

# 12 Collective Behavior, Social Change, and Contemporary Society



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## Chapter Outline

- 12.1 Collective Behavior
- 12.2 Social Movements
- 12.3 Social Change
- 12.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Social Change
- 12.5 Modernization and Post-Industrial Society

## Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the main forms of collective behavior.
- Describe the major types of social movements.
- Discuss the main theoretical perspective on social movements.
- Describe the various sources of social change.
- Discuss the four main sociological perspectives on social change.
- Understand the topics of modernization and post-industrial society.

The radio was a revolutionary technological innovation that had a profound impact on American society. It gained popularity in the 1920s, and it was the first major medium for the live transmission of information. The introduction of the radio initiated the popularity of the mass media in this country. In Depression-era America, the radio was the primary source of information and recreation for many American households. Radio listening was a social activity. A family or group of friends would gather around the radio and collectively listen to a broadcast. Some shows would feature news, and sports broadcasts were popular. Weekly dramas called serials also captured the imagination of the listening public.



*Popperfoto/Contributor/Getty Images*

**Orson Welles giving a radio broadcast.**

The October 30, 1938, episode of *The Mercury Theater on the Air* was an adaptation of H. G. Wells' classic novel *War of the Worlds*. The radio program was written and narrated by Orson Welles. The show was structured to simulate a series of live news broadcasts that were interrupting the "regularly scheduled programming" of orchestra music (Lovgen, 2005). These phony news bulletins claimed the United States was under attack by aliens. Massive gas plumes were spotted coming from Mars, New York City was being overrun by alien invaders, and a meteorite had hit a farm in New Jersey.

Although there was a statement at the beginning of the broadcast stating that the upcoming show was fiction, some listeners did not take note of that. Moreover, others had tuned into the program after it was started and were confused. Cantril (1947) estimated that 12% of the adult population in the United States heard the broadcast. Among those listening, 28% thought there was legitimately an alien invasion occurring.

These people then panicked and engaged in all kinds of hysterical behavior. In Newark, New Jersey, people were running from their homes with their faces covered with wet towels because they feared an "alien gas attack." Others sought refuge in their basements, turned to prayer, or phoned friends and relatives. The telephone switchboards of police agencies, newspapers, and radio stations were flooded with phone calls from anxious citizens. Dozens of people even had to seek medical treatment because of

shock and panic. Of course, none of the reported attacks were real, but the reaction of the people was.

In this chapter, several elements of collective behavior and social change will be discussed. Not all the behavior will be as sensational as that caused by Orson Welles' manipulations. Other collective behavior will be the result of a social movement trying to change the world or right a perceived wrong. Still others will happen because of emotion or situations that arise and then quickly pass. Still others will be very gradual—so gradual that you may not notice the change until it has happened. Some change will happen as a consequence of a related adjustment. Regardless, sociologists must be able to assess change, especially change caused by social movements, to recognize how the society is different from how it once was.

Three major social phenomena will be covered in this chapter. The first is collective behavior, which is generally spontaneous and consists of loosely organized activities that involve a large number of people. Second are social movements. These are organized and enduring efforts to promote (or discourage) social change. The main difference between collective behavior and social movements is the degree of organization. Specifically, social movements are more organized than collective behavior. The final topic, social change, involves transformations in the culture and social structure over time.

## 12.1 Collective Behavior

**Collective behavior** refers to loosely organized activities that involve a large number of individuals and are often spontaneous. People behave as a unit and collectively engage in some type of concerned action (Park, 1927). This can be conceived of as “mass behavior”; it is unplanned, lacks the regular interaction of groups, and doesn’t have the typical social boundaries of groups. This tends to be fragile and fleeting—collective behavior develops quickly, and then disappears just as rapidly. As a category, it includes a wide range of phenomena, including fads, fashions, rumors, gossip, crowds, riots, and disasters.

While social change is not usually the stated goal of collective behavior, occasionally it may be a consequence. For instance, riots and protests can draw attention to some problem and eventually lead to changes in society. Disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes have led to changes in public safety protocol as well as modifications to building codes. And some fashions gain such enduring acceptance they eventually become the norm.

### Fashions and Fads

**Fashions** are enduring patterns of behavior and style that enjoy popularity with a large number of individuals (e.g., clothing, hairstyles, architecture, and motor vehicles). Fashions enjoy widespread acceptance, endure for a significant period of time, and often become institutionalized. They may be associated with a particular identity (e.g., the business suit or Greek-letter clothing), and adoption of a particular fashion may identify a person as holding a particular status. Because fashions encompass consumer products and encourage conspicuous consumption, they can be profitable from a business standpoint. They are often aggressively marketed in the popular media.

On the other hand, a **fad** is a short-lived type of unconventional behavior or object that is enthusiastically adopted by some segment of the population. Fads appear suddenly, spread rapidly, are accepted quickly, and disappear rapidly (Aguirre, Quarantelli, & Mendoza, 1988). This may involve objects like Beanie Babies, Cabbage Patch Kids®, inline skates, Tamagotchi, and Members Only jackets. Other fads include behaviors like streaking (running naked in public places), using a hula hoop, bungee jumping, performing the Macarena dance at sporting events, and the “ice bucket” challenge. Compared to fashions, fads last a shorter period of time and are not as widely accepted—in fact, many of you are probably unfamiliar with some of the fads listed above.



*Paolo Cipriani/Getty Images*

**“Selfies” seem to be enduring beyond the time period of a fad in western culture.**

## Rumors and Urban Legends

A **rumor** is a piece of unconfirmed information that can't be verified and is rapidly spread via word of mouth or electronic communication (including the media). Shibutani (1966) observed that during times of crisis or emergency, the demand for information exceeds the supply. This gap in turn encourages the development and spread of rumors. The media can further complicate this situation by running stories that are not verified by traditional sources. When an event that is out of the ordinary happens, the general public is in a heightened state of anxiety and people wish to orient themselves by collectively constructing some interpretation of events (Weeber, Turner, & Durkin, 2005). For instance, on November 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. The shocked public turned to the media for information on this situation. There were a number of questionable news reports that later proved to be false: a journalist was also shot, a secret service agent was also killed, and the Vice-President had suffered a heart attack. A similar phenomenon occurred following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. There were false reports that the heinous attacks were the work of Kashmiri separatists. Moreover, there were also incorrect accounts that the passengers of Flight 93 had regained control of the plane and purposely crashed it in an effort to prevent further tragedy. Rumors circulated that terrorists chose the date, 9–11, to coincide with the emergency call line in the United States.

