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## How to Start a Riot: A Theory of Collective Action

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## Acknowledgements

For Geoffrey and Harry

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## **Background**

The concept of collective action is one of the oldest that has been studied in formal sociology, dating back to studies of crowd behavior in the late 19th century, including Le Bon's (1897) comprehensive analysis of the 'mind of the crowd' and contagion theory, where he discussed the concept of a collective group as a singular body. Earlier, Mackay (1869) had written about the same concept, stating, "Men, it has been well said, think in herds; it will be seen that they go mad in herds, while they only recover their senses slowly, and one by one" (viii).

As the field progressed, a greater emphasis on rational action came into focus. Contemporary literature often cites Olson's (1965) work as the chief proponent of this philosophy, where he claims that participation in collective action is a rational choice. Actors choose whether or not to participate in such an action depending on an understanding of the costs and benefits of potential participation. If there is more to be gained (by way of social acceptance or accruing of goods) through an individual actor being involved in collective action, then Olson predicts that the individual will participate.

However, contemporary literature also points to Klandermans' (1984) work stating that actors will participate in collective action if the ideals of the group (also referred to as the collective action frame) align with the actor's and if the actor believes that the collective action will be successful in its ultimate goal. Gamson (1992) also argues that "solidarity and collective identity operate to blur the distinction between individual and group interest, undermining the premises on which such utilitarian models [as Olson's] operate" (1992: 52). However, Olson does rightly

point to a free-rider problem in which individuals benefit from the results of collective action but do not participate.

Other social scientists have contributed to concepts of how collective action is generated and sustained, and this paper will present a combined theory of collective action in light of contemporary research. This paper will also augment existing theory by stating that lowered barriers to engagement and interaction with the social movement and social movement organization will increase the likelihood of both initial and sustained participation. Each section of the paper will condense the claims made into explicit theoretical statements and arguments, which are presented at the end of each section. Finally, a formal theory will be presented in Appendix I, which combines all of the presented theoretical claims and explain connections between propositions. Each section will have a title bolded, as well as a clear proposition (or multiple propositions) in italics underneath the title.

## **Identity**

Identity is crucial to understanding why certain individuals choose to participate in collective action. This affects how important the anticipated outcome of the collective action is to a given person, which in turn affects how much the social movement resonates with a given person.

Individuals and groups who experience disadvantage fall into two categories, both of which create identities based on such disadvantage. The first is structural disadvantage, where individuals experience oppression or discrimination based on a social group in which they are identified (such as race, class, gender, etc.). The second is incidental disadvantage, in which

individuals experience oppression or discrimination because they happen to be in a certain situation or location at a given time (Zomeran, Postmes, and Spears 2008). For instance, such an individual could be living in a country which collapses into a civil war.

In general, people who experience disadvantage are more likely to be socially and politically active. Such disadvantage is salient to that individual, causing that person to want to take action to ensure that such disadvantage doesn't happen again to them or other people (Bellows and Miguel 2009). Alesina and LaFerrara (2002) find that certain disadvantaged groups trust others less, therefore increasing the costs for them to engage with others: those who have “a recent history of traumatic experiences, even though the passage of time reduces this effect fairly rapidly” and “belonging to a group that historically has been discriminated against” (2008). Trust in this context is defined as an agreement to the statement that “most people can be trusted” (Smith, Marsden, Hout, and Kim 1972-2014).

The experiencing of oppression is not objective. Relative deprivation theory tells us that individuals respond when they notice that they are disadvantaged compared to those immediately around them (see Walker and Pettigrew 1984, Mummendey, Kessler, Klink, & Mielke 1999, and Crosby 1976). We know that relative deprivation is spurred into action or collective action “when social comparisons result in a subjective sense of injustice” (Zomeran et al., 2008:505). Bellows and Miguel (2009) also show that victims of war (though this can be understood in the abstract as people directly affected by disadvantage) “are significantly more likely to register to vote, attend community meetings, participate in local political and community groups, and

contribute to local public goods” (1145). In another instance, they explain that “parents who lost in school choice lotteries are significantly more likely to vote in subsequent school board elections, compared to parents who won” (1156). These occurrences of disadvantage show that difference from those against whom an individual compares themselves is what matters more than the objective level of disadvantage.

Tajfel’s (1978) social identity theory shows that once an individual understands themselves as a member of a structurally or incidentally disadvantaged group, it becomes a greater part of their identity. Because of this increased identification with the group, an individual is more likely to engage in collective action to alleviate their own disadvantage as well as the disadvantage borne by other members of the group with which the person identifies (Zomeran et al., 2008, see: Ellemers 1993, Kelly and Breinlinger 1996, Mummendey et al., 1999, Tajfel 1978).

There is also a distinction between identification with a disadvantaged group and identification with a social movement organization. Identification with a disadvantaged group creates some salience for the issue because the disadvantage is now part of that individual’s identity. However, becoming a member of a social movement organization creates a separate politicized identity, which “allows the political to become a personal identity project that transforms individuals’ identity from one defined by social circumstance into a more agentic one” (Zomeran et al., 2008: 507). Such identification with an organization creates an ‘activist’ or politicized identity which encouraging individuals to transform from adherents to constituents (see Simon and Klandermans 2001).

