

Hilary Term, 2024

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND COLLECTIVE PROTEST

Dr Michael Biggs

Wednesday 2–4pm, Meeting room on 1st floor

(Version 1, 3 January 2024)

This paper examines explanations for the origins and outcomes of social movements and collective protest. Readings range widely in subject matter—from the anti-slavery movement in the eighteenth century to protest following the fall of Mubarak in Egypt—but with an emphasis on the United States since 1950. The emphasis is on preparing students to develop their own empirical research, for the MSc dissertation or DPhil thesis.

Requirements for students auditing the paper as well as those enrolled:

- For two of the eight weeks, you will write an essay (about 2000 words) answering one of the questions. You are welcome to propose another question, just discuss it with me first. As well as the assigned readings, you must also read two other articles or another book published since 2010. Sharing your essays will help with revisions for the examination. Email me the essay before 5pm on Tuesday. Late essays will not receive comments.
- In one of those two weeks, you will give a 10-minute presentation based on your essay.

The paper is assessed by an unseen three-hour examination in Trinity Term.

READING LIST († to be circulated)

I. Black Lives Matter

Thinking about any social phenomenon is most fruitful when it starts from familiarity with specific examples. As a case study, we will consider the Black Lives Matter in the United States that peaked in 2020.

- Why did Black Lives Matter emerge in the 2010s?
- What did the Black Lives Matter movement achieve?

Laurens Grant (dir.), *Stay Woke: The Black Lives Matter Movement*, 2017;

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyl_plFyEww

Jennifer E. Cobbina, *Hands Up, Don't Shoot: Why the Protests in Ferguson and Baltimore Matter, and How They Changed America*, New York University Press, 2019

Pamela Oliver, 'Introduction: Black Lives Matter in Context', *Mobilization*, vol. 26, 2021, pp. 391–99.

Michelle S. Phelps, Anneliese Ward, and Dwjuan Frazier, 'From Police Reform to Police Abolition? How Minneapolis Activists Fought to Make Black Lives Matter', *Mobilization*, vol. 26, 2021, pp. 421–41

Chaniqua D. Simpson, Avery Walter, and Kim Ebert, “‘Brainwashing for the Right Reasons with the Right Message’: Ideology and Political Subjectivity in Black Organizing”, *Mobilization*, vol. 26, 2021, pp. 401–20

Larry Buchanan, Quoc Trung Bui, and Jugal K. Patel, ‘Black Lives Matter May Be the Largest Movement in U.S. History’, *New York Times*, 3 July 2020;

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/03/us/george-floyd-protests-crowd-size.html>

Sean Campbell, ‘The BLM Mystery: Where Did the Money Go?’, *New Yorker*, 31 January 2022; <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2022/01/black-lives-matter-finances.html>

Zackary Okun Dunivin, Harry Yaojun Yan, Jelani Ince, and Fabio Rojas, ‘Black Lives Matter Protests Shift Public Discourse’, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 119, 2022, e2117320119

2. Conceptualizing movements and protest

With a tangible example in mind, we turn to the question of how to conceptualize social movements and protest. Movements need to be grasped as an abstract social phenomena, and also one with a particular historical genealogy. Theory has been informed by the method of cataloguing protest events or ‘contentious gatherings’.

- Riots, demonstrations, strikes, occupations, boycotts—do these forms of action share similarities? How do they differ from voting?
- What explains the origin of the modern social movement?
- What is distinctive about the modern repertoire of protest and when did it arise?

Charles Tilly, *Contentious Performances*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, chs 1, 2, 5

Peter Stamatov, ‘The Religious Field and the Path-Dependent Transformation of Popular Politics in the Anglo-American World, 1770-1840’, *Theory and Society*, vol. 40, 2011, pp. 437–73

Claus Offe, ‘New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics’, *Social Research*, vol. 52, 1985, pp. 817–68 (read pp. 826–88)

Mario Diani, ‘The Concept of Social Movement’, *Sociological Review*, vol. 40, 1992, pp. 1–25

Clarence Marsh Case, *Non-Violent Coercion: A Study in Methods of Social Pressure*, Allen and Unwin, 1923, ch. 21

Ralph H. Turner, ‘The Public Perception of Protest’, *American Sociological Review*, vol. 34, 1969, pp. 815–31

Edwin Amenta, Neal Caren, Sheera Joy Olasky, and James E. Stobaugh, ‘All the Movements Fit to Print: Who, What, When, Where, and Why SMO Families Appeared in the *New York Times* in the Twentieth Century’, *American Sociological Review*, vol. 74, 2009, pp. 635–56