An **urban legend** is a type of contemporary folklore that describes unusual and horrible events while cautioning about the alleged dangers of the contemporary world. Examples include stories that McDonalds® hamburger meat contains earthworms, that rats have been found in buckets of KFC®, and that Bubble Yum bubble gum contains spider eggs. Best and Horiuchi (1985) examined urban legends regarding “Halloween sadists” who allegedly adulterated children’s treats with such vile acts as putting razor blades in apples and heroin in candy. They found that parents’ groups, some law enforcement officials, and the media were playing a role in the spread of such misinformation. In fact, approximately 60% of parents who responded to an ABC News poll in 1985 believed these stories were true.

Urban legends function to express the collective anxieties and insecurities that people have about modern life in contemporary society. At the same time, they also help people to construct meaning in a fashion that often promotes traditional cultural and social values (DiFonzo & Bordia, 2007). For example, the cautionary tales about fast food and candy promote traditional values about a healthy diet for kids. Also, stories about “Halloween sadists” serve to illustrate the dangers that are posed by strangers. Urban legends are also typically sensational stories that people are likely to spread. For example, consider the urban legend of rogue medical students harvesting the kidneys of unsuspecting victims who have been lured to an apartment by an attractive woman in a bar. This story meets all the criteria of an urban legend. It describes a horrible event that seems unlikely—but still somehow possible. It reinforces a social norm against promiscuity (as the attractive woman seems to be offering a sexual tryst to entice the victim back to her apartment). Finally, it is such a fantastic story one can hardly wait to tell others what they’ve just heard. With the advent of social media and other means of mass communication, it is now easy to post the story to Twitter or Facebook or email everyone in your address book to warn that their kidneys are in danger. Urban legends have become so prevalent in modern society that a clearinghouse website has been created at snopes.com to track emerging urban legends and keep a massive inventory of past stories for when they reemerge in the future.

## Panics

A **panic** occurs when people in the same location have a response (often irrational) to some perceived threat. A panic can occur in a very compressed period of time, or over an extended time frame (such as a financial panic causing a “run on banks” or adverse impact on the financial markets). The threat that causes a panic may be real or imagined. However, a common theme is that people are seriously concerned about the threat. This situation is influenced by the fact that there is often a lack of tangible information about the threat, and rumors frequently abound. The results of a panic (sometimes called a “mass panic”) can be tragic. For instance, in November of 1979, 11 people died at Cincinnati’s Riverfront Stadium while attending a concert of the rock band The Who. Since seating was “first come first served” or festival seating, fans were lined up at the various admission gates. At almost the same time the gates opened, a sound check was being performed on stage. Many fans believed the concert was starting and rushed towards the stage. Other fans tried to flee the onslaught. In the ensuing pandemonium, many people were trampled. In May of 1985, a fatal mass panic occurred at Heysel Stadium in Belgium during the European soccer championship match between Liverpool (England) and Juventus (Italy). Prior to kickoff, some Liverpool fans breached a fence (intended to keep rival fans separated) to confront the Juventus supporters. As the Juventus fans tried to escape the perceived threat, many were crushed against a stadium wall and 39 died. Fortunately, mass panics tend to be rare (Lewis, 1989; Pastel, 2001).

The concept of **moral panic** refers to a dispersed collective of people who have irrational reactions to some perceived threat to the existing social order. With this phenomenon, people perceive a threat to the moral fabric of society. Several have occurred during the 20th century, with examples including moral panics involving alcohol, pornography, and communists. A good example of this phenomenon involves the “Satanic cult” scares of the 1980s. A “widespread epidemic of Satanism” was blamed for a crime wave that included child abuse, serial murder, human sacrifice, and cannibalism (Jenkins & Maier-Katkin, 1992). During this period, advocacy groups and some elements of the media were involved in all kinds of tabloid-like claims-making (such as the assertion that 95% of missing kids had actually been abducted and

killed by Satanists). This included the television special hosted by Geraldo Rivera that aired on Halloween night of 1988 entitled *Devil Worship: Exposing Satan's Underground*. There was even congressional testimony on this topic. A driving force behind this specific moral panic was the reaction of some Christian fundamentalists to the perceived rise of religious and political liberalism in the United States. As with other moral panics, the media played a key role. Goode (2000) observed that the media seem to thrive on panics—they make for compelling news and increase viewership. As there are now no fewer than six 24-hour all-news networks, the desire has risen to turn any story, even an inherently local one, into a massive threat.

## Disasters

A **disaster** is an unforeseen event that involves some severe danger and results in catastrophic damage to people and property. There is a distinction made between natural disasters and technological disasters. Natural disasters are caused by natural occurrences or “acts of God.” For instance, in December 2004, a magnitude 9.1 earthquake struck off the coast of Indonesia and triggered a tsunami in the Indian Ocean. The event killed nearly one quarter of a million people. In October 2012, “Superstorm Sandy” struck the east coast of the United

States. It caused about \$65 billion in property damage and killed 72 people (Beven, 2012). On the other hand, technological disasters are related to human activity and result from a failure of technology. For instance, in 1986 an explosion occurred at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Russia. Approximately 30 people died, large areas of land became uninhabitable, and the long-term effects still are not known (International Atomic Energy Committee, 2005). A gas leak at the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, India, in 1984 caused nearly 20,000 deaths and over 500,000 injuries (Eckerman, 2005). Hurricane Katrina involved both a natural and technological disaster.



*NOAA/Science Source/Getty Images*

**In New Orleans, flood waters covered large portions of the city during Hurricane Katrina.**

ical disaster. The storm itself had high winds, heavy rains, and a catastrophic storm surge (a natural disaster). However, the high water levels caused the levee system in the city of New Orleans to fail (a technological disaster). Water inundated the city and mixed with sewage and chemicals to create a “toxic gumbo.”

Understanding disasters sociologically means examining people’s reactions to the event (Gill, 2007). One response for those who may be affected by a disaster is to take protective action, such as seeking shelter (e.g., in the case of a tornado) or evacuating from the area to be impacted (e.g., in the case of a hurricane). This protective action is a response to a perceived threat and can be influenced by the media as well as friends and family members. Some may take the threat seriously (and avoid harm) while others may not heed warnings (and face harm).

As Burnside, Miller, and Rivera (2007) noted, social class can play an essential role in this reaction. Specifically, members of the lower class may lack transportation and alternative shelter options and be unable to evacuate. This was the case in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina, and tens of thousands of the most vulnerable residents found themselves trapped. The reactions of those not directly affected by the disaster are also important in terms of rendering assistance. The state and federal governments have been severely criticized for their slow response to the epic disasters in New Orleans; the inaction greatly enhanced human suffering. Finally, in some situations, the reaction of some members in the impacted community may actually be “corrosive” (Miller, 2006). For example, some unscrupulous people may greatly overcharge for necessities such as food and water, and others may loot, as was the case in Hurricane Katrina. Research indicates that neighbors frequently band together as a community to prevent looting (Cromwell, Dunham, Akers, & Lanza-Kaduce, 1995). Such informal social control mechanisms are essential in the aftermath of a disaster because police protection is not readily available. In an effort to curb price gouging, several states such as Florida have passed laws that prohibit dramatic increases in the price of necessities during a declared emergency. However, a recent study found that fewer than 1% of price gouging complaints were actually investigated by state officials (McGee, 2008).

