John M. Murrin, Paul E. Johnson, James M. McPherson, Alice Fahs, Gary Gerstle, Emily S. Rosenberg, and Norman L. Rosenberg

Publisher: Clark Baxter
Senior Acquisitions Editor: Ashley Dodge
Development Editor: Margaret McAndrew Beasley
Assistant Editor: Kristen Tatroe
Editorial Assistant: Ashley Spicer
Associate Development Project Manager: Lee McCracken
Senior Marketing Manager: Janise Fry
Marketing Assistant: Kathleen Tosiello
Marketing Communications Manager: Tami Strang
Senior Content Project Manager: Joshua Allen
Senior Art Director: Cate Rickard Barr
Print/Media Buyer: Doreen Suruki
Permissions Editor: Roberta Broyer

© 2008 Thomson Wadsworth, a part of The Thomson Corporation. Thomson, the Star logo, and Wadsworth are trademarks used herein under license.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution, information storage and retrieval systems, or in any other manner—without the written permission of the publisher.

Printed in Canada
1 2 3 4 5 11 10 09 08 07

ExamView® and ExamView Pro® are registered trademarks of FSCreations, Inc. Windows is a registered trademark of the Microsoft Corporation used herein under license. Macintosh and Power Macintosh are registered trademarks of Apple Computer, Inc. Used herein under license.

© 2008 Thomson Learning, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Thomson Learning WebTutor™ is a trademark of Thomson Learning, Inc.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2006933547
ISBN-10: 0-495-11607-6

For more information about our products, contact us at:
Thomson Learning Academic Resource Center
1-800-423-0563

For permission to use material from this text or product, submit a request online at http://www.thomsonrights.com
Any additional questions about permissions can be submitted by email to thomsonrights@thomson.com

Thomson Higher Education
25 Thomson Place
Boston, MA 02210-1202
USA
Economic, Social, and Cultural Change in the Late 20th Century

21st-Century Los Angeles

Billboards such as these, one in English and the other in Chinese, showed how the advertising industry, like other American institutions, adjusted to the growing linguistic diversity.
The late 20th and the early 21st centuries brought sweeping changes to American life. A dramatic increase in immigration, along with movements of people throughout sprawling metropolitan areas and into states in the West and South, altered U.S. demographic patterns. The continuing transformation away from employment in the manufacturing sector of the economy changed the workplace for many Americans. A digital revolution transfigured systems of information in business and other areas of national life. A vast entertainment-informational complex, with an increasing emphasis on professional sports, also emerged. At the same time, religious life in America became more diverse, more devout, and more intertwined with the nation’s politics.
A Changing People

The demographic makeup of the United States changed significantly during the final three decades of the 20th century. The nation’s people became older, more metropolitan, and more ethnically and racially diverse. Moreover, important centers of power continued shifting away from the Northeast and toward the South and West.

An Aging, Shifting Population

During the 1950s, the height of the Baby Boom, the population had grown by 1.8 percent per year; after 1970, even with new waves of immigration and longer life expectancies, the growth rate slowed to about 1 percent per year. Younger people generally delayed marriage until well into their 20s, most raised smaller families than had their parents, and more remained unmarried for much of their life. The number of households with at least one child under 18 continually shrank. In 1960, nearly 50 percent fell into this category; by 1999, only about one-third of U.S. households contained even one person under the age of 18. Consequently, by the mid-1980s, people in the 25-to-44 age range constituted a larger slice of the U.S. population than any other category, and the number of those between their teens and early twenties was relatively small.

The steady rise of the median age of the population brought public policy, as well as personal, dilemmas. As aging Baby Boomers pondered retirement options, for example, policy makers worried that the projected Social Security and Medicare payouts would bequeath a staggering burden of costs to the smaller post-Baby Boom generations of workers. Trend watchers of the 1960s had talked of a “youth revolt.” At the beginning of the 21st century, their counterparts pondered the “graying of America.”

Significant change also occurred in the geographic distribution of population, and these transformations helped to shift the regional distribution of political and economic power. After 1970, the vast bulk of the nation’s population growth occurred in the South and the West. Nevada, California, Florida, and Arizona became the fastest-growing states, and by 2000, more than one in ten Americans lived in California. Between 1990 and 2001, California gained eight seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, Florida added six, New York lost five, and several other northeastern states lost two or three. Presidential politics increasingly turned on results from Florida, Texas, and California.

Many reasons account for this demographic shift: affordable air-conditioning, the expansion of tourism and new retirement communities in Sun Belt areas, businesses attracted by lower labor costs, the absence of strong unions, and the development of high-tech industries connected to military-related spending and the computer revolution.

The governmentally financed space program, directed by NASA installations in Texas and Florida, symbolized the geographic shift in the research and technology sectors. In 1961, President Kennedy had announced plans for the manned Apollo program, and in July 1969, astronaut Neil Armstrong had stepped from a spacecraft onto the lunar surface. Apollo flights continued until 1972, when NASA began to develop a space station. In the 1980s, NASA started operating “space shuttles,” manned craft that served as scientific laboratories in outer space and could be flown back to Earth for reuse. In early 1986, a Challenger shuttle craft exploded as it was about to take off, and the program stalled for a few years. Still, the accelerating ripple effect of space and defense spending continued to stimulate technological innovation and population growth in Sunbelt areas.

---

**Focus Question**

What major demographic trends characterized the post-1970 United States? How did they contribute to changing daily life?

---

**CHRONOLOGY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Congress passes Immigration Act of 1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Microsoft licenses its first personal computer software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>MTV and CNN debut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Supreme Court rules that home taping of TV programs does not violate copyright law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Immigration Reform and Control Act toughens laws against employing undocumented immigrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Fox television network debuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Immigration Act revises conditions for admittance • Census designates “Asian or Pacific Islanders” as single, pan-Asian category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Catch-phrase “surfing the Internet” is coined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Cesar Chavez dies • Number of Internet sites passes the 100,000 mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Dial-in Internet services begin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Fox News Networks debuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>First Harry Potter book published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>E-commerce begins in earnest • German Daimler buys out Chrysler Motors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>E-commerce and dot-com stocks surge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Last census of 20th century conducted • Many dot-com enterprises collapse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>People classified as “non-Hispanic whites” no longer a majority of California's population • America Online merges with Time-Warner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Final theatrical release in Star Wars series</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Aging of America


Map 31.1 Population Shifts Toward the Sunbelt

In the era after the Second World War, Americans gravitated toward the South and West. Which states grew the fastest? What might be some of the causes and consequences of such population shifts?

View an animated version of this map or related maps at http://www.thomsonedu.com/history/murrin.
New Immigration

A dramatic increase in immigration from countries mostly to the south and west of the United States accounted for much of the U.S. population growth, particularly in the southern and western parts of the country. The vast bulk of post-1970 immigration came from Asia, Oceania, Latin America, and Africa rather than from Europe, the primary source of immigrants from the 1790s to 1924. In 2000, roughly 12 percent of the U.S. population had been born outside of the United States, compared to the all-time high of 15 percent in 1890.

The largest number of non-European immigrants came from Mexico. Responding to labor shortages in the United States and poor economic prospects at home, both legal and undocumented immigration from Mexico rose substantially during the last 30 years of the 20th century. Many immigrants from Mexico arrived as seasonal agricultural workers or temporary laborers, but most soon formed permanent communities. According to the 2000 census, 90 percent of all Mexican Americans lived in the Southwest, primarily Texas and California.

Most immigrants from Puerto Rico settled around New York City, but sizable Puerto Rican communities developed in Chicago and in cities in New England and Ohio as well. Economic problems on the mainland during the 1970s prompted some to return to the island, but the flow reversed again after about 1980. By 2000, the Puerto Rican population on the U.S. mainland totaled about 3 million, compared to slightly less than 4 million in Puerto Rico.

Cubans had begun immigrating in large numbers in response to Fidel Castro’s revolution. After the U.S. Congress, in 1962, designated people fleeing from Castro’s Cuba as “refugees” eligible for admittance, more than 800,000 Cubans from every strata of society came to the United States during the next 20 years. They gradually moved northward into many major American cities, but the greatest impact came in south Florida. An agreement with Castro in 1995 brought the first U.S. restrictions on the flow of immigrants from Cuba. In 2000, however, about half of all the people residing in Miami were of Cuban descent.

