

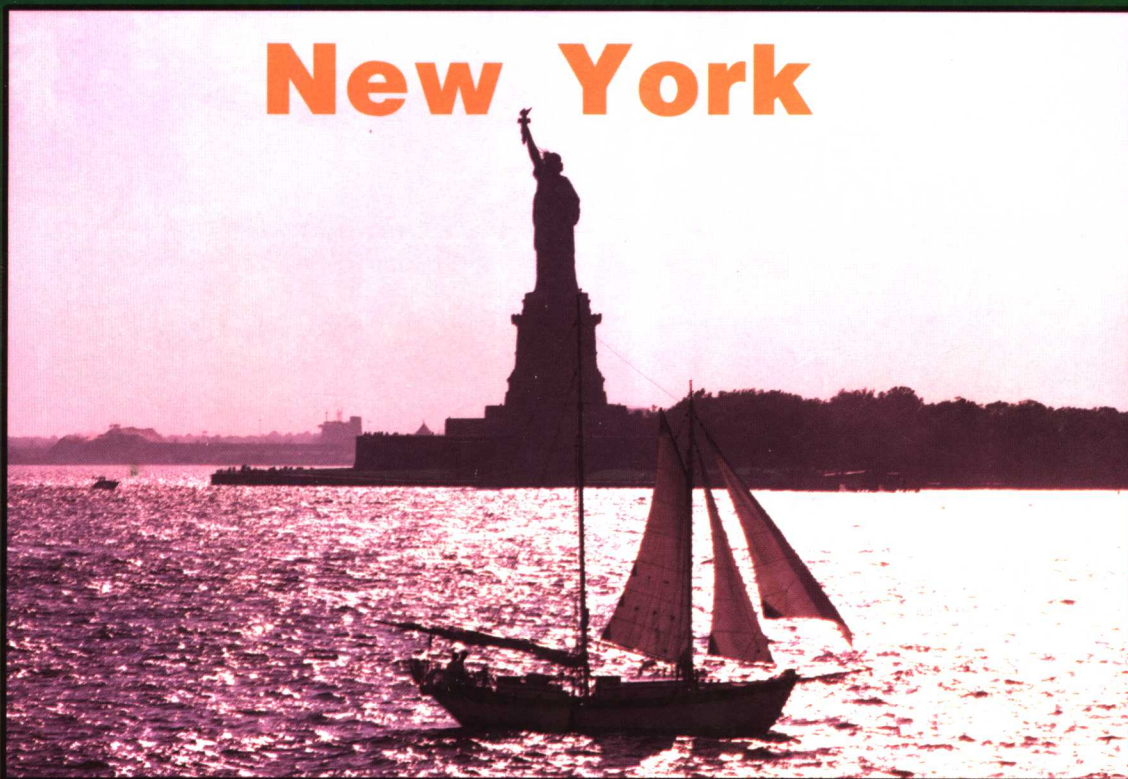
当代美国 概况

Contemporary American Culture and Society

(教师手册)

周静琮 编著

New York



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前 言

本书是为《当代美国概况》(学生用书)编写的教学参考书,编写时间为2000年秋季到2001年秋季。当时编著者是香港大学英语系博士生,而港大图书馆享有“亚洲美国学藏书之最”的美誉,编著者因此得益匪浅。编写完毕之后,港大美国学中心主任Priscilla Roberts博士对全书进行了详细的审阅,除修改语言上不足之处外,还提出其他建议,其中大多数都已体现在书稿中,编著者对此表示由衷感谢。

编写本书主要有以下目的:

