Social Movements
Definitions of Key Concepts

Although there are many definitions of social movements, most conceptual efforts include the following elements:

1. collective or joint action;
2. change-oriented goals;
3. some degree of organization;
4. some degree of temporal continuity; and
5. some extra-institutional collective action, or at least a mixture of extra-institutional (protesting in the streets) and institutional (political lobbying) activity.

Social Movements
Definitions of Key Concepts

Blending these elements together, we can define a social movement as

"a collectivity acting with some degree of organization and continuity either within or outside of institutional channels for the purpose of promoting or resisting change in the group, society, or world order of which it is a part."

Adapted from Doug McAdam and David A. Snow, Social Movements: Readings on Their Emergence, Mobilization, and Dynamics, 1997, p. xviii
Social Movements
Definitions of Key Concepts

Three general elements define social movements:

1) **Motivation**
   Why do people collectively protest? What are the social and psychological reasons behind collective movements?

2) **Organization**
   How do movements become collective? Are actors rational? How do groups and networks of protest emerge from individual discontent?

3) **Transformation**
   What is the role of the social movements in creating social change? Why do some movements succeed and others fail? How long are movements generally around and what happens to them?

**Types of Social Movements**

Sociologists classify social movements according to several variables – no one scheme is universally accepted.

**Degree of Change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Individuals</th>
<th>Limited</th>
<th>Radical</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>Reformative Social Movement</td>
<td>Revolutionary (Transformative) Social Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Redemptive Social Movement</td>
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**Examples of Social Movements**

- American Indian Movement (AIM)
- Animal Rights Movement (PETA)
- Anti-Apartheid Movement
- Anti-Drinking and Driving Movement (MADD)
- Anti-Globalization Movement
- Anti-Gun Control Movement (N.R.A)
- Anti-Nuclear Weapons Movement
- Anti-Racial Discrimination Movement
- Anti-Smoking Movement
- Anti-Tax Movement / Tea Party Movement
- Anti-War Movement
- Disability Rights Movement
- Civil Rights Movements
- Disability Rights Movement
- Environmental Justice Rights Movement (Gay Marriage Rights)
- Environmental Movement (i.e., Green Peace, Global Warming Movement)
- Farmer Workers Movement
- Gay Rights Movement
- Gun Control Movement
- Gun Rights Movement (i.e., N.R.A.)
- Housing Rights Movements (Affordable Housing Movement)
- Human Rights Movement
- Immigrant Rights Movement (Immigration Rights)
- Labor Movement
- Large Rights Movement / Anti-Labor Union
- Marijuana / Drugs Legalization Movement
- Myths of Men’s Movement
- New Right Movement
- Pro-Life Movement
- Pro-Abortion Rights Movement
- Sex Workers Rights Movement (C.O.Y.O.T.E)
- Public Education Reform Movement
- Women’s Health Movement (“Our Bodies, Ourselves”)
- Religious Movements (Promise Keepers, Moral Majority)
- Slave Time Movement
- Suffrage Movement
- Suicides Movement (Anti-Rape Movement)
- Temperance Movement
- Temple Movement
- Utopian Movement (Communal Living Movement)
- Vegan/Vegetarian Movement (i.e., PETA, Environmental Movement, etc.)
- Welfare Rights Movement
- White Power Movement
- Zero Population Growth Movement
Categories of People Involved in Social Movements

- **Constituents** devote varying amounts of either their time, energy, or material resources to the movement; “activists” vs. “mere supporters”

- **Adherents** agree in principle with the goals but have not contributed resources to the movement

- **Bystanders** are typically indifferent to the movement or ignorant of the issues involved

- **Opponents** are generally antagonistic to the goals and principles of the movement.

**Sociological Perspectives**

**Who developed sociology into a science?**

Emile Durkheim (France, 1858–1917)

- Made sociology into a science by studying social facts and forces. Made famous for his studies of anomie and suicide, religion, and the division of labor in society.
- **Theory:** Structural Functionalism
- **Science-Type:** Logical Empiricism

**Structural–Functional Theory**

(Durkheim and followers) Focus: Social Order

- Social structure is any relatively stable pattern of social behavior. e-Metaphor: If society is an organism, its structures are the organs.

**Social function:** how structure keeps society operating well; (dysfunction = social problem)

- Example: the social structure of education provides knowledge for people to gain skills and get jobs. Also, one educational function is to develop skills of social integration in individuals.

**Who developed sociology into a science?**

Karl Marx (Germany, 1818–1883)

- Recognized the great inequalities in the new industrial society (the haves and have-nots). For Marx, economic institutions are the basis of society.

