Social change is defined as “the transformation of culture and social institutions over time” (USI: Sociology Department). Change occurs whether people, groups, communities, or society is prepared for it. The change most likely will take place over a period of time rather than happening abruptly. It is important to create an awareness that change can and will happen. In order to best educate members of society one should be aware of the following:

**4 Characteristics of Social Change (USI: Sociology Department)**

1. It happens everywhere, but the rate of change varies from place to place.
2. Social change is sometimes intentional but often unplanned.
3. Social change often generates controversy.
4. Some changes matter more than others do.

**Industrial State Paradigm characteristics (Falk n.d.)**

1. Scientific method
2. Industrialization
3. Acquisitive materialism
4. Manipulative rationality/control over nature
5. Individualism

It is important to be able to recognize the characteristics of social change in order to adapt to the shifts, ideas, and changes that begin to influence the norms in the society. However, one must also acknowledge the causes of social change. Understanding the
causes will allow for people to take part in the changes and for the social work profession to stay involved with the issues society is confronted with.

5 Different Cause of Social Change (USI: Sociology Department)

1. Culture and Change: “Culture is a system that constantly loses and gains components.” 3 Main source of cultural change:
   A. Invention: production of new products, ideas, and social patterns.
   B. Discovery: finding something new or something new in what is already in existence.
   C. Diffusion: spreading ideas to other societies (trading, migration, mass communication).

2. Conflict and Change: It is thought that tension and conflict impacts social change (Karl Marx’ idea of class conflict causing change; school shootings).

3. Ideas and Change: Martin Luther King, Jr., Hitler, Gandhi

4. Demographic Change: Increase in population

5. Social Movements and Change: Joining people together for a common cause
   A. Alternative Social Movements: selective population and limited change (Planned Parenthood).
   B. Redemptive Social Movements: selective population and radical change (could occur with some religious sects).
   C. Reformative Social Movements: includes everyone but limited in change (environmental movements-recycling).
   D. Revolutionary Social Movements: the idea of changing all of society (Communist party wanting to radically change social institutions).
After reviewing the information that has presented think about the changes you have seen or studied throughout the American society and changes throughout the world. The Women’s Movement and the American Civil Rights Movement are two examples that have greatly impacted the American society and culture and the issues we face today. The levels of awareness of different changes will vary but it is important to create that awareness and become knowledgeable about how and why the changes occur. With that, the social work profession will be able to better serve the populations that are in great need of services.
Works Cited
