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The Changes in Industrial America
The Rise of Industrial Capitalism provoked a huge economic transformation and led to the rise of a heavily industrialized America which changed nearly every aspect of American Identity.

This industrialized America changed the politics, economy, and day to day life for the American people. This quick and drastic change also pushed America into the largest world power. A predominance of capitalism accompanied this industrialization.

Capitalism is an economic system that is characterized by corporate or private ownership of capital goods and investments and distribution of goods. Investments are determined by prices, production, and private decisions while the distribution of products is determined by competition in a free market. Capitalism promotes free will and is economically and socially progressive but can often only benefit the interests of a select few, leaving much of the population in a vulnerable position. Edward Earle views capitalism as a system that changed America by leading to institutional changes in the American economy and society (Purinton, 413).

The country boasts technological advancements in its industries that propel its continued economic growth. The period between 1870 and 1900 marked the era of Reconstruction where the US underwent a tremendous economic transformation that was characterized by a maturing industrial economy. America grew into a leading industrial capitalist in the world during this period. This era had an outburst of technological innovations that fuelled the economic growth (Livingstone, 33). For example, people shifted from

kerosene lamps and candles to households powered by electricity with lightbulbs and appliances. This same generation would also witness the evolution of transportation from horse drawn wagons to gasoline-powered automobiles, steam-powered locomotives and electric trolley cars (Schaller, 578 - 580).

Furthermore, the Americans born in an economy dominated by agricultural practices experienced an industrial revolution that radically changed the ways people worked and how they lived. Moreover, industrial capitalization resulted in the creation of a mass amount of job opportunities for the local people as well as immigrants. People quickly shifted from working in rural farmlands to the highly industrialized urban areas for what they had hoped would be a better living (Livingstone, 33). The late 1800s were characterized by population growth, expansion, and rapid industrialization. The introduction of the railroad system alone allowed for a new transportation infrastructure that made relocation and moving resources cheaper and more efficient. Most of this growth was facilitated by capitalism and was assisted by government policy. The American capitalists were unrestrained by low labor costs and the government hence they were able to establish heavy industries, transportation and communication networks, huge corporations and banking and financial firms (Atack, 37).

Some of the industries that boomed included factories such as steel manufacturing, farms, and mines such as coal mining. These industries benefited greatly from the advanced machinery and huge pool of cheap labor that was accessible to them. These workers disavowed the ownership

of production means for an hourly wage and a new way of city living. Unfortunately, this new wave of workers were mistreated for years with extremely low wages and overcrowded living conditions (Schaller, 579-593). The rise of capitalism heavily shaped the financial and investment industry of the US. The Reconstructive era made America a creative hub of the world with numerous inventions and patents. The need for investment capital resulted in the establishment of stock markets and American banks.

The growth was led by great business tycoons such as Andrew Carnegie, John Jacob Astor, John Rockefeller and JP Morgan. The finance industry was first impacted by the early heavy industries and the railroads between 1880 to 1900 (Uselding, 410). This sector further grew as a result of Electricity revolution and the automobile and pharmaceutical firms between 1918 and 1933. The critical discoveries of the 1920s and 1930s of insulin and penicillin became mass-manufactured contributing to an increase in the GDP. Capitalism shaped America's advocacy for fair pay, end of corruption and the present respect for women and children rights. The Gilded Age pointed out the challenges underneath the booming industrialization.

Corruption prevailed among the elected officials and the private citizens began to have more self-interests than being altruistic. There were connections between business and the government that led to political corruption. The country, therefore, endured mediocre politicians and presidents, many of whom took part in the big businesses (Uselding, 410). The laws at that time protected corporate interests and overlooked the workers' interests and social problems. Many people were quickly pushed to

poverty because of these and working conditions were extremely unfavorable for years to come. People would work in unsafe and toxic conditions for sixteen hours every day of the week for incredibly low wages.

These wages were so low that young children and women were compelled to work in order for a family to scrape by (Schaller, 593-594). Such challenges during this era have shaped the current America that continually fights for gender equality. Following these challenges, unions emerged in the 1870s, and they organized industrial action which led into the Labor Movement. These unions would organize workers into actions that tried to force corporations into bettering the working conditions; For example, in 1877 there was a strike that paralyzed the American railways for six weeks (Schaller, 597). Out of despair, the tactics employed by these unions were often disruptive and violent. The American unionists instigated riots, murders and even assaults (Atack, 37). These challenges paved the way for America's transformation through the reforms in the Progressive Era of the 1890s to 1920s. The media and journalists became active in exposing injustice and corruption, often by publishing about the conditions of these workplaces.

As a result, America had political reforms that saw an improvement in the elections and democratic representation. During this time there were social reforms that improved the law, education, and healthcare that affected the American people. Further legislation in the early 1900's reduced the power and size of corporate oligarchies and monopolies (Schaller, 695-702). The increase in wages saw the growth of the middle class in America. However, the improvements in the working conditions were gradual and inadequate, a

factor that allowed unions to flourish and form a permanent foothold in the workplace (Livingstone, 33). Most of these reforms have evolved over the years and have led to the robust societal, economic and political structures within America.

The rise of industrial capitalism significantly contributed to America becoming a superpower in the 20th century. Most of its companies shifted into producing munitions and military equipment during the World Wars, a venture that made the country economically and financially enriched (Schaller, 843-846). Following World War II, the nation also emerged as an economic and pre-eminent military power in the world leading into the Cold War with the Soviet Union. This moment is often described as the American Century among Americans.

The country quickly overcame the problems brought about by the Great Depression during this war (Uselding 410). The gross national product grew tremendously as well as the population. The Americans' affluence was reflected in the growth commonly referred to as consumerism. This consumer culture reflects the real salvation that Edward Earle describes in his piece "Big Ideas from Big Business" (Purinton, 395). He posits that business needs to be properly conceived and managed in order to redeem the human race. The business effect can only be realized through having, giving, thinking and being and not just theorizing. Henry Luce emphasizes that America has the primary obligation to help other countries and lead the World.

Americans have a fundamental responsibility as a world power to set an example to other people in the World (Luce, 51). The most significant change on the idea on what it means to be an American is the fact that the rest of the world now looks upon America for guidance and support. The growth of industrial capitalism led to huge transformations in the American Identity between 1865-1960.

There were significant developments in technology, investment, transportation, and communication. As a result, employment opportunities were created for the people to serve in these industries and shift into a new lifestyle. Early capitalism allowed for an extreme mistreatment of a new working class. Throughout the era new reforms allowed for a stronger middle class to grow and improved the quality of life for many Americans. This period also led to the US developing into a leading business-oriented country and a leading military power. Americans have developed a culture of attributing success that can be measured through the sacrifice, energy, economy, time, purpose and devotion (Purinton, 396).

Americans during this era experienced some of the worst economic struggles of American history but were also fortunate enough to experience some of the most dramatic changes that the rise of industrial capitalism brought to the growth of American culture and ideals.