**Social–Conflict Theory**

(Marx and followers) Focus: Social Power

- Society is an arena for group conflict which generates inequality, but also creates change.
- Inequalities of this kind include rich v. poor, men v. women, racial conflicts, religious conflicts, etc. But they always involve large categories, or classes, of people.
Who developed sociology into a science?

Max Weber, (Germany, 1864–1920) is known for his groundbreaking research on religion and capitalism, the social classes, and bureaucracy.

(Theory Connection: Symbolic–Interactionism
Science–Type: Interpretative/Pragmatic)

Symbolic–Interaction Theory
(Weber and followers) Focus: Social Meaning
Society is a product of everyday interactions of individuals, or “micro-level interaction” (vs. the “macro-level” big picture perspective of the previous theories).
How people interpret social life and norms is equally as important as the intentions of the norm’s creators.

Central Sociological Concepts
Social Norms
When people interact, social norms develop.
Norms are shared IDEALS for behavior.

A norm is a prescription for collective action, an agreed upon way of behaving; a social consensus.

IDEA = THOUGHT
Norms occur in the “conscience collective” of society
Human social groups experience a *consciousness of kind* when sharing norms.

Question:
– Describe some basic social norms.

Central Sociological Concepts
Social Roles
By our nature, we imitate and we learn from our institutional interactions our social ROLES, or expected social behaviors ACTUALLY performed by individuals.

BEHAVIOR = ACTION
The concept borrows from the field of theater, “acting” on the “stage of life,” so to speak.

Questions:
– What role are you “playing” now?
– What other roles have you “played” in your life?
Central Sociological Concepts

Social Institutions

Social interaction takes place in the context of social institutions. Social institutions are the purposeful organization of individuals into social groups and categories. Some universal social institutions are:

- Family
- Religion
- Education
- Economy
- Politics

Institutions define our social lives, and involve nearly every aspect of our personal lives as well. So, big changes in our institutions mean big changes in our personal lives.

Collective Behavior

Characteristics:

1. Represent the actions of groups of people, not individuals.
2. Involve relationships that arise in unusual circumstances.
3. Capture the changing elements of society more than other forms of social action.
4. May mark the beginnings of more organized social behavior.
5. Exhibit patterned behavior, not the irrational behavior of crazed individuals.
6. Usually appear to be highly emotional, even volatile.
7. Involve people communicating extensively through rumors.
8. Are often associated with efforts to achieve social change.

Early Theories of Collective Behavior

Social Contagion Theory

Gustav LeBon, 1895, The Crowd... (p12, Locher Chp. 2)

i. Trying to explain the violence of the French Revolution; (p12-13)

ii. Crowds diminish free-will; all members of a crowd are diminished in their reasoning capacities to the least intelligent, roughest, and most violent. (p13)

iii. Individuals feel invincible and anonymous; suggestibility reigns (p14)

iv. Critique: overly literal view of contagion, not scientific, eschews free-will
Early Theories of Collective Behavior

Social Contagion Theory (symbolic interaction)

Robert Park, 1904, The Crowd and the Public (p16)

i. Emergent interaction: more attuned to others; circular reaction occurs, spreading contagion (p16)
ii. First to define "collective behavior" (but vaguely) (p17)
iii. Crowd members act irrationally (p17)
iv. Park contributes more to an understanding of the social nature of crowd formation. (p18)

Mass Society Theory (social conflict)

William Kornhauser, 1959, Politics of Mass Society, (p15)

i. Developed by members of the "Frankfurt School" of sociology (Germany) to explain the turn to totalitarianism in early 20th c. Europe.
ii. "Massification" requires social marginalization (alienation from social norms of work, family, politics, etc.).
iii. Leads to populism and identity politics rather than democratic politics.
iv. Promoted by Hannah Arendt, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, others (known as Critical Theorists in sociology).

According to William Kornhauser’s Mass Society theory, the antecedent to all social movements in mass society is widespread social isolation and disconnection: excessive (egoistic) individualism.

The starting point for this theory is the concept of ‘mass society’—a state or condition that produces rife disengagement and isolation among individuals in late-modernity.