- 一、给教师在使用《当代美国概况》一书时提供方便,每个章节开头的Abstract, Focus questions 及 Topic for Term Paper 便是例子。
- 二、给教师在使用《当代美国概况》一书时提供参考资料,通常是比较有深度的参考资料。比如第二章关于美国宪法的由来和第十五章关于美国司法独立的背景知识,等等。《当代美国概况》每章由三个部分组成,每章的重点放在第一部分,编著者建议教师授课时集中讲解这部分内容。教师备课时可以有每章的Abstract为例,对《学生用书》的第一部分进行概括归纳;也可以在每章的Abstract基础上,参考本书提供的相关资料或其他资料库,自备一份更有深度的教案。此外,教师授课时间最好限制在整个课时(比如2个小时)的三分之二之内,其余时间可让学生作前一章的练习和本章第三部分的Feature,或者就学生感兴趣的有关话题进行讨论。因此,本书主要给每章的重点部分提供参考资料,以协助教师取得比较显著的教学效果,而学生由此获得对美国社会比较充分的了解。
- 三、给《当代美国概况》(学生用书)中的第二部分(Section B: Exploitation Activities)提供参考答案。

本书每个章节的组织结构与《当代美国概况》(学生用书)基本一致。每个章节包括的具体内容有:

Abstract: 为(学生用书)中每章的内容提要。

Focus questions: 一般就(学生用书)中的Section A: Exposition Texts 主要内容提6个问题,以方便教师了解学生在预习时对第一部分的把握程度。

Topic(s) for Term Paper: 每章都设有一到两个与该章内容紧扣的学期论文,并对论文内容作简略探讨和要求。

Section A: Exposition Texts: 给(学生用书)相应部分提供参考资料,是本书所有内容中占比最大的部分。

Section B: Exploitation Activities: 给(学生用书)相应部分提供参考答案。

Section C: Extension Tasks: 这个部分在本书中只是偶尔出现,因为在(学生用书)中它就属于扩充部分。

Linking Past and Present: 是每个章节的最后部分,内容多半涉及美国某个方面今天与过去经历的巨大变化,主要为教师提供一个富余的选择。教师可以把这个部分复印给学生,或只在课堂上作简略介绍。

作为同行,大家都知道,开设各种讲英语国家的社会文化课的目的不外乎有以下三个:

- 提高学生运用英语的能力,
- 深入了解对象国的文化,
- 加强学生分析问题和解决问题的能力。

其中最后一点应该引起我们的高度重视。当前,全球一体化进程对成型中的中国文化工业和文化市场带来很大的冲击。随着跨国集团资本的渗透和其他文化包装之下的市场争夺,新世纪里的中国文化风景显得异常繁杂和拥挤。作为文化研究开山祖之一的威廉姆斯曾指出,文化作为一个意义系统不只存在于艺术和知识之中,而且还楔入了各

种体制和日常生活。换句话说,对各种体制和日常生活的鉴别分析应该是文化研究的宗旨。怎样提高学生辨别来自身边和远方的各种文化现象,应是我们的职责。编著者因此希望同行们在授课时能用比较开明的心态,引导学生对各式有关问题进行分析、辩论,以最终取得比较理想的,长远的教学效果。

感谢本教程编辑陈鑫源教授,他在编辑本书时体现出令人佩服的细致,耐心和专业水准。感谢上海外语教育出版社担任本教程的出版和发行任务。

欢迎各位老师读者惠函指正本参考书中的谬误。地址:510420,广东外语外贸大学英文学院。

编 者

2002/5/18

Contents

Chapter I Introduction	1
<i>Abstract</i>	1
<i>Focus Questions</i>	1
<i>Topic for Term Paper</i>	2
<i>Section A: Exposition Texts</i>	2
A1. Geography	2
A2. The Formation of the Union	3
A3. Population Trends	6
A4. Economy	8
A5. Class	9
<i>American City: New York City</i>	9
<i>Section B: Exploitation Activities</i>	10
B1. Pair work	10
B2. Individual work	12
B3. Research projects	12
B4. Ask Americans	13
<i>Section C: Extension Tasks</i>	14
<i>Feature: Traditional American Values</i>	14
<i>Important Terms in American Studies</i>	14
<i>Linking Past and Present: The National Bird—the Bald Eagle</i>	15
Chapter II The Constitution and the Government System	16
<i>Abstract</i>	16
<i>Focus Questions</i>	16
<i>Topic for Term Paper</i>	16
<i>Section A: Exposition Texts</i>	17
A2. The Constitution	17
A4. The Structure of the Federal Government	19
A5. The Federal System	21
<i>Section B: Exploitation Activities</i>	22
B1. Individual work	22
B2. Pair work	23
B3. Group work	24
<i>Section C: Extension Tasks</i>	25
Table 1 Government Versus Personal Responsibility, 1983 – 1998	25
Table 2 How Efficient Is the Government?	26
Table 3 Can the Government Have a Positive Impact?	26
<i>Linking Past and Present: Uncle Sam</i>	26
Chapter III The Amendments	28
<i>Abstract</i>	28
<i>Focus Questions</i>	28
<i>Topic for Term Paper</i>	29
<i>Section A: Exposition Texts</i>	30

