

**SOCI 360**

**SOCIAL  
MOVEMENTS  
AND  
COMMUNITY  
CHANGE**

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(DR. K)**

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**STRUCTURAL-  
FUNCTIONALISM**

**“Structural Strain or  
Value-Added Theory”**

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Early Theories of Collective Behavior

**Structural Strain/Value-Added Theory**

(structural functionalism)

Neil Smelser, “Theory of Collective Behavior”

(1962) *(Locher Chp 4, p40)*



- i. **Structural strains** are institutional dysfunctions;
- ii. **Generalized beliefs lead to collective behavior** due to structural malfunction *(p44)*
- iii. **Value-added model** (structural conduciveness, strain, beliefs, precipitating factors, mobilization, social control) *(p42)*
- iv. **Critique:** Does not theorize the complex way beliefs come to be shaped by interpretation and definition; no historical relation *(p53)*

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## Neil Smelser's "Value-Added" Theory of Collective Behavior

The theory of collective behavior argues that **social movements are a response to major interruptions in the natural functioning of society**. Writing on the origins of social movements under this paradigm, Gusfield (1970: 9) notes the following:

*"We describe social movements and collective action as responses to social change. To see them in this light emphasizes the disruptive and disturbing quality which new ideas, technologies, procedures, groups migration, and intrusions can have for people."*  
(From: *Reform and Revolt*, Joseph Gusfield, ed., 1970, New York: John Wiley)

**Social change creates strains** on institutions, and **social movements are one way that people cope** with the uncertainty and angst of rapid and unexpected alterations in social structures according to Neil Smelser.



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## Value-Added Theory (Smelser): Six Determinants of Collective Behavior

Structural conduciveness	• The opportunities, or lack of them, afforded by the social structure of society e.g. democracies are more conducive to collective behaviour than authoritarian regimes.
Structural strain	• Breakdown in the ability of society to meet needs and expectations, meaning that 'strains' arise in different parts of the social structure.
Growth and spread of generalized beliefs	• Development of shared beliefs about the situation, e.g. why it is happening, who is to blame, what can be done.
Precipitating factors	• Trigger events, catalysts that enable people to attach their grievances to a concrete cause.
Mobilization of participants for action	• Organizational capacities of the group, including leaders, communication channels, money and other resources.
Operation of social control	• Ability of authorities, police and media to exercise social control (e.g. by public pressure or physical force).

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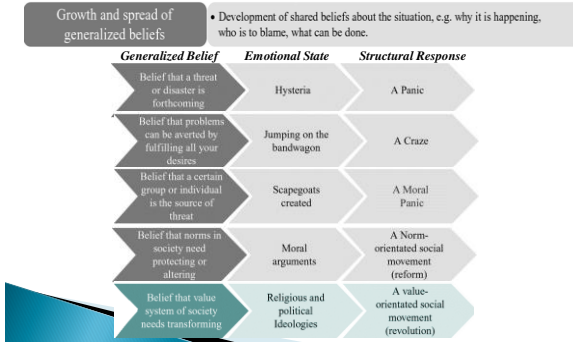
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## Value-Added Theory (Smelser): Six Determinants of Collective Behavior



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## Value-Added Theory (Smelser): Determinants of Collective Behavior



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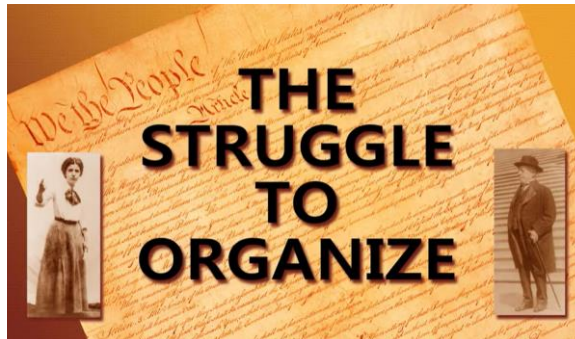
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## The Worker's Rights (Labor) Movement & Abolitionism



