

Reactions to Change

This chapter will consider the conditions that facilitate or hinder the acceptance of change. Those involved in social change at the theoretical and practical levels recognize the proclivity of individuals, groups, organizations, institutions, and even entire societies to seek and ward off change at the same time. At every level in society, there are forces that seek to promote change, and there are those that strive to maintain the status quo. Change is both sought and opposed, and in the long run the forces that promote change in society will have an edge over those that strive toward conservatism. Change often involves disruption, the reorganization of behavior patterns, and requires some alterations of values, attitudes, and lifestyles. Very few changes of any magnitude can be accomplished without impairing the life situations of some individuals or groups. As Donald Klein (1985:98) aptly notes, "It is probably inevitable that any major change will be a mixed blessing to those undergoing it in those instances when the status quo or situation of gradual change has been acceptable to many or most people. The dynamic interplay of forces in social systems is such that any stable equilibrium must represent at least a partial accommodation to the varying needs and demands of those involved. Under such circumstances, the major change must be desired by those affected if it is to be accepted."

To a great extent, the structure of a society dictates whether change will be opposed or advocated. When a society is highly integrated so that each element is tightly interwoven with all the others in a mutually interdependent system, change is difficult and costly. For example, among a number of Nilotic African societies, such as the Pakot and Masai, the culture is integrated around the cattle complex. Cattle are not only a means of subsistence; they are also a necessity for bride purchase, a measure of status, and an



object of intense affection (Schneider, 1959). Such a system is strongly resistant to social change. But when the culture is less highly integrated, so that work, play, family, religion, and other activities are less dependent on one another, change is easier and more frequent. A tightly structured society, in which every individual's roles, duties, and privileges are clearly and precisely defined, is less given to changes than a more loosely structured society, where social roles, lines of authority, privileges, and obligations are more open to individual rearrangement. For example, the structure of American society is highly conducive to social change. The prevailing individualism, lack of rigid social stratification, great emphasis on achieved status, high level of educational attainment, and institutionalization of research all tend to encourage rapid social change (Bensman & Vidich, 1987; Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1990; Sztompka, 1994; Toffler, 1980).

In the Western world, change seems normal, and most people pride themselves on being progressive and up to date. By contrast, the Trobriand Islanders off the coast of New Guinea had no concept of change and did not even have any words in their language to express or describe change. When Western visitors tried to explain the notion of change, the islanders could not understand what they were talking about. Societies obviously differ greatly in their outlook toward change. Those who revere the past, who worship their ancestors, honor and obey their elders, and are preoccupied with tradition and rituals, will change slowly and unwillingly. When a culture has been relatively static for a long period of time, individuals are likely to assume that it should remain so indefinitely. They consider their customs, culture, and technique as correct and everlasting. The accent is on the status quo, and change is never consciously or seriously considered. Still, change occurs in such a society, but in most cases it is too slow and too gradual to be noticed.

Although the rate of change varies from society to society, and within society among its various subgroups, it is possible to identify and analyze factors that inhibit or promote change in a variety of domains and levels. We shall now examine the conditions that play a role in the acceptance or rejection of change. A number of cross-cultural illustrations of actual situations will be considered to demonstrate the influence of specific factors in concrete change situations.

As a convenient way of organizing the diverse sources, conditions, and causes of acceptance and rejection of change, they will be considered in terms of social, psychological, cultural, and economic factors. Obviously there is a fair amount of overlapping among these factors, and the conditions of acceptance and rejection can only be separated for analytical purposes. They are the opposite sides of the same coin. The factors that are found in the nature of the social structure of the group or society are simply referred to as social; those dealing with perception, learning, and motivation are designated as psychological; factors that are culture-based are called cultural; and those with an economic base are termed economic. Clearly, economic



factors set the limit of change in many situations. As it will be shown, individuals are often reluctant to change their ways because of cultural, social, and psychological factors. But equally as often they are aware of the benefits of change and are anxious to alter their traditional ways, but the economic cost is just too great. If the economical potential is not present, attention to the other three factors will be meaningless. With these introductory remarks in mind, let us now turn to the stimulants to change.

SOCIAL STIMULANTS

All societies are constantly changing—some rapidly and some very slowly. A number of factors influence the rate of change and facilitate the acceptance of an innovation. The ones that play an important role in stimulating change include the desire for prestige, contact with other peoples, friendship obligations, social class, authority, problems of “fit,” timing, degree of participation in decision making, and competition. In the following paragraphs, these social stimulants to change will be examined.

Desire for Prestige

In every society, certain types of behaviors and activities are emulated because they confer prestige and status. The forms of behavior that are considered prestigious obviously differ from society to society. In the United States, for example, individuals with high parental and other nonwage income tend to choose high-status occupations that often produce low earnings (Fershtman & Weiss, 1993). In traditional societies, certain nonmaterial and symbolic achievements are rewarded with high status, such as religious asceticism, chastity, and fulfillment of ritual obligations. In the contemporary world, prestige is increasingly sought through the acquisition of certain visible material symbols such as clothes, food, housing, and automobiles or being listed in certain publications such as the *Rollin* in France (*Economist*, 1996). There are many illustrations of how the prestige factor is significant in bringing about social change. For example, in modern Indian villages, Western clothes, cigarettes, sunglasses, and tea are popular, both because of utility and because they possess prestige value. In Zambia (formerly Northern Rhodesia), the refrigerator confers a great deal of prestige and is usually placed in the center of the living room. Egyptians find status in costly cellular phones (Mekay, 1997). In Melanesia, the prestige factor to a great extent accounts for the use of corrugated iron roofs on the better homes, which, although more durable, are less comfortable than the old fashioned sago-palm thatch. In India, mothers of lower socioeconomic groups increasingly spend money on highly advertised, patented, powdered carbohydrate foods, which have prestige value, rather than on milk

and other locally produced foods that represent better nutritional value for the same price (Foster, 1973:155–158).

Felix M. Keesing (1958:400) points out that an innovation will be accepted more readily if it will add to the prestige of the acceptors. For example, in Latin America, latrines are frequently installed not because of an appreciation of the desirability of environmental sanitation, but because they add an extra note of elegance to a man's home, and he thereby rises in importance in the eyes of his peers. Similarly, in rural Egypt, modern medicine is making some progress because it is becoming a sign of social prestige to bring a physician into one's home. In the same vein, using a tractor, even though it may not be economical, is a symbol of being modern in many areas. For example, Foster saw in Zimbabwe many tractors whose use was clearly not economic—as a matter of fact, many of them were inoperable—but they were valued and prominently displayed for the prestige they conferred upon the owner (Foster, 1973:157).

Contact

It is frequently proposed in the social-change literature that contact with other societies stimulates change (Bochner, 1982; Keesing, 1958:401). Because many new attributes and traits come through diffusion, those societies in closest contact with other societies are likely to change most rapidly. During the period of overland transportation, the land bridge connecting Asia, Africa, and Europe was the center of civilizing change. With the introduction of sailing vessels, the center shifted to the fringes of the Mediterranean Sea and still later to the northwest coast of Europe. Areas of greatest intercultural contact are centers of change. Traditionally, war and trade have always led to intercultural contact, and today, travel, tourism, and the mass media are adding to the contact between cultures. Through contacts, behaviors are modified, new practices are introduced, and new symbols of prestige are established. For example, as a result of increased tourism and contact with Westerners, young people in the former Soviet Union sought to emulate certain Western practices and attires. Frequently, a pair of faded blue jeans sold on the black market for \$120 to \$140, which approximated a month's income of an average factory worker (although such transactions carried a heavy penalty). While on the topic of jeans, a *New York Times* article (Hofmeister, 1994) reports that a vintage pair of Elvis jeans is a status symbol that "can fetch \$3,000" and used Air Jordan athletic shoes from the 1980s, sweaty and soiled, can sell for "\$800 or more in Japan." In general, there are certain conditions of contact that facilitate the acceptance of a novelty. They include situations in which there is equal status between members of different cultural groups, when the contact is of an intimate rather than casual nature, and when the contact is pleasant and rewarding (Jaspars & Hewstone, 1982:128).



Friendship Obligations

Friendship patterns in much of the world are more carefully worked out and balanced than they are in the United States. In addition to liking and free association with someone of a person's choice, friendship implies mutual obligations and reciprocal favors. Friendship in this context provides the basis for cooperation in many societies. As a result of this type of friendship bond, many changes and innovations are accepted in order to please the proponent or those friends who have already accepted them. For example, authorities on international business emphasize the importance of friendship ties in business ventures in Africa. Friendship comes before business, and trust must be established before Africans enter business deals or consider the acceptance of new products or practices (Harris & Moran, 1996:514-515).

Social Class

Different social classes in a society react to change in different ways. For example, individuals in the upper and upper middle classes will be more likely to accept modern medical practices because they can more likely afford them, are better educated, and are in closer contact with clinics and physicians (see, for example, Strongegger, et al., 1997). They also have the means to obtain many innovations inaccessible to members of the other classes.

One would think that the poorest people in a society would be most receptive to change. However, this is not the case, and usually they tend to be the most reluctant to adopt new ways. As pointed out by T. R. Batten:

This is because they of all people can least afford to take risks. They have no reserves to tide them over failure. They know that they can just make a living by doing as they do, and they need to be very sure before they do anything differently. (Batten, quoted by Foster, 1973:170-171)

The most receptive people to change, in general, are those in the middle class. They have enough that they can take limited risks without threatening their well-being, but their situation is not so secure that the attraction of greater income, and the satisfaction of other felt needs, would not be a strong motivation to action. Moreover, they do not usually represent vested interests that may be threatened by major innovations, nor are they in a state of apathy, believing that no change is possible.

Authority

There are at least two kinds of authority that can be recognized as influencing receptivity to change. The first is the kind in which a respected leader vouches for, or approves, a proposed change. He or she is not actually fore-

ing the people to change; rather, the person is using the authority inherent in his or her position to reassure others that it is, indeed, safe, advantageous, and desirable. For example, a respected leader in the community, a well-liked teacher, or a popular coach, because of his or her prestige and moral authority, can facilitate the introduction of innovations in many areas of life.

When dealing with the welfare of the majority, at times the use of authority is required over the beliefs of a dissident minority. For example, compulsory vaccination and chlorinating of water have brought about important health benefits over the protest of vocal minorities. Similarly, the introduction of the New World potato in Europe required the initial use of authority for the benefit of all concerned. When the potato was first introduced in Europe in the late eighteenth century, it was opposed and was considered poisonous in that it would cause diarrhea and would otherwise be harmful. But in Germany, the head of the army ordered every soldier to plant potatoes to care for, harvest, and eat. Apparently, the length of the military service was sufficiently long to give the soldiers time to learn how to cultivate potatoes and to develop a taste for them. When the men returned to their farms after their military duty, they started to grow potato crops. It soon became a staple food in Germany and later spread to other parts of Europe.

The Problem of "Fit"

Acceptance of change is greatly facilitated when it can be integrated into the existing configuration of culture (Keesing, 1958:398). If a new form can be integrated or associated with traditional patterns, it has a greater chance of being accepted than if there is nothing to tie it to. For example, the horse fitted easily into the hunting culture of the Apaches, as it enabled them to improve their hunting techniques. Also, many non-Western societies have readily accepted the procedures and materials of scientific medicine—innoculations, antibiotics, and even surgery—where these were consistent with their traditional folk medicine. It was easier for the ill Navaho to swallow the doctor's pill while the Navaho's healing dance continued. By contrast, Western-type toilets are still being rejected (to the greatest consternation of many American tourists) in many parts of Thailand, Vietnam, Turkey, China and other countries because they are not suitable for the preferred squatting position.

The acceptance of an innovation is further facilitated when new tools and techniques can be adapted to preexisting ways of using the body. Traditional and established motor patterns are important, and if a new innovation can fit into this existing framework, the possibilities for successful introduction are multiplied. For example, at times it is easier to modify a tool than the motor pattern. When Mexicans were furnished with modern wheelbarrows at railroad construction sites, they removed the wheel and



lifted the barrow proper to their backs, supporting and carrying it with a forehead tumpline. This is owing to the fact that Mexicans for centuries have moved earth by carrying it in a basket supported on their backs in this fashion. As a matter of fact, even today, the tourists in Mexico City may see earth from the foundations of new skyscrapers being carried out of the ground in the same fashion.

Timing

The timing of the presentation of an innovation is a crucial, and obvious, consideration in its acceptance. For instance, in rural areas the acceptance of an innovation is conditioned by the right time within a yearly cycle. This is particularly true when one's pocketbook is involved. In rural communities, the amount of available cash fluctuates during the year. During the harvest time, people have the most cash available. This is the period for weddings, fiestas, and other activities that involve large expenditures. If new material items or practices come to the attention of people during this period, they are more likely to spend money on it than a couple of months before or after harvest time.

Participation in Decision Making

In the United States, an innovation will be more readily accepted if the people who are to change are involved in planning and execution even if the decision-making process involves adversary proceedings in which supporters of an opposing view are given an opportunity to influence the eventual decision (Helmer, 1994). In a classic study by Kurt Lewin (1965), conducted during World War II, the object was to change meat consumption patterns to less desirable, but more plentiful, cuts such as kidneys and sweetbreads. In Lewin's study, two experimental conditions were employed. In one, housewives heard a lecture of the benefits of these foods; in the other, a discussion was initiated among women. The same information was relayed in both cases. Results gathered at a later date indicated that 32 percent of the individuals participating in the discussion used the unfamiliar meats, compared to only 3 percent of the individuals who heard the lecture. It has since been repeatedly suggested in the social-science literature that change is effected more readily and with more relative permanence if the mass of the people involved participate in some way in the change program, although it is recognized that the notion of participation is class- and culture-specific.

Similarly in formal organizations, employees' participation in planning and implementing change tend to capture their excitement. It may result in better decisions because of employee input, and it may create more direct communications through personal involvement (Nadler, 1987:365). If employees feel deprived, bringing them into the decision-making process

will augment their involvement in the acceptance of the decision that is made. In general, if the decisions are important for the subordinates in terms of their own work, the acceptance of change will be aided through their involvement (Hall, 1995).

Competition

As already noted in Chapter 1, competition often spurs people to make changes. It may take place between individuals, between groups, or between communities. Competition as a stimulant to change is perhaps most pronounced in the contemporary marketplace (see, for example, Teisberg, Porter, & Brown, 1994). Consumers increasingly expect and prefer new products. Now, more than ever before, the flow of goods and services consists of innovations. Consumers not only expect a constant change in the items available to them, but they have come to consider such change desirable. The continuous production of new automobile models and the growth of the range of personal computers are two obvious illustrations. The process of continuous innovation, invention, and new technologies under the impetus of competition also creates new demands for investment and capital. This provides a basis for renewed expansion, thus further promoting change in the economic sphere.

PSYCHOLOGICAL STIMULANTS

When individuals are confronted with new opportunities, acceptance of those opportunities is conditioned by a number of psychological factors. In this section motivation, perceived needs, communication patterns, attitudes, and forms of personal influence are examined as facilitators in the acceptance of change.

Motivations to Change

Motivation is a purposive or goal-directed behavior that is acquired through experience by learning. It is a way of gratifying needs and desires, and thus there are many different types and levels. Certain kinds of motivations seem to be universal or nearly universal in that they cut across all kinds of societies and cultures and are found in some degree almost everywhere. These motivations for stimulating change are universal in nature and include such things as the desire for prestige, economic gain, and the wish to comply with friendship obligations.

The element of play, the fascination with a novel or unusual toy, has long been recognized as an important factor in invention and also seems to be significant as motivation in change. As an illustration, consider the effect of the play motive in East Bengal as a stimulant to change. Nearly 80 percent of all



families in a village had built bore-hole latrines, all within the course of several weeks. This kind of success rate was highly unusual for the prevailing environmental sanitation programs in that area. A bit of probing revealed that in that part of East Bengal there is a thick covering of rich alluvial soil, which permits the use of an auger for drilling the latrine pit. Four men can bore through as much as 20 feet of this soil in an hour and the results are little short of miraculous. It turned out that the villagers were enchanted with this marvelous new tool and wanted to try their hand at it. Competition between groups of men were informally organized, and records were set and broken for latrine drilling in rapid succession. "For several weeks this was undoubtedly the happiest village in the country. And, at the end of the time, a good job of environmental sanitation had been done—but not for the reason the health team thought" (Foster, 1973:163). Of course, the element of play stimulates the acceptance of innovations in many other ways. For example, the current fad among youngsters playing computer games increases their computer literacy and, at the same time, helps their parents to accept and use personal computers.

Perceived Needs

Acceptance of change in a society is greatly affected by how its members perceive their needs. "Needs" are obviously subjective and time and culture bound; they are real if people feel that they are real (see, for example, Perkins, et al., 1995). In many underdeveloped and malnourished parts of the world, individuals not only need more food, they also need *different foods*, especially vegetables and legumes. Agricultural changes that bring more food are more readily accepted than those bringing *different foods* for which they feel no need (Arensberg & Niehoff, 1971:155).

It is often argued that changing conditions tend to create new needs—genuine objective needs, not just subjectively "felt" needs. For example, urbanization created a need for sanitary engineering; the modern factory system created a need for labor unions; and the high-speed automobile created a need for superhighways. A culture is integrated, and therefore any change in one part of the culture creates a need for adaptive changes in related parts of the culture. Individuals can also develop a need when they learn that an improved method, an innovation, exists. "Therefore, innovations can lead to needs, as well as vice versa. Some change agents use this approach to change by creating needs among their clients through pointing out the desirable consequences of new ideas" (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971:105).

Communication Patterns

Communication is a circular interaction that involves a sender, a message, and a receiver. Several characteristics of the sender can promote the acceptance of change. If the person is considered an expert in a particular field,



he or she is likely to exert a favorable influence. Closely related to the question of expertise is the source of credibility. In general, the more credible the source, the greater the persuasive impact (Weyant, 1986:83–86). Credibility is often determined by level of education, social status, and professional attainment. Other sender characteristics that are likely to influence the receiver include trustworthiness, power, attraction, likability, and similarity.

