

Crowd Behavior: Contagion, Convergent & Emergent Norm Theory

Why do people act differently in crowds than they do individually? In this lesson, we will discuss three different theories to explain crowd behavior: contagion theory, convergent theory, and emergent norm theory.

Crowd Behavior

Crowds are common occurrences and can be seen in sporting events, music concerts, shopping sales, and amusement parks. Crowd behavior is the behavior that is conducted by individuals who gather in a crowd, while a crowd is defined as a gathering of people who share a purpose. There have been many theories developed to explain crowd behavior, and in this lesson, we will take a look at the contagion theory, convergent theory, and emergent norm theory in relation to crowd behavior.

Contagion Theory

Gustave Le Bon, a French social psychologist born in 1841, is considered to be the founder of crowd psychology, which explains why people do the things they do in groups. Le Bon's 1895 book, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, attributed crowd behavior to the 'collective racial unconscious' of the mob overtaking individuals' sense of self and personality and personal responsibility.

According to Le Bon, relieved of individual responsibility, individuals will behave in a more primal fashion. He asserts, 'by the mere fact that he forms part of an organized crowd, a man descends several rungs on the ladder of civilization.' A modern comparison might be the teenager who argues that his own actions of toilet papering the principal's house weren't so bad because everybody else was doing it, too.

In his book, Le Bon also formulated the contagion theory, which argues that crowds cause people to act in a certain way. The theory suggests that crowds exert a sort of hypnotic influence on their members. The hypnotic influence combined with the anonymity of belonging to a large group of people, even just for that moment, results in irrational, emotionally charged behavior. Or, as the name implies, the frenzy of the crowd is somehow contagious, like a disease, and the contagion feeds upon itself, growing with time. In the end, the crowd has assumed a life of its own, stirring up emotions and driving people toward irrational, even violent action.

The 18th-century French Revolution is an example of how contagion theory can be used to explain crowd behavior. Exacerbated by hard economic times, famine, and resentment of the ruling class, crowds of peasants, farmers, and workers stormed the Bastille on July 14, 1789, with the intention of obtaining guns and killing the ruling class, including King Louis XVI.

Convergence Theory

Whereas the contagion theory states that crowds cause people to act in a certain way, convergence theory says the opposite. People who want to act in a certain way intentionally come together to form crowds. Convergence theory was formulated by many leading sociologists,

and it assumes that when a critical mass of individuals with the same desire to effect change come together, collective action occurs almost automatically.

Think 'strength in numbers.' One person might believe strongly in a cause but assumes that his own individual action could not make a difference. As a result, individuals rarely act out alone. When they can convene with other individuals who have similar goals, the potential for successfully changing a policy or condition becomes more of a reality. With the support of others, an individual feels that the goal is within reach.

For example, although students often become bored in class during a long, dry lecture by a disinteresting professor, they rarely walk out in protest. Each individual student assumes that he would be individually caught and punished for this disrespectful action. However, if the students plan to walk out of all boring classes on the first Monday of the coming month at 11 a.m. sharp, then the crowd acts as one. They all march to the quad together to chant in protest against 3-hour-long lecture classes. This relieves the fear of retaliation or individual consequence of any kind, and they all feel closer to being heard and having their issues addressed.

Emergent Norm Theory

In *Collective Behavior*, 20th-century sociologists R.H. Turner and Lewis M. Killian explained crowd behavior with their emergent norm theory. Emergent norm theory states that crowd behavior is guided by unique social norms, which are established by members of the crowd.

The emergent norm theory combines the above two theories, arguing that it is a combination of like-minded individuals, anonymity, and shared emotion that leads to crowd behavior. It argues that people come together with specific expectations and social norms, but in the interactions that follow the development of the crowd, new expectations and norms can emerge. This allows for behavior that normally would not take place.

For example, upstanding, law-abiding citizens can peacefully assemble at their state capitol to protest the increase in state sales tax. During the course of their protest, a few highly agitated members of the crowd start shouting profanities and start throwing rocks at the capitol building. Soon, shouting and throwing rocks seems to become an acceptable crowd behavior, and within minutes, the rest of the crowd is shouting and throwing rocks, too.

Lesson Summary

In this lesson, we covered three different theories to explain crowd behavior. The first theory discussed was the contagion theory. This theory assumes that individuals act irrationally as they come under the hypnotic influence of a crowd. The second theory discussed was the convergence theory. This theory assumes that crowd behavior reflects the pre-existing value, beliefs, and behavioral disposition of the individuals who join a crowd. The third theory discussed was the emergent norm theory. This theory assumes that although the members of the crowd upheld basic social norms when initially assembling, new and more drastic norms emerge and are widely accepted throughout the course of the crowd's action.

