

The collective behavior and social movements

Mr.Ass. Drita Mehmedi
State University of Tetova – SUT, Faculty of Philosophy
dritamehmedi@gmail.com ; Phone: 00 389 71 622 589

ABSTRACT

Man comes to life as a single individual, but from birth to death, he spends his life as a member of society. Being part of that society, he realizes various roles during his life through these roles he enters into relation with other people and with different social groups. Man spends life in the context of a group, so many sociologists claim that the man from the beginning of his life has some "group instincts" that do seek to be associated with a group, tend to belong to a group and be welcomed by that group.

The society is grouped according to its needs and collective interests, these results establishment of the of the various forms of social grouping, among which we can mention: the crowd, groups of interest, political parties, various social movements (as revolutionary, reformist or even religious) which are established in order to carry forward various social processes depending on the specific needs of the society.

Individual and group report is reciprocal, but the impact on the individual group is greater because the individual merges against majority. In this case comes out collective behavior which affects the individual as part of the social group, and the group itself and other members in it. The collective behavior, as a concept, for the first time was mentioned by Robert Park, referring to social processes and events which do not reflect existing social structure (laws, conventions and institutions), but which emerge in a spontaneous way. The collective behavior can be defined as an action which is neither conformable (in which the actors follow the prevailing norms) nor deviant (in which the actors violate these norms). As a third form of action the collective behavior, occurs when norms are missing or they are unclear, or when they contradict one another. This type of behavior is often manifested through panic, fear, insecurity, etc.

The definition of collective behavior

Collective behavior is behavior that is not governed by the rules and everyday expectations that give direction to the social behavior, which does not reflect the social structure (laws, conventions and institutions), and which occurs spontaneously. Most sociologists described it as "an engine of social change", others call it as a reason of major revolutions. When it comes to collective behavior we have to understand that it represents a "collective mentality" that has the power to change the Individual behavior. The individual melts when it's faced with crowd and his behavior depends on the general behavior that is created.¹

One of the earliest studies on the crowd was Gustav Le Bon's study, titled "Crowd", published in 1895. From his perspective, the behavior of people gripped in the collective emotion of the crowd differs significantly from their actions in smaller groups. Under the influence of a focused crowd individuals are able to perform acts of barbarism or heroism, which in other cases they won't even think about them.²

These behaviors has been presented in revolutionary crowds which do not take into account that they will suffer loss, but are guided by the idea of realizing their collective purpose and in all these cases as a leader appears an individual (or several individuals) who have the ability for manipulating the majority, this is also how different religions in the world has been spread.

According to Le Bon when people take part in collective irritation generated by the crowds, they temporarily lose some of the key skills of reasoning that occur in everyday life. In such cases people become withdrawn and are easily manipulated by demagogues calls or leaders of the crowd. Under the influence of the crowd individuals react in "primitive" manner, says Le Bon, who sometimes radically has expressed his opinion to the crowd that says that: "An isolated person can be civilized, in crowd he is Barbarian – that means a creature that is acting instinctively. He owns spontaneity, violence, ferocity, and also enthusiasm and heroism as primitive human. "³

¹ Annual Editions, Personal Growth and behavior, 99/00, pag.20

² Giddens, Anthony, Sociologjia, Cabej, Tirana, 2002, pag. 589

³ Ibd, pag. 589

Theories of collective behavior

Adhesive Social Theory - is also referred to as social infection theory as it is based on the premise of turning the individual to the crowd. As part of the crowd man becomes merged into that group and he also changes his behavior, even showing irrational behavior. Individuals in a crowd imitate the behavior of other people so that at the end, all members are engaged in the same behavior. This circular reaction eliminates individual differences, and also logic capacity for original thinking. Regarding this theory Le Bon states that crowds perform a kind of hypnosis on the individual and makes him to abandon personal responsibility and he's surrounded by adhesive emotions of the crowd. However, critics argue that "collective mind" is not documented by systematic studies. Moreover, although the collective behavior can involve strong emotions, such feelings are not necessarily unreasonable in some cases their actions are rational.

Emergency Theory - Norm - shows the collectivity that is composed of different people who have different orientations and desires and express them in various ways and forms. In this case people make the rules as they want to operate. Adequate example to explain this theory may be the people who break a shop with a robbery aim, in that moment their purpose can be also joined by another group and together to damage, steal private property.

Structural Theory - author of this theory is Neil Smeler who considers that collective behavior depends on the structure of a social group. Structural tensions according to Smeler may come as a result of not having structural adjustment and the spreading of general beliefs within the crowd. For example revolutionary movements are based on ideas that show why there is inequality and how it can be mitigated through political struggle.⁴ The Theory of Smeler is counted as the general theory because it gives great importance to "generalized beliefs" and social values through different periods of time.⁵

⁴ Giddens, Anthony, Sociologjia, Cabej, Tirana, 2002, pag. 602

⁵ Pajaziti, Ali, Fjalor I sociologjisë, Logos, Skopje, 2009, pag. 576

Forms of social groupings

The crowd - is a social category that is composed of people who are affected by the same motive that defines and characterizes them; large group of people who are characterized by the dominance of the unconscious awareness of their joint actions. In fact, the crowd is a large number of unspecified persons who act alike.⁶

In the broadest sense, the term crowd implies to a batch of individuals from whatever nation, profession or gender, without regarding the moment that has joined them, so it is a pile that was converted into the slot where its members will not act according to their individual desire, but by extreme emotions and instincts.

