

56 Social Change

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Since its very beginning, sociology has had an abiding interest in social change, as the classical contributions of Comte, Spencer, Marx and Engels, Weber, and even Durkheim attest. But the study of social change has been, and indeed can only be, interdisciplinary. Anthropologists and archaeologists have long been interested in social change. They have formulated numerous evolutionary theories of society intended to fill in details of the broad outline of human social evolution over the past 10,000 years. Such study must also take into account the work of historians, and especially general theories of history.

In this chapter, I look at forms of social change under the following headings: theories of social evolution, the course of long-term evolution, social evolutionism and historical sociology, revolutions and state breakdowns, social movements, the development of the modern world-system and the institutions of modernity, globalization and economic development, and late modernity and postmodernity.

THEORIES OF SOCIAL EVOLUTION

Social evolution is a process of social change that exhibits some sort of directional sequence. In the second half of the nineteenth century, there were many well-known evolutionary theorists in both sociology and anthropology, including Herbert Spencer, Lewis Henry Morgan, Edward Burnett Tylor, L. T. Hobhouse, William Graham Sumner, Albert Galloway Keller, and Edward Westermarck, among others. Outside sociology and anthropology, Karl Marx

and Friedrich Engels also developed an evolutionary model of society based on economics and the class struggle (Sanderson 2007).

After a period of several decades in which evolutionary theories were heavily criticized, in the 1930s and 1940s evolutionism revived in the work of V. Gordon Childe (1936, 1951), Leslie White (1943, 1959), and Julian Steward (1955). Childe and White emphasized technological development as a critical force behind social evolution and developed broad evolutionary schemes. Steward focused on ecological determinants of cultural evolution and stressed that most evolution moved along a series of paths rather than one grand path. After 1960, a new generation of anthropologists and sociologists built on the work of these three thinkers. Elman Service (1970) developed an evolutionary typology based on a society's sociopolitical organization: bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and states. Robert Carneiro (1970) developed a famous theory of the evolution of the state that stressed population growth, warfare, and environmental circumscription. Circumscribed environments are those in which areas of fertile land are surrounded by natural barriers that impede the movement of people out of the area. Warfare is the result of population growth and resource scarcity, and when land is plentiful, people may be able to respond to war by simply moving away. But in circumscribed environments, land is eventually filled up, and the solution to more population pressure and resource scarcity becomes political conquest and, ultimately, state formation.

About the same time, sociologist Gerhard Lenski (1966) developed an evolutionary theory of stratification. The key to the rise of stratification, according to Lenski,

was technological advancement and increasing economic productivity. Once societies start to produce an economic surplus, competition and conflict over its control emerge, and as surpluses grow larger, struggles intensify and stratification systems become more elaborate. Later, Lenski (1970, 2005) expanded this theory to go beyond stratification. In both his early and later works, Lenski distinguished five major evolutionary stages: hunting and gathering, simple horticulture, advanced horticulture, agrarianism, and industrialism. As societies progress through these stages, a wide range of evolutionary consequences follow.

Sociologist Talcott Parsons (1966, 1971) developed an evolutionary theory that concentrated on the evolution of ideas and social institutions. He formulated the concept of an *evolutionary universal* to describe and explain how a society achieves a new stage of evolutionary adaptation and thereby improves its level of functional efficiency.

One of the most important theories of social evolution of this period was developed by Marvin Harris (1977), who saw the tendency of societies to deplete their environments as the result of population growth as the engine of social evolution. When populations grew, pressure on resources intensified and standards of living declined. At some point, people had no choice but to advance their technologies so as to make their economies more productive. Thus, farming replaced hunting and gathering, and then later farming with the use of the plow replaced farming with the use of simple hand tools. But technological change itself leads to further population growth and greater environmental degradation, and so a new wave of technological change eventually becomes necessary. For Harris, social evolution, at least in preindustrial societies, is a process in which people have been running as hard as they can just to avoid falling farther and farther behind.

Stephen Sanderson (1994a, 1995a, 1995b, 1999a, 1999b, 2007) has built on the evolutionary ideas of Harris. He has formalized, extended, and to some extent modified them by developing a comprehensive theory that he calls *evolutionary materialism*. The theory is laid out in terms of a detailed set of axioms, postulates, and propositions dealing with the nature of social evolution, the basic causal forces in social evolution (demography, ecology, technology, and economics), similarities and differences between biological and social evolution, the role of agency and structure in social evolution, and the tempo and mode of evolution. Sanderson uses evolutionary materialism as a general framework with which to understand three great evolutionary transformations: the origins of agriculture, the rise of the state, and the transition to modern capitalism.

