

# 21 Social Movements and Social Change



**Figure 21.1** When people join together, such as these 2011 Egyptian protesters, they are engaging in collective behavior. (Photo courtesy of Agent 021/Wikimedia Commons)

## Learning Objectives

### 21.1. Collective Behavior

- Describe different forms of collective behavior
- Differentiate between types of crowds
- Discuss emergent norm, value-added, and assembling perspective analyses of collective behavior

### 21.2. Social Movements

- Demonstrate awareness of social movements on a state, national, and global level
- Distinguish between different types of social movements
- Identify stages of social movements
- Discuss theoretical perspectives on social movements, like resource mobilization, framing, and new social movement theory

### 21.3. Social Change

- Explain how technology, social institutions, population, and the environment can bring about social change
- Discuss the importance of modernization in relation to social change

## Introduction to Social Movements and Social Change

In January 2011, Egypt erupted in protests against the stifling rule of longtime President Hosni Mubarak. The protests were sparked in part by the revolution in Tunisia, and, in turn, they inspired demonstrations throughout the Middle East in Libya, Syria, and beyond. This wave of protest movements traveled across national borders and seemed to spread like wildfire. There have been countless causes and factors in play in these protests and revolutions, but many have noted the internet-savvy youth of these countries. Some believe that the adoption of social technology—from Facebook pages to cell phone cameras—that helped to organize and document the movement contributed directly to the wave of protests called **Arab Spring**. The combination of deep unrest and disruptive technologies meant these **social movements** were ready to rise up and seek change.

What do Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), the anti-globalization movement, and the Tea Party have in common? Not much, you might think. But although they may be left-wing or right-wing, radical or conservative, highly organized or very diffused, they are all examples of social movements.

Social movements are purposeful, organized groups striving to work toward a common goal. These groups might be attempting to create change (Occupy Wall Street, Arab Spring), to resist change (anti-globalization movement), or to provide a political voice to those otherwise disenfranchised (civil rights movements). Social movements, along with technology, social institutions, population, and environmental changes, create social change.

Consider the effect of the 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. This disaster exemplifies how a change in the environment, coupled with the use of technology to fix that change, combined with anti-oil sentiment in social movements and social institutions, led to changes in offshore oil drilling policies. Subsequently, in an effort to support the Gulf Coast's rebuilding efforts, new changes occurred. From grassroots marketing campaigns that promote consumption of local seafood to municipal governments needing to coordinate with federal cleanups, organizations develop and shift to meet the changing needs of the society. Just as we saw with the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill, social movements have, throughout history, influenced societal shifts. Sociology looks at these moments through the **lenses of three major** perspectives.

The **functionalist perspective looks at the big picture**, focusing on the way that all aspects of society are integral to the continued health and viability of the whole. When studying social movements, a functionalist might focus on why social movements develop, why they continue to exist, and what social purposes they serve. For example, movements must change their goals as initial aims are met or they risk dissolution. Several organizations associated with the anti-polio industry folded after the creation of an effective vaccine that made the disease virtually disappear. Can you think of another social movement whose goals were met? What about one whose goals have changed over time?

The conflict perspective focuses on the creation and reproduction of inequality. Someone applying the conflict perspective would likely be interested in how social movements are generated through systematic inequality, and how social change is constant, speedy, and unavoidable. In fact, the conflict that this perspective sees as inherent in social relations drives social change. For example, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded in 1908. Partly created in response to the horrific lynchings occurring in the southern United States, the organization fought to secure the constitutional rights guaranteed in the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments, which established an end to slavery, equal protection under the law, and universal male suffrage (NAACP 2011). While those goals have been achieved, the organization remains active today, continuing to fight against inequalities in civil rights and to remedy discriminatory practices.

The **symbolic interaction perspective** studies the day-to-day interaction of social movements, the meanings individuals attach to involvement in such movements, and the individual experience of social change. An interactionist studying social movements might address social movement norms and tactics as well as individual motivations. For example, social movements might be generated through a feeling of deprivation or discontent, but people might actually join social movements for a variety of reasons that have nothing to do with the cause. They might want to feel important, or they know someone in the movement they want to support, or they just want to be a part of something. Have you ever been motivated to show up for a rally or sign a petition because your friends invited you? Would you have been as likely to get involved otherwise?

## 21.1 Collective Behavior

Making Connections:

Sociology in the Real World



### Flash Mobs



**Figure 21.2** Is this a good time had by all? Some flash mobs may function as political protests, while others are for fun. This flash mob pillow fight's purpose was to entertain. (Photo courtesy of Mattwi1S0n/flickr)

People sitting in a café in a touristy corner of Rome might expect the usual sights and sounds of a busy city. They might be more surprised when, as they sip their espressos, hundreds of young people start streaming into the picturesque square clutching pillows, and when someone gives a signal, they start pummeling each other in a massive free-for-all pillow fight. Spectators might lean forward, coffee forgotten, as feathers fly and more and more people join in. All around the square, others hang out of their windows or stop on the street, transfixed, to watch. After several minutes, the spectacle is over. With cheers and the occasional high five, the crowd disperses, leaving only destroyed pillows and clouds of fluff in its wake.

This is a **flash mob**, a large group of people who gather together in a spontaneous activity that lasts a limited amount of time before returning to their regular routines. Technology plays a big role in the creation of a flash mob: select people are texted or emailed, and the message spreads virally until a crowd has grown. But while technology might explain the “how” of flash mobs, it does not explain the “why.” Flash mobs often are captured on video and shared on the internet; frequently they go viral and become well-known. So what leads people to want to flock somewhere for a massive pillow fight? Or for a choreographed dance? Or to freeze in place? Why is this appealing? In large part, it is as simple as the reason humans have bonded together around fires for storytelling, or danced together, or joined a community holiday celebration. Humans seek connections and shared experiences. And a flash mob, pillows included, provides a way to make that happen.

### Forms of Collective Behavior

Flash mobs are examples of **collective behavior**, non-institutionalized activity in which several people voluntarily engage. Other examples of collective behavior can include anything from a group of commuters traveling home from work to the trend toward adopting the Justin Bieber hair flip. In short, it can be any group behavior that is not mandated or regulated by an institution. There are **four primary forms of collective behavior**: the crowd, the mass, the public, and social movements.

It takes a fairly large number of people in close proximity to form a **crowd** (Lofland 1993). Examples include a group of people attending an Ani DiFranco concert, tailgating at a Patriots game, or attending a worship service. Turner and Killian (1993) identified **four types of crowds**. **Casual crowds** consist of people who are in the same place at the same time, but who aren't really interacting, such as people standing in line at the post office. **Conventional crowds** are those who come together for a scheduled event occurring regularly, like a religious service. **Expressive crowds** are people who join together to express emotion, often at funerals, weddings, or the like. The final type, **acting crowds**, focus on a specific goal or action, such as a protest movement or riot.

In addition to the different types of crowds, collective groups can also be identified in two other ways. A **mass** is a relatively large number of people with a common interest, though they may not be in close proximity (Lofland 1993), such as players of the popular Facebook game Farmville. A **public**, on the other hand, is an unorganized, relatively diffused group of people who share ideas, such as the Libertarian political party. While these two types of crowds are similar, they are not the same. To distinguish between them, remember that members of a mass share interests whereas members of a public share ideas.

## Theoretical Perspectives on Collective Behavior

Early collective behavior theories (LeBon 1895; Blumer 1969) focused on the irrationality of crowds. Eventually, those theorists who viewed crowds as uncontrolled groups of irrational people were supplanted by theorists who viewed the behavior some crowds engaged in as the rational behavior of logical beings.

