Tools for Social Change

John R. Whitman, Ph.D.

Harvard Club of Birmingham

2 May 2019   johnrwhitman@mac.com   1

Review of Accelerator Classes

1. How to start a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization
2. Introduction to grant writing
3. Assessment and evaluation of nonprofit programs
4. Logic models and theory of change
5. Tools for social change

• Suggestions welcome!

2 May 2019   johnrwhitman@mac.com   2

Learning Objectives

1. Define "tool" and "social change"
2. Explain the difference between normative (standards of behavior) and codified (regulated behavior) rules
3. Explain the difference between incremental (individual, little or no lasting change) and systemic (large-scale, permanent) change
4. Describe two tools for incremental change
5. Describe two tools for systemic change
6. Explain the work of nonprofit organizations in terms of types of social change

Definitions

- Tool: A device that serves a particular function. Here, an intentional strategy to achieve desired social change.

- Social change: A change in the structure, function, or preferences of social arrangements. Here, change in the relationship between the powerful and the vulnerable.

Conceptual Framework

- Think of society as a game (Douglass North, 1990):
  - **Institutions** are the "rules" of the game
  - **Organizations** are the "players" (a group of people bound by a common purpose working to achieve a common goal)
  - **Entrepreneurs** create the change
- Your job is to:
  - **Learn** the rules of the game (different games have different rules):
    - **Normative**: Unwritten rules (norms, customs, traditions, values, behaviors…)
    - **Codified**: Written rules (laws, regulations, policies…)
  - **Play** by or **change** the rules
- Changing institutional rules is **Social Change**