An individual can endure the contradictions and controversies but the crowd never. In public meetings even the smallest objection by someone who is orator in the crowd immediately causes spiteful calls and lashing out loud, after which follow the actions and Oratory eviction if he insists on his statements. If there weren't forces of order to avoid the violent actions of the crowd, then the life of those who come against could be jeopardized.

- *Random crowds* - are people grouped at random, without any particular role and without purpose. A good example of this kind of crowd are people at the mall, at the market, on the road...
- *Conventional Crowds* - a number of people who are joined for a particular purpose and act in accordance with social norms that remain within the scope of normal behavior. Such are: followers of a show in the theater, participants in a concert, a sporting event.
- *Expressive Crowds* -gather, in order to experience strong emotions, for example, in a celebration or funeral celebrities.
- *Action Crowds* – are comprised of excited people, explosive who are involved in the different riots. Such crowds are destructive, they do not recognize the authority at all. E.g. social revolutionary crowds.

⁶ Pajaziti, Ali, Fjalor I sociologjisë, Logos, Shkup, 2009, pag. 754

Types of collective behavior

Riots - present violent form of collective behavior. It is not focused on a specific target, it is often indeterminate. Riots cause damage to material property more than to mass. They appear due to feelings of inferiority that a group can cause to another group. An important role in organizing the riots has the media which distribute various manuals and information about their organization. Riots may include: of police, ethnic, religious, of student, etc. In those cases where riots have taken greater resonance has happened to overthrow a government or political system, since the minority government can not resist the pressure of majority. History of the United States is a history of riots and especially riots committed by whites against minorities.⁷

Panic - it's kind of collective behavior which manifests itself in different ways depending on the circumstances. Panic often is defined as an episode of alarm, fear, distraction Triggering the measure, which leads to the loss of social balance. In a crowded theater is forbidden to call "fire"? Because this will probably cause a panic, that is, or if there is a fire really have no patience to prove, they will start running for the exit quite possibly in a disorganized and chaotic manner that will increase the risk injuries. When a panic happened in Mecca (Islam's holy site usually filled with pilgrims) in 1990, nearly 1,500 people died. Crowds can engage in panic despite the threat, whether real or imagined. Panic is kind of collective behavior which does not spread its selection, by panic can be affected everyone despite the education, faith, his attitude. Le Bon says that as "ignorant and scientist belong to the crowd, they are equally deprived by the ability to act."⁸

Rumors - represent unchecked words that pass from one individual to another, and such as circulate and disseminated in society. They can be personal or collective, in some cases it is enough to spread negative rumors about a certain person and by default he would be unacceptable for the whole society. In the case of collective rumors , it happens to be spread something exclusively unreal about a particular community and to make suspicious their participation in certain countries, we can mention the example of falsehoods spread about the

⁷ Kroehler, Hughes, Zanden, Vander, Sociology, Boston, 1999, pag. 453

⁸ Le Bon, Gustav, Psikologjia e popujve dhe e turmave, Fan Noli, Tiranë, pag. 157

believers of Islam, and their labeling , e.g. if a Muslim is in the plane then all passengers on the plane would worry about the fact that whether or not he is a terrorist.

Rumors spread in an uncertain environment where information is insufficient. Despite the damage that it can cause, it is difficult a rumor to disappear because is not possible to penetrate to every individual and erase what has already been heard once.

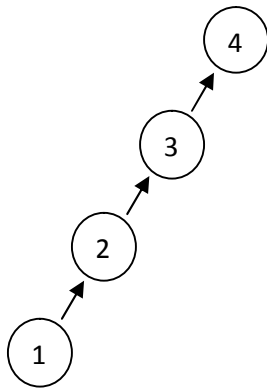


Fig.1

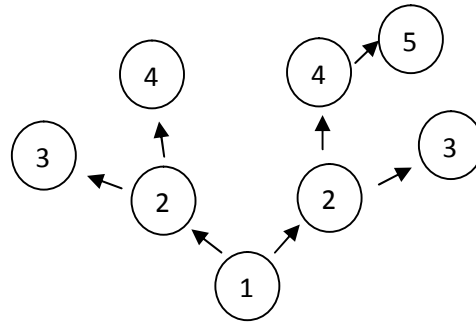


Fig. 2

Figures show how does the rumors are spread, so they spread in a consecutive manner and in a general way. It is sufficient that an individual knows any information so then it's easy to spread it.