These individuals then use social movements as a proxy for [their ‘need’ for] social connection or integration. Longing for a deeper sense of connection to abate the increasing alienation of late-modernity and modern cities, isolated people are drawn to social movements where they find a sense of belonging and an alternative community to their disconnected ones.
On "The Politics of Mass Society"

- "Mass society is a situation in which an aggregate of individuals are related to one another only by way of their relation to a common authority, especially the state."
- "A population in this condition is not insulated in any way from the ruling group, nor yet from elements within itself. Social atomization engenders strong feelings of alienation and anxiety, and therefore the disposition to engage in extreme behavior to escape from these tensions."
- "In mass society there is a heightened readiness to form hyper-attachments to symbols and leaders. People become available for mobilization by elites when they lack or lose an independent group life."
- "The lack of autonomous relations generates widespread social alienation. Alienation heightens responsiveness to the appeal of mass movements because they provide occasions for expressing resentment against what is, as well as promises of a totally different world."
- "In short, people who are atomized readily become mobilized. Since totalitarianism is a state of total mobilization, mass society is highly vulnerable to totalitarian movements and regimes."


Mass Society Theory (1970s version)

- Mass society: Macro Level/Institutional
  - accessible elites: lack of intermediate buffers between masses and elites
  - available masses: lack of integration into local associations and collectivities
- Available Masses swept into mass movements that threaten accessible elites
**Relative Deprivation Theory**

*Symbolic–interaction*  

**Herbert Blumer, 1951, The Field of Collective Behavior, (p19)**  

1. “Interpretive interaction” important role and behavior  
2. **Milling, collective excitement and social contagion** are three processes by which individual rationality is compromised  
3. Similar to “framing perspective”  
4. **Critique:** definitions can be vague and difficult to operationalize  

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**Relative Deprivation Defined**

- **Relative deprivation:**  
  - The conscious feeling of negative discrepancy between legitimate expectations and present actualities;  
  - Before discontent is channeled into a social movement, people must feel they:  
    - Have a right to their goals  
    - Perceive they cannot attain goals through conventional means  

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**Kornhauser’s Mass Society**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accessibility of Elites</th>
<th>Availability of Non-Elites</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communal Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Totalitarian Society</td>
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<td></td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pluralist Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mass Society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Early Theories of Collective Behavior

Relative Deprivation Theory
(structural–functionalism)

Neil Smelser, 1962, Theory of Collective Behavior (p30)

i. Structural strains are social problems;
ii. Generalized beliefs lead to collective behavior (p33)
iii. Value-added model (structural conduciveness, strain, beliefs, precipitating factors, mobilization, social control (p34)
iv. Critique: Does not theorize the complex way beliefs come to be shaped by interpretation and definition (p37)

Six Determinants of Collective Behavior

Collective behavior are social actions, like social movements or public riots, that are a response to unstructured, ambiguous, or unstable situations.

Neil Smelser, in his theory on the conditioning effect of unstructured situations (Theory of Collective Behavior, 1962), argued that collective behavior will emerge under these six conditions:

- Structural conduciveness (pre-existing conditions that make action likely)
- Structural strain (conditions that cause people to feel anxious)
- Generalized beliefs (beliefs about their & appropriate actions)
- Precipitating factors (incident that triggers collective action)
- Mobilization for actions
- Failure of social control

Neil Smelser’s Theory of Collective Behavior

The theory of collective behavior argues that social movements are a response to major interruptions in the natural operation of society. Writing on the origins of social movements under this paradigm, Gusfield (1970: 9) writes the following:

“We describe social movements and collective action as responses to social change. To see them in this light emphasizes the disruptive and disturbing quality which new ideas, technologies, procedures, groups migration, and intrusions can have for people.”

Social changes engenders strains on the population, and social movements is one way that people cope with the uncertainty and angst of rapid and unexpected alterations in social patterns according to Neil Smelser.
The “Relative Deprivation” assumption of collective behavior theory assumes that a social movement is likely to develop when people perceive a gap between what they feel their situations should be and what their situations actually are. Feeling deprived, people are more likely to form or join social movements. These feelings of deprivations are punctuated by the strain of sudden, unexpected, and/or undesired social change.

The J-Curve Theory. This theory argues that when an insufferable social condition improves but then looks like it might revert to its original state, the populace is more likely to take up collective behaviors—like social movements—to prevent this setback. Social movements, then, are the result of expectations that are rising too fast.


