Forces of Social Change
“Everyone over the age of forty is an immigrant”

- Margaret Mead
What is Social Change?

♦ Changes in the way society is organized, and the beliefs and practices of the people who believe in it

♦ All societies are involved in a process of social change, however this change may be so subtle and slow that society is hardly aware of it

♦ Example – the development of housing in Markham
Aspects of Social Change

- The opposite of social change is social continuity.
- Social continuity is not the absence of change because change is always happening.
- **Social continuity** means that there are structures within society which are built to resist change.
- Example - *the Catholic Church*
Natural Forces of Social Change

GEOGRAPHY

- This is when the natural lay of the land has affected the way societies have developed.
- Things like bodies of water, mountains, inlets, flat lands all affect the way a society develops.
- Geography can also prevent social change.
- Natural disasters can also drastically change a society (floods, earthquakes, volcanoes).
Examples

♦ China’s geographical layout forced the nation to develop a large scale irrigation system which required a strong centralized government

♦ North American coasts have small inlets which led to the development of small, separate colonies, able to be independent of each other
External Events

Definition

♦ External events are events that have occurred on a large scale affecting an entire nation or several nations

♦ These events have a large and immediate impact on social change
Examples

Any civil or world wars

- American Civil War – abolished slavery
- WWII – forced women into the workforce and they never returned home
- September 11/2001 – a change of thought regarding national threat and security
Technology

♦ Technology has strongly affected the way societies are designed and how they keep changing
♦ People receive their information more quickly now, can communicate in different ways
♦ Technology also affects architecture and the development of land
Examples

♦ The Plow
♦ The Train
♦ The Wheel
♦ The Internet
♦ Computers
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Alienation

♦ Durkheim coined the word “anomie” to describe the conditions of the factory workers who had no roots norms as they struggled in their lives
♦ Marx took this term and expanded it mean anyone who does not share the major values of society and feels like an outsider
♦ Alienation can create anarchists – people who act violently against society because they were alienated

Columbine shootings
Theodore Kaczynski, also known as the Unabomber is an American terrorist who attempted to fight against what he perceived as the evils of technological progress by sending mail bombs to various people
Conformity

♦ Conformity is the act of maintaining a certain degree of similarity (in clothing, manners, behaviors, etc.) to those in your general social circles, to those in authority, or to the general status quo. Usually, conformity implies a tendency to submit to others in thought and behavior other than simply clothing choice
Conformity

♦ Informational influence – is the human desire to accept information that another admired person tells us is valid

♦ Normative influence – is the pressure to conform to the positive expectations of others
Affecting Social Change

Alienation
- Has both positive and negative effects
- It can create reformers or people who create outstanding ideas
- Or people who are angry about being outcasts and express their frustration violently

Conformity
- Conforming to others tends to stifle social change because everyone is behaving the same
- Pressure to conform can result in negative behaviours such as increased racism, bullying, sexism