Once a person identifies with a disadvantaged group or with a social movement organization, they are pressed to engage in collective action in order to affect change (Drury and Reicher 2005). When disadvantage heavily affects a person (and thus they have much to gain by combatting such disadvantage), then they are more likely to participate and take on a large work load due to what Macy (1991) describes as “the effect of interest heterogeneity on the distribution of participation” (744). Identity plays a crucial role in determining who will be the founder of collective action, as well as who will be the constituents and adherents. It forms the basis for participation and opens the door to expanded engagement as part of the social identity model of collective action (SIMCA) (Zomeren et al., 2008).

- *If a person experiences relative deprivation (incidentally or structurally), then they will identify with the group of people experiencing the same disadvantage.*
- *If a person identifies with a group dedicated to ending such structural disadvantage, then they will create a politicized identity.*
- *If a person has a politicized identity, then they will identify with a disadvantaged group.*
- *If a person identifies with a disadvantaged group, then they will be more likely to participate in collective action.*

## **Goals**

Collective action is geared towards the creation (or sustaining) of public goods. In order to engage constituents and adherents, these public goods must have a “high jointness of supply” and “contributions must be indivisible” (Macy 1990). In other words, the public goods must not cost more (or the cost must only increase modestly) with higher numbers of consumers). For

instance, a city's public transportation system does not cost more to operate because it is desegregated. Further, when individuals are deciding whether or not to participate in the social movement, their contributions must be complete. They cannot accept some consequences that all participants must face but not others. Continuing with the above historical metaphor, participants can either join in the protests and accept that they may be punished or arrested or they may not join the protests. There is no third option of partial engagement because it provides an easy path that does not result in the desired outcome.

Beyond those, it is essential that participants be able to imagine a future different than the status quo (Zomeran et al., 2008). If people could not see an alternative to the current situation, then they will not be propelled into action. In a more negative sense, journalist Masha Gessen writes about lack of such imagination leading to destruction because people did not envision futures that differed in substantial ways from their current reality. She writes "lack of imagination is one of our greatest handicaps as humans and as citizens ... a lack of imagination is not an argument: it's a limitation. It is essential to recognize this limitation and try to overcome it. That is a difficult and often painful thing to do" (Gessen 2016).

Finally, participants must be able to see that their work will cause an impact (Gould 1993).

Without this, participants will see any efforts put into collective action as wasted. If they can see that their individual contributions will help alleviate the problem, then they will participate. This is often cited as a reason why people do not vote, because their singular vote will not sway the election overall. However, it is the task of the social movement organization (in this case, a



candidate or campaign staff member or volunteer) must convince the individual that their vote can make a difference in the outcome of the election. The higher chance of success that the individual determines the social movement to have, the more likely that individual is to become a participant (see Hornsey, Blackwood, Louis, Fielding, Mavor, Morton, O'Brien, Paasonen, Smith, and White 2006, Kelly and Breinlinger 1996, and Mummendey et al., 1999)

Collective action must be geared towards a public good that has a 'high jointness of supply', individuals must be given a binary option of participate or not, and participants must be able to imagine and fully conceptualize a future different from the present where the disadvantage (structural or incidental) does not exist. With all of that, they must also view their efforts as visibly contributing to the overall desired outcome.

- *If the goal of a social movement has high jointness of supply, then the resulting goal will gain more support.*
- *If individuals are able to imagine a reality different to the status quo, then the resulting goal will gain more support.*
- *If the goal gains support, then collective action will be more likely towards that goal.*
- *If participants in collective action see their work as being successful in a given iteration, then they will remain as participants for a further iteration.*

### **Consistency**

While the overall goals of the social movement must have specific goals, they must also present a vision for change that attracts support (Benford and Snow 2000). They do this by constructing

frames, which “are mental structures that shape the way we see the world” (Lakoff 2004:xv). In other words, a “frame is an angle or perspective on a collective problem (Oliver and Johnston 2000:50). Frames come in three variations: diagnostic frames, prognostic frames, and motivational frames (Witkowski 2008, see: Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986; Benford and Snow 2000). Diagnostic frames present issues with the status quo; prognostic frames give solutions, and motivational frames give encouragement for individuals to become participants.

Frames are the specific goals and suggested outcomes of collective action proposed by the social movement or social movement organization. If such a frame does not gain acceptance by the public, then it will not spur action (Benford and Snow 2000). Frames provide an answer to the question “what should be?” rather than “what is?”. A frame gains success based on salience and credibility (Benford and Snow 2000). A frame is salient when the issues presented or the goals being advocated for are important to the participants. A frame is credible when the goals being presented are seen as achievable and realistic. Credibility also means that the frame must align with individuals’ previously held beliefs, because people avoid engaging in activities which contradict their beliefs (see: Festinger 1957, Heider 1946, Klandermans and Tarrow 1988). Both salience and credibility are aided by increases in “source attractiveness, status, likeability, expertise, trustworthiness, and power” (Johnson, Lin, Symons, Campbell, and Ekstein, 1995:637. See also: Latane 1981).

