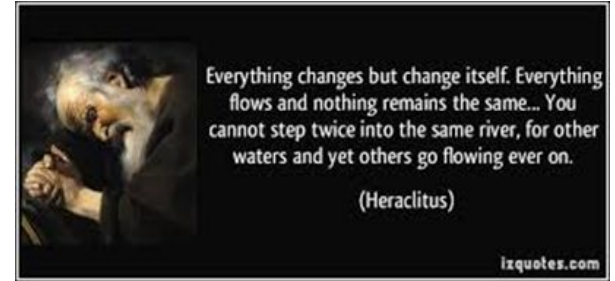


Collective Behaviour and Social Change

Lecture 22

Reasons why SOC101 is ending with a discussion on Social Change

- 'Change is the only Constant'
- Hope that this discussion will motivate you to work for social change
- C.W.Mills: "Sociological Imagination"
- Society shapes individuals and Individuals shape society!



What exactly is Social Change?

- Social change is any modification in the social organization of a society in any of its social institutions or social roles.
- It is basically transformation in the culture of a society.
- Individual discoveries, events, actions, works, writings- do not constitute in themselves social change but may trigger a process of reconfiguration in social relationships and institutions – This is what is social change.
- Think of how introduction of railways (1853) by the British in India changed Indian society
 - ECONOMIC- commercialization of agriculture, emergence of a well knit market, export of raw material and finished goods, cash cropping made land prices rise
 - SOCIAL- More travel, migration and changed familial structures, Increased networking between freedom fighters, movement for employment in non-agrarian sector; emergence of a new sector of employment all together

- Social Change is occurring at all times not just during political upheavals

- Rate of social change may vary

—(Think of how quickly ‘social distancing’ picked up how it affects social institutions like family, groups, work, education, consumption, leisure and how quickly it declined too

- Elements of social change vary as well: some changes are deliberate or intended, while others are unplanned or unintentional- Ex: Think of automobiles- their intended and unintended consequences.

- Even technology design processes have intended and unintended political consequences - makes poverty less visible

- Some social changes may be more controversial and important than others



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How Social Change Occurs?

- Multiple ways in which social change can occur

- Demographic Factors (Think of how countries with aging populations have to shift their policies in comparison to younger countries)

- Scientific discoveries and Innovations – (Think of how internet altered experience of place, time, networks, friends, communication, privacy)

- Result of human action- (You may know of how Helen Keller overcame her own handicaps to advocate for the rights of the disabled)

- Role of Ideology (How socialist ideology affected nation building in post Independent India in the early decades or how South Korea's lack of child friendly spaces is creating a very aging population demographic)<https://twitter.com/allyjung/status/1654128660629327876>

- Role of Diffusion – transmitting traits from one culture to another (Think of fashion trends)

- But most social changes also happen through **Collective Action**- groups can come together to critique inequalities (Think of labour rights movement, feminist movements, civil rights movement)

Collective Behaviour



"I Predict a Riot" While the majority of the people at the WTO protest in Seattle were peaceful, a small group started some violence and looting that led the Seattle police and National Guard to declare a state of emergency. They issued curfews and even shot rubber bullets and tear gas at innocent, nonviolent protestors.

- Collective behavior occurs when individuals converge, thus creating a group or crowd, and embark on some sort of action.
 - Crowds may seem disorderly but there is some amount of organisation and order in crowds
- Collective behavior generally takes three different forms:
 - Crowd behavior
 - Mass behavior/ Dispersed Collective Behaviour
 - Social movements
- These three types not mutually exclusive.

Crowd Behavior

- Crowd is formed when a large number of people come together-purposefully or randomly.
- Ex: People gathering around Street artists/ or a road accident
- May have different reasons to gather but become part of collectivity



- Some crowd gatherings may result in highly demonstrative and expressive action
- Ex: Woodstock 1999 rock concert
- Think of parallel examples from BLM protest - that turned violent and included store looting



Mass Behaviour

- Mass behavior- large groups of people not necessarily in the same physical location engage in similar behavior.
- Most common kind of mass behaviour is 'fads and fashion'- create transitory social change
- Fads are interests that are followed with great enthusiasm for a period of time
- Fashion: a widespread style of behavior and appearance
 - Short life span-quickly rise and fall
 - social networks are necessary to spread the enthusiasm
 - Can create a unified identity for practitioners.
 - Ex: Dieting, Veganism, Eco-consumption



- Others forms of Mass Behaviours can be
 - Rumours – Quickly spreading information largely through informal channels, can result in escalation of fear, violence
 - Public Opinions – Beliefs held by a collectivity about a common issue ; Advertisement often mould public opinion to support more consumption
 - Mass Hysteria or Panic – Overwhelming frenzy experienced without discernible evidence



Social Movements

- Social Movement: More organised form of collective behaviour
- They have leadership, organization and ideological commitment
- Several theories proposed to explain social movements:
 - **Mass Society Theory** – Viewed social movements as dysfunctional/irrational ; Argues that people join social movements not because of its ideals but because of satisfying psychological need to belong to something beyond them.
 - **Relative Deprivation Theory**- Focusses on actions of oppressed groups who seek rights or opportunities already enjoyed by others.
 - Marxian Theory of Social Change can be understood within the perspective of relative economic deprivation
 - Think of feminist movement around voting rights in America ; Civil rights movement ; Anti-caste Protests in South of India ; LGBTQIA+ social protests and movements

Something to ponder...

