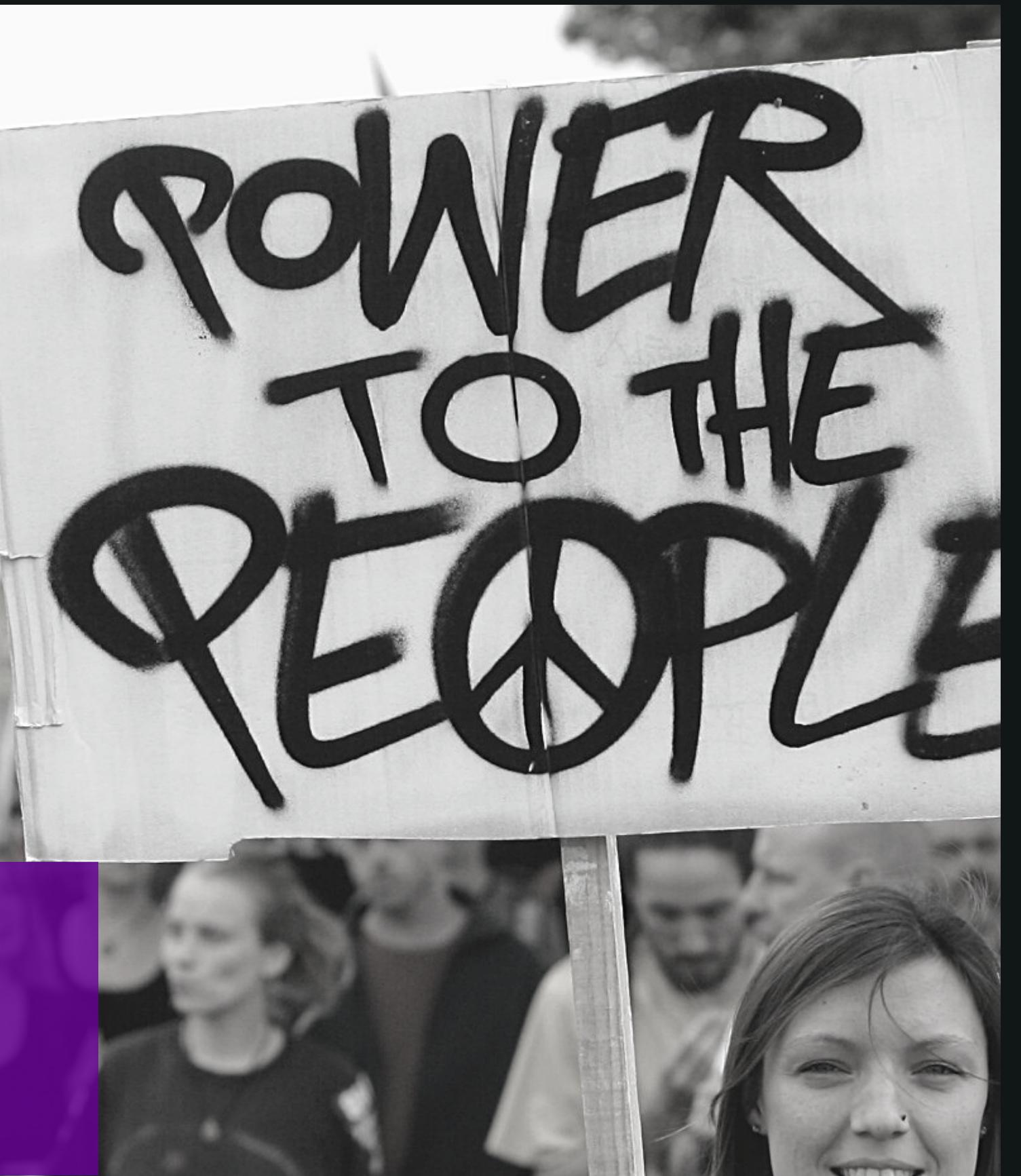


actor analysis ii:

Social Movements





characterising social movements

common mistakes

- treating movements as monoliths
- characterising all movements in the same way

how to get nuanced

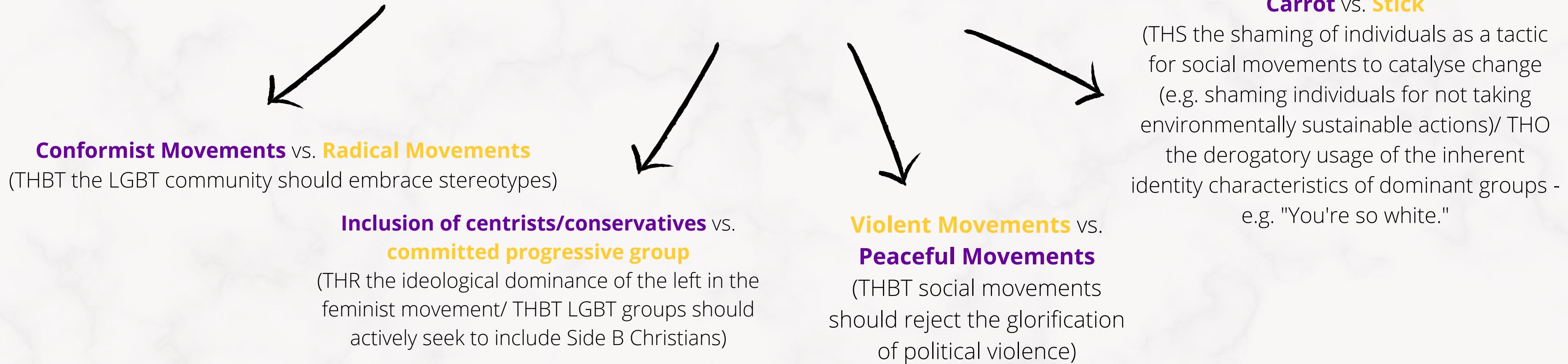
- consider movements as **made out of people** - different groups within them
 - in terms of the level of commitment (leadership, central organisation, core base, sympathisers)
 - in terms of ideology (e.g. radical subgroups, different types of feminism)
 - in terms of capital and resources (e.g. social privilege, political influence and money)
- consider different positions movements have **within the society**
 - fringe groups, with very few sympathisers
 - very large, mainstream movements - most people in favour
- consider different ways in which movements are **organised**
 - is there a concrete leader/ leading organisation/ a hierarchy?
 - is it a global or a local movement?



common clashes

most social movement debates boil down into one common clash:

broad, inclusive, but less committed movement x small, but committed and ideologically pure movement



case construction

- find out whether the motion is centred around the broad and inclusive vs. small and committed clash
- find out which side of the clash you are defending
- find mechanisms unique to the motion which get you to the impact of either broad and inclusive or small and committed
 - e.g. THBT the LGBT community should embrace stereotypes - how embracing stereotypes strengthens the core group (**S&C**)/ how more conformist strategies lead to more buy-in (**B&I**)
- impact the benefits/harms of your side of the clash
- weigh it up against the benefits/harms of the other side of the clash



how to defend **broad & inclusive** X how to defend **small & committed**

breakout room 1

- what would be the benefits of a movement with a large, heterogenous support base, on the expense of commitment?
- how would you try to weigh up these benefits against the benefits of a much smaller, but committed movement?



breakout room 2

- what would be the benefits of a movement with a committed, ideologically homogenous support base, on the expense of size?
- how would you try to weigh up these benefits against the benefits of a much bigger, but less committed movement?





how to defend **broad & inclusive** X how to defend **small & committed**

- less broad societal opposition (e.g. less microaggressions, more explicit/ tacit support for AA policies etc.)
- becomes an electoral issue for politicians
- even small help adds up - e.g. a lot of people donating a small amount of money → big overall change

trade-offs and how to weigh up **broad & inclusive**

watered-down message - how to overcome?

- explain why even watered-down message is still very useful (e.g. feminism → general goals such as anti-domestic violence)

more popular support/less backlash BUT less committed members

- explain that less microaggressions more important than legislative change (e.g. a lot of LGBTQ+ stuff)
- explain that legislative change is likely to follow the bottom-up change anyway, but not the other way round
- explain how broader movements are more likely going to attract donations



- better ability to articulate clear goals
- more pressure (e.g. people willing to turn up to protests, lobby, etc.)
- better community ties (e.g. safe spaces)

small & committed

clearly formulated goals - how to weaponise?

- explain why the watered-down version would be completely useless (e.g. 'humane' animal farming, climate change)
- explain why watered-down message alienates the most vulnerable people

less popular support/more backlash BUT more committed members

- explain why backlash is unlikely/non-comparative/harmless anyway
- explain why popular support is useless without immediate legislative change
- explain how only committed members both to commit resources (e.g. donations and time)

how does society engage with social movements?
why do people join social movements?
how can social movements affect change?
arguments in favour and against violence
hierarchical versus horizontal structure



Useful arguments & characterisations



how does society perceive social movements?

where does this matter?