- *If the goals of the social movement are seen as salient and credible, then the goals will gain more support.*

## Networks

Individuals rarely act independently or without consultation from others. Put more bluntly, “the assumption that individuals act in isolation is usually wrong” (Marwell and Oliver, 1988). Once founders and leaders are identified, so too must participants be recruited (see: Ennis and Schreuer 1987, Gould 1993). In light of the previously presented discussions on individuals affected by disadvantage in one way or another, this section looks at the recruitment of individuals who do not have a direct stake in the outcome of collective action.

Granovetter’s (1973) work on network ties demonstrates the power of weak ties to connect individuals to opportunities and resources in a variety of ways. These ties are important for helping people get jobs and join organizations (see also: Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson 1980). Once one person in a network is a constituent in a collective action, they are able to leverage their social ties to bring others into the social movement (Marwell and Oliver 1988, see also: Tilly 1978; Oberschall 1973).

Social networks create a domino effect. These ties “make individuals’ decisions about participating in collective action interdependent” (Gould 1993:182). Individuals determine “how many others are participating before deciding whether to join in” (Macy 1991:731). To illustrate, if one person in a given network is affected by the disadvantage, and the goals of the social movement align with others in that network, others are more likely to join because they know someone else who is already participating.

However, this works best when networks are sparse, heterogenous, and centralized (Gould 1993; Marwell and Oliver 1988). In that case, individuals are less likely to be tied to bystanders, which in turn increases their likelihood of participation as this network effect would work in both directions. Heterogeneity also provides an ability for the social movement to spread beyond one subset of a population, reaching into various parts of a given population. Should the collective action not resonate with members of the network, resulting in individuals within the network becoming opponents of the social movement, then that opponent's ties would act as a way to build opposition to the social movement.

Networks are also beneficial to social movement organizations as they host various events which require in-person presence, because "most participants ... are neither alone nor anonymous; rather, they assemble with family members, friends, or acquaintances, and often encounter more of the same" (McPhail 1991:60). Individuals can encourage others to attend these events through normative pressure, as explained in more detail in the next section). With the rise of social media technology in the 21st century, it is now possible for leaders to contact and organize groups of people with whom they had no previous contact, refuting Marwell and Oliver's (1988) claim that "organizers can recruit only those individuals with whom they have some prior social connection" (511). However, online interactions are closely tied with in-person interactions. Individuals are likely to become participants online if they see others in their network also participating.

- *If an individual is socially tied to a social movement participant, then the actor is more likely to also become a participant.*

## Norms

Olson (1965) proposed a theory of collective action that stated that individuals are rational actors who decide whether or not to engage in such action based on a comparison of the risks and benefits. It is clear that individuals participate in collective action for other reasons and participate in action that does not directly benefit them (see: Gachter and Fehr 1999). Similarly, people refuse to participate when that refusal allows them to gain something, whether that is time, resources, or social acceptance in another group (Dawes, Orbell, Simmons, and Van De Kragt 1986). Olson's argument can also be understood in the negative as addressing this very issue of how to deal with individuals who stand to gain from collective action but choose not to participate. This has become called the 'free-riding problem'.

In order to combat this, social groups create normative pressure on their members to participate in collective action. Due to their ability to generate politicized identities, social movement organizations are particularly adept at creating this pressure. It is not the overall outcome that motivates some participants, but rather the potential penalties that individuals may face if they do not participate. This creates an incentive for those individuals to participate because they can now avoid such penalties. Further, individuals can gain social acceptance by participating in collective action and joining a social movement (Gachter and Fehr 1999). Individuals are aware that once a norm of participation is created, social groups will punish norm violators (Bellows and Miguel 2009, see also: de Quervain and Hess, 1999).

More specifically, there are two norms that are generated in regards to expected participation in collective action: norms of fairness and avoidance of wasted effort (Gould 1993). A norm of fairness enforces relatively equal participation and cooperation amongst a social group, because those who are participating will begin to see themselves as providing a good without compensation for those who are not participating. This allows participants to encourage those in their social groups to participate alongside them. Alternatively, if the social movement does not seem like it will achieve its outcome (or the group at large does not agree with its intended goals), then it will pressure the participant away from the social movement in order to avoid the individual wasting time and effort.

Norms allow for groups to place pressure on individuals who may not have a direct stake in the alleviation of disadvantage or who may otherwise be able to shirk responsibility hoping that others will do the work. This kind of pressure can defeat the freeloader problem if applied in large enough quantities and through enough connections.

- *If a sufficient number of people from a given social group indicate that they will participate in collective action, then a norm of action will form in that group*
- *If an insufficient number of people from a given social group indicate that they will participate in collective action, then a norm of inaction will form in that group.*
- *If a norm of participation forms in a social group, then all individuals will be motivated to participate in collective action.*

## **Barriers to Engagement**

In order to effectively encourage individuals to become participants, leaders must be able to provide avenues for engagement that have low costs of time or resources (Witkowski 2008). As the costs of engagement go up for the average participant, the less likely that they will engage. These thresholds vary based on the level of interest that the individual in relation to the goals of the social movement. For instance, leaders may be very willing to donate significant amounts of time and money towards the goal, but it is likely that these people are affected by the disadvantage in a distinct way. For individuals who do not have such a proximity to the disadvantage, simple and low-cost methods of engagement will lead to higher likelihood of engaging in collective action and more frequent engagements with the social movement as a whole.