By the early 21st century, the number of Spanish-speaking people in the United States totaled more than in all but four countries of Latin America. Los Angeles became the second largest “Mexican city” in the world, trailing only Mexico City, and LA’s Salvadoran population just about equaled that of San Salvador. More Puerto Ricans lived in New York City than in San Juan, and the Big Apple’s Dominican population rivaled that of Santo Domingo.

Changes in immigration patterns began with the landmark Immigration Act of 1965, which spurred not only population growth but diversity as well. Since the 1920s, the nature of immigration to the United States had been determined by quotas based on national origins (see chapter 24). The 1965 act abolished these. Instead, it...
placed a ceiling of 20,000 immigrants for every country, gave preference to those with close family ties in the United States, and accorded priority to people with special skills and those classified as refugees. Although largely unforeseen at the time, this legislation laid the basis not only for a resumption of high-volume immigration but also for a substantial shift in the countries of origin.

International events also affected U.S. immigration policy. In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, for example, U.S. officials facilitated the admittance of many Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, and Hmong (an ethnically distinct people who inhabited lands extending across the borders of these three Asian countries). The goal was to resettle people who had allied with the United States during the war and whose families were consequently in peril.

In response to the growing number of people seeking admission to the United States, Congress later passed the Refugee Act of 1980. It specified that political refugees, “those fleeing overt persecution,” could be admitted more easily but that people seeking simply to improve their economic circumstances could not. In practice, U.S. officials interpreted the terms “political” and “economic” so that they generally admitted people leaving communist regimes but not those fleeing right-wing dictatorships. For example, Cubans and Soviet Jews invariably qualified under the Refugee Act, but Haitians often did not. (The number of undocumented Haitians entering the United States, however, rose rapidly.) Many Guatemalans and Salvadorans, hoping to escape repressive military governments backed by the United States during the 1980s, stood little chance of being admitted as legal immigrants. Thousands of undocumented immigrants from all over Central America, however, entered the United States to look for work.

Immigration soon began generating political controversy. As proponents and opponents of restrictions offered conflicting perspectives on how new immigrants, both legal and undocumented, were affecting domestic life, partisan differences emerged. In general, Democrats favored less restrictive policies than their GOP counterparts. Although many congressional Republicans hoped President Ronald Reagan would weigh in on their side, he played a minimal role in the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. This measure, at first glance, looked fairly restrictive. It granted full residency status to recent immigrants who could prove that they had been living in the United States since 1982, but it included stricter penalties on businesses employing undocumented workers. Lacking effective means of enforcing its penalties on employers, however, the new law did little to halt the flow of immigrants, especially during a time when jobs in the United States remained plentiful.

As a result, the debate over immigration grew more acrimonious and increasingly polarized. Another congressional act, in 1990, raised the number of immigrants who could legally be admitted on the basis of special job skills or the investment capital they could bring to the United States. A 1996 report, by a special congressional Commission on Immigration Reform, called for lowering the total of official immigration slots and for tightening restrictions against undocumented workers, but a wide range of political and social movements opposing such changes blocked such a response by Congress.

Conflicting demands and contradictory claims about the economic impact of immigrant workers helped stalemate further change in policy. Most business interests favored relatively open immigration policies and opposed strict enforcement of rules against hiring undocumented workers. They supported the claim that immigrants, both the highly educated and the skilled, along with those at the entry level, filled job slots that would otherwise remain open. Opponents, on the other hand, cited figures that suggested immigrants were assuming jobs formerly held by U.S. citizens, especially ones with minimal education and job training, and driving down wage rates. Data to
sustain any claim about the precise impact of immigration remained thin and highly contested. Moreover, political debate generally turned on reciting emotionally charged, largely anecdotal evidence rather than on closely analyzing available economic numbers.

The new immigration likely changed California more than any other state. (States along the southwestern border of the United States also felt the impact of immigration from Mexico but never experienced the same high level of Asian immigration as did California.) In the Golden Gate State, the counties of Los Angeles and Orange seemed microcosms of world culture. By 2000, fewer than half of schoolchildren in LA could claim proficiency in English, and no single ethnic group comprised a majority of the city’s population. As with the earlier surges of immigration, the wave that began during the 1970s produced not only problems and ethnic-based rivalries but also cooperation and hopes for the benefits of multiculturalism.

The Metropolitan Nation

Urban-suburban demographics, too, remained in a state of flux. At the end of the 20th century, more than 80 percent of Americans lived in vast metropolitan areas. With the overall population growing, though more slowly than during the 1950s and 1960s, the relationship between central cities and adjacent suburbs continued to change. Many once-distinct suburban areas melded into “urban corridors,” or “metropolitan strips,” which ran along freeway links between older cities such as Seattle and Tacoma or Washington and Baltimore. Outlying areas also sprouted “edge cities,” shopping and business complexes such as the Tyson’s Corner area, just outside of Washington, D.C. Edge cities competed with older urban centers for businesses, jobs, and residents. People living in these new areas, studies showed, rarely found the need to visit the nearby center cities.
Demographic patterns in suburbia also changed. First, greater numbers of people from non-European backgrounds began moving to suburbs, just as more Americans of European descent were relocating in cities. As a result, the percentage of African Americans residing in urban centers steadily declined, and the percentage living in suburbia increased, especially after 1990. With a number of immigrant groups settling outside central cities, some suburbs—even in midsized urban areas such as Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota—came to contain more people identified with non-European ethnic groups than the central cities they surrounded.

Second, many new suburbs sprouted up farther away than ever from either edge or core cities. A frenzy of new construction transformed more and more farmland and small towns into a series of sprawling housing developments, which demographers called “exurbs.” Built on relatively inexpensive land, exurbs allowed cost-conscious home buyers, many of them drawn to the tax-cutting policies of the Republican Party, to purchase more space for less money. At the same time, exurban areas of the early 21st century, as had the new suburbs of the mid-20th century, offered families with young children newly built schools and freshly constructed playgrounds. They also, however, allowed anyone commuting to work the opportunity to spend up to several hours every day trapped inside a car, inching in and out of exurban areas.

Meanwhile, the nation’s urban cores underwent continual transformation. During the 1970s and much of the 1980s, as manufacturing jobs began leaving urban areas and retail shopping continued to shift to outlying malls, cities focused on becoming financial, administrative, and entertainment centers. Distinct areas in most large cities also faced rising rates of homelessness, crime, and infrastructure deterioration, especially in their sewer and water systems. Big-city mayors complained that the government in Washington did little to address urban problems. Federal funding decreased from $64 per urban resident in 1980 to less than $30 by 1993.

During the late 1980s and 1990s, however, parts of most central cities underwent a stunning revival that reversed the declines of the 1970s. A building boom brought new office towers, residential buildings, and sports and arts complexes to downtowns across the country. Moreover, the population drain away from cities, at least in part, shifted into reverse. People with money to invest in housing and to spend at restaurants and on
entertainment began returning to selected areas, which thus became labeled as “gentrified,” in most cities.

Many different sources fed the gentrification movement. During the economically troubled 1970s, affluent young people in the rapidly expanding 25-to-44 age category rediscovered cities as interesting, relatively inexpensive places in which to live. Older homes and neighborhoods, which their parents had rejected, suddenly looked potentially “quaint” and “charming,” especially when properly renovated. Encouraged by federal laws that provided funds and tax breaks for refurbishing historic buildings, developers and ordinary people looked for workers skilled in dry-walling, tuck-pointing, and kitchen remodeling. During the 1980s and 1990s, the relatively healthy national economy helped the urban revival continue. Innovative urban design schemes skillfully integrated diverse architectural styles with new green spaces and revitalized river- and lakefronts.

At the turn of the 21st century, many U.S. cities seemed to be emerging as exciting, transnational spaces.
Community development corporations (CDCs), grass-roots efforts indebted to movement cultures of the 1960s and early 1970s, helped finance affordable housing, child-care facilities, and employment opportunities. The Community Reinvestment Act, which obliged banks to invest in low-income areas, stimulated economic activity. Community policing, a trend toward harsher sentencing, and an aging population lowered urban crime rates. Moreover, commuters frustrated by increasingly clogged freeways discovered that they could save both time and money by moving from distant suburbs to revitalizing downtowns. In addition, new immigrants, many bringing marketable skills and significant amounts of capital, also repopulated once-declining neighborhoods, refurbishing property and reviving commercial zones.

Economic Change

Focus Question

What were the most important, post-1970 technological and economic changes? How did technological change create both new problems and new possibilities?

