WHAT IS SOCIAL CHANGE?

• **Social change** is changes in the institutions, culture, stratification system, and other aspects of a society

• Social change can be large or small scale
  - **Macrochanges** occur at the institutional and structural levels of society
    - Ex: The current economic recession
  - **Microchanges** are small day-to-day changes
    - Ex: New fashions and styles
CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

1. **Social change is uneven**
   - William Ogburn discussed culture lag; material changes occur more rapidly than changes in accompanying values, beliefs and attitudes

2. **The onset and consequences of social change are often unforeseen**
   - The attack on the World Trade Center exemplifies this

3. **Social change often creates conflict**
   - Political, religious, and ethnic conflict often results at international levels and within national boundaries
The direction of social change is not random

- Norms, values and traditions direct social change
- Emile Durkheim, Herbert Spencer, and Auguste Comte saw social structures and cultures moving from the homogeneous to the complex with increasingly greater levels of differentiation or heterogamy (division of labor)
- Ferdinand Toennies observed cultures growing less integrated, eventually becoming societies where neighbors often do not know each other
THEORIES OF SOCIAL CHANGE

- **Unidimensional theorists** contend that societies move along a single line from simple to complex, or primitive to differentiated.

- **Multidimensional theorists** argue that structural, institutional, and cultural development of a society can simultaneously follow many evolutionary paths (this view is supported by anthropological research).
THEORIES OF SOCIAL CHANGE (CONTINUED)

• Karl Marx argued social change is a product of economic conflict that arises in capitalistic societies where the upper class owners of production (bourgeoisie) exploit the workers (proletariat)

• Ralf Dahrendorf argued that conflict is inherent in all social relationships--not only caused by economic forces
CYCLICAL THEORIES OF CHANGE

• **Cyclical theories** examine patterns of social structure and culture that recur at regular intervals

• Cyclical theories build on organicism— that society is like a living being with a life cycle

• Globalization forces changes throughout the world
  • As societies becoming increasingly interconnected, they become increasingly technical
  • Such change magnifies social, economic, and political differences everywhere
MODERNIZATION THEORY

- Proponents of this approach contend that technological changes lead to homogeneity in terms of differentiation and complexity.

- Developing nations are shaped within the mold of dominant Western nations:
  - We see this in Japan, where they are influencing other countries’ work ethics and shaping workplace policy.
  - Elderly do not fare well in industrial & post-industrial society—modernization depends on youth, speed, technological knowledge.
DEPENDENCY THEORY

• Highly industrialized nations tend to imprison developing nations
  • Rather than spurring the upward mobility of developing nations with transfers of technology and business acumen, they keep them subservient and dependent on them for their survival
  • Dominant industrial nations exploit 3rd world and developing nations (toxic dumpsites, factories creating negative impact on environment, workers, etc)
• Women, children, and men are placed in inferior working conditions to mass produce items for consumption in wealthy nations
Pitrim Sorokin (1941) outlined three phases or cycles of social change:

- **Phase I - idealistic**: society wrestles with the tension between ideal and practical
- **Phase II - ideational culture**: emphasis is on faith and new forms of spirituality
- **Phase III - sensate culture**: societies become indulgent in pleasure, hedonism, and sensation
  - Legal and illegal recreation is a primary societal value and activity
GLOBAL THEORIES OF SOCIAL CHANGE

- Peter Berger contends that as societies become increasingly modernized, they becomes more bureaucratized
  - He also contends that religion and religious values diminish in importance within the society as they modernize
Modernization creates a sense of powerlessness and alienation, especially for the less advantaged.

Karl Marx contended that capitalism disenfranchises the masses unless they gained class consciousness and revolted, they would be continually exploited (false consciousness).