Dana R. Fisher, Kenneth T. Andrews, Neal Caren, Erica Chenoweth, Michael T. Heaney, Tommy Leung, L. Nathan Perkins, and Jeremy Pressman, ‘The Science of Contemporary Street Protest: New Efforts in the United States’, *Science Advances*, vol. 5, 2019, eaaw5461

Swen Hutter, ‘Protest Event Analysis and Its Offspring’, Donatella della Porta (ed.), *Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research*, Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 335–67

Pamela Oliver, Alex Hanna, and Chaeyoon Lim, 'Constructing Relational and Verifiable Protest Event Data: Four Challenges and Some Solutions', *Mobilization*, vol. 28, 2023, pp. 1–22

Brayden G. King and Laura K. Nelson, 'Beyond Protests: Using Computational Text Analysis to Explore a Greater Variety of Social Movement Activities', *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, vol. 47, 2023, pp. 13–35

3. Class bases

In contemporary democracies, social movements draw disproportionately from people with university education. Put crudely, protesters are privileged rather than disadvantaged. How can this association be explained? Relevant studies use survey evidence, which enables us to consider the strengths and weaknesses of this source of evidence. It is crucial to recognize that the association with privileged class position is not historically invariant; after all, the labour movement was paramount for most of the twentieth century. We also need to consider collective action by the most marginalized, which often takes the form of rioting.

- Why are university students and graduates so prone to protest?
- Can we distinguish between the conditions that provoke riots and those that stimulate social movements?
- What sort of people are most likely to participate in protest, and why?

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 1848, prefaces, parts i-ii, iv

Darren E. Sherkat and T. Jean Blocker, 'The Political Development of Sixties' Activists: Identifying the Influence of Class, Gender, and Socialization on Protest Participation', *Social Forces*, vol. 72, 1994, pp. 821–42

Russell J. Dalton, *The Participation Gap: Social Status and Political Inequality*, Oxford University Press, 2017, ch. 3

Alexander K. Mayer, 'Does Education Increase Political Participation?', *Journal of Politics*, vol. 73, 2011, pp. 633–45

Mikael Persson, 'Testing the Relationship Between Education and Political Participation Using the 1970 British Cohort Study', *Political Behavior*, vol. 36, 2014, pp. 877–97

Sirianne Dahlum and Tore Wig, 'Chaos on Campus: Universities and Mass Political Protest', *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 54, 2021, pp. 3–32

Bryn Rosenfeld, 'Reevaluating the Middle-Class Protest Paradigm: A Case-Control Study of Democratic Protest Coalitions in Russia', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 111, 2017, pp. 637–52

Civis, 'Public Opinion Data on Black Lives Matter Police Reform', 2020;

https://29aww93vfjsz432bcn2d6lz2-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Public_Opinion_Data_BLM_CombinedCrosstabs_ALL.pdf

Michael Biggs, 'Has Protest Increased Since the 1970s? How a Survey Question Can Construct a Spurious Trend', *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 66, 2015, pp. 141–62

Amory Gethin, Clara Martínez-Toledano, and Thomas Piketty, 'Brahmin Left Versus Merchant Right: Changing Political Cleavages in 21 Western Democracies, 1948–2020', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 137, 2021, pp. 1–48

Juta Kawalerowicz and Michael Biggs, 'Anarchy in the U.K.: Economic Deprivation, Social Disorganization, and Political Grievances in the London Riot of 2011', *Social Forces*, vol. 94, 2015, pp. 673–98

4. Social networks

One primary reason for people to participate in movements or protest is the fact that others in their social network have done so. Movements also create new social networks.

- What configurations of social network are most conducive for participation in social movements?
- To what extent does the diffusion of collective protest or of movement organization depend on social networks?
- Does the prevalence of online social networks help or hinder mobilization today, compared to the pre-internet era?

Jo Freeman, 'The Origins of the Women's Liberation Movement', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 78, 1973, pp. 792–811

David A. Snow, Louis A. Zurcher, Jr., and Sheldon Ekland Olson, 'Social Networks and Social Movements: A Microstructural Approach to Differential Recruitment', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 45, 1980, pp. 787–801

Roger Gould, 'Why Do Networks Matter? Rationalist and Structuralist Interpretations', Mario Diani and Doug McAdam (eds), *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*, Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 233–57

Roger Gould, 'Multiple Networks and Mobilization in the Paris Commune, 1871', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 56, 1991, pp. 716–29

Doug McAdam and Ronnelle Paulsen, 'Specifying the Relationship between Social Ties and Activism', *American Journal of Sociology* vol. 99, 1993, pp. 640–67

Shin-Kap Han, 'The Other Ride of Paul Revere: The Brokerage Role in the Making of the American Revolution', *Mobilization*, vol. 14, 2009, pp. 143–62