Most people living in the United States at the turn of the 20th century oriented their lives around technologies that were either unavailable or only in their infancy 30 years earlier. The most technologically sophisticated could awake to some kind of digital device; pop breakfast into a microwave; telecommute to work, at home, on a portable computer; and talk to friends or colleagues over a cell phone. They could interrupt work, or follow it up, by listening to music downloaded from the Internet; watching a movie or television program recorded earlier; and going online to seek information, entertainment, or companionship. The pace of post-1970 technological change, in short, brought astonishing transformations in work routines and the rhythms of daily life.

New Technologies

Some of the most noteworthy technological changes occurred in biotechnology, in high-performance computing machines and software, and in other communications systems.

In one of the most important research projects of the late 20th century, scientists announced in June 2000 that they had successfully mapped the entire human genetic code. This Human Genome Project paved the way for new techniques of gene transfer, embryo manipulation, tissue regeneration, and even cloning. Breakthroughs in biotechnology promised new approaches to the treatment of cancer and other diseases. Genetic manipulation in plants seemed able to revolutionize food production, waste conversion, and toxic cleanup. Large food companies heralded the use of genetically modified foods as an extension of the earlier “green revolution,” which had boosted agricultural yields.

Serious questions about the role of science in manipulating genetic codes and altering reproductive processes, however, soon arose. Controversy swirled around the impact of genetically modified foods on the planet’s biodiversity. Research on fetal stem cells, which could be used to regenerate human tissue, raised a highly politicized religious-ethical debate over the definition of life.

The computer revolution entered a new phase during the 1970s. The introduction of microchips boosted the hardware capability and reduced the size and cost of computers. Powerful memory capacities and parallel processors, which allow many operations to run simultaneously, transformed industrial and informational systems, lowering labor costs and making production schedules more flexible. “Artificial intelligence” (AI) capabilities emerged, along with voice interaction between people and machines.

New communications technologies, such as fiber-optic networks and satellite transmission, and the computer revolution also fueled an “information revolution.” Libraries replaced card catalogs with computer networks. Voice-mail, fax transmissions, e-mail, and text-messaging came to supplement or simply replace posted mail and conventional telephone conversations. Cellular phone calls became more common than those using land-lines. The speed and accessibility of information thus changed patterns of human interaction. The simple act of “talking to a real person” or to a consumer representative who lived in the same community or even the same country became an increasingly rare occurrence.

Big Business

Other forms of computerized communications helped transform business operations. Although the practice of buying on credit had become increasingly common since the 1920s, vast computer systems greatly assisted the rapid expansion of bank-issued credit cards. Other innovations—automated teller machines (ATMs), automatic depositing, debit cards, and electronic bill payment—moved Americans closer to a cashless economy. Congressional deregulation of financial industries during the 1980s and 1990s, which prompted the Savings & Loan crisis, also permitted banking institutions and brokerage houses to offer similar financial services, accelerating competition among the financial giants that sold stocks, lent money, and offered insurance.

Franchises and chain stores also changed consumption and workplace patterns. McDonald’s and Holiday Inn
had pioneered nationwide standardization in the fast-food and travel industries during the late 1950s. Other chains soon copied their models. Starbucks elevated a simple beverage into pricey designer commodities. The Arkansas-based Wal-Mart chain became the country’s largest private employer. By the early 21st century, one of about every 120 workers and nearly one of every 20 workers in the retail sector received their paycheck from Wal-Mart. Such chains often brought a greater array of merchandise and lower prices, but critics charged them with crushing local, independent retailers in thousands of midsized and small towns.

U.S. chain businesses expanded overseas as well. After the end of the Cold War, McDonald’s opened to great fanfare in Moscow and Budapest, while the Hilton chain quickly placed new hotels in Eastern European capitals. Pepsi and Coke carried their “cola wars” into foreign markets. Starbucks created a controversy when it opened a branch in Beijing’s imposing Forbidden City.

Amazon.com led another branch of innovation—e-commerce, or the practice of buying and selling products over the Internet. At the end of the 1990s, a wave of new “dot-com” businesses promised to move more and more purchasing to the Internet and set off a short-term bubble in dot-com stocks. During 2000, stock prices for these enterprises collapsed as dramatically as they had risen. Buying and selling on the Web, however, remained an important new feature of consumer culture. Amazon and eBay, the online auction site, became models for doing business in cyberspace.

Raised on the rich farmlands of the upper Midwest, Norman Borlaug initially took agricultural bounty for granted. While a student at the University of Minnesota during the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, however, he confronted problems related to farm production. After receiving his Ph.D. in plant pathology in 1942, Borlaug soon launched a career devoted to helping people outside of the United States grow enough food to avoid famine.

Working with both U.S. charitable foundations and foreign governments, Borlaug traveled widely to develop new crop strains that could both survive and thrive in hostile environments. A varsity wrestler in college, Borlaug became almost as famous for his own physical labor in the fields of Africa and Asia as for the new varieties of wheat and rye he pioneered. By the 1960s, he had helped develop new strains of the basic grains, particularly wheat, and initiated the process called the “green revolution” in agriculture. Borlaug’s scientifically produced seeds were not only harder than older stains but also produced far greater yields.

Borlaug’s work promised to reverse the long-term trend in which population growth outpaced the food supply. The green revolution took hold almost everywhere in the world except sub-Saharan Africa. In the 1970s, Borlaug received the Nobel Peace Prize, largely for his contributions to combating famine in India and Pakistan during the 1960s.

The green revolution produced controversy as well as celebration. Critics in the scientific community worried about the long-term ecological and social effects of his agricultural innovations, which often relied on application of toxic fertilizers and intensive irrigation. Responding to his critics and lured out of retirement by President Jimmy Carter, Borlaug continued to insist that his basic techniques, if refined to meet new situations, would allow safe and abundant food production almost anywhere in the world.

At the beginning of the 21st century, as he neared the age of 90, Borlaug had left retirement behind. He was still teaching college classes in agronomy and traveling the world on behalf of the agricultural changes he had helped introduce. His admirers claimed that he had saved more lives, by preventing famine, than any other person of the 20th century.
Production, as well as consumption, turned global. U.S. automakers, for example, increasingly moved their procurement and assembly work offshore, even as foreign car manufacturers established new assembly plants in the United States. Moreover, the trend toward privatization (the sale of government-owned industries to private business) in many economies worldwide provided U.S. based firms with new opportunities for overseas acquisitions. Conversely, foreign interests purchased many U.S. companies and real estate holdings. In the early 1990s, RCA, Doubleday, Mack Truck, and Goodyear were just some of the traditionally American brands owned by foreign-based corporations. So many industrial giants had become global by the early 21st century that it was difficult to define what constituted a U.S. company or a foreign one.

Postindustrial Restructuring

New technologies and economic globalization helped change the American business structure and the workforce. In the 1970s, citing pressure from international competition and declining profits, many companies began cutting back their workforce and trimming their management staff, moves known as “downsizing.” Major steel plants closed, and the auto industry laid off thousands of workers. In the 1980s and 1990s, the steel and auto industries temporarily regained profitability, but other sectors took their turns at downsizing. Business restructuring, together with the government’s deregulation of major industries, touched off a merger boom. During the prosperity of the late 1990s, huge mergers, with acquisitions totaling more than $1.6 trillion per year, brought a concentration in corporate power unseen since the 1890s.

Meanwhile, the kinds of jobs held by Americans shifted. As employment in traditional manufacturing and extractive sectors (such as mining) decreased, jobs in the service sector, high-tech fields, and the information and entertainment areas increased. In 1960, the production of goods, as opposed to services, had engaged roughly one-quarter of the U.S. workforce. By the early 21st century, the comparable figure stood at about 15 percent. Moreover, according to one estimate, more than 40 percent of U.S. corporate profits came from the financial services sector, while only about 10 percent came from manufacturing. Financial services, computing, and other high-tech sectors offered relatively high salaries—astronomical ones for top management—but most jobs in the rapidly expanding service sector—such as clerks and cleaners—remained low paying, part-time, and nonunionized.

