

Chapter 14

The Process of Change: Can We Make a Difference?



The Process of Change

- Social change:
 - Variations or alterations over time in the behavior patterns, culture (including norms and values), and structure of society
 - Some is controllable, some not
 - Inevitable and ubiquitous
 - Can be rapid or gradual and evolutionary
 - Change at one level often caused by change at another level

The Complexity of Change

Micro-Level Analysis:

Change at the Individual Level

- Individuals with wealth, charisma, expertise, or privileged position can bring about change.
- Organizations use many strategies to persuade individuals to accept change, for example, appeal and persuasion, removing uncooperative individuals, using direct commands, etc.

The Complexity of Change

Meso-Level Analysis:

Change at the Institutional Level

- Climate change problem
 - Organizations have developed policies to reduce emission of pollutants
 - Universities band together to change clothing production from sweatshops

The Complexity of Change

Macro-Level Analysis:

Change at the National and Global Levels

- Societal-level change
 - For example, environmental shifts caused by one nation affect the entire world, but most nations do not want to change environmental practices for economic reasons
- Global systems and change
 - Impetus for change comes from global organizations, national and international organizations and governments, multinational corporations
 - For example, international alliances based primarily on economic ties

Social Change: Processes and Theories

The Process of Social Change

- Change is triggered by:
 - Strain:
 - Internal pressures for change
 - For example, conflicting goals or belief systems
 - Stress:
 - External pressures for change
 - For example, the natural environment, population dynamics, leaders or dominant individuals, technology, the social environment, or major historical events

Social Change: Processes and Theories

Micro-level theories of change:

- Symbolic interactionism:
 - Humans actively construct meaning; re-definitions of reality can upset the status quo and be powerful impetuses for change
- Rational choice:
 - A group seeking change must set up a situation in which new desired behavior is rewarded, or where people's perceptions about the advantages and disadvantages of old behaviors are altered

Social Change: Processes and Theories

Meso- and macro-level theories of change:

- Social evolutionary theories:
 - Societies move slowly from simple to more complex forms
 - Unilinear theories:
 - All societies progress through the same steps; advancement is defined as positive
 - » Nolan and Lenski's (2008) five stages of societal progress: hunter-gatherer, horticultural, agrarian, industrial, postindustrial; no stages are "better," but pattern is typical
 - Multilinear theories:
 - Simple societies become large, complex, technologically advanced societies through a variety of different processes

Social Change: Processes and Theories

Meso- and macro-level theories of change:

- Functionalist theories:
 - Societies are mostly stable; due to interdependence, change in one part of society will affect other parts; change may come from outside or within; slow change may occur as societies become more complex, rapid change is potentially dysfunctional
- Conflict theories:
 - Societies are dynamic, change is inevitable; conflict between those in power and the oppressed will lead to changes that may be useful for society

