Lecture Notes

# Chapter 14: Process of Change: We Can Make a Difference!

## Learning Objectives

1. Give examples of how change takes place at each level of analysis.
2. Explain how stresses and strains can lead to organizational change.
3. Explain the six factors necessary for collective behavior to occur.
4. Provide examples of the difference between planned and unplanned change.
5. Illustrate the stages of social movements.
6. Describe how the development of technology brings about change in societies and their environments.

## Chapter Overview

Chapter 14 provides a comprehensive explanation of numerous aspects of social change. It begins by explaining what change is, and exploring it from all three levels of analysis. Next, the process and theories of social change are outlined. Collective behavior is then described, beginning with theories of collective behavior, moving to a typology, and finally an explanation of planned change in organizations. Social movements are described, including the necessary conditions for social movements to occur and the types that may result from various goals. Finally, the role of technology in social change is depicted.

## Lecture Outline

I. The Complexity of Change in the Social World

A. *Social change* – defined as variations or alterations over time in the behavior patterns, culture (including norms and values), and structure of society

i. Some are controllable, some are not

ii. Inevitable and ubiquitous

iii. Can be rapid or gradual and evolutionary

iv. Change at one level often caused by changes at other levels

B. Change at the Individual Level: Micro-Level Analysis

i. Change at the individual level

1. Individuals with enough wealth, expertise, power by force, or charisma can influence change

2. Organizations use several strategies to bring about change, such as appealing to individuals’ values; using persuasion by presenting hard data and logic; convincing individuals that the existing benefits of change outweigh the costs; removing uncooperative individuals from the organization; providing rewards or sanctions for acceptance of change in order to change the cost-benefit ratio; or compelling individuals to change by an order from authority figures

ii. Change at the community level – community-level changes affect individuals

C. Change at the Institutional Level: Meso-Level Analysis

i. Change at the institutional level

1. *Global Climate Change*

a. *Churches as meso-level institutions*

b. *Universities as meso-level instutitions*

D. Change at the National and Global Levels: Macro-Level Analysis

i. Societal-level change

1. Environmental changes caused by one nation affect the entire world, but most nations do not want to change for economic reasons

ii. Global systems and change

1. International alliances primarily based on economic ties (e.g., NAFTA)

2. Analysis of NAFTA shows mixed results

II. Social Change: Processes and Theories

A. The process of social change

i. Triggered by:

1. *Strain* – interior pressures for change

a. May result from:

i. Conflicting goals (e.g., preserve jobs vs. increase profit)

ii. Different belief systems (political, religious, economic, or social)

2. *Stress* – exterior pressures for change

a. May result from:

i. The natural environment (e.g., earthquakes, floods, spread of diseases, and global warming)

ii. Population dynamics (e.g., birth and death rates, age distribution, migration patterns)

iii. Epidemics (e.g., H1N1 flu) change the World Health Organization, global medical reporting systems, and response networks

iv. Leaders or dominant individuals (effective leaders often create internal strains and external stressors to bring about change)

v. Technology (provides the tools for change)

1. Changes can give rise to secondary changes (e.g., the car gave rise to gas stations and traffic patterns)

2. Spread of technology is uneven at first

vi. The social environment (the institutionalized pattern of relationships that develop in organizations and nations)

vii. Major historical events (e.g., wars, assassinations, economic crises)

B. Theories of Social Change

i. Often created with the hope of controlling or guiding change

ii. Often reflect cultural and historical events

iii. Micro-level theories of change

1. *Symbolic interactionism* – humans actively construct meaning; re-definitions of situations can be powerful impetuses for change

a. Social institutions and structures are fragile because they can always be changed by individuals

b. Conservatives have a vested interest in socializing others not to “think outside of the box” so as not to disrupt the status quo

c. Individuals can also be a source of resistance to change

i. Individuals are less likely to resist change when they feel they had some choice in the collaboration process; this is a way of building consensus about the meanings of the changes

