

The following is a sample of what I consider to be an exceptionally well-written take-home exam for PSY 167: Culture and Conflict. The author's name has been withheld by request. Pay special attention to the organization of the paper. The first paragraph clearly sketches out the main points that will be covered and the last paragraph summarizes those points. Within each paragraph, the first sentence sets up the main point, evidence is presented to support that point, and a concluding sentence both summarizes the paragraph and provides a transition to the next paragraph. In addition, the evidence that is presented is strong, sufficiently detailed, phrased in a way that clearly supports the main points, and drawn from a wide range of sources. Stylistically, the writing is clear and precise.

Here is the assignment:

Take-home Paper #2: Cultural perspectives

Assignment. "Westernization" is the spread of Western cultural practices and values to other cultures. **What are the costs and benefits of Westernization?**

First, develop a thesis statement that is a one-sentence answer to this question. Support your thesis with 3-5 main points, providing sufficient logic, evidence, and examples to make your case. Add a conclusion that restates your thesis. Your intended audience for this paper is a first-year student at Hanover who has not taken this class.

Support your argument using at least 1 piece of evidence from each of the following readings.

- Nisbett's *The Geography of Thought* (Nisbett, 2004)
- Ritzer's *The McDonaldization of Society* (Ritzer, 2000)
- Summary and excerpts from Friedman's *The World is Flat* (Altermatt, 2006)
- The "Too Frustrated" section from Friedman's *The World is Flat* (Friedman, 2006)
- Roberts' "Diffusion of modernization and religious response" (Roberts, 2004)

More credit will be given if you can use main points from these readings rather than minor points.

Be sure it is clear where your evidence or examples are coming from by citing the author. If you include a direct quote (not necessary), give the page number after the date: (Gilovich, 1991, p. 55). You do not need to include a Works Cited page unless you rely on sources from outside of class (not necessary).

Length: 3-5 double-spaced pages

Westernization is the idea that the rest of the world is becoming more and more like the United States and Western Europe. Westernization has allowed for the advances in computing made by Bill Gates and other Westerners to spread throughout the rest of the world.

Traditionally American companies, such as KFC and McDonalds, are now all over the world because of Westernization. As Westernization spreads so does the search for better efficiency.

Western companies are always looking for ways to become more efficient. As a consequence, Westernization is not all good, but it is not all bad either. Among the benefits are the facts that computers allow information to be shared both faster and easier, also products and services are cheaper as the results of outsourcing and offshoring. Among the costs are the facts that Westernization has caused a rise in fundamentalism and terrorism, shipped jobs out of the United States, and forced some people into dehumanizing jobs. Westernization is making the world more efficient. But, some are revolting against this move to greater efficiency by reverting to fundamentalism, and some employees are becoming the victims of efficiency.

Because of Westernization and the advent of computers, it is now easier and more efficient to communicate with and share information with anyone in the world. In May 1990, Windows 3.0 came out. The operating system Windows 3.0 was so much easier to use that it allowed everyone to use personal computers. This in turn led to the popularity of personal computing today (Altermatt, 2006). Also, around this time the World Wide Web started to develop, and HTML was written by Tim Berners-Lee. HTML made the web much more maneuverable because it allowed authors to make “links” between web pages and to share and store images (Altermatt, 2006). “What really got things moving was the release of the first Netscape web browser in December 1994. Netscape took the HTML language and put it in the background- the foreground became the pretty combination of images, text, and links that we think of today when we browse the Web. Netscape made the Web user-friendly and suddenly *everybody* was getting online (Altermatt, 2006, p.1).” Since Netscape made the web popular, it allowed everyone to share and communicate information quickly and efficiently. Now, anyone with the internet can access vast amounts of information, instantly. The internet has opened up the East to the West. The efficient communication that the internet enables has led to the sharing

of ideas between East and West.

As a consequence of better communication, outsourcing and offshoring have become easier and more popular ways to increase efficiency. Outsourcing is paying another company to do work that used to be done in-house. Better communication allows doctors to send digital copies of x-rays over to India in order to be analyzed; or for, a company to have its accounting be done overseas. Many companies are outsourcing jobs to India, because the people in India will do the same jobs for less money than the people in the United States. India also has the Internet, an excellent education system, and plenty of English speakers (Altermatt, 2006). All of these factors make India very attractive to companies who are looking to outsource. By outsourcing, the companies will cut their labor costs which in turn will lower the cost of their service.

Another popular way of increasing efficiency is offshoring. Offshoring is moving the production of a product from the home country to another country. It is now easier for a company headquartered in the United States to communicate with a factory in China. Better communication gives the people at headquarters more control over how much of a certain product a factory manufactures. Headquarters can change the amount of production instantly via e-mail and the internet; whereas prior to the internet, headquarters would be forced to rely on slower and less reliable means of communication. Efficient communication makes it as easy for headquarters to manage a factory in China as it is to manage a factory a few hundred miles away.

Many top American companies are sending manufacturing jobs over to China because the labor costs in China are extremely low. Since the cost of labor is low, the companies can sell the product at a much lower rate than if the product were made in the United States. For this reason, China is increasingly taking over the manufacturing industry (Altermatt, 2006). Outsourcing and offshoring are more efficient because they cut costs. But, the obvious downside to outsourcing

and offshoring is that jobs are taken out of the United States. This means that someone who used to have a steady manufacturing job, now is unemployed. Companies are looking for ways to standardize jobs so that they can send the jobs overseas, and therefore cut costs. Offshoring and outsourcing allow companies to be more efficient by cutting costs.