### Emergent-Norm Perspective



**Figure 21.3** According to the emergent-norm perspective, people have their own reasons for joining a parade. (Photo courtesy of Infrogmatation of New Orleans/flickr)

Sociologists Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian (1993) built on earlier sociological ideas and developed what is known as emergent norm theory. They believe that the norms experienced by people in a crowd may be disparate and fluctuating. They emphasize the importance of these norms in shaping crowd behavior, especially those norms that shift quickly in response to changing external factors. **Emergent norm theory** asserts that, in this circumstance, people perceive and respond to the crowd situation with their particular (individual) set of norms, which may change as the crowd experience evolves. This focus on the individual component of interaction reflects a symbolic interactionist perspective.

For Turner and Killian, the process begins when individuals suddenly find themselves in a new situation, or when an existing situation suddenly becomes strange or unfamiliar. For example, think about human behavior during Hurricane Katrina. New Orleans was decimated and people were trapped without supplies or a way to evacuate. In these extraordinary circumstances, what outsiders saw as “looting” was defined by those involved as seeking needed supplies for survival. Normally, individuals would not wade into a corner gas station and take canned goods without paying, but given that they were suddenly in a greatly changed situation, they established a norm that they felt was reasonable.

Once individuals find themselves in a situation ungoverned by previously established norms, they interact in small groups to develop new guidelines on how to behave. According to the emergent-norm perspective, crowds are not viewed as irrational, impulsive, uncontrolled groups. Instead, norms develop and are accepted as they fit the situation. While this theory offers insight into why norms develop, it leaves undefined the nature of norms, how they come to be accepted by the crowd, and how they spread through the crowd.

### Value-Added Theory

Neil Smelser’s (1962) meticulous categorization of crowd behavior, called **value-added theory**, is a perspective within the functionalist tradition based on the idea that several conditions must be in place for collective behavior to occur. Each condition adds to the likelihood that collective behavior will occur. The first condition is *structural conduciveness*, which describes when people are aware of the problem and have the opportunity to gather, ideally in an open area. *Structural strain*, the second condition, refers to people’s expectations about the situation at hand being unmet, causing tension and strain. The next condition is the *growth and spread of a generalized belief*, wherein a problem is clearly identified and attributed to a person or group.

Fourth, *precipitating factors* spur collective behavior; this is the emergence of a dramatic event. The fifth condition is *mobilization for action*, when leaders emerge to direct a crowd to action. The final condition relates to action by the agents. Called *social control*, it is the only way to end the collective behavior episode (Smelser 1962).

Let's consider a hypothetical example of these conditions. In structure conduciveness (awareness and opportunity), a group of students gathers on the campus quad. Structural strain emerges when they feel stress concerning their high tuition costs. If the crowd decides that the latest tuition hike is the fault of the Chancellor, and that she'll lower tuition if they protest, then growth and spread of a generalized belief has occurred. A precipitation factor arises when campus security appears to disperse the crowd, using pepper spray to do so. When the student body president sits down and passively resists attempts to stop the protest, this represents mobilization of action. Finally, when local police arrive and direct students back to their dorms, we've seen agents of social control in action.

While value-added theory addresses the complexity of collective behavior, it also assumes that such behavior is inherently negative or disruptive. In contrast, collective behavior can be non-disruptive, such as when people flood to a place where a leader or public figure has died to express condolences or leave tokens of remembrance.



**Figure 21.4** Agents of social control bring collective behavior to an end. (Photo courtesy of hozinja/flickr)

### Assembling Perspective

Interactionist sociologist Clark McPhail (1991) developed **assembling perspective**, another system for understanding collective behavior that credited individuals in crowds as rational beings. Unlike previous theories, this theory refocuses attention from collective behavior to collective action.

Remember that collective behavior is a non-institutionalized gathering, whereas collective action is based on a shared interest. McPhail's theory focused primarily on the processes associated with crowd behavior, plus the lifecycle of gatherings. He identified several instances of convergent or collective behavior, as shown on the chart below.

**Table 21.1** Clark McPhail identified various circumstances of convergent and collective behavior (McPhail 1991).

Type of crowd	Description	Example
Convergence clusters	Family and friends who travel together	Carpooling parents take several children to the movies
Convergent orientation	Group all facing the same direction	A semi-circle around a stage
Collective vocalization	Sounds or noises made collectively	Screams on a roller coaster
Collective verbalization	Collective and simultaneous participation in a speech or song	Pledge of Allegiance in the school classroom
Collective gesticulation	Body parts forming symbols	The YMCA dance
Collective manipulation	Objects collectively moved around	Holding signs at a protest rally
Collective locomotion	The direction and rate of movement to the event	Children running to an ice cream truck

As useful as this is for understanding the components of how crowds come together, many sociologists criticize its lack of attention on the large cultural context of the described behaviors, instead focusing on individual actions.

## 21.2 Social Movements

**Social movements** are purposeful, organized groups striving to work toward a common social goal. While most of us learned about social movements in history classes, we tend to take for granted the fundamental changes they caused—and we may be completely unfamiliar with the trend toward global social movement. But from the anti-tobacco movement that has worked to outlaw smoking in public buildings and raise the cost of cigarettes, to uprisings throughout the Arab world, movements are creating social change on a global scale.

### Levels of Social Movements

Movements happen in our towns, in our nation, and around the world. Let’s take a look at examples of social movements, from local to global. No doubt you can think of others on all of these levels, especially since modern technology has allowed us a near-constant stream of information about the quest for social change around the world.

#### Local

Chicago is a city of highs and lows, from corrupt politicians and failing schools to innovative education programs and a thriving arts scene. Not surprisingly, it has been home to a number of social movements over time. Currently, AREA Chicago is a social movement focused on “building a socially just city” (AREA Chicago 2011). The organization seeks to “create relationships and sustain community through art, research, education, and activism” (AREA Chicago 2011). The movement offers online tools like the Radicalendar—a calendar for getting radical and connected—and events such as an alternative to the traditional Independence Day picnic. Through its offerings, AREA Chicago gives local residents a chance to engage in a movement to help build a socially just city.

## State



**Figure 21.5** Texas Secede! is an organization which would like Texas to secede from the United States. (Photo courtesy of Tim Pearce/flickr)

At the other end of the political spectrum from AREA Chicago, there is a social movement across the country in Texas. There, the statewide Texas Secede! organization promotes the idea that Texas can and should secede from the United States to become an independent republic. The organization, which has 3,400 “likes” on Facebook, references both Texas and national history in promoting secession. The movement encourages Texans to return to their rugged and individualistic roots, and to stand up to what proponents believe is the theft of their rights and property by the U.S. government (Texas Secede! 2009).

## National

A polarizing national issue which has helped spawn many activist groups is gay marriage. While the legal battle is being played out state-by-state, the issue is a national one and crops up in presidential debates quite frequently. There are ardent supporters on both sides of the issue.

The Human Rights Campaign, a nationwide organization that advocates for LGBT civil rights, has been around for over 30 years and claims more than a million members. One focus of the organization is their Americans for Marriage Equality campaign. Using public celebrities such as athletes, musicians, and political figures, the campaign seeks to engage the public in the issue of equal rights under the law. The campaign raises awareness of the over 1,100 different rights, benefits, and protections provided on the basis of marital status under federal law, and seeks to educate the public on why they believe these protections are due to committed couples, regardless of gender (Human Rights Campaign 2011).

A movement on the opposite end would be the National Organization for Marriage, an organization that funds campaigns to stop same-sex marriage (National Organization for Marriage 2011). Both of these organizations work on the national stage and seek to engage people through grassroots efforts to push their message.



