

# Early Mobilization Social Movements

# Early Mobilization

- How does a set of grievances turn into some form of concerted action?
- How does the strained political environment becomes so infected that mobization occurs among the disenfranchised?

# Resource mobilization

- **Resource mobilization** is a major **sociological theory** in the study of social movements which emerged in the 1970s.

- This theory places **resources at the center** of both the emergence and success of social movements.

- It stresses the ability of movement's members to
- 1) **acquire** resources
- 2) **mobilize** people towards accomplishing the movement's goals.

- Resource mobilization theory developed in reaction to traditional socialpsychological analysis of social movements.

- In developing it, theorists largely **abandoned the social-psychological approach** that characterized other social movement theories like relative deprivation theory, mass society theory, and collective behavior theory.

- These **social-psychological theories** all tended to focus on identifying factors that **attract individuals** to social movements
- (e.g. personality traits, grievances, disillusionment, and ideology).



- They also tended to consider participation in social movements to be irrational and unconventional behavior.

# resource mobilization theory,

- According to this theory a core, professional group in a social movement organization works towards:
  1. bringing money,
  2. supporters,
  3. attention of the media,
  4. alliances with those in power,
  5. refining the organizational structure.

# Resource mobilization is vital...

- Social movements need the above resources to be effective,
- Dissent and grievances alone will not generate social change

- This theory assumes that individuals are **rational**.
- Individuals thus **weight the costs** and **benefits** of movement participation and act only if benefits **outweigh costs**.

## Free Riders dilemma

- When movement goals take the form of public goods, the 'cheats' need to be taken into consideration

- **“Free riders”** are those who consume more than their fair share of a public resource, or shoulder less than a fair share of the costs of its production.

- Social movements are goal-oriented, but organization is more important than resources.

# Organization

- Org. means the interactions and relations between social movement organizations (SMOs) and other organizations (other SMOs, businesses, governments, etc.).



# Efficiency

- ...of the organization infrastructure is a key resource in itself
- Leaders
- Bureaucracy
- Publicity
- Engagement tactics

- The centrality of resources to the success of social movements explains why some discontented people are able to form movements while others are not.

- This theory has a **number of underlying assumptions** regarding movement membership, movement organization and broader societal factors that influence movement formation and development.

- This theory has been criticized for placing **too much emphasis on resources**, particularly financial resources, as the success of some movements depends more on the time and labor of members rather than on money.

# Resource mobilization theory

- Can be divided into two camps:
- John McCarthy and Mayer Zald are the originators and major advocates of the classic entrepreneurial (economic) version of this theory, while

# **Economic Version**

- **It argues that grievances are not sufficient to explain creation of social movements.**
- **Instead access to and control over resources is the crucial factor.**

- Resources include:
- knowledge,
- money,
- media,
- labor,
- solidarity,
- legitimacy,

- The entrepreneurial model explains collective action as a result of economics factors and organization theory. It argues that grievances are not sufficient to explain creation of social movements.



# **Political Version**

- Charles Tilly and Doug McAdam are proponents of the **political version of resource mobilization**
- The political model focuses on the **political** instead of economic factors.

- Internal and external support from a powerful elite.
- i.e Civil rights movement required support from democratic party members and lobbyists.

- In the 1980s, other theories of social movements **challenged** the resource mobilization framework

- 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.).

- Critics point out that resource mobilization theory fails to explain ,
- Large networks of individuals
- Other groups surrounding social movement organizations,
- Surrounding sources of various services

- A SMO usually is only part of a particular social movement; in other words, a specific social movement is usually composed of many social movement organizations - formal organizations that share movement's goals

- Social **movement organizations** usually have coordinating roles in social movements, but do not actually employ or direct most of the participants, who are part of a wider social **movement community**

- For instance, the **Civil Rights Movement** was a social movement composed of **specific** social movement organizations
- I.e. SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) or CORE (Congress of Racial Equality))



- **Culture Theory**[\[edit\]](#)
- *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. [\[13\]](#)

- 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." (p. 14

# Veganism

- Thus, the social movement is the general push toward veganism (an effort with numerous motivations) and PETA is only a single SMO working within the broader social movement. [↓](#)



# The peace movement

- is composed of many groups that want peace - groups that classify as SMOs such as Peace Action (SANE/FREEZE), Fellowship of Reconciliation and others

# Ku Klux Klan

- Is yet another SMO - part of the **white supremacist** movement.
- al-Qaeda, acting as a coordinating body for a large number of loosely-connected **anti-American** organizations and individuals
- is another example of a social movement organization.

# Summary

- Resource mobilization theory is ultimately a conflict approach
- It emphasizes how the status quo may transformed by the proper organizational tactics.