## Crowds

A **crowd** is a temporary collection of people gathered in close physical proximity who can influence each other's actions and emotions. Although there are a diverse variety of crowds, they share several common characteristics (Sullivan, 2004):

- *Anonymity*—Participants have a sense that they are unrecognized. They tend, therefore, to have a diminished sense of personal responsibility for their actions.
- *Uncertainty*—Crowds experience a degree of the unknown and unexpected. What will transpire next is generally ambiguous.
- *Suggestibility*—Because the events lack formal or rigid structure, people in crowds seek guidance from others on how to behave (e.g., should one sit, stand, applaud, scream, throw rocks, etc.).
- *Emotional arousal*—Crowd members are confronted with all kinds of stimuli that often occur in rapid fashion. There is also an acute awareness of the presence of other individuals in a crowd situation.
- *Permissiveness*—Crowds tend to stretch the boundaries of acceptable behavior. People in a crowd setting are more likely to engage in behavior and express attitudes they wouldn't in “ordinary” circumstances. (Sullivan, 2004)

Hebert Blumer (1969a) identified four types of crowds: casual, conventional, expressive, and acting. Casual crowds are loosely organized around some common event. Participants do not engage in structured interactions or rituals. People can exit and enter this type of crowd with relative ease, such as when walking through a park or viewing a museum exhibit. A conventional crowd is a sanctioned gathering that is deliberately planned for some specific purpose. Behavior occurs in compliance with established rules. Examples include people watching a sporting event or a Presidential inauguration. The expressive crowd is gathered based on some emotional theme with a focus on personal gratification and stimulation. This includes a prayer revival, fans celebrating a team's championship, New Year's Eve in Times Square, and those attending a peaceful protest. Finally, an acting crowd is volatile and focused intensely

on a single object or objects. These crowds are typically violent and disruptive. Examples are mobs, riots, and looting events. While crowds start with one purpose, the mood and purpose of a group can change quickly. For instance, sports fans celebrating a victory can quickly turn into an acting crowd that is rioting, given certain conditions.

## 12.2 Social Movements

A social movement is a lasting and organized effort to promote or discourage some type of change. These movements are driven by an ideology that serves as justification for their existence and actions (Hughes & Kroehler, 2013). Many sociologists believe they are the most important type of collective behavior. They are clearly the most organized and most enduring (Lofland, 1996). Social movements have been part of the American social fabric since its founding.

### Types of Social Movements

According to Aberle (1966), there are four main types of social movements. These phenomena can be classified based on two variables: first, the desired degree of change (limited versus total); second, the target of change (certain individuals or the whole society). A **revolutionary movement** seeks a complete change in society. It advocates a radical and complete transformation of the existing social order. Among the various types of social movements, it is clearly the most extreme type. An example would be the independence movement among the American colonists in the 18th century who sought independence from Britain. Their actions lead to the American Revolutionary War (1775–1783) and the eventual establishment of the United States of America. Another example would be the left-wing group called the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) of the 1970s. Best known for kidnapping heiress Patty Hearst, this group sought the violent overthrow of the U.S. government. A more recent example would be the right-wing “militia” movement of the 1980s and 1990s (Van Dyke & Soule, 2002). They sought to overthrow the federal government, which they believed was a failure and a threat to individual liberties. This movement gained national attention when two members bombed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people and injuring nearly 700 others.



Associated Press

**The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., integration leader, addresses a crowd on a street in Lakeview, New York, on May 12, 1965.**

**Reformative social movements** are focused on limited change in the whole society. Instead of seeking a complete change of the society as a whole, they are seeking to reform a limited aspect of the society. In the United States, this often involves organizations that are seeking

to secure full rights for a certain class of citizens. The Women's Rights and Civil Rights movements of the 1960s are leading examples. More recently, the gay rights movement has sought equal rights for lesbian and gay citizens in the United States. Unlike the revolutionary movement, the reformatory movement operates within the established boundaries of the social structure it wishes to change.

Others are **reactionary movements** that oppose change. Their goal is to revive previous social arrangements or to maintain the status quo. They view changes that have occurred or that they perceive to be occurring as threatening to them, and they seek to resist these changes. Various social conservative groups have sought to counter advances in women's rights, abortion rights, and gay rights, while liberal groups have sought to resist gun rights and the reinstitution of the death penalty (Goldberg, 1991). A good example of a reactionary movement from the last part of the 20th century in the United States would be the "Moral Majority." This was a politically oriented group of fundamentalist Christians founded in 1979 by the Reverend Jerry Falwell. They were "opposed to the Equal Rights Amendment, to the increased tolerance of homosexuality, the growing permissiveness regarding premarital sex, the greater acceptance of divorce, and to abortion" (Yinger & Cutler, 1982, p. 291).

A final type of social movement, the **redemptive movement**, focuses on radical changes in specific individuals, rather than the larger society. The goal of such movements is to have these individuals transform themselves and change their lives. An excellent example of this type of social movement is 12-step groups such as Alcoholic Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and Gambler's Anonymous. Their goal is to help members redeem themselves and lead better lives by abstaining from alcohol, drugs, and gambling, respectively. These movements include the Christian men's group Promise Keepers, which was oriented toward encouraging members to be better husbands and fathers, and Weight Watchers, which is aimed at supporting members in losing weight and leading healthier lifestyles.

## Theoretical Explanations of Social Movements

William Kornhauser (1959) is responsible for developing the concept of mass society. This perspective maintains that isolated and alienated people are drawn to social movements because these entities offer them a sense of belonging that they are missing. People with weak social ties can fill a void in their lives by participating in a social movement. Regarding people joining social movements, Eric Hoffer (1951) noted:

To the frustrated a mass movement offers substitutes either for the whole self or for the elements which make life bearable and which they cannot evoke out of their individual resources . . . The burning conviction that we have a holy duty toward others is often a way of attaching our drowning selves to a passing raft. What looks like giving a hand is often holding on for dear life . . . One of the most potent attractions of a mass movement is its offering of a substitute for individual hope. (pp. 13–15)

On the other hand, people who are well integrated in a society are unlikely to seek membership in a social movement.