Many individuals and families maintained their lifestyles by incurring rising levels of personal debt. In addition to discussing the “U.S. deficit,” economists began analyzing “the household deficit,” the difference between what U.S. households earned and what they actually spent. As late as 1980, the rate of indebtedness for households, though higher than that during the 1950s, still remained lower than it had been during the 1920s. The 1980s, however, inaugurated a trend that would accelerate into the next century: People living in the United States assumed ever-larger financial obligations enabled through various credit arrangements. As more people shouldered greater debt, the number of personal bankruptcies increased. Conversely, opportunities for accumulating one’s own rainy day fund declined. The rate of personal savings in the United States fell to the lowest in the industrialized world.
In turn, the nation’s business structure came to include a complex set of greatly expanded, often politically influential, financial institutions. (Financial institutions, beneficiaries of deregulation, constituted the largest contributors to political parties.) Some pundits called these, taken together, the “Debt and Credit-Industrial Complex” or the “Borrower-Industrial Complex.” A wide range of businesses—from international “super banks,” such as Citigroup and the Bank of America, to street corner institutions, such as Check ‘n’ Go and Moneytree, to pawn-shop chains, such as Pawn America, right on down to illegal loan shark operations—profited from people who never seemed able to balance their personal books. Many neighborhood loan sharks, cynics quipped, operated with only slightly less regulation, while providing more cordial service, than large banking chains. Federal court decisions and regulatory rulings during the 1990s effectively gave credit-card issuers a green light when charging interest rates and imposing other terms. Banks competed for customers from all across the spectrum but placed increasing importance on spreading “plastic” among the college-age population, for whom personal indebtedness was soaring. Observing the growth of a financial sector reined in by only slightly less regulation, while providing more cordial service, than large banking chains. Federal court decisions and regulatory rulings during the 1990s effectively gave credit-card issuers a green light when charging interest rates and imposing other terms. Banks competed for customers from all across the spectrum but placed increasing importance on spreading “plastic” among the college-age population, for whom personal indebtedness was soaring. Observing the growth of a financial sector reined in by fewer and fewer governmental regulations, the head of the U.S. Senate’s banking committee rejected any calls for re-regulation. Greater competition among lenders, he claimed, rather than greater oversight by government, provided the best solution to questionable banking practices: We “believe freedom is the answer,” he insisted.

As important business sectors, particularly the financial one, flourished, virtually every part of the labor union movement suffered as membership rolls continued to shrink. During the 1950s, more than 30 percent of the U.S. workforce belonged to a union; in the early 1970s, the figure had declined only slightly, to about 29 percent; by 1991, it stood at slightly above 16 percent. By the early 21st century, it slipped further, to around 13 percent. Some unions suffered greater attrition than others. Unions that represented workers in the “needle trades,” such as the fabled International Ladies’ Garment Workers Union, lost two-thirds of their membership during the last three decades of the 20th century.

Efforts to organize agricultural workers on the West Coast, who were largely of Mexican and Filipino descent, dramatized some of the difficulties of expanding the union movement. Cesar Chavez, a charismatic leader who emulated the nonviolent tactics of Martin Luther King, Jr., vaulted the United Farm Workers (UFW) into public attention during the early 1970s. As the union’s president and iconic symbol, Chavez undertook personal hunger strikes and instituted well-publicized consumer boycotts of lettuce and grapes to pressure growers to bargain with the UFW. During the later 1970s and the 1980s, however, the UFW steadily lost ground. Strong antiunion stands by growers and the continued influx of new immigrants who were eager for work undercut the UFW’s efforts. When Chavez died in April 1993, his union was struggling to recruit new members and to retain those already on its rolls.

The broader union movement faced only slightly less difficulty making inroads into new sectors of the economy. The major growth for organized labor came among government employees and health care workers. Unions launched ambitious organizing drives among clerical, restaurant, and hotel workers, but businesses adamantly fought back. Employers also continued to cut the health and retirement benefits that the leading U.S. firms had once proudly offered.

The system of fringe benefits found in the United States, which many companies had greatly expanded after the Second World War, came under increasing pressure toward the end of the 20th century. An attractive benefit package had once provided an employer, in the relatively competitive job market of the 1940s and 1950s, a way of attracting workers without paying dramatically higher wages and salaries. Moreover, the amount of money a company paid toward its share of a health plan did not count, under federal law, as part of an employee’s taxable compensation. Everyone thus stood to gain, it had seemed, from relatively generous benefit programs.

Things had begun to change, however, during the 1960s as U.S. companies faced both increasing foreign competition and rising domestic health care costs. In 1960, only about 5 percent of the entire U.S. GDP went for health care; some 45 years later, the comparable figure reached more than 15 percent, a greater percentage than people paid for food. The annual cost of providing health care for a family, according to most estimates, came to about what a full-time, minimum-wage worker would...
earn over a year and twice the pay of the average Wal-Mart employee. Any U.S. company facing domestic or foreign competition, such as the large auto manufacturers, found it increasingly difficult to maintain extensive benefit packages that included health care for an aging workforce.

As early as the 1980s, economists warned that the shift to a globalizing “postindustrial” economy was “deskilling” the labor force and eroding living standards in the United States. Critical observers expressed alarm over statistical evidence that so many of the new jobs created in the U.S. economy offered low wages and few benefits. Did the widening gulf between highly paid, highly skilled positions and minimum-wage jobs threaten to undermine the middle-class nature of American society? Wal-Mart, for example, actively resisted the unionization of its enormous workforce, which earned an average of $7 to $8 per hour in 2003 and enjoyed limited or no fringe benefits. Moreover, manufacturers wanting to lower costs to attract the huge Wal-Mart purchasing contracts moved their plants into countries with the least expensive labor costs. This trend further contributed to the disappearance of relatively better-paid manufacturing jobs from the United States.

Other economists painted a different picture. They acknowledged that internationalization and corporate downsizing might temporarily mean lost jobs for some people but insisted that gains in productivity and new jobs generated by innovative industries would eventually translate into lower consumer prices and rising living standards for all. Celebrants of change pointed to many success stories, especially in high-tech industries, where innovation paved a broad avenue of upward economic mobility for those with computer-age skills. Real wages did begin to rise during the 1990s, but this trend would reverse as the economy softened after 2000, and the gap between the highest and lowest income levels continued to grow.

At the beginning of the 20th century, skilled workers had tended to stick to one profession or place of employment throughout their working life. By century’s end, even many highly educated professionals likely faced the prospect of switching occupations several times before reaching retirement age. The need for training and retraining programs that served people of all ages, many observers noted, demanded a transformation in the relationship among education, job training, and employment.

The Sports-Entertainment Complex

What might be called a sports-entertainment complex inexorably expanded after 1970. Metropolitan areas competed vigorously to bring a home team to their locale—or retain the ones already located there. Lucrative TV contracts and generous tax write-offs attracted business entrepreneurs, such as George Steinbrenner of the New York Yankees, who decided they might also be interested in running their own sports team. The generation of owners who had relied on revenues from a sports franchise for their primary livelihood, such as the Griffith family in baseball or the Halas family in football, began disappearing. Even professional wrestling, which still bore the imprint of its carnival origins during the 1970s, finally became part of the sports-entertainment complex. During the 1980s, Vince McMahon, Jr., transformed his late father’s World Wrestling Federation (later World Wrestling Entertainment or WWE) into a multimillion-dollar, worldwide name brand.

Although still unofficially “the national pastime,” baseball faced numerous challenges during the post-1970 era. Seeking a better fit with emerging economic, demographic, and social forces, baseball’s own leadership tinkered with the structure of their operation. By relocating franchises to burgeoning metropolitan areas, Major League Baseball (MLB) could acquire a fresh supply of fans, advantageous TV deals, and stadiums financed by public money. If moving existing franchises made sense, creating new ones seemed an even shrewder option. In the single decade of the 1970s, for instance, MLB moved teams out of and back into Milwaukee; into, out of, and finally back into Seattle; and out of, back in, and then out again of Washington, D.C.

This kind of franchise reshuffling paled by comparison to that in professional football and basketball, sports that initially claimed greater growth than MLB. The National Football League (NFL) and the National Basketball Association (NBA) had both prospered during the 1960s, in large part because of national television coverage and franchise expansion, especially into the West and South. The NFL’s leadership began citing surveys that showed more sports fans narrowly preferred professional football over the slower-moving product of MLB.

Just in time for the 1970 season, the NFL merged with an upstart rival, the American Football League (AFL), with which it had been playing a “Super Bowl” since 1967. Dividing its TV revenues equally, this revamped NFL ensured that a small-market team, such as the Green Bay Packers, enjoyed a secure financial base and the opportunity to compete, over the long run, on a roughly level playing field with larger-market franchises. During the 1970s, ABC began televising an NFL game during prime-time hours, and the instant success of Monday Night Football signaled how important sporting events had become to TV and to the nation’s popular culture. Noting the obvious, a group of TV entrepreneurs launched, toward the end of the 1970s, ESPN, a new cable network devoted to nothing but sports. In 2006, the flagship Monday Night Football offering moved to ESPN.