- *If baseline participation in a given collective action has low costs, then more individuals will participate.*

## **Continuation of the Social Movement**

Some social movements define success within one iteration. In that circumstance, the above theoretical claims apply. However, if they define success in such a way that requires multiple iterations of action, then the claims below also apply. Movements aimed at affecting long lasting change require decades of consistent action, with several waves of coordinated efforts. It is important to note that a social movement does not necessarily fail because it does not continue beyond the first iteration. Many social movements, especially those designed to raise funds or to

provide a one-time service like relief after a natural disaster, set goals that can be accomplished in one iteration of action.

However, in order for a social movement to continue beyond the first request of its participants, it must cultivate those relationships. If a social movement, via social movement organizations, does not ensure that its participants are engaged throughout the process, those participants will begin to lessen their relationship with the social movement until they become bystanders.

Engaged participants can help grow the movement as well by connecting it to others through their networks. Disengaged or disaffected participants will refuse to do so.

Initially, the social movement must establish collective actions that have minimal time between action and outcome (Macy 1991; see also: Tversky, Kahneman, and Moser 1990). This means that the goals of each collective action must be specific and achievable. If goals have a long time between action and outcome, or the outcome is simply not within reach, then participants will lose interest in the action and the movement.

Additionally, if the movement does not provide rewards for participants, those participants will also be less likely to continue engagement. Continual struggle against a given circumstance is draining, and “the effort to hold back disaster eventually wears down” participants (Macy 1991:742). Simple rewards like personalized recognition or praise are often sufficient to maintain consistent participation.



Finally, if the social movement raises the initial cost of engagement, new participants will be added to the movement at a slower rate than old participants are leaving, resulting in a shrinking organization. The rule of lowered cost of engagement does not have an expiration date - it must be continued throughout the existence of the social movement.

- *If the social movement rewards its participants in one iteration of collective action, participants will continue to participate for the subsequent iteration.*
- *If there is at least one SMO, then subsequent iterations of collective action are more likely.*
- *If the cost of baseline participation increases over time, then the social movement will have fewer participants for the subsequent iteration.*

### **Scope Conditions**

In order for the theory described in this paper to apply, a few general conditions must be met.

First, the society must be pluralistic. That is, there must be an opportunity for a wide range of viewpoints to be openly discussed and seen as credible. Second, members of the general community must have access to communication technology that is free or very low cost. Finally, the general community must be able to communicate using the same language.

### **Summary of the Background Theories**

Social movements are one of the more intriguing phenomena of the modern age. They happen so often and in so many different contexts, but it is difficult to conceptualize a unified theory of how they come into existence and maintain a presence. This paper attempts to contribute a piece towards the possibility of a more unified theory.

It is understood that social movements often begin as a response to a situation of disadvantage by a person directly or indirectly affected by such disadvantage. Such movements engage in collective actions to alleviate such disadvantage and are often led by social movement organizations. Social movements grow by asserting a goal or set of goals that must resonate with the public and provide an outcome that is desirable to a wide section of the population. The movement can appeal to those not affected by the disadvantage through the transmission of information through network ties. Similarly, groups can use normative pressure to ensure that beneficiaries of the outcomes of collective action participate.

Social movements come in myriad shapes, sizes, and ideological bents. Discussed below are two contrasting types of social movements. Examples will be discussed with reference to their adherence to the various aspects of the theory presented in the earlier section of this thesis as well as their overall success. To conclude, there will be a discussion of the outcome of each movement as evidence for or against the theory.

In short, the theory presented in this thesis predicts that collective action will emerge if:

- A group creates politicized identities<sup>1</sup>
- The group identifies goals with high jointness of supply which are imaginable as different from the status quo
- The goals of the movement are both salient and credible
- Individuals are tied to other people who indicate that they will participate in collective action
- A norm of participation forms in a given social group

Further, the thesis predicts that collective action will continue beyond an initial iteration if:

- The social movement rewards its participants
- The costs of baseline participation do not increase
- The work of the social movement is successful at each iteration

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<sup>1</sup> The term politicized identities here is borrowed from Zomeren et al., 2008. It refers to identities which encourage individuals to participate in social movements because their identity is tied to the push for justice for which the social movement advocates.

## **Civil Rights Movement**

### *Background*

The Civil Rights Movement can largely trace its roots back to 1951, when 13 parents filed a class action lawsuit against the Board of Education in the City of Topeka, Kansas on behalf of their 20 children. The case proceeded through the US court system, eventually combining with 4 other cases from South Carolina, Virginia, Delaware, and the District of Columbia to be heard in the Supreme Court (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* 1951). The Supreme Court's 1954 ruling in *Brown v Board of Education* sparked a national conversation and debate about segregation. It also sparked a series of collective actions that swept the nation in an effort to gain equal rights for African-American and other minority groups in the United States.

