# SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT and  SOCIAL CHANGE

Dr  Eulalee Nderu-Boddington

Ph.D. Education
Assistant Professor at Prince Sultan University Riyadh Saudi Arabia
September 21st 2008

## Abstract

This article compares and contrasts the theories of three major writers on societal change: Chirot discusses the economic power struggles within and among core, peripheral, and semiperipheral societies, Toffler exposes a future in which major power shifts could have cataclysmic results, and Bruner emphasizes the importance of education to temper technological progress with wisdom and ethical behavior.

## Introduction

The article addresses the theories of three important writers on the topic of social and cultural change; they are Daniel Chirot, Jerome Bruner, and Alvin Toffler. I chose these writers for the purpose of examining their differing perspectives. Their concepts and assumptions will be examined and differences and similarities in their views will be contrasted and compared. An attempt will be made to integrate the theories and derive some guidance for students of the social sciences, who should be able to use this knowledge to further their understanding of the problems that our society faces today. A key concept that writers on the topic of social change bring to light is that change is inevitable in any society.

According to Chirot, the primary aspect of social organization is internal stratification, that is, who in society has what form of power and to what ends or means are those powers used. He uses the term "core society" to refer to a group of societies that hold power and wealth and dominate the weaker societies. A peripheral society is an underprivileged society, usually rich in raw materials but lacking in the technology to develop them. Then, there are the semiperipheral societies, between the core and the periphery, trying to become core societies themselves. Another concept to be addressed in the Breadth component is culture change. Bruner states that culture is always in a process of change, and when society changes drastically, its culture is affected; sometimes, culture change will effect social change. A futurist concept of social change is exposed by Toffler, whose perspective provides insight into what a power shift would entail, if transformation of a dominant power source were to take place. Other theorists where studied, their positions considered, and reference made to their thoughts on social and culture change. Lastly, a comparative examination of the different concepts of these theories was undertaken, as befits the Breadth component of this paper.

# The Meaning of Social Change—

## The Theory of Daniel Chirot

Social change means different things to different people. One can examine social change domestically (or internally) and internationally, because it concerns a variety of ethnically diverse groups of people. However, since social change is believed to be impacted by cultural change, one cannot really analyze one without the other. Etzioni (1966), in his book Studies in Social Change, explains that many social theories of change are, by and large, gradually assembled and pieced together from many theoretical contributions and research papers. Etzioni also states that a society has the capacity to guide itself and produce a knowledgeable elite, which receives and processes information, develops directions, and issues direction to social units that carry out the tasks of the elite group. If the social units revolt against the task of the elite, a social change is produced. To fully understand this topic, one has to look further at some of the other theorists in the field. Three prominent theorists of social and cultural change are Daniel Chirot, Jerome Bruner, and Alvin Toffler. Their writings will offer diverse insights and perspectives on this subject.

To understand the implications of social and cultural change, one has first to understand the meaning and the influence social and cultural changes wield. According to Chirot (1994), as expressed in his book Social Change in the Twentieth Century, social change is anything a regular organized group of people normally does or thinks while living collectively under a constitutive social system. Any respective change within this system over a long period, as long as it is repetitive rather than simply limited to a few episodes, constitutes social change. A change can be major or minor depending on the circumstances. In this statement Chirot explains that social change cannot be achieved with one incident in a social strata over a short period of time; only if the change is practiced by a group of people over an extended period, can it be classified as social change.

There are many other types of social changes as well. Chirot states that social change in America, for example, comprises changing sexual patterns, changing residential patterns, changing artistic tastes, and changing the general life style, all of which constitute an internal social change.

He notes however that there is one form of social change that is controlled by a core society, which is defined as holding economic, cultural, and political power and using it to exert change. This is an internal and international kind of social control, which core societies possess. Ross (1901) defines social control as "concerned with that domination which is intended and which fulfills a function in the life of the society." This would suggest that social control is intentional and that those who wield control can bring about change. The core societies are those who are economically diversified, rich and powerful, and relatively independent of outside influences and controls. They are an elite group, which can change laws, rules, and even cultures. "Elite" in this sense mean a specialized system that initiates, directs, and regulates other social systems. Examples would be countries such as the United States of America, Britain, and at one time Russia. They have the technology to shape or create change in many forms. They are the superpowers of this, the 21st, century. These countries have the nuclear and biotechnological ability to obliterate each other and possibly the whole world. This core group has the economic power to finance their own agendas, with the exception of Russia, whose communist system collapsed and must now rely on aid from the United States. Having this type of power leads to dominance and creates a pattern of absolute power.