Jurgen Habermas argued that modernization creates powerlessness caused by social inequalities related to race, ethnicity, class, and stratification based on sex.
Theorists proposed many explanations for social change including:
- Travel & discovery
- Cultural diffusion
- Inequality
- Changes in population
- War
- Technological innovation
- Mobilization of people through collective behavior and social movements
REVOLUTION

- Revolutions involve the overthrow of state or the total transformation of central state institutions.
- Revolutions result in far-reaching social change:
  - They can totally destroy the state and/or various disenfranchised groups.
  - Repressed groups can rebel against the existing state of affairs within the society, bringing about new economic and political systems.
• As anthropologist Ralph Linton (1937) asserted, what many people regard as “American” originally came from other lands such as: cloth developed in Asia, clocks invented in Europe, and coins developed in Turkey
  • Today’s array of foods represents this principle well; traditional spaghetti and meatballs, stew, and roast beef is American
  • Music, language, and dance follow this same principle
INEQUALITY & SOCIAL CHANGE

• Inequalities between people on the basis of class, ethnicity, sex, or other social structural characteristics can be a powerful motivation for social change
• Some government initiatives result from these differences, such as the introduction of teaching English as a second language in elementary schools and community colleges
  • Unless immigrants learn English, they will always be disadvantaged, and social and economic doors will be closed to them
• Technological innovations can be strong catalysts of social change
  • The Industrial Revolution demonstrated this principle in the move from agrarian life to industry
  • Technology brings with it great rewards and it also displaces millions of people
    • We see large factories converting to automation; this reduces the need to employ and pay many line workers
Digital computers and the subsequent development of desktop computing since the 1980s has revolutionized the planet.

- The Internet, and the doors it opened to near instantaneous global communication, is one of the most dramatic sources of social change the world has experienced.
- Cultural values, education, modes of production, have changed in an attempt to keep pace with this invention.
MOBILIZING PEOPLE FOR CHANGE

• Change requires human action; thinking is not enough
• People either act to promote or to resist change
• Collective behavior and social movements are two instruments of social change
  • Examples of social movements include the civil rights movement, the women’s movement, the environmental movement, and the militia movement
COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR

& SOCIAL MOVEMENTS
COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR

- occurs when norms to guide behavior are missing, irrelevant, or suspended and people establish new norms of behavior on the spot to respond to an emerging situation (innovation)
  - Collective behavior generally is spontaneous
  - Spontaneous actions are exemplified in a street riot or response to a dangerous situation—fire in a crowded bar, acquisitive panic at a sporting event, etc
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

- **Social movements** are led by groups that act with some continuity and organization to promote, protect or resist change in society
  - movements persist over time, and are not one-time events such as a march
  - Examples include efforts to defend civil rights and equal rights for ethnic groups and women, or to protect the environment
  - Social movements are not as spontaneous as other forms of collective behavior
CHARACTERISTICS OF COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR

1. represents actions of groups of people, not individuals
2. new or emergent relationships in groups that arise in unusual or unexpected circumstances
3. captures the more novel, dynamic, and changing elements of society
4. patterned, not irrational or overly emotional
5. Rumors (communication outside the normative structure) become a means of communicating between the people involved
ORIGIN OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

- Social movement (SM) is an umbrella term—environment, gay rights, women’s rights, etc., social movement organization (SMO) is the working organization—world wildlife federation, Greenpeace, EarthFirst!, ALF, PETA, SPCA, etc are the SMO’s of the environmental rights SM.
- For a movement to begin, pre-existing networks of communication must already exist
  - Charismatic leaders advance causes by bringing visibility to them
- People need to perceive an injustice for a cause to develop
- An organization structure must be developed for action to be effective
• Three primary theories of social movements:

• Resource mobilization theory focuses on how movements gain momentum by successfully garnering resources, competing with other movements, and mobilizing the available resources
  • Resources needed include: money, time, communication networks, technology, legal skills, leaders, followers, access to media, etc
• SM’s not very innovative or spontaneous.
• requires a combination of internal factors and external factors
  • Some structural condition provides an impetus for collective action
  • Wars, political pressure, economic and demographic shifts can create such opportunities
  • Large-scale changes can be opportunities for the mobilization of social movements
NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY

• Incorporates resource mobilization and political process theories
• Links culture, ideology, and identity to explain how new identities are forged within social movements
  • Concerned with the social construction of identity
  • Social movements present opportunities to modify oneself
  • This is not a structural, but a social-psychological theory
In the U.S., the most significant social movements are those associated with the nation’s diverse population and differing ideologies.

- The women’s movement, the civil rights movement, the gay and lesbian movement are all major sources of activism in contemporary society.
  - These movements have brought about the greatest changes in this nation’s social institutions.

Right wing movements are more violent than left wing (KKK).

Right wing more concerned with stopping change.