

SOCI 360

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND COMMUNITY CHANGE

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The Symbolic Construction of Movements

Della Porta, Chp 3: Collective Action and Culture

1. Social problems are subjective. (p65-66)

- a. What defines a social problem is not objective circumstance, but how a given circumstance is **interpreted and recognized** by society itself.
- b. The way in which that definition is created is through **symbolic conflict**.
- c. Social movements create a shared, symbolic **expression of values**



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2. **Ideology** (p67) – a system of beliefs that **motivates action** – has been the traditional way of explaining movement activism.

However, inherent in ideology are two aspects of culture that are distinct:

Values and the interpretative tools – **Norms** – that people use to make sense of their world.



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3. *The Role of Values: Inglehart, et al (p68)*

People have values that are consistent with their needs.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

"Material" needs (survival) trump

"Post-material" needs (self-fulfilment)

Generational changes in the post-WWII world altered values as a result of a shift in the culture from *materialist* to *post-materialist values*.



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4. *Problems with M vs. PM values (p70-72)*

a. *Dualism*: "When the possibility of a co-existence of the two value orientations is taken into account, more complex configurations may emerge."

b. *Other distinctions exist*: for example, authoritarianism vs. libertarianism

c. *Must values be translated into action? NO. There is another mechanism...*



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5. *Social Movements as a form of "drama" (p74)*

a. *Goffman (Frame Theory)*: the "schema of interpretation" defines the "frame", or worldview, that an individual gets from his/her culture's "symbolic production"

b. *Symbolic production in social movements - 3 elements (p74-79)*

i. *Diagnostic element* - who defines a problem?

ii. *Prognostic element* - opens new spaces for action; may have a utopian dimension; note categories here: *rejectionist, alternative, reformist*

iii. *Motivational element* - identity synchronizes with frames which prompts action



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6. Frame Analysis: Key Terms

a. Master Frames (p79)

Broad interpretations of reality; example, Marxism in 1970s Italy, or the anti-globalization movement today (p80-81)

b. Frame Bridging

When "representations by movement organizers incorporate interpretations of reality produced by sectors of public opinion which might otherwise remain separated" (p82)

c. Frame Extension

When specific concerns of a movement or organization relate to more general social goals (p82)



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6. Frame Analysis: Key Terms

d. Frame Alignment (p83)

"Relies on a dynamic relationship between the development of a movement and the cultural heritage of both the country in which it operates and its institutions."

- i. Movements make reference to **cultural currents**;
- ii. **Religion** plays an important role;
- iii. Collective action is both a **creative manipulation of new symbols and a reaffirmation of tradition** (i.e., movements can't be *too* deviant in their ideas or methods). (p84)