- choices of mobilisation strategies (conformist → negative / radicalising → already positive)
- choices of strategies to affect change (e.g. choosing courts if negative)
- can be used to impact / mitigate backlash arguments

the way society engages with movements / your particular movement can be analysed on two fronts

- **cultural** (what's the current attitude of ordinary people)
 - negative - individuals hold pre-existing beliefs that contradict your message (e.g. feminism emasculating, 'American dream' etc.)
 - apathetic (people are unaware of the issue)
 - already sympathetic (activism/anti-establishment culture, etc.)
- **political opportunity window** (how the system engages with you)
 - closed (authoritarian regimes, threatening base of the state)
 - open (pandering for your votes)

e.g. *THBT contemporary social movements should focus on class differences rather than on identity-based differences (gender, race, religion etc.)*



why do people join social movements?

common mistake: assuming that collective grievance or discontent automatically means mobilisation

- cost/benefit analysis (worth it over the alternative)
- identity construction (want to feel like being a part of something, catharsis, proximity to like-minded social group)
- empathy
- virtue signalling

where does this matter?

- choices of messaging

e.g. *THS the shaming of individuals as a tactic for social movements to catalyse change (e.g. shaming individuals for not taking environmentally sustainable actions, shaming individuals for violating lockdown/quarantine policies)*



how can social movements affect change?

common mistake: always focusing on electoral change and assuming that nothing can be done without it

a few possibilities

- **cultural change** ('winning hearts and minds') **BUT** not important just because a potential voting bloc!
 - less microaggressions / behaviour change
 - further pressure (cancel culture)
- **direct action** (e.g. volunteering)
- **corporations** (requires somewhat less people than politicians)
- **political action**
 - voting bloc
 - forcing politicians out of silence
 - lobbying (not all politicians are lizards, specific constituencies)
 - courts



arguments in favour and against violence

mechanisms on how violence can lead to change:

- can force regimes to surrender (e.g. police force, military likely to desert)
- challenges the state's strongman appearance - 'political opportunity window'
- international media attention - international lobbying etc.
- moderate wings look better → state might want to appease
- catharsis

if the debate is about a specific movement, try to characterise the context in such way that violence seems more/less efficient

Characterisation in favour of violence

describe the context within which the movement operates:

- stable membership base which is unlikely to get alienated/allies actually not needed
- state already lacks legitimacy, so police/army likely to desert
- the population would otherwise be apathetic because the state has too much control
- there is a lack of other options (easy framing: violence usually the last resort)

examples: revolutionary movements (Arab Spring, etc.)

mechanisms how peaceful protests lead to change/ violence prevents it:

- violence alienates many people (because too radical but also because access issues - e.g. women, elderly, children, etc.) → **broad and inclusive**
- can get higher sympathy from police forces/military
- violence encourages collective punishment (use of force, stricter assembly laws, etc.)
- easier for state to legitimise excessive use of force (e.g. internationally)

if the debate is about a specific movement, try to characterise the context in such way that violence seems more/less efficient

Characterisation against violence

describe the context within which the movement operates:

- membership base is unstable, could be easily alienated and allies are needed
- the state is generally seen as legitimate and so would be supported in e.g. crackdowns
- there are many other potential avenues of change

examples: extinction rebellion etc.



