




Christian Roles in Social Movements for Social Justice


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- What roles do Christians play in working for social change?
- How do social movements fit?
- How do these opportunities promote social justice?







The Praxis of Social Movements

This workshop explores how faith inspires social justice in social movements and invites you to reflect on contemporary examples that are important to you.

Participants will consider theoretical and theological insights that inform this arena of social work practice.





Participants will be able to:


- Understand more fully how social movements express Christian views of social justice using theoretical and theological frameworks;
- Identify examples of social movements and the role faith plays in them;
- Articulate their own theoretical and theological frameworks for participating in social movements;

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9-9:30 Introduction to the Topic and the Day: What Movements Move You?
 9:30-10:30 Raves, Fads, and Collective Behavior of the Masses: Historical perspectives on Movements
 10:30-10:45 Break
 10:45-11:45 Resource Mobilization: Modern, rational approaches to Movements
 11:45-12:30 Theories Applied: Discussion of Movements in Society and in the Church
 12:30-1:30 Lunch Break
 1:30-2:30 Social Construction of Meaning: Postmodern movements and What They Look Like
 2:30-2:45 Break
 2:45-3:45 Where the Spirit Blows: Your Practical Theology of Social Movement
 3:45-4:00 Wrap-Up

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To introduce ourselves...


Take a minute to write...

- What is a social movement?

- What is an example of one that inspires me?


- Why?


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A social movement is ...


... a form of group action, perhaps through the work of a formal organization or perhaps through community members who have come together for a common cause, which seeks to promote or to resist social change.






The profession of social work was born out of the settlement house movement and the charity organizations movement.


These movements inspired the professional goals of social service and social justice that continue to be central to social work today.






Likewise, people of faith often take leadership roles in social movements.


- Lyman Beecher – American Temperance Society
- Martin L. King, Jr. – Southern Christian Leadership Conference & Clarence Jordan – Koinonia Farm
- UCC Commission for Racial Justice – environmental justice in light of urban pollution







Theoretical Concepts of Social Movements


- Our focus today will be on theoretical models of practice.
- The praxis of social movements invites us to engage these theories in practice as a means of reflecting on our practice.
- I want us to think less about theories (noun) and more about theorizing (verb).






- Theorizing is the process of asking questions that invite us to reflect on the quality of our practice.
- Evidence-based practice doesn't come naturally in many contexts of social work, particularly social movements.
- Theorizing is a way to develop an evidence base that is at the same time theory-based.






How do we theorize?

- Today's workshop will walk us through 3-4 theoretical concepts and each will include questions about practical application.
- We'll look for evidence of each theory in practice and we'll reflect on how we might apply each theory in practice.







**Theoretical Concepts
of Social Movements**

- Collective Behavior/Collective Action
 - *Structural Functionalism*
 - *Symbolic Interactionism*
- Resource Mobilization
- New Social Movements





BREAK






Theoretical Concepts of Social Movements

- Collective Behavior
 - *Structural Functionalism*
 - *Symbolic Interactionism*
- Resource Mobilization
- New Social Movements







Raves, Fads, and Collective Behavior of the Masses:
The First Theoretical Concepts of Movements

Collective Behavior as a response to social strains, in a
Structural Functionalist Perspective

Two or more people come together to pursue a common
goal of changing the accepted functions of accepted
structures.


Change is based on a non-institutional or non-traditional
reaction to normal social structures and functions.






Gustave LeBon, 1896,
The Crowd

“The mental unity of psychological crowds is
disturbing. As crowds organize, people
descend several rungs in the ladder of
civilization.”







Neils Smelser, 1962

Collective behavior includes spontaneous, short-
lived, disorganized, and deviant responses to stress
and strain.


They are compounded by “anxiety, hostility, and
fantasy.”


“Extravagant claims” lead to “exaggerated behavior”
in response to “extraordinary forces”, which is
different from ordinary human behavior.





- Earlier I asked: What is an example of a social movement that inspires me? Why?
- Now: How does this social movement incorporate this view of collective behavior?







Raves, Fads, and Collective Behavior of the Masses:
The Second Theoretical Concept of Movements

Collective Behavior from a
Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

Two or more people come together to pursue a common goal of creating shared beliefs that shape people's responses.

Change is based on translating perceptions, feelings, and ideas into action.







Herbert Blumer, 1951

The meaning participants assign to social movements is essential to understanding their collective behavior.

Social organizing for social change is based on the social meanings people associate with social structures.

Perceptions, feelings, and ideas give rise to fluid social processes that are created, sustained, and transformed in an ongoing interpretive manner.







Collection Behavior


In sum, collective behavior, or collective action, is a theory that describes what occurs when two or more people come together to pursue a common goal, when they may not necessarily have the formal structure of an organization or societal support for what they are doing, but their passion drives them anyway.

Collective action is disorganized and irrational, at worst, and meaningful, but still emotional, reactive symbolic experiences, at best.





- Earlier I asked: What is an example of a social movement that inspires me? Why?
- Now: How does this social movement incorporate these views on collective behavior?





BREAK






Theoretical Concepts of Social Movements

- Collective Behavior/Collective Action
 - *Structural Functionalism*
 - *Symbolic Interactionism*
- Rational Choice/Resource Mobilization
- New Social Movements







Resource Mobilization: Modern, rational theoretical approaches to Movements

Two or more people come together to pursue a common goal of working for change from within the confines of a system.


