

Social
Movements
and Social
Change

Social Change

- As we have seen, the course of human history has seen a tremendous amount of social change
- This chapter looks at this change and how it comes about

Social Movements

- Collective behavior that is purposeful, organized and institutionalized but not ritualized*
- Different from **Social Movement Organizations** (SMOs) which are formalized *groups* seeking to obtain specific movement goals.*
- For example, the World Wildlife Fund, Greenpeace and EarthFirst! are all SMOs under the banner of the environmental movement. Each is associated with the environment but has vastly different outlooks, goals focus, and methods regarding how to bring about desired change related to the environment.

Social Movement Success or Failure

- First, it is difficult to define success. Sometimes it is obvious, for instance when a movement wants specific legislation passed. However, sometimes the legislation fails to pass immediately but the movement itself sets up a framework in which the legislation is eventually adopted. The opposite happened with Prohibition. While the Women's Christian Temperance Union (and others) were initially successful in getting the 18th Amendment passed and alcohol banned throughout the US, today alcohol is not only legally available but widely consumed.

Factors Related to Social Movement Success: Window of Opportunity

- Window of Opportunity
 - While difficult to define or identify clearly at the time, in hindsight we can frequently see unique historical situations that contribute to a movement's success or failure.
 - Opportunities can include election cycles and results, social events, and presence or absence of competing movements.

Social Movement Success: Window of Opportunity

- The Tea Party was able to capitalize on anti-government and more specifically anti-Obama sentiment that resulted from the passage of the Health Care Reform Act.
- Formed prior to mid-term elections which are frequently a time of opportunity for the minority party
- Able to take advantage of low voter turnout for these off year elections and used Republican Party as vehicle for entrance into formal government institutions

Window of Opportunity: Arab Spring

- Some argue the opportunity to affect change without formal military intervention gained the movement support in the US
- Increased educational attainment combined with decreased occupational opportunities led to unrest (<http://ideas.repec.org/a/aea/jecper/v26y2012i2p167-88.html>)

Window of Opportunity: OWS

- OWS took advantage of anti-Wall Street sentiment in wake of large scale “bailout” of banking industry
- Economic recession and its impact on the “99%” was also a factor in its initial success

Resource Mobilization and Tea Party

- Conservative websites and cable stations were early supporters of the movement. They picked up the story quickly for much publicity
- The movement was able to utilize the resources of the Republican party
- Several charismatic Republican leaders were early supporters

Social Movement Success: Resource Mobilization

- Resources include
 - Funds
 - Members
 - Publicity
 - Social Networks
 - Charismatic Leaders
 - Support of Power Players

Resource Mobilization and the Arab Spring

- There was no organized SMO for the political revolutions that swept the Middle East in the early months of 2011
- The movement gained “members” through the use of technology – twitter feeds and other social networking tools alerted participants to collective action that was occurring throughout the countries
- News reports gave the movement needed publicity and gained it new members, funds and other resources

Resource Mobilization and OWS

- OWS was never able to gain widespread public sympathy to the same extent
- Initial media reports were mainly neutral with later media focusing on the fact they weren't showering, they were "spoiled college students" etc
- Donations were steady at first but then dropped off
- No one charismatic leader (in fact the movement emphasized its lack of hierarchical leadership) but many well know advocates
- It too used social media to both promote its cause and coordinate demonstrations

Social Movement Success: Framing an Issue

- The context in which the issue is placed is key to gaining support
 - As marriage is increasingly viewed as a personal relationship rather than a reproductive, economic or even in many cases a religious relationship, “gay” marriage is seen as a natural next step
 - Likewise, both sides of the abortion debate seek to define the issue - one speaks of being “pro-life” and the other speaks of being “pro-choice.” Same issue, very different ways of viewing it

Framing the Legalization of Marijuana

- From <http://thesocietypages.org/sociologylens/2012/10/15/cannabis-legalization-on-the-ballot-framing-the-debate-in-three-states/#more-10960>
- “Unlike California’s Proposition 19, all three of these measures appear on the ballot in a year when voters will be choosing the president. Presidential election years traditionally have much higher voter turnout, a fact that organizers (on both sides, surely) are counting on to increase exposure and attention in all three states. By appealing directly to voters, rather than state legislators, the legalization movements in all 3 states are able to avoid the costly and difficult problems of lobbying and relying on support from elites. Put another way, the largely bypass the need to create or seek out political opportunities from a few powerful actors within the state. Opportunities here come from the electorate.
- By bypassing legislatures and by writing the ballot measures as they have (namely, with the establishment of a tax and regulatory agency), activists have been able to frame the debate in terms that already resonate with voters. Specifically, the central topic of this election is the economy, with state governments being particularly cash-strapped. A new vice tax provides a new source of income. And voters who are already conscious of economic issues and hesitant about new taxes, may be more likely to approve a tax that only affects a small part of the population engaged in the voluntary use of a vice (as opposed to, say, higher income or property taxes). Similarly, Colorado’s measure requires the first \$40million in cannabis taxes go to fund capital improvements for schools, while Washington’s measure will fund drug treatment programs. In the latter case, at least, this measure functions to mute many legalization critics. Drug treatment, like most healthcare, functions as part of a market economy and notoriously underfunded.
- No matter what happens in Washington, Oregon, and Colorado this election day, some things are clear. Activists are using clever framing techniques to push for legalization at a time when [public support is high](#).”

Social Movement Success: Goals

- Frequently goals are defined by individual SMOs
- Goals need to be clearly articulated – this is usually done at the SMO level
 - For example, the environmental movement includes SMOs which focus on various aspects of environmental degradation, each of which works for more specific goals

Goals: The Arab Spring, The Tea Party and OWS

- The Arab Spring had a clearly articulated goal, and a lofty one at that: the overthrow of what was deemed to be an unjust government
- OWS had several goals including the elimination of corporate money in elections, a change in the way foreclosures are handled, and a fairer tax code to reduce income disparity
- One of the primary goals of the Tea Party was repeal of ObamaCare, which is as of yet unsuccessful. However, they were very successful in several other goals including an emphasis on debt reduction, and a discussion of spending cuts

Charismatic Leaders

Charismatic leaders can influence public opinion, increase donations, and encourage membership enrollment.



**Obama shift on gay marriage tilts
U.S. attitudes**

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/25/us-usa-campaign-gaymarriage-idUSBRE84O1DN20120525>

Links for Various Social Movements

○ Temperance:

- <http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/prohibition/roots-of-prohibition/>

○ Civil Rights:

- <http://vimeo.com/43462957> or <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qj7k4wMdV5g>

○ Gay Rights:

- <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/stonewall/>

○ AIM:

- <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/weshallremain/> (see episode 5: Wounded Knee for AIM and the occupation of Wounded Knee)

○ Arab Spring:

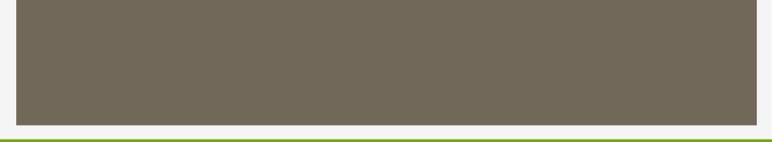
- <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67693/lisa-anderson/demystifying-the-arab-spring>

○ Occupy Wall Street:

- <http://occupywallst.org/>

○ The Tea Party:

- <http://www.teaparty.org/>



See a Problem?

Don't Despair – Take Action!

- “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead