

[See this page in the course material.](#)

Why summarize the nature and influence of collective behavior and social movements?

There are routine ways that we contribute to the functioning of our society. We follow the laws, we vote, we contact our members of Congress, and we try to get along with one another as best we can. Three hundred years ago, if people wanted something to change, they took matters into their own hands. If they were living in fear of Frankenstein's monster in the castle, they might take up their torches and pitchforks, march up to the castle and make demands until the matter of the monster was settled once and for all.

But sometimes the routine ways we previously shaped society no longer seem adequate to us, so we use other ways to try to change our society for the better, or to prevent changes we do not like. One example of this is Occupy Wall Street, a movement in 2011 that adopted the slogan of "We are the 99%." Protesters gathered first in New York, but then around the country (and globe!) to highlight the economic disparities between the wealthiest 1% and the rest of the population. This type of behavior is known as collective behavior.

In the event we do not like some aspect of our society, we can take action to try to facilitate some type of change. However, collective behavior takes more than just one person. A good example of this is how Cindy Lightner, a mother whose daughter had been killed by a drunk driver, founded the group MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Drivers) to encourage people to think about possible consequences before they drink and drive. She started with only a few people helping her draw attention to this issue, but the organization quickly expanded and has been responsible for changing laws related to drinking and driving in all 50 states.^[1]

Today, social movements are typically less violent than they may have been hundreds of years ago when villagers took up torches and pitchforks, but now social movements can spread rapidly through social media and become global issues. Instead of small-scale, local activism, some social movements may be international in scope. All of this is made possible through technology and the increase in our global interconnectedness.

-
1. MADD founder's daughter killed by drunk driver (2009). History.com. Retrieved from <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/madd-founders-daughter-killed-by-drunk-driver>

CC licensed content, Original

- Module introduction. **Authored by:** Cathy Matresse and Lumen Learning. **Provided by:** Lumen Learning. **License:** [CC BY: Attribution](#)
- Modification, adaptation, and original content. **Authored by:** Rebecca Vonderhaar for Lumen Learning. **Provided by:** Lumen Learning. **License:** [CC BY: Attribution](#)

</div