As a note, it is useful to discuss the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) as a general term, but it encompassed a series of disparate social movement organizations, each of which had different leaders, methods, and ideologies. This analysis will refer to the CRM as a distinct, and sometimes discordant, collection of groups and ideologies. As clear evidence for this spread of beliefs, the movement spawned at least 13 national social movement organizations to organize efforts towards the overall goal.

The CRM does not follow a simplistic model of one social movement organization leading one social movement that utilizes one form of collective action. Instead, it is a collection of social movement organizations which underlay various types of collective action as part of one larger

social movement. This analysis will test the theory's ability to be applicable in the most abstract form.

### *Identity*

The theory states that, in order for a social movement to succeed, it must create a politicized identity. The easiest way to do this is through the creation of social movement organizations. While no fewer than 13 such national organizations carried this work forward, the CRM also made use of the explicitly racial concepts that made up the movement (Clark 1966). There was no Black community (or other communities of color) that was not directly affected by the injustices that the CRM sought to correct. This ensured that a wide range of people felt the pressure of an affected identity.

In order to translate affected identity to politicized identity, the aforementioned groups sprung up in the ways that theory would expect. One such group, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was begun with the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr., who, in the language of the theory, acted as a Leader. From there, he recruited others who were affected by the issue to shoulder effort before network and norm effects could build a larger movement. In turn, the organization grew to encompass whole communities.

Finally, the CRM was immensely effective at using religious institutions as social movement organizations. Entire congregations became involved in efforts to support the CRM, which led to the creation of politicized identities for each member of the congregation. These groups used

established and newly formed groups to build politicized identities across the nation, building a network and coalition to support their goals.

### *Goals*

Social movements need to have goals, and those goals must be seen as having the ability to be enacted and create a difference. The first step to this is imagining a world different from the status quo. The leaders of the CRM were able to do this in tangible ways, presenting concrete demands for change. Leaders of 4 major SMOs joined together to release the following list of demands:

1. Passage of meaningful civil rights legislation;
2. Immediate elimination of school segregation;
3. A program of public works, including job training, for the unemployed;
4. A Federal law prohibiting discrimination in public or private hiring;
5. A \$2-an-hour minimum wage nationwide;
6. Withholding Federal funds from programs that tolerate discrimination;
7. Enforcement of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution by reducing congressional representation from States that disenfranchise citizens;
8. A broadened Fair Labor Standards Act to currently excluded employment areas;
9. Authority for the Attorney General to institute injunctive suits when constitutional rights are violated (Weingroff and King 1963).

The first test for each of these demands is that they all be public goods, that they be available to all people. Thanks to careful and attentive crafting, each demand, if enacted, is available to each person in the United States. The second test is that they must have a high jointness of supply, which is to say that the cost of implementing such a public good must not increase substantially for each person able to use it. The implementation of each of these demands would certainly have costs, such as hiring lawyers or increasing public works. However, the cost for each of these initiatives to serve the public does not significantly increase if they serve 300 people or 300 million people.

The mere fact that groups were able to come together to identify and describe a different reality is impressive in and of itself. It shows that a community had the imaginative power to define and describe a reality different from the status quo, which allowed them to create a broader vision on which that reality might rest.

### *Consistency*

In order for the social movement to grow and continue forward, its goals and rhetoric must be in line with previously-held beliefs of the general public. While there was a great deal of tension between the various SMOs involved in the movement on how to portray it, the fact that it became known as the Civil Rights Movement evinces a great deal about their ability to brand the movement as one in line with the nation's core ideals. Their core message was that this was a movement by Americans to achieve rights set out in the Constitution. Their victories in courts and in the halls of Congress showed that they were not seeking to change the fundamental values

of the nation, but rather to expand them to more people. This message resonated with wide swathes of population, even those who may have previously been ambivalent to the issues raised by the movement.

The CRM also was able to achieve consistency through the use of nonviolent strategies. Led by Bayard Rustin, who studied nonviolent tactics with Mahatma Gandhi, the movement was strict in demanding that its members not engage in violent confrontations. This showed to the public a commitment to being active contributors to society, creating a stark distinction between the nonviolent protesters and the armed military or police who opposed them. These images had an effect on the population at large, swaying public opinion toward the protesters because the public wanted to support the peaceful group where possible.

Finally, the social movement as a whole was able to adjust its messaging over time to adapt to the leaders in power. They understood that they needed a different message when conservatives were in power to when progressives were in power. They were able to shift their frame to include more people with each passing year, eventually building a coalition of supporters that had a more powerful voice than their detractors in the minds of lawmakers.

### *Networks and Norms*

Most of the SMOs involved in the movement created chapters in various cities around the United States, especially in the Southeast. This created broad networks of people in various cities that could participate and support collective actions. The notable exception to this model was the



Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Instead of forming its own chapters or affiliate organizations, it partnered with existing groups such as churches or community organizations. This model empowered churches to become the hub of activity in the movement, which gave physical space, leadership, and community support to the movement. Given that the affected population, African Americans, have very high religious participation rates, this tactic proved very effective at transforming affected identity into politicized identity through pre-existing institutions.