A1. The Bill of Rights	30
A2. The Remaining Amendments	31
A4. Illustrations of the Amendments	33
Section B: Exploitation Activities	35
B2. Pair work	35
B4. Research project	35
B5. Essay topics	35
Linking Past and Present: Fair Trial	36

Chapter IV Education

37

Abstract	37
Focus Questions	37
Topic for Term Paper	37
Section A: Exposition Texts	38
A1. American Perceptions of Education	38
A2. Elementary and Secondary Education	39
A3. Higher Education	40
Section B: Exploitation Activities	47
B2. Pair work	47
B4. Research projects	47
Section C: Extension Tasks	48
C1. <u>Feature</u> : Community Colleges	48
When Intellectual Life Is Optional for Students	49
Linking Past and Present: Noah Webster	51

Chapter V Immigration and Ethnicity

52

Abstract	52
Focus Questions	52
Topics for Term Paper	52
Section A: Exposition Texts	53
A1. Introduction	53
A2. Melting Pot vs. Salad Bowl	54
A3. American Immigration Policies	56
A4. The Changing Face of Ethnicity in America	59
A5. Affirmative Action	59
Section B: Exploitation Activities	62
B1. Individual work	62
B2. Pair work	62
B3. Group discussion	62
B4. Essay topic	62
Linking Past and Present: 1. Ellis Island and Angel Island	63
2. Native Americans	63

Chapter VI Family and Personal Relationships

64

Abstract	64
Focus Questions	64
Topic for Term Paper	65
Section A: Exposition Texts	65
A1. What Is Family	65
A2. Marriage	66

A4. Family Life	66
A5. Divorce and Cohabitation	70
A6. Homeownership	72
Section B: Exploitation Activities	73
B1. Group discussion	73
B2. Pair work	73
Section C: Extension Tasks	75
C3. Do Gay People Have Rights?	75
Linking Past and Present: The Hamburger	76

Chapter VII Domestic Economy 77

Abstract	77
Focus Questions	77
Topic for Term Paper	78
Section A: Exposition Texts	78
A3. The General Economic Situation after World War II and a Transformed Economic Structure	78
A4. U.S. Financial Markets	79
A5. Aspects of Corporations and Small Businesses	81
A6. U.S. Foreign Trade	82
A7. Tax Policy	86
Section B: Exploitation Activities	88
B1. Individual work	88
B2. Pair work	88
B3. Ask Americans	88
B4. Research projects	89
Section C: Extension Tasks	92
The Three Macroeconomic Theories that Dominate American Economic Decision Making	92
Definitions of the American Dream	93
Linking Past and Present: 1. A New System of Time Zones	93
2. The New England Yankee	93

Chapter VIII Social Welfare 95

Abstract	95
Focus Questions	95
Topic for Term Paper	95
Section A: Exposition Texts	96
A2. Social Welfare up to 1996	96
A3. The Reform of 1996 and the Changing Attitudes	98
Section B: Exploitation Activities	101
B3. Group work	101
B4. Essay topic	101
Section C: Extension Tasks	103
C2. Life Begins at Sixty-five?	103
Linking Past and Present: The Hot Dog	104