Another notion Chirot talks about is that of the peripheral society. Peripheral societies (e.g., Africa and parts of Asia and South America) are relatively poor and economically weak; they are also subject to manipulation by core societies. The peripheral societies are usually rich in natural resources, but do not have the technology or the expertise to develop them into viable products. So, the core societies buy the raw materials (uranium, minerals, cocoa, etc.) at cheap rates and turn them into usable products, which they, then, sell back to the peripheral societies at an enormous profit. Sometimes only the economically advantaged in the peripheral society can afford the imported products. This is a great economic disadvantage to these groups of people. Natural resources take millions of year to replenish, if they are taken away in commercial amounts. If no other viable alternatives to such depletion are found—such as developing their own industry and the capability to manufacture goods from their raw materials—the economies of these peripheral societies will one day simply collapse. The raw materials will be depleted, and there will be no industry to make up for the loss of exportation. Therefore, the whole society will be left impoverished. Dreams of one day becoming a core society are further diminished or completely extinguished.

One must wonder if there is intent in the core societies to retain control over the weaker societies. Without the latter's resources, the core societies would not become as rich as they are. They are dependent on these sources of raw materials, which their own countries do not possess, or do not possess in sufficient quantities to support their economic agenda. Thus, having the technology to develop raw materials and not sharing this capacity with other societies keeps them in control. The irony is that control is exercised over the sources of materials that are useless in their raw stage. Some industries in Africa give a percentage of their profits back to foreign companies who will, then, invest in the development of their raw materials over a period of time. Sometimes these raw materials are gold, diamonds, zinc, aluminum, bauxite, and others. Companies will go into the host country, build factories, and employ natives only for manual labor, leaving them at the bottom of the social strata. There is no training provided, nor are administrative or engineering jobs given to native employees. They are not taught how to operate the machinery, nor shown how the industry runs. Instead, foreign workers, who mostly come from the core societies, are imported to operate and supervise the machines. If a political crisis erupts, the foreign workers leave the country, and no qualified native personnel has been developed to run the machinery. Consequently, the factories must be closed down, and massive investments are lost. The host country is left where it started, if not in a worse position.

Such unscrupulous practices can be seen quite often in Africa, especially in countries such as Nigeria and Sierra Leone. These kinds of behaviors by foreign companies have a great social impact on the poorer countries. Political unrest, rises in the unemployment and crime rates, and the poor getting poorer are forces that make people revert to farming just to feed their families. The people's new behavior patterns have to change also; products they were able to afford when employed by the factories are now out of reach for them economically. Products such as ready-made clothing, pharmaceuticals, and supplemental food items, as well as housing, become too expensive. Social change after these events is so severe that political upheavals sometimes erupts. The government will often change the rules overnight to accommodate its position or a coup is likely to happen. Most of the time a coup will happen anyway, and a new leader starts the cycle over again. A rapid social change without appropriate resolution will cause the cycle to continue.

For a peripheral society to develop, states Chirot, it would have to close its borders, stop importation of ready-made goods, and develop its own internal resources for domestic use. They would do well to rent industrial machinery, because it is cheaper to rent than to buy, and produce goods for the consumption of their own society. After they have created a strong domestic base, then, they can open their borders to foreign imports. The core societies would, of course, oppose these kinds of measures because they are to their disadvantage by impeding the outflow of their products to the peripheral markets. The Japanese used such a measure after World War II; they closed their borders and developed their country internally, and they were extremely successful in doing so.