**Figure 21.6** The right of gays and lesbians to marry is a polarizing issue but is gaining support nationally. (Photo courtesy of Krossbow/flickr)

## Global

Despite their successes in bringing forth change on controversial topics, social movements are not always about volatile politicized issues. For example, let’s look at the global movement called Slow Food. Slow Food, with the slogan “Good, Clean, Fair Food,” is a global grassroots movement claiming supporters in 150 countries. The movement links community and environmental issues back to the question of what is on our plates and where it came from. Founded in 1989 in response to the increasing

existence of fast food in communities that used to treasure their culinary traditions, Slow Food works to raise awareness of food choices (Slow Food 2011). With more than 100,000 members in 1,300 local chapters, Slow Food is a movement that crosses political, age, and regional lines.

## Types of Social Movements


We know that social movements can occur on the local, national, or even global stage. Are there other patterns or classifications that can help us understand them? Sociologist David Aberle (1966) addresses this question, developing categories that distinguish among social movements based on what they want to change and how much change they want. **Reform movements** seek to change something specific about the social structure. Examples include anti-nuclear groups, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), and the Human Rights Campaign’s advocacy for Marriage Equality. **Revolutionary movements** seek to completely change every aspect of society. These would include the 1960’s counterculture movement, as well as anarchist collectives. Texas Secede! is a revolutionary movement. **Religious/Redemptive movements** are “meaning seeking,” and their goal is to provoke inner change or spiritual growth in individuals. Organizations pushing these movements might include Heaven’s Gate or the Branch Davidians. **Alternative movements** are focused on self-improvement and limited, specific changes to individual beliefs and behavior. These include trends like transcendental meditation or a macrobiotic diet. **Resistance movements** seek to prevent or undo change to the social structure. The Ku Klux Klan and pro-life movements fall into this category.

## Stages of Social Movements

Later sociologists studied the lifecycle of social movements—how they emerge, grow, and in some cases, die out. Blumer (1969) and Tilly (1978) outline a four-stage process. In the *preliminary stage*, people become aware of an issue and leaders emerge. This is followed by the *coalescence stage* when people join together and organize in order to publicize the issue and raise awareness. In the *institutionalization stage*, the movement no longer requires grassroots volunteerism: it is an established organization, typically peopled with a paid staff. When people fall away, adopt a new movement, the movement successfully brings about the change it sought, or people no longer take the issue seriously, the movement falls into the *decline stage*. Each social movement discussed earlier belongs in one of these four stages. Where would you put them on the list?

Making Connections: the Big Picture

Social Media and Social Change: A Match Made in Heaven



**Figure 21.7** In 2008, Obama’s campaign used social media to tweet, like, and friend its way to victory. (Photos courtesy of bradleyolin/flickr)

Chances are you have been asked to tweet, friend, like, or donate online for a cause. Maybe you were one of the many people who, in 2010, helped raise over \$3 million in relief efforts for Haiti through cell phone text donations. Or maybe you follow presidential candidates on Twitter and retweet their messages to your followers. Perhaps you have “liked” a local nonprofit on Facebook, prompted by one of your neighbors or friends liking it too. Nowadays, woven throughout our



social media activities, are social movements. After all, social movements start by activating people.

Referring to the ideal type stages discussed above, you can see that social media has the potential to dramatically transform how people get involved. Look at stage one, the *preliminary stage*: people become aware of an issue and leaders emerge. Imagine how social media speeds up this step. Suddenly, a shrewd user of Twitter can alert his thousands of followers about an emerging cause or an issue on his mind. Issue awareness can spread at the speed of a click, with thousands of people across the globe becoming informed at the same time. In a similar vein, those who are savvy and engaged with social media emerge as leaders. Suddenly, you don't need to be a powerful public speaker. You don't even need to leave your house. You can build an audience through social media without ever meeting the people you are inspiring.

At the next stage, the *coalescence stage*, social media also is transformative. Coalescence is the point when people join together to publicize the issue and get organized. President Obama's 2008 campaign was a case study in organizing through social media. Using Twitter and other online tools, the campaign engaged volunteers who had typically not bothered with politics, and empowered those who were more active to generate still more activity. It is no coincidence that Obama's earlier work experience included grassroots community organizing. What is the difference between his campaign and the work he did in Chicago neighborhoods decades earlier? The ability to organize without regard to geographical boundaries by using social media. In 2009, when student protests erupted in Tehran, social media was considered so important to the organizing effort that the U.S. State Department actually asked Twitter to suspend scheduled maintenance so that a vital tool would not be disabled during the demonstrations.

So what is the real impact of this technology on the world? Did Twitter bring down Mubarak in Egypt? Author Malcolm Gladwell (2010) doesn't think so. In an article in *New Yorker* magazine, Gladwell tackles what he considers the myth that social media gets people more engaged. He points out that most of the tweets relating to the Iran protests were in English and sent from Western accounts (instead of people on the ground). Rather than increasing engagement, he contends that **social media** only increases participation; after all, the cost of participation is so much lower than the cost of engagement. Instead of risking being arrested, shot with rubber bullets, or sprayed with fire hoses, social media activists can click "like" or retweet a message from the comfort and safety of their desk (Gladwell 2010).

Sociologists have identified high-risk activism, such as the civil rights movement, as a "strong-tie" phenomenon, meaning that people are far more likely to stay engaged and not run home to safety if they have close friends who are also engaged. The people who dropped out of the movement—who went home after the danger got too great—did not display any less ideological commitment. But they lacked the strong-tie connection to other people who were staying. Social media, by its very makeup, is "weak-tie" (McAdam and Paulsen 1993). People follow or friend people they have never met. But while these online acquaintances are a source of information and inspiration, the lack of engaged personal contact limits the level of risk we'll take on their behalf.



Donation Update: Over \$21 Million in \$10 donations raised for the people of #Haiti through the @RedCross text HAITI to 90999 campaign. ☆



**Figure 21.8** After a devastating earthquake in 2010, Twitter and the Red Cross raised millions for Haiti relief efforts through phone donations alone. (Photo courtesy of Cambodia4KidsOrg/flickr)

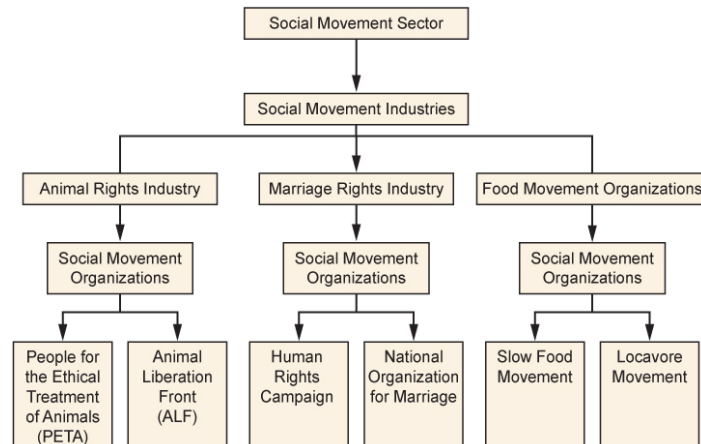
## Theoretical Perspectives on Social Movements

Most theories of social movements are called **collective action theories**, indicating the purposeful nature of this form of collective behavior. The following three theories are but a few of the many classic and modern theories developed by social scientists.

### Resource Mobilization

Social movements will always be a part of society, and people will always weigh their options and make rational choices about which movements to follow. As long as social movements wish to thrive, they must find resources (such as money, people, and plans) for how to meet their goals. Not only will social movements compete for our attention with many other concerns—from the basic (our jobs or our need to feed ourselves) to the broad (video games, sports, or television), but they also compete with each other. For any individual, it may be a simple matter to decide you want to spend your time and money on animal shelters and Republican politics versus homeless shelters and Democrats. But which animal shelter, and which Republican candidate? Social movements are competing for a piece of finite resources, and the field is growing more crowded all the time.

