

- Agenda** |
1. Administrative
 2. Social change
 3. Collective behavior

Synthesis essay 2

⋮ Due next Wednesday (March 19) at 11:59pm

Social change



Social *rigidity*

- ∴ Much of what sociologists look at is way that social structures *resist* change
- ∴ E.g.:
 - ∴ Class boundaries
 - ∴ Gender essentialism
 - ∴ Racialization
 - ∴ Economic inequality
 - ∴ Norm socialization
- ∴ All focus on ways that *dominant ideologies and norms are reinforced*



Social *change*

- ∴ Empirically, social structures *do change*
- ∴ *New norms emerge, dominant ideologies change, boundaries shift*
- ∴ Understanding the parts of social structures that *resist* change can help us understand *how change happens*

How do we explain *endogenous* social change?

1 Conflict theories

- ∴ Social inertia is based on structures of dominance, institutionalized barriers, and false consciousness
- ∴ Social change is the product of oppressed populations realizing their *common cause* and changing institutional framework (class consciousness)
- ∴ Powerful reassert dominance in new context
- ∴ **Work of deliberate social change is making the systems of oppression clear, helping oppressed see their common plight, and organizing**

2 Interactionist theories



Protestors stand in front of the burning Minneapolis Police Third Precinct (May 28, 2020)

How do we explain *endogenous* social change?

1 Conflict theories

2 Interactionist theories



- ∴ Social inertia based on constant *normalization* and *reinforcement* in everyday interaction
- ∴ Social change occurs when new norms of interaction take hold, subverting previous assumptions
- ∴ *Work of deliberate social change is to upset expectations of interaction as visibly as possible*

Rosa Parks sitting in the front of a bus in Montgomery, Alabama in 1956

How do we explain *endogenous* social change?