Lastly, according to Chirot, there are the semiperipheral societies, which try to industrialize and diversify their economies to become core societies. They are the societies midway between the core and the periphery. These societies are trying not to be manipulated by the core societies; therefore, they are always struggling to reach the top of the economic ladder. They have some viable industries, which can produce goods to sell to the core societies, but they do not possess the vast number of industries of the core societies. Because of this, the core societies still control the pricing of goods. They know how much can be imported, because they have the demand from the people who can afford these products in their own societies. However, the core societies can export their goods on a larger scale to these semiperipheral societies and gain back what the latter have acquired monetarily through their exports to the richer societies. In every aspect of control and manipulation, one can see how the core societies have the advantage over the peripheral and the semiperipheral societies and are able to initiate social change.

There are also other factors, according to Chariot, that influence social change. Factors, such as the ecological impact due to human population or long-term cyclical changes in climate or topography, have contributed greatly to social change; population growth causes migration and new production techniques, as well as overcrowding; but economics, technology, and politics are the most important causes of a general social change. Chariot suggested that the only method for understanding social change is to study the complex interactions between the ecological, political, economic, and cultural history of societies. One should never assume that stability prevails and things will never change, or if things change, it will only be for a while, after which they will revert to how it used to be, or an unchanging normality.

No single source of irrevocable change can be isolated; some sources produce change significantly more often than others, but almost all aspect of social life may, at one time or other, singly or in

combination, be the source of change. To fully understand social change one has to look also at culture and culture changes, because they, too, influence social change.

# Culture Change—

## The Theories of Jerome Bruner and Daniel Chirot

The definition of culture given by Taylor (1871) is that culture in a broad sense includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and any capabilities and habits acquired by people or individuals as members of society. Years later, Ralph Lipton gave a definition of culture as the configuration of learned behavior and results of behaviors the components and element of which are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society. Another writer, Elvin Hach (1973) of the University of California, stated that the concept of culture is an idea of singular importance, for it provides a set of principles for explaining and understanding human behavior. It is one of the distinguishing elements of modern social thought, and may be one of the most important achievements of modern social science, and in particular of anthropology.

A behaviorist definition of culture, according to Spadley (1972) is given by anthropologists and focuses on observable patterns of behavior within some social group. This culture concept is broken down for a particular group of people, their customs, and way of life. If the customs or way of life are altered in any way, it could influence a culture change. Spadley also gave another definition of culture by anthropologists, namely, that culture is the way of life of a group of people, the configuration of all of the more or less stereotyped patterns of learned behavior, which are handed down from one generation to the next through the means of language and imitation. If there is an alteration in the culture patterns, this could affect the social order of that particular group of people. The reasoning is that sociocultural behaviors are intertwined and one cannot talk about one without mentioning the other. Therefore, one can state that culture can be an influence of social change within a given society.

To further understand how culture can be an influence of social change, it will be useful to look at the work of another theorist, Jerome Bruner. As a research professor of psychology, Bruner has contributed many analytical thoughts and theories about how the mind works and how social influences trigger such thoughts. He explored the effects of thoughts on people's behavior. In The Culture of Education, he stated that he believes, as do many other anthropologists, that it is no longer a useful fiction to conceive that a culture is an established, almost irreversibly, stabilized way of thinking, believing, acting, and judging. Cultures have always been in a process of change, and the rate of change becomes greater as people's fates become increasingly intermingled through migration, trade, and the rapid exchange of information. One can also see that, if a group of people experience their beliefs, behaviors, and thoughts changed because of an episode (e.g., natural disaster, war, technology, and abundance of work in a particular area) over an extended period of time, this could provoke a culture change. Such changes could be adopted by the whole society and become a custom. Since customs are a part of culture and a way of life for any given society, one could also say that customs may be a contributing factor to social change.

Bruner further stated that nothing is culture-free, but neither are  individuals a mirror of their culture. What Bruner is saying here is that the whole of people's lives is centered on habits, and habits are cultural because they are an imitation and adaptation of and to the environment. Habits can change, because people are not merely a reflection of their culture, or their habits.