Mass Hysteria & Moral Panic: Definitions, Causes & Examples

In this lesson we will discuss mass hysteria and moral panic by using specific examples of each and comparing the causes of these phenomena.

Mass Hysteria

Do you remember the story of Henny Penny, also known as Chicken Little? In this folktale, a chicken believes that the world is coming to an end and hysterically runs around shouting, 'The sky is falling!' As a result, Chicken Little created mass hysteria.

Mass hysteria is defined as an imagined or assumed threat that causes physical symptoms among a large number of people. Sociologist Robert Bartholomew, author of several books on mass hysteria, including *The Martians Have Landed: A History of Media-Driven Panics and Hoaxes*, explained that mass hysteria symptoms typically include smelling gas, seeing strange objects, acting like animals, and fainting. Mass hysteria is a short-term event that may or may not have a specific cause. According to Bartholomew, people can start having real symptoms just from stories they hear, and sometimes, there is no real explanation for why mass hysteria happens; it just happens.

Do You Smell Gas?

An example of mass hysteria that had no apparent cause took place in a Tennessee high school. A teacher reported a petrol-like smell in her classroom shortly after arriving to the school in the morning. That morning, she had several students in her classroom develop dizziness, nausea, headaches, and shortness of breath.

Although the school was evacuated and around 100 people reported these types of symptoms, no gas leak was ever found. In fact, investigators searched for days and still could not locate any trace of a gas leak or any other cause for such symptoms. Even those individuals who reported the symptoms showed no abnormal results in blood tests done to try to solve the mystery. In the end, this case is considered an instance of mass hysteria without a known cause.

War Of The Worlds

An example of mass hysteria that does have a known cause occurred on October 30, 1938, during a radio broadcast adapted from H. G. Wells' novel *The War of the Worlds*. It occurred when Orson Welles caused thousands of listeners to believe that an actual Martian invasion was taking place. The hour-long radio broadcast was narrated in a news bulletin format without any commercial breaks.

It caused many in the audience to become hysterical, reporting that they could smell poison gas or see lightning flashes in the distance. According to some historians, approximately six million people heard the broadcast. 1.7 million thought it was true, and out of those, 1.2 million actually exhibited hysterical behavior.

Moral Panic

According to Emeritus Professor of Sociology Stanley Cohen, moral panic is a fear that grips a large number of people that some evil is threatening the well-being of society. Panics happen in part because they provide an avenue for groups of people to assess and redirect society's moral values. A moral panic is specifically framed in terms of morality and is usually expressed as outrage. In

addition, moral panics are typically exhibited from the older generation towards the younger generation.

Most of the time, moral panic involves issues related to sexuality. For example, the civil rights and women's liberation movements of the 1960s and 70s dramatically altered society's rules about sex, race, and gender. Any large-scale shift towards social liberalism tends to create a fearful moral panic among social conservatives, who believe that these trends could lead to the unraveling of Western Civilization.

Around the time of the civil rights movement, there was widespread fear of the loss of morals due to the influence of rock 'n' roll music. Specifically, the older generation feared that rock 'n' roll music would lead to promiscuity and anti-social behavior in the younger generations.

Lesson Summary

As part of human nature, people tend to fear change or the unknown. In this lesson, we examined mass hysteria and moral panic, along with their probable causes. Mass hysteria is a phenomenon in which a group of people exhibit similar hysterical symptoms. Technically, mass hysteria involves physical effects, such as changes in behavior or physical well-being.

Moral panic, on the other hand, is the term used to describe a state of panic induced in a large number of people who feel that a societal norm is being seriously threatened. For example, most new music or clothing styles have induced a certain degree of moral panic.

Collective Behavior: Crowd Types, Mobs & Riots

Collective behavior refers to events that suddenly emerge. These events do not conform to rules or laws but instead are shaped based on the issue at hand. This lesson discusses the forms of collective behavior: crowds, mobs and riots.

Introduction To Collective Behavior

Collective behavior refers to the spontaneous and unstructured behavior of a group of people in response to the same event, situation, or problem, like this crowd of people, for example. These events do not conform to typical structures that other events are formed around, such as rules or laws, but are not necessarily deviant in nature either.

