

Social Movement

Authored by
mohammad looti

November 19, 2022

RECOMMENDED CITATION

mohammad looti (2022). *Social Movement*. PSYCHOLOGICAL SCALES. Retrieved from <https://scales.arabpsychology.com/?p=39453>

Social movements are a type of group action. They are large informal groupings of individuals and/or organizations focused on specific political or social issues, in other words, on carrying out, resisting or undoing a social change.

Modern Western social movements became possible through education (the wider dissemination of literature), and increased mobility of labor due to the industrialization and urbanization of 19th century societies. It is sometimes argued that the freedom of expression, education and relative economic independence prevalent in the modern Western culture is responsible for the unprecedented number and scope of various contemporary social movements. However others point out that many of the social movements of the last hundred years grew up, like the Mau Mau in Kenya, to oppose Western colonialism. Either way, social movements have been and continued to be closely connected with democratic political systems. Occasionally social movements have been involved in democratizing nations, but more often they have flourished after democratization. Over the past 200 years, they have become part of a popular and global expression of dissent.

Modern movements often utilize technology and the internet to mobilize people globally. Adapting to communication trends is a common theme among successful movements.

Political science and sociology have developed a variety of theories and empirical research on social movements. For example, some research in political science highlights the relation between popular movements and the formation of new political parties as well as discussing the function of social movements in relation to agenda setting and influence on politics.

Definition

Charles Tilly defines social movements as a series of contentious performances, displays and campaigns by which ordinary people made collective claims on others. For Tilly, social movements are a major vehicle for ordinary people's participation in public politics. He argues that there are three major elements to a social movement:

Campaigns: a sustained, organized public effort making collective claims of target authorities;

Repertoire (repertoire of contention): employment of combinations from among the following forms of political action: creation of special-purpose associations and coalitions, public meetings, solemn processions, vigils, rallies, demonstrations, petition drives, statements to and in public media, and pamphleteering; and

WUNC displays: participants' concerted public representation of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitments on the part of themselves and/or their constituencies.

Sidney Tarrow defines a social movement as collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interactions with elites, opponents and authorities. He specifically distinguishes social movements from political parties and advocacy groups.

History

American Civil Rights Movement is one of the most famous social movements of the 20th century. Here, Martin Luther King is giving his "I Have a Dream" speech, in front of the Lincoln Memorial during the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom

The term "social movements" was introduced in 1850 by the German Sociologist Lorenz von Stein in his book "History of the French Social Movement from 1789 to the Present" (1850).

Tilly argues that the early growth of social movements was connected to broad economic and political changes including parliamentarization, market capitalization, and proletarianization. Political movements that evolved in late 18th century, like those connected to the French Revolution and the Polish Constitution of May 3, 1791 are among the first documented social movements, although Tilly notes that the British abolitionist movement has "some claim" to be the first social movement (becoming one between the sugar boycott of 1791 and the second great petition drive of 1806). The labor movement and socialist movement of the late 19th century are seen as the prototypical social movements, leading to the formation of communist and social democratic parties and organisations. From 1815, Britain after victory in the Napoleonic Wars entered a period of social upheaval. Similar tendencies were seen in other countries as pressure for reform continued, for example in Russia with the Russian Revolution of 1905 and of 1917, resulting in the collapse of the Russian State around the end of the First World War.

In 1945, Britain after victory in the Second World War entered a period of radical reform and change. In the post-war period, women's rights, gay rights, peace, civil rights, anti-nuclear and environmental movements emerged, often dubbed the New Social Movements. They led, among other things, to the formation of green parties and organisations influenced by the new left. Some find in the end of the 1990s the emergence of a new global social movement, the anti-globalization movement. Some social movement scholars posit that with the rapid pace of globalization, the potential for the emergence of new type of social movement is latent--they make the analogy to national movements of the past to describe what has been termed a global citizens movement.