The strength of Bruner's statement lies in its first half: Nothing is culture-free. In fact, it seems that some individuals are, indeed, mirrors of their culture because it is too hard for them to break cultural habits. For example, a person who grew up and lived in Mexico all of his or her life will have been taught the ways of his or her group of people and may speak the Spanish language exclusively. Then as an adult, the person moves to a different country or region of Mexico or even comes to live in North America. This person will not just shed the ways of his or her upbringing and habits because of a new environment. Some individuals may be completely assimilated by their new cultural environment, but generally they would tend to integrate their old culture with the new one. Others may even practice their old culture within a new culture. This is often evidenced in big cities such as New York, where in China town the Chinese people practice their culture within the constraints of that environment. They create a community that reflects their own culture by erecting buildings similar to the ones of their

home country, and they keep their culture and habits alive. These practices are therefore reflective of the culture of the Chinese people. There are many groups in the United States that fall into the same category: There are Greeks, West Indians, Ukrainians, and many others who refuse to give up their cultural habits and blend completely into the culture of the United States. This seems to be especially true of the older generation. Their presence begs the question: Does this contribute to a culture change? The answer seems to be: definitely yes. Although these people are separate in terms of cultural practices, they are part of the whole society and the laws of their host country govern them. Cultural change can take many forms; some are more radical than others, but most of the time they are subtle, and one has to search for them in order to detect them.

One could also consider the migration of groups of people with a distinct culture because they are forced to do so in times of war, and over a long period of time they might become accustomed to their new environment. Because they have to cope in their new environment (this group of people may have no choice), they incorporate their culture and their way of thinking with the new, giving birth to new thoughts and behaviors. This culture change is not uncommon, especially in this century. Leading up to World War II, some German Jews fled Nazi oppression and migrated to different parts of the world. Most became assimilated into the society they adopted, while still holding on to their religion; others changed their religion and claimed new identities to become full members of their new society. Therefore, one can say that migration of large groups of people, for whatever reason, is a contributing factor to social and cultural change.

The war in Yugoslavia, Sudan and Somalia today is another example of mass migration that contributes to social, as well as cultural, change. Although this migration is involuntary, the situation has permanently changed the status of the local region, as well as most other social and cultural factors. According to news documentaries, there exists a generation of people, the Albanians, uprooted and thrown out of their country by the Serbs; their migration to other countries is by force. The Serbs, who claim that they were first to inhabit the Kosorvo region centuries ago, accuse the Albanians of persecuting them because they were a minority. Therefore, in retaliation, the Serbs are waging an inhumane war against the ethnic Albanians, killing most of the men, raping the women, and herding the remaining families out of the country. This massive social change has impacted both the Serbs' and the Albanians' lives. Because the war is happened, and the full impact cannot be assessed until much later, but one can safely state that, judging by the results of past history, the culture of the migrating Albanians is undoubtedly going to change. Maybe they will keep their religion intact, but their behavioral habits and way of life will change. This could be said to be a culture change due to migration and politics.

Technology, as a rapid way of dispersing information, is another source of social change. It has greatly impacted modern society and changed the way many people live. Maybe Bruner was thinking about how computer use has become the norm in U.S. society and that anyone who cannot use a computer is frowned upon. Three decades ago this type of popular technology was unheard of, but today e-mail is nearly as commonly used for communication as the telephone. Today, one would more likely ask for an e-mail address than a telephone number, and this is acceptable behavior in U.S. society. One could say that customs have changed dramatically with respect to relying on the telephone and that it is rivaled by the use of e-mail. Although this is one of the simplest illustrations from the vast body of technological advancement, it is one that everyone can relate to and definitely represents a culture change.

Another example of how technology has made an impact on social and cultural systems is the production and use of smaller automobiles that are fuel-efficient. This idea was introduced to the U.S. automobile industry by the Japanese in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Today, the U.S. automobile industry is producing smaller, more fuel-efficient cars, which are durable, affordable, and economical to use. Most people prefer to use these smaller cars, because they save money when purchased and are cheaper to operate. In the past, size and fuel consumption did not matter much, when a car was bought. However, because of inflation and the higher cost of living, small cars have revolutionized the taste of the population. Culturally, this has made an impression on the social order and on status. People of all ages drive small cars today.

Nuclear technology and weapons of mass destruction cannot be readily traded because of security systems around the world. The core societies also keep this type of technological information a secret. However, today, countries such as India, Iran, China, and Pakistan have the nuclear technology to make a nuclear bomb. The gulf war of the early 1990s also proved that Iraq had enough nuclear and biological capabilities to create instability in the gulf region. The United States thought it could not let this happen, because it would pose a treat to the whole world if left unchecked. This is a case where

technology was thought to have fallen into the wrong hands. It is also an example of a core society's policing the globe to check who is undermining its power.