Collective behavior can be characterized as being:

- Short-lived in nature
- Having no clear leaders or organization within the group
- Having weak to little guidelines or procedures to follow

Examples of collective behavior may include a crowd doing the wave at a football game, a group of people forming around a street preacher, or even widespread interest in a new fad or product, like silly bands. I will explain collective behavior in sociology through three main forms: the crowd, the mob, and the riot.

Crowds Defined

We are witnessing a crowd. The crowd is defined as a relatively large number of people in close proximity to each other (this is sometimes referred to as localized collectivities). The crowd reacts at once to a common focus or concern.

This is different than the mass, which refers to people who are concerned about a common concern and influence each other's thinking but are not within close proximity of one another (often referred to as dispersed collectivities).

Crowds share characteristics:

- They do not define how to behave or share clear expectations on what will happen.
- They often feel something must be done right away to address their common concern.
- Attitudes and ideas about the common concern spread very quickly among crowd members.
- They often do and say things that they would normally not do, and they go along with the actions of others in the crowd.

Crowd Types

There are four different types of crowds.

1. Casual Crowd

This crowd probably formed as a casual crowd. That person holding the sign and standing on the platform over there probably prompted people to stop and listen. Casual crowds are loosely organized and emerge spontaneously. The people forming the crowd have very little interaction at first and usually are not familiar with each other.

2. Conventional Crowd

Conventional crowds result from more deliberate planning with norms that are defined and acted upon according to the situation. See, this crowd is starting to form a circle around the man on the platform. They have decided that this is the appropriate action to take.

3. Expressive Crowds

Expressive crowds form around an event that has an emotional appeal. It seems the man on the platform is talking about the recent tax hike that the city council approved. That may be why this crowd has become engaged and is growing.

4. Acting Crowd

An acting crowd refers to a crowd where the members are actively and enthusiastically involved in doing something that is directly related to their goal. This crowd is now chanting loudly, 'Lower our taxes now!'

As we have seen, crowds can change types.

The Mob

When an acting crowd starts to engage in destructive and sometimes violent behavior, they become a mob. A mob is a crowd that is easily persuaded to take aggressive or violent action in order to gain attention or solve their problem. Mobs are dangerous because they often lead to behavior that an individual would not normally engage in and cause a lot of damage to physical property and others. We better get out of here. It looks like this crowd has turned into an angry mob!

Another example of a famous mob is when Boston beat Vancouver in the 2011 Stanley Cup championship. The disappointed fans turned on the city and lit cars on fire, busted storefront windows, and caused a lot of destruction.

The Riot

The difference between a mob and a riot is nuanced. A riot is a type of crowd that is not as spontaneously formed as a mob but involves larger numbers of people and lasts longer. The concern of the group is more widely known and defined.

For example, the Chicago riot of 1968 illustrates how a small crowd engaged in violence after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., confined to a neighborhood on the West side, grew into a riot to consume 28 blocks of Chicago. Ten thousand police were sent in to disperse the riot, 11 people were killed, and over 100 fires had been set.

Lesson Summary

So, in conclusion, collective behavior is when events and social processes emerge but lack structure or organization. These are spontaneous in nature and are often short-lived. Collective behavior includes crowds, mobs, and riots.

Crowds are a group of people who share a common concern in close proximity of each other. Behavior for the people in the crowd is not defined, but the members of the crowd often feel something should be done immediately.

There are different types of crowds. Casual crowds are loosely organized and emerge spontaneously. Conventional crowds result from more deliberate planning with norms that are defined and acted upon according to the situation. Expressive crowds rally around a concern that is emotionally charged, while an acting crowd enthusiastically engages in activities directly related to addressing the concern of the group.

Crowds can quickly change types, and they often turn into mobs. Mobs are crowds in which the members are quick to take action and engage in behavior, sometimes violent, that they would not usually engage in. Riots have larger numbers of people and often last longer than crowds or mobs.

Types of Mass Behavior: Definitions & Examples

Mass behavior is a type of social behavior. There are many different types of mass behavior. In this lesson, we will define and describe mass hysteria, rumors, gossip, fads, and fashions as examples of mass behavior.

Mass Behavior

Mass behavior is a type of social behavior and is defined as collective behavior among people who are spatially dispersed from one another. Collective behavior describes the actions, thoughts, and feelings of relatively temporary and unstructured groups of people. In contrast, a social movement is a large, ongoing group of people engaged in an organized behavior designed to bring about or resist change in society.

There are many different forms of mass behavior. For example, mass hysteria, rumors, gossip, fads, and fashions are all examples of mass behavior. In this lesson, we will define and describe these examples of mass behavior.