Further, because of the widespread participation in the movement by religious and community organizations in the affected community, a strong norm of participation emerged within that community. Select groups from outside the affected community also joined in the movement, creating small pockets with norms of participation, such as on college and university campuses. Coordinators were able to foster strong local networks with local leadership. This allowed for greater connection by the public to leadership, improving the norm of participation.

### *Barriers to Engagement*

The various collective actions engaged in by the CRM were diverse. They ranged from standing at a peaceful protest to risking life and limb at a lunch counter, where the participants had an understanding that they would be assaulted or otherwise harmed. However, the baseline participation expected by the movement was physical presence at large-scale peaceful demonstrations. For actions with higher risk, they carefully recruited and selected participants in order to not send a parent to prison for a long time or subject an elderly person to physical abuse.

Because the baseline participation demanded so little of people, it was easy for large groups to follow the norm of participation. For groups that did not have a norm of participation, or even had a norm of active opposition, this low barrier to engagement, allowed more people to be a part than might be otherwise expected to join.

### *Continuation*

The Civil Rights Movement's founders understood that their goals would take decades to reach, thus they laid the groundwork for multiple rounds of interaction and engagement. The crucial aspect to this success was its underlying structure of SMOs. These myriad organizations buttressed a sprawling movement that had hundreds of thousand of participants and the attention of the world media. These SMOs allowed for political actions to be made after the crowds had dispersed because they had networks of individuals willing to do behind-the-scenes work that shaped policy and argued for decisions in Washington and in various courthouses and state capitals around the country. Even the marches required years of logistical planning, with coordination between the major SMOs and other groups that needed to be carefully done over the course of a year or more. This could only be done through a well-established SMO or group of SMOs that were committed to the cause, even if conflict emerged between the groups.

With each victory, small or large, the participants were rewarded. Every law passed or court decision rendered gave them greater rights and privileges as citizens, which encouraged them to continue forward. Had these victories not been won, participants likely would not have continued

forward, seeing only defeat in the face of toil, hardship, and fear. Further, with each action, participants grew their social networks. This created a stronger norm of participation over time, and it allowed for positive social benefits through engaging in the movement. This was aided by the movement's ability to keep the barrier to initial engagement low, which allowed for more unique people to join the movement over time. This meant that people could find new social connections by being a part of the CRM, which counteracted the potential downside of losing connections due to one's participation via ostracisation by opponents of the CRM.

### *Overall*

The CRM was successful because it operated in a pluralistic environment in which dominant ideas can be challenged. It fulfilled each part of the theory, and it was able to have a tangible effect on the people's lives who it claimed to represent.

### **Ice Bucket Challenge**

The Challenge began when a professional golfer challenged a family member to dunk themselves in ice to raise awareness for ALS. The challenge spread virally around social media, developing a set of rules that asked people to either participate in the challenge or donate when they were tagged. It is impossible to know the total number of people who participated, but the ALS Association reports more than \$100 million in donations through the summer of 2014. The money donated went towards finding a cure for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

### *Identity*

Due to its short lifespan, the movement had difficulty building a social identity. This problem was exacerbated by two complicating factors. First, it was nearly impossible for large numbers of people in the affected population to take part because the affected population were confronting a serious neuromuscular disease. Instead, the movement had to rely on others who were not directly affected, and it was unable to translate those identities into politicized identities at a rate that allowed to expansion of the movement. Second, the movement encountered difficulty in establishing a true identity because it was one of the first social movements to take place almost entirely online. Without the personal connections generated in offline social movements, the Ice Bucket Challenge (IBC) was unable to generate an identity which its members could claim.

### *Goals*

While no formal goals were ever published by any recognizable leader of the IBC, it is apparent that the overarching mission of the movement was to raise awareness for ALS. While this is a noble goal, it does not lend itself well to measurable success in the public arena, especially because it was not able to generate enough success to spur a large-scale second iteration of the movement. Most participants did not return for another round of participation. However, the secondary goal of the movement was highly successful in terms of its public request. The IBC asked participants to donate money towards ALS research, which provided over \$100 million towards such research. However, while this money is valuable in fighting against a horrible disease, this research does not produce victories in short succession. With that, participants did

not see their efforts having an impact in a short amount of time, causing them to drop out of the movement after the first iteration.

Both of these goals have a high jointness of supply. Increased awareness among the general population does not cost more to have with a population of one million or fifty million. The cure for a disease actually reduces in cost for the number of people who need it, because more insurance companies are likely to cover it as a valid treatment. It is questionable if people were able to imagine a different future from the status quo, because participants dropped off in such drastic numbers after the first iteration. Because goals like fundraising and awareness don't have tangible benefits that can be accrued after one large-scale iteration, people lose the ability to see a different future.