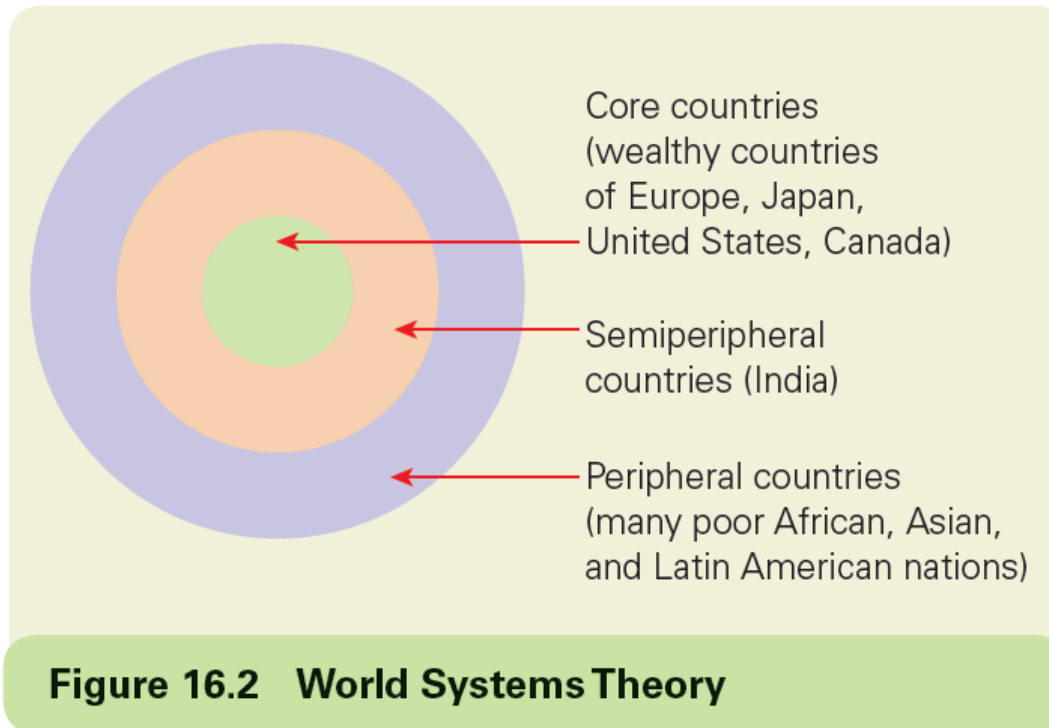
Social Change: Processes and Theories

Meso- and macro-level theories of change:

- World systems theory: all societies today have been influenced by capitalism
 - Core nations: economically and politically powerful; have controlled and profited most from world economic systems
 - Peripheral nations: countries that provide cheap labor and raw materials for core nations
 - Semi-peripheral countries: in intermediate position between core and periphery, trading with both
 - Commodity chains: global networks of labor resources and production processes that create a product

Social Change: Processes and Theories

World Systems Theory



Collective Behavior

Micro-level behavior and change:

- Collective behavior:
 - Spontaneous, disorganized group actions that often violate norms; arises when people are trying to cope with stressful situations or uncertain conditions
 - Crowd behavior: collective behavior in which a crowd acts, at least temporarily, as a unified group
 - Mass behavior: individuals communicate or respond in a similar manner to an ambiguous situation, often based on common information from the news or on the Internet
 - Unlike social movements, these forms of collective behavior lack a hierarchy of authority, a division of labor, and a sense of group action.

Collective Behavior

Theories of Collective Behavior

- The minimax strategy (rational choice theory):
 - People are more likely to engage in behavior if they feel rewards outweigh costs.
- Emergent norm theory:
 - Collective behavior often takes place in unusual situations where norms break down and new definitions of acceptable behavior emerge as people look to each other for clues.

Collective Behavior

Theories of Collective Behavior

- Value-added theory:
 - Certain conditions are necessary for individuals to join together in collective behavior
 - Structural conduciveness
 - Structural strain
 - Spread of a generalized belief
 - Precipitation factor
 - Mobilization for action
 - Social controls are weak

Collective Behavior

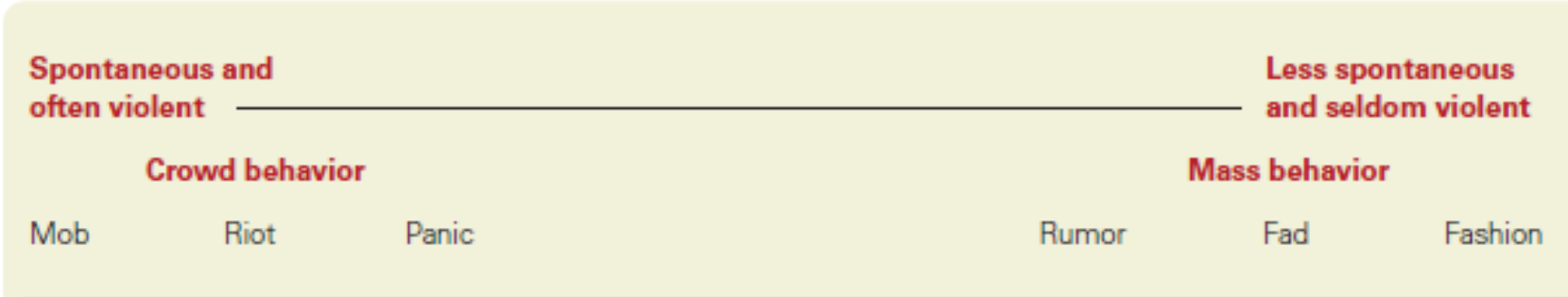
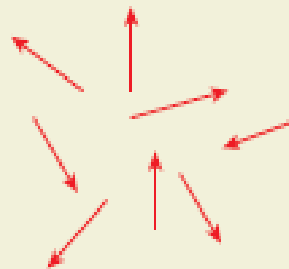