McCarthy and Zald (1977) conceptualize **resource mobilization theory** as a way to explain movement success in terms of its ability to acquire resources and mobilize individuals. For example, PETA, a social movement organization, is in competition with Greenpeace and the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), two other social movement organizations. Taken together, along with all other social movement organizations working on animals rights issues, these similar organizations constitute a **social movement industry**. Multiple social movement industries in a society, though they may have widely different constituencies and goals, constitute a society's **social movement sector**. Every **social movement organization** (a single social movement group) within the social movement sector is competing for your attention, your time, and your resources. The chart below shows the relationship between these components.



**Figure 21.9** Multiple social movement organizations concerned about the same issue form a social movement industry. A society's many social movement industries comprise its social movement sector. With so many options, who will you give your time or money to?

### Framing/Frame Analysis

Over the past several decades, sociologists have developed the concept of frames to explain how individuals identify and understand social events and which norms they should follow in any given situation (Goffman 1974; Snow et al. 1986; Benford and Snow 2000). Imagine entering a restaurant. Your “frame” immediately provides you with a behavior template. It probably does not occur to you to wear pajamas to a fine dining establishment, throw food at other patrons, or spit your drink onto the table. However, eating food at a sleepover pizza party provides you with an entirely different behavior template. It might be perfectly acceptable to eat in your pajamas, and maybe even throw popcorn at others or guzzle drinks from cans.

Successful social movements use three kinds of frames (Snow and Benford 1988) to further their goals. The first type, **diagnostic framing**, states the problem in a clear, easily understood way. When applying diagnostic frames, there are no shades of gray: instead, there is the belief that what “they” do is wrong and this is how “we” will fix it. The anti-gay marriage movement is an example of diagnostic framing with its uncompromising insistence that marriage is only between a man and a woman.

**Prognostic framing**, the second type, offers a solution and states how it will be implemented. Some examples of this frame, when looking at the issue of marriage equality as framed by the anti-gay

marriage movement, include the plan to restrict marriage to “one man/one woman” or to allow only “civil unions” instead of marriage. As you can see, there may be many competing prognostic frames even within social movements adhering to similar diagnostic frames. Finally, **motivational framing** is the call to action: what should you do once you agree with the diagnostic frame and believe in the prognostic frame? These frames are action-oriented. In the gay marriage movement, a call to action might encourage you to vote “no” on Proposition 8 in California (a move to limit marriage to male-female couples), or conversely, to contact your local congressperson to express your viewpoint that marriage should be restricted to opposite-sex couples.

With so many similar diagnostic frames, some groups find it best to join together to maximize their impact. When social movements link their goals to the goals of other social movements and merge into a single group, a **frame alignment process** (Snow et al. 1986) occurs—an ongoing and intentional means of recruiting participants to the movement.

This frame alignment process involves four aspects: bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation. *Bridging* describes a “bridge” that connects uninvolved individuals and unorganized or ineffective groups with social movements that, though structurally unconnected, nonetheless share similar interests or goals. These organizations join together creating a new, stronger social movement organization. Can you think of examples of different organizations with a similar goal that have banded together?

In the *amplification* model, organizations seek to expand their core ideas to gain a wider, more universal appeal. By expanding their ideas to include a broader range, they can mobilize more people for their cause. For example, the Slow Food movement extends its arguments in support of local food to encompass reduced energy consumption and reduced pollution, plus reduced obesity from eating more healthfully, and other benefits.

In *extension*, social movements agree to mutually promote each other, even when the two social movement organization’s goals don’t necessarily relate to each other’s immediate goals. This often occurs when organizations are sympathetic to each others’ causes, even if they are not directly aligned, such as women’s equal rights and the civil rights movement.



(a)



(b)



(c)

**Figure 21.10** Extension occurs when social movements have sympathetic causes. Women's rights, racial equality, and LGBT advocacy are all human rights issues. (Photos (a) and (b) courtesy of Wikimedia Commons; Photo (c) courtesy of Charlie Nguyen/flickr)

*Transformation* involves a complete revision of goals. Once a movement has succeeded, it risks losing relevance. If it wants to remain active, the movement has to change with the transformation or risk becoming obsolete. For instance, when the women's suffrage movement gained women the right to vote, they turned their attention to equal rights and campaigning to elect women. In short, it is an evolution to the existing diagnostic or prognostic frames generally involving a total conversion of movement.

### New Social Movement Theory

**New social movement theory**, a development of European social scientists in the 1950s and 1960s, attempts to explain the proliferation of post-industrial and post-modern movements that are difficult to analyze using traditional social movement theories. Rather than being one specific theory, it is more of a perspective that revolves around understanding movements as they relate to politics, identity, culture, and social change. Some of these more complex interrelated movements include ecofeminism, which focuses on the patriarchal society as the source of environmental problems, and the transgender rights movement. Sociologist Steven Buechler (2000) suggests that we should be looking at the bigger picture in which these movements arise—shifting to a macro-level, global analysis of social movements.

## 21.3 Social Change

Collective behavior and social movements are just two of the forces driving **social change**, which is the change in society created through social movements as well as external factors like environmental shifts or technological innovations. Essentially, any disruptive shift in the status quo, be it intentional or random, human-caused or natural, can lead to social change. Below are some of the likely causes.

### Causes of Social Change

Changes to technology, social institutions, population, and the environment, alone or in some combination, create change. Below, we will discuss how these act as agents of social change and we'll examine real-world examples. We will focus on four agents of change recognized by social scientists: technology, social institutions, population, and the environment.

#### Technology

Some would say that improving technology has made our lives easier. Imagine what your day would be like without the internet, the automobile, or electricity. In *The World Is Flat*, Thomas Friedman (2005) argues that technology is a driving force behind globalization, while the other forces of social change (social institutions, population, environment) play comparatively minor roles. He suggests that we can view globalization as occurring in three distinct periods. First, globalization was driven by military expansion, powered by horsepower and windpower. The countries best able to take advantage of these power sources expanded the most, exerting control over the politics of the globe from the late 15th century to around the year 1800. The second shorter period, from approximately 1800 C.E. to 2000 C.E., consisted of a globalizing economy. Steam and rail power were the guiding forces of social change and globalization in this period. Finally, Friedman brings us to the post-millennial era. In this period of globalization, change is driven by technology, particularly the internet (Friedman 2005).

But also consider that technology can create change in the other three forces social scientists link to social change. Advances in medical technology allow otherwise infertile women to bear children, indirectly leading to an increase in population. Advances in agricultural technology have allowed us to genetically alter and patent food products, changing our environment in innumerable ways. From the way we educate children in the classroom to the way we grow the food we eat, technology has impacted all aspects of modern life.

Of course there are drawbacks. The increasing gap between the technological haves and have-nots—sometimes called the digital divide—occurs both locally and globally. Further, there are added security risks: the loss of privacy, the risk of total system failure (like the Y2K panic at the turn of the millennium), and the added vulnerability created by technological dependence. Think about the technology that goes into keeping nuclear power plants running safely and securely. What happens if an earthquake or other disaster, like in the case of Japan's Fukushima plant, causes the technology to malfunction, not to mention the possibility of a systematic attack to our nation's relatively vulnerable technological infrastructure?

#### Social Institutions

Each change in a single social institution leads to changes in all social institutions. For example, the industrialization of society meant that there was no longer a need for large families to produce enough manual labor to run a farm. Further, new job opportunities were in close proximity to urban centers where living space was at a premium. The result is that the average family size shrunk significantly.

This same shift towards industrial corporate entities also changed the way we view government involvement in the private sector, created the global economy, provided new political platforms, and even spurred new religions and new forms of religious worship like Scientology. It has also informed the way we educate our children: originally schools were set up to accommodate an agricultural calendar so children could be home to work the fields in the summer, and even today, teaching models are largely based on preparing students for industrial jobs, despite that being an outdated need. As this example illustrates, a shift in one area, such as industrialization, means an interconnected impact across social institutions.