hierarchical versus horizontal structure

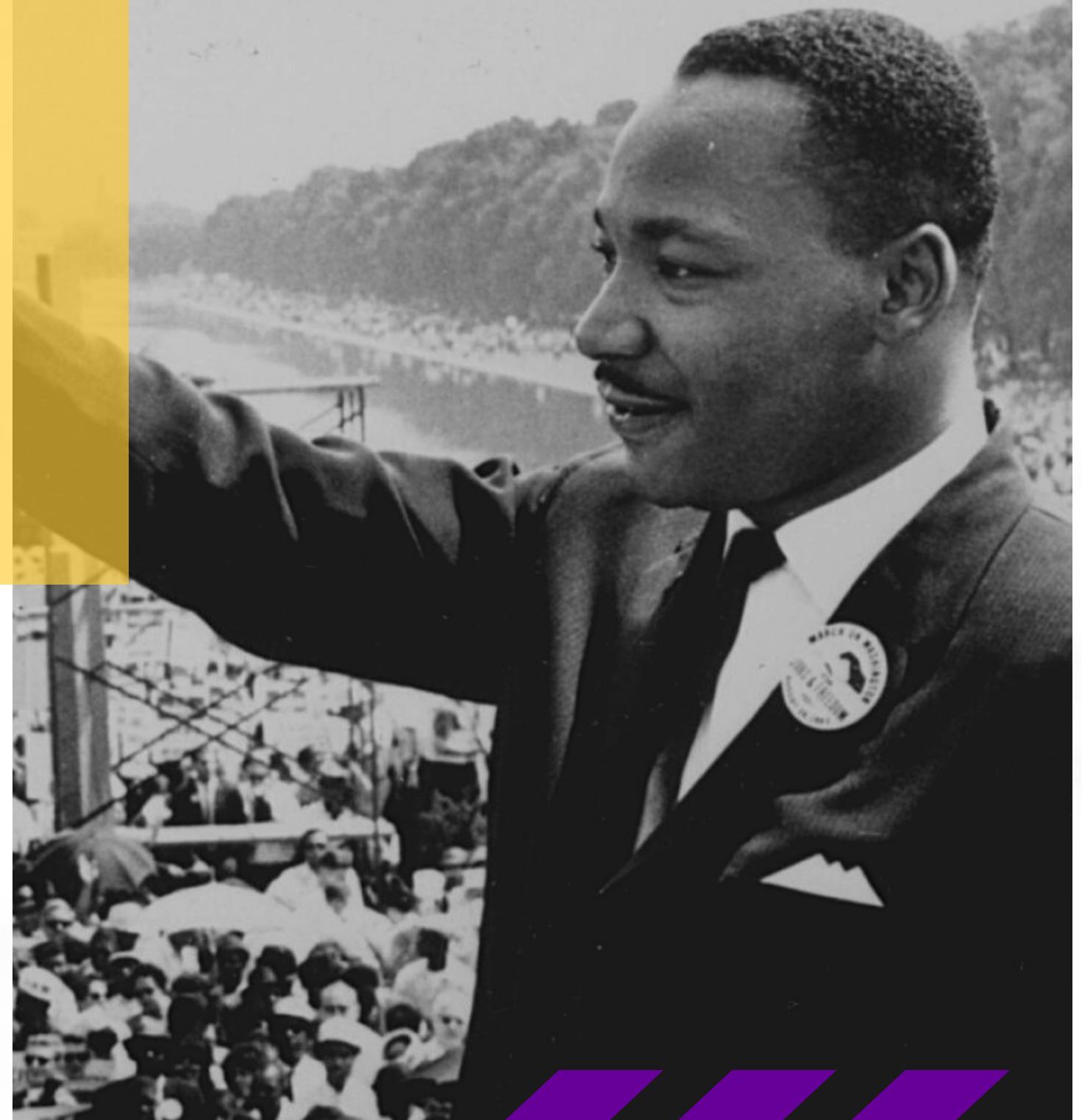
- strategic choice in and of itself - e.g. signalling effect

In favour of concrete leader & hierarchical

- easier to put forward a clear coherent message (e.g. able to speak against violent subgroups etc.)
- easier to be represented - e.g. can establish personal connections with politicians, lobby, access to media
- easier to mobilise through a hierarchy
- respectability politics - more likely to receive funding if appear 'professional'
- economies of scale - know-how, resources, etc. sharing across

In favour of leaderless & decentralised

- leader in risk of being easily decapitated, co-opted, etc.
- decentralised movements can more effectively represent specific local needs
 - who tends to be on the top of hierarchies (esp. if respectability politics?)
- decentralised movements often appeal to the appetite for 'against the system' among activists



- social movement debates are very predictable and almost always centred around **the same core clash** → take advantage of this and run the stocky mechanisms well
 - **characterisations matter** and most top room debates will be won on them → always characterise
 - a) what the movement looks like
 - b) what the society looks like and how it currently perceives the movementin such way that supports your mechanisms
- movements **are not monoliths** - be nuanced in describing them! Read about the most prominent social movements and come up with stocky characterisations for both sides (e.g. feminist movement is fringe and powerless vs. feminist movement is mainstream and can afford to ask for radical changes)



key takeaways