Several characteristics of a message may stimulate the acceptance of change. One is the use of the arousal of fear as opposed to more rational, less emotional, appeals. For example, the highly emotional and fear-arousing appeals to combat AIDS through what is popularly referred to as “safe sex” seem to be effective in altering sexual practices and behavior. Similarly, in recent years, some politicians who have employed negative campaign tactics that attempt to discredit their opponents have been more successful than those who stick to more traditional issue-oriented campaigns (Netesueck, 1994a:22–42).

A second characteristic is the organization of the message. In terms of stimulating acceptance of change, is it more effective to present one side of an argument or both sides? In a classic and oft-replicated study by Carl Hovland and his associates it was found that presentation of both sides was more effective in converting the highly educated. The presentation of only one side of the argument was more effective among the poorly educated and those originally favoring the advocated view. Two-sided communications, it has been discovered, appear to be more effective “inoculators” than are one-sided communications. In summarizing the relative merits of one and two-sided communications, they say this:

1. A two-sided presentation is more effective in the long run than a one-sided one (a) when, regardless of initial opinion the audience is exposed to subsequent counter-propaganda, or (b) when, regardless of subsequent exposure to counter-propaganda, the audience initially disagrees with the commentator's position.
2. A two-sided presentation is less effective than a one-sided presentation if the audience initially agrees with the commentator's position and is not exposed to later counter-propaganda. (Hovland, Lumsdaine, & Sheffield, 1949:109)

Finally, there is the question of primacy-versus-recency effects in the delivery of a message. There are arguments in support of both sides of the question. Those in favor of recency contend that an audience is more likely to recall material that is presented last. Those in favor of primacy argue that attention span of an audience declines by the time the second speaker presents the argument. The key seems to be the time interval between the presentations. If there is little time between the two, the first speaker will have an advantage. If the time interval is greater, it is more likely (assuming that the speakers are equal in characteristics such as expertise, trust, attractiveness, and so on) that the second speaker will be more effective. It should be



noted, however, that these are broad generalizations, and the question of primacy versus recency should be seen as just one of the many variables stimulating the acceptance of a message.

Receiver characteristics also need to be taken into consideration. For example, research shows that many voters do not respond directly to appeals by politicians. These appeals, instead, are evaluated in the context of their memberships in groups and organizations such as social clubs and labor unions. If a person is supported by a group holding similar views, the individual will be more resistant to change than when such support is absent. By contrast, when group ties are weak or lacking, one is more susceptible to persuasive appeals. This explains, to an extent, why new immigrants, who lack family, community, and group ties, are more likely candidates for extremist political and religious organizations. Such organizations provide the individual with a sense of solidarity, identity, and belongingness. Extremist organizations, such as the John Birch Society, capitalize on this through their appeals to the uprooted, and are relatively successful in areas with large migrant populations. Related to this is the idea that when individuals make a public commitment before a group, the probability of their acceptance of a change will increase. For example, Alcoholics Anonymous and the various quit-smoking and weight-reduction groups rely heavily on such public commitments (Albrecht, Chadwick, & Jacobson, 1987:232–237).

Attitudes

In the acceptance of a change, one would tend to think that information must precede attitudes and that favorable attitude toward the change must precede behavior. However, empirical research has not clearly specified these relationships. Although many studies examine attitude change, little research exists to document the relationship of attitude change and behavior change. In fact, the relationship between the two has been subject to considerable debate. Arthur R. Cohen (1964:137–138) pointedly concludes:

Most of the investigators whose work we have examined make the broad psychological assumption that since attitudes are evaluative predispositions, they have consequences for the way people act toward others, for the programs they actually undertake, and for the manner in which they carry them out. Thus attitudes are always seen as precursors of behavior, as determinants of how a person will actually behave in his daily affairs. In spite of the wide acceptance of the assumption, however, very little work on attitude change has dealt explicitly with the behavior that may follow a change in attitude.

Leon Festinger, in support of Cohen's conclusion, suggests that when attitudes are changed on the basis of persuasive communication, this change "is inherently unstable and will disappear or remain isolated unless an environ-



mental or behavioral change can be brought about to support and maintain it" (1964:415). His main point is that unless environmental change to support the new opinion occurs, "the same factors that produced the initial opinion and the behavior will continue to operate to nullify the effect of the opinion change" (p. 416). Thus attitude change may not serve as a sufficient condition for a behavioral change, and it seems reasonable that the probability of behavioral change would be greater as environmental circumstances also change.

Personal Influence

Personal influence refers to a change in an individual's attitude or behavior as a result of interpersonal communication. A theory of particular importance regarding the acceptance of personal influence is that of Herbert C. Kelman (1961). He elaborates three processes by which individuals respond to personal influence. These are compliance, identification, and internalization. *Compliance* occurs when the person accepts influence in the hope of achieving a favorable reaction from another person or persons. The individual does not accept the influence because he or she believes in its content but because of an anticipated gratifying social effect. Influence based on *identification* occurs when the opinion or behavior accepted is associated with a "satisfying self-defining relationship" to a person or a group. Identification is basically role imitation, whereby influence results from admiration of another person, or role maintenance, whereby acceptance is necessary to maintain a role relationship with another person. The motivational basis for identification is different from that of compliance in that the person is not primarily concerned with pleasing the other individual, but with meeting the other's expectations—or at least perceived expectations—for his or her own role performance. *Internalization* occurs when an individual accepts influence congruent with his or her particular value system. The content of the advocated opinion or behavior is of major concern and becomes integrated with the individual's existing values. Kelman's theory is very helpful in understanding the role of personal influence in facilitating the acceptance of change. It also helps to create similarity, and it has been shown in the literature that the more similar an actor is to a neighbor, for example, the more likely the actor will follow the adoption patterns of that neighbor (Axelrod, 1997).

Individuals facing a new life experience—such as migrants, newlyweds, or new college students—tend to be more susceptible to personal influence because, in such states of life, habits for handling many situations are not yet established and the individual is open to new information. Similarly, individuals aspiring to membership in certain groups may be inclined to emulate the behavior of persons already in these groups and be susceptible to their influence. Merton (1957:265) calls this "anticipatory socialization;" that is, an individual tends to adopt the attitudinal and behavioral characteristics of group members before he or she actually belongs to the



group. For example, the medical student at the first opportunity dons the white coat of the profession and runs to the nearest medical supply store to buy his or her symbolic stethoscope. Among consumers, anticipatory socialization entails the development of expectations regarding product ownership and adaptive patterns of consumer behavior (Moschis, 1987:26-28). Such aspirational behavior might be seen in the social climber, who drives the "right" kind of car, buys the "right" kind of clothes, joins the "right" clubs, and sends his or her children to the "right" schools. In all of these cases, the individual who lacks actual membership acquires the visible symbols of that membership and is more prone and willing to accept changes than those who are already in the group.

These are the more important psychological factors that stimulate the acceptance of change. However, it should be noted that the list is not exhaustive. In the next section we shall consider some of the principal cultural stimulants to change:

CULTURAL STIMULANTS

The term *culture* refers to a set of knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and rules for behavior that are shared by members of a society. In general, the existing culture base largely determines what new traits will be accepted. Different cultures exhibit different degrees of capability and readiness for accepting change. Both the context of culture and the degree of cultural integration not only play a role in the receptivity for the new but also encourage innovation. This section will focus on these cultural conditions to show under what circumstances they facilitate the acceptance of change.

High- and Low-Context Cultures

Edward T. Hall (1989), a renowned anthropologist, has suggested the concept of *high and low context* as a way of understanding different cultural orientations. Cultures differ widely in the extent to which unspoken, unformulated, and unexplicit rules govern how information is handled and how people interact and relate to each other. In high-context cultures, much of human behavior is covert or implicit, whereas in low-context cultures much is overt or explicit. The amount of contexting required for understanding everyday life extends from low in some cultures to high in others. Hall, for example, places Germany, Switzerland, Scandinavia, and the United States at the low end of the continuum; France in the middle; and China, Japan, and the Arab countries at the high end of the scale.

In a low-context culture, messages are explicit; words carry most of the information in communication. Bonds between people are often fragile, formal, and legal. Involvement of people with each other is low, and there are

fewer distinctions made between insiders and outsiders. In such cultures, Hall contends, change is easy, rapid, and welcomed by most people.

In high-context cultures, less information is contained in the verbal part of the message, as much more information is in the context of communication, which includes the background, associations, and basic values of the communicator. Who you are—that is, your values and position or place in society—is crucial in the high-context culture, such as Japan or the Arab countries. Bonds between people tend to be strong, and there is a deep involvement of people with each other. They get along with much less legal paperwork than is deemed essential in low-context cultures such as the United States. In a high-context culture, a person's word is his or her bond. There is less need to anticipate contingencies and provide for external legal sanctions in a culture that emphasizes obligation and trust as important values. In these cultures, shared feelings of obligation and honor take the place of impersonal legal sanctions. Greater distinctions are made also between insiders and outsiders; and cultural patterns are enduring and slow to change. In such cultures, an awareness of the cultural environment is essential to create receptivity for an innovation coming from the outside (Vago, 1982).

Cultural Integration

The extent of cultural integration plays a role in the acceptance of change (Eriksen, 1992). Highly integrated and harmonious cultures tend to produce a sense of security and satisfaction among their members. On the other hand, a culture with a lower degree of integration in which the various themes and patterns are less perfectly coordinated adapts more easily to circumstances that bring about change. In a highly integrated culture, change, even if it begins in only one aspect of culture, may cause the whole culture to disintegrate. For example, when the British abolished headhunting in Melanesia, the results were dramatic. The people lost their interest in living, and the birthrate dropped rapidly; on one island, the number of childless marriages increased from about 19 percent to 46 percent, on another from 12 percent to 72 percent. Why? Headhunting was the center of social and religious institutions; it pervaded the whole life of the people. They needed to go on headhunting expeditions because they needed heads to appease the ghosts of their ancestors on many occasions, such as making a new canoe, building a house for a chief, or making a sacrifice at the funeral of a chief. Although their headhunting expeditions lasted only a few weeks, and the actual fighting only a few hours, preparations lasted for years. They had to build new canoes and celebrate numerous rites and feasts, which stimulated horticulture and the breeding of pigs. The number of festivities and celebrations increased as the date for the expedition neared. Other activities commenced when the successful hunters returned. With the integrating pattern



of their lives denied them, the Melanesians lost interest in their living (Montagu, 1968:94).

In a society in which there is little harmony and integration of cultural norms and understandings, there is usually much conflict, confusion, waste, insecurity, and social unrest. These conditions provide a fertile ground for the acceptance of change. Moreover, such a culture tends to be more rational and more secular, with a high emphasis on achievement orientation and individualism. There is a higher degree of social mobility, high rates of literacy, and strong occupational differentiation. Personal obligations to family and friends are minimal, and contractual relations tend to prevail. Religion is superficial for most people, the nuclear family dominates, the outlook is cosmopolitan, and the emphasis is on innovativeness. In such a climate, novelty is not only encouraged but eagerly sought after.

In highly integrated cultures, receptivity is stimulated when the change is seen in the context of a religious framework. When the recipients of a change are aware that the proposed innovation has the support of the existing deities, acceptance of it will be greatly enhanced. For example, in development programs in Arab countries it helps to introduce a given innovation with the phrase, "In the name of Allah" (Patai, 1983:143-155).

Different groups in a society may show differing receptivity to change. Obviously, in every changing society there are liberals and conservatives. In general, literate and educated people tend to accept changes more readily than the illiterate and uneducated. And, a group may be highly receptive to change of one kind, but highly resistant to changes of other kinds. For example, there are many churches of strikingly modern architecture where the sermons have remained basically unchanged since the days of Luther.

The characteristics of a social group obviously influence the acceptance of a new idea or practice as has been demonstrated in a now-classic study by Saxon Graham (1956), on the acceptance of five innovations in the United States—television, canasta, supermarkets, hospital insurance, and medical service insurance—across social-class levels. His research revealed that no single social class was consistently receptive in adopting all five innovations. Television, for example, diffused more quickly among lower social classes, while the card game canasta diffused more quickly among upper social classes. Graham argues that the critical factor in acceptance is the extent to which the attributes of the innovation are compatible with the attributes of the culture of the receiving social system. The "cultural equipment" required for the adoption of television, according to Graham, included an average education, a minimum income, and a desire for passive spectator entertainment. This cultural pattern coincided with a lower social-class level.

Finally, the perception of the relative merits of a novelty is considered as influential in facilitating acceptance. On the lighter side, this may be illustrated by the promotion of movies by film distributors. If the movie is good, it usually is placed in a small number of theaters and not distributed on a



mass basis for a considerable period of time. This results in a fairly slow process of diffusion, which often relies heavily on personal influence. If the movie is bad, it is shown in multiple runs in neighborhood theaters, with heavy advertising in order to secure as much acceptance as possible before word spreads among moviegoers as to the film's true merits (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955:180). Let us now examine some of the economic conditions and factors that stimulate the acceptance of change.

ECONOMIC STIMULANTS

Convincing evidence exists that the desire for economic gain is an important stimulant to change. If something has a purely utilitarian value (that is, if it is valued because of what it will do), change may be accepted quite readily. Frederic C. Fliegel and Joseph E. Kivlin (1966), in a study of the acceptance of new farm practices by American farmers, found that those that are perceived as most profitable and least risky are most readily accepted. However, if some feature of the traditional culture is valued intrinsically aside from what it will do, change is less readily accepted. To illustrate, for the American farmer, cattle are a source of income, to be bred, culled, and butchered whenever most profitable. In contrast, cattle are considered sacred in India, and there is a prohibition on the slaughter and consumption of beef among Hindus (Nair, 1967). For many of the Nilotic peoples of Africa, cattle represent intrinsic values. The owner recognizes and loves each cow. To slaughter one would be like killing one of the family. The average Westerner, who takes a rational and un sentimental view of economic activities, may find it hard to accept the sentiments and values of non-Western peoples. (By the same token, many non-Western peoples resent and find hard to accept a great variety of Western sentiments, values, and practices.) Westerners may be irritated by the Biaga of central India, who refused to give up their primitive digging sticks for the far-superior moldboard plow. Why? The Biaga loved the earth as a kindly and generous mother; they would gently help her with the digging stick to bring forth her yield; but could not bring themselves to cut her "with knives."

Perception of Economic Advantages

However, economic forces ultimately tend to override many traditional values and practices. Lucy P. Mair, for example, suggests that the modern African's actions increasingly are determined by a perception of economic advantage and not by "an abstract theory of the sacredness of land which inhibits their recognition of its economic potentialities," and she proposes as a generalization of wide application that: "the conservative force of tradition is never proof against the attraction of economic advantage, provided that



the advantage is sufficient and is clearly recognized. In the case of land it is abundantly clear that the emotional and religious attitudes towards it which are inculcated by native tradition have not prevented the development of a commercial attitude" (Mair, quoted by Foster, 1973:154-155).

Cost

Change is always costly. In general, the very poor resist all change because they cannot afford to take any risk (Arensberg & Niehoff, 1971:149-150). However, cost is a relative judgment. It is generally a function of an individual's economy of preferences:

The price of a novelty in goods or labor is measured by a prospective acceptor's reference to his total wealth, by his comparison of its cost with the cost of some alternative, and also by his estimate of the pressures of his need for it. The man who can afford a yacht may still find the price of a new lawn mower excessive, yet the sick man considers that any sacrifice is not too great to secure relief. An American mortgages his salary to buy an automobile, whereas the English workingman considers this price too high for him to pay. (Barnett, 1953:361)

The restraining effect of novelty costs is also evident when they are absent. It is fairly easy to get individuals to try something if doing so entails no financial cost to them. Initially they may think that it is worthless or harmful just because it is free, but they are more likely than not to accept it because it is free. The practice of giving away free things is widespread in the United States, and advertising campaigns often include giving away samples and "free" gifts. Only those individuals who are suspicious that there might be some strings attached to such a sample will reject it and fail to give it a trial. Obviously, trying something does not commit them, so what can they lose? Sponsors of TV and radio giveaway shows, box-top contests, and the like capitalize on this appeal and win often enough to make the gamble a sound business practice. Such activities have often resulted in the adoption of a given product.

At the organizational level, cost is one of the most obvious dimensions influencing the acceptance of change. In formal organizations the financial cost can be divided into (1) initial cost and (2) continuing cost. When the outcome of cost-benefit analysis is favorable for the organization in question, the likelihood of accepting a given innovation is enhanced (Hall, 1995:206-208). Social cost is another form of expense and is an important factor in explaining the rate of adoption, particularly in developing countries. Gerald Zaltman and his associates (1973:34-35) cite an international management consulting firm in which it was observed that even seemingly minor management changes (from the consulting firm's viewpoint) in power and status within the organization, resulting from the adoption of



more efficient management science techniques, produced sufficient internal conflict to cause a substantial number of medium-size business firms in developing areas to discontinue the newly adopted practices.

Social cost may come in the form of ridicule, isolation, ostracism, or even exclusion or expulsion from some important reference groups. As Zaltman and his colleagues wrote:

Social position within a group influences the degree to which such a cost may occur and how serious the individual may perceive this cost. The marginal member of a group may have little to lose by innovating; therefore, even in the presence of considerable disapproval, he may proceed to adopt an innovation. There is always the possibility that the decision might prove to be a wise one, and he may gain stature as a consequence. . . . A high-status member of a group may also adopt, again, even in the presence of potential or actual ridicule. The high-status person can do so because he generally has an inventory of goodwill or social credit upon which he can draw, and he will suffer little if the innovation does not succeed. (Zaltman, Duncan, & Holbek, 1973:35)

In many instances, the cost factor is also related to the efficiency of a given product or article. At the time of their initial introduction, most machines and articles are crude. For example, the first airplane barely got off the ground, the first computer was the size of a small classroom, and the first automobile barely exceeded the speed of a horse-drawn carriage. The first radio was hardly audible, and the first television set was barely visible. Indeed, imperfections are part of discoveries and are to be expected to exist. If any invention, however, meets a need and persists, it tends to be steadily improved. Today's airplane is a far cry from the Wright Brothers' flying machine of 1903. Similarly, today's automobile, usually a smoothly functioning machine, bears little resemblance to the contraptions of the turn of the century. Mass production usually brings about an increased efficiency and a lowering of the cost as evidenced by, for example, the continuous refinements and power increases in personal computers at rapidly decreasing prices (*Economist*, 1994:99). Once the mechanical imperfections are removed, accompanied by a decline in cost of the article, the likelihood of its acceptance will be increased.

