
Chapter 2: Cultural Diversity and Conformity

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Case Study: Body Ritual Among the Nacirema

Ceremonies and rituals are an important part of any culture. In the 1950s, Horace Miner examined some of the rituals of the Nacirema culture. His description of the culture included a portrait of an average Nacirema and his or her daily body ritual. Although the language Miner used made the culture seem exotic and strange, the description was a truthful representation of the American (Nacirema spelled backwards) morning ritual.

Section 1 at a Glance

The Meaning of Culture

- Culture is made up of the material and nonmaterial products of human groups.
 - A society is a group of interdependent people who share a common culture and feeling of unity. Society differs from culture in that societies are made up of people and cultures are made up of products.
 - All cultures share certain elements: technology, symbols, language, values, and norms.
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The Meaning of Culture

Main Idea

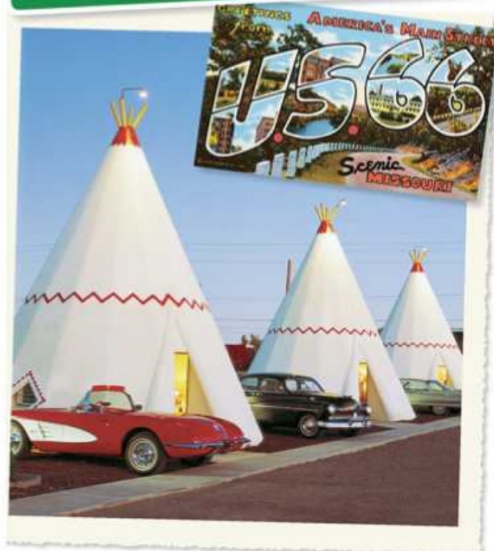
- Culture is made up of all the shared products, both physical and abstract, of human groups. While specific products differ between cultures, all cultures are made up of the same five basic components.

Reading Focus

- What is the meaning of the term *culture*, and how do material culture and nonmaterial culture differ?
 - What are the basic components of culture?
-

**SOCIOLOGY
CLOSE UP**

Car Culture U.S.A.



The Wigwam Village Motel, in Holbrook, Arizona, gave drivers a fun place to rest while traveling on Route 66—the "Main Street of America."

**How did the car
influence American
culture?**

What Is Culture?

Culture consists of all the shared products of human groups, both physical and abstract. A **society** consists of the people who share a culture.

Physical products

- Known as **material culture**
- Includes automobiles, books, building, clothing, computers, and cooking utensils

Abstract products

- Known as **nonmaterial culture**
 - Beliefs, family patterns, ideas, language, political and economic systems, rules, skills, and work practices
-

Reading Check

Contrast

What is the difference between
a society and a culture?

Answer: *Culture is the shared products of human groups. A society is a group of interdependent people who share a common culture.*

The Components of Culture

Technology

- Refers to objects and the rules for using them
- Any tool and its usage
- Any rule that makes a use of an object illegal

Symbols

- The basis of human culture
 - Any words, gestures, or images
 - Different cultures use different symbols
-

The Components of Culture

Language

- Organization of written or spoken symbols into a standardized system
- Can be used to express any idea

Values

- **Values** are shared beliefs
 - Distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong, desirable and undesirable
 - Group's values help to determine character and culture
-

The Components of Culture

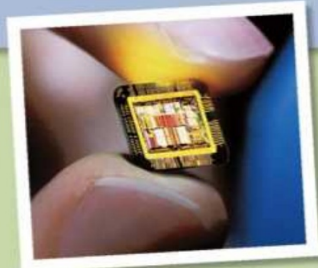
Norms

- Shared rules of conduct in specific situations
- **Folkways** do not carry heavy moral significance
- **Mores** carry heavy moral significance
- **Laws** are written and enforced by government

The Elements of Culture

A culture is made up of all the shared products of a human group—everything from physical objects to beliefs, values, and behaviors. While cultures may differ from society to society, they all consist of the same key elements: technology, symbols, language, values, and norms. **Which element of culture do you feel is most important? Why?**

Technology For sociologists, technology refers not only to physical objects but also to the rules established for using those objects. So, technology involves an understanding of how a silicon chip works as well as the chip itself.



Symbols A symbol is any commonly understood gesture, word, object, sound, or design that has come to stand for something else. For example, the yin-yang symbol originated in China, but it has long been recognized as a symbol of harmony in many cultures.



Language Perhaps the most important element of culture is language, the organization of written or spoken symbols into a standardized system. In countries such as Canada, several languages are part of the culture. Above, a sign uses both English and Cree, a Native American language.