Debra Minkoff, 'The Payoffs of Organizational Membership for Political Activism in Established Democracies', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 122, 2016, pp. 425–68

Jennifer Larson, Jonathan Nagler, Jonathan Ronen, and Joshua Aaron Tucker, 'Social Networks and Protest Participation: Evidence from 93 Million Twitter Users', *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 63, 2019, pp. 690–705

Bogdan State and Lada Adamic, 'The Diffusion of Support in an Online Social Movement: Evidence from the Adoption of Equal-Sign Profile Pictures', *Proceedings of the 18th ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing*, 2015, pp. 1741–50

Michael Biggs, 'Who Joined the Sit-ins and Why: Southern Black Students in the Early 1960s', *Mobilization*, vol. 11, 2006, pp. 241–56

James M. Jasper and Jane D. Poulsen, 'Recruiting Strangers and Friends: Moral Shocks and Social Networks in Animal Rights and Anti-Nuclear Protests', *Social Problems*, vol. 42, 1995, pp. 493–512

5. Political linkages

Social movements are intimately connected to the political system. Political opportunities can help to explain increasing mobilization in some cases, but by no means all. The boundary between movements and conventional politics is sometimes permeable, with bureaucrats and politicians promoting the cause from within the system.

- ‘If movement emergence is explained by political opportunities, it becomes impossible to account for many cases where movements fail—because in those cases the opportunities turned out to be nonexistent.’ Do you agree?
- Can social movements create their own political opportunities?
- What political circumstances are most conducive to a social movement’s success?

Herbert P. Kitschelt, ‘Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest: Anti-Nuclear Movements in Four Democracies’, *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 16, 1986, pp. 57–85

Doug McAdam, ‘Conceptual Origins, Current Problems, Future Directions’, Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald (ed), *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, Cambridge University Press, 1996

David S. Meyer, ‘Protest and Political Opportunities’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 30, 2004, pp. 125–45

Jeff Goodwin, ‘Are Protestors Opportunists? Fifty Tests’, Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper (eds), *Contention in Context: Political Opportunities and the Emergence of Protest*, Stanford University Press, 2011, pp. 277–302

Joshua Bloom, ‘The Dynamics of Opportunity and Insurgent Practice: How Black Anti-Colonialists Compelled Truman to Advocate Civil Rights’, *American Sociological Review*, vol. 80, 2015, pp. 391–415

Marion Fourcade and Evan Schofer, ‘Political Structures and Political Mores: Varieties of Politics in Comparative Perspective’, *Sociological Science*, vol. 3, 2016, pp. 413–43

Jack A. Goldstone and Bert Useem, ‘Prison Riots as Microrevolutions: An Extension of State-Centered Theories of Revolution’, *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 104, 1999, pp. 985–129

6. Protest volatility

Protest is one of the most volatile social phenomena; periods of quiescence are punctuated by waves. With hindsight, sociologists can always find exogenous changes to ‘explain’ the eruption of protest, but they never predict them in advance! Volatility may be explained by the fact that participation in collective action depends on the actions of others, and so protest is subject to positive feedback.

- ‘The threshold model is useless because it cannot be empirically tested.’ Do you agree?
- Why does protest tend to cluster in time, so that periods of quiescence are punctuated by large waves?
- How helpful is the concept of diffusion in explaining the dynamics of protest?

Mark Granovetter, ‘Threshold Models of Collective Behavior’, *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 83, 1978, pp. 1420–43

Dingxin Zhao, ‘Ecologies of Social Movements: Student Mobilization During the 1989 Prodemocracy Movement in Beijing’, *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 103, pp. 1493–1529

Davide Cantoni, David Y. Yang, Noam Yuchtman, and Y. Jane Zhang, ‘Protests as Strategic Games: Experimental Evidence from Hong Kong’s Antiauthoritarian Movement’, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 134, 2019, pp. 1021–77

Kenneth T. Andrews and Michael Biggs, 'The Dynamics of Protest Diffusion: Movement Organizations, Social Networks, and News Media in the 1960 Sit-ins', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 71, 2006, pp. 752–77

Michael Biggs, 'Strikes as Forest Fires: Chicago and Paris in the Late 19th Century', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 110, 2005, pp. 1684–1714

Michael Biggs, 'Size Matters: Quantifying Protest by Counting Participants', *Sociological Methods and Research*, vol. 47, 2018, pp. 351–83

Mark R. Beissinger, 'Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena: The Diffusion of Bulldozer/Rose/Orange/Tulip Revolutions', *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 5, 2007, pp. 259–76