Vested Interests

Vested interests also relate often to economic concerns and growth patterns (Krusell and Rios-Rull, 1996). They appear as promoters of change whenever proponents believe the proposed change will be profitable to them. Over time in a society, certain interests tend to be more successful than others. They manage to have their views accepted by the society at large, and they accumulate money, organization, and power. In so doing, they become vested interests: interest groups that derive special advantage



from maintenance of the status quo, that seek to protect their special advantages, and that oppose all further changes except those favorable to them. The railroads, for example, have opposed the growth of trucking industry and at the same time promoted innovations in engines and passenger cars as well as improvements in organization and delivery of services. In the social-change literature, more emphasis is placed on the opposition than the promotion of change by vested interests, perhaps because, in part, opposition to change is more dramatic and widespread than support of change. The changes that vested interests make are mainly improvements in existing practices, whereas the opposition they show is directed against major—and, for them, threatening—innovations. More will be said about the role of vested interests in social change in the discussion of social barriers to change in the next section.

To recapitulate, social scientists have placed much more emphasis on the reasons for opposing rather than accepting change (Bennis, 1987:37–39; Germani, 1981:167–172; Hall, 1989:197–211; Zaltman & Duncan, 1977:61–89). Still, by pulling together the social, psychological, cultural, and economic stimulants to change, it is possible to come up with some generalizations concerning the conditions of acceptance. There is sufficient evidence in the social-science literature to indicate that change will be more readily accepted if it is adopted by consensus group decision; when people have an opportunity to empathize with opponents; when there is an opportunity to recognize and discuss valid objections and to take appropriate measures to relieve unnecessary fears or hardships. The likelihood of acceptance is further increased when people feel that the change is not going to threaten their autonomy or security; when it does not clash with prevailing values and ideas that have long been cherished; and when it is seen as reducing rather than increasing present burdens. When these conditions are met, readiness to accept change gradually becomes a characteristic of many individuals, groups, or institutions in a society. The good old days are no longer nostalgically cherished; instead, there is an anticipation of a better life in the days to come. The spontaneity of youth is cherished, and innovations are protected until they have had a chance to establish their worth. In such a situation, the ideal is more and more seen as possible.

In the contemporary world, however, situations of resistance to change are much more numerous than situations of acceptance. Even within rapidly changing societies, there is considerable resistance to new ideas, new scientific and technological developments, and new patterns of social life. Often change is resisted because it conflicts with traditional values and beliefs, or a particular change may simply cost too much money. Sometimes people resist change because it interferes with their habits or makes them feel frightened or threatened. In the following pages, the various conditions of resistance to change will be examined.



RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

The concept of resistance has become one of social science's dominant theoretical and practical preoccupations in social change analyses (Brown, 1996). One can always find a justification in some more or less pragmatic terms for active resistance to change. The peasant in a developing country will find reasons for refusing to try out a new tool, a new technique, a fertilizer, or a different mode of cultivation. The new, the different, the peasant may insist, will only poison the soil, produce inferior grain, upset God, or cause his wife to bear only girls. A modern businessperson may single out ventures with new things or practices that have failed to produce a profit. Bureaucrats will have a body of rules and precedents to justify their conservatism; a scholar, the whole of history to protect him or her from new ideas. "And for everyone, primitive, peasant, and modern layman and expert alike, there is always as the final and ultimate defense against anything new some version or other of the thesis that what was good enough for father is good enough for son" (LaPiere, 1965:175-176).

Anything new or novel can be the object of resistance. It can be a social or cultural innovation, a scientific discovery, or mechanical or social invention. Regardless of the type of novelty, its unqualified acceptance can in no way be assured regardless of how socially or otherwise beneficial it may be seen. For example, western Europeans commonly regard maize as fit only for animal fodder, avoiding human consumption to an extent that could be considered a food taboo (Brandes, 1992). Many things that are new are opposed, and whenever change is attempted, resistance is likely to appear. Although the term *resistance* conjures up a pejorative connotation in general, this is not always the case. In fact, resistance can be a healthy phenomenon. It is a positive force when, from some objective perspective, the proposed change is harmful to society. In situations in which an intended change is subjectively harmful to a person or a group, resistance is justifiable (Zaltman & Duncan, 1977:62). With this in mind, let us now turn to the social, psychological, cultural, and economic barriers to change.

SOCIAL BARRIERS

Many social factors act as barriers to change. The ones that will be examined in the following pages include vested interests, status interests, social class, ideological resistance, group solidarity, authority, fear of the unfamiliar, forms of rationalization, and organized opposition.

Vested Interests

Change may be resisted by individuals or groups that fear a loss of power, wealth, or prestige should an innovation gain acceptance. "A particu-



exposing the heliocentric hypothesis was refused until 1822 by the Roman Catholic church, and only then was a decree quietly issued by the Holy Office:

There is no reason why the present and future Masters of the Sacred Palace should refuse license for printing and publishing works treating of the mobility of the earth and the immobility of the sun, according to the common opinion of the modern astronomers. (Smith, quoted by Bierstedt, 1974:213)

Now and then, there are vested interests in skills and knowledge. Artisans, for example, are usually reluctant to adopt a new tool or material because doing so would render their existing skills obsolete and demand that they learn to utilize new ones. At the organizational level, change can threaten occupational groups (Hall, 1995). Resistance is likely to come about when some specialties foresee that they will not be needed if certain changes are implemented. There was a fair amount of resistance to the adoption of the early typewriter because it devaluated the skill of handwriting, which had been a prized ability of the educated person. LaPiere (1965:192) suggests that "no man . . . will passively accept a change that destroys the value of hard-won skills and knowledge and that demands that he acquire a complex of new and different skills and knowledge if he is to hold his own." Thus, in many cases, those who must adapt to a new innovation may find it to be a personal disadvantage to do so.

Status Interests

The acceptance of almost any innovation will adversely affect the status of some individuals in society; and, to the degree that those whose status is threatened consciously recognize the danger, they will resist adopting it. In most societies, through time, individuals made some improvements in their social status, became a known artisan, a tribal elder, a wise old parent, and this rise in social status was a recognition of the person's increased value to society. In rapidly changing societies, past experience often has little bearing on the present, and those who have earned a high status often see that status jeopardized by an innovation, and as a result, they resist its adoption. Today, occupational status and age are no longer correlated. The modern business prefers highly educated employees. Downsizing and the possibility of underemployment or unemployment are real concerns in many occupations and professions (Jensen, 1996). Not surprisingly, fear of loss of status associated with seniority and not with education may prompt resistance. People who benefited from the existing order are unlikely to welcome anything that will lower their self-esteem (Bennis, 1987:37) or threaten their economic well-being.

Resistance stemming from the fear of status depreciation can take many forms. For example, Raphael Patai (1983:115-117) calls attention to one of the basic features of the Bedouin ethos, which is a contempt for any kind of phys-



ical labor with exception of tending of the livestock and raiding, considered the only proper occupations for a free person. He comments that among the many despised varieties of work, agricultural labor is the one most emphatically rejected. For Bedouins, to engage in cultivation would not only result in an irreparable loss of status, but it would also dishonor them. As a result of this disdain for agriculture, attempts in several Arab countries to have the Bedouins settle in one place have met with little success. The same fear of loss of status compels young people in many Arab countries to be clerks for inadequate wages rather than helpers at construction sites with considerably more pay.

Social Class

In general, rigid class and caste patterns tend to hinder the acceptance of change. However, different social classes in a society tend to react to and alter the course of change in different ways. In highly stratified societies, individuals are expected to obey and take orders from those in superior positions of authority or power. Those in position of superiority, in turn, dictate to those below them. This reduces the free interplay of ideas and opinions that is so important in so many change situations (Foster, 1973:127). The prerogatives of the upper strata are jealously guarded, and attempts to infringe on them by members of lower socioeconomic groups are often resented and repulsed. For example, under the rigid traditional Indian and Pakistani caste system, which was declared illegal only recently, members of different castes could not draw water from the same well, go to the same schools, eat together, or otherwise mingle. The types of work one could do were rigorously prescribed, and any violation of rules was condemned. Until the mid-1960s, a somewhat similar situation existed in the United States concerning the position of blacks.

Members of the upper classes, in general, are more likely to accept innovations, whereas those in the lower classes or those who are downwardly mobile tend to resist them. Occupation is one of the bases of stratification, and rarely, if ever, have any considerable proportion of the members of an occupational group willingly renounced their established skills and knowledge in favor of some innovation that required the development of new skills and understandings (LaPiere, 1965:191). In most cases there is a tendency to cherish the old ways of doing things and to adhere to the status quo.

Ideological Resistance

Resistance to change on the grounds of ideological traditionalism is quite prevalent (Germani, 1981:169-172; Zaltman & Duncan, 1977:66). At the individual level, traditional ideology is an inhibitor of sexual behavior (Brody, et al., 1996). At the level of society, many non-Western societies are reluctant to accept innovations that they see as Westernizing influences. This nationalistic fear is very common, and even many Europeans and Canadians worry about

the "Americanization" of their societies. For a while, the expression "the cocacolonization of Europe" was in vogue. These attitudes are not against change as such, but against the perceived political implications of certain changes. To illustrate: In Islamic countries, anti-Western sentiments derive, in part, from a fear that the adoption of Western technology will destroy the ancient faith (Patai, 1983:194-196). Or, a nationalistic ideology rationalizes that rapid population growth contributes to the strength of a nation and any attempt at family planning or fertility moderation is a neocolonialist plot.

There are many other types of ideological resistance to change. The Catholic church opposes birth control and abortion on ideological grounds, and the medical profession uses ideological arguments to resist anything suggesting socialized medicine and fought against the enactment of the Medicare Law of 1965 (Allen, 1971:278-279). Thus, it may be concluded that the basic intellectual and religious assumptions and interpretations regarding existing power relations, morality, welfare, and security tend to be rather consistent and adversely disposed to change.

Group Solidarity

Previous work suggests that group solidarity influences the nature of social change (Moxley & Proctor, 1995). In traditional societies, there is usually a strong sense of solidarity, which is reflected in bonds of mutual obligation in the context of family and friendship patterns, a preference for small-group identification, a pronounced sense of belonging, and a willingness to criticize anyone who deviates from customary norms.

When economic well-being is roughly at the same level and individuals have generally the same access to resources, reciprocal obligations are effective in maintaining a society. Conditions of equality and cooperation are incompatible with trends toward individualization, migration, and changes in the division of labor. In villages, those who make economic progress no longer find their relationships in balance. Progressive individuals must be prepared to disregard many of the traditional obligations and ties that their societies expect of them. The prevalence of mutual obligations, the accent on self-esteem and prestige, factors that in part make up solidarity and hold societies together, can effectively curb the acceptance of innovations (Zaltman & Duncan, 1977:72).

Identification with small groups provides a sense of psychological security and satisfaction for most people both at the organization level (Zetka, 1982) and at the community level. Frequently, innovations that upset such traditional groups meet with strong resistance, and people will often forgo comfort, convenience, and economic gain in return for more enjoyment in life. For example, in many Latin American villages, women wash clothes under conditions that are anything but comfortable. The pleasures of working in the company of others and the discussions and joking compensate for the hardship. They resist



efforts to alter this pattern of working regardless of the hardships involved. In a far corner of Africa, the village well serves the same function, and women resented the fact of builders putting running water into all houses and rebelled because they were taken away from their only excuse for social contact.

Authority

Whenever an established pattern of authority is threatened or even questioned by the promoters of an innovation, resistance is likely to occur. This is perhaps most pronounced at the level of organizations (Aghion & Tirole, 1997; Zaltman & Duncan, 1977:75). For example, when two or more departments at a university merge, one of the most difficult problems to overcome is the feeling on the part of individual departments that they are going to lose control over decision making and be subjected to a reduction in influence. Chairpersons, whose authority is likely to diminish, will be the most vocal (and frustrated) opponents of such reorganization.

At community level, authority figures play a decisive role in the acceptance or rejection of change (Waste, 1998). However, in many societies, leadership and authority patterns at an institution are not fully developed and insufficient to guide group decisions that are needed in order to make major changes. Often, individuals who speak out for a new project or idea or volunteer their services will be criticized rather than praised for their efforts, and their neighbors will suspect that they see opportunity for personal gain at their own expense. Roger M. Keesing (1968) describes the Kwaio of the Solomon Islands who have chiefs only on Tuesdays. Their social organization included no chiefs, but it became necessary to invent some to handle dealings with white officials after World War II. To avoid conflict between these new chiefs and the traditional holders of authority and influence, they simply agreed that the chiefs would "reign" only on Tuesdays when the white officials called.

At times, authority within the family is a deterrent to acceptance of change. For example, among the Navaho, the decision to enter the hospital is reached only after a family conference. A wife and husband alone are not free to exercise their discretion in this context. Similarly, among some traditional Spanish-speaking Mexicans in California, hospitalization is a grave and serious step and is a family, not an individual, problem. In such situations, resistance to medical practices, among other types of change, can be anticipated.

Fear of the Unfamiliar

A good deal of the initial resistance to any innovation stems from apprehension, from fear of the unknown, of a new technology (Miller, 1996). Even today, many individuals in Western countries are still afraid of air travel. Although carefully gathered government studies indicate that flying is many times safer than traveling by automobile, these individuals are petrified by the

idea of getting into an airplane and taking off. Fear is also a factor in resistance to change that threatens individuals with a loss of status, income, or power. Individual opposition to both the civil rights movement and the women's movement has often reflected the fear of the dominant group members—whites on the one hand, men on the other—that gains for a minority would mean losses for them. In such situations, stereotyped thinking is likely to act as a further barrier to the acceptance of change. Fear has often prevented the use of particular plants as food; for example, in parts of the United States, the tomato was considered poisonous as recently as a century ago. Even such a minor change from the familiar as the use of aluminum in place of iron in cooking pots and pans has aroused considerable apprehension; housewives were afraid that the new metal would contaminate the food cooked in it, and even experts doubted the use of aluminum as kitchenware (LaPiere, 1965:178–179).

Often, even the name of a given product can elicit apprehension among people. Some years ago, the Colgate Palmolive Company introduced a new toothpaste called Cue into French-speaking districts in Canada. The product was never accepted, for the word has an obscene connotation in French (it means "ass"). McDonald's Big Mac hamburger did not fare much better in parts of Vancouver—Big Mac is a slang expression there for "big breasts."

Forms of Rationalization

At times, resistance to change occurs for quite plausible reasons when the proposed change is seen as being possibly deleterious for a social system, or when the outcomes are impractical or highly debatable (Warren, 1977:51). New forms of social organization may also be resisted for a while on the grounds that they do not work, or do not work well enough to justify their cost in time, effort, or money. On occasion, however, some of the rationales for opposing change are anything but logical and reasonable, and alibis or excuses are created in all parts of society to ward off new developments (Zelby, 1992). For instance, when the railroad could not exceed 30 miles per hour, people in opposition to it argued that the speed was more than the human body could endure. Today, possibly, their great-grandchildren claim that people cannot endure supersonic speeds. Doctors disapproved of the use of early automobiles because it would lead to atrophy of the human legs, and some argue today that cellular phones cause cancer.

Organized Opposition

At times, widespread individual resistance to change may become mobilized into organized opposition that can assume formal organizational structure (for example, the National Rifle Association [NRA], which opposes gun control), or it may be channeled through a social movement (such as the recent pro-life activities) or political action committees and lobbyists (Thompson,

Cassie, & Jewell, 1994; Ainsworth & Sened, 1993). In other instances, organized opposition may take the form of a letter-writing campaign. For example, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration received over 50,000 letters in August 1994, in opposition to proposed regulations that would severely restrict workplace smoking. This massive mailing initiative is believed to be organized by tobacco companies. Of course, their spokesmen would neither confirm or deny involvement in a letter campaign (Swisher, 1994).

In traditional societies, the existing social organizations are often strong enough to delay, if not prevent, the acceptance of change. Through much of the Middle Ages, family, church, guild, and state cooperated in maintaining the existing order. In modern societies, by contrast, with a multiplicity of informal and formal organizations often in conflict with each other, new organizations have developed to combat particular threats to the status quo. For example, the Ku Klux Klan developed in opposition to the early efforts of reformers to bring the blacks of the South something of that equality with whites that was their constitutional right (LaPiere, 1965:197), and a nativist group, the League of Deliverance, attempted to mobilize West Coast workers to prevent the employment of Chinese labor (Gamson, 1990). These and similar organizations have resisted change that was under way, and although most of them have fought a losing battle, their delaying effects have often been considerable.

At times, however, when organized opposition to change is not forthcoming, the consequences can be disastrous. For example, more than 6 million Jews were slaughtered in concentration camps during World War II, in part because they did not organize resistance to the changes beginning in the early 1930s in Nazi Germany. In the next section, the psychological factors in resistance to change will be considered.

PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS

It is a well-established proposition in the social-change literature that "All of the forces which contribute to stability in personality or in social systems can be perceived as resisting change" (Watson, 1969:488). Any detailed account of these forces is obviously beyond the scope of this book. For the present purposes, the emphasis will be on selected psychological barriers to resistance. They include habit, motivation, ignorance, selective perception, and ineffective communication.

Habit

From the psychological perspective, an initial impediment to change is the matter of *habit*. Once a habit is established, its operation often becomes satisfying to the individual. Habits, once formed, resist change. Individuals become accustomed to behaving in a certain manner and they feel comfortable

with it. A person who is accustomed after dinner to his or her chair, a glass of red wine, and a newspaper, may resist any change in the details of this routine.

