

SOCI 360

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND COMMUNITY CHANGE

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(DR. K)**



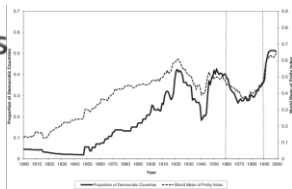
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Democracy, Social Movements, and Relative Deprivation



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Social Movements and Global Social Change (Schaeffer 2013)



Three developments had important historical consequences:

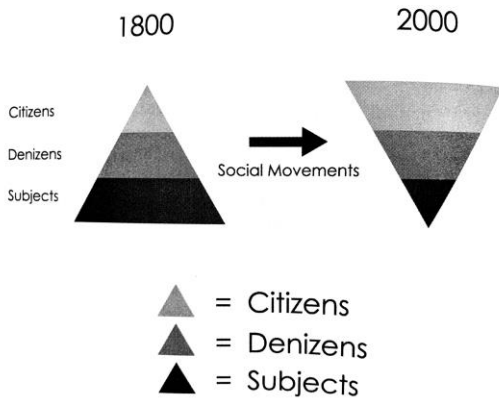
- 1) the **rise of republics**;
- 2) the **democratization** of republics;
- 3) The **expansion of citizenship** in the republics.

These changes have led to the demise of dynastic states and the ferocious rivalry for control of colonial empires.

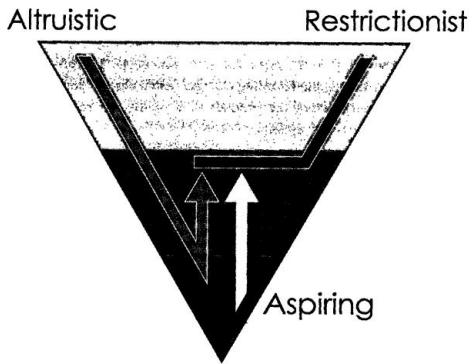
But inequalities still exist.



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Types of Social Movements

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Three Approaches to Collective Behavior

- ▶ 1) Symbolic-Interactionist:
Relative Deprivation
- ▶ 2) Structural-Functionalist:
Value-Added Theory
- ▶ 3) Social-Conflict:
History, Communism, and Labor



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SYMBOLIC-INTERACTIONISM

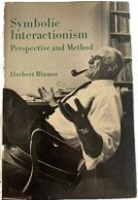
“Relative Deprivation”

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Early Theories of Collective Behavior

Relative Deprivation Theory (symbolic interaction)

Herbert Blumer, “The Field of Collective Behavior”, 1951 (Locher, Chapter 2, p19)



- i. “Interpretive interaction” important to role and behavior (p19)
- ii. *Milling, collective excitement, and social contagion* are three processes by which individual rationality is compromised (p19)
- iii. Similar to “framing perspective” (cultural and interpretive)
- iv. Critique: definitions can be vague and difficult to operationalize (p20)

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Blumer’s Relative Deprivation Approach

▶ **Relative deprivation:** a conscious feeling of negative discrepancy between legitimate expectations and present actualities.



Before discontent is channeled into **collective behavior**, people must feel they:

- 1) Have a *right* to their goals &;
- 2) Perceive they cannot attain goals through *conventional means*.

[More explanation here \(video\)](#)



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"Theory of Collective Behavior": Relative Deprivation (Blumer)

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.**

This can lead to **conflict between individuals**, but also on the part of **individuals against institutions.**

Feeling deprived, people are more likely to form collective behaviors. And these feelings of deprivations are punctuated by the strain of sudden, unexpected, and/or undesired social change. But this may not ALWAYS lead to social movements; **it may result in riots, increased crime, and moral panics that scapegoat the very victims of the deprivation!**

[Video explanation](#)



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"Theory of Collective Behavior:" Relative Deprivation Examples

"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."

(Neil J. Smelser: 1962, [The Theory of Collective Behavior](#), The Free Press)

For example:

- 1) As we have seen, the revival of old movements and the initiation of new ones of among American laborers ([Worker's Rights Movement](#)) in the nineteenth century was closely related to their changing economic fortunes. More on [the Labor Movement](#).
- 2) Slave revolts and rebellion can be interpreted through relative deprivation theory. For example, John Brown, a white abolitionist from Lake Placid, New York, led a number of slave rebellions in the south, the most famous at Harper's Ferry, for which he was hanged (just prior to the Civil War). ([Slave Revolts](#))
- 3) 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 ([1920s Progressive Movement](#)).

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