#### Population

Population composition is changing at every level of society. Births increase in one nation and decrease in another. Some families delay childbirth while others start bringing children into their fold early. Population changes can be due to random external forces, like an epidemic, or shifts in other social

institutions, as described above. But regardless of why and how it happens, population trends have a tremendous interrelated impact on all other aspects of society.

In the United States, we are experiencing an increase in our senior population as baby boomers begin to retire, which will in turn change the way many of our social institutions are organized. For example, there is an increased demand for housing in warmer climates, a massive shift in the need for elder care and assisted living facilities, and growing awareness of elder abuse. There is concern about labor shortages as boomers retire, not to mention the knowledge gap as the most senior and accomplished leaders in different sectors start to leave. Further, as this large generation leaves the workforce, the loss of tax income and pressure on pension and retirement plans means that the financial stability of the country is threatened.

Globally, often the countries with the highest fertility rates are least able to absorb and attend to the needs of a growing population. Family planning is a large step in ensuring that families are not burdened with more children than they can care for. On a macro level, the increased population, particularly in the poorest parts of the globe, also leads to increased stress on the planet's resources.

### The Environment

Turning to human ecology, we know that individuals and the environment affect each other. As human populations move into more vulnerable areas, we see an increase in the number of people affected by natural disasters, and we see that human interaction with the environment increases the impact of those disasters. Part of this is simply the numbers: the more people there are on the planet, the more likely it is that people will be impacted by a natural disaster.

But it goes beyond that. We face a combination of too many people and the increased demands these numbers make on the earth. As a population, we have brought water tables to dangerously low levels, built up fragile shorelines to increase development, and irrigated massive crop fields with water brought in from several states away. How can we be surprised when homes along coastlines are battered and droughts threaten whole towns? The year 2011 holds the unwelcome distinction of being a record year for billion-dollar weather disasters, with about a dozen falling into that category. From twisters and floods to snowstorms and droughts, the planet is making our problems abundantly clear (CBS News 2011). These events have birthed social movements and are bringing about social change as the public becomes educated about these issues.

## Making Connections:

## Sociology in the Real World



### Our Dystopian Future: From *A Brave New World* to *The Hunger Games*



**Figure 21.11** Is the glass half-empty or half-full when it comes to social change? Fiction writers explore both sides of the issue through fantasy futuristic novels like the *Hunger Games* trilogy by Suzanne Collins. (Photo courtesy of Carissa Rogers/flickr)

Humans have long been interested in science fiction and space travel, and many of us are eager to see the invention of jet packs and flying cars. But part of this futuristic fiction trend is much darker and less optimistic. In 1932, when Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* was published, there was a cultural trend towards seeing the future as golden and full of opportunity. In his novel set in 2540, there is a more frightening future. Since then, there has been an ongoing stream of dystopian novels, or books set in the future after some kind of apocalypse has occurred and when a totalitarian and restrictive government has taken over. These books have been gaining in

popularity recently, especially among young adult readers. And while the adult versions of these books often have a grim or dismal ending, the youth-gearred versions usually end with some promise of hope.

So what is it about our modern times that makes looking forward so fearsome? Take the example of author Suzanne Collins's hugely popular *Hunger Games* trilogy for young adults. The futuristic setting isn't given a date, and the locale is Panem, a transformed version of North America with 12 districts ruled by a cruel and dictatorial capitol. The capitol punishes the districts for their long-ago attempt at rebellion by forcing an annual Hunger Game, where two children from each district are thrown into a created world where they must fight to the death. Connotations of gladiator games and video games come together in this world, where the government can kill people for their amusement, and the technological wonders never cease. From meals that appear at the touch of a button to mutated government-built creatures that track and kill, the future world of *Hunger Games* is a mix of modernization fantasy and nightmare.

When thinking about modernization theory and how it is viewed today by both functionalists and conflict theorists, it is interesting to look at this world of fiction that is so popular. When you think of the future, do you view it as a wonderful place, full of opportunity? Or as a horrifying dictatorship sublimating the individual to the good of the state? Do you view modernization as something to look forward to or something to avoid? And which media has influenced your view?

## Modernization

**Modernization** describes the processes that increase the amount of specialization and differentiation of structure in societies resulting in the move from an undeveloped society to developed, technologically driven society (Irwin 1975). By this definition, the level of modernity within a society is judged by the sophistication of its technology, particularly as it relates to infrastructure, industry, and the like. However, it is important to note the inherent ethnocentric bias of such assessment. Why do we assume that those living in semi-peripheral and peripheral nations would find it so wonderful to become more like the core nations? Is modernization always positive?

One contradiction of all kinds of technology is that they often promise time-saving benefits, but somehow fail to deliver. How many times have you ground your teeth in frustration at an internet site that refused to load or at a dropped call on your cell phone? Despite time-saving devices such as dishwashers, washing machines, and, now, remote control vacuum cleaners, the average amount of time spent on housework is the same today as it was fifty years ago. And the dubious benefits of 24/7 email and immediate information have simply increased the amount of time employees are expected to be responsive and available. While once businesses had to travel at the speed of the United States postal system, sending something off and waiting until it was received before the next stage, today the immediacy of information transfer means there are no such breaks.

Further, the internet bought us information, but at a cost. The morass of information means that there is as much poor information available as trustworthy sources. There is a delicate line to walk when core nations seek to bring the assumed benefits of modernization to more traditional cultures. For one, there are obvious pro-capitalist biases that go into such attempts, and it is short-sighted for western governments and social scientists to assume all other countries aspire to follow in their footsteps. Additionally, there can be a kind of neo-liberal defense of rural cultures, ignoring the often crushing poverty and diseases that exist in peripheral nations and focusing only on a nostalgic mythology of the happy peasant. It takes a very careful hand to understand both the need for cultural identity and preservation as well as the hopes for future growth.

## Chapter Review

### Key Terms

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**acting crowds:** crowds of people who are focused on a specific action or goal

**alternative movements:** social movements that limit themselves to self-improvement changes in individuals

- assembling perspective:** a theory that credits individuals in crowds as behaving as rational thinkers and views crowds as engaging in purposeful behavior and collective action
- casual crowds:** people who share close proximity without really interacting
- collective behavior:** a non-institutionalized activity in which several people voluntarily engage
- conventional crowds:** people who come together for a regularly scheduled event
- crowd:** when a fairly large number of people share close proximity
- diagnostic framing:** when the social problem is stated in a clear, easily understood manner
- emergent norm theory:** a perspective that emphasizes the importance of social norms in crowd behavior
- expressive crowds:** crowds who share opportunities to express emotions
- flash mob:** a large group of people who gather together in a spontaneous activity that lasts a limited amount of time
- frame alignment process:** using bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation as an ongoing and intentional means of recruiting participants to a movement
- mass:** a relatively large group with a common interest, even if they may not be in close proximity
- modernization:** the process that increases the amount of specialization and differentiation of structure in societies
- motivational framing:** a call to action
- new social movement theory:** theory that attempts to explain the proliferation of postindustrial and postmodern movements that are difficult to understand using traditional social movement theories
- prognostic framing:** when social movements state a clear solution and a means of implementation
- public:** an unorganized, relatively diffuse group of people who share ideas
- reform movements:** movements that seek to change something specific about the social structure
- religious/redemptive movements:** movements that work to promote inner change or spiritual growth in individuals
- resistance movements:** those who seek to prevent or undo change to the social structure
- resource mobilization theory:** theory that explains social movements' success in terms of their ability to acquire resources and mobilize individuals
- revolutionary movements:** movements that seek to completely change every aspect of society
- social change:** the change in a society created through social movements as well as through external factors like environmental shifts or technological innovations
- social movement industry:** the collection of the social movement organizations that are striving toward similar goals
- social movement organization:** a single social movement group
- social movement sector:** the multiple social movement industries in a society, even if they have widely varying constituents and goals
- social movement:** a purposeful organized group hoping to work toward a common social goal
- value-added theory:** a functionalist perspective theory that posits that several preconditions must be in place for collective behavior to occur



## Section Summary

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### 21.1 Collective Behavior

Collective behavior is non-institutionalized activity in which several people voluntarily engage. There are four different forms of collective behavior: crowd, mass, public, and social movement. There are three main theories on collective behavior. The first, the emergent-norm perspective, emphasizes the importance of social norms in crowd behavior. The next, the value-added theory, is a functionalist perspective that states that several preconditions must be in place for collective behavior to occur. Finally the assembling perspective focuses on collective action rather than collective behavior, addressing the processes associated with crowd behavior and the lifecycle and various categories of gatherings.