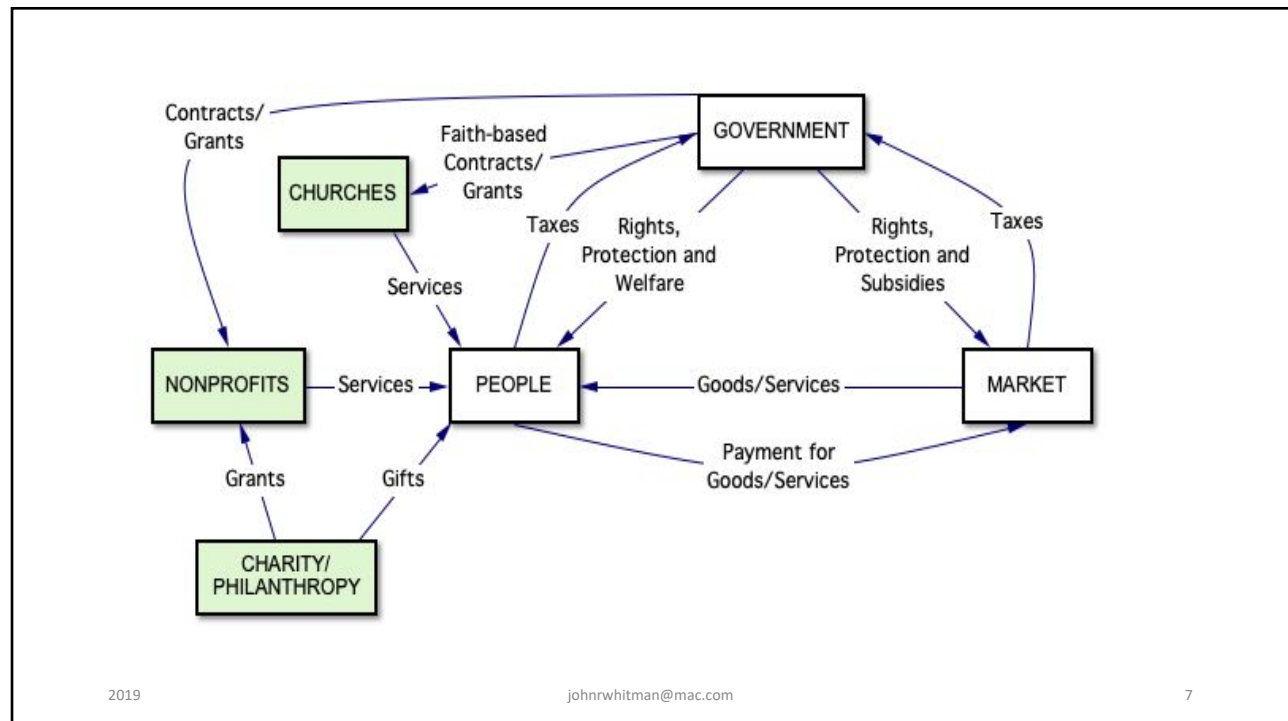2019   johnrwhitman@mac.com   5
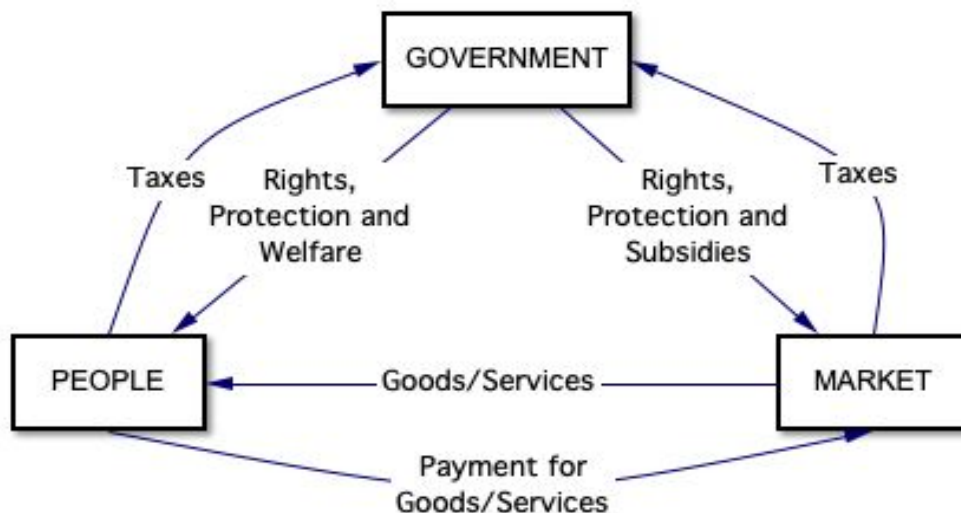
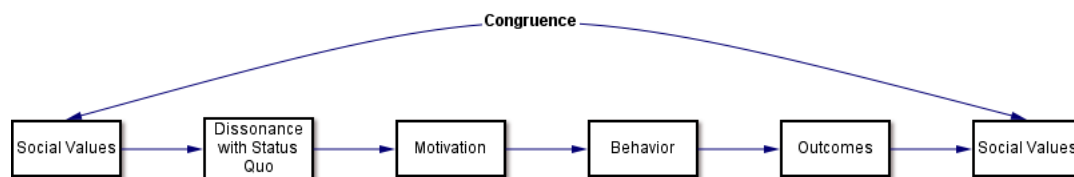2019   johnrwhitman@mac.com   6

Social Change: Injustice in the Status Quo

Change Creates Winners and Losers

- Not everyone shares the same social values
- Frederick Douglass: "Power concedes nothing without a demand."
- Those who work for social justice usually represent the vulnerable
- Those who are powerful today effectively used tools for social change to transform America's social values for their benefit:
  - Individual responsibility (not social welfare)
  - Free markets (de-regulation and privatization)
  - Small government (lower taxes for the wealthy; cut social services)

Social Values?

