Chapter 20: Culture and Community in the Global Age: 20-2g Enduring Cultural Diversity
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20-2g Enduring Cultural Diversity

AP® Exam Tip

Understand the importance of the expansion of education in this time period.

Although protesters regularly denounce the "Americanization" of the world, a closer look suggests that cultural globalization is more complex. Just as English has spread widely as a second language, so global culture is primarily a second culture that dominates some contexts but does not displace other traditions. From this perspective, American music, fast food, and fashions are more likely to add to a society's options than to displace local culture.

Japan was first to demonstrate that a country with a non-Western culture could industrialize effectively. Individuality was less valued in Japan than the ability of each person to fit into a group, whether as an employee, a member of an athletic team, or a student in a class. Moreover, the Japanese considered it unmannerly to directly contradict, correct, or refuse the request of another person. From a Western point of view, these Japanese customs seemed to discourage individual initiative and personality development and to preserve traditional hierarchies. Japanese women, for example, even though they often worked outside the home, responded only slowly to the American and European feminist advocacy of equality in economic and social relations. However, the Japanese approach to social relations was well suited to an industrial economy. The efficiency, pride in workmanship, and group solidarity of Japanese workers played a major role in transforming Japan from a defeated nation with a demolished industrial base in 1945 to an economic power by the 1980s, but proved less well adapted to the severe economic slowdown that began in the 1990s.

As awareness of the economic impact of Japanese culture and society began to spread, it became apparent that Taiwan and South Korea, along with Singapore and Hong Kong (a British colony before being reunited with China in 1997), were developing dynamic industrial economies of their own. Today India and the People's Republic of China are following the same path without forsaking their national tastes and heritages.

Section Review

- The global pervasiveness of Western culture has provoked charges of U.S.
  cultural imperialism.

- Technology such as radio, television, and the internet has played a major role in the spread of Western culture since World War II.

- Technology has also contributed to the emergence of a global popular culture that blends a variety of cultural elements from different countries.

- A global elite culture has also developed combining the English language, science, and higher education.

- Despite globalizing forces, cultural diversity remains strong, if not completely secure.

This does not mean that the world's cultural diversity is secure. Every decade a number of minority languages cease to be spoken. Televised national ceremonies or performances for tourists may prevent folk customs and costumes from dying out, but they also tend to devitalize rituals that once had many local variations. While a century ago it was possible to recognize the nationality of people from their clothing and grooming, today most urban men dress the same the world over, although women's clothing shows greater variety. As much as one may regret the disappearance or commercialization of some folkways, most anthropologists would agree that change is characteristic of all healthy cultures. What doesn't change risks extinction.

Environment & Technology

Connected

The period since World War II witnessed wave after wave of technological innovations. None has had greater impact on the way people work, learn, and live than the computer. Until the 1970s most computing was done on large and expensive mainframe computers. These massive computers were primarily used for data storage and analysis, and the government agencies, universities, and large corporations that owned them controlled access.

Today most computers are in private hands, and most are devoted to communication and information searches and to personal entertainment, a transformation symbolized when the market value of the search engine Google surpassed that of IBM, the key developer of mainframe and PC computing. Before the 1970s few anticipated the technological innovations that revolutionized the computer industry through miniaturization during the last three decades. The key development leading to smaller and cheaper computers was the microprocessor, a silicon chip that contained the computer's brains. Today digital "smart" technologies made possible by this constantly evolving innovation help us manage kitchen appliances, automobiles, fitness routines, personal calendars, household lighting

and heating, and a host of other daily activities.

Initially developed to facilitate American defense research in the 1960s, the internet was the second key to the revolution in communication and publication. It allowed smaller, faster computers and now tablets and smartphones to become research, information, and entertainment portals that could access vast international databases of research, opinion, entertainment, and commerce. Small personal computers and related devices and the World Wide Web have had a revolutionary impact on modern culture, allowing individuals and groups—without the support of governments, corporations, or other powerful institutions—to collect and disseminate information more freely than at any time in the past (see Chapter 19). The disruptive potential of this new forum was indicated in February 2010 when WikiLeaks published more than 250,000 classified U.S. government cables on the Web. Many of the most embarrassing documents were then published by traditional print media. The rise of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, also known as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) has also depended in part on the potency of the Web as a political platform and recruitment tool. Donald J. Trump's dependence on Twitter posts in the 2016 presidential campaign is another indication of this technology's political potential.

In the last decade new technologies have permitted the integration of previously distinct devices and technologies. As a result, software and hardware providers now routinely blend the functions and uses of small laptop computers, cellular phones, and MP3 players to provide new business and professional applications and entertainment. Hand-held "convergence devices" evolving from the cellular telephone allow users to make phone calls, send email, search the internet, read books, play music and videos, find directions, and store digital texts. No corporation has played a more central role in this stage of the computer revolution than Apple, a computer company that has become a major innovator in the smartphone and tablet market. It is now the most valuable corporation in the world. Worth noting is the fact that other representatives of new technology—Google's parent company Alphabet, Microsoft, Facebook, and Amazon—are also at the pinnacle of international corporate wealth and power.

One result of these technological revolutions is the appearance of plugged-in, self-identifying communities in venues like blogs, social media, and chat rooms that transcend or supplement older forms of community based on ethnic, regional, or economic identities. At the same time these innovations have undermined traditional expectations of privacy as corporations and governments routinely follow online activity, dropping targeted advertisements into our online searches and routinely following our physical movements.

The Connected Crowd

On the floor of this crowded dance club patrons record the entertainment as

well as their own participation on smartphones, transmitting the event simultaneously to friends across the city, nation, and even internationally via Facebook, Instagram, and other social media services.

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Three Gorges Dam on China's Yangzi River

The world's largest hydroelectric facility, completed in 2012, the dam is also designed to improve river shipping and reduce the danger of flooding. However, 1.3 million people were displaced in its construction and many archaeological sites inundated.

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