Values In sociological terms, values are shared beliefs about what is good, desirable, and proper. Respect for one's elders is an important value in many cultures. In Thailand, the new year festival, Songkran, is a time to honor one's elders.



Norms Cultural values are enforced by norms—shared rules of conduct people follow in their relations with one another. Some norms, such as obeying traffic signals, are formalized as written laws.

Reading Check

Identify

What are the key components of culture?

Answer: *technology, symbols, language, values, and norms*

Section 2: **Cultural Variation**

Watch Movie: *A Culture of Honesty*

Do Now

Please write a response to the following question.

1. What elements do you believe all cultures have?

Agenda

1. Do Now (2 min.)
2. Quick Review (5 min.)
2. Objectives (3 min.)
3. Dinner in Japan vs. Home (obj #1)
4. The Things Cultures Have in Common (obj #2)
5. Listing the Universals (obj #3)
6. Why the Universals Vary (obj #4)
7. Closing

Quick Review

There are three main **sociological perspectives**.

1. Functionalism (macro-perspective)

Views society as a set of working parts. All of the parts have functions. Society will change if a part does not have a function because it will go away.

Explanation of cellphones:

Cell phones serve important functions such as communication and fashion. If people did not find cellphones to have an important function, they would not use them.

2. Symbolic Interactionism (micro-perspective)

Views society as individuals/groups reacting to symbols. Society will change if people understand symbols differently.

Explanation of cellphones:

Cellphones symbolize increased communication and being fashionable. When a person sees a cell phone she/he recognizes the meaning of the symbol and then decides if she/he wants one.

3. Conflict Perspective (macro-perspective)

Views society in terms of how those with power (the bourgeoisie) control those without power (the proletariat). They want the control because they will get more resources. Society will change with conflict or revolution.

Explanation of cellphones:

Powerful people use cellphones so they can communicate better and thus get more resources. Less powerful people use them so they too can try to get more resources, but also because sometimes the powerful force them to.

Name _____ Date _____ Block _____

Cultural Variation

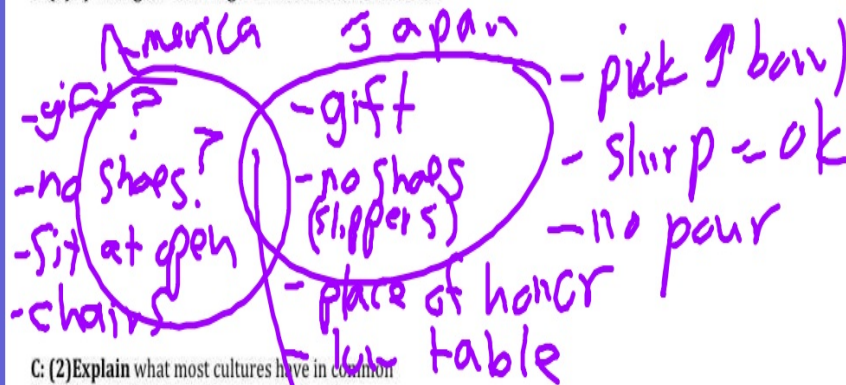
9/7/10

Schy

Directions: Fill out this sheet, and submit it at the end of class.

C: (1) Compare and contrast eating dinner in their own family with a Japanese family

L: (1) by filling a **Venn-diagram** about the two activities



C: (2) Explain what most cultures have in common

L: (2) by reading and taking notes on p. 39

What do most cultures have in common?

C: (3) List five cultural universals

L: (3) by using your notes from p. 39

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

eat dinner
conversation
food
gathering
(together)

C: (4) Explain why cultural universals are expressed differently across cultures

L: (4) by discussing **Murdock's** view on the **cultural purpose** of the **family**, and then writing an answer.


Weekly Preview:
Section 2:
Cultural Variation

- Cultures can be very different from one another in many ways. However, all cultures share certain features. These are called **cultural universals**. **(Tuesday 9/7)**
 - Variations exist between different societies, but they also exist within the same society. **Subcultures** and **countercultures** are examples of variations within societies. **(Wednesday 9/8)**
 - Sociologists must take care to view cultural variations without bias, allowing each culture to be judged by its own standards and not those of another culture. **(Thursday 9/9)**
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Cultural Variation

Main Idea

There are many elements that all cultures share. Many cultural variations exist, however, and cultures change over time.