Another sociological contributor to a theory of social evolution is Jonathan Turner (1995, 2003), whose theory focuses on social differentiation. According to Turner, the ultimate force setting social evolution in motion is population growth; population growth generates increased logistical loads, which in turn generate selection pressures for new social structures to handle these increasing demands.

Population growth increases the values of four macro-social forces—production, distribution, regulation, and reproduction—and as the values of these forces escalate, institutional differentiation occurs.

THE COURSE OF SOCIAL EVOLUTION

Virtually all social evolutionists agree that the first great social transformation was the Neolithic Revolution, which introduced plant and animal domestication. This began about 10,000 years ago in Southwest Asia, but the transition to communities based on agriculture occurred more or less independently at later times in Southeast Asia, China, Mesoamerica, South America, and North America (agriculture came to Europe by migrations from the East). The transition to agriculture led to settled and more densely populated communities that for a while remained relatively egalitarian but that eventually gave way to stratified societies organized into chiefdoms (Sanderson 1999b:20–52).

By about 5,000 years ago, in several parts of the world societies that had evolved into chiefdoms were beginning to make the transition to a state level of political organization, or to what many scholars call *civilization*. This occurred first in Mesopotamia and Egypt, and then later in China, the Indus valley in northern India, parts of Europe, and Mesoamerica and Peru. Most civilizations have been agrarian societies, thus cultivating the land with plows and draft animals and intensively fertilizing the soil. Like the Neolithic Revolution, the transition to civilization and the state was a process of independent parallel evolution in several parts of the world (Sanderson 1999b:53–95).

From the time of the emergence of the first states, it was to take several thousand years before a shift to a qualitatively new mode of social organization occurred. Most sociologists argue that it was the *Industrial Revolution* of the late eighteenth century that introduced a qualitatively new form of social life, industrial society. However, in recent years some sociologists have moved this transformation back in time to the sixteenth century (Wallerstein 1974a, 1974b). The qualitative shift is, then, considered to be the transition to a *capitalist world-economy*. Capitalism—selling goods in a market to earn a profit—in some form or another has existed for thousands of years, but after the sixteenth century, it began to replace earlier, precapitalist forms of social life. From this perspective, the Industrial Revolution was simply part of the logic inherent in the advance of capitalism. Although most scholars treat the rise of capitalism as Europe's decisive contribution to the world, at about the same point in history Japan began to undergo a capitalist transition of its own (Sanderson 1994b).

There have been many attempts to explain this transition (Sanderson 1999b:155–168; Emigh 2005), such as Weber's ([1904] 1958) famous Protestant ethic theory, which Robert Bellah (1957) applied to the case of Japan.

Randall Collins (1997) has applied Weberian thinking in a different way, pointing mainly to the role of Buddhist monasteries in medieval Japan in stimulating entrepreneurship. Different types of Weberian arguments have been presented by Chirot (1985, 1986) and Mann (1986). Various Marxian theories, emphasizing either a “crisis of feudalism” (Dobb [1947] 1963; Wallerstein 1974a, 1974b) or the revival of trade in medieval Europe (Sweezy [1950] 1976), have also been formulated.

A world-system interpretation has been proposed by Andre Gunder Frank and Barry Gills (1993). They reject the notion that a qualitative shift to a capitalist mode of production occurred in sixteenth-century Europe and emphasize a much longer process of quantitative economic growth that has been occurring on a world level for some 5,000 years. In a more recent work, Frank (1998) argues that Asia, and especially China, was more advanced than Europe until the eighteenth century. Similar arguments for the equal if not greater economic power of Asia have been made by Pomeranz (2000) and Hobson (2004).

Sanderson (1994b, 1999b:168–78) has offered a synthetic theory that is intended to apply equally to the cases of Europe and Japan. He points to five major similarities between late-feudal Europe and Tokugawa Japan that served as important preconditions stimulating capitalist development in both regions: small size, location on large bodies of water, temperate climate, population growth, and highly decentralized feudal politicoeconomic regimes. Sanderson stresses that these preconditions operated within the context of a very long-term evolutionary trend, expanding world commercialization, which had been occurring since about 5,000 years ago and which created a kind of critical economic mass that provided the basis for the development of capitalism.

Currently, there is no real consensus on which of these many and varied theories work best. Perhaps all that can be reasonably concluded at this point is that this continues to be one of the most important issues in the sociological study of major social transformations and is likely to remain so in the years to come.