Deprivation theory holds that social movements develop in situations where people feel they are not being adequately served by the current social arrangements. They don't believe that their needs are being met and they feel deprived. This creates a sense of injustice. Relative deprivation occurs when people think they are worse off than members of their reference group (i.e., people they compare themselves to) (Merton, 1968). A social movement can form among people who share a common sense of deprivation and wish to rectify the conditions that are undesirable to them. This theory represents functionalist thinking on the topic of social movements (Sullivan, 2004) because the movements are thought to occur when there are structural problems involving a gap between the rewards available in a society and people's expectations.

Resource mobilization theory does not really focus on the reasons that individuals join social movements. Instead, it is concerned with the conditions by which social movements prosper. The success or failure of a given social movement is not based on the emotional motivations of its members, but rather the availability and utilization of resources. The resources in question are things like finances, social and political contentions, communication, and media attention. If these resources are available and can be properly utilized, then the movement is likely to succeed. If not, the social movement is likely to fail.

Synthesizing elements of these models is Neil Smelser's (1962) value-added model of collective action. Smelser's model is divided into several determinants. The more of these determinants that exist in a situation, the more likely some collective action will occur. The first is structural conduciveness, which refers to the possibilities for an incident of collective behavior to happen. In short, can the crowd identify some person or event that is responsible for their trouble? If so, can the group communicate to one another to organize some action? Finally, is there a way for the group to express grievances through traditional channels? If the crowd knows who caused the problem, feels there is no way to address their problem in the existing society, and can communicate with one another, the likelihood of action increases. If any of these elements are missing, the likelihood of collective action decreases.

The next determinant is structural strain—whether or not the issue is caused by normative strain (which is situational and will likely pass) or values strain (which will be seen as an attack on the common way of life). Clearly, the values strain is the one that will cause collective action.

Smelser's third determinant is a growth of a generalized belief. This relates to the first point where a source of the problem is identified. Group hostility often arises from feelings of ambiguity and anxiety. If the crowd is unsure of what can or will happen next, a narrative will emerge from the group. This story will identify who is responsible for the issue and will indicate that the group should punish the responsible party. If the crowd is not feeling anxiety or a narrative does not develop and take hold in the group, collective action is unlikely.

Next is mobilization for action: Does someone take the lead in the group to start taking action? Quite obviously, if no one takes any action, neither will the group. However, if the leader takes a peaceful or pro-social action, then the group will likely follow. The same is true if the leader takes a violent action; the group will likely follow that. Associated with this determinant is some precipitating event. Does someone throw a bottle? Do the police arrive in full riot gear? Does someone from a competing group throw a punch? In short, is there a spark that ignites the action?

Finally, one must consider the role of forces of social control. If there are strong, pro-social controls in place, the collective action may not start. Social control can be formal (e.g., police, military) or informal (e.g., local opinion leaders, ministers), with the assumption being these actors would prefer the collective action not start.

For Smelser, collecting and analyzing these determinants can allow a researcher to understand why collective behavior took place. It may also be the key to predicting when such behavior will occur and even grasping collective action when it seems to be irrational.

## Sociology in Action: Celebration Riots

On April 7, 2014, the University of Connecticut Huskies men's basketball team defeated the University of Kentucky Wildcats 60–54 to win its second NCAA Men's Basketball Championship in four years. This win was different than the previous wins, though. UConn's longtime coach Jim Calhoun had retired and turned the team over to former UConn player Kevin Ollie. The team struggled throughout their first year with Ollie and did not play in post-season tournaments due to an NCAA punishment. As the 2013–2014 season started, the team had lost several starts and had changed conferences, now playing in the less prestigious American Athletic Conference. Through the regular season, the team was ranked in the top 25 but was never viewed as a threat. The Huskies made the NCAA Tournament as a #7 seed

(indicating the selection committee believed them to be no better than the 28th-best team in the country). Their win made them the second lowest seed ever to win the Final Four.

The 2014 championship was different for another reason as well. While the basketball team was celebrating in Arlington, Texas, where the game was played, back on campus in Storrs, Connecticut, a celebration riot was well underway. By the time order was restored around 1:30 a.m., over 30 arrests had been made. Thousands of dollars in property damage had occurred—cars had been turned over, a lamppost was uprooted and thrown



Peter Macdiarmid/Thinkstock

**Riot police step in to control German soccer fans.**

through the front window of an academic building, and the student union was trashed. Police attributed much of the damage to alcohol consumption, and UConn Police chief Barbara O'Connor even said she was happy with the way the campus conducted itself (Cox, 2014).

Several questions arise when these celebration riots happen, as they do on an almost yearly basis after sports championships in the United States. The most common question is "Why are fans trashing their own town or campus?" Jerry Lewis has spent much of the last 25 years attempting to answer that question. In his book *Sports Fan Violence in the United States* (2007), Lewis analyzes these riots and proposes a set of criteria that can explain these riots and potentially predict when they will occur. It is important to note that with relatively few exceptions, fan riots in the United States are "celebration riots"; it is the fans of the winning team that are the ones doing the rioting. In contrast, in Europe, specifically around soccer, there are more likely to be "punishing riots" in which the fans of the losing team takes out their collective frustration on anything representing the winning side (e.g., the winner's

**(continued)**

## Sociology in Action: Celebration Riots (*continued*)

town, fans, team bus, anything with the “wrong color”). In the United States, the losers tend to disappear while the winners celebrate—often in violent and destructive ways.

Drawing from Smelser’s value-added model, Lewis argues that the more of these variables present in the situation, the more likely a riot is to occur. Lewis derives a series of hypotheses designed to highlight certain conditions that, when present, make a celebrating riot increasing likely to occur:

1. Celebrating riots by fans of the winning team are more likely than punishing riots by fans of the losing team.
2. A celebrating riot is more likely to occur after championship games.
3. A celebrating riot is more likely to occur if the winning team has failed to win a championship in the previous five years.
4. A celebrating riot is more likely to occur the deeper into play the championship series continues (e.g., Game 6 of a “best of seven” series).
5. A celebrating riot is more likely to occur if the deciding game is a close, exciting event.
6. A celebrating riot is facilitated by sports fans’ access to a natural, urban gathering area.
7. If a celebrating riot occurs, the typical rioter will be a young, White male (which is a typical sports fan, but it also means that most of the fans will look alike, increasing the anonymity within the crowd).

In analyzing Lewis’ criteria, a couple of things are clear. First, many of these criteria have to do with emotion. The first five actively assume that a significant amount of tension and anxiety will be present as fans watch their team try to win a coveted position, especially if they have not done so in several years. Second, only a few of these criteria are knowable in advance. We will know if the game is for a championship. We will know how close to ending a championship series is. We will know how long it has been since a given team has won a title.