The NBA rounded out the big three of the sports-entertainment business. With its relatively small court making this sport even more TV-friendly than football, professional basketball could expand into new locales and broaden its television coverage. As the NBA’s revenues
grew, it came to feature high-profile African American stars, such as Julius (“Dr J”) Irving, more prominently than either the NFL or MLB. At century’s end, the NBA led the sports-entertainment world in promoting African Americans, including its greatest star Michael Jordan, into coaching and management positions.

Promoters aggressively marketed other sports-entertainment operations. These included a greatly expanded National Hockey League (NHL) and revamped tours of the men’s Professional Golfing Association (PGA) and a tour for women (LPGA). The nation’s love affair with the automobile helped to speed the growth of auto racing. The Indianapolis 500 initially vied with the Super Bowl for recognition as the most spectacular one-day event in sports, but stock-car competition eventually overtook Indy-style racing, expanding from its traditional base in the South. John Kennedy had tried to soft-pedal his fascination with sports, in favor of emphasizing more cerebral pursuits, but later political figures eagerly sought the glamour coming to surround big-time sports. Political candidates rushed to sign up prominent athletes for their campaign squads, and some, including former star quarterback Jack Kemp, successfully made the transition from the sports to the political field. In addition to tapping his family connections, George W. Bush used his part-ownership of the Texas Rangers baseball team as an entrée into electoral politics.

With the business of sports booming, it seemed inevitable that its legal foundations would also begin shifting. Professional players had long complained of receiving a disproportionately small share of profits, but the laws governing sports operations invariably favored owners. A new generation of athletes, armed with union advisers, challenged the old order. In 1970, baseball’s owners celebrated when the U.S. Supreme Court narrowly rejected a suit challenging MLB’s key contractual arrangement, the reserve clause that bound a player to a team year-after-year, as an unconstitutional form of involuntary servitude. Subsequent rulings, however, created slightly different systems of “free agency” throughout every team-sport enterprise. As a consequence, talented athletes could auction off their services in the marketplace. (The super-talented, such as Bo Jackson, even played off one professional sport against another.) Although some fans grumbled, especially when highly paid players failed to perform up to expectations, owners discovered that steadily rising revenues from TV, tax breaks, and favorable stadium deals could support the new salary structures. Perhaps the most successful examples of unionization in the post-1970 era came in the sports-entertainment field, where labor strikes remained a viable option for unions. Knowledgeable fans found themselves needing to become conversant with labor relations as well as more traditional sports-world matters.

Sports and legal questions also became intertwined with social issues. Feminists condemned big-time sports for promoting sexism—pointing, for example, to the emphasis the NFL placed on female cheerleading squads that resembled Las Vegas chorus lines—and urged inclusion of more opportunities and better financial rewards for women athletes. Colleges and universities, mandated by Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 to achieve equality in sports activities, faced difficult decisions about how to finance and promote women’s sports. In women’s sports where professionalism prevailed, such as tennis and golf, the trend was unabashedly toward emulating the male model. Prize money, endorsement contracts, and media coverage for women athletes all steadily escalated during the last decades of the 20th century.

As the importance that cultural commentators assigned to Jackie Robinson’s struggle to desegregate MLB during the 1940s had underscored, the sports-entertainment complex had long provided a cultural mirror. Sports supposedly reflected and represented larger themes. How much opportunity the sports-entertainment complex really offered to people of non-European descent, a question that had been raised dramatically by a Black Power protest at the 1968 Summer Olympics, remained a persistent issue. By the early 21st century, the number of African Americans playing MLB was declining, while that of Latino ballplayers was soaring. Similarly, as NBA scouts identified talented international players, especially from Eastern Europe, some observers began to fear that the strong African American presence might disappear from professional basketball courts.

As the sports-entertainment complex grew in wealth and visibility, traditionalists inevitably saw signs of decline. Sporting events, such as the Winter and the Summer Olympic Games, no longer amateur competitions in any meaningful sense, seemed awash in commercialism and off-field corruption. Similarly, the surge of interest in MLB at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the next century appeared to owe a great deal to the prodigious feats of home run hitters, led by Mark McGwire, Sammy Sosa, and Barry Bonds. It soon became evident, however, that consumption of greater quantities of performance-enhancing drugs was helping players drive balls out of MLB parks. The super-knowledgeable sports fan, it seemed, not only needed a background in legal but now in pharmaceutical matters as well.

### Media and Popular Culture

**Focus Question**: How did new forms of media change the ways in which people received information and entertainment?

A greater range of knowledge could prove handy for fans of all popular culture. New technologies significantly
altered how people received and used books, movies, TV, music, and informational resources. By the early 21st century, virtually every home or apartment had at least one television and VCR or DVD player, and about 60 percent had a personal computer. People looked to the Internet for access to newspapers, books, music, and movies. E-mail and text-messaging increasingly became the first choice for contacting friends. The omnipresent video screen, which became ever more portable, seemed the preeminent symbol of American culture.

The Video Revolution

At the beginning of the 1970s, TV broadcasters could still expect a hit program to draw more viewers in a single evening than a hit motion picture attracted over an entire year. The three networks could promise advertisers that a rough cross section of the American public would be in front of their TV sets watching their sales pitches.

During the 1970s, however, the networks found themselves increasingly forced to embrace the strategy called "narrowcasting," fragmenting the viewing audience into carefully targeted segments. CBS replaced several highly watched programs, such as *The Beverly Hillbillies*, with shows aimed toward viewers under the age of 40, those coveted by advertisers because research studies identified them as more likely than older viewers to spend money on products and services. CBS also introduced "edgier" programming. *All in the Family*, a sitcom about a blue-collar family's intergenerational conflicts associated with the 1960s, made its bigoted protagonist, Archie Bunker, a lightning rod for issues involving race and gender. Although *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* rarely took overtly feminist positions, its cleverly constructed storylines and sharp dialogue consistently addressed the personal politics of working women. Other CBS shows, such as the antiwar sitcom *M*A*S*H*, also merged comedy and social commentary.

With CBS leading the way, the entire TV industry prospered during a nearly 10-year period beginning in the mid-1970s. ABC found its niche among high-school and college-age viewers, emphasizing sex-and-action programs (*Charlie's Angels*), mildly risqué sitcoms (*Three's Company*), and shows about teen life (*Happy Days*). NBC brought the barbed humor of the 1960s Counterculture to network television by nurturing *Saturday Night Live*. At the end of the 1970s, nine of every ten television sets were tuned to a network program during prime-time viewing hours.

A decade later, however, network programmers faced a harsher TV landscape. NBC could claim two now-classic hits, *The Cosby Show* (featuring an affluent African American family) and *Cheers* (set in a Boston tavern where "everybody knows your name"), but its other prime-time programs garnered disappointing ratings. Facing a similar situation, the other two networks joined NBC in slashing budgets and staff, especially in their news-gathering divisions. At the same time, local stations, which formerly limped along without a network affiliation, suddenly thrived. These independents programmed older Hollywood films, sporting events, and reruns of canceled, prime-time shows now being syndicated to individual stations. Several hundred independent television stations debuted during the 1980s.

Capitalizing on the rise of these independents, the Fox television network went on the air in 1988. Using a pattern that was later imitated by other would-be networks, Fox offered a limited schedule to previously nonaffiliated stations. Fox's first big hit, *The Simpsons*, an animated send-up of the standard family sitcom, became a pop cultural phenomenon and mass-marketing bonanza. In 1993, Fox outbid CBS for the rights to carry professional football games. The WB, UPN, and Fox networks featured programs, such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer, That 70s Show*, and *Malcolm in the Middle*, for audiences that contained more minority, young, and urban viewers than those of the three older networks.

New technologies, which promised viewers greater choice, challenged all of these networks. The remote control, an innovation of the 1960s that finally caught on during the 1980s, created a television aesthetic called "channel surfing," in which viewers flipped rapidly from program to program. Videocassette recorders (VCRs), introduced during the 1980s, became the first of the record-and-view-later technologies allowing viewers even greater control over their television offerings.