EVOLUTIONISM AND HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY

In the 1970s, sociology experienced a “comparative-historical revolution,” and the study of large-scale historical change, a fundamental part of classical sociology, revived. With a few notable exceptions, historical sociologists have not been friendly to evolutionary theories of social change. Two of the earliest recent historical sociologists were S. N. Eisenstadt and Barrington Moore, Jr. Eisenstadt’s (1963) *The Political Systems of Empires* made use of Parsonian neoevolutionary assumptions, as did his more general theoretical essay “Social Change, Differentiation, and Evolution” (1964). Barrington Moore Jr.’s (1966) *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*,

perhaps the most important work in the initial revival of historical sociology, identified three major historical trajectories that led to modernity: a capitalist and democratic path (England, France, and the United States), a capitalist and initially democratic path but with a temporary reversion to fascism (Germany and Japan), and a Communist path (Russia and China). Moore explained these outcomes in loosely Marxian terms, arguing that where capitalist forces were strongest and landlord forces weakest, the outcome was democratic, but where capitalist forces were weakest and landlord forces strongest, the outcome was the most undemocratic.

Perry Anderson (1974a, 1974b) was more explicitly Marxist in his orientation. Anderson traced out the crisis of Roman antiquity and identified the conditions under which it was replaced by feudalism. He then traced out the crisis of this new mode of production many centuries later and showed how it led to the centralized bureaucratic states that formed in Europe between the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries.

Michael Mann’s (1986) *The Sources of Social Power* was an attempt to look at world history from a largely Weberian perspective. The main thesis of this book was that there are four major types of social power—ideological, economic, military, and political—which are relatively autonomous realms of social life.

Randall Collins (1986, 1995) has also taken a Weberian approach to historical sociology. In his work on geopolitics, he identified a particular type of society, the agrarian-coercive society, that is constantly seeking to expand the territory under its control. But as the territories of such societies grow larger, these societies become increasingly costly to maintain. Failure in war becomes increasingly common, and this, combined with the rising economic costs of maintaining the state apparatus, leads to a crisis and ultimately a collapse. Collins applied this geopolitical model not only to preindustrial states but also to predict the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union.

Immanuel Wallerstein (1974a, 1974b, 1979, 1980, 1989) created a revolutionary new paradigm in historical sociology, *world-systems analysis* (WSA). WSA is based on the assumption that societies are not independent entities but are embedded in larger intersocietal networks—world-systems—that are usually organized in a hierarchical fashion. Wallerstein postulated that a specifically capitalist world-system had begun to form in Europe and elsewhere around 1450. This world-economy consisted of an economically and politically dominant segment, or *core*; a highly subordinated and exploited segment used by the core for cheap labor, access to important resources, and the production of raw materials for export, or *periphery*; and an intermediate zone that was both exploiter and exploited, or *semiperiphery*.

WSA is evolutionary in the sense of specifying a long-term directional trend in the history of the world-system. This trend is the *deepening of capitalist development*, which is essentially the extension of the logic of

commodity production to the entire economic sphere and even beyond it. Societies evolve only as parts of the world-system. Chase-Dunn and Hall (1997) have tried to give the evolutionary character of WSA much more historical depth. They argue that there have been world-systems of various types for thousands of years and identify three major types of world-systems in world history: kin-based world-systems, tributary world-systems, and the modern world-system. The authors explain the transition from one type of world-system to another largely in cultural materialist terms. Their model can be summarized approximately as follows: population growth → environmental degradation → population pressure → emigration → circumscription → conflict, hierarchy formation, and intensification. (For a much more detailed summary and critique of WSA, see Sanderson 2005b.)

REVOLUTIONS AND STATE BREAKDOWNS

An especially important form of change in recent centuries is that of revolution and state breakdown. Theda Skocpol (1979) distinguishes between *social revolutions* and *political revolutions* and defines social revolutions as “rapid, basic transformations of a society’s state and class structures [that are] accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below” (p. 4). Political revolutions involve only the transformation of state structures, there being no corresponding transformation of class or social structures. Goldstone (1991) has used the alternative term *state breakdown*, which occurs when a society’s government undergoes a crisis so severe that its capacity to govern is crippled. Only some state breakdowns become actual revolutions. Many state breakdowns lead to only limited political changes, ones that are not dramatic enough to warrant the label revolution.

Perhaps the most dramatic revolutions have been the French Revolution of 1789, the Russian Revolution of 1917, and the Chinese Revolution that began in 1911 and culminated in 1949. To these may be added other social revolutions in the Third World, such as the Cuban Revolution in 1959, which replaced the corrupt Batista regime with a socialist regime; the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, which ushered in rule by Islamic theocrats; the Nicaraguan Revolution of the same year; and the more recent revolutions against Communist rule in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. During 1989, in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, there were major political transformations toward more democratic and open political regimes. In 1990, Yugoslavia splintered into several separate states, most of which shifted more toward democracy and capitalism (Sanderson 2005a).