Key processes

Several key processes lie behind the history of social movements. Urbanization led to larger settlements, where people of similar goals could find each other, gather and organize. This facilitated social interaction between scores of people, and it was in urban areas that those early social movements first appeared. Similarly, the process of industrialization which gathered large masses of workers in the same region explains why many of those early social movements addressed matters such as economic wellbeing, important to the worker class. Many other social movements were created at universities, where the process of mass education brought many

people together. With the development of communication technologies, creation and activities of social movements became easier - from printed pamphlets circulating in the 18th century coffeehouses to newspapers and Internet, all those tools became important factors in the growth of the social movements. Finally, the spread of democracy and political rights like the freedom of speech made the creation and functioning of social movements much easier.

Types of social movement

Sociologists distinguish between several types of social movement:

Scope:

reform movement - movements advocating changing some norms or laws. Examples of such a movement would include a trade union with a goal of increasing workers rights, a green movement advocating a set of ecological laws, or a movement supporting introduction of a capital punishment or the right to abortion. Some reform movements may aim for a change in custom and moral norms, such as condemnation of pornography or proliferation of some religion.

radical movement - movements dedicated to changing value systems in a fundamental way. Examples would include the American Civil Rights Movement which demanded full civil rights and equality under the law to all Americans, regardless of race; the Polish Solidarity (Solidarno??) movement which demanded the transformation of a Stalinist political and economic system into a democracy; or the South African shack dwellers' movement Abahlali baseMjondolo which demands the full inclusion of shack dwellers into the life of cities.

Type of change:

innovation movement - movements which want to introduce or change particular norms, values, etc. The singularity movement advocating deliberate action to effect and ensure the safety of the technological singularity is an example of an innovation movement.

conservative movement - movements which want to preserve existing norms, values, etc. For example, the anti-technology 19th century Luddites movement or the modern movement opposing the spread of the genetically modified food could be seen as conservative movements in that they aimed to fight specific technological changes.

Targets:

group-focus movements - focused on affecting groups or society in general, for example, advocating the change of the political system. Some of these groups transform into or join a political party, but many remain outside the reformist party political system.

individual-focused movements - focused on affecting individuals. Most religious movements would fall under this category.

Methods of work:

peaceful movements - various movements which use nonviolent means of protest as part of a campaign of nonviolent resistance, also often called civil resistance. The American Civil Rights movement, Polish Solidarity movement or the nonviolent, civil disobedience-orientated wing of the Indian independence movement would fall into this category.

violent movements - various movements which resort to violence; they are usually armed and in extreme cases can take a form of a paramilitary or terrorist organization. Examples: the Rote Armee Fraktion, Al-Qaida.

Old and new:

old movements - movements for change have existed for many centuries. Most of the oldest recognized movements, dating to late 18th and 19th centuries, fought for specific social groups, such as the working class, peasants, whites, aristocrats, Protestants, men. They were usually centered around some materialistic goals like improving the standard of living or, for example, the political autonomy of the working class.

new movements - movements which became dominant from the second half of the 20th century - like the feminist movement, pro-choice movement, civil rights movement, environmental movement, free software movement, gay rights movement, peace movement, anti-nuclear movement, alter-globalization movement, etc. Sometimes they are known as new social movements. They are usually centered around issues that go beyond but are not separate from class.

Range:

global movements - social movements with global (transnational) objectives and goals. Movements such as the first (where Marx and Bakunin met), second, third and fourth internationals, the World Social Forum, the Peoples' Global Action and the anarchist movement seek to change society at a global level.

local movements - most of the social movements have a local scope. They are focused on local or regional objectives, such as protecting a specific natural area, lobbying for the lowering of tolls in a certain motorway, or preserving a building about to be demolished for gentrification and turning it into a social center.

Identification of supporters

A difficulty for scholarship of movements is that for most of them, neither insiders to a movement nor outsiders apply consistent labels or even descriptive phrases. Unless there is a single leader who does that, or a formal system of membership agreements, activists will typically use diverse labels and descriptive phrases that require scholars to discern when they are referring to the same

or similar ideas, declare similar goals, adopt similar programs of action, and use similar methods. There can be great differences in the way that is done, to recognize who is and who is not a member or an allied group:

Insiders: Often exaggerate the level of support by considering people supporters whose level of activity or support is weak, but also reject those that outsiders might consider supporters because they discredit the cause, or are even seen as adversaries.

