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# SOCIAL CHANGE

# 社会变迁

【美】史蒂文·瓦格 著  
Steven Vago

第5版



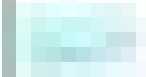
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# Preface

The fifth edition of this book is a response to the growing demands for timely and comprehensive sociological analysis of one of the most important concerns of our time, social change. This edition greatly increases contemporary multicultural and international components. At the same time, the book retains the classroom-tested, pedagogically sound features and the proven organizational framework of the previous editions and remains scholarly, comprehensive, informative, at times controversial, and quite readable. I have successfully resisted the temptation to make only cosmetic changes and verbiage alterations so common in revisions.

The book is designed to provide a clear, concise and up-to-date analysis of the major theoretical perspectives, sources, processes, patterns, and consequences of social change. It considers factors that stimulate or hinder the acceptance of change in a multi-cultural context, and it emphasizes unintended consequences and costs of both planned and unplanned change. It dwells on the ways of creating and on the methods of assessing change. Going beyond standard treatments of the topic, this text highlights those aspects of theory and research that have immediate practical implications for students of social change and uses contemporary examples, many of them flowing from the destruction of the World Trade Center towers by terrorists on September 11, 2001, that are relevant to the experience of the book's audience. Although the orientation of the book is sociological, I did not hesitate to incorporate theoretical and current empirical work from anthropology, social psychology, economics, political science, and history.

This edition reflects the many comments and recommendations made by students and colleagues both in the United States and abroad who have used the book in their classrooms and research. Whereas the basic organizational plan of the text remains unchanged, a substantial amount of new information has been included. Almost every page of this edition has been revised, not only for the purpose of updating, but also to increase its informative function, advance its analysis and minimize lapses into dry academic prose. New sections have been added, dated materials were dropped, and the list of suggested further readings at the end of each chapter has been expanded and updated. Key concepts and ideas have been developed in virtually every chapter. Most chapters have been reconsidered, refined

and enlarged, or reduced when warranted, and all have been updated to reflect the latest theoretical and empirical advances and the most recent statistics, but not at the expense of the rich classical literature which provides the intellectual foundation for this book. Thus the reader will have a chance to learn what is new while being exposed to traditional sociological thinking. The novel features include discussions on terrorism, current developments in the former Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact nations, controversies on globalization, trends in higher education, the social impact of the proliferation of personal computers, and the steadily increasing economic and social costs of environmental alterations. A unique aspect of the book is its extensive use of cross-cultural illustrations.

Although any errors, inaccuracies, omissions, and commissions are accepted—and regretted—as my own responsibility, much of the book derives from many persons, mostly scholars at various universities in the United States and abroad and students, whose constructive criticism, help and cumulative wisdom I gratefully acknowledge. Special thanks go to my students in annual courses on social change over the past thirty-five years who patiently endured many earlier drafts of the various revisions and offered a variety of valuable suggestions. As with other books and scholarly endeavors, the Vago Foundation was once again instrumental in making this project feasible and went beyond all expectations in providing financial, research and secretarial assistance, inspiration and encouragement, and the requisite infrastructure for the preparation of this text.

To Pine Tree Composition, Inc., I extend my gratitude for their outstanding processing of the manuscript and for expertly preparing the index and to Karen Berry for superbly putting everything together.

Steven Vago  
*Bellingham, Washington  
and Harrison Hot Springs,  
British Columbia*

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction: Dimensions and Sources of Change

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At the onset of the second millennium, change continues to be all-pervasive, ubiquitous, and at times disconcerting. People from all walks of life talk about it, want it, oppose it, fear it, and at times they even want to make sense out of it. But there is nothing new in the allure of change. From the beginning, social change has been an integral part of the human condition. Since the earliest times, there has been a fascination with change, a constant preoccupation with its ramifications, and prolonged agitation about its consequences. This book is about that age-old concern with social change, which is, with all due modesty, one of the most important, challenging, and exciting topics in sociology.

The science of sociology began in the quest for explanations for social change. The advent of this new science marked the beginning of a long and sinuous road toward making “sense” of change. Yet, in spite of the multitude of efforts since its inception, the discipline of sociology is still confronted with the questions of how society changes, in what direction, why, in what specific ways, and by what forces these changes are created. Considering the fact that social change has been ubiquitous and, from time to time, a dramatic feature of society, there is still a great deal to learn about its nature and scope. Today social change is a central concern of sociology, and it is likely to remain one of the most intriguing and difficult problems in the discipline.