Numerous theories of revolution have been proposed (Sanderson 2005a:61–106). Well-known older theories include the rising expectations theory of James Davies (1962) and the relative deprivation theory of Ted Robert

Gurr (1970). Probably the most famous theory of revolution is Marx’s, which emphasizes the socioeconomic order and class struggle (Marx and Engels [1848] 1978). In Marx’s formulation, as capitalism advanced, the working class would expand in size and the capitalist class, through the gradual concentration of capital, would shrink. Ultimately, a huge working class would confront a tiny bourgeoisie. There would also occur an economic polarization and intensifying conflict between the two classes. With the continuing advance of capitalism, the working class would become better organized and at some point would rise up and overthrow the capitalist class and usher in a socialist society.

Marxian theory has not, for the most part, been supported by the historical events of the past century. No advanced capitalist society has experienced a socialist revolution. On the contrary, such revolutions have occurred in overwhelmingly agrarian societies, first in Russia in 1917, and then later in China and Cuba and other parts of the Third World. And it has been the peasantry rather than the working class that has been most central to revolutionary change. Where the Marxian theory falls short is in its failure to take into account the political realm. More recent Marxian theories focusing on Third World revolutions have emphasized the disruption of peasant life by the spread of capitalist market relations (Wolf 1969) and the kinds of economic situations that make Third World peasants most likely to revolt (Paige 1975).

The major alternative to Marxian theories emphasizes the political side of social life. *State-centered theorists* make an important distinction between revolutionary *attempts* and revolutionary *outcomes*. Marxian theories identify economic conditions that lead to discontent and thus revolutionary attempts, but these have not been successful in predicting revolutionary outcomes. The state-centered theory developed by Skocpol (1979) was designed to explain the three Great Revolutions. Skocpol’s theory holds that the Great Revolutions resulted from a coming together of two overpowering circumstances, a massive crisis within the state organizations of France, Russia, and China, and widespread rebellion among the lower classes, especially the peasantry. State crises result, according to Skocpol, from severe international political and military pressures and from economic difficulties that produce widespread dissatisfaction among the peasant population.

Jack Goldstone’s (1991) state-centered theory attempts to explain four cases of state breakdown: the English Revolution of the mid-seventeenth century, the French Revolution of the last decade of the eighteenth century, the Anatolian rebellions of the 1600s in the Ottoman Empire, and the fall of China’s Ming Dynasty in 1644. Goldstone argues that state breakdowns have been cyclical phenomena that have occurred in two major waves, one peaking in the mid-seventeenth century and the other in the mid-nineteenth century. Goldstone’s *demographic/structural model* considers how population growth leads to widespread

social and economic dissatisfaction and subsequently a state crisis. When populations grow, prices increase while tax revenues lag, which means that states must increase taxes. Because it is difficult to increase taxes enough to maintain fiscal stability, a state fiscal crisis normally ensues. Population growth also has a negative effect on social and economic elites, because it increases the number of competitors for elite positions, leading in turn to occupational frustrations within the elite. Population growth also drives down wages. With higher prices and lower wages, both rural and urban misery increase, precipitating food riots and wage protests. The result of this combination of unfortunate circumstances is widespread state crisis and, ultimately, a state breakdown.

Wickham-Crowley's (1992) state-centered theory is designed to explain Latin American revolutions. In the second half of the twentieth century, successful revolutions occurred in only two Latin American countries, Cuba in 1959 and Nicaragua in 1979. Cuba and Nicaragua shared several features that were critical for the formation and success of revolutionary movements, the most important of which was a distinctive type of state, a *neopatrimonial regime*. Such a regime has a highly corrupt ruler who turns the state into his own personal property; he personally controls the military, suppresses political parties, and dispenses rewards and favors in a highly personalized manner. In short, he dictatorially controls the state and bends it to his whims. It is precisely this type of regime, Wickham-Crowley argues, that is most vulnerable to overthrow because the dictator eventually alienates virtually all major social groups, thus creating an opportunity for these groups to form a revolutionary coalition despite their opposing interests.

The Great Revolutions and the Third World revolutions were "revolutions from below" created by a combination of revolt by subordinate classes in conjunction with state weakness. However, the revolutions against Communism were what have been called "revolutions from above," or revolutions made by one segment of the political elite against another (Sanderson 2005a). When Mikhail Gorbachev rose to power in the Soviet Union in 1985, he inaugurated the economic and political reforms known as *perestroika* and *glasnost*, which were intended to move the Soviet Union in a more market-oriented and democratic direction. Gorbachev also changed the relationship of the Soviet Union to its Eastern European satellites (Kumar 2001). By 1989, Gorbachev had made it clear that the Soviet Union would no longer intervene in the affairs of Eastern Europe, where social discontent and protest against the Communist regimes intensified. In fact, there is evidence that the Soviet leadership actually encouraged revolt (Kumar 2001). Without Soviet support, these regimes could not survive.