2. *Rational choice* – a group seeking change must set up a situation in which new desired behavior is rewarded; alternatively, people’s perceptions about the advantages/disadvantages of old behaviors can be changed

a. *Force-field analysis* – an analysis of the payoffs in favor of change and the forces rewarding the status quo, as well as how to change the balance in either direction

iv. Meso- and macro-level theories of change

1. *Social evolutionary theories* – societies move slowly from simple to more complex forms

a. *Unilinear social evolutionary theories* – all societies progress through the same steps; advancement is desirable

b. Lenski – societies progress through four stages (none are “better” than the others, but the progression is typical due to expansion of technology and more efficient harvesting of energy sources)

i. Move from hunting and gathering to horticultural to agrarian to industrial

ii. Many societies skip steps or adapt technology selectively

iii. Social, political, and religious ideologies sometimes question whether “progress” is desirable

c. *Multilinear social evolutionary theories* – simple societies go through a process of change to become large, complex, technologically advanced societies in a variety of ways

2. *Functionalist theories* – societies are basically stable (held together by shared norms) and composed of interdependent parts that make the society function smoothly; slow change may occur as societies become more complex, but rapid change is potentially destabilizing and is dysfunctional

3. *Conflict theories* – change is inevitable; conflict between those in power and the oppressed will lead to healthy changes that are useful for society

4. *World systems theory of global change*  – all societies have been influenced (at least indirectly) by capitalism

a. *Core nations* – economically and politically powerful countries; historically have controlled global decision making and received the largest share of profits from the world economic systems

b. *Peripheral nations* – countries that provide cheap labor and raw materials for the core nations

c. *Semi-peripheral countries* – countries in an intermediate position between core and periphery nations that trade with both; industrializing, so many core countries expand there or work as partners with them

d. Core and semi-peripheral countries process raw materials from the periphery and then sell the finished products back to the periphery nations; the core can exploit the other nations

e. Since the 1960s these relationships have been modified as corporations break up their production into smaller pieces and scatter them around the world; Now manufacturing is often done in semi-periphery countries and distribution by core countries

f. *Commodity chains* – worldwide networks of labor resources and production processes that create a product

g. Groups created by core countries like the International Monetary Fund assist periphery countries with their debt, but create dependency and decrease autonomy

III. Collective Behavior: Micro-Level Behavior and Change

A. *Collective behavior* – actions that are spontaneous, unstructured, disorganized, and often violate norms; they arise when people are trying to cope with stressful situations and unclear or uncertain conditions

* + 1. *Crowd behaviors*—mobs, panics, riots, and demonstrations—are all forms of collective behavior in which a crowd acts, at least temporarily, as a unified

1. Crowds see themselves as supporting a just cause and may not feel bounded by normal social controls

ii. *Mass behaviors* – individual people communicate or respond in a similar manner to ambiguous or uncertain situations, often based on common information from the news or on the internet

B. Theories of Collective Behavior

i. *The minimax strategy* – individuals try to minimize costs and maximize gains; based on rational choice

ii. *Emergent norm theory* – collective behaviors often take place in unusual situations where norms break down and new definitions of acceptable behavior emerge

iii. *Value-added theory* – key elements are necessary for individuals to join together in collective behavior

1. *Structural conduciveness* – existing problems that create an environment ripe for change

2. *Structural strain* – the social structure is not meeting the needs and expectations of the citizens, which creates widespread dissatisfaction with the status quo

3. *Spread of a generalized belief* – common beliefs about the cause, effect, and solution of a problem evolves, develops, and spreads

4. *Precipitation factor* – a dramatic event or incident occurs to incite people to action

5. *Mobilization for action* – leaders emerge and set out a path of action; or an emergent norm develops that stimulates common action

6. *Social controls are weak* – police, military, politicians, or religious leaders are unable to counter social movement

C. Types of Collective Behavior

i. *Mobs* – emotional crowds that engage in violence against a specific target (e.g., lynchings and other hate crimes)

ii. *Riots* – an outbreak of illegal violence against shifting targets, committed by individuals expressing frustration or anger, against people, property, or both; often occur because of a sense of deprivation (e.g., the response to Stonewall)

* + 1. *Panic* – a large number of individuals become fearful or try to flee threatening situations that are beyond their control, sometimes putting their lives in danger. (e.g., in fires)

iv. *Rumors* – a form of *mass behavior* in which unsupported or unproven reports about a problem, issue, or concern circulate widely throughout the public (e.g., urban legends)

v. *Fads* – temporary items or activities that spread rapidly and are copied enthusiastically by large numbers of people (e.g., Cabbage Patch Kids and Rubix Cubes)

vi. *Fashions* – a social pattern favored by a large number of people for a limited period of time (e.g., music and clothing styles)