We will also know if the fans have access to a “natural, urban gathering area.” In the UConn example, the college campus served as this gathering place. However, in many professional sports, the area around the stadium or arena becomes the staging area. There has been a trend over the past 20 years to build sports stadiums and arenas in downtown areas as a means of urban revitalization or gentrification (Rosenweig, 2005). With these downtown stadiums come bars, restaurants, and retail businesses hoping to capitalize on the crowds flooding the area to watch the ballgame. It is this pattern that opens the doors to the celebration riot. During a big game, many fans who don’t have game tickets will still flood the downtown area to be close to the action. Some cities have even started having viewing parties, inviting fans to come downtown and watch the game on big screens near the arena. These fans are highly emotional because of their team’s success (especially if their team has not won a championship in several years) and likely have just spent several hours in a bar watching a game. When their team is successful, the joyous, intoxicated crowd spills out into the streets (quite literally).

While the crowd is probably primarily filled with happy people, we are almost certainly seeing non-normal behavior. This could be something as benign as dancing in the street or climbing a lamppost, but when norms start to be violated it becomes very easy for other forms of non-normal behavior to begin. Whether these behaviors are turning over a dumpster, climbing on a bus shelter, or flipping a car, the high level of emotion coupled with a decrease in social control allows for riotous behavior to start.

*(continued)*

## Sociology in Action: Celebration Riots (*continued*)

Durkheim wrote of the idea of a *social current*, which could sweep through a crowd and move typically normal individuals to do atrocious things (Durkheim, 1895). As the “normal” behaviors begin to break down around the fans, the anonymity of a large crowd coupled with the energy of that crowd, along with a significant dose of alcohol, make violent, destructive behavior an option. Now it’s not simply chanting for your team and climbing the bus shelter, but also setting fire to the overturned car, or trashing the bus shelter, or throwing a piece of that shelter through the department store window.

Earlier in this chapter, Smelser’s theory mentioned how a lack of social control could make collective action more likely. The same is true here. If, as typically happens, local law enforcement wait for the riot to get out of hand before sending in the police, the rioters tend to see this as an escalation and often respond with violence toward the police. Celebration riots can be prevented if a large and consistent police presence was maintained before, during, and after the games. This strategy is also very expensive.

Using Lewis’ hypothesis, let’s analyze the UConn riot in Storrs:

1. UConn has just won the NCAA Championship.
2. The game against Kentucky was the final game of a month-long tournament known generally as “March Madness,” which is watched by millions of people in the United States.
3. UConn had won a title only two years before. However, the program had faced several challenges, including losing its legendary coach. They were not expecting to win the title.
4. While the NCAA Finals is a single game, the tournament itself serves as a month-long series that culminates the first Monday in April.
5. The game was a close, exciting event. The margin of victory was 6 but the UConn led by only one point with eight minutes left to play.
6. The campus at Storrs, Connecticut, served as the natural, urban gathering area.
7. When watching the clips of the rioting, you see men and women in the crowd, but most of the damage is being done by young, White males.

So, six of the seven criteria were met and a riot occurred—just as the theory would predict. During the NCAA tournament there were riots at the University of Dayton and University of Arizona. After the Frozen Four NCAA Hockey championships there was a riot at the University of Minnesota and one at Michigan State University when their team earned a spot in the Rose Bowl. And just so we don’t think this is strictly a collegiate phenomenon, there were riots at several locations in Massachusetts after the Boston Red Sox won the 2013 World Series (just as their fans had rioted in 2007 and 2004, and also in 2012 when the New England Patriots played in the Super Bowl). Similar riots occurred in San Francisco in 2010 and 2012 when the Giants won the World Series, in 2009 and 2010 when the Los Angeles Lakers won NBA titles, and in Baltimore following the 2013 Super Bowl win by the Ravens. In each case, most or all of the criteria were met.

What the theory did not predict is that fans of the losing Kentucky Wildcats team rioted as well! Those of us who study these riots have noticed over the past few years that even losing fans tend to have celebration riots. They are not punishing riots; instead, they have the same tone as the riots celebrating the winners. This could indicate that the idea of “riot as celebration” has become part of the sports culture. Perhaps now causing damage is a way to show how strong the fan base is.

## 12.3 Social Change

**Social change** involves the transformation of the social structure and culture over time. It results in subsequent shifts in both culture and society. Not only does social change have a profound impact on the broader social structure, it also greatly impacts the experiences of individuals. Ironically, C. Wright Mills (1959) wrote about the “earthquake of social change” that occurred in the United States during the 1950s. A hallmark of the years since then has been a far more pronounced level of social change. For instance, recent years have seen a tremendous change in gender and race relations in our country. A great number of technological innovations have transformed social life, including television, telephones, computers, automobiles, airplanes, and satellite communications. There are many sources of social change; we will explore several of them in the following sections.

### Physical Environment

Since the very beginning of civilization, people have had to achieve a working relationship with their physical environments for social life to be possible. This is a functional necessity for society to thrive. Droughts, floods, storms, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and climate change are all environmental concerns that can present a serious challenge to the well-being of a social group. For instance, during the Great Depression, over-farming created a “dust bowl” in the Great Plains, and many Americans needed to relocate (Shepard, 2009). Due to the destruction of Hurricane Katrina, tens of thousands of people living in Gulf Coast areas had to relocate; over 400,000 people evacuated the city of New Orleans. Two years later, less than half of these people had returned (Vigdor, 2008). Many beachfront communities are now facing challenges from “coastal erosion,” which is a result of overbuilding and the impact of storms. Many communities have had to take corrective actions, and some people will eventually need to be relocated because of these challenges.

### Demographics

The composition, size, and distribution of the population have a tremendous impact on society. Population pressures, both real and imagined, have even been cited as the cause of various wars through history (Bierstedt, 1970). Population pressures have also driven immigration. Even migration within an individual society can affect social life. It affects the American political process because representation in Congress is a function of the population of the various states. Furthermore, an increase or a decrease in the birth rate can have a profound influence on a society. Take, for instance, the so-called “baby boomers” that were born after World War II. The spike in the birth rate quickly necessitated an increasing number of primary and secondary schools to educate these children. During the following decade, the demand for higher education skyrocketed. It is not surprising that a great deal of conflict and controversy occurred in the 1960s on campuses that were overcrowded with rebellious adolescents. Currently, the baby boomers are aging and beginning to retire. This will increase the demand for services for the elderly, such as health care and assisted living facilities. This demand may very well place a serious strain on the American economy.

## Conflict

Change does not always occur in a smooth fashion. Instead, conflicts over resources, norms, and values often drive social change. Our nation was born from a revolution, as were many of the other countries that are currently in existence in our world. The United States of America could only achieve its independence from the colonial domination of Great Britain through violent revolution taking the form of an armed conflict. The gains in the area of civil rights were the result of conflict. The civil rights movement likely would not have enjoyed success without protests, confrontations, and marches (as well as the accompanying responses of reactionary groups). These conflicts drew national attention to the problems associated with segregation and race relations in the American South.