Within the Soviet Union, the revolution was a classic example of revolution from above (Hahn 2002). Mass action was negligible or nonexistent, and the regime was brought down by infighting within the political elite,

which was severely divided on the direction the country should take. The elite divisions themselves seemed to be primarily the result of the severe economic problems of Soviet society. Gorbachev's economic reforms were designed to deal with these problems, which became especially serious after the mid-1970s. But the economic and political reforms unleashed political forces over which Gorbachev eventually lost control, resulting in the Soviet collapse (Hahn 2002).

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Social movements are organized campaigns by segments of the public to press some claim or achieve some political goal. In some instances, they shade into, and may be scarcely distinguishable from, revolutionary organizations, but most social movements have much more moderate and limited aims than revolutionary groups. Like revolutions, social movements are modern political phenomena. The first social movements may have begun in London in the late eighteenth century, but they were not common until the 1820s or 1830s, when there were large and highly effective mobilizations devoted to such things as the rights of workers, the emancipation of Catholics, and parliamentary reforms. In France, the full complement of social movement claim making began to be seen in the mid-nineteenth century (Tilly 2004).

The nineteenth century saw a major expansion in the number and range of social movements. A sampling of social movements in the United States during this time would include the American Anti-Slavery Society, the Grand Eight Hour Leagues, the International Workingmen's Association, and the American Federation of Labor (Gamson 1990; Tilly 2004). By late in the century, social movements had begun to represent a wider range of interests, and there was a notable decline in violence, probably as a result of the expansion of political rights. In the twentieth century, and especially in its second half, the social movement had become commonplace. As Tilly (2004) points out, the year 1968 saw a sudden surge in movement activity. In May of that year, French students and workers collaborated in an attack on the de Gaulle regime, the Dubček regime in Czechoslovakia launched a liberalization campaign, and there was a great flurry of movement activity in the United States: accelerating protests against the Vietnam War, collective violence in black neighborhoods in more than a hundred American cities, the radical student movement at Columbia University, and a Poor People's March on Washington. Then, in 1989, there were the numerous outbreaks of popular protest against Communism in Eastern Europe (Tilly 2004).

Over this entire period, social movements became increasingly internationalized. In just the first two months of 2001, for example, there were protests of various types in the Philippines, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Argentina, and

Mexico, not to mention the activities of antiglobalization forces protesting at the meeting of the World Trade Organization in Porto Alegre, Brazil, as well as at meetings of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, and Cancun, Mexico (Tilly 2004).

In a sense, the causes of social movements are just the opposite of the causes of revolutions. Whereas revolutions are most likely where states are highly repressive but also weak and vulnerable, social movements are much more likely to emerge in highly democratic societies. Social movements have accelerated in direct proportion to increased democratization, and nothing much resembling a social movement can be found today in such undemocratic states as Kazakhstan, Belarus, or the People's Republic of China (Tilly 2004). Democracy promotes social movements for several reasons. For example, it broadens and equalizes rights and it expands protections for citizens against arbitrary government action (Tilly 2004). And just as democratization promotes social movements, social movements generally promote democratization. Social scientists used to consider social movements "outsiders," but it has become increasingly clear that there is often a very fine line between social movements and regular government activity (Goldstone 2003).

But why do *certain types of movements emerge in certain places and at certain times*? McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1996) speak of a growing consensus that three sets of factors working together determine the emergence and nature of social movements: political opportunities, mobilization of resources, and "framing." In his *resource mobilization theory*, Tilly (1978) emphasized the first two sets of resources. *Political opportunities* involve the extent to which a political environment is favorable to social movement activity. For example, if a group making claims has formal or informal power, and if the government against which the claims are being made is unlikely or unable to engage in repression, then a favorable political environment exists. Both American and European students of social movements have sought to understand how a nation's political environment has affected the form, extent, and degree of success of social movements (McAdam et al. 1996).

Mobilization of resources concerns the extent to which the members of a group share common needs and interests, have built up a network of ties that gives them some degree of unification, and control important resources that give them the capability of pursuing their joint aims. The particular nature and extent of these various resources shape social movement outcomes. Finally, there is *framing*, an idea borrowed from Erving Goffman's notion of "frames" (Snow and Benford 1992). Framing involves the shared meanings and social definitions that people build up regarding their situation: what they feel aggrieved about and how they imagine that redress of their grievances can best be brought about. In the emerging consensus of which McAdam et al. (1996) speak, framing is considered a crucial mediating factor between opportunities, resources, and actions.