Mass Hysteria

Mass hysteria is a common term used to describe a situation in which various people all suffer from similar hysterical symptoms. Hysteria is now viewed as a psychiatric disorder consisting of signs and symptoms of illnesses with no organic basis. Mass hysteria is also known as collective hysteria, epidemic hysteria, or mass psychogenic illness.

An example of mass hysteria occurred in 1944, when a woman in Illinois smelled something odd outside her window, felt her throat and lips were burning, and suddenly couldn't move her legs. After calling the police, her symptoms went away. While looking for the source of the gas, her husband observed someone outside the house - a possible instigator of the 'gas attack.' After gossip and the local newspaper spread the news of the event, many other people in the small town developed similar symptoms. No gas or evidence of any kind was ever found.

Rumors

Rumors are unsubstantiated information about a subject that is spread informally. A rumor is typically a piece of information or story that has not been verified, meaning that the person telling it doesn't know if it's true or false.

Slander is a rumor about a person that is spread in order to purposefully cause pain or damage. When slander is written down (in text, Facebook, tweeting, email, etc.) it's called libel. There are many celebrities currently suing the tabloid magazines for printing damaging rumors that were not true.

Gossip

In general, gossip can be defined as a private conversation between two people about someone else who is not around. The information they are discussing is represented as factual even though the truth may not have been confirmed. Gossip also tends to be spoken by people about someone they know, not celebrities or historical figures. Another common aspect is that the speaker assumes a morally superior attitude in body language and tone. A final common trait is that people compare themselves to the target of the gossip and find themselves better off.

Fads

Fads are a form of collective behavior when large numbers of people enthusiastically embrace some activity or object for a short period of time. Examples of fads include music preferences, dance styles, and types of slang speech. Fad objects are such things as the hula hoop, styles of dress, or the Rubik's Cube.

A fad, by definition, is a short-term event. Fads are often confused with trends; however, they are not the same thing. The major difference between a fad and a trend is duration. A fad product may be something like the beepers of the late 1980s, which enjoyed a few years of popularity, but as technology advanced, the use of the beeper disappeared just as quickly as it appeared.

On the other hand, the use of the cell phones of the 1990s may have started as a fad but quickly developed into a growing trend that continues today.

Fashion

Fashion is a term commonly used to describe a style of clothing. A fashion usually remains popular for about 1-3 years and then is replaced by yet another fashion. In any era, fashion is a reflection of the times and what is going on socially and economically.

The 1920s represented a time of tremendous social change and economic prosperity. For example, women had just won the right to vote with the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, and after World War I the entire country was booming economically. There was a sense of liberation in American society, which was reflected in the fashion of the time. For instance, women's fashion broke away from the Victorian style of wearing long dresses and corsets. Instead, they wore slinky knee-length dresses that exposed their legs and their arms.

Lesson Summary

In this lesson we covered mass hysteria, rumors, gossip, fads, and fashions, which are all examples of mass behavior. It is important to keep in mind that mass behavior is a type of social behavior that many people participate in. The people participating in the mass behavior do not need to be in close proximity to one another or even know each other in order for them to engage in this type of social behavior.

Social Movement: Theories and Motives

In this lesson, we will define what social movements are and discuss why they develop. We'll cover the deprivation theory, the mass society theory and the structure strain theory, which are three theories that sociologists use to explain social movements.

Social Movement

A social movement is an organized effort by a large number of people to bring about or impede social change. Although social movements differ in size, they are all essentially collective. That is, they result from the coming together of people whose relationships are not defined by rules or procedures but who merely share a common outlook on society.

Sociologists have looked at social movements and offered several theories to explain how they develop. Three of those theories - deprivation theory, mass society theory and structure strain theory - will be discussed in this lesson.

Deprivation Theory

Deprivation theory was first described by Robert Merton and states that social movements arise among people who feel deprived. According to this approach, when people compare themselves to others, they may feel that they are at a disadvantage. They join social movements with the hope of ending their grievances. This sense of having less than other people (money, justice, status or privilege), also known as deprivation, is the basis for the social movement. According to this theory, this comparison, which results in a sense of injustice, is the key to the start of the social movement.

Women wanting equal rights is an example of deprivation theory. Women were seen as second-class citizens who had a social status lower than men's. For example, women were expected to restrict their interests to home and the family. Women were not encouraged to obtain a college education or pursue a career. In addition, women did not have the right to own their own property, keep their own wages or sign a contract. All women were also denied the right to vote.