Outsiders: Those not supporters who may tend to either underestimate or overestimate the level or support or activity of elements of a movement, by including or excluding those that insiders would exclude or include.

It is often outsiders rather than insiders that apply the identifying labels for a movement, which the insiders then may or may not adopt and use to self-identify. For example, the label for the levellers political movement in 17th century England was applied to them by their antagonists, as a term of disparagement. Yet admirers of the movement and its aims later came to use the term, and it is the term by which they are known to history.

Caution must always be exercised in any discussion of amorphous phenomena such as movements to distinguish between the views of insiders and outsiders, supporters and antagonists, each of whom may have their own purposes and agendas in characterization or mischaracterization of it.

Dynamics of social movements

Stages of social movements.

Social movements are not eternal. They have a life cycle: they are created, they grow, they achieve successes or failures and eventually, they dissolve and cease to exist.

They are more likely to evolve in the time and place which is friendly to the social movements: hence their evident symbiosis with the 19th century proliferation of ideas like individual rights, freedom of speech and civil disobedience. Social movements occur in liberal and authoritarian societies but in different forms. However there must always be polarizing differences between groups of people: in case of 'old movements', they were the poverty and wealth gaps. In case of the 'new movements', they are more likely to be the differences in customs, ethics and values. Finally, the birth of a social movement needs what sociologist Neil Smelser calls an initiating event: a particular, individual event that will begin a chain reaction of events in the given society leading to the creation of a social movement. For example, American Civil Rights movement grew on the reaction to black woman, Rosa Parks, riding in the whites-only section of the bus (although she was not acting alone or spontaneously--typically activist leaders lay the groundwork behind the scenes of interventions designed to spark a movement). The Polish Solidarity movement, which

eventually toppled the communist regimes of Eastern Europe, developed after trade union activist Anna Walentynowicz was fired from work. The South African shack dwellers' movement Abahlali baseMjondolo grew out of a road blockade in response to the sudden selling off of a small piece of land promised for housing to a developer. Such an event is also described as a volcanic model - a social movement is often created after a large number of people realize that there are others sharing the same value and desire for a particular social change.

One of the main difficulties facing the emerging social movement is spreading the very knowledge that it exists. Second is overcoming the free rider problem - convincing people to join it, instead of following the mentality 'why should I trouble myself when others can do it and I can just reap the benefits after their hard work'.

Many social movements are created around some charismatic leader, i.e. one possessing charismatic authority. After the social movement is created, there are two likely phases of recruitment. The first phase will gather the people deeply interested in the primary goal and ideal of the movement. The second phase, which will usually come after the given movement had some successes and is trendy; it would look good on a résumé. People who join in this second phase will likely be the first to leave when the movement suffers any setbacks and failures.

Eventually, the social crisis can be encouraged by outside elements, like opposition from government or other movements. However, many movements had survived a failure crisis, being revived by some hardcore activists even after several decades.

Social movement theories

Sociologists have developed several theories related to social movements. Some of the better-known approaches are outlined below. Chronologically they include:

collective behavior/collective action theories (1950s)
relative deprivation theory (1960s)
marxist theory (1880s)
value-added theory (1960s)
resource mobilization (1970s)
frame analysis theory (1980s) (closely related to social constructionist theory)
new social movement theory (1980s)
political process theory (1980s)

Deprivation theory

Deprivation theory argues that social movements have their foundations among people who feel deprived of some good(s) or resource(s). According to this approach, individuals who are lacking

some good, service, or comfort are more likely to organize a social movement to improve (or defend) their conditions.

There are two significant problems with this theory. First, since most people feel deprived at one level or another almost all the time, the theory has a hard time explaining why the groups that form social movements do when other people are also deprived. Second, the reasoning behind this theory is circular - often the only evidence for deprivation is the social movement. If deprivation is claimed to be the cause but the only evidence for such is the movement, the reasoning is circular.