### *Consistency*

The IBC was able to create an ideology consistent with that of the public at large. There are very few people who would argue that debilitating diseases are good for the public, and people are generally supportive of efforts to find cures or preventative measures to those diseases. It aligned easily with so many people's beliefs that the movement was able to create clear identities for people (though not politicized identities) based on their dedication to the cause.

### *Network and Norms*

Like many modern movements, the IBC spread rapidly through social networks. One important facet of the IBC was "tagging" individuals who had not yet participated, which notified them that

someone in their network expected them to participate in the movement as well. This worked well to spread the movement, because each participant was asking others in their network to participate as well. This also created a strong norm of participation, because one participant had directly asked an individual to become a participant. Further, entire communities created norms of participation if enough of them joined the movement.

### *Barriers to Engagement*

Participating in the IBC was relatively easy and low-cost. It involved having a camera, internet access, and an account on a social media site (plus some ice and a bucket). Because it was low cost, hundreds of thousands of people participated across the globe, posting videos and sharing them with each other on social media sites. It allowed for easy identification with the movement, because the initial action to join was simple and could be done anywhere.

### *Continuation*

In contrast to the Civil Rights Movement, the Ice Bucket Challenge was not designed to continue beyond its initial large-scale effort. Because goals were set that could be accomplished within one iteration, there was no underlying structure to the IBC. No group claimed to be the leading voice of the movement, and it did not have any sustained direction. Because no group could provide any further actions, it became unclear how to continue to engage with the movement after the first iteration. Because of that, participants dropped out of the movement quickly after their first iteration. Further, participants did not gain rewards, nor were they recognised for their efforts. Taking part in the IBC did not gain participants any value, nor did it help expand their

social network. These are not necessarily negative aspects. Rather, they show that social movements can, and often do, consciously design their efforts to only last for one round of collective action.

### *Overall*

The IBC was remarkably effective at spurring one-time engagement from a wide base of people across the world. Participation in the movement was low-cost, and it was able to spread virally through social media. However, there was no organization that led the movement, and there was no thought behind what participants should do after an initial iteration, so the movement died.

The movement very quickly raised tens of millions of dollars for research to combat ALS, and it was a successful one-shot movement.

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## Appendix I: Formal Theory

### **Key Primitive Terms**

- Goal
- Iteration
- Support
- Norm
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Situation
- Characteristic
- Cost

### **Definitions**

- Relative deprivation: Individuals experience disadvantage compared to those immediately around them.
- Incidental deprivation: individuals experience disadvantage because they happen to be in a certain situation at a given time.
- Structural disadvantage: individuals experience disadvantage based on a social group in which they identify.
- Social movement organization (SMO): a group of people who guide and govern collective action as part of a larger social movement.

- Politicized identity: a sense of self that requires a person to take part in collective action
- Collective action: an effort undertaken by a group of people to alleviate a situation of relative deprivation
- Situation of disadvantage: a situation in which one group of people are oppressed relative to another social group.
- Social movement: a group of individuals who engage in collective action
- High jointness of supply: the costs of providing the good increase minimally with an increase in the number of consumers.
- Success: achieving the stated goal of a collective action (or a part of that goal)
- Participant: Individual who either supports or participates in the social movement.
- Salient: the situation of disadvantage presented by the social movement is relevant to participants
- Credible: the goal or goals presented by the social movement are achievable and realistic
- Social group: a group of people who collectively identify with a common characteristic.
- Baseline (participation): the lowest level of participation with which a person can claim membership in a social movement or participation in collective action

### **Scope Conditions**

- The society must allow a wide range of viewpoints to be openly discussed and seen as credible
- Members of the general community must have access to free or low-cost communication technology



- Members of the general community must be able to communicate using the same language.

### **Propositions**

- If a person experiences relative deprivation (incidentally or structurally), then they will identify with the group of people experiencing the same disadvantage.
- If a person identifies with a social movement organization or a disadvantaged group, then they will create a politicized identity.
- If a person has a politicized identity, then they will identify with a disadvantaged group.
- If a person identifies with a disadvantaged group, then they will be more likely to participate in collective action.
- If the goal of a social movement has high jointness of supply, then it will gain more support.
- If individuals are able to imagine a reality different to the status quo, then the resulting goal will gain more support.
- If the goal gains support, then collective action will be more likely towards that goal.
- If participants in collective action see their work as being successful in a given iteration, then they will remain as participants for a further iteration.
- If the goals of the social movement are seen as salient and credible, then the goals will gain more support.

- If an individual is socially tied to a social movement participant, then the actor is more likely to also become a participant.
- If a sufficient number of people from a given social group indicate that they will participate in collective action, then a norm of action will form in that group
- If an insufficient number of people from a given social group indicate that they will participate in collective action, then a norm of inaction will form in that group.
- If a norm of participation forms in a social group, then all individuals will be motivated to participate in collective action.
- If the social movement rewards its participants in one iteration of collective action, participants will continue to participate for the subsequent iteration.
- If there is at least one SMO, then subsequent iterations of collective action are more likely.
- If the cost of baseline participation increases over time, then the social movement will have fewer participants for the subsequent iteration.