“...The history of social movements abounds with agitations on the part of groups who experience a real or apparent loss of wealth, power, or prestige. For example: (1) farmers’ movements have arisen in periods of depression and declined in periods of prosperity. (2) Dissatisfactions over land distribution have also been at the root of numerous agrarian movements. (3) As we have seen, the revival of old movements and the initiation of new ones among American laborers in the nineteenth century was closely related to their changing economic fortunes. (4) Movements to regulate speculation have been stimulated by the financial issues and market disorganization occasioned by financial crises. (5) The movement which culminated in the rise of the Progressive Party in the early twentieth century was based in large part on the apprehension that big business was acquiring too much economic and political power. (6) In the 1820s, many of the supporters of the anti-Masonry movement—among whose objectives was to prohibit Masons from holding public office—came from the ranks of ministers who felt their own religious influence waning and who resented the Masons’ religious appeal.”

Resource Mobilization Theory

(Structural-functionalism)

McCarthy and Zald, 1987, from Social Movements in an Organizational Society (p42-60)

i. People need the means to act collectively (p 42)
ii. Premised on rational action theory (p 45-47)
iii. The collective-action problem: free-riders (p 48-50)
iv. Action is precipitated by (a) sanctions, (b) incentives, and (c) critical mass (p 53-54)
v. Critique: Outside help seems essential for movements to coalesce; rational action ignores emotional response

Key Resources for Social Movements:

1. Money, Money, – And More Money
2. Organizational/Management Resources (both People & Money)
3. Media Strategies / Ideological Framing Strategies
4. Leadership (Every movement needs a good leader – or a few “good leaders”)
5. Willing Participants / “True Believers” (People who are willing to march and hold signs in subzero weather, for example)

Social Movement Organization (related to Resource Mobilization Theory) (p59-66)

i. Continued resource mobilization depends upon organizational connections (p 59)
ii. After the 1960s, formal and institutionalized social movements organizations emerged
iii. Within the social movement sector are distinct industries and organizations (p 59)
S.M.S.: Social Movement Sector ("The Social Movement Sector (SMS) consists of all SMIs in a society no matter to which social movement they are attached." – McCarthy and Zald [1987]

S.M.I.: Social Movement Industries (Social movements that specialize in a particular type of arenas such as Civil Liberties (Civil Rights Movement, Gay Rights Movement, etc.) Women's Liberation Movement (Pro-Choice Movement, Equal Right Amendment Movement, etc.).

S.M.O.: Social Movement Organization (i.e., Civil Rights Movement, Feminist Movement, Prohibition Movement, Temperance Movement, etc.)

Social Movements
Definitions of Key Concepts

Social Movement Sector (SMS): The conceptual space or part of society that encompasses all social movements and social movement activity.

The SMS competes with other sectors – i.e., economy, polity, religion, education, family, entertainment/leisure – for individual’s time and material resources.

Social Movement Industry (SMI): The collectivity of all social movement organizations that identify with and promote the goals of a particular set of issues and problems.
Social Movements Definitions of Key Concepts

Social Movement Organization (SMO): A complex, formal organization that identifies with and promotes the goals of a particular social movement.

[SMI]

**ENVIRONMENT**
- Greenpeace
- Sierra Club
- Audubon Society
- Save the Whales

**ABORTION**
- National Right to Life
- Operation Rescue
- Planned Parenthood
- National Abortion Rights Action League

**SOCIAL JUSTICE**
- Southern Christian Leadership Conference
- Congress of Racial Equality
- National Right Organizations
- NOW
- LULAC
- Gay & Lesbian Rights
Local Movement Centers

Other "pre-existing organizations" that exist for other reasons are often important players in social movements, including especially professional organizations, union political parties, interest groups, churches and other religious groups (both local congregations and national organizations), social clubs, colleges and universities (sometimes high schools), and charitable foundations and organizations.

Social Movement Sector (SMS)

Social Movement Industry (SMI)

Social Movement Organization (SMC)

Social Movement Theories

Social Network Theory (structural–functional)
Diani, 1992, from The Concept of Social Movement (p67–74)

i. Interpersonal ties affect the pattern of relations between SMOs (‘abeyance structures’) (p 67)

ii. Instrumental opportunities (resource acquisition) shape alliances between SMOs (p 69)

iii. Methods: Social Network Analysis (SNA) develops ‘sociograms’ modeling interpersonal and SMO relations (p 69–70)

iv. Network analysis emphasizes the relational side of movement organization
Social Network Theory

How connected are we?

**Network Theory**

‘Six Degrees of Separation’
Through a chain of just five or six people, anyone in the world can be linked to anyone else.

**Social Network Analysis** (SNA) or ‘Social Network Theory’ more generally, is an area of sociological study emerging in the 1970s (long before Facebook, LinkedIn and MySpace existed). (cf. Wellman, Castells, Haythornwaite)

What is the value of social network analysis?
- careers might emerge as a result of social networking;
- neighborhood watch groups are an example of networking;
- terrorist movements can be tracked and better understood through SNA.
- The Internet is both a technical network and a social network.