The customs of a society may be seen as collective habits, and especially where sentiment pervades custom, custom is slow to change when challenged by new practices and ideas. Habits of individuals that impede social change are derived from social experience and can often be modified by using a group approach to the problem. For example, the dietary patterns of humans change very slowly (Popkin, 1993), and new foods are introduced into a diet with great reluctance, but when the individuals have a chance to discuss the relative merits of the proposed substance in the interest of better nutrition, the likelihood of its acceptance is increased (Lewin, 1965).

Motivation

The *motivational* forces stimulating the acceptance of change may be handicapped by the active or potential resistance of different sectors of society. How these different sectors influence motivation has been described by Clark Kerr and his associates (1964) in their study of industrialization processes in developing countries. They identify five such sectors: (1) the family system, (2) class and race, (3) religion and ethical evaluations, (4) legal concepts, and (5) the concept of the nation-state. The manner in which these sectors of society control change and affect motivation may be seen in the following evaluations.

1. The extended family system, they argue, weakens industrial incentives to work, save, and invest, and reserves key managerial positions for family members, regardless of relative competence of insiders and outsiders.
2. A class structure based on traditional social status does not encourage motivation keyed to economic performance.
3. Traditional religious and ethical values, which emphasize "peace" and "duty" unrelated to economic gain or advancement and which oppose change, particularly in science and technology, do not enhance the cause of innovation.
4. Traditional customs and social norms that deny individual and property rights and fail to guarantee contracts do not facilitate the processes of acceptance of novelty.
5. Finally, divisive groups in developing society that hinder or prevent the emergence of a strong nation-state system do not serve the cause of accelerated acceptance of change.

Collectively, these five sectors reinforce the traditional motivational forces in society geared to the preservation of the status quo.

Ignorance

Ignorance is another psychological factor associated with resistance to change. Ignorance often goes hand in hand with fear of the new and is a prod-



uct of cognitive impairment (Dunn, 1997). This has often been the case with new foods. Not long ago, many individuals assumed that citrus fruit brought an acid condition to the digestive tract. Once it was proved otherwise, resistance based on the concern about acid has faded. Many examples abound of products and procedures that failed to be accepted by people for whom they would seemingly have been beneficial as a result of their misconceptions and ignorance about them. For example, in a rural village in Peru, an effort was made to reduce the incidence of typhoid and other water-borne diseases by introducing the hygienic measure of boiling contaminated water. But, in spite of efforts to convince the residents of the advantages of the innovation and the great benefits to their health, most refused to take it up. Their beliefs about the origins of disease and their association of boiled water with illness prevented them from accepting this new kind of behavior (Wellin, 1955).

Selective Perception

Once an attitude has been formed, an individual responds to other suggestions within the framework of his or her established outlook. Situations may be perceived as reinforcing the original attitude when they are actually dissonant. In a classic experiment, a common stereotype associating blacks with carrying razors led observers of a cartoon to think they had seen the razor in the hands of a black rather than of a white person (Allport, quoted by Watson, 1969:491). It is a well-known fact in the social sciences that individuals prefer news sources, whether in print or broadcast, with which they are already in agreement. "By reading or listening to what accords with their present views; by misunderstanding communications which, if correctly received, would not be consonant with preestablished attitudes; and by conveniently forgetting any learning which would lead to uncongenial conclusions, subjects successfully resist the possible impact of new evidence upon their earlier views. There are relatively few instances in which old prejudices have been changed by better information or persuasive arguments" (Watson, 1969:491).

Perception is to a great extent conditioned by culture (Moody-Adams, 1994). Individuals in different cultures frequently perceive the same phenomenon in different ways. For example, in rural Mexico, the Indians are reluctant to call the priest for the last rites for a sick relative, even though they are Catholics. They have noticed that on entirely too many occasions the patient dies shortly after the priest visits. In another instance, an anthropologist was unable to measure his subjects for his anthropometric records: The only time an Indian was measured was for a coffin, and if they permitted the anthropologist to measure them, they knew they would die (Foster, 1973:130).

George Foster (1973:131-141) examines a number of situations in which selective perception hinders the acceptance of change. In one instance, he describes a case of perceptual misinterpretation. A linguist missionary cou-

ple was living in a village in southern Mexico in a native house with stick walls and thatched roof. For decoration, they placed on their wall a picture of the black and white Scottie dogs that advertised the whiskey of the same name. The Indians showed enormous interest in the picture; as a matter of fact, their fascination bordered on veneration. It dawned on the couple that the only pictures the Indians had ever seen were of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints. Not wanting to create the belief that Americans worship dogs, they quickly removed the Scotties from the wall.

The perception of health issues can be problematic. Physicians started lancing the gums of teething infants in the sixteenth century. Soon, cutting the gums of infants to encourage dentition, a period of discomfort and fever, became standard procedure. Lancets became more sophisticated and ornately decorated, often sporting elaborate handles. Few physicians argued against the practice, and dental textbooks as late as 1938 continued to make references to the benefits of the procedure. As dentistry evolved, teething was considered as natural process best left alone. There were no complications and justification for it and lancing no longer exists in the developed world (Dally, 1996).

In much of the developing world, hospitals are perceived as places where people go to die, not to get well. As a result, there is much resistance to hospitalization because the patient perceives it as meaning his or her family has lost all hope for the person. Foster (1973:132) cites a famous saying about the largest hospital in Egypt: "He who enters it will be lost (dead) and he who comes out of it is born (as a new man)."

Another aspect of differential perception has to do with gifts. Many aid programs offer commodities and services without cost. However, acceptance of such programs often has been negligible. For example, when free powdered milk was first distributed in Chilean health centers, very few women would use it. They suspected that it was of poor quality, or downright harmful. A free gift, in their experience, was suspect. However, when a token charge was made for the milk, they perceived that in the eyes of the clinic personnel the milk had some value, and, shortly thereafter, they started to use it in great quantities. Making a nominal charge for goods or services has been found effective to facilitate acceptance.

At times, there are misperceptions about the objectives of a given proposal or project for change. For example, contraceptive devices had been rejected by many Indian villagers because they feared that family planning change agents were trying to stop birth completely. Occasionally, similar objects intended for different purposes result in the same use as a consequence of misperception. For instance, one of the earlier forms of birth control that was tried in a village in India was the "foaming tablet" that produced contraceptive effects when placed in a woman's vagina. Unfortunately, these tablets were similar in appearance to aspirin and other pills that the village women had received from public health workers. The similarity of



the foaming tablets with a previous innovation led to their eventual rejection, for women simply swallowed the tablets (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971:150). While on the topic of contraceptives, it is worth noting that in many parts of the world, the condom is associated with prostitution. Its purchase is perceived by others, such as the seller, that the buyer is planning to have an encounter with a prostitute. Strong norms against prostitution, especially in Latin America, carry a negative connotation regarding anything associated with prostitution. As a result, it is difficult to promote condoms among certain groups for the purpose of family planning (Zaltman & Duncan, 1977:74).

Ineffective Communication

A basic principle of human communication is that the transfer of ideas occurs most frequently between a source and a receiver who are alike, similar, homophilous. *Homophily* refers to the degree to which individuals who interact are similar in certain attributes, such as beliefs, values, education, social status, and the like (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971:14). In homophilous situations, communication of ideas is likely to have greater effects in terms of knowledge gained, attitude formation, and change, and overt behavior change. "One of the most distinctive problems in the communication of innovations is that the source is usually quite heterophilous to the receiver." (*Heterophily* is the mirror opposite of homophily and is defined as the degree to which pairs of individuals who interact are different in certain attributes) (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971:15). Such a situation results in ineffective communication, which, in turn, hinders the acceptance of change. In other words, they simply do not speak the same language. In this sense, the effectiveness of the mass media as an instrument of social change can be impaired (Comstock, 1983).

In a large, complex, and heterogeneous society, the language problem is multiplied by the presence of a number of subgroups within societies who in expressing themselves use specialized vocabularies that are not fully comprehensible to nonmembers. For example, American teenage slang is to some degree unintelligible to most parents. Similarly, members of the various professions and occupations, such as physicians, lawyers, and carpenters, all use specialized words and expressions.

Medical personnel appear to be among the worst offenders with respect to poor communication. For example, in a Spanish-speaking community in the United States, a physician gave a young mother with limited command of English the following instruction: "Apply a tight pectoral binding and restrict your fluid intake." At a Mother's Club meeting in Temuco in Chile, a physician advised expectant mothers to walk "three kilometers a day." However, this instruction was meaningless, for the women simply were not trained to think in terms of distance in the same

way that an educated person would (Foster, 1973:143). These two illustrations simply show how communication can be a factor in resistance to change. The problem is further compounded in cross-cultural communication. For instance, many business people abroad assume that, because their counterparts speak good English, they are probably familiar with American business jargon such as "ballpark figures," "front-end money," and "the bottom line." But when someone from France, for example, tries to translate "bottom line," it can have a completely different meaning. (*Une ligne du derrier?*)

There are sometimes problems with symbolic communication. The meaning of an action or a gesture often can be quite different from what it was intended to elicit. For example, in New Zealand, a successful health-education poster designed to encourage students to brush their teeth depicted a whale jumping out of the water in pursuit of a tube of toothpaste. The same poster was reproduced for use in Fiji. The response was immediate and overwhelming! Fiji fishermen sent a rush call to New Zealand for large quantities of this wonderful new fishbait (Foster 1973:144)! In another instance, a well-meaning gesture by an American labor-relations expert created a great degree of embarrassment. In Micronesia a few years back, our expert sought to recruit Palauan workers for a mining operation. He first demanded to see the "chief"—a request that posed a problem because they have no chief in their social structure. Finally, they produced a person with whom the American expert sought to establish rapport by throwing an arm around his shoulders and laughingly tousling his hair. In Palauan culture this little gesture was an indignity comparable in our culture to opening a man's fly in public (Useem, 1952). Needless to say, this expert was not very successful. In the next section, cultural barriers to change will be examined.

CULTURAL BARRIERS

Resistance to change is usually most pronounced when traditional values and beliefs are involved. In Ireland, cultural values, derived in part from the material conditions of life in a small-scale rural society, and, in part, from antimaterialist religious ethics, combined to produce a value system that put little premium on dynamic and innovative entrepreneurship, and this held back economic development in the country (Keating, 1992). In India, much of the population is ill fed or even starving, yet over 300 million cows, sacred to the Hindus, are not only exempt from being slaughtered for food, but are also allowed to roam through villages and farmlands, often causing extensive damage to crops. However, it is unlikely that the raising of cattle for food will be acceptable in India in the near future, as the eating of beef runs counter to long-held religious beliefs. Many factors influence values and



beliefs in a culture. They include fatalism, ethnocentrism, norms of modesty, the degree of cultural integration, notions of incompatibility, prevailing motor patterns, and superstitions.

Fatalism

Fatalism is an important impediment to change. "In many parts of the world we find cultures adhering to the belief that man has no causal effect upon his future or the future of the land; God, not man, can improve man's lot. . . . It is difficult to persuade such people to use fertilizers, or to save the best seed for planting, since man is responsible only for the performance, and the divine for the success of the act" (Mead, 1953:201). *Fatalism* is a belief that all events are determined by fate and are hence inevitable. It entails a feeling of a lack of mastery over nature and one's surroundings. It is present in a variety of situations ranging from accounting for illness and misfortune (Davison, Frankel, & Smith, 1992) to hypothesizing that Communist rule in Eastern Europe was predicated on hierarchies that encouraged widespread fatalist attitudes among citizens that helped to preserve the status quo (Taras, 1991). One has no control over one's life, and everything that happens to a person is caused by gods, evil spirits, fate or forces beyond one's control. Expressions such as "it was my fate" or it is the "will of Allah" are common reactions to problems such as epidemics and crop failures (Harris & Moran, 1996; Patai, 1983:147).

Religious beliefs and sacred writings often contribute to fatalistic attitudes. For example in rural Brazil it is difficult to persuade mothers to seek help for their sick children during the month of May. In Catholic theology, May is the "Month of the Virgin Mary," and, in parts of Brazil, it is believed that when a child dies in May, it is particularly fortunate because the Virgin is "calling" her child to come to be with her. To obtain medical aid during this time would be contrary to the will of the Virgin. In Egypt, some authorities consider high infant mortality rates related to the perception of that as "Allah's will" and the belief that no one can extend life because the Koran says: "Wherever you are, death will seek you, even if you are in strongly built castles."

Ethnocentrism

Americans are not the only ones who consider themselves superior, possessing the only "right" way of thinking about the world and of coping with their environment. Similarly, most primitive peoples before extensive contact with the Western world were extremely *ethnocentric*, thinking that they were the people, and their ways were the only correct ones dealing with the environment. Feelings of superiority about one's culture make people unreceptive to the ideas and methods used in other cultures. A version of



ethnocentrism is also found in some organizations where one encounters resistance often referred to as "NIH," or "Not Invented Here" (Bennis, 1987:37). For example, some faculty members may balk at a new teaching method because it originated outside of their department or school.

Related to ethnocentrism are pride and dignity, which also constitute barriers to change. Quite frequently, adults feel that "they will lose face" if they go back to school. Often older women resist modern maternal and child health care programs on the grounds that if young pregnant women attend clinics, for example, such would reflect on the ability and judgment of the older ones.

Norms of Modesty

Ideas about *modesty*, like ideas about most everything else, are culturally conditioned. Proper behavior in one setting may be highly shocking in another. In many parts of the world, nudity or seminudity is taken for granted, as on many beaches of Europe, and modest dress is not always associated with covering the sex organs. For example, in the Amazon Basin, Indian women were observed at close range in a state of nature. When seen by travelers, they were highly embarrassed, but this embarrassment usually disappeared when the women retired for a moment to reappear wearing a string of beads or some other kind of ornament (Foster, 1973:90).

In many cultures, medical examination and treatment may be resisted by native women when it is done by a male physician, and frequently the husband may object to the treatment. Ideally, this resistance could be overcome by having it done by female physicians. However, this is not always the case. Women on the island of Yap in Micronesia are resistant to genital examination by a male physician, but they are even more resistant to examination by a female. The reason: women regard all other women, regardless of age, as potential rivals for men's attention; at the same time, they believe their own genitals are their strongest power over men. Exposing their source of power to potential rivals, they feel, weakens their competitive advantage and threatens them with loss of masculine attention (Schneider, cited by Foster, 1973:91).

Cultural Integration

Anthropologist R. A. Manners (1952) uses an interesting metaphor in comparing highly integrated cultures with a delicate watchlike mechanism. He suggests that the rapid introduction of new elements into such a culture acts very much like the dropping of a grain of sand into the delicate works of a watch. The watch runs poorly or the culture becomes disorganized and anomic. Thus, he points out, highly integrated cultures tend to be resistant to change, whereas less delicately balanced cultures tend to assimilate change better if the change is not too radical or sudden.



Incompatibility

Resistance is often due to the presence in the recipient cultures of material and systems that are, or considered to be, irreconcilable with the invading traits or systems and, as a result, tend to block them, checking their further diffusion (Kroeber, 1973:141). When such *incompatibility* exists in a culture, change comes about with difficulty. For example, the contrast between a monotheistic and a polytheistic religion underlines this point. Monotheistic peoples can accept a new deity only by rejecting the previous incumbent, which would be asking a great deal from them. Many missionaries have found this out the hard way.

Motor Patterns

Motor patterns and customary body positions are conditioned by culture and learned in childhood. Culture dictates the positions in which we sleep, stand, sit, and relax. Culture determines what gestures we use, how we hold and use tools and carry objects (i.e., on the head, shoulder, or in the hands) and how we manipulate our bodies in variety of situations. In many cases, unfamiliar muscular activity involved in a new activity may underlie its rejection. To change established motor patterns is difficult and tiring. For example, as part of a community development program in the Cook Islands, a raised cooking stove was devised so that food would be protected from animals and dirt, and women would not have to stoop continually in preparing the meals. However, the raised stove was generally rejected because it was very uncomfortable to have to stand on one's feet while cooking. In another instance, an attempt was made to introduce latrines in rural El Salvador (the outhouse version, which was considered an improvement over disposing of bodily wastes in the traditional fashion). A coffee planter built the standard American model, that is, a square wooden structure with a raised seat, perforated by one or more holes, for each house. However, he was quite upset when his employees refused to use them. "Finally, an old man offered a suggestion: 'Patron, don't you realize that here we are squatters?' The planter ripped out the seats, replaced them with a perforated slab floor, and was gratified to find that public acceptance was much greater. He had learned what has had to be learned independently time after time, in many parts of the world: for psychological or physiological reasons, latrines, with raised seats seem to cause constipation among people who customarily defecate in a squatting position" (Foster, 1973:103).

Superstitions

Superstition is an uncritical acceptance of a belief that is not substantiated by facts. Throughout the world, many people start the day by consult-



ing their horoscopes in the morning paper. Some consider the arrangement of stars a factor in decision making. Former presidents Ronald Reagan and Boris N. Yeltsin have been known to consult astrologers for guidance (Specter, 1997). It is noteworthy that in the United States alone, there are 15,000 astrologers and only 1,500 astronomers. Residents of Hong Kong are particularly obsessed with lucky numbers and fortune telling. Bankers and lawyers regularly consult fortune tellers, as do housewives and delivery boys, and the 200 or so fortune tellers in Soothsayer's Arcade may be the largest such grouping in the world (Faison, 1997). In China (and in many other parts of the world), there are people trained in *feng shui*, the Chinese practice of placing man-made structures in harmony with natural surroundings. In fact, such experts were called in to look at the ill-fated Denver International Airport, which was plagued by a series of construction difficulties that delayed its long-awaited opening until 1995. They concluded that it was a *feng shui* disaster, rife with images of death and grief (Newsweek, 1994b). In Russia, the most popular weekly television programs deal with straight, factual discussions of how sorcery and witchcraft can improve one's daily life. Major newspapers advertise the services of clairvoyants, witches, and warlocks. Well-trained physicians at respected hospitals see nothing unusual in recommending that their patients see a *babka*, an old woman with the power to heal (Specter, 1997).