The initial challenge to the networks came from cable television (CATV), which was in nearly 75 percent of the nation's homes by 2000. The arrival of CATV accelerated the fragmentation of TV's audience. Atlanta's Ted Turner introduced the Cable News Network (CNN), several movie channels, and an all-cartoon network before his communication empire merged with that of Time-Warner. Companies selling direct satellite transmission challenged both the networks and cable, but the lack of a standard reception format slowed the expansion of this competing medium. By the early 21st century, the percentage of viewers watching prime-time network programs had fallen from 90 percent to under 60 percent. At the 2003 Emmy awards ceremonies, shows initially running on CATV received, for the first time, more awards than those carried on the traditional networks.

The “New Hollywood”

New technologies and changing business practices during the 1970s produced a “New Hollywood.” With movie attendance in 1970 about the same as it had been in 1960, Hollywood studios needed to change their mode of operation. They began raising ticket prices, betting on a few
The series of Star Wars movies, which first hit theaters in 1977, eventually gained a vast, sometimes cult-like following. The initial Star Wars broke all previous box-office records and launched literally thousands of merchandising spin-offs. Marketing campaigns began in the era of low-tech products, such as Luke Skywalker lunch boxes, and extended into the age of interactive computer video games. The movie’s creator, George Lucas, earned more money from licensing images from Star Wars than from the unprecedented box-office receipts for the 1977 film. Star Wars, which took three years and the then-astronomical sum of $30 million to produce, generated a similarly outsized popular response. Within three years, it returned a nearly 2,000 percent profit. It also gained 10 Academy Award nominations, seven Oscars, and three Grammy awards. The movie financed Lucas’s own private media empire, LucasFilm Ltd.; introduced six-track Dolby stereo to motion-picture theaters; helped make viewers in their teens and early twenties Hollywood’s primary target audience; and pioneered computerized breakthroughs in the use of graphic imagery and camera movement. The bottom line for Hollywood increasingly depended less on producing a steady supply of successful films than on releasing a few “blockbusters” modeled on Star Wars. The film industry designed blockbusters to attract a huge initial audience; create an expectation of sequels; sustain a variety of ancillary products, do well in markets overseas, and sell briskly in various VHS and DVD editions.

The initial Star Wars entry, eventually the fourth installment in what would become a six-part series, arguably tells an allegorical story that aims at working against the cynicism and divisions of the Vietnam era. Young Luke Skywalker, aided by the wizened Obi-Wan Kenobi and Han Solo, joins the fight to defeat the evil “Empire” and to rescue Princess Leia from the villainous Darth Vader. The movie embellishes this sparse tale with imagery borrowed from different Hollywood genres, including science fiction, combat films, westerns, and the Saturday-morning serials of the 1930s and 1940s.

The film’s final sequences, which show the triumph of individual effort and resourcefulness—not sophisticated technology—over an evil enemy, can appear to counter the traumatic and tangled history of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia with a heroic folktale. Similarly, the alliance between youthful Skywalker and aging Obi-Wan Kenobi might seem a parable about the need to heal the “generation gap” of the 1960s.

Seen another way, though, a film product such as Star Wars seemed to rest less on crafting the kind of political-historical allegory found in earlier Cold War-era movies such as High Noon (1952) than on simple market logic. A successful blockbuster primarily needed to create opportunities for inserting eye-filling special effects (often portraying considerable violence and mayhem) and for devising imagery (such as cute robots and cuddly creatures) for subsequent marketing in off-screen forms. In this sense, film spectacles such as Star Wars merit attention less as representations of specific episodes and themes in the past than as historical events in their own right.
blockbuster films, such as the highly profitable Star Wars series (1977–2005), and hoping for a surprise hit, such as My Big Fat Greek Wedding (2002). Yet for every blockbuster or unexpected success, there was a super-expensive flop such as Gigli (2003).

Volatility in the movie market encouraged most filmmakers to play it safe. Many movie makers recycled titles and special effects that had made money in the past. They transferred popular stories, such as How the Grinch Stole Christmas (2000), and TV shows, such as The Brady Bunch (1995), to the big screen and produced sequels for any movie, such as Pirates of the Caribbean (2003), which even approached blockbuster status. In addition, Hollywood expanded the older practice of targeting younger viewers with movies such as Ferris Bueller’s Day Off (1986).

Meanwhile, celebratory stories that tapped themes in popular history, such as Braveheart (1995) and Titanic (1997), impressed both ticket buyers and industry insiders.

At the same time, however, relatively small-scale movies also began to flourish. Woody Allen became one of the first U.S. filmmakers to specialize in movies, such as Crimes and Misdemeanors (1989) and Scoop (2006), which borrowed techniques and themes from European cinema. The actor-director Robert Redford launched the Sundance Film Institute in the hopes of encouraging “offbeat” examples of screenwriting and direction. Held in Park City, Utah, the annual Sundance Festival began attracting Hollywood moguls who sought the next “small” movie, such as The Blair Witch Project (1999), which might find a large audience. The CATV lineup soon included several outlets,
including the Sundance Channel, for independent films, and the Landmark movie chain featured films that seemed unlikely to play in the multiplex mall theaters. Some major studios even created special divisions, such as Paramount Classics, to specialize in so-called independent films. Moviemakers also experimented with digital technology, and by 2007, digital movies played regularly in commercial theaters, a trend traditionalists condemned for degrading the visual richness of cinematic imagery.

The New Hollywood became increasingly intertwined with the changing television establishment—once its feared rival—and with the emerging VCR, DVD, and iPod industries. Hollywood gained badly needed revenue by licensing its offerings to TV and for VCR and DVD distribution. During the 1980s and early 1990s, before a few chain operations cornered the market, the United States had claimed more video rental outlets than movie theaters. Constantly updated technologies gave viewers improved visual imagery, bonus attractions, such as footage cut from the theatrical release, wide-screen prints, and the kind of expert commentary and analysis hitherto only available at a film school. As Hollywood studios discovered that DVD sales easily matched theatrical receipts, they sought action films with elaborate special effects that promised to sell well on DVD. They also confronted, however, new “pirating” technologies that allowed their movies to appear in illegal, bootlegged editions at virtually the same time they debuted in theaters.

The Changing Media Environment

CATV, VCRs, and digital technology transformed the entire media-entertainment environment, including the pop music industry. The Music Television channel (MTV), initially offering a 24-hour supply of rock videos, debuted in 1981. Critics immediately charged it with portraying women as sex objects and excluding artists of color. Eventually, however, MTV defused complaints, especially after featuring Michael Jackson’s 29-minute video based on his hit single “Thriller” (1983). By the early 21st century, MTV and other CATV channels programmed videos that represented the increasingly multiethnic nature of the music industry.

Musical performers of the 1980s, such as Madonna, used MTV to forge a new relationship between music and visual imagery, the “MTV aesthetic.” This fast-paced visual style played with traditional ideas about time and space, recycled images from movies and TV programs, and often carried a sharp, satirical edge. The hit series Miami Vice, revived as a feature film in 2006, helped introduce the MTV aesthetic to a broader audience. During the 1990s, MTV abandoned its initial all-video format and developed a wide range of youth-oriented programming. Its cult classic, The Real World, anticipated the run of “reality” shows that quickly became staples on other CATV channels and on the networks.

Entertainment conglomerates began marketing music in a variety of ever newer formats. The 45-rpm record and
the long-play album (LP), associated with the musical rev-
olutions of the 1950s and 1960s, all but disappeared. Dig-
tal compact discs (CDs) and iPods changed not only the
technology through which pop music was delivered but
also the nature of the product and the listening experience.
The classic LPs of the late 1960s and early 1970s had fea-
tured 10 to 12 songs, split between the two sides and often
organized around a core theme. The turn-of-the-21st-
century CD player or iPod, by contrast, could hold a
hodgepodge of songs, with themes, if any, established by
the listener, not the producer.

Taken together, the Internet and digital technology
permitted people to obtain, preserve, and exchange music
in entirely new ways. The commercial music industry and
most artists complained about people using the Internet
to pirate copyrighted material. After years of legal spar-
ring, while the practice of internet file swapping soared,
the music industry tried a carrot-and-stick approach. It
began selling songs online and filed an unprecedented
number of lawsuits for copyright infringement against
ordinary people who were sharing music files from their
personal computers.