## A Futurist Theory of Social and Cultural Change—Alvin Toffler

If one wishes to examine a futurist view of social change, one must consider how social and cultural change affect the population today. According to Heidi and Alvin Toffler (1995), as described in their book Creating a New Civilization: The Politics of the Third Wave, people, today, live in a changing society and need to change their knowledge about the future. The authors call this the third wave—a global revolution—in which a society must be rebuilt from the ground up with the concomitant struggle for control over who will shape the new order. Thus, there is a conflict between people who are committed to maintaining a dying social order and those who want to bring in the new. The authors also state that people, at present, are caught in a crosscurrent between the second and third wave.

The first wave of change was the agricultural revolution, when agrarian societies were formed that learned to farm and support themselves through agriculture and fishing. It lasted over 1,000 years and ended approximately in the 17th century. That is when the agricultural society was swept away by the second wave of change, or the rise of the industrial civilization. It lasted over 300 years with its factories, railroads, and food processing plants. The industrial civilization was a product of the second wave, or the industrial revolution. It is now giving way to the third wave, which is being felt by today's societies.

Toffler explains that the image of waves is used in a symbolic sense. If waves collide with each other, they cause a concurrent amount of energy that causes the pattern of the waves to change—an apt metaphor symbolizing what is happening today. The third wave does consist of changing tides not only in the economy and technology, but also in culture, morality, ideas, institutions, and political structures.

Presented here is a 21st-century view of the calamities that could take place if order, behavior, and thoughts of a society do not change and develop into new ways of thinking and if people do not become critical thinkers along with their economic and technological successes. If one expects to survive the future trends, one has to be innovative in terms of how the culture will be able to absorb the impact of massive social changes. One can, for example, look at the schools of today and see that the old order of educational institutions is no longer working. Although the technology exists and is impacting the schools and the children's thoughts and behaviors, there appears to be a lack of moral support needed by each child to complement and balance this great technological advancement. Here, one would like to call upon the families of the children to instill, or at least, help support this aspect of other social institutions; yet, they are also going through drastic social upheavals. Some of these families need moral support themselves, because they are often leaning on a single parent whose priorities comprise the first level of Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs, which is securing food, shelter, and safety. There is often no time or energy left over for moral support or discipline in the homes. Professor Harry H. Johnson of the University of Illinois stated in is article Sociocultural Evolution that, while the unit of progress is some innovation, it is in a real sense society that has achieved enhanced functional capacity. A society has to create a new way of survival by fostering innovation, reorganization, and positive reinforcement, rather than threats and punishment.

If one looks at the culture of politics, one can readily see the enormous impact that it has made on people's lives during this period of time or in this century. Wars are more prominent, because of the might of the core societies with their advanced weaponry. Diplomacy has forfeited its place to bombs and cruise missiles. The morals of the leaders often leave much to be desired, leaving people with the wish for clear moral leadership for their children and for society in general. The question begs to be asked: Where are we headed? Toffler states that no society changes without conflict; but with conflict, one should have a clear understanding of what the solutions might be or, at least, some sort of resolution where there is a lesson to be learned. In the political arena, solutions are what the mighty societies can force on the less mighty. They have the means to get an answer without having to make an effort at diplomacy. Punishing solutions, however, have sometimes a negative effect and can makes the right action seem wrong. Social and cultural change is taking place on a more massive level than ever before because of technological and political might. The rethinking of behavior patterns of many societies has changed their culture today, often in response to the core societies' views and ideas. The political structure, even in some core societies, is causing many to reflect seriously whether politics is

ruining the culture or whether this is simply part of the third wave Toffler talks about—as long as it is not annihilation of all that we know with only a few people surviving the catastrophe.

# A Comparison of Theories

## on Social and Cultural Change

If one compares and contrasts the different views of these theorists, a common feature in their beliefs stands out, namely, that social and cultural change in any society are inevitable. Whether influenced by a core society, as Chirot theorizes, or caused by changing behavior patterns, internal crises, or environmental conditions, as pointed out by Bruner, or threatened by a destructive third wave, according to the futurist visions of Toffler, societies will change, often dramatically.