## Norms and Values

Modifications to norms and values can create changes in the rest of society. As mentioned previously, the ideas of Calvinism (the “Protestant ethic”) were instrumental in the formation of the capitalist economic system in western society. Moreover, over the course of the latter half of the 20th century, there have been substantive changes in the values and norms regarding sexual expression. The attitudes about sex and sexuality have become more progressive, and a so-called “sexual revolution” has occurred. Premarital sex is now the norm. There have also been changes in the norms and values related to gender. While women still face sexual discrimination, they undoubtedly enjoy greater opportunities than they did a half a century ago and have made remarkable strides towards equality. The stereotypical homemaker of the 1950s is no longer a central role—working mothers are now the norm. (See Chapter 9 for a discussion of changes in gender roles and sexual expression.)



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**The increased acceptance of working mothers is a manifestation of changing norms and values.**

## Mass Media

The mass media are responsible for the instantaneous flow of information across social and geographical boundaries throughout the world. Ideas and emotional states can now be rapidly disseminated to an almost limitless audience. Collective behavior is now facilitated by this flow of information. The mass media transmit information about fads and fashions, as well as rumors and moral panics. The chapter began with an example of this—a panic started by a radio program that some listeners did not know was fiction.

## Technology

Technological innovation has a transformative impact on social life. Innovations in manufacturing, such as automation and robotics, have changed the work experiences of millions of Americans. Radio, television, and the telephone have all greatly facilitated communication. Transportation is now safer and more efficient because of the airplane and the automobile. Computers and the Internet have literally created a revolution in the social world. They have changed the ways we engage in communication and commerce, as well as patterns of education and recreation.

Although changes in norms and values played a role in the sexual revolution, two technological innovations played an important part as well. First, the introduction of the birth control pill provided a reliable and convenient mode of contraception that prevented unwanted pregnancies. Second, the automobile afforded young people with privacy so they could engage in sexual exploration without the strict oversight of adults (Durkin & Bryant, 1995).

### Sociology In Action: Ibn Khaldun (1332-1404)

Although Auguste Comte introduced the term *sociology* and is known as the father of sociology, some early scholars did work that has significant importance for sociology because they were interested in social life. The best example would be the Arab historian Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406). Much of his work in the area of history involved looking at how social factors impacted historical events, and how historical events had an impact on social life. Khaldun is best known for his work on the rise and fall of civilizations.

Khaldun felt that humanity could be classified on the basis of two groups of people—nomads and citizens. Nomads were a hardy people who lived off the land and often engaged in combat, while citizens lived a sedentary or “soft” life in the city. Many of the great civilizations were founded by nomadic people. They eventually settled into the life of the city and developed a social system. They also developed a centralized leadership or government. Over the course of time, the conquerors begin to get “soft” enjoying the luxuries of living in a city. Moreover, the central political body tends to become corrupt and focused on its self-interest. In turn, the citizens begin to resent the central authority and social cohesion declines. This decline will continue until the civilization is eventually conquered by another nomadic people. However, these conquerors will eventually encounter the same problems of citizen life, and they too will be conquered by another group. While the nomadic peoples often attack a city because they envy the power, riches, and luxuries the citizens possess, each in turn is destined to succumb to it.

## 12.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Social Change

There are four leading sociological perspectives on social change. First, functionalism is concerned with a social system maintaining equilibrium or balance during the process of social change. Second, evolutionary perspectives see change as representing progress that results in the betterment of a society. Third, cyclical perspectives do not view social change as a linear process. Rather, society is seen as fluctuating between various themes in a cycle that repeats itself over the course of history. Finally, conflict perspectives argue that social change is the result of competing group interests.

### Functionalism

Since functionalism is very much concerned with social stability, change represents a challenge to the balance of a social system. Societies inherently behave in ways that seek to maintain equilibrium through the adjustment of the various parts. When some change is instituted, other parts of the social system must assimilate this change. As Parsons (1951) noted, societies will strive toward an “integration of systems” when change occurs.

Ogburn (1922) noted that much of the change since the beginning of the 20th century has involved technological advancements, and such change can occur in an exceptionally rapid fashion. As discussed in Chapter 3, cultural lag occurs when material culture changes more rapidly than nonmaterial culture, and there is an adjustment gap between these two forms of culture. In contemporary society, material culture is synonymous with technology. Nonmaterial culture, such as norms and values, is constantly trying to adapt to the rapid changes in material culture. Bierstedt (1970, p. 525) argued that “many, if not all, social problems can be traced to the fact that various parts of the culture are not in adequate adjustment to each other.” A good example of cultural lag would be the problem of texting while driving. People have grown accustomed to the conveniences of handheld communications. However, this has led the problem of “distracted driving,” and it is a major cause of automobile accidents. Yet many people do not eschew texting when they are driving.

### Evolutionary Perspectives

Many of the earliest theories of social change were evolutionary theories. This perspective considers social change to be a linear process, with each new development representing progress for the betterment of society. Society is constantly moving forward and improving. This type of reasoning was used to justify colonialism and the domination of some groups of people by other societies. Over the course of history, “civilized” people have conquered and dominated “barbarians.” This logic allowed people in the developed societies to conceive of this as a natural phenomenon that was acceptable. Although the evolutionary theories were popular through the early part of the 20th century, they are generally rejected by contemporary sociologists (Shepard, 2009).

The best known of these evolutionary theories of social change was introduced by Herbert Spencer (1885). Spencer was an advocate of “social Darwinism.” Much like the biological world, the social world involves natural selection and “survival of the fittest.” He argued that the societies that were fit would thrive and advance. They were able adapt to the environment and continue to prosper. On the other hand, the “less fit” societies would be unable to adapt to challenges. In turn, these less fit societies would begin to decline and eventually cease to exist.

## Cyclical Perspectives

The natural world often operates based on cycles. We pass through the four seasons, only to arrive at winter once more and start the same cycle. Like the natural world, the social world follows a similar, repetitive cycle. These theories argue that social change is not evolutionary—it is not heading in a linear direction. Any given society typically has a dominant theme or focus, and this dominant theme typically fluctuates among several possible options. As Moore (1974) observed, cyclical theories don’t deny the existence of change, but they deny that any specific change is leading somewhere particular in the long term.

