
Advanced Introduction to

Social Movements and Political Protests

KARL-DIETER OPP

*Professor Emeritus of Sociology, Department of Sociology,
University of Leipzig, Germany, Visiting Professor,
Department of Sociology, University of Washington, Seattle,
USA*

Elgar Advanced Introductions

 **Edward Elgar**
PUBLISHING

Cheltenham, UK • Northampton, MA, USA

Contents

| | | |
|------------------------------------|--|----------|
| <i>List of figures</i> | ix | |
| <i>About the author</i> | x | |
| <i>Preface and acknowledgments</i> | xi | |
| 1 | Introduction to <i>Social Movements and Political Protests</i> | 1 |
| 1.1 | The analytical approach to the explanation of social movements and political protests | 1 |
| 1.2 | Conceptual clarifications: protest, social movement, and other ambiguous concepts | 4 |
| 1.3 | Discussion | 8 |
| 2 | Social movements and political protests as collective action | 9 |
| 2.1 | The goals-beliefs theory, value expectancy theory, “rationality,” and the explanation of protest | 10 |
| 2.2 | Grievances, public goods preferences, and perceived personal influence as conditions for protest | 18 |
| 2.3 | Social incentives, repression, the perceived obligation to protest, identification, and emotions | 23 |
| 2.4 | How social networks and social media influence protest | 36 |
| 2.5 | The impact of a critical mass on the emergence of protests | 43 |
| 2.6 | Production functions | 47 |
| 2.7 | Rivalness of consumption | 49 |
| 2.8 | Individuals and social structure: connecting the micro and macro level | 50 |

| | | |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 2.9 | Coordinating individual protests: from organization to spontaneous action | 53 |
| 2.10 | An alternative application of the goals-beliefs theory: the “costly abstention theory of protest participation” | 56 |
| 2.11 | Discussion | 59 |
| 3 | Extending the context of protest: political opportunities and societal resources | 61 |
| 3.1 | The political opportunity structure perspective | 62 |
| 3.2 | The resource mobilization perspective | 68 |
| 3.3 | How and why should one distinguish between opportunities and resources? | 73 |
| 3.4 | Discussion | 73 |
| 4 | Extending the motivational basis of protest I: framing, cognitive balance, and the goals-beliefs theory | 75 |
| 4.1 | How “frames” are supposed to influence protests | 75 |
| 4.2 | Alternatives approaches: constructionism or “rationalism”? | 79 |
| 4.3 | How to improve the framing approach: an application of balance theory | 83 |
| 4.4 | Discussion | 87 |
| 5 | Extending the motivational basis of protest II: the identity perspective | 88 |
| 5.1 | The concept of identity | 88 |
| 5.2 | Some propositions about identity and identification from the social movement literature | 90 |
| 5.3 | The major problems of the identity perspective | 93 |
| 5.4 | Identity as a component of the theory of collective action | 95 |
| 5.5 | A multi-stage model of identification and protest | 98 |
| 5.6 | Discussion | 100 |

| | | |
|----------|---|------------|
| 6 | When protests change politics: explaining the behavior of the protest targets | 102 |
| 6.1 | Public choice theory and the explanation of the behavior of democratic regimes | 103 |
| 6.2 | The “cost-assessment approach” of social movement theory | 105 |
| 6.3 | The goals of democratic governments | 107 |
| 6.4 | How democratic governments react to demands of protesters | 108 |
| 6.5 | Beliefs of democratic governments: what is the best response to protesters’ demands? | 109 |
| 6.6 | Explaining government reactions to protests in authoritarian regimes | 112 |
| 6.7 | Some propositions about protest and government reactions from the sociological and political science literature | 116 |
| 6.8 | Discussion | 119 |
| 7 | When protests change protesters and bystanders | 120 |
| 7.1 | What characteristics of individuals could be influenced by what kind of protest participation? | 120 |
| 7.2 | The procedure of explaining the impact of protest participation on incentives and other personal characteristics | 122 |
| 7.3 | The volatility of protest participation: some data | 124 |
| 7.4 | From protest participation to incentives to protest: some mechanisms | 127 |
| 7.5 | Discussion | 131 |
| 8 | How to put all this together: the structural-cognitive model, the Protestant Reformation, the protests against the Russian invasion of the Ukraine, and some guidelines for explaining social movement phenomena | 133 |
| 8.1 | The structural-cognitive model | 134 |
| 8.2 | Two illustrations: the diffusion of the Protestant Reformation and the protests against the Russian invasion of the Ukraine | 136 |

| | | |
|-----|--|-----|
| 8.3 | Some guidelines for explaining social movement phenomena | 149 |
| 8.4 | Discussion | 150 |
| | <i>References</i> | 151 |
| | <i>Index</i> | 171 |

Figures

| | | |
|-----|---|-----|
| 2.1 | Explaining the deterrence and radicalization effect of repression | 27 |
| 2.2 | The inverted u-curve and other relations between repression and protest | 29 |
| 2.3 | The anger-incentives model | 34 |
| 2.4 | Causal interrelationships between incentives | 35 |
| 2.5 | Example of a social network | 37 |
| 2.6 | A visualization of the emergence of a critical mass | 46 |
| 2.7 | Examples of production functions | 48 |
| 2.8 | Explaining collective action by individual and collective properties: a micro-macro model | 51 |
| 2.9 | The role of political entrepreneurs for the emergence of protests | 54 |
| 3.1 | The definition of a political opportunity structure and its effects on protest | 63 |
| 4.1 | Configurations of actors, beliefs, and their relationships | 84 |
| 5.1 | An illustration of the omitted variables bias | 95 |
| 5.2 | Embedding identification as a variable in a multi-stage model with feedback effects | 98 |
| 6.1 | The multi-actor model of protest | 103 |
| 6.2 | Conditions for concessions to movement demands | 110 |
| 7.1 | Explaining protest and its impact on later protest | 122 |
| 7.2 | McAdam's model of explaining long-term activism (McAdam 1989) | 129 |
| 8.1 | The structural-cognitive model | 135 |
| 8.2 | Two cognitive and social structures and their impact on the diffusion of the Protestant Reformation | 140 |
| 8.3 | Conflicting belief systems in the Russian invasion of the Ukraine | 148 |