In studying these concepts, a number of factors influencing social change have emerged from the writings of the theorists. Some critical factors are economics, technology, culture, politics, and migration. Each of these factors will be examined, and the views of the major theorists will be compare and assessed in the following sections.

## The Political Factor

Chirot, Toffler, and Bruner are not remarkably different in their thinking. Chirot stated that social changes are caused by various factors, such as politics, economics, and technology, which the core group of society controls. He further stated in his book on social change that there can be no doubt that the core democracies, including the United States, are sufficiently bureaucratized and their economic power is sufficiently concentrated that any a massive crisis could lead quickly to the assumption of power by a small elite. This is what happened in Germany in the 1930s and could occur in the United States. One can see evidence of this with the rise of neo-Nazi and white supremacy groups within this country. These are groups with various factions that glorify Hitler and his beliefs in persecution and vengeance visited upon people who are not of the same race or ethnic background. Sporadically, one will see outburst by these groups, involving hate crimes that are committed across the country. They have the weaponry and are a well-trained army that could fuel a crisis within this country. The government has to train special units within its police force to monitor these groups. Therefore, this writer agrees with Chirot's hypothesis on the issue of politics and its changing and change-inducing impact during the 20th century.

Bruner stated that culture affects and effects social change in many ways and that politics as well is a contributing factor to changes in a society. Politics are controlled by core groups that have the means to wage war or set the stage for a new political agenda. Bruner also stated that nothing is culture-free. Politics has its own culture and as such, it impacts social change. This is also how Chirot discusses politics as a contributing factor to social and cultural change. If one compares what Toffler has to say about political agendas, one can see that his theory also bears out that politics exert a powerful influence  on social conflicts that will eventually lead to social change, revolutionize culture, and bring about as yet unanticipated changes in the 21st century.

What underlies all these views is the conviction that politics controls much of how people experience social and cultural changes. Politics permeates every agenda in a society, even to the point of how people think. While the three social scientists reviewed here—Chirot, Bruner, and Toffler—speak from different perspectives and make a number of different assumptions, they are agreed, nevertheless, on the fact that the political factor is a powerful source of social change.

# The Economic Factor

With respect to the economic factor, Chirot stated that core societies are economically wealthy and can therefore exercise control over other societies. Wealth assumes certain powers. Bruner talks about the dominance of society by the triggers that set off the mind to change behaviors. People who are economically weak want to become strong; therefore, their thought processes work toward becoming economically strong. These thought process change behaviors toward, for example, working hard, gambling, investing, or saving. Multiplied by many people, such thinking patterns could ultimately cause a social change, because patterns of behavior becomes ingrained in a culture, when sustained over long periods of time. Based on this example one can say that economic conditions are also a factor contributing to social change.

Toffler's theory presents a picture of what an economic power shift in any society can be like. He stated that during the second wave economic concentration was centered around raw materials, land, and labor—materials that are exhaustible, and hard to replenish—but they constituted economic power during that period of time. However, in today's third wave economy, knowledge is the central resource towards economic power. Knowledge in this context, explains Toffler, is defined as data, information, images, symbols, culture, ideology, and values. This kind of resource of the third wave is inexhaustible and can readily be replenished. If one looks at Toffler's theory, one can gain some ideas of what lies ahead for this society and toward what implications this country is headed.

