



# Collective Behavior and Social Movements

## Part I

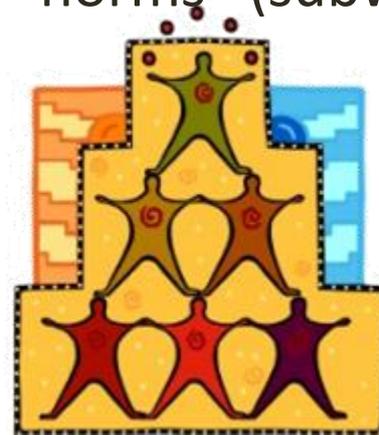
A social movement that only moves people is merely a revolt. A movement that changes both people and institutions is a revolution.

Martin Luther King Jr



# Crowds vs. Masses

- **mass**: a number of people who share an interest in a specific idea or issue but who are not in one another's immediate vicinity (for example, bloggers)
- **crowd**: a relatively large number of people who are in one another's immediate vicinity
- **casual crowd**: people who happen to be in the same place at the same time ... may share momentary interest and a few emergent norms (subway car, shopping mall)





# Types of Crowds

- **conventional crowd**: people who come together for a scheduled event ... share a common focus and generally act in line with institutionalized norms (people at a concert, college lecture, ceremony)
- **expressive crowd**: people releasing emotions with others who experience similar emotions ... dominant expression is joy (Mardi Gras, New Year's)
- **acting crowd**: collectivity so emotionally focused that it may erupt into violent behavior ... hostility toward a *singular* target as in a mob, or a range of *shifting* targets as in a riot



# Types of Crowds

- **protest crowd**: engages in activities intended to achieve political goals ... generally non-violent and has leadership (sit-ins)
- **riot**: relatively spontaneous outburst of violence by a large group of people
- **social movement**: organized effort by a large number of people to bring about or impede social, political, economic or cultural change
- **disaster behavior**





# Explanations of Crowd Behavior

Theory	Major assumptions
Contagion theory	Collective behavior is emotional and irrational and results from the hypnotic influence of the crowd.
Convergence theory	Crowd behavior reflects the beliefs and intentions that individuals already share before they join a crowd.
Emergent norm theory	People are not sure how to behave when they begin to interact in collective behavior. As they discuss their potential behavior, norms governing their behavior emerge, and social order and rationality then guide their behavior.
Value-added theory	Collective behavior results when several conditions exist, including structural strain, generalized beliefs, precipitating factors, and lack of social control.



# Explanations of Crowd Behavior:

## Contagion Theory

- Gustave Le Bon
- People are more likely to engage in antisocial behavior in a crowd because they are **anonymous** and feel **invulnerable**.
- Crowd excitement is **contagious** and breaks down the restraint of individuals.
- Collective behavior is understood as **irrational**, people will do things in a collectivity that they will not do alone.



# Explanations of Crowd Behavior: Convergence Theory

- Floyd Allport, Neil Miller and John Dollard
- Crowds do not unduly influence individuals to act in emotional and even violent ways.
- Rather, crowd behavior reflects the behavior and attitudes of the individuals who decide to join a crowd.
- Once they converge in a crowd, the behavior of the crowd is a consequence of their behavior and attitude.
- Instead of the crowd affecting the individuals in it, the individuals in it affect the crowd.





# Explanations of Crowd Behavior: Emergent Norm Theory

- Ralph H. Turner and Lewis M. Killian
- tied to symbolic interactionism
- When expectations are vague, crowds **develop their own definition of the situation** and establish norms for behavior that fits the occasion.
- Collective behavior is understood as **rational** and people are free to leave if crowd behavior begins to offend them.





# Explanations of Crowd Behavior: Value-Added Theory

- Neil Smelser
- Six conditions must be present for collective behavior to occur.
  - society structurally conducive to occurrence of collective behavior
  - structural strain
  - general belief of what is wrong and could be done
  - precipitating incident sparks collective behavior
  - mobilization of action
  - agents of social control conducive to collective action



# Value-Added Theory: The Los Angeles Riots (1992)



- The 1st amendment to the constitution gave rioters the right to assemble.
- There was a long-time strain between the LAPD and the local African American population.
- A general feeling existed that the social ills faced by African Americans were the product of racism.
- Four officers charged with beating Rodney King were acquitted.
- Once a few started to act and television covered them, the activity started to spread.
- Early inaction by the police prolonged events and allowed it to grow.



# Blumer's Model of How an Acting Crowd Develops

- **acting crowd**: an excited group that moves towards a goal
- the acting crowd's five stages
  - **tension or unrest**: People are disturbed about some condition of society and become restless, apprehensive and vulnerable to rumor and suggestions.
  - **exciting event**: An event occurs so shocking that people become preoccupied with it.