Chapter IX Political Parties and Interest Groups 105

Abstract	105
Focus Questions	105

Topic for Term Paper	105
Section A: Exposition Texts	106
A1. The Evolution of Two-Party Democracy	106
A2. Party Functions	107
A3. Traditional Images of the Two Parties	107
A5. Interest Groups	108
Section B: Exploitation Activities	112
B1. Individual work	112
B2. Pair work	112
B3. Essay topic	113
B4. Ask Americans	113
Linking Past and Present: How Abraham Lincoln Emerged as a National Leader Through Political Debates	114
Chapter X Work	115
Abstract	115
Focus Questions	115
Topic for Term Paper	115
Section A: Exposition Texts	116
A1. A Portrait of the U.S. Labor Market Today	116
A2. Job Security and the Service Sector	118
A4. The Graying of the Workforce	121
A5. Telecommuting and Changes in the World of Work	122
Section B: Exploitation Activities	123
B1. Individual work	123
B2. Pair work	123
B3. Essay topics	124
Linking Past and Present: Blue Jeans	126
Chapter XI The Print Media	127
Abstract	127
Focus Questions	127
Topics for Term Paper	127
Section A: Exposition Texts	128
A1. Newspapers	128
A3. Ownership of the Print Media	131
Section B: Exploitation Activities	132
B1. Pair work	132
B2. Individual work	132
B3. Research projects	133
Section C: Extension Tasks	135
C1. <i>Feature: Esquire</i> , an Introduction to the Current State of the Magazine Industry	135
Linking Past and Present: Magazines and Newspapers in the 19th Century	135
Chapter XII The Electronic Media	136
Abstract	136
Focus Questions	136
Topics for Term Paper	136
Section A: Exposition Texts	137

A3. The Three Giant Networks and the Organization of the Traditional Television Industry	137
A5. Media Controls — Laws and Regulations	138
A6. The Internet	141
Section B: Exploitation Activities	143
B1. Individual work	143
B3. Research project	143
B4. Essay topic	143
Section C: Extension Tasks	144
C1. <u>Feature</u> : Presidential Election and TV	144
Linking Past and Present: From Cable to the Wireless	145

Chapter XIII Leisure and Recreation 146

Abstract	146
Focus Questions	146
Topic for Term Paper	146
Section A: Exposition Texts	147
A1. Trends in Leisure Time	147
A2. Sports and Campus Recreation	147
A3. Indoor and “Invisible” Leisure Activities	148
A4. Theme Parks	149
A5. Factors that Promote Leisure and Recreation	149
A6. Leisure-Service Agencies	149
A7. Trends Affecting Leisure in the 21 st Century	151
Section B: Exploitation Activities	154
B1. Pair work	154
B2. Group work	154
B3. Debating topic	155
B4. Research projects	156
Section C: Extension Tasks	156
C1. <u>Feature</u> : Disneyland, More Than an Entertainment Empire	156
C2. The Federal Government’s Role in Recreation	157
Linking Past and Present: 1. Jazz 2. Central Park and Macy’s	157

Chapter XIV Tourism and Holidays 159

Abstract	159
Focus Questions	159
Topics for Term Paper	159
Section A: Exposition Texts	160
A1. Tourism, a Major Industry	160
A3. Leisure Plus Travel	161
A4. Tourism Organization	162
A5. Tourist Attractions	163
A6. Holidays in the U.S.A.	164
Section B: Exploitation Activities	165
B2. Pair work	165
B4. Debating topic	167
Linking Past and Present: Mount Rushmore	167

Chapter XV Justice and the Law 169

Abstract	169
Focus Questions	169
Topic for Term Paper	170
Section A: Exposition Texts	170
A1. Judicial Independence	170
A2. Essentials of Law	172
A3. Types of Courts	173
A4. Judges	174
A5. The Legal Profession	177
A6. Access to Legal Services	178
A7. The Apparatus of Justice	179
A8. Problems with the American Criminal Justice System	180
Section B: Exploitation Activities	181
B2. Pair work	181
B4. Group discussion	181
Section C: Extension Tasks	182
C1. <u>Feature</u> : Race and Criminal Justice	182
Linking Past and Present: The President and the Supreme Court	183
Chapter XVI Crime and the Police	184
Abstract	184
Focus Questions	184
Topics for Term Paper	184
Section A: Exposition Texts	185
A1. General Introduction: Crime in America	185
A3. Crime Policy in the U.S.	188
A4. Firearms Violence and Gun Control Legislation	188
A5. Drug Offenses	189
A6. Juvenile Crime and the Juvenile Court	190
A7. Community Policing: a New Approach to Make America Safer	191
Section B: Exploitation Activities	192
B1. Pair work	192
B3. Essay topics	193
B4. Research project	193
Linking Past and Present: Minority Groups in Policing	194
Chapter XVII America and the World	195
Abstract	195
Focus Questions	195
Topics for Term Paper	196
Section A: Exposition Texts	196
A1. Foreign Affairs Bureaucracy	196
A2. The Foreign Policymaking Process	197
A3. America in the Cold War	197
A4. The Post-Cold War Era	202
A5. The Middle East: a Multilateral Peace Process	204
A6. Terrorism and Counterterrorism	205
Section B: Exploitation Activities	206
B1. Individual work	206
B2. Pair work	206