The newest resource, knowledge, is what will propel this society into the 22nd century and change most of its perspectives on social and cultural attitudes. While knowledge is a good thing, this writer believes that its use and dissemination could be better implemented than it is today. Used properly, ideas, information, and values can be great resources, but Toffler did not comment about what will happen when knowledge falls into the hands and minds of persons with a warped sense of ideology and values, creating a new kind of culture of aggressiveness, especially within the school system. Not everyone nurtures a good ideology or good values. As a teacher, this writer knows firsthand that many teachers try to teach positive values to children, but many times these values are not reinforced at home. With good information, two middle school boys in Littleton, Colorado, decided that they would make bombs and use them on their peers to solve their problems, engendering a wave of copycat crimes of the same type. These young people knew how to obtain information on how to make bombs right off the Internet. One is led to wonder whether this kind of information should be freely available on the Internet or whether it should be classified. The problem of too much dangerous information falling into the wrong hands and minds has already changed the culture of most schools and of society at large. It was once believed that if one teaches in an inner city school, especially at the high school level, one might die by gunshot or muggings. Therefore, most teachers looked for jobs in suburban school districts. While there were metal detectors in most inner city schools, there were none in the suburbs. But this incident took place in a middle-class neighborhood in the suburbs. This situation has created fear in both parents and teachers. It has definitely provoked social and cultural changes within this society. In places where shootings and bombings was unheard of and metal detectors all but unknown and even at the elementary school level, attitudes and habits will have to change, and has changed.

Even if economic wealth is dependent on knowledge, as described by Toffler, one ought to be very careful about the knowledge that is so freely dispensed. Knowledge, it seems, has to have the right mind and values to go along with its development to truly benefit society.

When Chirot talked about an economically wealthy society, he dealt with tangible assets and with how societies wanted to become wealthy by exploring technology and developing its resources from within toward without. Toffler, in a sense, is saying the same thing; however, he is convinced that people who can master the greatest knowledge and apply it as a usable commodity will make the greatest advances in the future and be the really economically wealthy. Bruner holds that with more effective education (i.e., knowledge) and with sensitivity to diversity, especially in the schools, any society can become wealthy.

The views of these three theorists are in agreement on another point: This is an age where one must think globally and where economic wealth cannot be achieved when there is procrastination on global innovations. On must use knowledge, sensitivity to diversity, and  resources to explore all possibilities for the betterment, if not the sheer survival, of society and the human race. Toward that end, the wealth will have to be shared.

# The Technology Factor

Chirot tried to make the reader understand that, without technology, a core society cannot develop and have the kind of power that fuels itself, its industries, exports, and nuclear and biological capabilities. However, there should be, in his opinion, a limit to how technology is used in the core societies. Chirot (1977) states:

> Even if capitalism solves the technological problems of pollution and energy waste, the political problems of the world system will not go unsolved unless the core learns to do with fewer and more expensive imports of raw materials from the old periphery. Changes in the world system will impinge on core economies and force considerable social and economic change. Not only political, but relatively greater economic isolation is indicated. The core can at the very least, continue to exchange goods and services within itself; but it must learn to do without the profits it formerly extracted from the periphery, and it must learn to trade with new revolutionary regimes on a more limited and more equitable basis than the past. Such regimes are proliferating and will soon test the extent to which the core has adapted. (pp. 12-13)

Here, Chirot argues for an end to the core societies' exploitation of the peripheral societies' resources. He recommends that they learn to adapt to lesser profits extracted from the periphery and develop greater resourcefulness in advancing themselves by relying on their own resources.

Chirot used South Africa as the example where countries such as Britain and the United States have large investments, which are concentrated in the hands of a few white members of the elite, although the majority of that country is black. Through exploitation they are perpetuating the legacy of the old colonial system in Africa, where the minority (the "elite" in the Chirotian definition of the word) still holds on to power through the use of investments for the support of the core society. This system, however, will falter someday, because the tolerance of the black majority will not last much longer, especially since apartheid is, at least nominally, over. Chirot warned that war would break out, if the core refused to change. However, since Chirot wrote his book, war did not break out in South Africa, and a peaceful transition took place with the emergence of a black president. Life, of course, has not gotten better for the majority of the black population, because they were so economically disadvantaged for so long under the apartheid system that they do not have the means to acquire resources as their white counterparts do. Therefore, the possibility of war still exists, if the core does not incorporate some of the knowledge Chirot disseminates and does not return some of the wealth to the black people of South Africa. A more drastic social change will be inevitable in this country, if thoughts and behaviors are not changed voluntarily and the economic disparity dealt with. One might ask: Would not the core society wage war to protect its investments, and might not the peripheral society, which is the majority population, resort to the same means?

It has been shown time and again that a gradual change is better for people than sudden, cataclysmic changes. The core society would be well advised to gradually change and educate itself about how change might be brought about and how wise strategies might be developed and implemented without mass social conflicts.