Figure 16.3 Types of Collective Behavior



Mobs involve a group collectively focusing their action on a single individual or location (e.g., a lynch mob).

Figure 16.4 The Difference Between Riots and Mobs



Riots involve dispersed actions expressing frustration (e.g., urban riots over poor conditions).

Collective Behavior

Types of collective behavior

- Mobs (e.g., lynchings)
- Riots (e.g., Iraqi riots over lack of jobs)
- Panic (e.g., in fires)
- Rumors (e.g., urban legends)
- Fads (e.g., tattooing)
- Fashions (e.g., music genres)

Planned Change in Organizations

Meso-level change:

How Organizations Plan for Change

- Planned change:
 - Deliberate, structured attempts, guided by stated goals, to alter the status quo of the social unit
- Sometimes change is desired; sometimes it is forced on the organization by external stresses.
- Change cannot be fully predicted, as changes in one area may create problems in others.

Planned Change in Organizations

Models for planning organizational change:

- Closed system models:
 - Internal focus; goal is to move the organization closer to ideal bureaucratic efficiency and effectiveness
 - Human resources or organizational development approach: organization participants should be involved in decisions leading to change
- Open system models:
 - Combine internal processes, which create outputs, with external environment, which creates inputs and feedback
 - Views change as ongoing; all parts of organization and environment as linked; change in one part affects the rest

Planned Change in Organizations

The Process of Planned Change

- Many organizations must change within themselves to meet new conditions and attempt to bring about change in the world.
- Organizations must try to avoid conflict.
- Change is generally perceived as desirable if it is evolutionary or planned; unplanned change can be disruptive.

Social Movements

Macro-level change:

- Social movements:
 - Consciously organized attempts, outside of established institutions, to enhance or resist change through group action
 - Focus on a common interest
 - Have an organization, leader, and goals
 - Most common in industrial or post-industrial societies where diverse groups advocate for their own interests
 - Usually begun by an individual outside the power structure and focus on how resources are distributed
 - May stimulate counter movements: social movements against the goals of the original movement

Social Movements

Requirements for Movement Formation

- Individuals must share basic values, ideals, statuses
- There must be a preexisting communications network
- A strain and precipitating event galvanizes people
- Effective leadership emerges
- Members develop a sense of efficacy and potential success

Social Movements

Types of Social Movements

- Expressive:
 - Focus on changing people, saving them from corrupt lifestyles
- Social reform:
 - Seek to change some aspect of society, but members generally support society as a whole
- Revolutionary:
 - Attempt to bring about total change in society by overthrowing existing power structures and replacing them with new ones
- Resistance or regressive:
 - See change as a threat to societal values, want to maintain status quo; try to protect existing systems or restore old ones
- Global transnational:
 - Take place across societies and focus on large-scale, global issues