### 21.2 Social Movements

Social movements are purposeful, organized groups, either with the goal of pushing toward change, giving political voice to those without it, or gathering for some other common purpose. Social movements intersect with environmental changes, technological innovations, and other external factors to create social change. There are a myriad of catalysts that create social movements, and the reasons that people join are as varied as the participants themselves. Sociologists look at both the macro- and microanalytical reasons that social movements occur, take root, and ultimately succeed or fail.

### 21.3 Social Change

There are numerous and varied causes of social change. Four common causes, as recognized by social scientists, are technology, social institutions, population, and the environment. All four of these areas can impact when and how society changes. And they are all interrelated: a change in one area can lead to changes throughout. Modernization is a typical result of social change. Modernization refers to the process of increased differentiation and specialization within a society, particularly around its industry and infrastructure. While this assumes that more modern societies are better, there has been significant pushback on this western-centric view that all peripheral and semi-peripheral countries should aspire to be like North America and Western Europe.

## Section Quiz

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### 21.1 Collective Behavior

- Which of the following organizations is *not* an example of a social movement?
  - National Football League
  - Tea Party
  - Greenpeace
  - NAACP
- Sociologists using conflict perspective might study what?
  - How social movements develop
  - What social purposes a movement serves
  - What motivates inequitably treated people to join a movement
  - What individuals hope to gain from taking part in a social movement
- Which of the following is an example of collective behavior?
  - A soldier questioning orders
  - A group of people interested in hearing an author speak
  - A class going on a field trip
  - Going shopping with a friend
- The protesters at the Egypt uprising rally were:
  - a casual crowd
  - a conventional crowd
  - a mass
  - an acting crowd
- According to emergent-norm theory, crowds are:
  - irrational and impulsive
  - often misinterpreted and misdirected
  - able to develop their own definition of the situation
  - prone to criminal behavior

6. A boy throwing rocks during a demonstration might be an example of \_\_\_\_\_.
- structural conduciveness
  - structural strain
  - precipitating factors
  - mobilization for action

## 21.2 Social Movements

7. If we divide social movements according to their position among all social movements in a society, we are using the \_\_\_\_\_ theory to understand social movements.
- framing
  - new social movement
  - resource mobilization
  - value-added
8. While PETA is a social movement organization, taken together, the animal rights social movement organizations PETA, ALF, and Greenpeace are a(n) \_\_\_\_\_.
- social movement industry
  - social movement sector
  - social movement party
  - social industry
9. Social movements are:
- disruptive and chaotic challenges to the government
  - ineffective mass movements
  - the collective action of individuals working together in an attempt to establish new norms, beliefs, or values
  - the singular activities of a collection of groups working to challenge the status quo
10. When the League of Women Voters successfully achieved its goal of women being allowed to vote, they had to undergo frame \_\_\_\_\_, a means of completely changing their goals to ensure continuing relevance.
- extension
  - amplification
  - bridging
  - transformation
11. If a movement claims that the best way to reverse climate change is to reduce carbon emissions by outlawing privately owned cars, “outlawing cars” is the \_\_\_\_\_.
- prognostic framing
  - diagnostic framing
  - motivational framing
  - frame transformation

## 21.3 Social Change

12. Children in peripheral nations have little to no daily access to computers and the internet, while children in core nations are constantly exposed to this technology. This is an example of:
- the digital divide
  - human ecology
  - modernization theory
  - dependency theory
13. When sociologists think about technology as an agent of social change, which of the following is *not* an example?
- Population growth
  - Medical advances
  - The Internet
  - Genetically engineered food
14. China is undergoing a shift in industry, increasing labor specialization and the amount of differentiation present in the social structure. This exemplifies:
- human ecology
  - dependency theory
  - modernization
  - conflict perspective
15. Core nations that work to propel peripheral nations toward modernization need to be aware of:

- a. preserving peripheral nation cultural identity
  - b. preparing for pitfalls that come with modernization
  - c. avoiding hegemonistic assumptions about modernization
  - d. all of the above
16. In addition to social movements, social change is also caused by technology, social institutions, population and \_\_\_\_\_ .
- a. the environment
  - b. modernization
  - c. social structure
  - d. new social movements

## Short Answer

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### 21.1 Collective Behavior

1. Discuss the differences between a mass and a crowd. What is an example of each? What sets them apart? What do they share in common?
2. Can you think of a time when your behavior in a crowd was dictated by the circumstances? Give an example of emergent-norm perspective, using your own experience.
3. Discuss the differences between an acting crowd and a collective crowd. Give examples of each.
4. Imagine you are at a rally protesting nuclear energy use. Walk us through the hypothetical rally using the value-added theory, imagining it meets all the stages.

### 21.2 Social Movements

5. Think about a social movement industry dealing with a cause that is important to you. How do the different social movement organizations of this industry seek to engage you? Which techniques do you respond to? Why?
6. Do you think social media is an important tool in creating social change? Why or why not? Defend your opinion.
7. Describe a social movement in the decline stage. What is its issue? Why has it reached this stage?

### 21.3 Social Change

8. Consider one of the major social movements of the 20th century, from civil rights in the United States to Gandhi's nonviolent protests in India. How would technology have changed it? Would change have come more quickly or more slowly? Defend your opinion.
9. Discuss the digital divide in the context of modernization. Is there a real concern that poorer communities are lacking in technology? Why or why not?
10. Which theory do you think better explains the global economy: dependency theory (global inequity is due to the exploitation of peripheral and semi-peripheral nations by core nations) or modernization theory? Remember to justify your answer and provide specific examples.
11. Do you think that modernization is good or bad? Explain, using examples.

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## Index

---

### A

absolute monarchies, 382, 390  
absolute poverty, 217, 223  
achieved status, 93  
achieved statuses, 92  
acting crowds, 479, 491  
activity theory, 296, 300  
age stratification theory, 298, 300  
ageism, 292, 300  
aggregate, 123, 134  
agricultural societies, 84, 93  
alienation, 88, 93  
alternative movements, 484, 491  
amalgamation, 238, 248  
ambilineal, 315, 328  
anarchy, 382, 390  
animism, 344, 350  
anomie, 86, 93  
anticipatory socialization, 112, 113  
antipositivism, 15, 24  
anxiety disorders, 433, 440  
ascribed, 92  
ascribed status, 93  
assembling perspective, 481, 492  
assimilation, 237, 248  
atheism, 344, 350  
authoritarian leader, 134  
authoritarian leaders, 128  
authority, 380, 390  
automation, 413, 417

### B

baby boomers, 282, 300  
bartering, 399, 417  
beliefs, 61, 72  
bigamy, 315, 328  
bilateral descent, 315, 328  
bourgeoisie, 87, 93  
bureaucracies, 130, 134