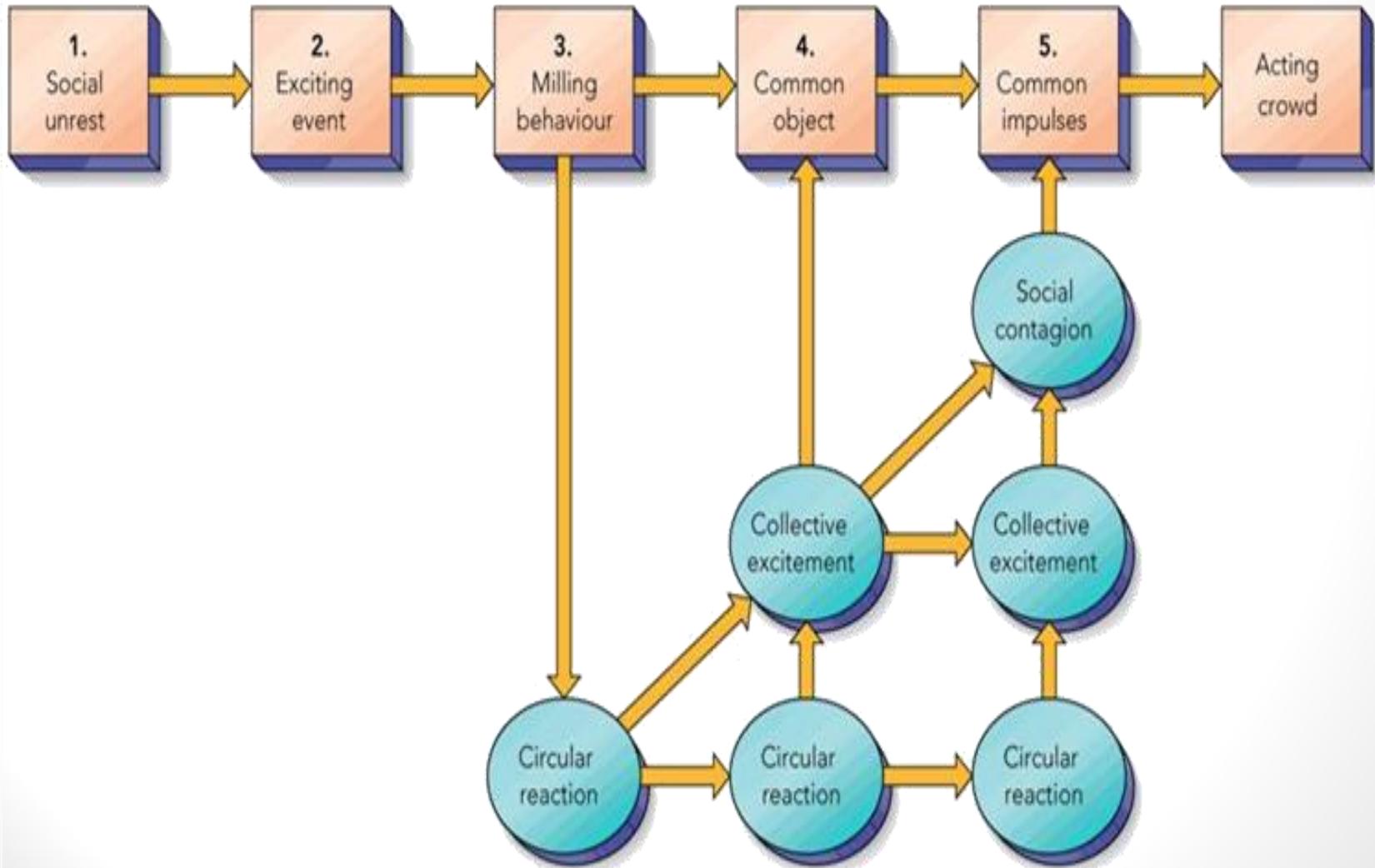


# Blumer's Model of How an Acting Crowd Develops

- the acting crowd's five stages
  - **milling behavior**: People in crowd begin talking about the event and a circular reaction begins. During this stage, people pick up clues to the "right" way of thinking and feeling which is reinforced by others.
  - **common object of attention**: People's attention becomes focused on some aspect of the event. They become caught up in the collective excitement.
  - **common impulses**: A sense of collective agreement about what should be done emerges, which is stimulated by **social contagion**: a sense of excitement passed from one person to another.