B3. Essay topics	207
Section C: Extension Tasks	207
C1. <i>Feature</i> : The United Nations and U.S. Domestic Politics	207
Linking Past and Present: 1. U.S. Overseas Expansion and the Fate of Puerto Rico	207
2. Can Women Do Combat Jobs	208
Chapter XVIII Belief and Religion	209
Abstract	209
Focus Questions	209
Topics for Term Paper	210
Section A: Exposition Texts	210
A1. How Religious Are Americans?	210
A2. Major Themes in the Development of American Religions	211
A3. 20 th Century Diversity and Pluralism	211
A4. The Changing Religious Landscape	213
Section B: Exploitation Activities	214
B1. Pair work	214
B2. Group discussion	215
Linking Past and Present: School Prayer and Congressional Backlash	217

Chapter I Introduction

Abstract

Section A is divided into five subsections: Geography, the formation of the union, U. S. population trends, the economy, and the concept of class. Geography gives a brief account of Hawaiian Islands and the 7 major physical features across the mainland. The latter include the Pacific Coast, the Intermountain Region, the Rocky Mountains, the Interior Plains, the Appalachian Mountains, the Canadian Shield, and the Coastal Plains. The formation of the union first explores the content of the Declaration of Independence, how the Constitution was adopted, the causes and effects of the Civil War, what happened during the Gilded Age, the Great Depression, and the unexpected impact of World War II on the American economy. It then proceeds to outline and comment on the following events and movements in post-war America: the baby boomers and the counterculture movement, the Vietnam War, and the Culture Wars. Population trends state that more than 80% of Americans live in urban areas. Suburbanization, a process that began in the post-war era, became, by the early 1960s, the predominant element of metropolitan America, and the central city was declining. However, recent experiences of downtown revitalization around the United States are evidence that many communities have succeeded in bringing life back to the once dying downtown. At the same time, many metropolitan areas have become so large that they simply sprawl and merge into other metropolitan areas, forming a megalopolis, a post-suburban pattern. The public sector accounts for only one fifth of the American economy, a free enterprise system where services constituted 80% of the GDP revenues in 1999. Homeownership, a major part of the American Dream, has been realized only for two-thirds of Americans, while wealth distribution becomes increasingly polarized. The class system, however defined, has played a significant role in the life and thinking of Americans. The *Feature* in **Section C** surveys the following six American values: individual freedom, self-reliance, equality of opportunity, competition, material wealth, hard work.

Focus questions

1. What are the seven major physical regions across the United States? What are the important cities located within each region?
2. What are the main contents of the Declaration of Independence? When was the period referred to as the Gilded Age? What were the features of the 1920s? What were the important events and movements in post-World War II America?
3. Comment on the fate of Americans in the inner cities. Who are the baby boomers?
4. Can you give a brief account of homeownership and wealth distribution in the United States? What were the major shifts in U. S. GDP composition around the turn of the century?
5. How do you interpret the class system in the lives of Americans?

Topic for Term Paper

Have students discuss the intricacies of generational politics in modern America.

Hints

A number of critics have set forth the potential for conflict between the three major generations represented in American society today: the World War II generation, the baby boomers and Generation X. Ask them to point out the distinctive historical contexts into which each of these generations was born. They should demonstrate in their papers how these different historical contexts define each generation's political, economic, social, and cultural agenda. They should also identify the potential for conflict between the generations as America moves into the 21st century.