Mass hysteria - comes to expression in those moments when the measure lacks rationality and they fall prey of the emotions. It appears less often among society, but when that it is shown , it has great impact and shakes the stability of society. Such an occasion worth noting was the news broadcasted about the end of the World in December of 2012, which story made people leave their homes and take measures for their safety, while the rest who were weaker emotionally put themselves in the act of suicide because they could not accept the end of the world. The collectivities are more likely to react emotionally and in irrational manner, when there is a general lack of information about a phenomenon. Mass hysteria in the crowd easily appears as

the crowd is not only impulsive but also unsustainable.⁹ This creates a state of anxiety, where individuals are more likely to get engaged in mass hysteria .

HOW TO SOCIAL MOVEMENTS?

Above we spoke about the crowd, which is a kind of social grouping that reacts depending of external or internal stakeholders, but never having a predetermined purpose. For unlike the crowds in society, there are also other forms of organized social groups that have a defined purpose and their behavior depends on the purpose exactly. It is about social movements. Social movements are deliberate efforts of a group in society to create new institutions or reform existing ones. They are usually organized to promote ideas, new forms of life, or to resist a change in the level of society. Social movements can be defined as a collective effort to achieve common interests or achieve a common goal through collective action outside the sphere of established institutions.¹⁰

For the classification of social movements has been proposed different ways. More appropriate classification is David Abelar, which distinguishes four kinds of social movement.

- **Transformative movements**

Type of change - total / radical

Target group - society

Their aims are "inaccessible" changes in society and where they are part. Changes that provide their members are radical, the widely spread and often they try to reach them even with violence. Such movements are *revolutionary or radical religious* ones. These movements are guided by the idea perhaps utopian. Revolutionary movements are more extreme and they can openly advocate radical change which is the violent overthrow of the existing regime and the reorganization of society. Example Bolshevik Revolution (the left) in Russia in 1917 was led by revolutionary groups, Fidel Castro took power in Cuba through a revolution. For religious

⁹ Le Bon, Gustav, Psikologjia e popujve dhe e turmave, Fan Noli, Tirana, pag. 154

¹⁰ Giddens, Anthony, Sociologjia, Cabej, Tirana, 2002, pag. 600

movements, it is accepted that their members have irrational behavior, and it is not dealing with the real world of thought or analysis, to try to experience tremendous mood.¹¹

- **Reform movements**

Type of change - partial / limited

Target group - society

Have more limited goals and aspire to change only some aspects of social existing order. They deal with different aspects of inequality or injustice. Examples of this are *the feminist movement*, *the movement for children's rights*, etc. which commit protecting the rights of certain people. The purpose of these movements is to convince society that human rights are universal character and as such belong to everyone without distinction.¹²

- **Alternative Social Movements**

Type of change - partial / limited

Target groups - individual

They are types of individual movements which aim is changing individual habits or thoughts. These movements are less threatening to the power and form of government as these amounts do not tend to change the system, but they focus on only one social group and try to change their collective behavior. For example, focus on children or adolescents in order to protect them from deviant behavior.

The type of social movements	Target group	Type of change
Transformational	Society	Total / Radical

¹¹ Pajaziti, Ali, Fjalor I sociologjisë, Logos, Skopje, 2009, pag. 358

¹² Canivez, Patrice, Të edukohet qytetari, Fryma, Dukagjin, 2004, pag. 123

Reformer	Society	Partial/ Limiting
Alternative	Individual	partial / Limiting

Table 1.

The importance of social movements

Social movements represent the mutual interest for the whole society, as they are the bearers of many social processes, they are as much a feature present in the modern world that are official bureaucratic organizations, that they often oppose. The study of the nature and their impact forms an area of great interest in sociology.

If we look back at the history of mankind, there is no doubt that social movements have played a major role in shaping democratic societies, as they have the power to influence the institutions and



Illustrative Image

culture of a country, in order to change it. It should be noted monarchist systems that have multiple cease as a result of a revolution, many social marginalized groups who have earned their rights as a result of a citizen initiativeetc.

Conclusion

Based on the above definitions we can conclude that collective behavior is unplanned and spontaneous, whereas social movements are planned strategy. Social movements are related to collective behavior in two aspects. Initially social movements should encourage a desperate measure to control and maintain it as the second spontaneous collective behaviors serve as a driving force for mobilizing social movements, social movements are so interrelated with collective behavior and both together cause different reactions in a particular social circle.

There is no doubt that the process of globalization affects the way of creating social movements, but they also affect the promotion of universal human values by advancing women in all social spheres, stopping violence against children, as well as contributing to the elimination to the racial discrimination, ethnic and religious. In sum social movements are driving force of society and the "guardian" of collective behavior.

Literatura

Giddens, Anthony, Sociologjia, Cabej, Tiranë, 2002

Le Bon, Gustav, Psikologjia e popujve dhe e turmave, Fan Noli, Tiranë

Canivez, Patrice, Të edukohet qytetari, Fryma, Dukagjin, 2004

Pajaziti, Ali, Fjalor I sociologjisë, Logos, Shkup, 2009

Brinkerhoff, B. David; White, K. Lynn, Sociology, West Publish Company, 1988

Annual Editions, Personal Growth and behavior, 99/00

Kroehler, Hughes, Zanden, Vander, Sociology, Boston, 1999