# Blumer's Model of How an Acting Crowd Develops





# Contemporary View: The Rationality of the Crowd

- **minimax strategy**: people try to minimize costs and maximize rewards regardless of existence of crowds
- five kinds of participants in crowd behavior
  - **ego-involved**: high personal stake in event
  - **concerned**: personal interest in event but less than ego-involved
  - **insecure**: little concern about issue but sought out crowd because it gives a sense of power and security
  - **curious spectator**: inquisitive and may cheer crowd on even though doesn't care about issue
  - **exploiter**: doesn't care about issue but uses it for own purposes



# Collective Behavior

- ...voluntary, often spontaneous activity that is engaged in by a large number of people and typically violates dominant group norms and values
- the action or behavior of people in groups or crowds
- Types of collective behavior may be distinguished by the dominant emotion expressed.
- a group of people who bypass the usual norms governing their behavior and do something unusual
- broad term covering a wide range of acts
- emerges in **spontaneous** way





# Collective Behavior

- In contrast, **institutionalized behavior** refers to activity that is guided by firmly established norms ... going to school or movies, working, etc.
- There are 3 types of actions.
  - **conforming**: following prevailing norms
  - **deviant**: behavior that violates the norms of a group
  - **collective**: behavior neither conforming nor deviant ... norms are absent or unclear or contradict each other



# How is collective behavior different from group behavior?

## COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR

- limited and short-term social interaction
- no clear social boundaries, anyone can be a member of the collective
- generates weak and unconventional norms

## GROUP BEHAVIOR

- remain together longer
- membership is more limited or selective ... groups of colleagues, organizations, friends
- stronger and more conventional norms





# The Collective Behavior Continuum





# Causes of Collective Behavior

- **structural factors**: underlying conditions in the larger society ... increase the chances of people responding in a particular way
- **strain**: occurs when one aspect of society is no longer in balance with other aspects
- **relative deprivation**: a gap between one's desired level of need satisfaction and one's actual level of need satisfaction
- **grievances**: discontent with the existing distribution of resources



# Causes of Collective Behavior

- timing
- breakdown in social control mechanisms
- corresponding feeling of normlessness





# Early Explanations of Collective Behavior

- Because much collective behavior is dramatic, unpredictable and frightening, early theories were more evaluative than analytic.
- **herd mentality** (Charles Mackay): described how people are influence by their peers
- **collective mind** (Gustave LeBon): There is a magnetic influence given out by the crowd that transmutes every individual's behavior until it becomes governed by the group mind. The crowd is a unit in its composition which robs every individual member of their opinions, values and beliefs.



# Early Explanations of Collective Behavior

- **circular reaction** (Robert Park): a type of interaction in which each person reacts by repeating the action or mirroring the sentiment of another person, thereby intensifying the action or sentiment in the originator





# Types of Collective Behavior

## rumors and gossip

- ...unverified information passed informally from person to person
- Sociologists ask how rumors serve to solve problems and reduce anxiety.
- thrive in times of uncertainty
- **gossip**: rumors about personal affairs
- **rumors**: short-lived, replace ambiguity or uncertainty, of little consequence
- **urban legend**: rumors about scary events, often offer life lessons

## fads and fashions

- ...periodic popularity of styles
- occur most frequently in modern societies where change is appreciated

**public opinion**: attitudes and beliefs communicated by ordinary citizens to decision makers

**panics and mass hysteria**: intense, fearful and seemingly irrational reaction to a perceived, but often misunderstood or imaginary, threat ... not everyone panics



# Mass Hysteria: *War of the Worlds*

- Halloween Eve 1938
  - Orson Welles performed a radio dramatization of HG Wells' science-fiction classic *War of the Worlds*.
  - CBS radio dance music program suddenly interrupted by a news bulletin informing the audience that Martians had landed in NJ and were conquering Earth.
  - Listeners informed before, during and after broadcast that it was fictitious dramatization but an estimated 1 million of the 10 million listeners believed events had actually occurred.





# Mass Hysteria: *War of the Worlds*

- Halloween Eve 1988
- Portuguese radio station rebroadcast original program on 50th anniversary and panic ensued again.



## ***Radio Listeners in Panic, Taking War Drama as Fact***

***Many Flee Homes to Escape 'Gas Raid From Mars'—Phone Calls Swamp Police at Broadcast of Wells Fantasy***

A wave of mass hysteria seized thousands of radio listeners throughout the nation between 8:15 and 9:30 o'clock last night when a broadcast of a dramatization of H. G. Wells's fantasy, "The War of the Worlds," led thousands to believe that an interplanetary conflict had started with invading Martians spreading wide death and

and radio stations here and in other cities of the United States and Canada seeking advice on protective measures against the raids.

The program was produced by Mr. Welles and the Mercury Theatre on the Air over station WABC and the Columbia Broadcasting System's coast-to-coast network, from 8 to 9 o'clock.