- What are social values?
- "A *social value* is an enduring, normative belief that describes a preferred mode of social conduct or end-state in society and justifies action to attain or sustain a preferred social order" (Whitman, 2006, p. 137).
- Social values are different from personal values or organizational values.
- Social values are what describe "a better world":
  - Canada: "Peace, order, and good government."
  - USA: "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Contested Social Values

- How would policy be different to achieve the following social values:
  - Individual liberty, free markets, small government (conservative, libertarian values)
  - Promote the general welfare, equality, good governance (liberal values)
- Or:
  - Sovereignty and independence (conservative: Do not sign multinational agreements; promote states' rights)
  - Collaboration and cooperation (liberal: Stronger together)
- Or:
  - Tradition and authority (favor the privileged, status quo)
  - Knowledge and innovation (promote merit-based, open to change)

Outcomes?

- What outcomes would change the status quo and convey your preferred social values?
- How to you achieve that change?

Types of Outcomes

- Change in assets/wealth, other indicators? (Distributive justice; less disparity in income/wealth; less disparity in health; increase literacy)
- Change in procedures? (Procedural justice; equal opportunity; giving voice to the poor; empowering the disenfranchised)
- Change in behavior? (Improved diet; more exercise; get out the vote)
- Change in law, regulation, enforcement, consequences? (Civil Rights Act of 1964; require seat belts; enforce no smoking zones; fines for litter)

2019　　　　　　　　　　johnrwhitman@mac.com　　　　　　　　　　13

Mission Capture

- Funders tend not to fund their own destruction
- Foundations are unlikely to dismantle capitalism
- Philanthropists are not about to demand redistribution of wealth
- Funders tend to shape your program to fit with their preferences
- Do your sources of funding really want the type of social change you seek?
- If not, how to you achieve real social change?

2 May 2019　　　　　　　　johnrwhitman@mac.com　　　　　　　　　　14

Strategies for Social Change

Incremental Change Institutions
- Charity (compensatory)
- Market (exchange)

Systemic Change Institutions
- Education (normative)
- Policy (codified)

Mobilizing Strategies
- Funding
- Grassroots
- Movement
- Advocacy
- Capacity-building
- Innovation

Change Institutions and Organizations

Incremental
- **Charity**: Alms; One-time or annual gifts and donations; Disaster aid; Medical assistance
  - Examples: **Food Bank** (feeding the hungry); **Red Cross** (disaster relief)
- **Market**: Exchange of goods and services, especially private goods
  - Examples: **Grameen Bank** (microloans to the poor); **Triumph Services** (jobs for disabled)

Systemic/Transformative
- **Education**: Quality preschool education; Public health awareness; Smoking cessation; Army experience
  - Examples: **National Head Start Association** (works to make Head Start universal); **Federalist Society** (shapes the thinking of law students to favor one interpretation of the Constitution)
- **Policy**: Civil Rights legislation; Seatbelt regulation; Smoking restrictions; GI Bill; Environmental legislation
  - Examples: **Brookings Institution/Heritage Foundation** (policy advisory); **American Civil Liberties Union** (initiates legal action to change status quo); **Congress**

Mobilizing Strategies for Institutional Change

- **Funding**: Providing financial resources for change
- **Grassroots**: Organizing people at the community level for change
- **Movement**: Building coalitions of diverse groups to achieve change
- **Advocacy**: Representing underserved individuals to achieve change
- **Capacity-building**: Increasing intellectual, social, financial, human capital to create change
- **Innovation**: Creating new technology and methods to achieve change

	SOCIAL CULTURAL	DOMAIN OF CHANGE	POLITICAL ECONOMY
TRANSFORMATIVE **Systemic change**	**3. Normative** *Large-scale normative change in informal, behavioral rules (e.g., social values, norms), i.e., through* ***Education***		**4. Codified** *Large-scale change mandated by formal, written rules (e.g., laws, regulations), i.e., through* ***Policy***
TYPE OF CHANGE		**Mobilizing strategies: Funding; Grassroots; Movement; Advocacy; Capacity-Building; Innovation**	
TRANSACTIONAL **Incremental change**	**1. Compensatory** *Incremental social change to restore or improve the status quo for a few for a short time, i.e., through* ***Charity***		**2. Exchange** *Transactions of economic value usually within a marketplace, i.e., through the* ***Market***

What Strategies Are You Using?