THE WORLD-SYSTEM AND THE INSTITUTIONS OF MODERNITY

The modern world was ushered into existence in the sixteenth century with the transition from a feudal to a more capitalist economy. Wallerstein, as we have seen, saw this as a transition to a *capitalist world-economy*. In the first phase of its development (about 1450–1640) (Wallerstein 1974a), capitalist agriculture and early forms of industrial production prevailed, and the leading core powers were Holland, Great Britain, and northern France. A capitalist periphery formed in Eastern Europe and Iberian America and a semiperiphery in Southern Europe.

A "second era of great expansion of the capitalist world-economy" began in the 1760s (Wallerstein 1989). It was marked by the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution in Britain in the mid-eighteenth century, the spread of industrialization to other parts of Western Europe and to North America in the nineteenth century, and the enormous embarkation of the most powerful European states on a process of massive colonization. In the twentieth century, the United States emerged as the great core power, but later challenges to U.S. supremacy have come from East Asia, first from Japan and more recently from China. The center of the world-economy has been tilting eastward, and it is likely that within half a century much of East Asia, centered on China, will be dominant in the world-economy.

The development of the world-economy has been paralleled in the political realm by the rise of an *interstate system* and its new national states, which were much larger in scale and much more centrally coordinated than the feudal states that preceded them. It actually took several hundred years for these states to form. Germany, for example, was not a unified nation-state until after 1871, and in the Italian peninsula there were several hundred small city-states that came together in the nineteenth century to form what is now Italy (Tilly 1990).

The past two centuries have witnessed the rise of modern social structures and institutions. First, there was a shift from largely rural, agricultural societies to highly urbanized and industrialized societies. As these changes proceeded, the old class structure of nobles, retainers, merchants, peasants, and a large "lumpenproletariat" gave way to a new class structure centered on capitalists, industrial managers, and factory workers. This class structure has in the past century or so changed even further with the formation of a large middle class, a moderately sized class of learned professionals, and a rapidly expanding class of service workers. Sociologists have tried to map this class structure in various ways and with varying degrees of success (e.g., Wright 1985, 1997; Rossides 1990). Daniel Bell (1973) has argued that in recent decades a further change has occurred in the class structure with the shift from industrial to "postindustrial" societies. The dominant class in postindustrial societies is no longer a capitalist class, but a "social intelligentsia," or a class of highly educated

persons whose dominance is based on their possession of advanced forms of theoretical knowledge (cf. Kumar 1995).

Three other major changes of the past century have been the rise of democratic governments, the emergence and expansion of mass education, and the formation of welfare states. Democracies—governments with legislative bodies, free elections, mass suffrage, and individual rights and liberties—emerged earliest in the settler colonies that hived off from Britain, in the most developed societies of Western Europe, and in Japan (Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992; Sanderson 2004). Democracy came much later to the less-developed world, but a major new wave of democratization began in the 1980s (Kurzman 1998; Green 1999).

The first system of mass education formed in Germany in 1763, but these systems began mostly in the nineteenth century, and by the end of the century mass primary education was in place throughout Western Europe and North America. Mass secondary education came much later, beginning only in the late nineteenth century in the United States and not until the twentieth in Western Europe. University education has become widespread only since the middle of the twentieth century. The less-developed world lags behind, but it has been following a very similar developmental path (Meyer et al. 1977; Shofer and Meyer 2005).

Welfare states have been products of the twentieth century, and three main types can be identified (Esping-Andersen 1990). *Liberal* welfare states have been characteristic of England and her settler colonies, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Here, the state provides citizens meager to modest income support. *Conservative* welfare states, found primarily in Austria, Germany, France, and Italy, provide much greater benefits, but the distributional system is highly status-differentiated, with benefit structures being very different for middle- and working-class families. The *social democratic* welfare state provides very high levels and many types of benefits to all citizens regardless of class or status. These regimes are most characteristic of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and to some extent the Netherlands.

Other changes associated with the rise of modernity include transformations in gender roles, the family, and forms of intimacy. There have been enormous transformations in gender relations in the past four decades, with women moving out of the home and into the workplace in unprecedented numbers. They occupy positions of high status and authority everywhere and increasingly dominate the educational world. For example, over 55 percent of undergraduate students are now women, and professional and graduate students are increasingly female. Half of the new admittees to medical and law schools in the United States are women, and about half of new Ph.D.s in biology are granted to women. In such fields as psychology, sociology, and anthropology, 70 percent or more of new Ph.D.s go to women (Browne 2002, 2005).