The best known of these theories is from Pitirim Sorokin (1937). He argued that societies tend to fluctuate between two major themes. The first is a sensate culture. This type of culture places an emphasis on personal experiences and materialism. The other is an ideational culture, focused on abstract concerns like faith, compassion, patriotism, and other ideas. The 1920s (or the “Roaring Twenties”) was a time of great prosperity in the United States. However, the focus changed during the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II in the 1940s. Those decades were based on ideational culture. Then, in the 1950s, sensate culture emerged yet again with a focus on material possessions and the “American Dream.” However, the 1960s was an ideational decade, with a great focus on abstract concerns and a fair amount of social upheaval. However, this eventually gave way to the profit-driven capitalism of the 1980s (a sensate culture). As ironic as it may seem, many of the hippies of the 1960s became the yuppies of the 1980s.

## Conflict Perspectives

According to conflict theory, social change does not occur in a natural, orderly, or linear fashion. Social change is the result of conflict. Social change occurs because of a conflict between different group interests. According to Marx, conflict is necessary for social progress. As noted earlier in this chapter, the United States gained its independence from Great Britain in an armed revolution. Moreover, the civil rights movement made great gains through conflict and confrontation with the powers that were repressing human rights. Marx believed that the workers could not escape the oppression and alienation of capitalism without uniting to overthrow that particular economic system.

According to conflict theory, social change is often driven by economic factors. According to Marx and Engels (1972, p. 337) capitalism is based on “naked self-interests.” Society and social relations are structured in a way that will benefit the capitalists at the expenses of the rest of the citizens. Trends in corporatism and global capitalism are not driven for the ideological sake of “progress” and the “betterment of humanity,” but instead are based on the

economic interests of capitalists. The results of these developments are the exploitation of vulnerable workers on a global scale.

## 12.5 Modernization and Post-Industrial Society

One of the main consequences of collective behavior, social movements, and social change can be a fundamental alteration of the very fabric of society and culture. At certain times these transformations have been so significant that social scientists argue that civilization has moved into a new phase of development. Civilization prior to the Industrial Revolution is generally described as a pre-industrial society or pre-modern culture. The Industrial Revolution heralded the industrial society or modern culture. Our current historical phase, which is heavily reliant on advanced technology and globalization, is often referred to as post-industrial society or postmodern culture.

### Modernization

The first societies, which we now call “pre-modern,” typically had an economy that was based around agriculture. Communities were small and predominantly rural. Where people

lived was generally based around the production of food. These were traditional societies, with a strong sense of history. Traditional belief systems, like religion, played a dominant role in the daily life of citizens. In terms of social relationships, most of the communication and social interaction was done face to face basis. Social relationships were based on primary ties. Institutions such as the family were the cornerstone of pre-industrial societies. For instance, education was typically provided by the family. Among the population, the infant mortality rates were high and the life expectancies low (Henslin, 1997).



*Design Pics/Thinkstock*

**Metropolitan populations, advances in technology, and a formalized education are all characteristics of a modern society.**

The concept of **modernization** describes the all-encompassing process of cultural, economic, and social transitions that occur when a pre-industrial society becomes industrial. So a modern society is an industrial society. In general, the notion of modernity is synonymous with progress. There are a number of distinctive characteristics that distinguish a modern society from a pre-modern society (Macionis, 2007; Shepard, 2009):

- Heterogeneity—there is an increased diversity in society.
- An orientation toward the future, rather than the past.
- A decline in the importance of traditional belief systems.
- Relationships based mostly on secondary ties.

- The population clustered in metropolitan areas based around industry.
- An economic system that is based on manufacturing goods using mass production techniques.
- A large government that has a bureaucratic structure and a division of labor.
- A formal education system.

Daniel Bell (1973) argued that there has been a fundamental shift in western society, and these changes have extended beyond modernization. The industrial society has been replaced by the post-industrial society. A **post-industrial society** is focused on advanced technology and dedicates far more resources to the provision of services than to manufacturing. This form of society is based on the manufacturing of knowledge and information rather than on the production of goods (Thompson & Hickey, 2012). We now speak of an “information revolution,” rather than the industrial revolution. Technological innovations have transformed the fundamental nature of society. The transition to a post-industrial society has had a revolutionary impact on the social and cultural patterns of society.

## Postmodernism

In this text, the term **postmodernism** is used to describe the cultural and social aspects of a post-industrial society. The idea of postmodernism has become a popular topic in a variety of academic disciplines, including sociology, philosophy, anthropology, and history. The term tends to mean different things to different groups of people. At times, it has even been used in a conflicting or contradictory manner. Although there are a variety of perspectives on postmodernism, there are several basic areas of agreement regarding the characteristics of a postmodern culture.

## Globalization

As the pace of social development has moved in an almost exponential fashion in the postmodern world, the perceived size of the globe has shrunk dramatically (Ritzer, 2013). We now speak of a “global village” or a “global community.” **Globalization** is a trend toward a growing interconnectedness and interdependence among the nations of the world. It has been greatly facilitated by advances in transportation and communication. To a large extent, this process has been driven by economic concerns. We now have multinational corporations and global markets. Certain brands like Coca-Cola®, Microsoft®, and McDonalds® are global brands. Moreover, capital freely flows across borders, as do jobs (e.g., as related to “outsourcing” of American jobs). There is also a growing trend toward world governance, with organizations such as the United Nations and



Daniel Kalkner/picture-alliance/dpa/AP Images

**A KFC and Pizza Hut restaurant in Shanghai is evidence of globalization.**

the G20. In the last century, even sports have come to have a global dimension, with competitions such as the Olympic Games and the World Cup in soccer and basketball. The American professional basketball league (the NBA) now features players from a number of countries. Similarly, the English soccer league (the Barclay's Premiership) has athletes from dozens of nations participating.

As Charon (2010) noted, the process of globalization has both advantages and disadvantages. One positive is a reduction in production costs that translates into saving for consumers and profits for shareholders. On the other hand, there is a rise of wealth-producing corporations that have transcended governmental boundaries. Savings for consumers and profits for investors come at the sake of exploiting “cheap labor” in developing countries. Furthermore, the process of globalization is not equal, nor is it democratic. It is dominated by wealthy nations like the United States, Japan, and Great Britain. Finally, problems that were once limited to a specific location can quickly become problems on a global level. For example, problems with religious extremists in Central Asia and the Middle East are now a global crisis. At the time we wrote this chapter, the leading news story was about a video of an ISIS terrorist beheading a British aid worker in a remote desert that provoked a global political discussion. The deadly Ebola virus was once limited to West Africa. However, because of globalization, there are serious concerns that this can quickly become a global pandemic.

## Dominance of New Technologies

Postmodern culture provides a “saturation” of technology in the daily lives of citizens. Computers and related communication innovations have allowed for the existence of an unstructured but vast global communications network called the Internet. This allows for the instantaneous communication of text, pictures, and videos on a worldwide basis. New patterns of interaction have developed around Internet technology. The social media, such as Twitter and Instagram, play a dominant role in the lives of tens of millions of people on a daily basis. There are very few places in the world, no matter how poor, where some form of Internet access is not available.