1 Conflict theories

2 Interactionist theories

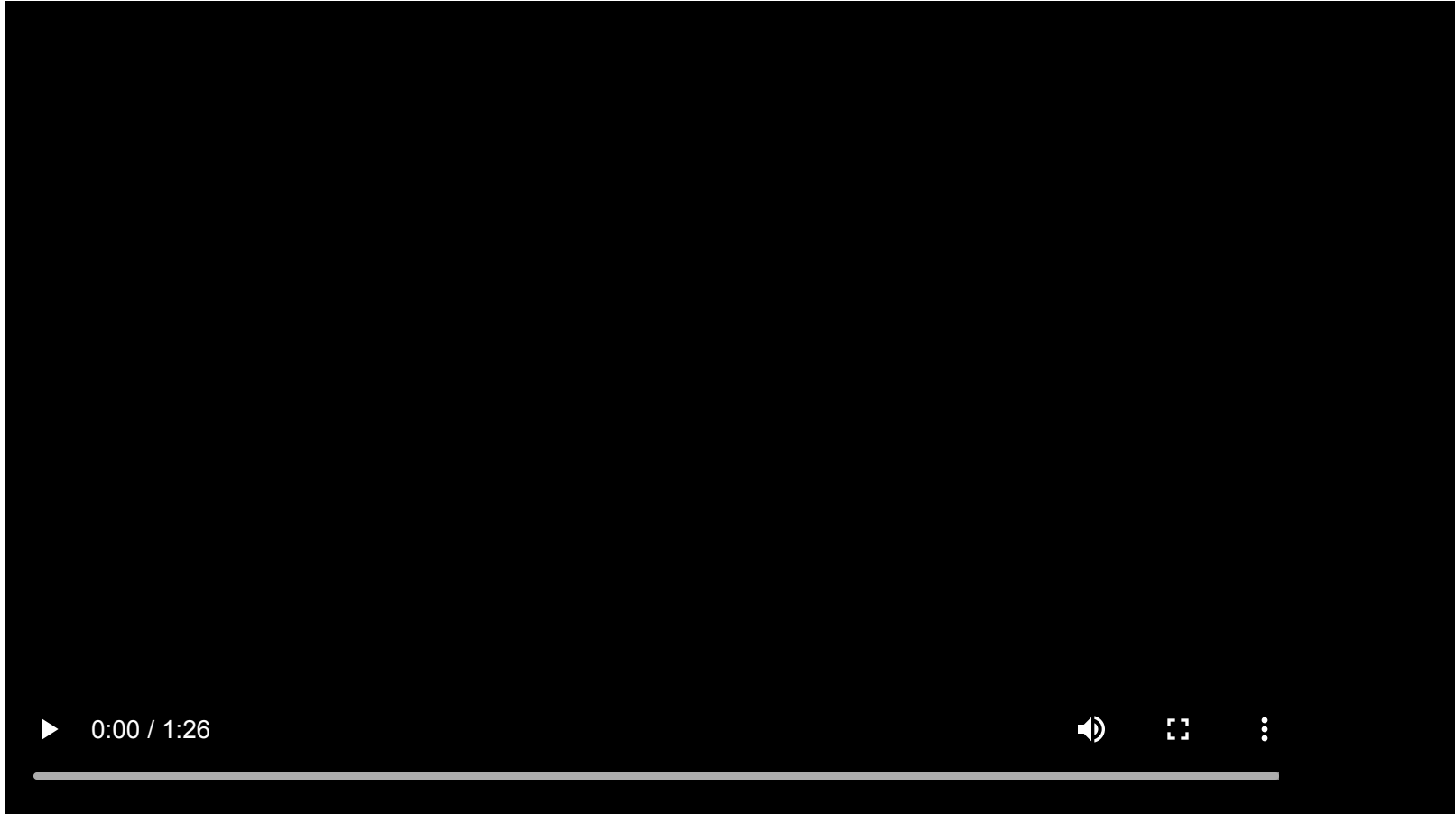
Common thread:
Collective behavior

| Social change happens when enough
| people decide it should



Collective behavior





Collective behavior

Collective action

- ∴ Group of people acting “as one”
- ∴ Often the focus is on *unexpected* action
- ∴ Informal, non-institutional coordination

What makes this kind of behavior notable?

- ∴ Unexpected outcome
- ∴ Acts in opposition to existing power structures
- ∴ Only works because enough people participate



Collective behavior

Why is collective action difficult?

The perspective from
rational choice theory



Tragedy of the commons

- ∴ Shared pasture needed by all
- ∴ “Default” state: overgrazing
- ∴ Best outcome equal and controlled allocation
- ∴ No single herder would do better by limiting behavior
- ∴ Solution is cooperation
 - Community norms
 - Government oversight
 - Punishment for misuse

Describes pervasive features of collective action

- ∴ Collective good perceived to be at odds with individual good
- ∴ All or nothing: if not enough people participate situation is same (or worse)
 - Risk of acting alone
- ∴ Solutions require communication, community, and unified behavior

Theories of collective behavior

Explaining Collective behavior:

**Contagion/
convergence**

Social order breaks down in crowds

**Rational
choice**

Collective behavior solves collective problems

**Emergent
norms**

Groups develop new norms in face of unexpected situations

Value-added

Collective behavior response to strained social situations

Theories of collective behavior

Contagion and convergence

Older theories of collective behavior center on how crowds form and disperse
Crowds seen as events where social order breaks down



Contagion theory

- ∴ Crowd membership alters normal behavior
- ∴ Anonymity creates dissociation
- ∴ People caught up in the crowd will do things they otherwise would not (violent, irrational)
- ∴ “Mob mentality”
- ∴ Popular idea but not supported empirically

Convergence theory

- ∴ Like-minded people will find one another
- ∴ Latent (hidden) desires expressed in crowd
- ∴ “Release” of underlying tendencies
- ∴ Responsibility for personal actions diffused
- ∴ Some similarities to Durkheim’s “collective effervescence”

Theories of collective behavior

Rational Choice

- ∴ Focus on mutually beneficial cooperation
- ∴ Going against the grain potentially costly
- ∴ Overall cooperation benefits everyone (Prisoners' dilemma)
- ∴ Conclusion: cooperative behavior needs a core of committed participants



Emergent Norms

- ∴ Interactionist—behavior based on norms
- ∴ Norms are expected responses to expected situations
- ∴ In unexpected situations, new norms emerge
- ∴ Negotiation of what is “acceptable” creates coordination of action

Theories of collective behavior

Value-added theory

- Functionalist approach—focus on social strain
- Six conditions for collective action:
 - **Structural conduciveness**
(awareness and opportunity)
 - **Structural strain**
(e.g. perceived inequality)
 - **Spread of generalized belief**
(agreement on clearly-defined problem)
 - **Precipitating factors**
(event or ‘spark’ that sets off action)
 - **Mobilization for action**
(emergence of networks/leaders pushing action)
 - **Failure of social control**
(insufficient intervention by authorities)
- **Sees collective action as generally disruptive and undesirable for a functioning society**
Early 1960s

Coming Out as Fat: Rethinking Stigma **(Saguy and Ward 2011)**

- ⋮ Being fat is *extremely* stigmatized
- ⋮ Anti-fat stigma is often considered socially acceptable in ways that, e.g., anti-queer stigma is not (e.g. media, government, science, ...)

Discussing fatness

- ⋮ Being fat is not a medical condition needing treatment, nor is it an indicator of poor health
- ⋮ Medicalized terms like 'obese' and normative words like 'overweight' should be avoided, as should euphemisms that try to avoid saying the word fat
- ⋮ Do not single out individual bodies for comment (celebrity or otherwise)
- ⋮ Trauma surrounding bodies is common — be sensitive in your Perusall comments and group discussions
- ⋮ Because of the sensitivity of these issues, I will be *moderating the Persuall comments* more closely than usual

Image credit



Photo by [Oliver Hale](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Photo: [@nickwoltman](#)
([Twitter](#))



Photo: [United Press](#)

Image credit



Photo by [Claudio Schwarz](#)
on [Unsplash](#)



Still from [All of US Are Dead](#)
(2022)



Video: [WGU Japlandic](#)
([YouTube](#))



Still from [West Side Story](#)
(2021)

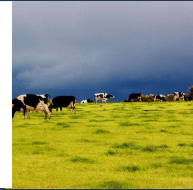


Photo: [Martin Abegglen](#)
([Flickr](#))



Still from [A Simple Plan](#)
(1998)