Although the women's rights movement focused mainly on the right to vote, it brought about other changes for equality as well. For instance, women's access to higher education expanded, and as a result, females began to enter traditionally male professions such as authors, doctors, lawyers and ministers.

Mass Society Theory

A mass society is a society in which prosperity and bureaucracy have weakened traditional social ties. Mass-society theory was first developed by the political sociologist William Kornhauser. In his theory, Dr. Kornhauser suggests that people who feel isolated and insignificant within a society are attracted to social movements. Social movements, according to this theory, are influenced by the media, and they provide a sense of empowerment and belonging that the movement members would otherwise not have. The key components in this theory are:

- The media are a powerful force within society that can subvert essential norms and values and thus, undermine social order
- The media are able to directly influence the minds of average people
- Once people's thinking is transformed by media, long-term consequences are likely to result

Social Movement Stages: Emergence, Coalescence, Bureaucratization & Decline

Although social movements around the world differ from each other in many ways, they all generally go through a life cycle marked by the progressive stages of emergence, coalescence, bureaucratization, and decline. In this lesson we will discuss the four stages of social movements.

Social Movements

Have you ever been asked to tweet, friend, like, or donate online for a cause? Perhaps you have 'liked' a local nonprofit on Facebook, prompted by one of your friends liking it, too. Nowadays social movements are woven throughout our social media activities. Although many of the past and present social movements around the world differ from each other in many ways, they all generally go through a life cycle marked by the progressive stages of emergence, coalescence, bureaucratization, and decline. In this lesson, we will discuss the four stages of social movements.

A social movement is not necessarily a political party or interest group, nor is it a mass [fad](#) or trend. Instead they are somewhere in between. They are defined as a group of people with a common ideology who try together to achieve certain general goals. Some characteristics of social movements are that they are involved in conflicts with clearly identified opponents and they share a collective identity. Their goals can either be aimed at a specific policy or be more broadly aimed at cultural change.

Stage 1: Emergence

Social movements start when people realize that there is a specific problem in their society that they want to address. This realization can come from the dissatisfaction people feel or information and knowledge they get about a specific issue. At the first stage, the social movement defines the problem it is going to address.

The first stage of the social movement is known as emergence. Within this stage, social movements are very preliminary and there is little to no organization. Potential movement participants may be unhappy with some policy or some social condition, but they have not yet taken any action in order to redress their grievances, or if they have, it is most likely individual action rather than collective action. For example, a person may comment to family that he or she is dissatisfied with a particular issue.

Stage 2: Coalescence

Often, social unrest or discontent passes without any organizing or wide-spread mobilization. For example, people in a community may complain to each other about a general injustice, but they do not come together to act on those complaints and the social movement does not progress to the second stage.

The second stage of the social movement life cycle is known as coalescence. Stage two is characterized by a more clearly defined sense of discontent. It is no longer just a general sense of unease, but now a sense of what the unease is about and who or what is responsible. This is the stage when the social movement and the issues it focuses on become known to the public. At this stage, a social movement develops its plan of action, recruits members, holds protest marches, forms networks, and gets resources. Most importantly, this is the stage at which the movement becomes more than just random, discontented individuals; at this point, they are now organized and strategic in their outlook.

Stage 3: Bureaucratization

The third stage of the social movement life cycle is known as bureaucratization. As a movement grows, it often tends to become bureaucratized, and paid leaders and paid staff replace the volunteers that began the movement. It also means that clear lines of authority develop. More attention is also devoted to fundraising

At the same time, if movements do not bureaucratize to at least some degree, they may lose their focus and not have enough money to keep on going. Many social movements fail to bureaucratize and, in this way, end up fizzling out because it is difficult for members to sustain the emotional excitement of the first two stages and because continued mobilization becomes too demanding for participants.

The gay rights movement is an example of a movement that has passed through this stage. The gay rights movement moved from agitation and demonstrations to having many formal organizations that now work toward the goals of the gay rights movement. Some of these organizations include the Human Rights Campaign and the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Discrimination (GLAAD). If they did not form these bureaucratic organizations, many movements would have most likely faded away and their demands would have gone unmet.



The gay rights movement has moved into the bureaucratization stage

Stage 4: Decline

The fourth stage of the social movement life cycle is known as decline. Social movements eventually decline for one or more reasons. For example, leaders may not run things properly, or there might be conflicts inside the organization. However, sometimes they achieve their goals and naturally cease to exist because there is no reason to continue. For example, the abolitionist movement became irrelevant with the passing of the Thirteenth Amendment ending slavery.

