and serve the richest and most powerful corporations and people in the world.

By learning how to disrupt these airports, offices, and hotels, service workers can exert their newly available and previously unimagined power—not for a day, but for weeks and months in an escalating campaign that demands decent wages and living conditions for workers and a stronger, more prosperous future for entire communities and cities. In using this power, they can take the lead in creating a new world where the incredible technological progress, wealth, and economic advances of the global economy lift up the poor, empower the powerless, and inspire all of us to fight for justice.

Recommended Resources

For more information on global union organizing, see http://www.union-network.org/unipropertyn.nsf. To learn about SEIU, go to www.seiu.org; and to find out more about the corporate accountability campaign on Group 4 Securicor, go to www.focusongroup4securicor.org and www.eyeonwackenhut.com.

Dan Clawson. 2003. *The Next Upsurge: Labor and the New Social Movements* (Cornell University Press). A progressive transformation, Clawson believes, will be difficult or impossible without the active involvement of the working class and its collective voice, the labor movement.

Rick Fantasia and Kim Voss. 2004. *Hard Work: Remaking the American Labor Movement* (University of California Press). Fantasia and Voss examine the decline of the American labor movement and the emergence of a new kind of "social movement unionism" that suggests the potential revival of unionism in the United States.

Stephen Lerner. 2003. "An Immodest Proposal: A New Architecture for the House of Labor." *New Labor Forum* 12(2)(Summer):7–30; and (2005) "A Winning Strategy to Do Justice." *Tikkun* (May/June):50–51. Drawing lessons from how SEIU remade itself so that workers could take on big, non-union employers, Lerner argues that the labor movement's structure, culture, and priorities stand in the way of workers' gains and the need to change.

Ruth Milkman. 2006. *L.A. Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the U.S. Labor Movement* (Russell Sage Foundation). Milkman explains how Los Angeles, once known as a company town hostile to labor, became a hotbed of unionism, and how immigrant service workers emerged as the unlikely leaders in the battle for workers' rights.

Ruth Milkman and Kim Voss, eds. 2004. *Rebuilding Labor: Organizing and Organizers in the New Union Movement* (Cornell University Press). Milkman and Voss bring together established researchers and a new generation of labor scholars to assess the current state of labor organizing and its relationship to union revitalization.

Saskia Sassen. 2006. *Cities in a World Economy* (Pine Forge Press). Sassen uses the term "global cities" to capture the growth of service firms under globalization and their concentration in a small number of cities, as well as discussing these firms' increasing dependence on low-paid service workers.

Part IX

Why Do Movements Decline?

Introduction

Not surprisingly, scholars have had much more to say about why social movements arise than why they decline, enter a period of "abeyance," or disappear altogether. Nonetheless, several hypotheses about movement decline have attained some notoriety. Most explanations for decline focus on the surrounding political environment, which may of course constrain as well as facilitate movements. Of course, the very success of a movement in changing laws or government policies may undermine the motivations that many people had for participating in that movement. Movement organizations may also be legally recognized by the government, leading to their "institutionalization" and declining reliance upon disruptive protest. Government concessions of this type, even if they do not redress all the grievances and concerns of movement participants, may nevertheless be sufficient to satisfy or placate many people, who will then drift away from the movement or from protest tactics. Social movements, in short, may become victims of their own success.

Movements may also decline as a result of their own internal dynamics and evolution. In her account of the decline of the women's movement in America, Barbara Epstein stresses how the movement gradually lost its radical élan and vision. This was a result in part of intense ideological conflicts among radical feminists within the movement, who had provided much of the movement's activist core and ideological inspiration. Gradually, and partly because of its own success in opening up new professional careers for women, the women's movement as a whole took on a middle-class outlook. It became more concerned with the career opportunities and material success of individual women than with the group solidarity of women or the concerns of poor and working-class women. A remarkably wide range of women's organizations have now been successfully institutionalized, Epstein points out, but they have not been able, and most have not been concerned, to bring about gender equality within the larger society.

The excerpt by Joshua Gamson emphasizes yet another way in which a movement's internal dynamics may lead to schism, if not decline. Movements typically

Movements in Abeyance Some political causes go through long periods of relative inactivity, disappearing from the public eye, before springing back to life. While in abeyance, they are kept alive by small groups or networks of people who remember previous mobilizations and remain committed to ideals that are generally out of favor among the broader public. Such "abeyance structures" also include formal organizations that continue to work for social change even when there is no evidence of a surrounding movement. For instance, the small and largely obscure National Woman's Party (NWP) led by Alice Paul agitated for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) during the 1940s and 1950s, until that cause was picked up again by the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The persistence of such networks and organizations helps to explain why certain movements, ideas, and tactics can sometimes reappear quickly after decades of dormancy. See Taylor (1989).

require—or themselves attempt to create—clear and stable collective identities. How can we make claims and demands upon others, after all, if we do not know who "we" and "they" are? Many recent movements have been centrally concerned with establishing, recasting, and/or defending collective identities, including previously stigmatized identities. But collective identities, sociologists argue, are not "natural" or given once and for all; they are culturally constructed and continually reconstructed. Some identities, moreover, may obscure or devalue others. As a result, people have often attempted to blur, reconfigure, or deconstruct certain identities. Hence, Gamson's question: must identity movements self-destruct?