Social Movements

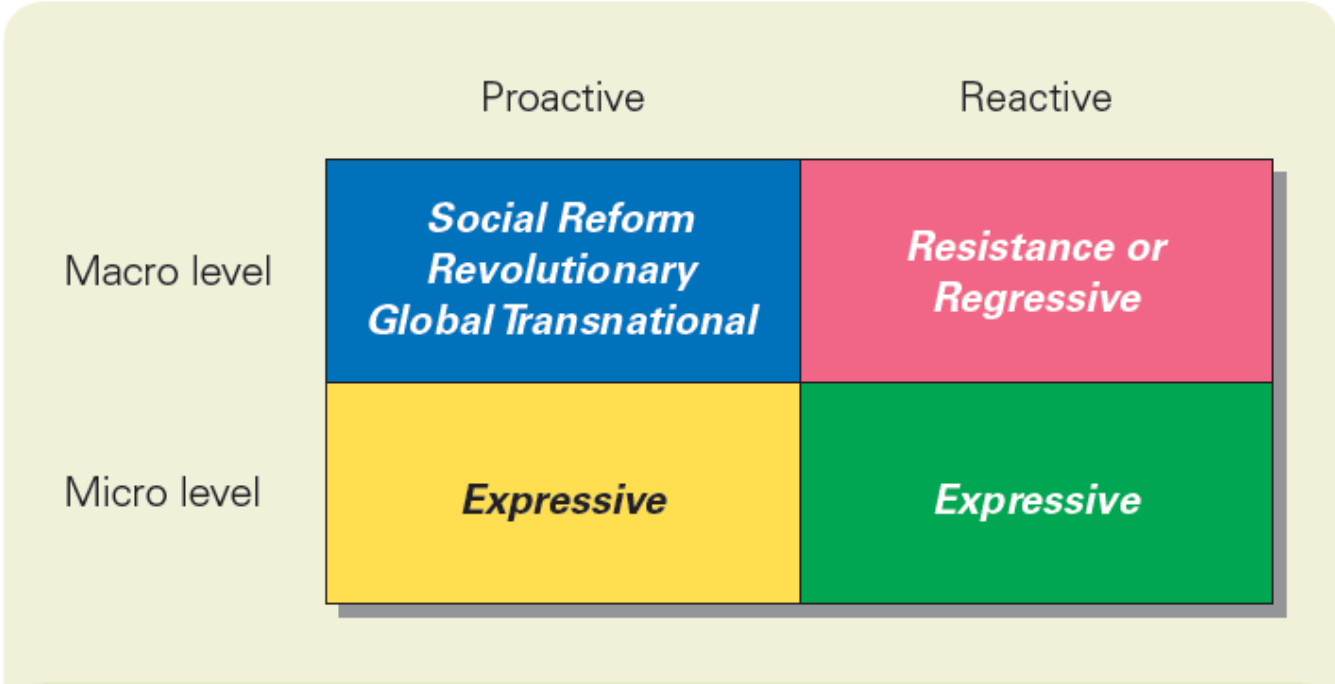


Figure 16.6 Types of Movements

Social Movements

Globalization and Social Movements

- Global South countries are coming together to form social movements in response to unjust treatment by Global North countries
- “Globalization from below”:
 - Efforts by common people to protect workers and the environment from profit-driven globalization

Technology, Environment, and Change

Technology

- Technology:
 - the practical application of tools, skills, and knowledge to meet human needs and extend human abilities
 - Technology is closely linked to the environment
 - Technological revolutions have altered societies and created social divisions

Technology, Environment, and Change

Ogburn: technological change is brought about by three processes:

- Discovery:
 - A new way of seeing reality, created by an individual or small group (micro-level)
- Invention:
 - Combining existing parts, materials, or ideas to form new ones, often through the expansion of science (increasingly meso-level)
- Diffusion:
 - The spread of an invention or discovery from one place to another (involves macro and micro levels)

Technology, Environment, and Change

Technology and Science

- Science: the systematic process of producing human knowledge; it uses empirical research methods to discover facts and test theories
 - Technology applies science to solve problems
- Science has become a major social institution in today's industrial and postindustrial societies
 - Institutionalization: the creation of a stable pattern of roles, statuses, and groups that systematically meet needs for new resources and understandings
 - Scientific institutions involve people, resources, specialized training, communication, competition
 - Basic and applied research

Technology, Environment, and Change

Technology and Change

- New technology can be a force for global integration or disintegration
- New technology can bring benefits to some, while harming others
- Rapid technological change affects inter-generational relationships