The intention of this book is to draw attention to the complexities and concerns inherent in the understanding of social change. It will concentrate on the more salient features, characteristics, processes, and perspectives of change in the United States and cross-culturally. The purpose is to try to make “sense” of change and to consider what is changing—and where, why, and how.

The principal mission of the book is to serve as a text in undergraduate courses on social change. The comprehensives and the large number of references included also make the book a valuable resource for both graduate students interested in social change and instructors who may be teaching a course on the subject for the first time. Because the book has been written with the undergraduate student in mind, no one particular perspective or approach to change has been taken, nor has a specific ideology or theoretical perspective been embraced. To have done so would have been too limiting for the scope of this book, since important contributions to social change would have had to have been excluded or would have been subject to criticism that such contributions were out of context. As a result, the book does not propound a single thesis; instead, it exposes the reader to a variety of theoretical perspectives proposed to account for social change in the social science literature.

## THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The book deals with modes of social inquiry of change. It examines the principal theoretical, empirical, analytical, and evaluative aspects in the study of social change. The discussion of the various topics combines sociological classics with significant contemporary insights and balances the presentation of theory with useful and testable hypotheses. When warranted, theoretical insights are translated into practical applications in a variety of situations. To make the text more comprehensive and interesting, the sociological perspectives are supplemented with viewpoints drawn from other disciplines in the social sciences and an abundance of cross-cultural and historical illustrations. The following comments on chapter contents will provide a schematic orientation for the reader.

This chapter examines the nature and the basic concepts of the subject matter and presents an approach for the conceptualization of social change. Next, the sources of change are considered. They encompass the impetus for change, the driving force behind change, and the conditions that are sufficient to produce it. The principal sources of change chosen for analysis are technology, ideology, competition, conflict, political and economic forces, and structural strains.

Sociological explanations of why social change occurs are as old as the discipline itself. To introduce the reader to the diverse theoretical orientations, Chapter 2 reviews the most influential and important classical and contemporary theories of social change. They are discussed by principal perspectives and proponents. The review concentrates on evolutionary, conflict, structural-functional, and social-psychological explanations of social change.

After the identification and analysis of forces that produce change, we need to consider the question of how and in what form change takes place. In Chapter 3 the discussion focuses on such patterns of change as evolution, diffusion, acculturation, revolution, modernization, industrialization, urbanization, and bureaucratization.

One might comment at this stage of the discourse: "So far, so good, but what has really changed in our contemporary world?" In response to this question, Chapter 4 examines trends in such specific social arrangements and spheres as family, population, stratification, power relations, education, and economy.

Once a change is accepted at any level of the social system, it is appropriate to ask how long it is likely to be sustained. Thus, the question of duration becomes important; this is discussed in Chapter 5 in terms of both the long-term and transitory phenomena of change such as fads, fashions, lifestyles, and cults.

Social change contains varying dialectical modes. It is neither automatic nor unopposed. It affects individuals and groups in society in different ways, for whom change may mean different things. Chapter 6, on the reactions to change, looks at the social, psychological, cultural, and economic forces and conditions that facilitate or hinder the acceptance of change.

The question of what new social arrangements must be made, once change is brought about, has seldom been considered adequately in the literature on social change. The purpose of Chapter 7 is to examine the impacts and effects of change, its unintended consequences, and the methods of coping with change.

Any alteration of the social system and all forms of social engineering carry a price tag. But the price we pay for it is rarely mentioned. In Chapter 8, the discussion is concerned with the issues of the economics of change and the social and psychological costs of "progress."

How to bring about social change is among the most crucial and timely questions in the book. Thus, an analysis of strategies to create "desired" change is paramount. The aim of Chapter 9 is to analyze a series of social change strategies and tactics used in a variety of change efforts.

The last chapter is devoted to the current methodologies used in the assessment of the viability of change on social arrangements. Emphasis is placed on technology and environment assessment, techniques of change evaluation, and methodologies for forecasting change with applicable policy implications.

