fully.” Feminists have come together in coalitions based on
their differences and therefore undertake various political projects, which are complementary as well as contradictory. As Moraga (2002, p. xvi) states, women of color are not a “‘natural’ affinity group but are people who, across sometimes painful differences, come together out of political necessity.”

Sandoval (2000, p. 63) explains that through differential consciousness, U.S. third world feminists “cruise”\(^{58}\) through meaning systems by employing various gears and remaining ever conscious that each is a tactical strategy we employ is a “consensual illusion.” One performs an essentialist identity as a strategy. For example, though feminist social movement(s) may sometimes tactically organize as “women”, this does not equate to an essential essence. Sandoval (2000, p. 63) explains that “a differential consciousness recognizes and identifies expressions of power as consensual illusions. When resistance is organized as equal-rights, revolutionary, supremacist, or separatist in function, a differential form of criticism would understand such mechanisms for power as transformable social narratives that are designed to intervene in reality for the sake of social justice.” Yet, Blackwell (2000, p. 54) rightly points to the difficulty of this task, due to Sandoval’s categories. “Her [Sandoval’s] analysis only names the hegemonic gears of feminist typologies which she aims to destabilize whereas I would like to emphasize the multiple locations in which women of color feminist subjects emerge that may enact shifts in consciousness and strategy outside of those named in feminist typologies.” Thus, Sandoval is able to chart the ways third world feminists (and others)

\(^{58}\) Barbara Noda’s metaphor of “lowriding through the women’s movement” that Sandoval (1999, pp. 2-3) states that U.S. third world feminists in the 1970s “were developing imagery, methods and theories necessary for the ‘cruising’ through meaning systems which would become the hallmark of a distinctive U.S. third world feminism” See: Sandoval (1995).
can use hegemonic oppositional frames, but her concept of the gearshift is limiting.
Moving through hegemonic gears is not sufficient for a theorization of feminist social
movement(s), which employ many gears at the same time. Each particular feminist
project and/or identity has a specific purpose, comes from a particular position, and is
engaged in relation to other feminist political projects and identities.

By expanding Sandoval’s (2000) gear shift, a movement-relevant social
movement theory can recognize and theorize the ways in which feminist social
movement(s) perform collective identities by cognitively mapping various axes of
oppression and signaling particular strategic interventions. In fact, this theory recognizes
feminist social movement(s) as fluid, ever changing, and highlights Cohen and Arato’s
(1992, p. 63) interface. “Instead of conforming to the linear model of development, the
feminist movement has shifted back and forth between mass action and political pressure,
depending on the available political opportunities and the issue at hand.” From NOW to
interventions in the understanding of gender as a political category, feminist social
movement(s) have negotiated various identities and tactics.

VI. Conclusion

This field statement has argued that neither positivist, phenomenological, nor civil
society based social movement theories can fully explain the multiple political fields
through, within, and beyond which feminist social movement(s) operate. Moreover, the
field of social movement theory has not engaged in the dialogue with feminist social
movement(s) which would allow for the development of new social movement’s
 theorization of multiple identity or Cohen and Arato’s (1992) interface. By actively
listening to the insights of U.S. third world feminists, particularly the work of Collins (1990) and Sandoval (2000), a movement-relevant social movement theory has been presented which theorizes the productivity of difference and the multiple political logics of feminist social movement(s). This project challenges other social movement theorists to build coalitions with social movements in order to begin the difficult though productive work of cross-cultural/ideological/political/social translation and dialogue. Moreover, it provides the basis for my future work that seeks to explore the travels and translations of participatory democratic social movements across the Americas.

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