SECTION A: EXPOSITION TEXTS

A1. Geography

Geographic Facts about the U.S.

Largest state, by area	Alaska	591,004 square miles
Largest state, by population	California	33,145,000
Smallest state, by area	Rhode Island	1,212 square miles
Smallest state, by population	Wyoming	480,000
Longest rivers	1. Mississippi 2. Missouri 3. Rio Grande	2,348 miles 2,315 miles 1,885 miles
Highest mountain	Mount McKinley (Alaska)	20,320 feet
Lowest point	Death Valley (California)	282 feet below sea level
Largest lake	Lake Superior	31,820 square miles
Deepest lake	Crater Lake (Oregon)	1,932 feet
Rainiest spot	Mt. Waialeale (Hawaii)	460 inches rainfall per year

Tornadoes

Tornadoes are especially common in the United States, but only in certain areas. They occur mainly in the central states.

A hot afternoon in the spring is the most likely time for a tornado. Tornadoes always move in a northeastern direction. They never last longer than eight hours. A tornado's path is narrow, but within that narrow path a tornado can destroy everything. It can smash buildings and rip up trees. Tornadoes can kill

people, too.

The worst ever tornado swept through the states of Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana in 1925, killing 689 people. Modern weather equipment now makes it possible to warn people of tornadoes. People have a much better chance of protecting themselves, but nothing can stop tornadoes from destroying everything in their path.

A2. The Formation of the Union

1) The Declaration of Independence

The Declaration was intended to influence foreign opinion, but it had little effect outside Great Britain, and there it had only made people determined to subdue the rebels. Why then, has it had so much influence on modern history? As John Adams later pointed out, the basic idea was commonplace among 18th century liberals. But if the idea lacked originality, at least it had never before been put into practice on such a scale. Revolution was not new, but the spectacle of a people solemnly explaining and justifying their right to overthrow their oppressors and establish a new system on their own authority was almost unprecedented. Soon the French would be drawing upon this example in their revolution, and rebels everywhere have since done! likewise. And if Jefferson did not create the concept, he gave it a perfect form.

5) Economic Weaknesses of the 1920s and the New Deal

Although there was real prosperity in the United States in the 1920s, there were also disguised economic problems. Traditional industries, like railroads and coal, were in deep trouble, and farmers suffered from a decline in both exports and prices. Laborers saw their real wages rise, but not nearly as rapidly as the income of the middle-class manager, who benefited the most from the new Industrial Revolution. The increasing income of the middle class created its own peculiar problem. Because the middle class had so much idle money, much of it went into speculation. It is not surprising that the 1920s ended in a stock-market crash.

During his campaign for the presidency in 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt declared that he pledged himself to a new deal for the American people. Right after his inauguration in 1933, FDR sent a number of bills to Congress. During the Hundred Days, Congress passed 15 major new laws. These new laws covered programs from job relief to planning for economic recovery. Together, they made up Roosevelt's New Deal, which had three main goals: relief for the unemployed, plans for recovery, and reforms to prevent another depression.

How much did the New Deal programs contribute to the U. S. economic recovery in the early 1940s?

Supporters believed that the government must regulate industries such as banking to prevent another depression. They also argued that the government should meet the needs of all citizens. Programs like Social Security (see **Social Welfare**), they said, were necessary for the public good. The Social Security Act (passed in 1935) had three parts. First, it set up a system of pensions for older people. Payments from employers and employees supported this system. Second, the new act set up the nation's first system of unemployment insurance. People who lost their jobs received small payments until they found work again. The third part gave states money to support dependent children and people with

disabilities. The Social Security system survived and has expanded over the years. Today, it provides medical benefits to older Americans as well as pensions and unemployment insurance.

Many critics were worried about the increased power of the government. Others warned that the government spent more than it took in from taxes. Business leaders claimed that the New Deal was making labor unions too powerful. The criticism also pointed out that it was not bringing economic recovery. In fact, full recovery did not come until 1941. By then, the U.S. was producing goods for the nations fighting in World War II. Today, many Americans would agree and say that World War II, instead of the New Deal, ended the Depression.