**Metcalfe’s Law:** As you add members to a network one by one, its value to each member grows exponentially.

A Network Map of the Internet
Castells 2001,
The Internet Atlas
Della Porta: Networks (Chp 5)

1. Network Theory Premises
   a. Social networks are both created by and a cause of collective action. (p115)
   b. Social networks are responsible for 60–90% of recruitment for religious, political, and environmental activism. (p117)
   c. Radical activism requires more numerous and more durable personal connections. (p117)

Della Porta: Networks (Chp 5)

2. Problems with network focus:
   a. takes away from important cultural messaging; (p121)
   b. networks are not a total explanation for mobilization (p122)
   c. Costs/risks of deviant behavior can be a stronger predictor of participation than network ties (p125)

Political Process Theory (social–conflict)
McAdam, 1982, from Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency (p77–90)
   i. Reliance on a favorable political environment before movements can happen (p 78, 80)
   ii. Modern movements were birthed with the modern rational–legal nation–state (p 82)
   iii. Shifting “political regimes” may offer opportunities for movements to challenge (p 83, Figure 4.1 p 80)
   iv. Critique: Too general a theory to clearly define for whom or what political opportunities exist
The political process theory, which was developed as an alternative to the dominant Resource Mobilization Perspective, rests on the idea that social movement participants are individuals who possess limited power in society and thus seize the opportunity, through a cycle of contention (or punctuated periods of protest and revolt among disaffected masses) to use social movements to champion their grievances during periods of abrupt social changes when the state’s authority might be weakened.

McAdam’s political process theory is heavily influenced by Karl Marx’s view on power, as stated in his own words: “...The political process model is more compatible with a Marxist interpretation of power. Marxists acknowledge that the power disparity between elite and excluded groups is substantial but hardly regard this state of affairs as inevitable. Indeed, or orthodox Marxists, that which is inevitable is not the retention of power by the elite but the accession to power by the masses.”


Writing on political process theory as combined perspective, Doug McAdams said:

“The political process model represents an alternative to both the classical and resource mobilization perspectives. Rather than focusing exclusive attention on factors internal or external to the movement, the model describes Insurgency as a product of both. Specifically, three sets of factors are identified as shaping the generation of Insurgency. It is the confluence of expanding political opportunities, Indigenous organizational strength, and the presence of certain shared cognitions within the minority community that is held to facilitate movement emergence. Over time these factors continue to shape the development of Insurgency in combination with a fourth factor: the shifting control response of other groups to the movement.” – Doug McAdam. 1982. Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency. Chicago, Il: University of Chicago Press.

Social Movement Theories

Frame Analysis (symbolic–interaction)

Goffman, 1974, from Frame Analysis (p91-105)

i. Shared symbolic meanings constitute social action (p 92)

ii. Frames describe patterns of thought shared by movement constituents (p 93)

iii. Frame alignment involves connecting movement frames to ordinary frames; this happens through “bridging, amping, extension and transformation” (p 95)

iv. Media can be play an important role in distributing movement frames (p 98-99)

v. Critique: Despite a focus on politics and culture, PPT and framing has an innate “structuralist bias” (p 100)
Social Movements as a form of “drama” (p74)

a. Goffman (Frame Theory): the “schema of interpretation” defines the “frame”, or worldview, that an individual gets from his/her culture’s “symbolic production”

b. Symbolic production in social movements – 3 elements (p74-79)

i. Diagnostic element – who defines a problem?

ii. Prognostic element – opens new spaces for action; may have a utopian dimension; note categories here: rejectionist, alternative, reformist

iii. Motivational element – identity synchronizes with frames which prompts action

Frame Analysis: Key Terms

a. Master Frames (p79)

Broad interpretations of reality; example, Marxism in 1970s Italy, or the anti-globalization movement today (p80-81)

b. Frame Bridging

When “representations by movement organizers incorporate interpretations of reality produced by sectors of public opinion which might otherwise remain separated” (p82)

c. Frame Extension

When specific concerns of a movement or organization relate to more general social goals (p82)

d. Frame Alignment (p83)

“Relies on a dynamic relationship between the development of a movement and the cultural heritage of both the country in which it operates and its institutions.”

1. Movements make reference to cultural currents;
2. Religion plays an important role;
3. Collective action is both a creative manipulation of new symbols and a reaffirmation of tradition (i.e., movements can’t be too deviant in their ideas or methods). (p84)