Toffler, on the other hand, talks about a fight for economic and technological power to see who will control and reshape the next world order. He feels that core societies are still struggling within themselves to define how or what course of action should be taken. Higher-order thinking will have to take place in order for this problem to be solved. Although most societies are still caught up in the old

ways of thinking, critical thinking about the future of technology, its advancement, and its dispersement must take place. Without being proactive on this issue, large segments of society, even within core societies, could be faced with enormous problems.

Chirot and Toffler share many thoughts concerning technology. Both expose the technology factor as one of the causes of social change and see its enormous potential to impact the social order of the core societies. They both describe vividly the possibilities of what might take place, if critical thinking on the subject is not developed and a sharing of resources is not accommodated. Toffler, however, envisions conflict on a more massive scale than Chirot, if the disbursement of knowledge and a sharing of resources are not equitably applied and the core societies keep up their struggle to maintain their power.

Bruner's theory regarding technology is centered around schools, which will be dealt with in more detail in the Depth component of this paper. Suffice it to say, that Bruner feels that schools should educate the children to become creators and innovators of technology and that, by changing the culture of the schools, one can influence how the future will unfold and progress.

## The Culture Factor

Toffler and Chirot mention that social change causes culture change and that the changes can be massive or subtle. Massive social change could be occasioned by war, as well as by ecological, political, technological, or economic upheavals. It could also result, reciprocally, from a drastic change of habits (i.e., culture). An example of a change of habits in the United States would be smoking: Whereas 10 years ago, it was considered chic to smoke cigarettes, in the 1990s, this habit is no longer appealing to the majority of the population because of the newly discovered health risks cigarette smoking poses. The change in behavior pattern was adopted on a massive scale over a long period of time, in spite of numerous conflicts with the tobacco industry. This is representative of a culture change.

In Social Change in the Twenty First Century, Chirot (1977) used the term "socially based conflict groups," meaning groups of individuals who are united by a common ideology, rather than by economic interest. A mutual interest, however, could be language, religion, or ethnicity. Many culture-based conflicts are centered around economic antagonism and class structure and, sometimes, religious practices as well. For example, all Arab countries produce oil; however, some countries produce more than others. Consequently, some Arab countries are richer than others, which creates classes and a class-based separation of behaviors. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are two economically wealthy countries; but they differ on cultural practices in their society. Their common interest, however, is how to sell their oil to the West, and their religious practices (Islam) are basically the same. Culturally, as far as religion is concerned, they share the same beliefs. When there are conflicts in ideology or the interpretation of religious practices, then, cultural conflicts can separate these Arab states, as in the case of Iran. Iran holds a fundamentalist view of how Islam should be practiced, and it has a low tolerance for the West. Other Arab countries are more liberal in thought when it come to their religious practices and tolerance for the West. From this analysis one can conclude that cultural conflict can induce culture change.

Toffler holds that culture change cannot come about until there is a conflict. It appears to this writer that Toffler's argument states that, before any society will change, it must change its habits and that changing habits on the societal scale provokes social and cultural conflict; yet, it is this very conflict, which brings about progressive thoughts and behaviors.

There are, of course, many types of social conflicts. The variation in the nature of conflicts affects the way they emerge, escalate, and de-escalate. According to the conflict theorist Louis Kriesberg of Syracuse University, three significant and interrelated factors govern conflict. They are (a) the character of the parties, (b) the nature of their goals, and (c) the means used in the struggle. Parties differ in their degree of organization and boundedness. The nature of their goals might differ within the organization, and the means to achieve these goals might differ as well (Kriesberg, cited by Etzioni, 1966). Applied to Toffler's theory, it should be a productive exercise to reflect on the means and the goals the third wave will activate to change society and its culture for the better.

## Conclusion

By studying the writings of Toffler—even more so than by reading Chirot, who also deals with social change—this writer could not help but develop a sense of urgency to change society's mores. In addition, Bruner's theory on social and cultural change strongly affected and most directly inspired me as an educator to take action, because it deals with education and explains how education has its own intricate culture, which is in need of diversification and change.

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