7) The Post-World War II America

The Baby Boom of the 1940s and 1950s

By the time the 1950s rolled around, Americans were hungry for financial security and family stability. For people who could recall their family's struggle to make ends meet during the Depression and who had experienced instability and family separation during World War II, the opportunities to buy a home and have a big family represented an attractive promise of security and fulfillment.

For many Americans the 1950s still stands out as the "glory days" of families, a reference point against which recent changes in family life can be measured and interpreted. It was the most family-oriented period in U.S. history, dramatically reversing trends in the United States since the turn of the 20th century. For example, half of all women in the 1950s married while they were still teenagers. And the divorce rate declined steeply, to about half what it is today. For the first time in history the vast majority of American children could expect to live with married biological parents throughout childhood. New values regarding families also developed in the 1950s. The belief that all the satisfaction and amusement one needed could be found within the nuclear family had no precedent in history. According to one popular magazine of the time, the defining characteristic of the ideal family was "togetherness," a "new and warmer way of life" in which men and women sought fulfillment not alone, isolated from one another, but as a family sharing a common experience.

The Counterculture Movement

Rock music and lyrics that challenged traditional values became popular, and many young people joined "hippie" communes or fled to neighborhoods like Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco or the East Village in New York City, where they experimented with drugs and a variety of alternative lifestyles. Traditional family values declined as even many adults accepted a freer sexual code of behavior, living together out of wedlock and accepting the view that marriage and having children were not essential for happiness.

A significant aspect of the counterculture movement was its rejection of work as the end of one's life.

A deep-rooted belief in the value of hard work, which was linked to a conservative, industrious, and moralistic view of life, had long been a fundamental doctrine of American society. Workers mostly tended to be loyal to their companies, fellow employees, and the task itself — although labor-management conflict sometimes found expression in battles between company bosses and unions in a number of industries.

However, since the 1960s, there has been a retreat from the stern concepts of the Protestant work ethic. As conventional values and monetary success were undermined in the thinking of young people during the counterculture period, leisure satisfactions assumed new importance.

By 1981, a poll by the Louis Harris survey organization found that:

- 78% of all working Americans feel that “people take less pride in their work than they did 10 years ago.”
- 73% believe that “the motivation to work hard is not as strong today as it was a decade ago.”
- 69% feel that American workmanship is worse than it was.
- 63% simply believe that “most people do not work as hard today as they did 10 years ago.”

Generation X

Certain cohorts are so distinctive that they get pinned with a label. One example is the baby boom generation. A more recent cohort of interest is Generation X, which consists of roughly 48 million people who are now in their 20s. The birth rate during the late 1960s and the 1970s, when these individuals were born, was about half as high as during the post-World War II years of the baby boomers.

People of Generation X are less likely to get married than older generations and more likely to delay marriage if they do. In 1970, 55% of men and 36% of women between the ages of 20 and 24 had never married. In 1996 the figures were 81% of young men and 68% of young women (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997).

Furthermore, the high divorce rate over the past several decades has had a direct and lasting impact on this cohort. Roughly 40% of people in their 20s today are children of divorce. Even more of them were so-called latchkey children, the first generation of children to experience the effects of two working parents. For many of them, childhood was marked by dependence on secondary relationships — teachers, friends, day care teachers, and so on.

From the perspective of older generations, Generation X—with its hard-edged and sometimes threatening language, fashion, music, and recreational pursuits — has become the embodiment of uncontrollable change and fear of their collective future. However, the members of Generation X have a bold style of confronting the world that is having a significant impact on everything from TV advertising to employee recruiting.

The Devaluation of Women in American Culture

American women's demands for greater autonomy have resulted in significant cultural, political, and economic gains, compared to those of women in other countries. However, American men continue to control most of the important social institutions. They still dominate the upper echelons of business and government while women still bear most of the responsibility for undervalued domestic concerns and household labor (see **Family and Personal Relationships**).

Women also continue to be devalued by cultural expectations that emphasize superficial appearance over accomplishment. For instance, recent research on images of women in television, films, books, and magazines shows that women are more likely than men to have their looks commented on or to show concern