Change is based on rational, goal-oriented experiences of working for the collective social good.





McCarthy & Zald, 1973


- Resource mobilization represents a **rational choice perspective**: conscious actors make rational choices for change in a system.
- Entrepreneurs and organizations work to maximize resources and relationships to foster change.






- Rational participants in conventional activities of “normal politics.”
- Entrepreneurs develop social movement organizations as key mobilizing structures.
- Elite allies are invited to join to garner respect for the movement.
- Leaders promote research as basis for action.







Rational and calculated response
vs.
Emotional reaction


Piven and Cloward (1995) criticize the overly rational emphasis: “A riot is clearly not an electoral rally, and both the participants and the authorities know the difference”






- Earlier I asked: How does this social movement incorporate these views on collective behavior?
- Now: How does your social movement incorporate these views on resource mobilization?





BREAK





Theoretical Concepts of Social Movements

- Collective Behavior/Collective Action
 - *Structural Functionalism*
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- Resource Mobilization
- New Social Movements







New Social Movements: Postmodern Theoretical Responses to Movements


- New Social Movements use **Social constructionism** as an interpretive theory.
- Change is based on consciousness-raising that motivates and inspires.







- An alternative to the functionalist mobilization paradigm and a return to concepts of symbolic interactionist approaches to collective behavior theory.
- Recognizes the social, emotional, and cognitive role of politics and not just economics in movements.





- Shift from focus on material well-being (economics) to focus on quality of life, self-realization, and human rights, with an interest in issues such as identity, lifestyle, and culture.
- Examples include women's rights, ecology, and the peace movement.







Frames - the concepts and ideas that can unite and incite movement participants.

They contribute to the development of shared understandings, goals, and strategies for implementation.


If a concept is framed well, it will have meaning that motivates people to be involved in social activism and fosters a collective identity.

At the same time, the process of framing can be divisive.







- Earlier I asked: How does this social movement incorporate these views on resource mobilization?
- Now: How does your social movement incorporate these views on new social movements?






BREAK







Theories in Practice


- Does the movement reflect the collective action of individuals and small groups, or does it represent the work of an organization?
- Are people joining in because of specific ways they stand to gain or is there a wider change driving their involvement?
- Is the movement based on a common social or religious experience or political or economic factors?







- If a group of dedicated individuals come together to work for peace, to fight poverty, or to challenge racism, to what extent do they function as individuals with shared beliefs working in solidarity or as individuals joining a more formal organization?






- Reflecting symbolic interactionism or social constructionism, collective action may include deeply meaningful, but less formal efforts.
- Reflecting resource mobilization theory, social workers may organize towards a more formal organization, or at least towards a calculated consideration of resources, including individual relationships and networks.
- Meanwhile others, from a collective action perspective, may practice in such a way that goes against the status quo political process, disrupting 'business as usual.'







What is the role of Christians in social work in social change?


What is the role of NACSW in social change?






- Each of the social movement theoretical responses reminds us that we are more than a faithful professional organization promoting protectionist self-interest. We have an opportunity to do something big! We can band together and go to Congress, our churches, Wall Street - and demand change!





- We have powerful symbols in our professional code of ethics (preamble, values), our NACSW mission statement, and our faith. How do these call us to love our neighbor, do justice, practice mishpat, tzedeka, chesed and shalom (symbolic interactionism).






- We can utilize our assets (Rick), mobilize external resources in working for change (such as partner organizations), support like-minded movement organizations, and ally with powerful key stakeholders (resource mobilization).





- We can develop a sense of purpose or discern our identity for seeking social change, joining in God's prophetic imagination, standing in global solidarity in God's preferential option for the poor, and seeking to give voice to the voiceless (new social movements).







Theology of Social Movements

- The theologies of our movements can reflect similar perspectives.
- Movements may reflect ways God calls us to mobilize resources.
- Movements may reflect ways God calls us to interact with symbols of our faith.
- What else? How so?







- Earlier I asked: How does this social movement incorporate views on collective action, resource mobilization, new social movements?
- Now: How would you express the theology of your social movement?






BREAK






Questions for Theorizing:


- Do we see traditional collective behavior characteristics? Is there a challenge to structures/functions? Are there powerful social symbols inspiring action?
- What resources are mobilized and who are the elite allies associated with this social movement?
- What are some of the cultural frames utilized by the movement in terms of the existence of the problem, the window of opportunity, setting goals, and deciding on courses of action
- How attractive would this social movement be for social workers? Christians in social work? Why or why not?





Other Questions for your Reflecting on your own Role

- What role do you see yourself playing in a social movement? Why?
- What theory does your role reflect?
- How does theology shape your involvement?





A Global Example

- Egyptian Youth Movement Revolution and Social Media
- Role of crowds? Emotion? How do these challenge structures?
- Social Media in movements: How does it reflect theories? How do we best use social media for social change?

Another Example


- Evangelical Orphan Care Movement:
<http://youtu.be/8d9246JCsEU>
- Role of theological framing/narratives: what theology is reflected? How is theological language used to promote change?



ONE more


- The ONE Campaign and the Movement to Make Poverty History
<http://vimeo.com/34891110>
- Role of elite allies? Mobilizing structures? Resources? As a new social movement, what reality is being constructed?





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