Marxist Theory

Derived from Karl Marx, Marxism as an ideology and theory of social change has had an immense impact on the practice and the analysis of social movements. Marxism arose from an analysis of movements structured by conflicts between industrial workers and their capitalist employers in the 19th century. In the twentieth century a variety of neo-Marxist theories have been developed that have opened themselves to adding questions of race, gender, environment, and other issues to an analysis centered in (shifting) political economic conditions. Class-based movements, both revolutionary and labor-reformist, have always been stronger in Europe than in the US and so has Marxist theory as a tool for understanding social movements, but important Marxist movements and theories have also evolved in the US. Marxist approaches have been and remain influential ways of understanding the role of political economy and class differences as key forces in many historical and current social movements, and they continue to challenge approaches that are limited by their inability to imagine serious alternatives to consumer capitalist social structures.

Mass society theory

Mass society theory argues that social movements are made up of individuals in large societies who feel insignificant or socially detached. Social movements, according to this theory, provide a sense of empowerment and belonging that the movement members would otherwise not have.

Very little support has been found for this theory. Aho (1990), in his study of Idaho Christian Patriotism, did not find that members of that movement were more likely to have been socially detached. In fact, the key to joining the movement was having a friend or associate who was a member of the movement.

Social strain theory

Social strain theory, also known as value-added theory, proposes six factors that encourage social movement development:

structural conduciveness - people come to believe their society has problems

structural strain - people experience deprivation

growth and spread of a solution - a solution to the problems people are experiencing is proposed and spreads

precipitating factors - discontent usually requires a catalyst (often a specific event) to turn it into a social movement

lack of social control - the entity that is to be changed must be at least somewhat open to the change; if the social movement is quickly and powerfully repressed, it may never materialize

mobilization - this is the actual organizing and active component of the movement; people do what needs to be done

This theory is also subject to circular reasoning as it incorporates, at least in part, deprivation theory and relies upon it, and social/structural strain for the underlying motivation of social movement activism. However, social movement activism is, like in the case of deprivation theory, often the only indication that there was strain or deprivation.

Resource mobilization theory

Resource mobilization theory emphasizes the importance of resources in social movement development and success. Resources are understood here to include: knowledge, money, media, labor, solidarity, legitimacy, and internal and external support from power elite. The theory argues that social movements develop when individuals with grievances are able to mobilize sufficient resources to take action. The emphasis on resources offers an explanation why some discontented/deprived individuals are able to organize while others are not.

Some of the assumptions of the theory include:

there will always be grounds for protest in modern, politically pluralistic societies because there is constant discontent (i.e., grievances or deprivation); this de-emphasizes the importance of these factors as it makes them ubiquitous

actors are rational; they weigh the costs and benefits from movement participation

members are recruited through networks; commitment is maintained by building a collective identity and continuing to nurture interpersonal relationships

movement organization is contingent upon the aggregation of resources

social movement organizations require resources and continuity of leadership

social movement entrepreneurs and protest organizations are the catalysts which transform collective discontent into social movements; social movement organizations form the backbone of social movements

the form of the resources shapes the activities of the movement (e.g., access to a TV station will result in the extensive use TV media)

movements develop in contingent opportunity structures that influence their efforts to mobilize; as each movement's response to the opportunity structures depends on the movement's organization and resources, there is no clear pattern of movement development nor are specific movement techniques or methods universal.

Critics of this theory argue that there is too much of an emphasize on resources, especially financial resources. Some movements are effective without an influx of money and are more dependent upon the movement members for time and labor (e.g., the civil rights movement in the U.S.).

Political process theory

Political process theory is similar to resource mobilization in many regards, but tends to emphasize a different component of social structure that is important for social movement development: political opportunities. Political process theory argues that there are three vital components for movement formation: insurgent consciousness, organizational strength, and political opportunities.

Insurgent consciousness refers back to the ideas of deprivation and grievances. The idea is that certain members of society feel like they are being mistreated or that somehow the system is unjust. The insurgent consciousness is the collective sense of injustice that movement members (or potential movement members) feel and serves as the motivation for movement organization.