IV. Planned Change in Organizations: Meso-Level Change

A. How Organizations Plan for Change

i. Because of modern communication and transportation techniques, the outcomes of even small changes cannot be fully predicted

ii. *Planned change* – deliberate, structured attempts, guided by stated goals, to alter the status quo of the social unit

B. Models for planning organizational change

i. *Closed system models* – the goal of closed system models is to move the organizational closer to ideal bureaucratic efficiency and effectiveness

ii. *Open system models* – combine internal processes and external environment; the external environment provides the organization with inputs (workers and raw materials) and feedback (accessibility of the product)

1. Implications: change is ever-present and ongoing, all parts of the organization and environment are linked, and change in one part affects other parts

C. The Process of Planned Change

i. Organizations must try to stay balanced and avoid conflict, but planned changes can be beneficial

ii. Organizational leaders direct the change

V. Social Movements: Macro-Level Change

A. What is a social movement?

i. *Social movements* – consciously organized attempts outside of established institutional mechanisms to enhance or resist change through group action]

1. Focused on a common interest

2. Most common in industrial or post-industrial societies where there are diverse groups that advocate for their own goals and interests

3. Usually begun by individuals outside the power structure

4. Often stimulate *countermovements* – social movements against the goals of the original movement

B. Stages of Social Movements

i. *Preliminary stage* – the context for a movement is set

ii. *Popularization stage* – individuals coalesce their efforts, define their goals and strategies, develop recruitment tactics, and identify leaders; the social movement enters the public arena

iii. *Institutionalized stage* – the organization gains the members and funds necessary for change

iv. *Fragmentation and demise* – the group breaks apart because the resources may be exhausted, the leadership may be inept or may have lost legitimacy, or the leaders may be co-opted by powerful mainline organizations (this stage does not occur in all movements)

C. Types of Social Movements

i. *Expressive movements* – focus on changing individuals and saving people from corrupt lifestyles

ii. *Social reform movements* – seek to change some aspect of society, but members generally support the society as a whole

1. Generally focus on one issue

2. Often use non-violent, legislative means of change

iii. *Revolutionary movements* – attempt to transform society, to bring about total change in a society by overthrowing existing power structures and replacing them with new ones

1. Often use violent means

iv. *Resistance or regressive movements* – see change as a threat to societal values, so try to protect an existing system or part of a system

v. *Global transnational movements* – focus on large-scale, global issues

D. Globalization and Social Movements

i. Social movements are arising in response to the core countries’ mistreatment of periphery nations (imposing policies, keeping them in debt, etc.)

ii. Current globalization (where corporate profits rule) has damaged the environment, lessened consumer protection, decreased national sovereignty and local control of decisions, and reduced safety and other protections for workers

1. As corporations become international, they just move to another country if they do not want to abide by the standards of the one in which they currently reside

2. *Globalizing from below* – efforts by common people to fight back; protect workers, defend the environment, and combat poverty

3. *Lilliput strategy* – one tiny individual cannot fight massive corporations, but many individuals working in tandem can

VI. Technology, Environment, and Change

A. *Technology* – the practical application of tools, skills and knowledge to meet human needs and extend human abilities

i. Fueled the agricultural, industrial, and postindustrial revolutions

ii. A technology failure can sometimes inspire or revitalize a group supporting social change

B. Ogburn – change is brought about through three processes:

i. *Discovery* – viewing something that has always been present in a different way

ii. *Invention* – combining existing parts, materials, or ideas to form new ones

iii. *Diffusion* – the spread of an invention or discovery from one place to another

C. Technology and Science

i. *Science* – the systematic process of producing human knowledge; it uses empirical research methods to discover facts and test theories

ii. Technology applies this scientific knowledge

* + 1. Science was institutionalized in the 18th century

iv. Social conditions can assist or harm scientific and technological innovation

1. Specialization, effective communication, and competition increases the speed of scientific discovery

D. Technology and Change

i. New technology can improve the lives of those in developing countries, but in other ways may be deleterious

ii. New technological developments can be a force not only for world integration but also for economic and political disintegration

* + 1. The social world is interdependent, but its parts are often in conflict

VII. What Have We Learned?

A. The choices we as individuals make facilitate change at each level in our social world

B. Understanding sociology provides knowledge and tools to make informed decisions and allows us to work with groups to make a difference