

Factors that Influence Change




Physical Environment
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Physical Environment

Climate, weather, vegetation, animal populations and humans all affect the physical environment

- When one of these factors changes it has a ripple effect which affects the rest of the society
- Natural disasters can wipe out core resources that people in a society depend on
 - Examples... Floods like Hurricane Katrina, Tsunamis in Indonesia and [Japan](#)
 - Entire towns and cities were wiped out and areas completely destabilized – infrastructures and institutions affected, taking years to recover from
- Environmental issues caused by humans such as pollution and global warming can cause serious negative changes to the environment and populations 
 - Examples... Skin cancer rates in Australia are the highest in the world, partly due to the damage to the ozone layer [next slide](#)

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Where are these kids playing, what is the temperature & why are they dressed like this?



Proximity

How close another cultural group is to a society can cause it to change

- Societies that live in close proximity to others tend to change more rapidly than those who are remote
- Exchanges between cultures are known as intercultural contact
 - In the past this occurred through wars, exploration and trade
 - Today this includes the exchange of ideas, trade, globalization and tourism



Population Changes



Changes in population due to immigration and emigration affect society

- The Canada we know today was built via immigration
- New immigrants can create diverse cities and challenge the social system to expand to meet the unique needs of its new members
 - Ex. Where does everyone live?
- We need population growth through immigration, see [Canadian birth rate](#)
 - but there are limits on the number of people who can come in to avoid overwhelming existing social systems and infrastructures
- Losing population to emigration also affects a society,
 - They lose workers, brain power, taxes and so on



Social Environment

There are different types of societies, collectivist and individualistic; singular, pluralistic and inclusiveness

- Collectivist societies emphasize the group rather than the individual, survival and doing well is measured collectively – behaviour is guided by duties and responsibility to the group this can make change difficult because...
 - the change would need to benefit the group as a whole
 - and because these societies are more likely to be quite traditional
- Individualistic societies emphasize the individual rather than the group, survival and doing well is measured personally- behaviour is guided by privileges and freedoms
 - theoretically more tolerant of differences and therefore more accepting of changes
 - Focus on individual success can cause inequities in the society which can cause conflict or challenges





Leaders

Charismatic leadership

The emergence of a leader with charisma is an important component of social change

- **Charisma** is a term used by Max Weber to describe a leader characterized by **large vision, magnetic style, having strong popular support and aspects of extraordinary, superhuman and supernatural character**
 - a leader who places demands on the populace but also promises rewards for their support
 - one who maintains distance between herself & the people – she is on a pedestal in a sense
 - this leader may be good or bad, but for sociologists these critiques should be **value free** and focus on the **leadership skills** – example... Were they an effective leader? Not ...Were they a moral leader?



Leaders



The Role of Elites

- Sometimes no single leader appears, this does not mean that changes halt.
- Many societies in fact have one or more “**modernizing elites**”
- Modernizing elites are groups of people who create significant social change and influence the direction in which it goes.
 - Example from Braveheart would be the Scottish noblemen who banded together to initially fight off the British with William Wallace
- It is more common to see social change occur through the role of elites, than through a single charismatic leader





Population Readiness

- If the population isn't ready for the kind of social change proposed by the leader or the elites, then change will not necessarily occur
- People's attitudes toward change need to be examined
- Sometimes there are impediments that affect population readiness



Impediments

- 2 impediments or things that get in the way include **tradition & expense**
- **Tradition** refers to people being unwilling to accept certain changes in society
 - Example being operated on by a computerized machine rather than a doctor
- The **cost** of social change can be prohibitive or too high for society to support
 - Example government fully funding university



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Technology



The development and use of technology in society has wide reaching implications on a culture's social institutions, customs and values

- In Canada many of our social values are connected with the technology that we use daily
- Technology affects the way we interact with our environment
- Technology can drive progress in society