Organizational strength falls inline with resource-mobilization theory, arguing that in order for a social movement to organize it must have strong leadership and sufficient resources.

Political opportunity refers to the receptivity or vulnerability of the existing political system to challenge. This vulnerability can be the result of any of the following (or a combination thereof):

- growth of political pluralism
- decline in effectiveness of repression
- elite disunity; the leading factions are internally fragmented
- a broadening of access to institutional participation in political processes
- support of organized opposition by elites

One of the advantages of the political process theory is that it addresses the issue of timing or emergence of social movements. Some groups may have the insurgent consciousness and resources to mobilize, but because political opportunities are closed, they will not have any success. The theory, then, argues that all three of these components are important.

Critics of the political process theory and resource-mobilization theory point out that neither theory discusses movement culture to any great degree. This has presented culture theorists an

opportunity to expound on the importance of culture.

One advance on the political process theory is the political mediation model, which outlines the way in which the political context facing movement actors intersects with the strategic choices that movements make. An additional strength of this model is that it can look at the outcomes of social movements not only in terms of success or failure but also in terms of consequences (whether intentional or unintentional, positive or negative) and in terms of collective benefits.

Culture theory

More recent strains of theory understand social movements through their cultures - collectively shared beliefs, ideologies, values and other meanings about the world. These include explorations into the "collective identities" and "collective action frames" of movements and movement organizations.

Culture theory builds upon both the political process and resource-mobilization theories but extends them in two ways. First, it emphasizes the importance of movement culture. Second, it attempts to address the free-rider problem.

Both resource-mobilization theory and political process theory include a sense of injustice in their approaches. Culture theory brings this sense of injustice to the forefront of movement creation by arguing that, in order for social movements to successfully mobilize individuals, they must develop an injustice frame. An injustice frame is a collection of ideas and symbols that illustrate both how significant the problem is as well as what the movement can do to alleviate it,

"Like a picture frame, an issue frame marks off some part of the world. Like a building frame, it holds things together. It provides coherence to an array of symbols, images, and arguments, linking them through an underlying organizing idea that suggests what is essential - what consequences and values are at stake. We do not see the frame directly, but infer its presence by its characteristic expressions and language. Each frame gives the advantage to certain ways of talking and thinking, while it places others out of the picture."

Important characteristics of the injustice frames include:

Facts take on their meaning by being embedded in frames, which render them relevant and significant or irrelevant and trivial.

People carry around multiple frames in their heads.

Successful reframing involves the ability to enter into the worldview of our adversaries.

All frames contain implicit or explicit appeals to moral principles.

In emphasizing the injustice frame, culture theory also addresses the free-rider problem. The free-

rider problem refers to the idea that people will not be motivated to participate in a social movement that will use up their personal resources (e.g., time, money, etc.) if they can still receive the benefits without participating. In other words, if person X knows that movement Y is working to improve environmental conditions in his neighborhood, he is presented with a choice: join or not join the movement. If he believes the movement will succeed without him, he can avoid participation in the movement, save his resources, and still reap the benefits - this is free-riding. A significant problem for social movement theory has been to explain why people join movements if they believe the movement can/will succeed without their contribution. Culture theory argues that, in conjunction with social networks being an important contact tool, the injustice frame will provide the motivation for people to contribute to the movement.

Framing processes includes three separate components:

Diagnostic frame: the movement organization frames what is the problem or what they are critiquing

Prognostic frame: the movement organization frames what is the desirable solution to the problem

Motivational frame: the movement organization frames a "call to arms" by suggesting and encouraging that people take action to solve the problem

Social movement and social networking

Much discussion has been generated recently on the topic of social networking and the effect it may play on the formation and mobilization of social movement. For example, the emergence of the Coffee Party first appeared on the social networking site, Facebook. The party has continued to gather membership and support through that site and file sharing sites, such as Flickr. The 2009-2010 Iranian election protests also demonstrated how social networking sites are making the mobilization of large numbers of people quicker and easier. Iranians were able to organize and speak out against the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad by using sites such as Twitter and Facebook. This in turn prompted widespread government censorship of the web and social networking sites.