Gamson shows how the gay and lesbian movement has been shaken in recent years by "queer" theorists and activists who have challenged fixed sexual identities like "gay, "lesbian," and "straight." Queer activists have also challenged the "assimilationist" goals of mainstream (and generally older) gay and lesbian activists, some of whom object to the very use of a stigmatized label like "queer." To some extent, Gamson points out, queer activism developed out of the growing organization of bisexual and transgendered people, whose very existence challenges the notion of fixed sexual and gender identities.

In the end, then, the gay and lesbian movement and indeed all identity movements face a dilemma: to be politically effective they may feel a need to emphasize exclusive and secure collective identities, but this may paper over and effectively ignore important differences among movement participants—differences that may later erupt in a way that weakens the movement. How movements handle this dilemma in order to avoid self-destruction—how they weigh and balance competing and potentially disruptive identity claims—is an important question for future research.

Movements may also decline because the "political opportunities" that may have helped give rise to them begin to contract or disappear. Elite divisions may be resolved or (perhaps because of elite unity) elites may decide to harshly repress a movement. Both of these factors are usually invoked to explain the violent demise of the democracy movement in China in 1989. In *The War on Labor and the Left* (1991), Patricia Cayo Sexton also emphasizes repression as a key factor in the decline of the U.S. labor movement since the 1950s. More specifically, Sexton argues that union decline in America is largely explained by aggressive employer opposition to unions, which is in turn facilitated by laws and policies that favor employers over workers. One does not see the same type of employer resistance in Canada, Sexton points out, mainly because laws discourage it. As a result, unions have become stronger in Canada. American unions have also been hurt by factory closings in recent years; many businesses have transferred their operations to parts of the country (mainly the South) or other countries where unions are weak and wages relatively low. (Of course, as Stephen Lerner points out in chapter 33, multinational corporations remain vulnerable to organized labor.)

A primary reason for the existence of a legal framework in the United States which encourages business opposition to unions is the historic *political* weakness of the American labor movement. Unlike all other developed capitalist countries, the United States has never had a strong labor or leftist political party (although some scholars have suggested that the Democratic Party briefly functioned like one during the 1930s and 1940s). Scholars refer to the historical weakness of labor and socialist parties in the United States as "American exceptionalism." The precise reasons for this exceptionalism continue to be debated, with factors such as the two-party system, racial and ethnic antagonisms among workers, and the American creed of individualism receiving considerable emphasis.

Charles Brockett and Ian Roxborough remind us that repression sometimes works and sometimes fails. State violence sometimes demobilizes protestors and crushes insurgents, but it sometimes backfires, spurring more people to take to the streets or to take up arms. What explains this?

Looking at Central America during the 1970s and 1980s, Brockett notes that ruthless repression was most effective when authorities used it before movements had become strong—before a "cycle of protest" had begun. However, after such a cycle of protest was underway—when people were already active and organized—repression tended to backfire. Organized activists redoubled their efforts, went underground, and often turned to violence, joined by others seeking protection, justice, and sometimes revenge.

Roxborough suggests that U.S. counterinsurgency efforts in Iraq failed because they were based on a misunderstanding of insurgent social movements. U.S. officials assume that popular attitudes towards insurgents and the government are based on short-term cost-benefit calculations, failing to see how insurgencies are deeply rooted in intractable class, ethnic, or religious conflicts. Accordingly, attempts to win over the "hearts and minds" of the population by providing material benefits are insufficient. Insurgent movements are less interested in popularity or legitimacy per se than in monopolizing political control at the grassroots; such movements constitute an alternative government. Counterinsurgency, then, is about establishing local political control, a project that requires a great deal of time and manpower—something which outside powers may be unwilling to commit.

Discussion Questions

1. How might a social movement become a victim of its own success? Could this be said of the women's movement?
2. Why has the women's movement declined in recent years? Do you think this decline is permanent or is the movement simply in "abeyance," with the possibility of springing back to life under the right conditions?
3. How have "queer" activists challenged the gay and lesbian movement? Is this challenge simply destructive or potentially beneficial to that movement?
4. Why did government repression sometimes "work" in Central America and sometimes backfire?
5. How do insurgent or revolutionary movements differ from other movements? When are such movements most likely to succeed? When and how is counterinsurgency most likely to succeed?