## Diagram

- **Abbreviations**
  - RD: Relative deprivation
  - InD: Incidental deprivation
  - StD: Structural deprivation
  - IDG: identification with disadvantaged group
  - IDSMO: a person identifies with a social movement organization

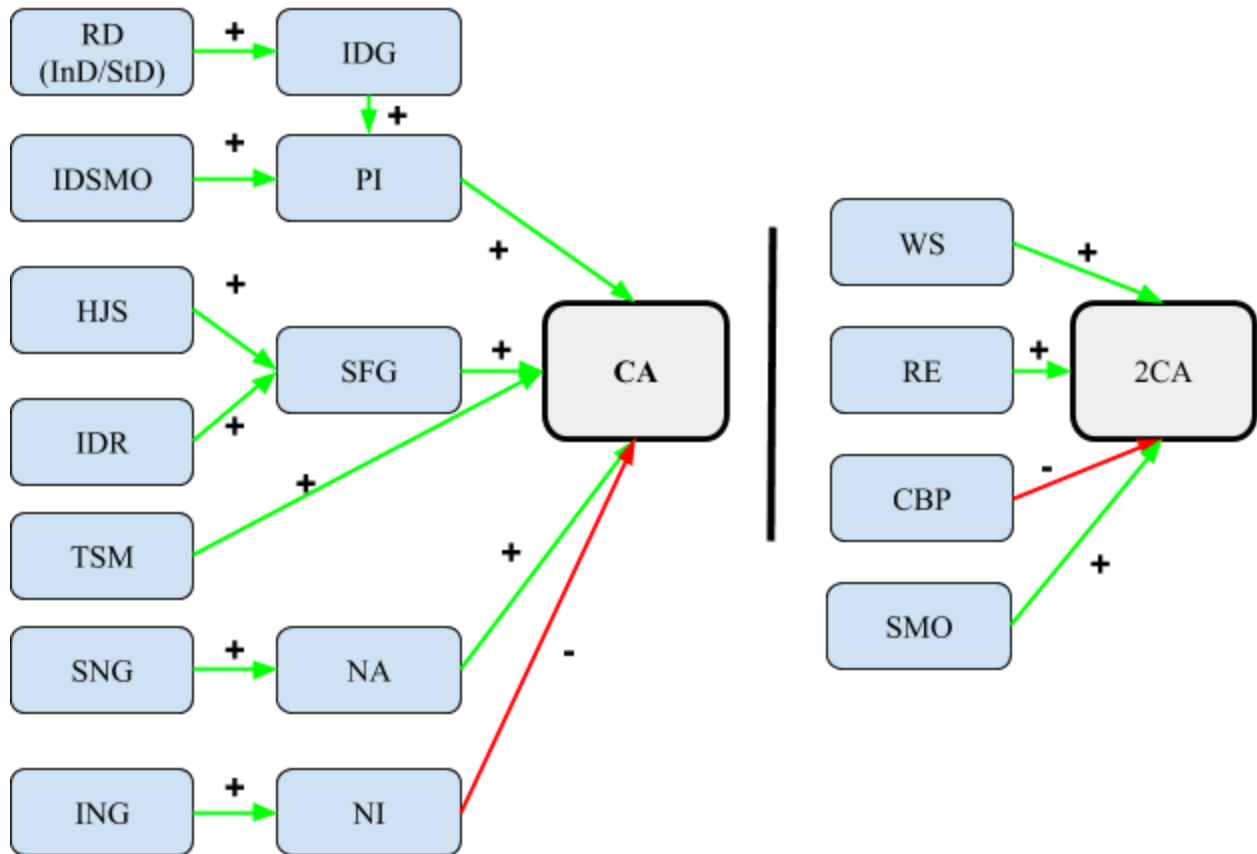
- PI: Politicized identity
- CA: collective action
- HJS: high jointness of supply
- IDR: imagine a different reality
- SFG: support for goal
- WS: work is successful
- 2CA: further iteration of collective action
- SA: Salient
- CR: Credible
- TSM: ties to social movement
- SNG: sufficient number of people in a social group indicating action
- NA: Norm of action
- ING: insufficient number of people in a social group indicating action
- NI: Norm of action
- RE: rewards given for one iteration of collective action
- SMO: social movement organization
- CBP: cost of baseline participation

- **Propositions**

- RD (InD/StD)  $\rightarrow$  IDG
- IDG  $\rightarrow$  PI
- IDSMO  $\rightarrow$  PI
- PI  $\rightarrow$  IDG

- $IDG \rightarrow CA$
- $HJS \rightarrow SFG$
- $IDR \rightarrow SFG$
- $SFG \rightarrow CA$
- $WS \rightarrow 2CA$
- $SA \rightarrow SFG$
- $CR \rightarrow SFG$
- $TSM \rightarrow CA$
- $SNG \rightarrow NA$
- $ING \rightarrow NI$
- $NA \rightarrow CA$
- $RE \rightarrow 2CA$
- $SMO \rightarrow 2CA$
- $CBP \rightarrow 2CA$

## Diagrammed propositions



**Terminological System**