In the interest of becoming more efficient, businesses often times turn their employees into victims of efficiency. A perfect example is Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart has become the retail giant that it is today by mastering the art of “supply chaining.” But, Wal-Mart does not pay its employees well. “Supply-chaining is increasing the connections between suppliers, retailers, and customers (Altermatt, 2006 p. 5).” Supply-chaining makes Wal-Mart more efficient because it allows Wal-Mart to manipulate how much of a product is delivered to which store. This insures that Wal-Mart’s supply will keep up with the local demand. But in the interest of being more efficient, Wal-Mart will often pay low wages to its employees in order to keep costs low (Altermatt, 2006). The low wages make Wal-Mart more efficient because the low wages allow Wal-Mart to keep the prices low, but the employees suffer. Other companies besides Wal-Mart sacrifice the well-being of the employee in order to increase efficiency. McDonalds is just one other example. McDonalds breaks the task of preparing food down into several tasks. This process makes McDonalds very efficient because it standardizes their product, and allows them to make many hamburgers in a short period of time. It is the job of the employee at McDonalds to perform one of these tasks the exact same way all day long, much like assembly line and factory workers. But, this is a very dehumanizing process because it forces the workers to act like robots (Ritzer, 2000). Working in a McDonalds does not allow someone to express his individuality. The worker is just expected to do his simple task and no other ability that he has is utilized. By paying low wages and standardizing jobs, the companies are becoming more

efficient, but they are also mistreating their workers.

Employees will be treated differently in a Westernized world, traditional factors that used to guarantee job security may not guarantee job security. The search for efficiency will trump many traditional factors, such as worker tenure. Worker tenure is not as highly valued in the West as it is in the East. Easterners immediately associate age with status. Westerners tend to give status based on accomplishments rather than age. In a survey conducted by Hampden-Turner and Trompensaars, a group made up of businessmen from both Eastern and Western countries was asked if they would let go of an employee who had worked superbly for fifteen years, but whose performance had declined in the past year and showed no signs of improving. The results of the survey were that more than 75% of the Westerners believed the worker should be released; whereas only 20% of the Easterners believed the worker should be dismissed (Nisbett, 2004). As Westernization expands tenure will no longer guarantee a person his job anywhere in the world. Performance will be valued much more so than the age of the person doing the job. This will make the workplace much colder because no matter how many years a person has been working for a company, he will be let go if his performance is not “up to par.” Westernization, while making products cheaper and more efficient, often times hurts the employee. In a Westernized world, the employees lose the guarantees of good wages and job security. Since Westernization is not perfect, perhaps even fatally flawed, some have chosen not to embrace it.

Many people are joining fundamentalist movements in response against Westernization. Fundamentalism is a movement towards a more legalistic, literalistic, and rigid interpretation of religious text. HAMAS (Islamic Resistance Movement of Palestine) is an example of a fundamentalist movement (Roberts, 2004). Fundamentalism is actually a relatively recent

movement. “It (fundamentalism) comes after the worldwide spread of technology and industry and along with the earliest stages of global economies. It is late-modern, and some would say it is post-modern. Fundamentalism is a movement to fight back, and modernity is the enemy (Roberts,2004, p. 381).” Fundamentalism is often a reaction against the diversity and openness that comes with modernization. The idea of having to work with and depend on people who have radically different beliefs can be threatening to religious traditions that have always protected the absoluteness of norms and values (Roberts, 2004). People are uncomfortable accepting that there may be more than one way to do or view certain things. Often times, people want to believe that there is only one way and that way is their way, even if accepting someone else’s way could lead to greater efficiency. Fundamentalism gives these people an outlet to believe that their way is the only way, whereas modernization calls for them to be accepting of the beliefs of others. Modernization forces people to interact with other people from different cultures, religions, and geographic areas. If someone cannot accept the point of view of someone else, those two can not work together. Fundamentalism may also be a reaction against fear of ethnocide. Ethnocide is the death of a group’s traditional culture (Roberts, 2004). When people feel that their culture is being lost they want to gravitate towards something that is familiar. It is interesting to note that all of the 9/11 hijackers converted to fundamentalism in Europe. They were removed from Middle Eastern culture, so they gravitated towards a local mosque or Muslim prayer group. The mosque gave them a feeling of familiarity and solidarity that they could not find anywhere else in Europe (Friedman, 2006). Fundamentalism is an attempt to save one’s culture from cultural erosion. For example, as a reaction against the separation of church and state seen in the modern nations of the Western world, many Islamic fundamentalists want to bring church and state even closer together (Roberts, 2004). They see separation of church and

state as a Western idea, so they bring church and state closer together in response to Westernization. Islamic fundamentalists choose to view only the unflattering aspects of Western life. They choose to label all of Westernization as decadence because they fear what change may bring. "If openness, women's empowerment, and freedom of thought and inquiry are the real sources of the West's economic strength, then the Arab-Muslim world would have to change. And the fundamentalists and extremists do not want change (Friedman, 2006, p. 481)." Islamic fundamentalists want to destroy our way of life as a way of preserving their own way of life. They want to stop Westernization because Westernization poses a threat to their way of life. They fear the change that Westernization may bring, and therefore do not want it to happen. They do not want greater efficiency if it means that they will have to give up some of the traditional aspects of their culture. Because of the negative aspects of Westernization and the move to greater efficiency, there is a fundamentalist backlash against it.

As a consequence of Westernization we will get more efficient service and lower prices, but employees will be mistreated in the search for greater efficiency. Companies will look for ways to be as efficient as possible. This means that they are going to look for the workers who will do the most work for the least amount of money. Companies are only going to keep the most efficient workers. Fundamentalists will resist Westernization because they fear that Westernization may destroy their culture and change their way of life. As Westernization moves forward we need to be aware of both the costs and benefits of Westernizing.