In many instances, superstitions act as important barriers to change. Some examples: In Zimbabwe (formerly Southern Rhodesia), nutrition-education efforts were hampered because many women would not eat eggs. According to widespread belief, eggs cause infertility, they make babies bald, and they cause women to be promiscuous. In the Philippines, it is widely believed that eating squash and chicken at the same time produces leprosy. In some places, women are not given milk during late pregnancy because of the belief that it produces a fetus too large for easy delivery, and, in other places, a baby may not be given water for several months after birth because water's "cold" quality is upsetting to the infant's heat equilibrium. Finally, in areas of Ghana, children are not given meat or fish because it is believed that they cause intestinal worms (Foster, 1973:103-104). Obviously, where such superstitious beliefs prevail, the acceptance of novelty, which is contrary to traditional ideas, will be greatly hampered. In the final section, economic barriers to change will be considered.

ECONOMIC BARRIERS

Resistance to change stemming from economic factors mostly relates to technological innovations, machines, and gadgets, although it can apply to social inventions and scientific discoveries as well. The cost of an invention can prevent its adoption, at least for a while. A society of limited economic



means cannot afford to initiate programs involving nuclear energy nor can the majority of its citizens afford to adopt such modern appliances and conveniences as central heating, refrigerators, or automobiles (see, for example, Weisskoff, 1994). Even in the most affluent societies, limited economic resources constitute a barrier to changes that might otherwise be readily adopted. For example, in the United States, most everyone would readily accept the desirability of more effective controls on pollution, cheaper and more convenient systems of public transportation, and adequate health care for all. The fact that improvements in these areas come very slowly is a matter not only of priorities but also of cost. Cost, perceived profitability, and economic resources in a society can act as effective barriers to change, as will be shown on the following pages.

Cost

The cost of acquiring or using a novelty can be prohibitive, as far as some potential acceptors are concerned. This is an important deterrent to the widespread adoption of a variety of modern innovations in both the technological and the ideological domains. A large number of people in the world today are ready to accept—in fact, psychologically they have already accepted—electric lights, television, computers, dishwashers, central heating, sanitation programs, modern house design, and many other changes, but they are simply unable to afford them. The willingness to accept is present, but the economic sacrifice is either too great or completely beyond the scope of realization. In some cases, the cost of an innovation is so great that no one can afford it. The idea is acceptable and it has important implications, but the returns to be expected are not commensurate with the investment required to produce it. Such is the status of the recently proposed comprehensive health insurance plan for everybody in the United States.

Perceived Profitability

The perception of economic *profitability* is an important consideration that involves a predisposition toward an innovation. However, profitability alone would not ensure the adoption of an innovation. For example, even if the price of beef were to be reduced by 99 percent in India, Hindus would not begin eating cows. Nevertheless, there are many novelties that do not run so counter to cultural and social norms, and in these cases the rate of acceptance is likely to be more rapid if the innovation is more economically or socially profitable. Even in these instances, however, it should be noted that the increase in profitability needs to be rather spectacular to affect the rate of adoption. Students of rural life feel that the relative economic advantage of a new idea must be at least 25 to 30 percent higher than existing prac-

tice for economic factors to affect adoption. When an innovation promises only a 5 to 10 percent advantage, a farmer probably cannot even distinguish that it is advantageous (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971:143). His limited skills with figures, elementary accounting ability, and lack of experience with the scientific method of reaching conclusions all act to limit the farmer's comparing ability. In some instances, as noted by Rogers and Shoemaker (1971:143), to induce farmers to change, the potential payoff must be very high—not 5 to 10 percent, but 50 to 100 percent. Occasionally, a new practice is accepted because of the financial incentives but is rejected for some other reasons at a later stage. For example, when government agencies introduced hybrid corn to the Mexican-American farmers of the Rio Grande Valley a few years ago, they readily adopted it because of its superior yield and high profitability; but within three years they had all returned to the old corn. The reason was that the hybrid corn did not make good tortillas (Apodaca, 1952).

Limited Economic Resources

In many underdeveloped and developing countries, changes are desired but cannot be adequately implemented because of other economic pressures. In such countries, from 70 to 90 percent of the labor force is in agriculture; there is a lack of employment opportunities outside of agriculture; there is very little capital per head, and, for most people, existence is near the "subsistence" level; and savings practically do not exist for the large mass of the people. Whatever savings do exist are usually achieved by a land-holding class whose values are not conducive to investment in industry or commerce. A major proportion of expenditures is spent on food and basic necessities. There are poor credit facilities and a very low volume of trade per capita (World Bank, 1997).

These economic characteristics in underdeveloped countries tend to hinder capital formation, which, in turn, is considered a principal obstacle to change. These countries seem to face more difficulties than the now-advanced countries when they began their industrialization. Simon Kuznets (1965) points to six major differences that are still quite pronounced:

1. The present level of per capita product in the underdeveloped countries in their preindustrial phase is much lower than it was in the now-advanced countries, with the single exception of Japan.
2. The supply of land per capita is much smaller in developing countries today than it was in the presently advanced countries when they began their industrialization.
3. Agricultural productivity in developing countries today is probably lower than it was in advanced countries in the past.
4. The inequality in the distribution of income is wider today than in the past, but not in a way that favors accumulation of productive capital.
5. The social and political structure of the low-income countries today is a much greater barrier than it was in the past.



6. Most of the present-day underdeveloped countries are launching development after a long period of colonial status, whereas the European countries began industrialization after a long period of political independence.

At times, nations that are scarcely emerging from the stage of feudalism are quite unwilling to go through the stage of laissez-faire capitalism. They see and emulate social security programs in the advanced nations, along with minimum wage legislation, factory-safety and maximum-working-day legislation, trade union movements, and the like. These programs are carried out in the context of an insufficient system of taxation and are usually of relatively short duration. Moreover, expenditures on these types of activities, admirable as they are in principle, take away funds from more essential matters such as basic health care, education, and the like.

In addition, the limited savings and investment patterns are not conducive to national development or large-scale changes. For example, in India, too much of the limited savings goes to the hoarding of gold and of jewelry imported legally or illegally into the country, thus using up its scarce foreign exchange. Many underdeveloped countries also suffer from chronic inflation. Hence, there is a natural tendency for people to invest in real estate and in the holding of inventory. Finally, there is the frequent tendency of the rich in underdeveloped countries to pile up their savings abroad, legally or illegally, thereby making it unavailable to the nation for its internal development.

Other change-inhibiting economic factors include the lack of natural resources, such as oil, timber, coal, uranium, gas, and agricultural acreage. Obviously, the natural resources available to a society's economy can vary; some have a plentiful supply, others very few. However, more important than the level or abundance of indigenous resources is the degree of access a society has to natural resources, whether its own or those of another society. When availability of and access to natural resources are limited, in most cases, the economic structure of a society will not be able to support large-scale changes. Related to natural resources is labor, which can be viewed in both quantitative and qualitative senses. The number of people who can participate in the economy (quantity) always affects economic processes, but more important, the level of skill, knowledge, expertise, and motivation (quality) is an equally significant influence on the economy. Both labor and natural resources are closely associated with a society's ability for capital formation, a prerequisite for industrialization and modernization (Krugman, 1994).

In sum, cultural, social, and psychological barriers and stimulants to change exist essentially in an economic context which, in many instances, sets the absolute limits to change. Quite often, people are aware of the value of change and are anxious to modify their traditional ways, but the economic conditions prevent them from doing so. In such situations, economic factors constitute a formidable barrier to change.

SUMMARY

In every society, there are factors that promote change, and there are those that strive to maintain the status quo. The former are considered as stimulants to change, whereas the latter are seen as barriers; they can be separated only in an analytical sense. In reality, stimulants and barriers operate simultaneously. In this chapter, they were examined in social, psychological, cultural, and economic terms.

One of the principal social stimulants to change is the desire for prestige. Societies in contact with one another are more likely to accept novelty than those in relative isolation. Strong friendship obligations in developing societies are also considered factors in the acceptance of change. Different social classes react to change in different ways, and in general, those in the middle classes are more likely to accept an innovation. Authority influences receptivity to change, and at times it is required over the beliefs of a dissident minority. Acceptance of change is enhanced when it can be integrated into the existing configuration of society. The timing of an innovation is also important. Under certain circumstances, competition acts as a stimulant to change, and, in general, a novelty will be more readily accepted if the people who are to change are involved in its planning and implementation.

On the other side of the token, social barriers to change are often manifested in the form of vested interests and status interests. In such situations, change is resisted by individuals or groups who fear a loss of power, wealth, or prestige should an innovation gain acceptance. Rigid class and caste patterns also tend to hinder the acceptance of the new. Resistance can also be based on ideology and rational conviction. Societies with a high degree of social solidarity and diffuse authority patterns will be resistant to change. At times, individuals are afraid of social dislocation and apprehensive of the unknown. On many occasions, prevailing moral sentiments provide a sound basis for resistance. Resistance may also be irrational and covert and, on occasions, change may meet with organized opposition.

Acceptance of or resistance to change is also conditioned by a number of psychological factors. Favorable motivational dispositions, perceived needs, clear-cut lines of communication, positive attitudes, and personal influence tend to facilitate the acceptance of change. By contrast, habit, ignorance, forms of selective perception, and unclear communication hinder change.

As Ralph Linton suggested, "If we know what a society's culture is, including its particular system of values and attitudes, we can predict with a fairly high degree of probability whether the bulk of its members will welcome or resist a particular innovation" (Linton, quoted by Allen, 1971:288). In a society in which there is a high degree of emphasis on tradition, a fatalistic outlook on life, a strong sense of ethnocentrism, highly traditional



norms of modesty, prevalence of superstitions, and inflexible motor patterns, there will be, in general, resistance to change. By contrast, where these conditions are absent or present to a lesser degree, the culture will be less tightly integrated and more receptive to novelty.

Of the four sources of acceptance or resistance, the economic factors are perhaps the most decisive. Perception of economic advantage and reasonable costs can, in most cases, facilitate the acceptance of change. On the other hand, regardless of the desirability of a given change, its compatibility with the recipient culture and many other considerations, it will not be accepted if the economic sacrifice is too great. In other words, regardless of how much people in a society want something, if they cannot afford it, the chances are that they will not be able to get it. However, once a novelty is affordable, its perceived profitability will facilitate its acceptance. In the following chapter, the impact of change will be considered.

SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS

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Impact of Change

Social changes occurring in recent years have had an enormous impact on the lives of people. As a consequence, there is a growing preoccupation in the social change literature with the impact of change (Brannigan & Goldenberg, 1985; Goldhaber, 1986; Finsterbusch, 1980; Finsterbusch, Llewellyn, & Wolf, 1983; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Zellner, 1995). The term *impact* refers essentially to the effect or influence of a particular change or innovation after its introduction. A change may have an impact at any level in society, or it could influence the course of an entire society. The impact of a change may be major or minor, important or insignificant, direct or indirect, short-term or long-term. Depending on one's particular perception, interpretation, and evaluation, the impact of a particular change may have harmful or beneficial effects, or it may be functional or dysfunctional for a given social system. In this chapter, the impact of change will be examined from the following perspectives: social impact of technology, responses to change, social disorganization, unintended consequences of change, and ways of coping with change.

More often than not, the study of the impact of change is a complicated undertaking. In some instances, it is relatively easy to identify the direct consequences of a change. In most cases, however, complications arise when attention is focused on other impacts or consequences. As an example, let us consider the 1973 Supreme Court decision that declared restrictive state abortion laws to be unconstitutional. According to the guidelines set by the Court, an abortion decision during the first trimester of pregnancy is left to a woman and her physician, free of any regulation by government. Since 1973, close to 40 million legal abortions have been performed in the United States; close to one-third of all pregnancies now end in abortion.



at a rate of well over 4,000 per day. In some areas, such as New York State, the number of abortions every year nearly equals the number of live births. Almost half of American women have terminated at least one pregnancy and millions more are involved as partners, parents, health care workers, counselors, and friends (Reagan, 1997). In the early 1990s, the number of abortions hovered over 1.6 million per year. Since then, abortion rates have started to drop slightly because of reduced access to the procedure (more than 80 percent of U.S. counties have no abortion providers and some whole states have only one or two); increased use of condoms; increasing numbers of single women who are keeping their babies; and the fact that baby boomers are getting older.

Certain effects flow immediately from the content of this change. The direct effect of an abortion is to terminate the life of a fetus. The immediate effect of the Court decision was to enable women to obtain abortions legally. This resulted in an increase in the number of abortions performed; "a decline in birthrates and rates of illegitimate births; a decrease in the number of women with dependent children on welfare; lower maternal-mortality and infant-mortality rates" (Mauss, 1975:473); and a reduction of the cost of abortion.

Another impact of the abortion decision was the revitalization of the various pro-life (antiabortion) movements. Abortion remains a topic of considerable controversy, and it has been called "feticide," "war on the unborn," "baby killing," and "slaughter of the innocent," by its opponents, and specific individuals and organizations are conducting a nationwide campaign of intimidations, bombings, and other violent acts including the murder of physicians who perform the procedure (Parenti, 1995:306–307). At the same time, pro-choice proponents emphasize individual rights and the quality of life and proclaim that abortion is a merciful, humanitarian backup method of birth control that is necessary in population growth. Regardless of one's position on the controversy, the abortion question is at once a moral, medical, legal, sociological, demographic, psychological, and political problem (Callahan, 1970:1–2). Let us consider each of these briefly.

As a *moral* problem, abortion raises the question of the nature and control of incipient human life. Pro-life morality tends to subordinate all other considerations to the fetus's right to life. Pro-choice proponents contend that the mother's rights are prior to all other considerations. In this view, a woman's freedom rests finally on her control of her own reproductive processes. Thus, she alone has the right to decide to abort. A third position tries to balance the relative rights of mother and fetus.

As a *medical* problem, abortion affects the doctor's conscience and medical skills. Should medical technology designed to improve human life be used for this purpose? There are also questions about the viability of the fetus and the unsettled issue of when life begins. From a different perspective, many physicians who perform abortions are now concerned about



harassment, personal safety, increased litigation, and rising malpractice insurance and fewer and fewer medical schools teach first-trimester abortion as a routine aspect of gynecology.

As a *legal* problem, abortion raises the question of the extent to which society should concern itself with the unborn life, with motherhood, with family, use of law-enforcement personnel, and with public control of the medical profession.

Sociologically, abortion touches on the woman's role in society, family organization and disorganization, national demographic policy, and the role of formal and informal sanctions. Pro-choice proponents tend to be highly educated, well-paid careerists with few children, almost no ties to formal religion, and a strong vested interest in their work roles. These women see themselves as equal to their husbands, and the unavailability of abortion would limit their competitive chances in the world. Thus, abortion is perhaps as much an economic issue as a psychological and physical one. By contrast, pro-life advocates generally tend to be practicing Roman Catholic women with large families and low-paying or no outside jobs. They believe in traditional sex roles and see motherhood as the highest mission in life. For the first group, loss of the right to abortion would threaten their place in the world of work; for them, motherhood is an option and children a project. For the second group, motherhood is a calling and children a gift. These different views are shaped by divergent social and economic expectations. In a recent book on abortion in American history, Leslie J. Reagan (1997) suggests that the abortion debate is really an ideological struggle over the position of women. How free should they be to have sexual experiences, in or out of marriage, without paying the price of pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood? How much right they should have to consult their own needs, interests, and well-being regarding childbearing? How subordinate they should be to men, how deeply embedded in the family, how firmly controlled by national or racial objectives?

As a *demographic* problem, abortion raises the question as to whether it provides a useful, legitimate, and desirable means of fertility regulation where such regulation is needed.

As a *psychological* problem, abortion involves highly emotional issues such as conception, pregnancy, birth, and child rearing. Some women feel exploited by abortion, and they regret having ended their pregnancies. At times, this feeling may result in depression, or in extreme cases, suicide.

Finally, as a *political* problem, abortion presents the American political system with a unique difficulty. The American political system is built, to a great extent, on interest-group bargaining, which is well suited to producing compromise. But abortion is among the very few issues that inherently does not admit compromise. Just as a woman cannot be slightly pregnant, neither can her fetus be a little bit aborted. And, if one side takes the position that life begins at conception, while the other argues that it is a gradual



development achieved by degrees over nine months of gestation, there is no way to compromise between the absolutist and relativist positions. In the political arena, one is either for or against abortion. In an era of single-issue politics, candidates for political office and elected officials are well aware of this dilemma.

Thus, the impact of abortion needs to be considered in all of the domains discussed above. Additional effects, such as the consequences of more frequent abortions on infertility and premature deliveries, the effects of women's ability to exercise greater control over their reproductive lives, and its significance for the changing role of women, need to be entertained. On a global basis, abortion is considered perhaps the most widely used single method to control fertility (Petersen, 1975:205). As such, its long-term consequences need to be viewed in the context of broader population policies. Obviously, in such a context, the consequences of abortion could reverberate on many other aspects of life.

This discussion on the impact of abortion clearly illustrates the complexity of the effects of social change. In most instances, no social change leaves the rest of social life entirely unaffected. In some cases, the impact of change can be shattering. Recall the case of Caliente, which involved the introduction of a new invention in an American community, or the introduction of the steel ax to the Yir Yoront of Australia. The consequences of these innovations are dramatic, but so are the effects of a number of other innovations. Let us briefly consider some of them.

THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

There are many ways to consider or categorize the social impacts of technology. One common way is simply to examine specific impacts of certain technologies, such as the effect of television on violence or the effects of computers in the office (Goldhaber, 1986:32-33). This approach was taken by William F. Ogburn (1933:153-156) in a now-classic article entitled "The Influence of Invention and Discovery." He compiled a list of 150 effects attributable directly to the introduction of the radio. These effects are listed under the following eleven broad headings:

1. Uniformity and diffusion
2. Recreation and entertainment
3. Transportation
4. Education
5. Dissemination of information
6. Religion
7. Industry and business
8. Occupations

9. Government and politics
10. Other inventions
11. Miscellaneous

Ogburn suggests that each one of the 150 items listed under these categories might be broken down into additional, particular, and more detailed effects. For example, the impact of the radio on increasing interest in sports is broken down in detail to show an additional fifteen social effects. More than two generations after Ogburn's article, a study conducted in rural Uganda underscores the multiple impacts of the radio (Robbins & Kilbride, 1987:256-259). The radio is given a prominent and visible place in the home. Often, the radio is decorated and proudly shown. Radio ownership enhances one's social position. Among the radio's effects: "It makes a person get more friends than before and the neighbors come for news and announcements. . . . To those who are not married, the radio makes women to love men. . . . It shows that the person is rich. . . . In the old days, men did not respect their wives. They could beat them. The radio has made men change. . . . The radio has given knowledge as to how to care for children and to prevent diseases. . . ." (Robbins & Kilbride, 1987:256-257).