These transformations in gender relations, along with other changes, have had enormous consequences for personal life and intimate relationships. The family has been forced to endure a set of enormous shocks. The divorce rate has skyrocketed, as have the number of single-parent families, most of which are headed by women. The family has largely lost its old function as an economic institution and even much of its function as a reproductive institution (Tiger 1999). People increasingly marry for love, and this has created almost unbearably high expectations for intimate relationships (Collins 1985). In the words of Stephanie Coontz (1992, 2005), love has destroyed the traditional family.

GLOBALIZATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In recent years, there has been constant and ubiquitous talk of *globalization*, which can be defined as “the widening, deepening, and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life” (Held et al. 1999:2). There are essentially three main forms of globalization. *Economic globalization* involves the extent of international trade, capital flows, and migration and is best measured in terms of the ratio of world trade to world output. Global interconnectedness via trade has been growing faster than the world-economy itself. In 1990, the ratio of world trade in goods and services to world gross domestic product was 19 percent, but by 2000 it had increased to 29 percent. Another important indicator of economic globalization is change in the ratio of cross-border capital flows to world output. The amount of capital flowing across international borders has been growing faster than the world-economy itself (World Bank 2002). A third indicator is the increasing flow of people across international borders. The number of international migrants is growing considerably faster than world population itself (International Organization for Migration 2003). In the 1990s, the rate of increase in the ratio of growth in migrants relative to world population was roughly three times that experienced in the period between 1975 and 1990.

Political globalization involves not only a growing interconnectedness between nation-states in the interstate system but also an increasing connectedness between supra-, sub-, and nonstate actors (Meyer et al. 1997; Beckfield 2003). Growth of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) (e.g., the United Nations, the European Union, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization) is a good indicator of political globalization. In 1960, the average country belonged to 18 such organizations, but by 2000 the average country was a member of 52 (Beckfield 2003). Another good indicator of political globalization is the growth of international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) (e.g., the International Red Cross, Greenpeace, and the International Chamber of Commerce). In 1960, the average country had within it private individuals or

organizations who were members of 141 INGOs, but by 2000 the average country was tied to 984 (Beckfield 2003).

Sociocultural globalization involves the emergence of a "world culture." This is evidenced in processes of cultural and institutional consolidation and in the increasingly cosmopolitan character of cultural consumption, as cultural products, knowledge, and lifestyles diffuse across national boundaries. For example, McDonald's has tens of thousands of restaurants in 118 countries, the world's 20 biggest-grossing films of 2002 were all produced by a Hollywood studio, and CNN is available in nearly every country with a cable or satellite television system. Sociocultural globalization is also indicated by such things as a dramatic surge in international tourism, a major increase in international telephone traffic, and the stupendous growth of the Internet and people's reliance on it.

Whether globalization is preponderantly good or preponderantly bad for human well-being, especially the well-being of people in the less-developed world, has been a hotly debated issue (e.g., Singer 2002; Stiglitz 2003). On the positive side, considerable evidence shows major increases in life expectancy in the less-developed world in recent decades, much of which is due to sharply plummeting rates of infant and child mortality (Lomborg 2001; Singer 2002), and since 1970 there has been a sharp reduction in the proportion of the world's population said to be starving.

Based on these figures, things seem to be improving rather than deteriorating. Yet critics of globalization insist that even if there has been some sort of absolute improvement for the world's worst-off populations, globalization has nonetheless led to an increase in global inequality. The United Nations' 1999 *Human Development Report* showed that in 1960, the ratio of the richest quintile of the world's population to the poorest quintile was approximately 30:1, but by 1997 this had increased to 74:1 (see also Korzeniewicz and Moran 1997). However, studies that measure world income inequality using purchasing power parity (PPP) income estimates (e.g., Goesling 2001; Firebaugh 2003) find that the level of world inequality has remained essentially the same since the early 1960s, or perhaps even declined slightly (Firebaugh and Goesling 2004).

It is often pointed out that these improvements in living conditions are *average* improvements, and that there are still many people whose lives have not been improved, or may actually have deteriorated, because of globalization. Although globalization has benefited hundreds of millions of people, for millions of others globalization has not been good. There are still some segments of many underdeveloped societies that lead an extremely marginal and unpleasant existence. Tens of millions of people still live in crowded shantytowns in extremely flimsy makeshift housing, areas that contain open sewers and that are disease infested. (For an extensive discussion of the evidence pro and con on globalization, see Sanderson and Alderson 2005:225–38.)