Reading Focus

- p. 39 What do most cultures have in common with each other?
 - p. 39-40 What factors account for cultural variations within cultures?
 - p. 41 How have some social scientists responded to cultural variation?
 - p. 42 How does cultural change occur?
-

Objectives

- SWBAT

- Content:

- (1) compare and contrast** eating dinner in their own family with a Japanese family **(2) explain** what most cultures have in common **(3) list** five cultural universals **(4) explain** why cultural universals are expressed differently across cultures

- Language:

- (1) by filling a venn-diagram** about the two activities **(2) by** reading and taking notes on p. 39 **(3) by using** their notes from p. 39 **(4) by discussing Murdock's** view on the **cultural purpose** of the **family**, and then writing an answer.

**SOCIOLOGY
CLOSE UP**

Time for Dinner

Objective #1. compare and contrast eating dinner in their own family with a Japanese family by **filling a venn-diagram** about the two activities



How do everyday activities such as eating dinner differ from culture to culture?

Reading Focus

Objective #2 explain what most cultures have in common **by** reading and taking notes on p. 39

- p. 39 What do most cultures have in common with each other?



.

Objective #3

list five cultural universals by using their notes from p. 39

CULTURAL UNIVERSALS

QUICK
FACTS

Anthropologist George Murdock identified more than 65 cultural universals—features that are common to all cultures. How these universals are expressed, however, differs from culture to culture.

Arts and Leisure

athletic sports, dancing, decorative art, games, music

Basic Needs

clothing, cooking, housing

Beliefs

body adornment, dream interpretation, folklore, funeral rites, religious ritual, weather control

Communication and Education

education, greetings, language

Family

courtship, family feasting, kin groups, marriage

Government and Economy

calendar, division of labor, government, law, property rights, status differentiation, trade

Technology

medicine, toolmaking

Reading Check

Find the Main Idea

What are cultural universals?

Answer: *features that are common to all cultures* ▼

Objective #4

explain why cultural universals vary across cultures by **discussing** **Murdock's** view on the **cultural purpose** of the **family**, and then writing an answer.

Cu = cult. Univ.

Objective #4

explain why cultural universals vary across cultures by **discussing** **Murdock's** view on the **cultural purpose** of the **family**, and then writing an answer.

why does family vary across and within cultures?

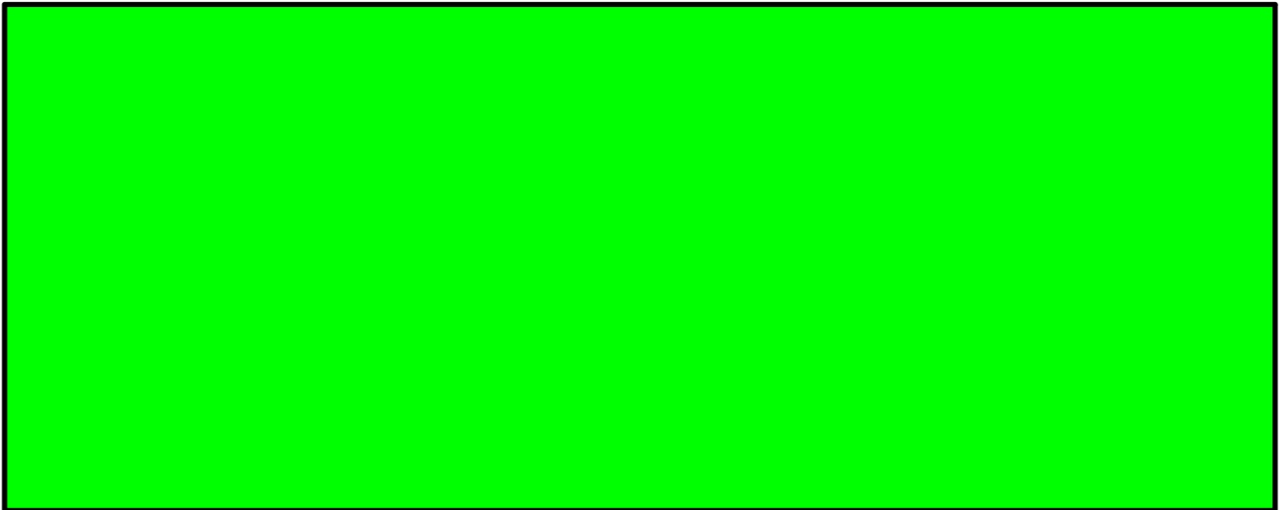
Murdock = fam. are cu b/c need to
Backgrounds Care for kids

- not all the same
- diff histories
- diff beliefs
- divorce
- diff ways of parenting

Cultural Variations

p. 39-40 Reading Focus:

What factors account for cultural variations within cultures?