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## **SOCIAL-CONFLICT THEORY**

### **“Communism and Worker’s Rights”**

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## 19<sup>th</sup> c. Working Conditions

- ▶ “In truth, they were not human beings; they were merely toiling machines in the service of the few aristocrats who had guided history down to that time. The industrial revolution has simply carried this out to its logical end by making the workers machines pure and simple, taking from them the last trace of independent activity, and so forcing them to think and demand a position worthy of men.”  
— Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*

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## “Historical Materialism”

### Social-Conflict Theory of Karl Marx (Germany, 1818–1883) and followers



- **Ideas and Concepts**
- i. **Economic condition** is at the **base** of the social order – other institutions are part of the **super-structure**.

- ii. **Alienation**: the condition in which the individual is isolated and divorced from his or her society, work, or the sense of self.

Alienation can exist from:  
- product of labor  
- process of labor  
- others  
- self

- iii. **False consciousness**: a condition in which the beliefs, ideals, or ideology of a person are not in the person's own best interest. Marx believed that capitalism, in its creation of two classes that are in conflict (*bourgeoisie* – owners – and *proletariat* – workers), creates a false among workers who are distracted by media and religion). The only way to overcome false consciousness is to have a **class consciousness**, or the awareness of one's rank in society.



*Focus: Social Power*



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## “Materialist Movements”

### Seeking Physical Security

#### The Worker's Movement

- ▶ The worker's movement sought to obtain relief from horrible working conditions for the working class as capitalism rose in Europe and America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
  - [Click here for examples of such poor conditions](#)
- ▶ These movements wanted to ensure the physical security – or “put enough food on the table” – for the masses of the working classes who were subject to the terms of the institution of capitalism without recourse.

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## In Context: Worker's Rights

- ▶ The **Worker's Rights (Labor) Movement** of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century is an example, for Marx and **social-conflict** oriented sociologists, of the working class being pushed too far by the capitalist **class**.
- ▶ For Durkheim and the **functionalists**, of the **anomic disruption** related to the economic and social changes happening as a result of industrialization.
- ▶ From the **symbolic-interaction** perspective, the micro-level aspects of the worker's movement involved examining milling, collective excitement, and the **creation of new norms** in the midst of social protest.
- ▶ Review the videos and readings on the details of the history of the worker's movement to connect theory to practice.



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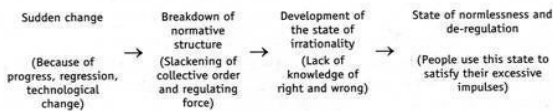
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### Durkheim's "Anomic Theory" and its "Mass Society" and "Collective Behavior" Variants

- For society to experience order, all of its subparts must be **healthy or functional**. All of its parts must be **well-integrated**.
- For Durkheim, **social movements** are a **symptom of social disintegration, or anomic disruption** (the condition of **normative breakdown** which leads to **irrationality**)
- The most reliable signs of **societal anomie** are **increases in social deviance, crime, suicide, and social movements**.

Durkheim's Model of Anomie



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## Historical Examples of Significant Anomic Disruptions

- Shift from an agrarian society to an industrial one. i.e., the **Worker's Rights movement**. Watch: [The Industrial Revolution \(1750-1850\)](#).
- Collapse of the Soviet Union: The shift from a Communist Society to a Capitalist one. Watch: [Perestroika in the former U.S.S.R \(1990-2000\)](#).
- The shift from an Industrial Society to a Post-Industrial one: Watch: [The Information Revolution \(1960-Present\)](#).



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## Durkheim on Anomic Disruptions and their Effect on the Individual

"[A person] is governed not by a material environment brutally imposed on [them], but by a conscience superior to [their] own, the superiority of which [they] feel. Because the greater, better part of [their] existence transcends the body, [they] escape the body's yoke, but is subject to that of society. But when society is disturbed by some painful crisis or by beneficent but abrupt transitions, it is momentarily incapable of exercising this influence; thence come the sudden rise in the curve of suicides which we have pointed out above." (*Suicide*, pg. 252)

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