The New Mass Culture Debate

New trends in mass commercial culture predictably gen-
erated popular controversy. In 1975, the Federal Commu-
nications Commission (FCC) ordered the television net-
works to dedicate the first 60 minutes of prime-time each
evening to “family” programming free of violence or
“mature” themes. Eventually, federal courts struck down
this family-hour requirement as a violation of the First
Amendment’s guarantee of free expression. Demands
that Congress regulate rock lyrics and album covers also
ran afoul of complaints that this kind of legislation would
be unconstitutional. Eventually, TV programmers, record
producers, and new Internet gaming companies, follow-
ning the example of the Hollywood film industry, adopted
“warning labels” that supposedly informed parents about
products with violent and sexually explicit imagery.

Meanwhile, works of commercial culture were
attracting serious aesthetic analysis. Unlike the critics of
the 1950s, who had dismissed mass culture as trivial and
degenerate, analysts who gravitated to the new academic
field of Cultural Studies, and its various spin-offs in the
journalistic world, often seemed to be unabashed fans of
the commercial products they studied. Most consequently
jettisoned the distinction between lowbrow and highbrow.
The music of The Beatles could be studied along with that
of Beethoven, and Bob Dylan’s lyrics along with poetic
classics. The careers of manufactured celebrities such as
Britney Spears and Tom Cruise attracted the attention of
entertainment journalists and academics. They sought to
understand what the popularity of these iconic figures pur-
portedly signified about American life. The Cultural Stud-
ies approach rejected the elitist-sounding criticism of the
1950s, which had seen consumers as cultural “dupes” who
passively soaked up worthless products. Instead, it stressed
how people could interact creatively with commercial cul-
ture. Scholarly studies of Star Trek, for example, examined
how, through self-produced magazines (called “fanzines”),
conventions, and the Internet, “Trekkies” had created a
grassroots subculture that used the TV series of the 1960s
and its spin-offs to launch and sustain discussions about
social and political issues.

The Cultural Studies approach tended to embrace
multiculturalism. It highlighted, and often celebrated,
works produced by women, political outsiders, and non-
Western writers and artists. It also encouraged students to
see traditional texts within their political and historical
contexts rather than as timeless works. Traditionalists con-
demned this “cultural turn” as a legacy of the countercul-
ture of the 1960s and blamed it for eroding settled ideas of
artistic quality and value.

Some of the fiercest debates over an alleged decline in
the popular arts involved the emergence of an “infotain-
ment” complex, especially on television. An imprecise
cultural category, infotainment signaled that the always-
delicate balance between informing and merely amusing
audiences was now tilting decisively toward the latter side of
the equation. TV news operations, for instance, seemed to
have headed in this direction with the 1981 retirement of
revered CBS newscaster Walter Cronkite, long considered
the “most trusted” person in the country. None of Cronkite’s
successors, including his replacement at CBS, Dan Rather,
ever gained his elevated reputation and credibility.

At the same time, the invention and expansion of
CATV news brought strains of infotainment to the gather-
ing and dissemination of news about the United States
and the world. Images and commentary, to be sure,
reached far more households and ran 24/7 on Cable Net-
work News (CNN), which debuted in 1980. None of the
anchors or reporters who worked for this path-breaking
operation, however, achieved the oracle-like aura that
people such as Cronkite had earlier supplied. As initially
directed by Ted Turner, the mercurial CATV visionary,
CNN sometimes pursued a “hard-news” agenda, from
camera crews and correspondents stationed around the
globe, but increasingly stressed programs, such as its one-
t ime signature offering Firing Line, that relied on the in-
studio pyrotechnics of verbally dueling pundits. Its eventual
rival, the Fox News Channel (FNS), created in 1996 as a
right-leaning alternative to CNN, retrofitted the Firing
Line approach and used it in much of its programming,
which came to feature a recognizable stable of attractive,
verbally quick personalities with conservative views.
Moreover, in contrast to the old TV network format, which aimed at a “big-tent” audience, public affairs coverage on CATV adopted an avowedly narrowcasting strategy. With talk- and news-radio, local TV news programs, and most Internet sites offering much the same approach, critics of the new trends stressed how narrowly informed, according to polling data, consumers of the wide array of public affairs programming seemed to be. Infotainment seemed intent on reconfirming the existing perspectives of its core constituencies. In this same vein, public-opinion data suggested that two popular “fake” news programs, The Daily Show and The Colbert Report, themselves testaments to the Comedy Central network’s own limited audience strategy, likely produced—or simply attracted—viewers who were more broadly informed about issues than aficionados of the “real” news programs.

Another “Great Awakening”

The 1960s, according to most cultural historians, ushered in another religious Great Awakening. By employing this term, they did not mean that the nation’s diverse people suddenly became roused to spiritual enthusiasm. Religiosity had long been a far more powerful component of cultural life in the United States than in European nations. The last decades of the 20th century, however, witnessed the further intensification of always intense religious sentiments. People drawn to the Religious Right became particularly vocal about their commitment to seeing the world through religious teachings, but this perspective was hardly limited to political conservatives. Polls taken during the 1990s revealed that the more than 75 percent of Americans believed in a divine being who performed miracles on earth.

This latest Great Awakening emerged within a culture of greater religious diversity than the nation had ever witnessed. During the 1950s, for example, Will Herberg could confidently expect his book entitled Protestant-Catholic-Jew (1955) to characterize the religious dimensions of the “American Way of Life.” A half-century later, however, these three faiths represented only some of the religious dominations in the United States.

The cultural ferment of the 1960s, for example, affected the nation’s religious landscape. Popular memory still identifies the 1960s with cultlike movements, such as the “Jesus People,” loosely associated with the Counterculture. Embracing a strategy used by earlier groups that aimed at religious purification, some countercultural groups withdrew from secular institutions and sought to create communal retreats organized around religious principles and teachings. Many people drawn to alternative cultures during the 1960s also embraced spiritual and religious impulses outside of the Protestant-Catholic-Jewish triad. Asian-inspired spiritual traditions, such as Transcendental Meditation and Buddhism, also proved appealing. Looking out from his own Harvard University campus into his local community during the mid-1970s, a religion professor claimed to find more than 40 Asian religions being practiced.

More importantly, the Immigration Act of 1965 enabled larger numbers of immigrants from a variety of places—and religious backgrounds—to come to the United States. By the early 1990s, as the array of different faiths continually expanded, the weekly directory of religious services in LA’s leading newspaper noted times and places for nearly 600 different denominations.

Immigration swelled the numbers of people in particular religious faiths, especially Islam, which had held only a minimal presence in the United States prior to about 1970. The Black Power impulse had attracted some new converts to the homegrown Nation of Islam during the 1960s, and later immigration from countries with large Islamic populations brought to the United States several million people who practiced more traditional versions of Islam. According to careful estimates—the official U.S. Census does not track religious affiliations—the number of U.S. residents who practiced Islam by the year 2000 surpassed that of Judaism or of individual mainline Protestant denominations such as Presbyterian and Episcopalian.

Gradually adapting to U.S. cultural conditions, mosques began making Sundays, rather than the traditional Friday, the week’s major Islamic holy day. In a similar spirit, leading Islamic institutions such as the Islamic Center of Southern California and the Muslim Community Center in Chicago came to offer a variety of religious and nonreligious services for their congregations. They also sought to inform non-Muslims about their faith, which claimed more followers worldwide than any other religion, and to present an organized front against acts of discrimination.

Similar growth spurts came among Protestant evangelicals and Mormons, both of which grew faster than the U.S. population as a whole. Between the 1960s and the 1990s, the Southern Baptist Convention, moving outside of its regional base in the South, added 6 million new members. The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (the Mormon faith) added more than half that many. In addition to augmenting their membership rolls in the United States, many of these groups greatly expanded their international missionary activities.

Although the fundamentalist and evangelical faiths associated with the Religious Right flourished, religious allegiance varied considerably all across the political spectrum. A number of evangelical groups such as the Sojourners, for example, embraced sociopolitical positions almost diametrically opposed to those espoused by the New Right. Moreover, many evangelicals began to embrace the cause of environmental stewardship, a policy once associated more with the political left.

Most organized religious groups struggled with questions about the relationship between spiritual faith and the
lifestyles celebrated by LGBT movements. Some leaders of the Religious Right, such as Jerry Falwell, mobilized and organized against what they saw as moral decay. In 1979, he and other like-minded fundamentalist ministers formed the Moral Majority, an activist movement devoted to encountering, as Falwell once put it, enemies of Judeo-Christian values “face-to-face and one-on-one” and to bringing “them under submission to the gospel of Christ.” Orthodox Judaism, Islam, and Catholicism also considered same-sex relationships as sinful. In stark contrast, a minority of churches, synagogues, and temples—especially in larger cities—reached out to welcome LGBT members. A few accepted gays and lesbians as ministers and rabbis, and recognizable bodies of “gay theology,” grounded in reinterpretations of Biblical passages as well as on general principles of religious tolerance, began to emerge.