- Systemic/Transformative (Education/Policy)
- Incremental/Transactional (Charity/Market)
- Sociocultural (Education, Charity)
- Political Economy (Policy, Market)
- Mobilizing Strategy (not an end in itself)

What Expertise Can Provide Capacity?

- The rules of the game are be different in different institutions, and likely require different expertise
- Transformative
  - **Educational**: Graduate School of Education, Social Psychology
  - **Policy**: Law School, School of Government/Policy
- Transactional
  - **Charity**: (Palliative care): Medicine, Public Health, Philanthropy
  - **Market**: Business School

Creating Capacity for Change

- Internal:
  - Training
  - Learning on the job
- External:
  - Hiring from within Alabama: Knowing the rules of the culture and having local contacts with power and influence
  - Hiring from outside Alabama: Exposure to best practices elsewhere to inspire innovation in Alabama

Case Study 1: Racism (source: *Deep Roots*)

- Racism roots: Since Emancipation and Post-Reconstruction, counties that had the largest proportion of slaves have the highest degree of racism: attitudes toward Blacks and conservative preferences on civil rights, affirmative action/redistribution, law enforcement, politicians.
- Original cause: Greatest economic impact from loss of free labor, plus economic competition with poor whites, plus threat of political empowerment.
- White reaction: Black Laws; Jim Crow segregation, disenfranchisement; KKK terror; lynching; unjust imprisonment; convict labor.
- Persistence: Racism has seen intergenerational persistence in these counties due to attitudes, norms, and preferences transmitted through family upbringing and institutions (e.g., schools, churches, law enforcement, justice system).
- It's 1960: Racism is rampant: What would you do?
- It's 2019: Racism persists: What would you do?

Case Study 2: Government Capture (source: *A Gift of Freedom*)

- Unrest: The 1960s were a time of hippies and massive social unrest, notably for Civil Rights and against the Vietnam War. The Democrats were launching massively expensive programs for social welfare; Conservative Barry Goldwater lost the 1964 election.
- Fear: Conservatives were afraid of losing the free enterprise system.
- Vision: Inspired by a 1971 memo that outlined a vision for how conservatives could influence political ideas, a small number of conservative foundations funded conservative think tanks; conservative scholarly books and papers; the Federalist Society to train conservative lawyers and judges; academic endowments for conservatives at liberal universities; training judges in cost/benefit analysis as a way to decide cases; influence of textbooks; public outreach through TV/media. (Nixon put the author on the Supreme Court.)
- Outcome: Since the 1980s the country has shifted to the right.
- Persistence: The effects of this shift will last for generations (Supreme Court, federal judges, federal policies of deregulation and cutbacks for social welfare, conservative governors, influence on education; etc.).
- 2019: Regardless of your political preference, what would you do?

2 May 2019   johnrwhitman@mac.com   23

Closing Comments

- Is the status quo in your world good enough?
- Is incremental change good enough?
- What social values drive your vision of systemic/transformational change?
- Use the tools for social change checklist and model for inspiration
- Social change, not funders, should drive your mission
- Real social change is not easy because there are winners and losers in contests of power and influence (politics and money)
- One fundamental barrier to change in this state may be the Alabama Constitution of 1901, itself a root cause of social deprivation

2 May 2019   johnrwhitman@mac.com   24

Questions?

References

- Acharya, A., Blackwell, M., & Sen, M. (2018). *Deep roots: How slavery still shapes southern politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Flynt, W. (2004). *Alabama in the twentieth century*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press.
- Giridharadas, A. (2018). *Winners take all: The elite charade of changing the world*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Miller, J. J. (2006). *A gift of freedom: How the John M. Olin Foundation changed America*. San Francisco: Encounter Books.
- North, D. C. (2005/1990). *Institutions, institutional change and economic performance*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Villanueva, E. (2018). *Decolonizing wealth: Indigenous wisdom to heal divides and restore balance*. Oakland: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.