In addition to the radio, Ogburn also analyzed a number of other inventions. For example, for the x-ray machine, he listed sixty-one influences that caused changes in industry, in medicine, in science, and in trade. Similarly, he noted 150 social effects from the use of the automobile. (Forty years later, Gabor Strasser, 1973:926-928, almost doubled Ogburn's figure of social effects attributable to the automobile, and his list may well be incomplete.) But neither took into consideration the decline in public transportation; how emission controls have been canceled out by an increase in the miles driven; that salt used on ice and snow causes trees and vegetation to wither; and that Americans are fat because they drive rather than walk (Kay, 1997). And no one thinks of the 300 million or so tires that are annually discarded. As one observer noted: "You can't bury 'em. You can't put 'em in the water. No one will steal them. They're just there." But back to Ogburn.

Ogburn has distinguished three general forms of the social effects of invention. The first is *dispersion*, or the multiple effects of a single mechanical invention, as was illustrated in the case of the radio or the automobile. The second general effect is *succession*, or the derivative social effects of a single invention, which means that an invention produces changes, which, in turn, produce further changes, and so on. "Derivative effects of invention follow one another like ripples after a pebble is thrown in water . . . the invention of the tin can is said to have influenced the movement for woman suffrage. It first led to canning factories, then it reduced the time in preparing meals in the home; it thus gave women more time for activities outside the home, including participation in the movement for woman's rights and the suffrage. In turn, woman's suffrage has had a series of derivative effects"



(Ogburn, 1933:124). Another illustration of the derivative social effects would be the invention of the cotton gin, which simplified cotton processing and made cotton more profitable, resulting in the encouragement of planting of more cotton, which, in turn, required more slaves. The increase in slavery and growing Southern dependence on cotton exports helped to provoke the Civil War, which greatly stimulated the growth of large-scale industry and business monopoly. These, in turn, encouraged antitrust laws and labor unions, and the chain reaction is still continuing. Obviously, not all these developments are viewed as directly related to the cotton gin, but it helped to produce them all.

The third form of the social effects of invention is called *convergence*, that is, the coming together of several influences of different inventions. For example, the automobile, the electric pump, and the septic tank helped to make the modern suburb possible.

Ogburn further notes that the effects of invention on society are of various degrees and kind. One of the first effects of invention is the change in the habits of the individuals using them, as in the case of persons who use typewriters instead of pen and ink. When there is a large number of individuals whose habits are changed, then a *social class* is affected. Thus, there develops a class of women typists and stenographers who have a place in society in relation to other groups and classes. This, in turn, changes certain organizations, and the organization of various business is affected by the use of typewriters. At times, inventions have far-removed effects on *social institutions*, such as the family, which is affected by the employment of daughters, wives, and single women in offices and factories. Additional influences are those that affect *ethics* and codes of conduct related to these material changes. For example, years ago "it was almost a moral precept that woman's place was in the home. The appearance of women on the streets and in places of business for many years slowly affected manners and customs closely related to ethical codes" (Ogburn, 1933:162). The final influence, he notes, is on systems of thought or *social philosophies* that tend to be influenced by inventions. Thus, the inventions that attract women away from home are related to the social philosophy concerning the equality of sexes and in the resulting greater social justice for women.

Technological innovations also affect wealth, power, culture patterns, gender relationships, work (Goldhaber, 1986:33-82) and even diet. Technological innovation is one of the principal ways of creating and redistributing wealth. Examples abound. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, elevators increased already high land values in major cities. Air conditioning has opened up areas in the South with hot and humid climates to modern commerce and industry. Mechanization of farm technology resulted in the growth of agribusiness, causing many farmers with small holdings to go bankrupt. Certain skills also lose their value when a new technology is introduced. For example, the traditional Swiss watch industry



declined as a result of the transition to electronic, digital watches. The potential of labor-saving technology also reduces the value of many skills. Finally, in the context of food consumption, some consumer groups are urging the public to consider a new issue: whether to buy meat that has been mechanically deboned. The most widely used method squeezes meat scraps from a carcass, ideally leaving the bones intact. Investigations revealed, however, that pieces of bone, bone marrow, and spinal cord sometimes get into the meat. This may be a cause for concern because spinal cords can carry bovine spongiform encephalopathy, commonly known as "mad cow" disease, which has been linked to several deaths in Britain and resulted in the institution, in the late 1990s, of a series of measures impacting the cattle industry in the United Kingdom and beef distributors, processors, and restaurants in Europe. Concerned consumers may now want to ask about processing methods since mechanically deboned beef is not labeled as such (*Atlantic Monthly*, 1997).

Technology can extend the power of the already powerful, and it can increase the power of the relatively weak. For example, advances in communication technology are useful for augmenting the power of small groups of managers in multinational corporations or governmental bureaucracies. Information technologies allow organizations to have access to a far wider range of information than in the past, and to be able to use it in turn for strengthening themselves even further. By contrast, bicycles can augment the power of large groups to communicate, or to organize to resist centralized authority. Similarly, new information technologies such as video recorders, cable television, and the Internet can lessen the power of those who control the major networks to decide the flow of issues and concerns that command public attention.

New technologies alter culture patterns and ways of life. A good example is how the bicycle changed mate-selection practices in the French countryside in the late nineteenth century. Young men suddenly had the opportunity to travel longer distances, which extended the number of potential available spouses beyond one's village. This changed traditional courtship practices and a whole set of criteria to select a husband or wife. And, what was true for the bicycle is even more the case for cars and airplanes. Technology has had a profound impact on patterns of intimacy, home life, socialization practices, and leisure-time activities, in addition to many other areas.

In virtually all societies, tasks and social roles are divided along gender lines, although the divisions vary from society to society. Gender roles are often tied to particular technologies, often leaving women in a lower-status position. In traditional societies, certain tools are considered feminine, others are masculine. Similarly, in modern societies, certain technologies seem to have gender attached to them. To illustrate: The introduction of typewriters into offices coincided with the introduction of women into clerical roles;



the early telephone operator or receptionist came to be identified as female. Computers are often seen as "male" tools, whereas the almost identical word processors are frequently perceived as "female" tools.

One of the most pronounced technological impacts on work is automation. As a result, old skills become obsolete, the character and the composition of the labor force change, and more and more workers who cannot obtain new skills enter lower-paid occupations or join the ranks of the unemployed or early retirees. Technology is also helpful to compensate for a skill that cannot be easily learned. For example, authentic Persian carpets are handmade individual products of particular Iranian villages. The designs are unique to areas and villages. The carpets are hand-knotted and have visible irregularities of symmetry, of color, and of shape. With the help of computers, the basic patterns can be analyzed; variations and irregularities can be programmed. As a result, modern rug-making factories can reproduce the intricate patterns with ever-greater fidelity, making it difficult to distinguish the imitations from the real thing. And, the imitation can come from any place where there is a rug factory with state-of-the-art machinery.

The computer further altered the nature of the workplace by changing the kind and number of workers needed along with the type and amount of information needed and used. The computerization of an office, for example, may reduce the number of workers required, and those who are needed will have new skills although the impact of computers on productivity is still being debated. With computers, more information can be utilized and stored, and this brings about an increase in the gathering of new information. The computer's impact reverberates in virtually all human activities. In education, computer-assisted instruction is gaining in popularity even though there is no good evidence that most uses of computers significantly improve teaching and learning (see, for example, Oppenheimer, 1997). Computers altered health care (but did not reduce waiting) and allow people to shop from their homes.

But computers can also be used in less desirable ways. Tapping into a vast trove of government, legal, and medical data bases, dozens of companies are into a booming business peddling personal details on anyone—to anyone willing to pay the price. One of the concerns is that personal data services could enable stalkers or spouse-abusers to find their victims (Beiser, 1997). Another concern is that personal information will be used for "identity theft"—an exploding category of crime in which a crook masquerades as someone else. With your name and social security number, anyone can apply for credit cards and loans and leave you to pay the bills. Through computerized job surveillance, companies can invade the privacy of their employees. Credit bureaus hold and share over 200 million files on people and their consumption and spending patterns. New information is added to these files every time one applies for a personal loan, credit card, or mortgage. This is in addition to information about us that is stored in school, hospital, gov-



ernment, and other data banks and the rapidly emerging biometrics technologies which are used to identify people through various body characteristics such as faces, hands, voices, eyes, and even smells (Hansell, 1997). Any one of these sources can be a potential threat to our privacy, or what's left of it. As stated in a front-page article on cyberspace in *The New York Times*, "Indeed, as the free-flowing exchange and exploitation of information is being celebrated as the main engine of economic prosperity into the next century, individual privacy is looking more and more like an endangered natural resource." (Bernstein, 1997:A1).

Finally, computers can also be used to commit crime. At the workplace, computer crime is costing business billions of dollars annually. Basically, *computer crime* is any illegal act for which knowledge of computer technology is used to commit the offense. There are five broad categories of computer crime (Conly & McEwen, 1990:3). *Internal computer crimes* are alterations in computer programs to modify outcomes. For instance, in a brokerage house or bank, financial records can be systematically changed or deleted. *Telecommunication crimes* involve the use of telephone lines to gain illegal access to computers or to access phone companies to make illegal phone calls. This process is known among hackers as *phreaking*—a play on the words *freak*, *phone*, and *free* (Mungo & Clough, 1992:3). Long-distance and international access codes are sold, or, at times, given away by phreakers, and phone companies lose large sums as a result. *Computer manipulation crimes* are those that create new records or change data in a system to carry out some illegal activity. For example, embezzlers use this method to alter data in existing accounts. *Support of criminal enterprises* involves the use of computers and data bases for money laundering, drug trafficking, or running a network of call girls. Finally, *hardware and software theft* includes illegal copying of software and thefts of trade secrets and microprocessor chips. Computer crimes have become so widespread that many law enforcement agencies had to create new units and task forces to deal with the continuously emerging problems. In the next section, responses to the effects of social change will be considered.

RESPONSES TO CHANGE

The effects of social change are never evenly distributed, and in a socially differentiated and heterogeneous society, the impact of a change will tend to differ for individuals, groups, and social strata variously located in the structure. However, it is possible to make some generalizations about the consequences and impacts of large-scale social changes and some of the more typical responses to them. For the first part of the discussion, the emphasis will be on the forms of alienation and their behavioral consequences that may be construed as responses to change.



The analysis will take place in the context of the so-called mass-society "theory," in which, according to Melvin Seeman, the major theme is that the passing of the old community has had powerful and often destructive impacts. It is a theory in the sense that it states three major elements in the transition process. "It becomes a theory—at least in the sense that it can produce testable propositions through a set of independent, intervening, and dependent variables—by combining (1) a historically oriented account of contemporary social structure, (2) assertions about the psychological effects of that structure, and (3) predictions about the resulting individual behavior" (Seeman, 1972:468–469). In this theory, alienation is the principal intervening variable; it is produced by the social structure, and, in turn, it produces distinctive behavioral responses. Seeman concedes that the theory is highly debatable, and it currently has more critics than adherents. An oft-noted shortcoming of the theory is its lack of sufficient articulation of the process by which the various responses come about. It is also plausible that some students in the universities will not see the mass-society thesis as credible because it goes against their own past experience and does not reflect their present circumstances. Some may even see it as a threat to their hopes and aspirations (Hamilton & Wright, 1986:401). Still, in the present context, Seeman's thesis is important and informative.

As Table 7.1 shows, the structural features that are the independent variables are quite standard ones in the sociological literature. They demonstrate what is happening in a broad social change process from a historical perspective. The five trends that constitute the basis of this part of the argument are:

1. The decline of the importance of kinship and family in decision making and the consequent increase of anonymity and impersonality in social relations.
2. The decline of traditional social forms and the rise of secularized, rationalized forms, which include (a) the emergence of bureaucracy as an organizational form, (b) the growth of mechanization and standardization (in work and elsewhere) as a technical form, and (c) the secularization of beliefs and values, an ideological form of secularization involving the weakening of "given" standards of behavior.
3. The shift from homogeneity to heterogeneity, which entails increased social differentiation involving an increased specialization of tasks for individuals and institutions with increased division of labor and interdependency. This, of course, brings about standardization in other spheres such as in mass culture and consumption.
4. Increased physical and social mobility, which implies the waning of community ties and immediate interpersonal bonds.
5. Enlargement of scale, meaning that the basis of action (for example, communication, transport, politics, urbanization, etc.) have become massive in the literal sense that big corporations, cities, and nations make decisions that affect large populations. (Seeman, 1972:469–470)



TABLE 7.1 Components of Mass-Society Theory

(A) Contemporary Structural Trends	(B) Forms of Alienation	(C) Behavioral Consequences
1. Kinship to impersonality	1. Powerlessness	1. Political passivity (e.g., nonvoting)
2. Traditional to rational forms	2. Meaninglessness	2. Wildcat strikes
3. Homogeneity to heterogeneity	3. Normlessness	3. Mass movements
4. Stability to mobility	4. Value isolation (cultural estrangement)	4. Ethnic prejudice
5. Enlargement of scale	5. Self-estrangement	5. Mental disorder
	6. Social isolation	6. School absenteeism
		7. Low information level
		8. Suicide

SOURCE: Melvin Seeman, "Alienation and Engagement," in *The Human Meaning of Social Change*, eds. Angus Campbell and Philip Converse (New York: Russell Sage, 1972), p. 468.

Note: The figure implies that the factors in column A lead to the development of one or more forms of alienation (column B) with the illustrative behavioral consequences in column C, but the figure is not constructed to be read line by line (e.g., powerlessness is not necessarily tied to kinship—impersonality).

These historical trends, Seeman points out, are guides to measurable variables. However, once the related indices are specified, a number of assumptions may be made between the relationship of social change and alienation. *Alienation* refers to the fact that there are "six related but distinguishable notions, and that these six varieties of alienation can be rather sharply defined in terms of the person's *expectancies* or his *values*" (1972:472). Therefore, to be alienated means to be characterized by one or more of the following:

1. *A sense of powerlessness*: a low expectancy that an individual's own behavior can control the occurrence of personal and social rewards; for the alienated individual control is located in external forces, powerful others, in luck, or fate.
2. *A sense of meaninglessness*: a sense of the incomprehensibility of social affairs, of events whose dynamics a person does not understand and whose future course the individual cannot predict.
3. *A sense of normlessness*: a high expectancy that socially unapproved means are required to achieve given objectives; the perspective that an individual is not bound by conventional standards in the pursuit of what may be, after all, quite conventional goals; for example, wealth, or high status.
4. *Value isolation* (or cultural estrangement): a person's rejection of commonly held values in the society; the assignment of low reward value to goals or behavior that are highly valued in a given society. An illustration of this would be the highly alienated artist or intellectual who rejects the going standards of success.

5. *Self-estrangement*: to be engaged in activities that are not rewarding in themselves. For example, the classic description of a worker carrying out unfulfilling or uncreative work.
6. *Social isolation*: a person's low expectancy for inclusion and social acceptance, typically manifested in feelings of loneliness, rejection, or repudiation. (Seeman, 1972:472-473)

The behavioral consequences of the various forms of alienation are illustrated in Table 7.1. "These consequences in turn become matters that a democratic society would find important in its accounting of the personal meaning of social change" (Seeman, 1972:474). Furthermore, each of the dimensions or forms of alienation is associated with a series of more specific and empirically demonstrated consequences. Let us select just one dimension: powerlessness. It has been associated with membership and participation in organizations that can mediate between the individual and the state or corporation, with a tendency not to engage in planned and instrumentally oriented action, and with a readiness to participate in relatively unplanned and/or short-term protest activities, with poor learning, and with a greater sense of powerlessness among minority groups. It may also be a factor in the rise of conspiracy theories and the widespread cynicism and disillusionment of Americans toward government. For example, according to a 1997 poll, 51 percent of the public believes it is either "very likely" or "somewhat likely" the federal officials were "directly responsible for the assassination of President Kennedy" in 1963; more than one-third of those surveyed suspect the Navy, either by accident or on purpose, shot down TWA Flight 800 near New York in 1996; and a majority also believe that it is possible that the Central Intelligence Agency intentionally permitted Central American drug dealers to sell cocaine to inner-city African American children (Hargrove & Stempel, 1997).

The concept of alienation has been used to account for a number of diverse responses to rapid social change. For example, Ted Gurr (1972:134) drew together a sample of incidents in which alienated groups expressed their disenchantment by resorting to violent uprisings. His focus was on discontent that resulted not from objective wants but from perceived discrepancies between human needs and opportunities to satisfy those needs. Using as his sample 1,100 occurrences of strife in 114 nations during the period of 1961-1965, he found that 93 percent originated in such discontent. The same conclusion is reiterated in a variety of historical and theoretical studies of revolution (DeFronzo, 1996; Goldstone, Gurr, & Moshiri, 1993). Mass alienation has also developed as a response to state socialism, giving rise to many sociological problems, such as a loss of respect for authority and the necessity of using black markets to survive. Such behaviors continue even as major democratic reforms take place since new social norms have not been formed, creating development problems for the functioning of newly formed democratic institutions in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (Tong, 1995).



Although Seeman's conceptualization of the forms of alienation and their behavioral consequences is a good way of viewing responses to social change, it's not the only way, as evidenced by a review of the literature. For example, the Cargo cult, which was discussed in Chapter 5, can also be considered as a response to, and a way of coping with, accelerated change induced by European contact in Melanesia during the period of colonial rule. The Cargo cult is "one of the basic modes of reaction or adjustment to situations of rapid culture change characteristic of an entire area in a specific historical phase" (Schwartz, 1976:159). The cult responses are comparable to forms of religious responses to rapid culture change, crises, and domination reported throughout the world (Lanternari, 1965; Zellner, 1995). Social movements are also considered responses to changing social conditions (Oberschall, 1993).