The bulk of the evidence reviewed above seems to call into question some of the basic assumptions of dependency and world-system theories of underdevelopment (e.g., Bornschier, Chase-Dunn, and Rubinson 1978; Bornschier and Chase-Dunn 1985). These theories claim that the development of the most advanced countries has led to the underdevelopment of the least developed. Although this may have been the case in earlier historical periods (see Mahoney 2003), it does not seem to be the case any longer. In the current period, foreign investment from developed countries in less-developed countries appears to be beneficial rather than harmful (e.g., Firebaugh 1992), and there has been much more development taking place than dependency and world-system theories allow for. Even the most recent sophisticated tests of these theories by their erstwhile supporters (e.g., Kentor and Boswell 2003) show that, at a minimum, they require serious revision. (For an extensive summary of the findings of these studies, see Sanderson 2005b.)

None of this means that we must return to some sort of modernization theory, such as the classical theory of Rostow (1960) or the more recent theory of Landes (1998). These theories also leave a lot to be desired. Perhaps there should be a reconsideration of the Marxian versions of modernization theory developed some years ago by Szymanski (1981) and Warren (1980), who resurrected Marx's thoughts on the role of imperialism in the developmental trajectories of the less-developed world. Szymanski and Warren claim that Marx took the view that imperialism would create conditions in less-developed countries that would lead them along the same developmental path as the imperialist countries.

LATE MODERNITY AND POSTMODERNITY

The tempo and character of social change in the past few decades have been extraordinary. As Anthony Giddens (1990) has argued, the modern world has witnessed a set of changes heretofore unprecedented in human history. These changes involve the *pace of change*, the *scope of change*, and the *specific nature of modern social institutions*. The pace of change in today's world is not only extreme but also constantly accelerating. The scope of change is enormous, as indicated by the previous discussion of globalization. And there are specific features of modern institutions that have never been seen before, such as "the wholesale dependence of production upon inanimate power sources, or the thoroughgoing commodification of products and wage labor" (Giddens 1990:6). In Ben Agger's (2004) terms, we live in an era of "fast capitalism," which is rapidly becoming "faster and faster capitalism."

Giddens identifies the master trend of human history as *time-space distanciation*, or a "stretching out" of time and space. In the early twenty-first century, this process has reached extreme proportions, and as a result, "living in the

modern world is more like being aboard a careening juggernaut . . . rather than being in a carefully controlled and well-driven motor car” (Giddens 1990:53). According to Giddens (2002), we are already living in a “runaway world” that will continue to run away faster and faster as time goes by. Other astute observers of the contemporary scene, such as David Harvey (1989), see a world marked by a *condition of postmodernity*. Harvey argues that increasing globalization has led to a continual shrinking of the psychological experience of time and space, a phenomenon he calls *time-space compression*. This is in a sense the mirror image of Giddens’s time-space distancing. In recent centuries, Harvey argues, there have been several periods of time-space compression. Harvey sees the latest episode as having begun in the 1970s, and like the earlier episodes, this one has had profoundly psychologically destabilizing consequences for the individuals who have been experiencing it, especially changes in personal life of a very disruptive nature. For Harvey, two consequences stand out in particular. The first has been the accentuation of the “volatility and ephemerality of fashions, products, production techniques, labour processes, ideas and ideologies, values and established practices. The sense that ‘all that is solid melts into air’ has rarely been more pervasive” (Harvey 1989:285–86). Second, there has been an increasing emphasis on

the values and virtues of instantaneity (instant and fast foods, meals, and other satisfactions) and of disposability (cups, plates, cutlery, packaging, napkins, clothing, etc.). . . . It meant more than just throwing away produced goods, but also being able to throw away values, life-styles, stable relationships, and attachments to things, buildings, places, people, and received ways of doing and being. (P. 286)

If Harvey is on target in his identification of the nature and sources of a major social transformation, then the

implications for the future seem ominous. Since time-space compression is inherent in the very logic of capitalist development, the pace of production, consumption, and social life will continue to increase. Future waves of time-space compression would be expected to be even more intense, and as such would likely produce even more severe forms of psychological destabilization. If this were to occur, then the time-space compression of the early twenty-first century may in retrospect seem relatively mild, a prospect that is scarcely enticing.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

The study of social change, so critical a part of classical sociology, became something of a poor stepchild during the middle decades of the twentieth century, but in the past 30 years it has been tremendously revitalized. Comparative-historical sociology has become a major branch of sociology and is, in fact, one of sociology’s most vigorous and sophisticated branches. The study of revolutions has become a major area of focus of comparative-historical sociologists, and more recently, new life has been breathed into the study of social movements. And sociologists continue to study social evolution in numerous ways. Even the study of the family and gender relations has become more historical, and thus more devoted to change.

If the past three decades are any indication, then future prospects in the study of change look very bright. It is to be expected that the study of evolution, revolution, social movements, globalization, and modernity will not only continue but also expand and branch out. Indeed, as the pace of modern social life continues to accelerate, sociologists, always concerned with recent social trends, will devote even more energy to describing and explaining it, as well as to predicting where we may be headed.