Religious divisions emerged over foreign policy questions. During America’s longest war, devoutly religious people from virtually every denomination spoke out, from seemingly every possible perspective, about the religious implications of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. If many spiritual leaders and lay people, during the post-1960s era, tended to express foreign policy perspectives comparable to the militant anticommunism that dominated the Religious (and the larger New) Right, a somewhat smaller, and equally devout, number of people believed their religious values impelled them to oppose some U.S. initiatives.

The movement to contain the spread of—and, ultimately, to eliminate—nuclear weapons attracted the support of a number of religious groups, including leaders of the U.S. Catholic Church. After prolonged internal debate among differing factions, Catholic bishops in the United States issued a pastoral letter entitled “The Challenge of Peace” (1983). It joined statements by several Protestant movements and, in effect, declared the nuclear policies of the United States to be in conflict with religious teachings.

At about the same time, some Catholic priests joined Protestant congregations in offering sanctuary to undocumented refugees from Latin America, particularly El Salvador and Guatemala, who were fleeing from U.S.-supported military regimes and, once they reached the United States, from immigration authorities.

Three prominent religious figures who entered partisan politics exemplified the diversity of religion’s relationship to political action. Father Robert F. Drinan, while a

![The Islamic Center of America, Dearborn, Michigan](image)

Opened in the spring of 2005, this 70,000 square-foot facility dramatized the growing presence of Islam in the United States. It features building materials imported from throughout the world, a gold dome, twin minarets, and a prayer hall that can accommodate a thousand worshippers.

![Religion in America, 2001](chart)

This chart shows the self-described religious affiliations of the American people compiled through sampling techniques.

Source: Data adapted from The American Religious Identification Survey, Graduate Center, City University of New York.
member of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1971 to 1981, generally embraced positions associated with George McGovern’s rather than Jimmy Carter’s wing of the Democratic Party and, on issues such as abortion, often stood against the pronouncements of his own Roman Catholic Church. Eventually, apparently largely in response to Drinan’s political positions, the Church hierarchy ordered that no priest should hold a political office. Espousing political perspectives similar to those of Drinan, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, a Baptist, made two serious bids, in 1984 and in 1988, for the Democratic presidential nomination. He presented himself as part of a “Rainbow Coalition.” This movement style of politics looked back, in some ways, to the religious fervor of the civil-rights movement and forward, in other ways, to the secular multiculturalism of post-1960s politics. In contrast, the Protestant evangelist Pat Robertson used his links to the Religious Right to mount an aggressive presidential bid. He hoped to wrest the 1988 GOP presidential nomination away from George H. W. Bush and place it more firmly in the hands of the New Right.

The political campaigns of Jackson and Robertson inevitably revisited charges of corruption that had touched both of their religious movements—and several others as well. The charges against Jackson and Robertson—generally involving sloppy bookkeeping, payrolls heavily staffed with relatives, and ineptly phrased political pronouncements—paled in comparison to the controversies that swamped two other religious movements during the 1980s. Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker of the “Praise the Lord” (PTL) crusade and Jimmy Lee Swaggart, all of whom were prominent celebrities in “the electronic church,” saw their multimillion-dollar, multimedia empires collapse when tabloid headlines revealed their well-publicized lapses into the kind of sexual and financial values against which their TV ministries preached. Jim Bakker went to jail, and Swaggart eventually found his TV ministry relegated to public-access CATV channels rather than the top-ranked independent stations on which he once starred.

Far broader and deeper in its appeal than some detractors initially allowed, however, the Religious Right succeeded in establishing itself within the nation’s religious-cultural landscape. The crusade led by Billy Graham avoided any hint of financial or moral malfeasance, and Graham remained one of the nation’s most admired—and officially nonpartisan—citizens. The Religious Right created cultural-spiritual networks that included publishing enterprises, bookstores, radio and TV outlets, Christian academies and other “charter” schools, an expanded set of religiously affiliated colleges and seminaries, and even schools of law and of public policy.

Emerging early on from this milieu, Hal Lindsey’s The Late, Great Planet Earth (1970), a best-selling book of the 1970s and 1980s (though not one found on lists compiled by mainstream bookstores and media), prepared the way for other successful apocalyptic novels, particularly the blockbuster Left Behind series. Conceived by the Reverend Tim LaHaye, a founder of the Moral Majority, and written by Jerry Jenkins, its 16 entries (1995–2007) featured page-turning tales about Earth’s “final days” before the Rapture that would carry true believers to heaven. The actor-director Mel Gibson’s The Passion of the Christ (2004), a blockbuster movie made outside of the Hollywood studio system, also highlighted the commercial potential of cultural products that tracked the theological-political doctrines of the Religious Right.

This broad movement succeeded in developing a powerful narrative about the history of the United States and of the entire planet, one that could be used to bolster its work on this earth. As articulated by the historian-theologian Francis Schaeffer, a committed evangelical, the people who believed that Christian teachings should shape civil society and the realm of governance had become political outsiders since the Renaissance. In this view of history, the Enlightenment had given birth to “secular humanism,” which wrongly separated the secular state from religious values and thus marginalized the true faith. The Religious Right embraced Schaeffer’s books, such as How Should We Then Live (1976) and The Christian Manifesto (1981), as revelatory texts that pointed toward a politics that could reunite the sacred and the secular.

The Republican Party, first in opposition to President Bill Clinton and then in support of George W. Bush, became the primary electoral vehicle of the Religious Right. Religious activists persuaded some state Republican organizations, including that in Texas, to adopt a “Christian” platform that called for curtailing the separation of church and state and radically reorienting the activities of the national government. Also mobilizing and organizing at the local level, the Religious Right created movements that sought to influence the decisions of city and county school boards. From the grassroots to the White House, then, the Religious Right after 1992 played an increasingly important role in an American political culture that revolved around images of hope and fear.

Conclusion

Sweeping changes occurred in demographics, economics, culture, and society during the last quarter of the 20th century. The nation aged, and more of its people gravitated to the Sun Belt. Sprawling urban corridors challenged older central cities as sites for development. Rapid technological change fueled the growth of globalized industries and the restructuring of the labor force to fit a postindustrial economy.
The most prominent development in American popular culture was the proliferation of the video screen. Television, motion pictures, and the Internet increasingly targeted specific audiences, and the fragmented nature of cultural reception was exemplified by the rise of new, particularistic media ventures.

Questions for Review and Critical Thinking

Review

1. What major demographic trends characterized the post-1970 United States? How did they contribute to changing daily life?
2. What were the most important, post-1970 technological and economic changes? How did technological change create both new problems and new possibilities?
3. How did new forms of media change the ways in which people received information and entertainment?

Critical Thinking

1. In what ways might the major demographic changes of the late 20th century have accelerated the postindustrial economic restructuring, and vice versa?

Identifications

Review your understanding of the following key terms, people, and events for this chapter (terms are defined or described in the Glossary at the end of the book).

- Sun Belt
- microchips
- space shuttle
- information revolution
- Immigration Act of 1965
- Cesar Chavez
- Hmong
- Religious Right
- Refugee Act of 1980
- Great Awakening
- urban corridors
- secular humanism
- Human Genome Project

Suggested Readings


Photo Credits

Frontmatter

Chapter 17

Chapter 18

Chapter 19

Chapter 20

Chapter 21

Chapter 22

Chapter 23

Chapter 24

Copyright 2008 Thomson Learning, Inc. All Rights Reserved. May not be copied, scanned, or duplicated, in whole or in part.
Chapter 25

Chapter 26

Chapter 27

Chapter 28

Chapter 29

Chapter 30

Chapter 31
p. 972: © Richard T. Nowitz/CORBIS; p. 977: © Richard Cummins/CORBIS; p. 980 (top): California Department of Transportation; p. 980 (bottom left): California Department of Transportation; p. 980 (bottom right): California Department of Transportation; p. 982: © Ted Streshinsky/CORBIS; p. 983: © Keren Su/CORBIS; p. 988: Lucasfilm/20th Century Fox/THE KOBAL COLLECTION; p. 990: TM and Copyright © 20th Century Fox Film Corp. All rights reserved./ The Everett Collection; p. 993: © Rebecca Cook/Reuters/CORBIS

Chapter 32