Toke Aidt, Gabriel Leon-Ablan, and Max Satchell, 'The Social Dynamics of Collective Action: Evidence from the Diffusion of the Swing Riots, 1830–1831', *Journal of Politics*, vol. 84, 2022, pp. 209–25

Ruud Koopmans, 'The Missing Link Between Structure and Agency: Outline of an Evolutionary Approach to Social Movements', *Mobilization*, vol. 10, 2005, pp. 19–33

Paul Y. Chang and Kangsan Lee, 'The Structure of Protest Cycles: Inspiration and Bridging in South Korea's Democracy Movement', *Social Forces*, vol. 100, 2021, pp. 879–904

7. Movement organization

Social movements must be sustained by organization. Formal bureaucratic organization is prone to oligarchy and can divert attention away from the movement's goals to the organizational maintenance. Conversely, however, groups that eschew formal organization do not necessarily give all participants an equal voice.

- How does the organizational structure of a social movement influence the kinds of actions it undertakes?
- Does democracy *within* a social movement organization help or hinder its political effectiveness?
- Why do some movement organizations avow nonviolence while others embrace physical violence?

Luther P. Gerlach and Virginia H. Hine, *People, Power, Change: Movements of Social Transformation*, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970, ch. 3†

Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1977, ch. 5

Suzanne Staggenborg, 'The Consequences of Professionalization and Formalization in the Pro-Choice Movement', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 53, 1988, pp. 585–605

Darcy K. Leach, 'The Iron Law of *What* Again? Conceptualizing Oligarchy Across Organizational Forms', *Sociological Theory*, vol. 23, 2005, pp. 312–37

Jo Freeman, 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness', *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, vol. 17, 1972–73, pp. 151–64

Marshall Ganz, 'Resources and Resourcefulness: Strategic Capacity in the Unionization of California Agriculture, 1959-1966', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 105, 2000, pp. 1003–62

John S. Ahlquist and Margaret Levi, *In the Interest of Others: Organizations and Social Activism*, Princeton University Press, 2013, ch. 1

Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*, University of Oklahoma Press, 2004, chs. 5–6

W. Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg, 'The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics', *Information, Communication and Society*, vol. 15, 2012, pp. 739–68

8. Evaluating outcomes

We like to think that social movements can be transformative, but robust evidence for this is surprisingly scarce. The challenge is to isolate the effect of protest and mobilization from the effect of other social changes that facilitate protest and mobilization. Devil's advocates need to be taken seriously.

- Why do some movements succeed while others fail?
- 'The achievements of any movement depend largely on the reaction of the state rather than the movement's own strategies.' Discuss.
- 'In a democracy, politicians respond to the central tendency of public opinion rather than a small minority of activists.' Do you agree?

Paul Ingram, Lori Qingyuan Yue, and Hayagreeva Rao, 'Trouble in Store: Probes, Protests, and Store Openings by Wal-Mart, 1998–2007', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 116, 2010, pp. 53–92

Michael Biggs and Kenneth T. Andrews, 'Protest Campaigns and Movement Success: Desegregating the U.S. South, 1960–61' *American Sociological Review*, vol. 80, 2015, pp. 416–43

Omar Wasow, 'Agenda Seeding: How 1960s Black Protests Moved Elites, Public Opinion and Voting', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 114, 2020, pp. 638–59

Michael Biggs, Christopher Barrie, and Kenneth T. Andrews, 'Did Local Civil Rights Protest Liberalize Whites' Racial Attitudes?', *Research and Politics*, vol. 7, 2020, pp. 1–8

Andreas Madestam, Daniel Shoag, Stan Veuger, and David Yanagizawa-Drott, 'Do Political Protests Matter? Evidence from the Tea Party Movement', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 128, 2013, pp. 1633–85

Regina Branton, Valerie Martinez-Ebers, Tony E. Carey Jr, and Tetsuya Matsubayashi, 'Social Protest and Policy Attitudes: The Case of the 2006 Immigrant Rallies', *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 59, 2015, pp. 390–40

Christoph Dworschak, 'Civil Resistance in the Streetlight: Replicating and Assessing Evidence on Nonviolent Effectiveness', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 55, 2023, pp. 639-51

Neil Ketchley and Thoraya El-Rayyes, 'Unpopular Protest: Mass Mobilization and Attitudes to Democracy in Post-Mubarak Egypt', *Journal of Politics*, vol. 83, 2021

Travis Campbell, 'Black Lives Matter's Effect on Police Lethal Use-of-Force', *Journal of Urban Economics*, in press, 2023

David John Frank, Bayliss J. Camp, and Steven A. Butcher, 'World-Wide Trends in the Criminal Regulation of Sex, 1945 to 2005', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 75, 2010, pp. 867-93