There are several other general reasons why social movements decline. One is that popular support for their goals begins to erode. This can happen because the public may perceive that enough has been done already to meet the grievances of the members of the movement or that the movement has gone too far, asking too much of other Americans. Moreover, the public may simply get bored and move on to other issues. Another reason movements fade is that activists may become weary of the struggle.

Lesson Summary

Social movements tend to happen when a significant number of people come to define their own troubles and problems, not just in personal terms but in more general social terms, believing that there is a common cause for all of their troubles and that the government can be moved into action on their behalf. This combination of circumstances can be difficult to organize and sustain.

Social movements have a life cycle: they are created (stage 1: emergence), they grow (stage 2: coalescence), they achieve successes or failures (stage 3: bureaucratization), and eventually, they dissolve and cease to exist (stage 4: decline).

Social Movement Definitions: Alternative, Redemptive, Reformatory & Revolutionary

Social movements can occur at the individual level or the societal level and can advocate for either minor or radical changes. This lesson will cover four kinds of social movements: alternative, redemptive, reformatory, and revolutionary.

Social Movement

A social movement is a large group of people who are organized to promote or resist some social change. A social movement is typically based upon two factors - first, whom the movement is trying to change, and second, how much change a movement is advocating. Social movements can occur at the individual level or at the societal level, and they can advocate for either minor or radical changes.

In 1966, cultural anthropologist David F. Aberle identified four kinds of social movements: alternative, redemptive, reformatory, and revolutionary. In this lesson, we will discuss these social movements in terms of promoting social change.

Alternative Social Movements

Alternative movements are do-it-yourself efforts that seek to change some aspects of an individual's behavior.



AT&T's 'It Can Wait' public awareness campaign is an example of an alternative social movement. It is focused on a simple message: no text is worth dying for. This is a nationwide movement that has tremendous support.

The It Can Wait campaign is an example of an alternative social movement

Redemptive Social Movement

A redemptive social movement is one that seeks total personal transformation and is typically religious in nature. The spread of Christianity is a prime example of a redemptive social movement.

Missionaries have spread Christianity since the days of the Roman Empire. By the time Rome fell in 476 CE, much of Europe was Christian. Missionaries from the Byzantine Empire brought Orthodox Christianity to Russia. In Asia, medieval missionaries made converts as far away as India and China. With the founding of America, Christianity began to spread beyond Europe and Asia. Among the early missionaries were Catholics who journeyed to Central and [South America](#) seeking to convert native peoples.

During the period between about 1500 and 1750, Christianity became the first religion to spread around the world, and by the 1900s, Christianity had spread to every continent on the globe. Today the Christian missionary work continues.

Reformative Social Movement

Reformative social movement is a social movement that seeks to change only some specific aspects of how society functions.

The movement to obtain marriage rights and benefits for same-sex couples is an example of a reformative social movement. This movement began in the 1970s but became more prominent in American politics in 1993 when the Hawaiian Supreme Court declared the state's prohibition to be unconstitutional in *Baehr v. Lewin*. During the 21st century, public support for legalizing same-sex marriage has grown considerably, and various national polls conducted since 2011 show that a majority of Americans support same-sex marriage.



The movement for marriage equality is a reformative social movement

Revolutionary Social Movement

Revolutionary social movements seek to replace the existing social order through radical change.

The social and political upheaval that occurred in France between 1789 and 1799 is an example of a revolutionary social movement. Amidst a financial crisis, the common people of France were increasingly angered by the incompetency of King Louis XVI. This resentment, coupled with growing Enlightenment ideas, fueled the revolutionary social movement, and the French Revolution began.



The incompetency of Louis XVI helped fuel a revolutionary social movement in France

Lesson Summary

The four types of social movements discussed in this lesson were alternative, redemptive, reformative, and revolutionary. Alternative social movements are at the individual level and advocate for minor change. Redemptive social movements are at the individual level and advocate for radical changes. Reformative social movements occur at a broader group or societal level and advocate for minor changes. Revolutionary social movements occur at a broader group or societal level and advocate for radical changes.

During this time period, the monarchy that had ruled France for centuries collapsed within three years. French society underwent transformation as feudal, aristocratic, and religious privileges evaporated under the sustained assault from political groups, masses in the streets, and peasants in the countryside. Old ideas and traditions and hierarchy of monarchy, aristocracy, and religious authority were abruptly overthrown by new Enlightenment principles of equality, citizenship, and inalienable rights.