

15. Collective Behavior and Social Movements

Objectives

- Analyze how and why people in crowds and mobs behave as they do
- Identify forms of mass behavior
- Analyze why social movements occur
- Analyze how social movements work

Vocabulary

activist	collective behavior	deindividuation	social movement
civil disobedience	collectivity	propaganda	

Background

In this chapter, students analyze how and why people behave in groups. The chapter compares the relatively unstructured, emotional reactions of collective behavior to more structured, purposeful activities of social movements. Students also analyze and discuss the roles of mass media in influencing and controlling people in groups.

Students define collective behavior and examine it in the light of four social theories: the contagion theory, the convergence theory, the structural stress theory, and the emergent norm theory. Students identify six conditions that, according to the structural stress theory, are necessary for collective behavior to occur: structural conduciveness, social strain, growth and spread of a generalized belief, a precipitating event, mobilization of participants for action, and inadequate social controls.

Students then analyze crowds and crowd behavior. They identify common behaviors exhibited by crowds and analyze the role of deindividuation in bringing about crowd behavior.

Students also look at six types of mass behavior: fads, crazes, fashions, mass hysteria, rumors, and urban legends. They analyze and evaluate the roles of propaganda and mass media in influencing and

controlling such collective action.

In the second section of the chapter, students analyze far more structured and goal-oriented forms of group behavior: social movements. Social movements are distinguished by their ideology, organization, and goals from other groups in a society. Students look at six different types of social movements. They also evaluate two theories of how and why social movements arise: the relative deprivation theory and the resource mobilization theory.

Students also evaluate the success of social movements in terms of leadership, loyalty, and social conditions. They learn to recognize four stages of social movements: emergence, coalescence, bureaucratization, and decline. Examples from United States history encourage students to analyze the importance of social movements to society and culture.

Further Resources

Canetti, Elias. *Crowds and Power*. New York: Noontday Press, 1998.

Tarrow, Sydney G. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

For Discussion

Review

1. What are four prominent theories of collective behavior?
2. What are six forms of mass behavior?
3. What are three characteristics of social movements?
4. What are two prominent theories on how and why social movements form?
2. Analyze your school life in terms of Blumer's list of crowds. What examples can you give of each of his four types of crowds?
3. What kinds of propaganda are you exposed to in your everyday life? Give examples of name calling, glittering generalities, transfer, testimonials, and bandwagon tactics.
4. What is your view of civil disobedience as a tactic for a social movement to use? Explain.
5. In terms of leadership, loyalty of members, and social conditions, which do you think are the most powerful social movements in our society? Give reasons for your answers.

Critical Thinking

1. What are some positive examples of collective behavior? If you can, give examples from your own experience.

Activities

1. Collective Behavior and Television

Divide students into teams and assign each team a different TV network to cover. Ask students to watch the networks for a given number of hours on the same night. As they watch, they should look for examples of how television, intentionally or otherwise, creates or influences collective behavior, such as fads, crazes, fashions, mass hysteria, rumors, and urban legends. Discuss results in class.

2. Social Movements in American History

Ask students to research and report on various social movements that have arisen during the history of the United States. Use the list on page 293 as a starting point. In their reports, students should identify how and why each movement went through the four stages described in the chapter. Reports should also include the direct influence of each social movement on life today.

3. Internet: Social Movements Today

Assign small teams of students to choose a current social cause and to visit websites that promote them. Teams should evaluate the effectiveness of the sites in presenting the causes to the public and identify any use of propaganda on the sites. Students should analyze each site's contents and give their opinions as to whether the cause is or is not worth following.

4. Special Sources: Mass Behavior and Financial Markets

Encourage students to research the history of American business to find examples of ways in which mass behavior creates markets for goods and vice versa. The dot.com buying frenzy of the 1990s is just one example of how mass behavior can affect entire economies. A good way to find similar crazes is to check years in which the stock market was booming.

Name _____

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As you read Chapter 15, write an answer to each question below.

1. According to the structural stress theory of Neil Smelser, what six conditions are needed in order for collective behavior to occur?

2. What is deindividuation, and how does it contribute to collective behavior?

3. What are the differences between social movements and collective behavior?

4. What are six types of social movements?

5. What is the difference between the relative deprivation and resource mobilization theories of why social movements form?

Name _____

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Find the best answer for each item. Then circle the correct answer.

- Who is a person who engages in assertive action to support or oppose an issue?
 - soldier
 - activist
 - revivalist
 - pessimist
- Which is the form of protest in which people deliberately disobey the law in order to draw attention to a cause?
 - rioting
 - mass hysteria
 - civil disobedience
 - deindividuation
- Which term includes riots, fads, mass hysteria, and panic?
 - social movements
 - structured responses
 - civil disobedience
 - collective behavior
- Which of the following is an unstructured group of individuals temporarily acting together?
 - social movement
 - mass medium
 - collectivity
 - crowd
- Which term means the loss of self-awareness?
 - deindividuation
 - panic
 - mass hysteria
 - civil disobedience
- Which term means information designed to manipulate public opinion?
 - a social movement
 - propaganda
 - collective behavior
 - a collectivity
- Which of the following is a collective effort to bring about social or political change?
 - social movement
 - collectivity
 - crowd
 - mass media
- What is defined as a set of beliefs that unites the members of a social movement?
 - convergence
 - mass hysteria
 - ideology
 - collective behavior
- What kind of social movement bases its goals on an image of a perfect society?
 - expressive
 - regressive/resistant
 - revolutionary
 - utopian
- Which stage in a social movement is characterized by a hierarchical structure?
 - emergence
 - coalescence
 - bureaucratization
 - decline

Name _____

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Read each description, and write the letter of the correct term on the line.

1. According to Smelser, the first condition needed for collective behavior is _____.
 - a. a crowd
 - b. a precipitating event
 - c. structural conduciveness
 - d. mobilization of participants
2. A gathering of people for a concert or lecture is an example of a(n) _____ crowd.
 - a. casual
 - b. conventional
 - c. expressive
 - d. active
3. A religious revival meeting or patriotic rally is an example of a(n) _____ crowd.
 - a. casual
 - b. conventional
 - c. expressive
 - d. active
4. _____ is collective behavior that develops when people are in fear of immediate danger.
 - a. Panic
 - b. Mass media
 - c. Collectivity
 - d. Frustration
5. A sense of reduced responsibility is one of the results of _____.
 - a. frustration
 - b. panic
 - c. propaganda
 - d. deindividuation
6. A form of panic in which people reinforce each other's rational fears is called _____.
 - a. deindividuation
 - b. mass hysteria
 - c. rumors
 - d. urban legends
7. Social movements are more _____ than collective behavior.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. realistic b. diverse 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> c. structured d. spontaneous
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8. A social movement that is based on strong disapproval of current trends is called _____.
 - a. expressive
 - b. regressive / resistant
 - c. reform
 - d. utopian
9. Money, facilities, leadership, and people are all _____ of a social movement.
 - a. causes
 - b. issues
 - c. trends
 - d. resources
10. Women's suffrage is an example of a social movement that declined because it had _____.
 - a. accomplished its goals
 - b. failed to capture public support
 - c. failed to use civil disobedience
 - d. stopped being spontaneous

Essay Question

How do you think the mass media contribute to collective behavior? Give examples from your experience.