Television has become a medium to transmit information and entertainment. It is also used to buy and sell goods, and some use this medium to televise religious broadcasting. In the beginning, there was limited access to the television, a limited number of television channels, and a limited schedule of programming. Now there are hundreds of channels. Television can be found in nearly every household in the developed world, and television programming can be streamed to handheld communication devices. Content is now available every hour of every day. With the advent of around-the-clock specialized news channels like CNN, Fox News, and the BBC, people now speak of a “24-hour news cycle.”

## Mass Media and Everyday Life

In postmodern society, the media and everyday life are intertwined (Moore & Moore, 1997). As noted above, there are a variety of 24-hour news channels on television. However, there are also specialized channels for a vast array of personal interests, including music, cooking, home improvement, exercise, and sports. Sociologists have written about the concept of **infotainment**, which combines elements of information and entertainment (Surette & Otto, 2002).



Ida Mae Astute/Contributor/Getty Images

**Oscar winner Jamie Foxx tries to forecast the weather on *Good Morning America*—an example of infotainment.**

one point in time, American youth only listened to music on the radio. With the advent of music television stations like MTV, artists were expected to have a video to accompany their song, and music videos began driving record sales. In most circumstances, the media are not directly transmitting a certain event or incident, but rather selected images of that incident or event. The media shape a person's sense of reality. As a result, it has become difficult if not impossible to distinguish between the version of reality produced and marketed by the mass media and the actual facts of a situation or event.

## Lack of Meaning

In postmodern culture, people often have trouble guiding their behavior because they lack traditional cues. According to postmodernist Jean Baudrillard (1983, p. 4), we are now living in an "age of simulation," where humans are constantly "substituting signs of the real for the real" (p. 2). The signs and symbols we use to signify the realities of daily life are foundationless. Some examples of these simulacra are the Nike logo, Disneyland®, the national flag, and Princess Diana. In postmodern culture, symbols and images have the capacity to eclipse the real (Merrin, 1999), and the line between reality and unreality is blurred (Dotter, 2004). In postmodern society, "it is increasingly difficult to tell the real from those things that simulate the real" (Ritzer, 2008, p. 500). Reality television is simulacra; its representation of real life is taken more as reality than as the highly produced, manipulated, and edited storyline that it is.

Postmodern culture is said to be superficial and lacking in depth. For instance, are Facebook "friends" friends in the traditional sense? While modern society was based on rationality, postmodern society is far less rational and far more flexible. There is a loss of a sense of history and a loss of the binding force of tradition (Luhmann, 1995). Lyotard (1984) argued that there really are no more grand narratives or central unifying ideologies that unite people. For instance, in the United States, there is far greater religious pluralism than there was 100 years ago because of greater acceptance of world religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism (see Chapter 11 for a discussion of this). Moreover, there is a greater secularization of religious belief systems in postmodern society, so the traditional religious ideology is no longer present to provide collective meanings.

The "primetime" line-ups of the leading news channels normally do not feature traditional news broadcasts. Instead, they air personality-driven shows that feature "talking head" hosts such as Bill O'Reilly and Rachael Maddow, who both entertain and inform viewers. Moreover, weather events such as a hurricane or blizzard are now covered in a way that entertains viewers. In some circumstances, disasters have become cultural narratives that are produced for consumption (Crouch, 2000).

The media constantly bombard people with an endless stream of images. At

## Summary and Resources

### Chapter Summary

Society and social life do not remain static, but change over time. These changes may be subtle, or they may be dramatic. Sometimes social change is the result of collective behavior, which involves loosely organized activities involving a large number of people. Examples include fashions, fads, rumors, urban legends, panics, crowds, and disasters. On the other hand, there are social movements, which are long-lasting, organized efforts to discourage or promote social change. Some type of guiding ideology generally drives social movements.

Other possible sources of social change include the physical environment, conflict, demographics, the mass media, and technology. The rapid social changes that occurred after modernization (i.e., the Industrial Revolution) have resulted in what social scientists now call a post-industrial society and a postmodern culture. This is characterized by a reliance on advanced technology and a trend toward globalization (i.e., a growing interconnectedness and interdependence among the nations of the world).

### Web Resources

#### Mobilizing Ideas

<https://mobilizingideas.wordpress.com/>

An online journal published by The Center for the Study of Social Movements at the University of Notre Dame. The journal explores issues related to social movements from a variety of social science perspectives.

#### Collective Behavior and Social Movements

<http://cbsm-asa.org/>

The section of the American Sociological Association dedicated to collective behavior and social movements.

### Discussion Questions

1. In what ways are social movements and collective behavior similar? In what ways are they different?
2. In your opinion, why do certain social movements succeed while others fail? Support your opinion with one or more theories from this chapter.
3. This chapter identified a number of sources of social change. Which one do you believe is the most important? Why?
4. Four sociological perspectives on social change were presented in this chapter. Which one do you think is the best explanation of social change? Why?
5. Sociologists claim we are living in a post-industrial society with a reliance on advanced technology and a trend towards globalization. In your opinion, are these trends positive or negative? Please explain your reasoning.

## Key Terms

**collective behavior** Loosely organized activities that involve a large number of individuals and are often spontaneous.

**crowd** A temporary collection of people gathered in close physical proximity who can influence each other's actions and emotions.

**disaster** An unforeseen event that involves some severe danger that results in catastrophic damage to people and property.

**fad** A short-lived type of unconventional behavior or object that is enthusiastically adopted by some segment of the population.

**fashions** Enduring patterns of behavior and style that enjoy popularity with a large number of individuals.

**globalization** A trend toward a growing interconnectedness and interdependence among the nations of the world.

**infotainment** Combined elements of information and entertainment.

**modernization** The all-encompassing process of cultural, economic, and social transitions that occur when a pre-industrial society becomes industrial.

**moral panic** A dispersed collective of people who have irrational reactions to some perceived threat.

**panic** Occurs when people in the same location have a response (often irrational) to some perceived threat.

**postmodernism** The cultural and social aspects of a post-industrial society.

**reactionary movements** A social movement that opposes change in a society and seeks to maintain the status quo.

**redemptive movement** A social movement that focuses on radical changes in specific individuals, rather than the larger society.

**reformative movement** A social movement that is focused on limited change in the whole society.

**revolutionary movement** A social movement that seeks a complete change in society.

**rumor** A piece of unconfirmed information that can't be verified and is rapidly spread via word of mouth or electronic communication.

**social change** The transformation of the social structure and culture over time.

**urban legend** A type of folklore that describes unusual and horrible events while cautioning about the alleged dangers of the contemporary world.