### C

cancer cluster, 453, 469  
capital flight, 214, 223  
capitalism, 402, 417  
career inheritance, 407, 417  
carrying capacity, 455, 469  
case study, 44, 47  
caste system, 193, 204  
casual crowds, 479, 492  
category, 123, 134  
centenarians, 281, 300  
charismatic authority, 381, 390  
chattel slavery, 221, 223  
class, 193, 204  
class consciousness, 88, 93  
class system, 193, 204  
class traits, 199, 204  
clear division of labor, 131, 134  
climate change, 467, 469  
code of ethics, 46, 47

coercive organizations, 131, 134  
 cohabitation, 314, 328  
 cohort, 280, 300  
 collective behavior, 479, 492  
 collective conscience, 86, 93  
 commodification, 439, 440  
 commodities, 397, 417  
 concentric zone model, 460, 469  
 conflict theory, 19, 24, 146  
 conformity, 129, 134  
 conspicuous consumption, 204, 204  
 constitutional monarchies, 382, 390  
 content analysis, 46, 47  
 contested illnesses, 427, 440  
 continuity theory, 296, 300  
 control group, 47  
 control theory, 154  
 conventional crowds, 479, 492  
 convergence theory, 406, 417  
 core nations, 214, 223  
 cornucopian theory, 455, 469  
 corporate crime, 151, 154  
 corrections system, 154, 154  
 correlation, 39, 47  
 countercultures, 67, 72  
 court, 153, 154  
 credentialism, 366, 370  
 crime, 150, 154  
 criminal justice system, 153, 154  
 crowd, 479, 492  
 cults, 343, 350  
 cultural capital, 365, 370  
 cultural deviance theory, 146, 154  
 cultural imperialism, 59, 73  
 cultural relativism, 59, 73  
 cultural transmission, 361, 370  
 cultural universals, 57, 73  
 culture, 56, 73  
 culture lag, 69, 73  
 culture of prejudice, 235, 248  
 culture shock, 59, 73  
 cyberfeminism, 178, 179

## D

davis-moore thesis, 202, 204  
 debt accumulation, 216, 223  
 debt bondage, 221, 223  
 degradation ceremony, 112, 113  
 deindustrialization, 214, 223  
 demedicalization, 439, 440  
 democracy, 385, 390  
 democratic leader, 134  
 democratic leaders, 128  
 demographic transition theory, 455, 469  
 demography, 454, 469  
 denomination, 344, 350  
 dependency ratio, 284, 300  
 dependency theory, 222, 223  
 dependent variable, 35  
 dependent variables, 47  
 depression, 407, 417  
 design patent, 167  
 design patents, 179

deviance, 142, 154  
 diagnostic framing, 486, 492  
 dictatorship, 384, 390  
 differential association theory, 149, 154  
 diffusion, 70, 73  
 digital divide, 165, 179  
 disability, 434, 440  
 discoveries, 69, 73  
 discrimination, 232, 248  
 disengagement theory, 296, 300  
 doing gender, 265, 270  
 dominant, 231  
 dominant group, 248  
 double standard, 270  
 downward mobility, 198, 204  
 dramaturgical analysis, 21, 24  
 dyad, 127, 134  
 dynamic equilibrium, 18, 24  
 dysfunctions, 18, 24

## E

e-readiness, 165, 179  
 e-waste, 464, 469  
 ecclesia, 344, 350  
 economy, 397, 417  
 education, 358, 370  
 elder abuse, 293, 300  
 emergent norm theory, 480, 492  
 empirical evidence, 32, 47  
 endogamous, 193  
 endogamous marriages, 204  
 environmental racism, 468, 469  
 environmental sociology, 462, 469  
 established sects, 343, 350  
 ethnicity, 231, 248  
 ethnocentrism, 58, 73  
 ethnography, 42, 47  
 evolutionary model of technological change, 168, 179  
 exchange theory, 299, 300  
 exogamous, 193  
 exogamous marriages, 204  
 experiment, 44, 47  
 explicit rules, 131, 134  
 expressive crowds, 479, 492  
 expressive function, 134  
 expressive functions, 123  
 expressive leader, 134  
 expressive leaders, 127  
 expulsion, 236, 248  
 extended family, 318, 328  
 exurbs, 458, 469

## F

false consciousness, 88, 93  
 family, 313, 328  
 family life course, 317, 328  
 family life cycle, 316, 328  
 family of orientation, 313, 328  
 family of procreation, 313, 328  
 fertility rate, 454, 469  
 feudal societies, 84, 93  
 field research, 38, 47



figuration, 12, 24  
 filial piety, 284, 300  
 first world, 213, 223  
 flash mob, 479, 492  
 folkways, 63, 73  
 formal education, 360, 370  
 formal norms, 62, 73  
 formal organizations, 130, 134  
 formal sanctions, 144, 154  
 fourth world, 213, 223  
 frame alignment process, 487, 492  
 function, 18, 24  
 functionalism, 18, 24

## G

gatekeeping, 177, 179  
 gender, 256, 270  
 gender identity, 257, 259, 270  
 gender role, 259, 270  
 generalizability, 134  
 generalized other, 102, 113  
 genocide, 236, 248  
 gentrification, 460, 469  
 geriatrics, 285, 300  
 gerontocracy, 293, 300  
 gerontology, 278, 300  
 gerotranscendence, 300, 301  
 global assembly lines, 409, 417  
 global cities, 408, 417  
 global commodity chains, 409, 417  
 global feminization, 216, 223  
 global inequality, 212, 223  
 global stratification, 200, 205, 212, 223  
 globalization, 70, 73  
 grade inflation, 366, 370  
 grand theories, 17, 24  
 grief, 290, 301  
 gross national income, 214  
 gross national income (gni), 223  
 group, 122, 134

## H

habitualization, 91, 93  
 hate crimes, 151, 154  
 hawthorne effect, 36, 47  
 head start program, 367, 370  
 hidden curriculum, 108, 113, 365, 370  
 hierarchy of authority, 131, 134  
 high culture, 66, 73  
 homophobia, 258, 270  
 horticultural societies, 83, 93  
 hospice, 291, 301  
 human ecology, 460, 470  
 hunter-gatherer, 82  
 hunter-gatherer societies, 93  
 hypothesis, 34, 47

## I

ideal culture, 61, 73  
 impairment, 434, 440  
 impersonality, 132, 134  
 in-group, 124, 134

income, 192, 205  
 independent variables, 35, 47  
 individual mandate, 436, 440  
 industrial societies, 93  
 informal education, 360, 370  
 informal norms, 62, 73  
 informal sanctions, 144, 155  
 information societies, 85, 93  
 innovation, 69  
 innovations, 73  
 institutionalization, 91, 93  
 instrumental function, 123, 134  
 instrumental leader, 127, 134  
 intergenerational mobility, 198, 205  
 interpretive framework, 35, 47  
 intersection theory, 235, 248  
 interview, 38, 47  
 intimate partner violence (ipv), 325, 328  
 intragenerational mobility, 199, 205  
 inventions, 69, 73  
 iron cage, 89, 93  
 iron rule of oligarchy, 132, 134

## K

kinship, 315, 328  
 knowledge gap, 165, 179

## L

labeling theory, 147, 155  
 laissez-faire leader, 128, 134  
 language, 65, 73  
 latent functions, 18, 24  
 leadership function, 127, 134  
 leadership style, 134  
 leadership styles, 128  
 legal codes, 150, 155  
 legitimation, 438, 441  
 liberation theology, 348, 350  
 life course, 285, 301  
 life expectancy, 281, 301  
 literature review, 34, 48  
 looking-glass self, 92, 93

