Chapter 21
Collective Behavior and Social Movements

Introduction to Sociology
Spring 2010
Discuss the various theories of collective behavior.

• 3 theories of collective behavior:

1. **Emergent norm perspective** – Emergent norms in collective behavior reflect shared convictions held by members of the group and are enforced through sanctions. Sociologists Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian (1987) state that during a episode of collective behavior a definition of what behavior is appropriate or not emerges from the crowd.
2. **Value-added model** - Developed by Neil Smelser in 1962, his model outlines 6 determinates of collective behavior:

1) **Structural conduciveness** – The organization of society can facilitate the emergence of conflicting interests.

2) **Structural strain** – Occurs when the conduciveness of the social structure to potential conflict gives way to a perception that conflicting interests exist.
3) Generalized belief – A shared view of reality that redefines social action and serves to guide behavior.

4) Precipitating factor – A specific event or incident that triggers collective action.

5) Mobilized for action – The group is more likely to come out on evenings or weekends.

6) Manner in which social control is exercised - Social control may prevent, delay, or interrupt a collective outburst.
3. Assembling Perspective – McPhail and Miller in 1973 introduced concept which incorporates periodic assemblies, which include recurring gatherings of people (Example: college classes), and nonperiodic assemblies that include less formal assemblies (Example: demonstrations).
Describe the nature of disaster behaviors.

- **Disaster behavior** refers to a sudden or disruptive event or set of events that overtaxes a community’s responses, so that outside aid is necessary. (*Example:* 9/11 – NYC’s Emergency Management Center was destroyed. However, within hours, both an incident command post and a new emergency operations center had been established to direct the search and recovery effort.)
Discuss behavior patterns associated with fads and fashion.

• **Fads** are temporary patterns of behavior involving large numbers of people; they spring up independently of preceding trends and do not give rise to successors. In contrast, **fashions** are pleasurable mass involvements that feature a certain amount of acceptance by society and have a line of historical continuity. (Examples: fad: dancing the Macarena; fashion: punk haircuts)
Describe the nature of panics and crazes.

- A **craze** is an exciting mass involvement that lasts for a relatively long period of time. In contrast a **panic** is a fearful arousal or collective flight based on generalized belief that may or may not be accurate. (Examples: craze - Tonight Show Johnny Carson’s monologue suggesting a national shortage of toilet paper which actualized; panic – result of *The War of the Worlds* radio dramatization in 1938)
Discuss the nature of rumors.

- Rumors are pieces of information gathered informally that are used to interpret an ambiguous situation. Research reveals that in the workplace, rumors about what is or may be happening are usually highly accurate.
Describe the nature, extent, and explanations of social movements.

• **Social movements** refer to organized collective activities to bring about or resist fundamental change in an existing group or society.

• In other nations and the U.S., social movements have greatly affected the course of history. (Examples: abolitionists, suffragists, civil rights workers, and Vietnam war activists)
• 3 explanations on why people mobilize into social movements:

1. Relative Deprivation Approach:
   1) **Relative deprivation** is defined as the conscious feeling of a negative discrepancy between legitimate expectations and present actualities.
   2) People must also feel have right to their goals.
   3) Disadvantaged group must perceive that its goals cannot be reached through conventional means; but, only through collective action.
2. Resource Mobilization Approach:

1) Term resource mobilization refers to the ways in which a social movement utilizes resources: money, political influence, access to the media, and personnel – as leadership.

3. New Social Movement Theory:

1) New social movements refer to organized collective activities that address values and social identities, as well as improvement in the quality of life.
Discuss the impact of technology on collective behavior.

• The latest technology brings us together to act and react in an electronic global village. The impact of the latest technology on various forms of collective behavior is of interest to sociologists. Internet chatrooms allow nonperiodic assemblies of people that can develop a large collective of like-minded people, such as Greenpeace. Sociologists refer to such electronic enhancement of established social movements as computer-mediated communication (CMC).
Discuss the movement for disability rights.

- In early ‘60’s, a group of disabled young adults organized to be allowed admission at Univ. of California at Berkley. They succeeded in demonstrating they could succeed in college. They, then, turned their attention to the surrounding community. In 1990, working with a presidentially appointed council, organizations representing people with disabilities achieved passage of the ADA.
• The **Americans with Disabilities Act** defines disability as a condition that substantially limits a major life activity, such as walking or seeing. It prohibits bias against people with disabilities in employment, transportation, public accommodations, and telecommunications. Businesses with more than 25 employees cannot refuse to hire a qualified applicant with a disability. Instead, they must make reasonable accommodations that will allow workers with disabilities to do their jobs.