Responses to change can also be viewed in the context of Hagen's notion of status withdrawal, which was discussed in Chapter 2 (Hagen, 1962). Hagen applied Robert K. Merton's typology of modes of individual adaptation to the analysis of individual and group responses to social changes resulting in status withdrawal brought about by conquest, colonialization, or changes within the elite. Status withdrawal was defined as the perception on the part of individuals or groups that "their purposes and values in life are not respected by groups in the society whom they respect and whose esteem they value" (1962:185). Several responses to a situation of status withdrawal are possible. Initially, aggression and rebellion may occur or attempts may be made to ignore the situation and pretend that things have not changed. According to Hagen, the usual response is retreatism, in which an attempt is made to maintain the traditional and valued ways of life, clandestinely as necessary. The adult generation experiencing this conflict retreats to a passive "safe" lifestyle, and, although behavior may change, there are no basic personality changes.

Retreatism can also be seen as a response to status withdrawal on the part of groups. As a whole, the native Americans have been forced into a retreatist position in response to a conflict between their values and way of life and their defeat and placement on reservations by the federal government. Traditional avenues to status have been closed off, and the opportunities and means for achievement in the white society are extremely limited. The retreatist response is perpetuated by the children being raised to esteem traditional values but with no clear role model for the future (Hagen, 1962:490).

Retreatism as it has been described by Hagen is one possible response to a particular type of change situation. Other responses, following Merton's typology, could entail innovation, ritualism, and rebellion. Innovation offers a potential for responding in a fashion which is beneficial to the individuals or groups involved. Ritualism may entail the rejection of new cultural goals, and rebellion, a nonacceptance of the change and possible attempts to counteract it.



SOCIAL CHANGE AND SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION

As Robert E. Park (1975:38–39) gloomily notes:

We are living in a period . . . of social disorganization. Everything is in a state of agitation—everything seems to be undergoing change. . . . Any form of change that brings any measurable alteration in the routine of social life tends to break up habits; and in breaking up the habits upon which the existing social organization rests, destroys that organization itself. Every new device that affects social life and the social routine is to that extent a disorganizing influence. Every new discovery, every new invention, every new idea, is disturbing. . . . Apparently anything that makes life interesting is dangerous to the existing order.

In many instances, indeed, social change is disruptive, and an underlying condition for social disorganization is change.

A widely accepted definition of *social disorganization* refers to “inadequacies in a social system that keep people’s collective and individual purposes from being as fully realized as they could be.” Obviously, the concept of social disorganization is relative; “It is not tied to any absolute standard, which would be Utopian, but to a standard of what, so far as we know, could be accomplished under attainable conditions.” Quite simply stated, “When we say that a group or organization or community or society is disorganized, we mean that its structure of statuses and roles is not working as effectively as it might to achieve valued purposes” (Merton, 1976:26). Thus, social disorganization entails the breakdown of the organizational structure, the various elements in society become “out of joint,” and the influence of social norms on particular groups or individuals is weakened. The result is that the collective purposes of society are less fully realized than they could be under a different, better organized system. Value and norm conflicts, mobility, weak primary relations, lack of group cohesiveness, and other ingredients of social disorganization can also lead to deviance such as mental illness, drug abuse, alcoholism, suicide, and crime (Clinard & Meier, 1995:64–68; Liska, 1987:63–64).

The processes of social change can provide the impetus for social disorganization by creating conditions for conflicting interest and values, conflicting status and role obligations, faulty socialization, and faulty social communication (Merton, 1976:26–27).

Conflicting interests and values are produced by the increased complexity and diversity of social life as illustrated by the different demands and expectations of workers, management, and stockholders. Individuals occupy a variety of statuses in society, and these statuses “can pull in different directions by calling for opposed modes of behavior” (Merton, 1976:26). When there is no provision of a shared set of priorities among these competing obligations, the individual’s behavior becomes unpredictable and

socially disruptive, and regardless how it is judged, it remains disorganizing. For example, "Competition between obligations of home and work, of local mores and national law, of religion and state, of friendship and the 'organization' make for potential conflicts" (1976:27). Social change also brings about faulty socialization by not providing adequate resocialization of individuals involved in these processes. Individuals simply do not know how to behave in their newly acquired statuses or in radically changed social situations. Finally, faulty social communication is produced in situations of change by structural inadequacies or partial breakdown in channels of communication between people in a social system.

Social disorganization is also generated by the fact that change tends to be uneven, resulting, as it was discussed in Chapter 2, in what William F. Ogburn (1950) calls *culture lag*. Some areas of society change faster than others, with the result that the parts of the system no longer mesh as a whole. In general, technological changes take place more rapidly than changes in other institutions and values; humanity accepts new tools more readily than new ideas. For example, industrialization has proceeded much faster than the development of social controls over the pollution that industrialization generates. Similarly, although developments in medical science have contributed to a global population explosion, religious prohibitions against artificial methods of birth control have not been modified, nor in most parts of the world has there been any change in the traditional attitudes and preference systems for large families (Brown, 1997).

Social disorganization is also produced by what Philip M. Hauser (1973:430) calls the *social morphological revolution* (changes in the size, density, and heterogeneity of population and the impact of these changes on humans and society). This is the result of three developments: (1) the remarkable increase in the rate of population growth itself, often referred to as "the population explosion"; (2) the increasing urbanization and metropolitanisation of the people, which he calls the "population implosion"; and (3) the increasing heterogeneity of the population composed of different nationalities and racial groups, which he designates "population diversification." These demographic changes have in turn been affected by technological and social changes. These developments are highly interrelated and constitute the elements of the social morphological revolution.

Hauser (1973:435–436) asserts that the combined effects of these developments have profoundly altered human nature and the social order.

... the social morphological revolution has modified the human aggregation as a physical construct and as an economic mechanism, it has transformed human behavior and social organization, including the nature of government; it has generated and aggravated a host of problems—physical, personal, social, institutional and governmental. . . . Examples of the physical problems are given by the problems relating to housing supply and quality, circulation of persons and

goods, solid and human waste removal, air and water pollution, recreational facilities, urban design, and the management of natural resources. . . . Examples of personal, social and organizational problems are given by the incidence of delinquency and crime, alcoholism, drug addiction, and mental disorders. . . . It is revealed also in unemployment, poverty, racism, bigotry, intergroup conflict, family disorganization, differential morbidity and mortality, labor-management conflict, the conservative-liberal debate, the maladministration of criminal justice; and in corruption, malapportionment and inertia in government, and the fragmentation and paralysis of local government.

In short, the social morphological revolution has transformed the "little community" (a concept used by Redfield) into the "mass society." Hauser suggests that much of the chaos and disorganization of contemporary society may be understood as frictions in the transition still under way from the little community to the mass society, and he cites governmental, racist, and other "lags" that have taken place. Without a doubt, population growth has affected all social institutions. Judah Matras (1977:251-256) cites a number of instances, in support of Hauser's contentions, in which population growth or changing age, class, or ethnic composition may render political institutions and community decision-making processes ineffective by forcing them to form coalitions, political machines, and political exchange and trade-off routines. These, in turn, become disorganized under changing population composition and need to be periodically revamped. Similarly, various forms of population pressures, such as the influx of large groups of immigrants in a short time period, can affect and disorganize educational institutions, churches, voluntary organizations, police forces, business and industry, communications, recreational institutions and even the Social Security system (Huddle & Simcox, 1994).

Social disorganization is often associated with personal demoralization. For example, Vine Deloria, Jr. (1988) notes that the extermination of the buffalo highly demoralized the native Americans of the Great Plains. As it was described earlier, the buffalo provided food, clothing, and shelter, and dozens of parts of the buffalo carcass were used by the tribespeople. The buffalo hunt provided the principal object of their religious ceremonies and the main avenue to social status and recognition. Other status-conferring activities, such as warfare, were also dependent on a large supply of dried buffalo meat. The government's attempt to pacify the tribes through the extermination of the buffalo resulted in their demoralization. The integrating and status-conferring functions of the war party and the buffalo hunt have disappeared. Religious ceremonies became empty and meaningless. The hunting economy was destroyed, and the native Americans lived, and at times starved, on government handouts. The traditional goals and values that gave meaning to their lives were now unavailable; they found it extremely difficult to substitute the white man's goals and values for their own. In a

few instances in which they did successfully adopt the white man's economy, this, too, was soon destroyed by the white man's "need" for their land. They suffered from the destruction of their own culture, but they were denied full access to the white man's culture. Moreover, they were subjected to unknown diseases and corrupted by alcohol. Thus, it is no surprise that many of the tribes became deeply demoralized. Depopulation became widespread, and only in recent decades has the native American population begun to grow again.

Developing countries have perhaps the highest disorganization rate because they are undergoing accelerated changes that are compounded by population pressures, sporadic food shortages, scarcity of resources, and environmental problems (Harf & Trout, 1986). Modernization and "progress" bring new hardships to many in developing countries (Scott & Kerkvliet, 1973). Robert H. Bates (1974) points out that modernization promotes new systems of social stratification and encourages increased ethnic competition within developing countries, thus contributing to disorganization. It should be noted, however, that although modernization is generally associated with social disorganization, there is no empirical evidence that modernization directly contributes to personal disorganization and psychic strain (Inkeles, 1973:358-359).

It is important to note that under some circumstances, disorganization can be both the cause and the effect of social change. The notion of disorganization is based on the assumptions that at some point in the past, a given problem did not exist or was not recognized and that society had a fairly stable equilibrium in which practices and supporting values were in harmonious agreement. Then social change of some kind disrupted this harmonious agreement and brought to the fore new practices or new conditions in which the old practices no longer worked properly, or new knowledge that made old practices obsolete, or new value judgments that declared old practices no longer endurable. This, in turn, created a confusion in which old rules were both debated and ignored, yet no new rules were generally accepted. In other words, change had disorganized and disrupted the organization of the former system of behavior. Eventually, however, new rules and practices will develop, and, at least for a while, a new equilibrium will appear and will be preserved until disrupted by another round of change. In brief, disorganization and reorganization are going on continuously. Moreover, as it was shown in the preceding chapter, willful, purposeful disorganization can be used as a tactic of achieving some desired change. Illustrations of purposeful disorganization would be some of the tactics used in the effort to thwart the Vietnam War or to obtain greater justice for black students through the takeover of university buildings in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Allen (1971:380) suggests that, to some extent, one could say that the use of disruption in order to obtain desired changes amounts to "disorganization for good reasons." In the examples given, "if disorganization was



a 'means,' the 'ends' were stopping the Vietnam war, increasing justice for blacks, and so on."

The issue of disorganization for "good reasons" raises some interesting questions. Although individuals generally prefer social order and tend to dislike anarchy and chaos, "nevertheless organization is not inevitably linked with what is 'right' nor disorganization with what is 'wrong.' One can point out that a good example of a *well-organized* nation would be Germany under Hitler. Other sociocultural systems or subsystems may be well organized but open to serious criticisms. Justice is just as important as 'order,' and other values may be of prime consideration" (Allen, 1971:381). Obviously, whether or not disruption and disorganization is the "right" course of action to be followed is a value-laden issue open to considerable debate. The important point to remember for the present purpose is that disorganization can be seen both as an effect and as an instrument of social change. In the next section, the unintended consequences of change will be considered.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Any change of a certain magnitude will disturb the prevailing and ever-temporary balance of social forces and will bring about subsequent changes, some of which can have unintended ramifications throughout the social structure. Technological innovations and attempts to solve social problems are notable examples. Consciously designed changes foster subsequent unplanned and unintended developments—unanticipated consequences that invariably differ in character and scope from the initial planned change. It should be noted, however, that many of the unanticipated consequences are not at all the results of consciously designed change efforts. Instead, as Robert M. MacIver (1942:20) presciently stated many years ago, they "are the social resultants of a great many individual or group actions directed to quite other ends, but together conspiring to bring them about." To illustrate this point, businesspeople, labor unions, and politicians may all pursue a common goal of economic prosperity, but the conjecture of their separate efforts may instead produce an economic slump.

Examples of unanticipated consequences of change efforts are almost bewildering in their abundance. Almost every effort is accompanied by them. Perhaps the best-known example is Prohibition, which was designed to end alcohol consumption in the United States. In fact, it did little to reduce consumption rates. More serious, however, was its consequence—of making potential criminals of millions of citizens and yielding vast profits for organized crime. Similarly, the efforts by the Drug Enforcement Administration to crack down on the importation of marijuana resulted in a phenomenal increase in domestic production. Currently, over 50 percent of marijuana

consumed in the United States is produced domestically, and, in some states, such as Hawaii, Oregon, and California, it is the biggest cash crop (Vago, 1997:207–208). Similarly, the quota system imposed in the mid-1980s on imported Japanese cars backfired. Instead of the quota protecting American car manufacturers and workers, the Japanese benefited from it. The trade limits created a shortage of Japanese autos in American showrooms, thus enabling their makers to increase prices and boost their revenues by as much as \$2 billion per year. That extra profit, which came out of the pockets of American consumers, gave the Japanese carmakers even more money for research to improve their competitive position against Detroit (*Time*, 1987:59). The demand for Italian luxury goods also created a market for cheap counterfeits for customers who like brand names but not premium prices. For decades, Italian luxury goods makers have had to fight a flood of counterfeits made in Asian factories—a nuisance but not a major threat because the shoddy quality of the bogus handbags, scarves, and shoes gave them away to discerning eyes. Lately, however, industrial piracy is taking place at home with the result that one of the most skilled sectors of the Italian economy is now competing against itself on world markets. The same specialist workshops that provide goods for brand name companies also provide them for the black market. In the late 1990s, counterfeiting has become so widespread that it anchors some local economies. Its prevalence helps explain why some areas with high unemployment, like Naples, have escaped social unrest: many jobs exist that are not on anybody's book (Tagliabue, 1997:3).

There are many other instances of politically sponsored and governmentally enforced changes that have produced unintended consequences. Many people benefited from the federal programs addressed to the alleviation of poverty. Some of these activities, however, have served to perpetuate poverty among the beneficiaries and others have not directly benefited them. In the Seattle-Denver minimum-income maintenance experiment, for example, the guaranteed payments were shown to be a disincentive to work and destructive of family bonds. In comparing the rate of marital breakups between those receiving the minimum payment and those in a control group, it was found, unexpectedly, that "those in the benefit group suffered from a higher incidence of breakups" (Institute for Socioeconomic Studies, 1979:4). Several other programs of urban renewal thus far have created further slums. One reason for that unintended result was the practice of demolishing ruined apartment houses, the renovation of which could not be financed. This, in turn, displaced slum dwellers, who were forced to move someplace else, where they created new slums.

Closer to home (or university), there are also some unintended consequences of the familiar Buckley amendment, which requires that in institutions with federal support, all records (particularly those concerning students) be open to inspection by persons concerned. Warren Bennis (1976)

raised an important question in his article "Have We Gone Overboard on 'The Right to Know'?" He admitted that the Buckley amendment is laudable in its intent, but one consequence of it is already clear. College administrators are now reluctant to put any very substantial information into any student's record. "What will be set down will be so bland and general as to be useless, for example, to college-entrance officials who want to make a considered judgment of an applicant's overall merits. If, for example, he had threatened to cut a teacher's throat but had not done so, he could scarcely be described as 'possibly unstable.' The student or his parents might sue" (1976:21). The various "sunshine" laws that have been passed by numerous states prohibiting closed meetings and the Freedom of Information Act, which became effective on February 19, 1975, requiring that most records of federal agencies be provided to anyone upon request, also resulted in fewer written recorded discussions, more private meetings, and greater secrecy with "more winks than signatures ('don't write, send word') if for no other reason than the avoidance of some new capricious lawsuit" (1976:20).

In all of these illustrations, the changes were undoubtedly initiated with the best of intentions on the part of those who proposed them. Few individuals would question, for example, the intentions of sending emergency food supplies to disaster-stricken countries and even fewer would consider the possibility of unintended consequences. But even such an action can have deleterious consequences as evidenced by the donation of emergency food supplies by the United States to Guatemala after the earthquake. According to *The New York Times* (Riding, 1977), it was entirely unnecessary, and had the effect of hurting the very farmers it was intended to help. When an earthquake struck on February 4, 1976, taking 24,000 lives and leaving 1.2 million people homeless, Guatemala had just harvested its largest grain crop in many years. The food was undamaged, and within days was recovered from the rubble of devastated homes. The United States sent thousands of tons of grain to be donated to rural victims of the quake. It knocked out the bottom of the grain market in the country and did considerable damage to the vulnerable economies of the small farmers—Indians living in the highlands north of Guatemala City, who were worst hit by the disaster. Dependent on sales of grain to generate money to rebuild their homes, they found that the aid supplies caused the market price of corn to drop drastically so that they could not sell their own products to obtain sufficient funds for reconstruction. Moreover, with the decline of farm income, the string of small mountain cooperatives suddenly found themselves decapitalized, dangerously weakening a new and important experiment in local organization. The food aid also upset community leadership patterns. Some leaders were more successful than others in obtaining food handouts, and those who were able to produce "free things" suddenly assumed greater positions of power and influence.