## M

macro-level, 17, 24  
 malthusian theory, 455, 470  
 manifest functions, 18, 24  
 market socialism, 404, 418  
 marriage, 313, 328  
 mass, 480, 492  
 mass media, 109  
 master status, 147, 155  
 material culture, 57, 73  
 matrilineal, 315  
 matrilineal descent, 328  
 matrilocal residence, 316, 328  
 mcdonaldization, 135  
 mcdonaldization of society, 132  
 mechanical solidarity, 86, 93  
 media, 180  
 media globalization, 172, 179  
 medical sociology, 427, 441

medicalization, 432, 441  
 medicalization of deviance, 439, 441  
 megachurch, 349, 350  
 megalopolis, 459, 470  
 mercantilism, 400, 418  
 meritocracies, 132  
 meritocracy, 135, 193, 205  
 metropolis, 459, 470  
 micro-level theories, 17, 24  
 minority group, 231, 248  
 model minority, 243, 248  
 modernization, 491, 492  
 modernization theory, 222, 223, 298, 301  
 monarchy, 382, 390  
 money, 399, 418  
 monogamy, 314, 328  
 monotheism, 344, 350  
 mood disorders, 433, 441  
 moral development, 103, 113  
 mores, 63, 73  
 mortality rate, 454, 470  
 motivational framing, 487, 492  
 mutualism, 405, 418

## N

narcotizing dysfunction, 176  
 nature, 104, 113  
 negative sanctions, 144, 155  
 neo-luddites, 178, 180  
 new media, 169, 180  
 new social movement theory, 488, 492  
 nimby, 469, 470  
 no child left behind act, 368, 370  
 nonmaterial culture, 57, 73  
 nonreactive, 46  
 nonreactive research, 48  
 nonviolent crimes, 151, 155  
 normative or voluntary organizations, 135  
 normative organizations, 131  
 norms, 62, 73  
 nuclear family, 318, 328  
 nurture, 104, 113

## O

oligarchy, 383, 390  
 one person, one vote, 387, 390  
 operational definition, 34  
 operational definitions, 48  
 organic solidarity, 86, 93  
 out-group, 124, 135  
 outsourcing, 412, 418

## P

panoptic surveillance, 177, 180  
 paradigms, 17, 24  
 participant observation, 41, 48  
 pastoral societies, 83, 93  
 patrilineal, 315  
 patrilineal descent, 328  
 patrilocal residence, 316, 329  
 patrimonialism, 381, 390  
 peer group, 107, 113

peripheral nations, 214, 223  
 personality disorders, 433, 441  
 physician-assisted suicide, 290, 301  
 planned obsolescence, 166, 180  
 plant patents, 167, 180  
 pluralism, 237, 248  
 polarization, 413, 418  
 police, 153, 155  
 politics, 386, 390  
 pollution, 463, 470  
 polyandry, 314, 329  
 polygamy, 314, 329  
 polygyny, 314, 329  
 polytheism, 344, 350  
 popular culture, 67, 73  
 population, 37, 48  
 population composition, 454, 470  
 population pyramid, 454, 470  
 positive sanctions, 144, 155  
 positivism, 14, 24  
 power, 379, 390  
 power elite, 146, 155  
 prejudice, 232, 248  
 primary aging, 286, 301  
 primary data, 38, 48  
 primary deviance, 147, 155  
 primary groups, 123, 135  
 primogeniture, 194, 205  
 private health care, 436, 441  
 prognostic framing, 486, 492  
 proletariat, 87, 93  
 public, 480, 492  
 public health care, 436, 441

## Q

qualitative data, 38, 48  
 qualitative sociology, 15, 24  
 quantitative data, 38, 48  
 quantitative sociology, 15, 24  
 queer theory, 270

## R

racial steering, 233, 248  
 racism, 232, 248  
 random sample, 38, 48  
 rational-legal authority, 381, 390  
 rationalization, 89, 93  
 real culture, 61, 73  
 recession, 407, 418  
 reference group, 125  
 reference groups, 135  
 reform movements, 484, 492  
 relative poverty, 217, 223  
 reliability, 33, 48  
 religion, 338, 351  
 religious beliefs, 338, 351  
 religious experience, 338, 351  
 religious rituals, 339, 351  
 religious/redemptive movements, 484, 492  
 representative democracy, 385, 390  
 research design, 48  
 resistance movements, 484, 492

resocialization, 112, 113  
resource mobilization theory, 486, 492  
revolutionary movements, 484, 492  
role conflict, 92, 94  
role performance, 92, 94  
role strain, 92, 94  
role-set, 92, 94  
roles, 91, 94

## S

sample, 37  
samples, 48  
sanction, 61  
sanctions, 73, 144, 155  
sapir-whorf hypothesis, 65, 73  
scapegoat theory, 231, 248  
scientific method, 48  
second world, 213, 223  
secondary aging, 286, 301  
secondary data analysis, 45, 48  
secondary deviance, 147, 155  
secondary groups, 123, 135  
sect, 343, 351  
segregation, 236, 248  
selective optimization with compensation theory, 299, 301  
self, 102, 114  
self-fulfilling prophecy, 91, 94  
self-report study, 152, 155  
semi-peripheral nations, 214, 223  
senescence, 291, 301  
services, 398, 418  
sex, 256, 270  
sex ratio, 454, 470  
sexism, 262, 270  
sexual orientation, 257, 270  
sexuality, 266, 270  
shaken-baby syndrome, 327, 329  
sick role, 438, 441  
social change, 489, 492  
social construction of race, 230, 248  
social control, 61, 73, 143, 155  
social disorganization theory, 145, 155  
social epidemiology, 429, 441  
social facts, 18, 24  
social gerontology, 278, 301  
social integration, 86, 94  
social mobility, 198, 205  
social movement, 492  
social movement industry, 486, 492  
social movement organization, 486, 492  
social movement sector, 486, 492  
social movements, 482  
social order, 143, 155  
social placement, 363, 371  
social solidarity, 17, 24  
social stratification, 191, 205  
socialism, 403, 418  
socialization, 100, 114  
socialized medicine, 437, 441  
society, 56, 73, 82  
sociological imagination, 10, 24  
sociology, 10, 24  
sorting, 364, 371

standard of living, 195, 205  
 status, 92, 94  
 status consistency, 194, 205  
 stereotype interchangeability, 435, 441  
 stereotypes, 232, 248  
 stigmatization, 434, 441  
 stigmatization of illness, 427, 441  
 strain theory, 145, 155  
 street crime, 151, 155  
 structural mobility, 199, 205  
 structural unemployment, 416, 418  
 subculture, 67  
 subculture of aging theory, 299, 301  
 subcultures, 73  
 subjective poverty, 218, 224  
 subordinate, 231  
 subordinate group, 248  
 subsistence farming, 401, 418  
 suburbs, 458, 470  
 survey, 36  
 surveys, 48  
 symbolic interactionism, 21, 24  
 symbols, 64, 73

## T

technological diffusion, 174, 180  
 technological globalization, 172, 180  
 technology, 164, 180  
 technophiles, 178, 180  
 thanatology, 290, 301  
 theory, 17, 24  
 third world, 213, 224  
 thomas theorem, 91, 94  
 total institution, 135  
 total institutions, 131  
 totalitarian dictatorship, 385, 390  
 totemism, 344, 351  
 tracking, 365, 371  
 traditional authority, 381, 390  
 transgender, 259, 271  
 transsexuals, 259, 271  
 triad, 127, 135

## U

underemployment, 416, 418  
 underground economy, 218, 224  
 underinsured, 436, 441  
 unilateral descent, 315, 329  
 universal access, 361, 371  
 universal health care, 437, 441  
 upward mobility, 198, 205  
 urban sociology, 457, 470  
 urbanization, 457, 470  
 utilitarian organizations, 131, 135  
 utility patents, 167, 180

## V

validity, 33, 48  
 value neutrality, 47, 48  
 value-added theory, 480, 492  
 values, 61, 73  
 verstehen, 15, 25

victimless crime, 151, 155  
violent crimes, 151, 155  
voluntary organizations, 131

**W**

wealth, 192, 205  
white flight, 459, 470  
white privilege, 233, 248

**X**

xenocentrism, 59, 73  
xenophobia, 409, 418

**Z**

zero population growth, 455, 470