The study of social change is naturally eclectic. Knowledge about it has accumulated in shreds and patches. In attempting to explain social change—whether on the scale of major transformations in society or of a more specialized, localized kind—one is tempted to look for "prime movers" analogous to the forces of Newtonian physics. But there are no "laws" in sociology

comparable to the laws of physics. At best, we have some good generalizations. Our investigations are guided by a number of theoretical perspectives resulting in a variety of strands of thought and research. In pulling them together, we will be guided by the following concerns:

1. What do we need to know about social change? What are the principal issues in the study of change?
2. What do we really know? What are the major theories and findings in the field? How much confidence can we have in them?
3. What remains to be known? What are the major gaps, "unknowns," or lacunae, in theory and research?

In a sense, more problems are raised than can be solved in this volume. One of the fascinating aspects of the study of social change is that there are so many loose ends, so many ways of considering the subject, and so much yet to be learned. It is hoped that this book will serve as a useful point of departure for further study of change.

## THE NATURE OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Change is one of the central issues of our time. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus stated this in his oft-quoted proposition that one cannot step twice into the same river. The same observation in the words of a modern author: "The action in its repetition can never be the same. Everything involved in it has irrevocably changed in the intervening period" (Adam, 1990:168).

Everywhere, change has become central to people's awareness, and there is a commitment to change that is irreversible, irresistible, and irrevocable. In every society, there is technological change, demographic change, rapid ecological change, and change induced by internal incongruities in economic and political patterns and by conflicting ideologies. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, Americans have had more than 4 million babies and 1.6 million abortions annually. Over 2 million couples wed every year, and a little over 1 million divorce. Life expectancy for Americans has reached a record level, while the infant mortality rate has fallen to a new low. Forty-three million Americans move in a given year, 10 million change occupations, 1.5 million retire, and 2.5 million die (Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2002). In the workplace, millions are hired, fired, promoted, demoted and sued. There is a dramatic decline in equities and personal wealth and unknown numbers of retirement plans are shattered. There is a growth in corporate corruption, large companies go bankrupt, new products appear on the market, and old skills become obsolete. New causes and abuses, issues, and excuses emerge with their appropriate slogans, politically correct vocabulary and blame targets and there is an unprecedented pedophilia scandal in the Catholic church with lawsuits by enraged victims



and large-scale transfers of offending priests from parish to parish and secret out-of-court settlements with victims (Williams and Cooperman, 2002). Mass circulation magazines have special reports on the question of "What Has Changed" since the millennium, covering a slate of topics ranging from the impact of terrorism on our lives to the consequences of spending more time in cyberspace (see, for example, *Business Week*, 2002). Even the national girth is changing, along with food preferences and portion sizes, and in 2000, more than 65 percent of adult Americans were overweight as compared to 56 percent in 1999, and some 31 percent of them—55 million people—were obese (Shell, 2002; Spake, 2002). For our explorations, the fundamental questions relate to what is changing, at what level, and how fast. Further, we want to know what type of change is taking place—and what its magnitude and scope are.

An obvious first question in considering the nature of social change is, "What is changing?" For the layperson, it could be everything or nothing. The question as it is phrased is just too broad, too general to be meaningful. In the United States, the standard form of greeting someone is usually followed by the question, "What's new?" Invariably, we are at a loss to come up with a coherent and cogent response to this habitual but ridiculous question. Still, it is an everyday occurrence. As a rule, we fire back an equally ridiculous and meaningless response saying, "Not much," "Nothing," or remarks in that vein. To avoid this dilemma of uncomfortable ambiguity, we need to go beyond the original question and specify what it is that is assertedly changing. Change, when it exists, is change of something with a specific identity—whether this is a norm, a relationship, or the divorce rate. Failure to specify the identity or what is changing can easily lead to confusion.

Once we have established the identity of what is changing, the next consideration is the level at which change takes place. Even though the concept of social change is inclusive of all social phenomena, in reality, we cannot study and comprehend change without knowing where it takes place. Thus, we need to identify the location in the social system in which a particular change is occurring. We can establish several units of study and focus our attention, for example, on the following levels: individuals, groups, organizations, institutions, and society.

Thus, change is becoming "social" and we are also becoming a bit more specific with our question. We might now pose the question, "What is changing and at what level?" We are now talking about the scope of change in relation to the number of persons or groups whose norms or social arrangement change; that is, the location of a particular change in a social system as well as the type of norm, attribute, or relationship that has changed. For example, on the individual level we can talk about changes in attitudes, beliefs, aspirations, and motivations. On the group level we might consider changes in the types of interaction patterns—in communication, methods of conflict resolution, cohesion, unity, competition, and acceptance