On many occasions, even seemingly trivial changes forced upon people tend to produce dysfunctional consequences. For example, Christian missionaries to the South Seas were distressed by the near-nudity of the natives; to them it was an indication of sexual immorality,

for in Western society clothing not only is a protection of the body against the elements, but is also, although perhaps only incidentally, a requisite for virtue. On the assumption that lack of clothing stimulated sexual desire, they attempted to improve the sexual morality of the natives by inducing them to clothe their bodies. It may be doubted that putting clothes on the natives had any significant effects upon their sex conduct; but there is no doubt that it contributed along with newly introduced diseases, alcohol, and Western food practices, to the decimation and sometimes total extermination of native populations. For as is now clear, under the high temperature and humidity conditions of tropical regions, clothing has markedly adverse effects on physical welfare. (LaPiere, 1965:76-77)

It is probably inevitable that, in the short run, most change efforts will produce some unintended consequences, and, over the long run, even the most successful attempts will have some unplanned by-products. It should be noted, however, that the unintended consequences are not always deleterious. A good illustration of a positive, but unintended, consequence of a change effort has to do with the effects of the liberalization of pornography laws in Denmark on the incidence of child molestation. In the words of Bert Kutchinsky (1973:179), "The unexpected outcome of this analysis is that the high availability of hard-core pornography in Denmark was most probably the very direct cause of a considerable decrease in at least one type of serious sex offense, namely, child molestation. Between 1965 (the first year of the availability of hard-core pornographic pictures) and 1969 (the year of the repeal of the Penal Ban, and of peak production) the number of cases of this type dropped from 220 to 87. The implication of our conclusion is that a large number of such offenses have been avoided since the late 1960s, because potential offenders obtained sufficient sexual satisfaction through the use of pornography, most probably combined with masturbation." In a later study, Kutchinsky found a similar decrease in child molestation in the former West Germany, which he attributed to an increased availability of pornographic material (U.S. Department of Justice, 1986:974). Bear in mind that the intent of liberalizing pornography laws was not even remotely related to an attempt to reduce sex crimes.

It is easy to go on listing unanticipated consequences of change. The important point to remember is that change has by-products both in the long run and in the short run, and, in most cases, the unintended consequences, both beneficial and deleterious, tend to increase over time. The impact of the automobile, for example, in 1895, when there were less than a dozen such

machines on the road, is qualitatively different from today, when there are over 180 million in the United States alone. Consider the following statement from *Scientific American*, published in 1899 (quoted by Ayres, Simon, & Carlson, 1973:738): "The improvement in city conditions by the general adoption of the motor car can hardly be overestimated. Streets clean, dustless and odorless, with light rubber-tired vehicles moving swiftly and noiselessly over their smooth expanse, would eliminate a greater part of the nervousness, distraction, and strain of modern metropolitan life." As this quote illustrates, the determination of the impact of automobile technology has not been notably successful. Its by-products are too well known to warrant further reiteration here. The automobile, in turn, created a series of other changes whose unanticipated consequences could fill another volume. Again, the important point to remember is that most social and technological changes have brought in the wake of their primarily intended effect a series of unforeseen effects—some adverse and some beneficial. In the next section, ways of coping with both intended and unintended effects of changes will be examined.

COPING WITH CHANGE

In the always-eloquent and but at times overdramatic words of Alvin Toffler (1970:11): "Western society for the past 300 years has been caught up in a fire storm of change. This storm, far from abating, now appears to be gathering force. Change sweeps through the highly industrialized countries with waves of ever accelerating speed and unprecedented impact." Warren G. Bennis and Philip E. Slater (1968:124) describe modern society as *The Temporary Society*—"of temporary systems, nonpermanent relationships, turbulence, uprootedness, unconnectedness, mobility, and above all, unexampled social change." These writers take the position that in many areas accelerated social change complicates life by shifting standards, updating some behaviors as desirable, outdating others as old-fashioned and out of place. Ways of behaving that at one time may have been effective in establishing individuals' positions and identities became obsolete. Middle-class white parents, proud of their achievements in acquiring material goods and providing their children with the "best" in schooling, travel, recreational opportunities, and living conditions, find these values viewed as unimportant or as evidence of materialistic decadence. Black parents who learn to shelter their children from hostile environments through accommodation find themselves attacked as weaklings or "Uncle Toms." Men who learned to behave in protective, although patronizing, ways toward women are not only "politically incorrect" but are called "chauvinist pigs," and women who learned to play seductive and submissive roles toward men are considered "unliberated."



Change further complicates life by increasing the rate of friction between groups and within groups. As established standards of behavior break down, as efforts to develop appropriate standards for dealing with a changing order come to the fore, as underprivileged groups seek changes to improve their situation, and as new notions of appropriate identity emerge, friction increases. Moreover, change is always difficult, and it is especially difficult for those benefiting from the status quo. As it was shown in Chapter 6, it is not surprising that change elicits resistance and resentment among some segments of the population. By the same token, lack or slowness of change will result in anger and protest among other segments. When change comes about in one area, it will reverberate on other aspects of social life, although it should be recalled that some aspects of social life (such as values and thought systems) change more slowly than others (such as technology). Change, in many instances, is disturbing; it upsets the routine and the predictability of everyday life.

In particular, in the domain of technological changes, as Donald Schon (1971:27–28) writes:

Individuals must somehow confront and negotiate, in their own persons, the transformations which used to be handled by generational change . . . while technological change has been continuing exponentially for the last two hundred years, it has now reached a level of pervasiveness and frequency uniquely threatening to the stable state.

These technological changes cannot be isolated from the social relationships in which they are embedded. Even an apparently minor innovation, such as the introduction of hybrid maize, may undermine a whole tradition of peasant life, as it did in France when it revamped agricultural and dietary practices.

In many instances, change in every level of society is disruptive, can result in a series of unanticipated consequences, and can bring about social disorganization in its wake. When change is especially frustrating or upsetting, the question of coping with it becomes of paramount importance.

On the individual level, there is a set of rather versatile psychological defense mechanisms (such as rationalization, repression, projection, denial, reaction formation, and sublimation) that can be relied on in case of unexpected or threatening developments (Albrecht, Chadwick, & Jacobson, 1987:11). These defense mechanisms can be used to facilitate adjustment and coping. In the case of certain personal problems, for example, it is more a question of learning to live with them than of resolving them. This is particularly true in the case of adjusting to typical “private” problems such as death or divorce. The psychological literature is extensive on this topic, and it outlines the various strategies for coping (Bridges, 1980; Coelho, 1972).

Coping is required, in situations of fairly drastic change, that defies familiar ways of behaving and that requires the production of new behavior



"and very likely gives rise to uncomfortable affects like anxiety, despair, guilt, shame, or grief, the relief which forms part of the needed adaptation. Coping refers to adaptation under relatively difficult conditions" (White, 1974:48-49). This is particularly true for displaced persons and immigrants who have to learn new skills to cope with a foreign environment and to develop a new set of social relationships (Bun & Chiang, 1994:197-198).

The past few decades have offered many opportunities to observe ways in which people cope in extreme situations. David A. Hamburg and his associates (1974:412-414) describe some instances of coping under extreme stress in the Nazi concentration camps. They cite the work of Eitinger, which was based on direct observations in the camps followed by semistructured interviews and medical examinations over many years. The principal question is: How it was that some people were able to survive this prolonged physical and psychological ordeal? Obviously, a certain physical minimum of survival possibilities were present, and Eitinger has been concerned with patterns of coping behavior that tended not only to foster physical survival but to maintain mental health both during the stay in the camp and after it. One of his major findings was that "identification with the aggressor" was not frequently used by inmates, and when it was used, it tended to have a damaging effect on self-esteem and interpersonal relationships in the long run. Inmates were found to be greatly helped if they felt they had *something to live for*. "The prisoners who fared best in the long run were those who for one reason or another could retain their personality system largely intact—where previous interests, values, and skills could to some extent be carried on during the period of incarceration. Very fortunate in this respect were some members of service professions, such as physicians, nurses, clergymen and social workers" (Hamburg, 1974:413).

Another method of coping in this extreme situation that has proved effective in the long run involved *linkages with valued groups*. To illustrate, prisoners who were able to stay together with family members or to remain in contact with some of their prewar friends benefited from such relationships. Moreover, strong identification with ethnic or national groups also proved quite supportive. For example, when Norwegian prisoners were asked several years later what helped them to survive, their response very often conveyed a strong thrust: "Being together with other Norwegians." Basically, the maintenance of self-esteem, a sense of dignity, sense of group belonging, and a feeling of being useful to others all seemed to contribute significantly to survival, both in physical and psychological terms.

By contrast, conditions of high physical and psychological vulnerability are summarized by Eitinger (quoted by Hamburg, 1974:413) as follows: "Prisoners who were completely isolated from their family, bereft of all contact with groups to whom they were related before the war, people who very quickly abandoned themselves and their innermost values, people who were completely overwhelmed by the notion that they had nobody and

nothing to struggle or live for, all felt completely passive and had lost their ability to retain some sort of self-activity. They were those who most usually succumbed." This work on coping and on survival under extreme conditions underlines the importance of both group support and of individual strategies in coping and adaptation.

Fortunately, not too many change situations result in such extreme hardship and stress threatening the survival of individuals, as in the case of the Nazi concentration camps. In the context of less drastic change on the individual level, a person can develop what David Mechanic (1974:33) calls coping capabilities. Such capacities entail the ability not only to react to changes, but also to influence and control the demands to which an individual will be exposed. But to do so, Mechanic suggests that the individual must be motivated to meet those demands as they become evident in a change situation. He points out that there is a way of escaping anxiety and discomfort by lowering motivations and aspirations, but there are many social constraints against this mode of reducing stress. For successful coping, the individuals must also have the capabilities to maintain a state of psychological equilibrium "so that they can direct their energies and skills to meeting external, in contrast to internal, needs" (1974:33). Defense mechanisms that may be successful in diminishing pain and discomfort may be catastrophic for personal coping if they retard enactment of behavior directed toward changing conditions. "To put the matter bluntly, such defenses as denial—a persistent and powerful psychological response—will do a drowning man no good!" (Mechanic, 1974:33).

Mechanic points out that people's abilities to cope depend on the efficacy of the solutions that their culture provides, and the skills they develop are dependent on the adequacy of the preparatory institutions to which they have been exposed. "To the extent that schools and informal types of preparation are inadequate to the task men face, social disruption and personal failure will be inevitable no matter how strong the individual's psychological capacities" (1974:33). In the same vein, the kinds of motivations that individuals have, and the directions in which such motivation will be channeled, will depend on the incentive system in a society, that is, the patterns of behavior and activities that are valued and those that are condemned. In this context, social supports are essential in maintaining an individual's psychological comfort for "men depend on others for justification and admiration, and few men can survive without support from some segment of their fellows" (1974:33–34).

The ways in which individuals cope with changing conditions are institutionalized, and they tend to be cumulative through the generations. People learn from the experience of others, and mechanisms of coping are taught from one generation to another. The ability of people to adapt to the conditions of their lives depends in large part on the adequacy of institutionalized solutions. But institutionalized solutions to problems must

change as the problems themselves change. With rapid technological and social change, "institutionalized solutions to new problems are likely to lag behind, and the probability increases that a larger proportion of the population will have difficulties in accommodating to life problems. . . . Increasingly, it is clear that major stresses on modern man are not amenable to individual solutions, but depend on highly organized cooperative efforts that transcend those of any individual man no matter how well developed his personal resources" (1974:34).

Mechanic advocates a kind of "collective" coping through group organization and cooperation that allows for the development of mastery through specialization of function, pooling of resources and information, developing reciprocal help—giving relationships, and the like. The effectiveness of people in many situations is dependent on the maintenance of viable forms of organization and cooperation that allow important tasks to be mastered. Mechanic also notes that "individuals who may be adaptive and effective persons from a psychological perspective may be unfitted because of their values and individual orientations for the kinds of group cooperation that are necessary in developing solutions to . . . problems. Thus, many effective copers may become impotent in influencing their environment because of their resistance or inability to submerge themselves into cooperative organized relationships with others" (1974:36–37).

Peter Marris (1986) presents a somewhat different perspective on coping with change at the level of individuals from that of David Mechanic. He argues that people assimilate new experiences by placing them in the context of a familiar, reliable construction of reality. This structure, in turn, rests not only on the regularity of events themselves, but on the continuity of their meaning. This is accomplished through what Marris calls the *conservative impulse*, which is a tendency of adaptive beings to assimilate reality to their existing structure and to avoid or reorganize parts of the environment that cannot be assimilated. He posits that conservatism and adaptability are interdependent, and the readiness to react to new kinds of experience depends on the ability to assimilate them into familiar principles. This is exemplified by the social dimensions and impact of AIDS on people and social institutions (McCoy & Inciardi, 1995). Coping with change by those who are infected in this instance is, in a sense, an ability to interpret new events in light of familiar principles.

Of course, coping with change is not limited to the level of individuals. At the primary group level, for example, coping with change is an essential function of the family (Lesbe & Korman, 1989). In a sense, the family is a system of accommodation to social change. At the level of organizations, coping with change, among other things, entails the manipulation of the environment for the purpose of continuously attaining organizational objectives and internal adjustments in structure, procedures, and personnel (Gross & Etzioni, 1985; Hall, 1995).

At the level of society, there have been several historical illustrations of successful coping with change. For example, Everett E. Hagen (1962:350) notes that many of the samurai of Japan turned to business to recover the purpose and prestige they had lost in the disintegration of feudal society. According to Levy (quoted by Greer, 1975:132), others joined the police force because this preexisting social character fitted nicely the requirements of the function, and the dangerous samurai had a job in modern Japan. Similarly, Clifford Geertz (1963) has shown how the Balinese aristocracy exploited old feudal ties to create new large-scale commercial organizations, after Dutch rule and the Populist regime that followed had deprived them of political authority. Both these groups have in common a sense of superiority derived from pride in their social class, their ethnic culture, and a sense of frustration because their superiority could not find recognition through conventional careers. In a way, the revitalization movements, such as the Ghost Dance and Cargo cults that were discussed earlier in this text, are also attempts to cope with dramatic changes. Finally, the more recent movements of national liberation and decolonization in developing countries also seek, at least in principle, to enable the populace to adjust to changing conditions.

Undoubtedly, ways of coping with social change are an important aspect in the study of change. Thus far, much of the research on coping and adaptation has been limited to specific individual strategies in dealing with stress and disaster situations or with extreme hardships such as in prisons or concentration camps or to formal organizations such as hospitals (Powell, 1975). Certainly, we need to know more about major cultural differences in coping behavior and how coping strategies may be used under diverse situations and at different levels, and we need to further our understanding about long-term versus short-term coping strategies. Additional information about coping patterns under specified conditions could benefit individuals, organizations, and institutions challenged by crises of social change, as is the case currently, for example, in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and assist them further in anticipating typical or recurring coping exigencies. In the long run, it should be possible to identify change situations that are especially disruptive and to design coping strategies for various levels by pertinent social criteria such as age, sex, ethnic group, and the like, and to identify the risks, costs, opportunities, and benefits associated with each strategy in each situation, taking into account important considerations such as cultural and subcultural settings. It is not difficult to imagine the utility of such knowledge for educators, planners, and policy makers.

SUMMARY

This chapter considered the impact of change from the following perspectives: social impact of technology; responses to change; social disorganiza-



tion; unintended consequences of change; and ways of coping with change.

Technology can have a multitude of social impacts. Ogburn, for example, compiled a list of 150 effects that are directly attributable to the introduction of the radio, and it would be safe to assume that the television has brought still more. There are three general forms of social effects of inventions: dispersion, succession, and convergence. In various ways, technology affects habits of individuals, which, in turn, reverberate on social classes and social institutions. Additional influences are those affecting ethics, codes of conduct, and social philosophies. Technological innovations have important implications on wealth, power, culture patterns, gender relationships, and work.

Responses to change were first considered in the context of the mass-society theory, which encompassed contemporary structural trends, forms of alienation, and behavioral consequences. The various manifestations of alienation, such as powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, value isolation, self-estrangement, and social isolation, were seen as responses to change. Other forms of responses discussed included the Cargo cult, religious responses, social movements, status withdrawal (in the context of retreatism), and an expansion of Merton's typology of modes of individual adaptation.

Social change is disruptive, and underlying much social disorganization is the phenomenon of social change. The processes of change provide the impetus for disorganization by creating conditions for conflicting interests and values, conflicting status and role obligations, faulty socialization, and faulty social communication. Disorganization is also generated by the fact that change tends to be uneven, resulting in culture lag. The social morphological revolution has greatly altered individual behavior and social organization, and generated and aggravated a host of problems. Social disorganization is often associated with personal demoralization, as evidenced by the native Americans of the Great Plains, who suffered social disorganization as a result of the extinction of the buffalo. The rate of social disorganization is perhaps highest in developing countries, for they are undergoing accelerated changes and at the same time they are relatively unfamiliar with change processes. Disorganization can be both the cause and the effect of social change, and, at times, it may take place "for good reasons."

Social change entails a series of unintended effects, some adverse and some beneficial. There is an abundance of illustrations of unanticipated consequences of change efforts. In many cases, these unanticipated consequences are deleterious for individuals affected by the change. In the short run, most change efforts will result in unintended consequences, and, over the long run, even the most successful attempts will have some unplanned by-product. The unanticipated consequences can be beneficial, as illustrated by the unintended effects of the liberalization of pornography laws in Denmark and in the former West Germany on the incidence of child molestation.

Change has become the prevailing life mode; a life rooted in constants seems a thing of the past. Social change complicates life by shifting standards, values, and behavior patterns. It also increases friction between groups and within groups. When change is especially frustrating or upsetting, the question of coping with it becomes of paramount importance. Coping is required in situations of drastic change that defy familiar ways of behaving and require the production of new behavior or new responses. Under conditions of extreme stress, as in the case of the Nazi concentration camps, individuals were greatly helped if they felt they had something to live for and when they maintained linkages with valued groups. In less extreme situations, individuals can develop "coping capabilities," which are based on socially conditioned and institutionalized patterns of responses. In many instances, the major stresses on modern people are not amenable to individual solutions, but depend on highly organized cooperative efforts in the form of "collective" coping through group organizations. Coping is also facilitated when new experiences are placed in the context of a familiar, reliable construction of reality. Our knowledge of coping strategies under diverse situations and by diverse groups requires further expansion. In the next chapter, the costs of change will be considered.

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- FURLONG, ANDY, AND FRED CARTMEL. *Young People and Social Change, Individualization and Risk in Late Modernity*. Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1997. A provocative discussion of the extent to which "individualization" and "risk" brought about by the restructuring of life chances impact young adults.
- GOLDBAHER, MICHAEL. *Reinventing Technology: Policies for Democratic Values*. New York: Routledge, 1986. See, in particular, Chapters 3 and 4 on the social impact of technology.
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