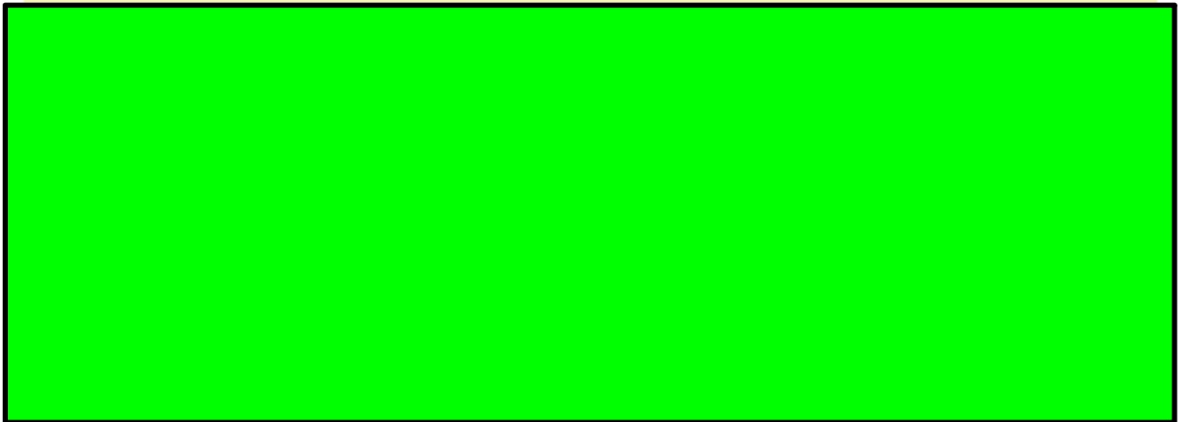
Click on the image to play the Interactive.



Reading Check

Contrast

What is the difference between a subculture and a counterculture?



Response to Variation

Ethnocentrism

- A tendency to view one's own culture and group as superior
- People from all cultures are somewhat ethnocentric at different times
- Can lead to discrimination
- Can cause the home culture to stagnate
- Even professional scholars struggle with **ethnocentrism**

Cultural Relativism

- **Cultural relativism** is the idea that a culture should be judged by its own standards
 - Can help explain beliefs or behaviors that seem strange or different
-

Perspectives on Culture

Functionalist Perspective Culture reflects and enforces society's central values. It encourages harmony and stability by integrating individuals into society. Subcultures diffuse discontent of subgroups in society. Ethnocentrism encourages group solidarity.

Conflict Perspective Culture reflects and enforces the values of those who hold power. It encourages and maintains social inequality. Subcultures and countercultures challenge those in power. Ethnocentrism encourages discrimination against the powerless.

Interactionist Perspective Culture is maintained and modified through everyday social interaction. Interaction among subcultural groups helps to transmit customs and traditions and also introduces new cultural meaning systems.

Reading Check

Identify

How might ethnocentrism
cause discrimination?

Answer: *People who think their own culture is superior to another culture may begin to think people of the other culture are inferior.*

Cultural Change

- **Cultural diffusion**

- **Cultural diffusion** is the spreading of culture traits from one society to another
- Today it can happen almost instantly

- **Cultural lag**

- **Cultural lag** is the time it takes for nonmaterial culture to “catch up” to changes in material culture

- **Cultural leveling**

- **Cultural leveling** is a process by which cultures become more and more alike
 - Some suggest it is the first step toward a global culture
-

Reading Check

Summarize

What are the major processes of cultural change?

Answer: *cultural diffusion and cultural leveling*

Cultural Diversity and Sociology

The Adaptive American Culture

The long history of immigration to the United States has resulted in an American culture that embraces values, behaviors, and material culture from other cultures around the world.

- Latino influence is especially strong as Hispanics are the largest minority group
- Influences food, clothes, and cars available
- Latino holidays are celebrated
- Spanish-language advertisements are common
- South Asians are becoming a larger and larger portion of U.S. population
- Pakistani and Indian food has quickly become more popular
- Bollywood movies are popular



Grocery stores that cater to both South Asian immigrant communities and the wider U.S. society are becoming more common.

Thinking Critically

- How have immigrant groups influenced American culture?
- What are some examples of how food, business practices, and advertising have changed because of immigration?

Section 3 at a Glance


The American Value System

- Over the years, sociologists have identified what they believe are the core values of American society.
 - Among these values are work, individualism, morality and humanitarianism, personal achievement, and others.
 - American values have not stayed the same over time, however. New values, such as respect for the environment, regularly develop and become part of American culture.
-

The American Value System

Main Idea

Even though American society is quite diverse, there are certain core values that the vast majority of Americans share.



Reading Focus

- What are traditional American values?
 - How have our values changed since the 1970s?
-

**SOCIOLOGY
CLOSE UP**

“Work Is Its Own Reward”



How important is work
in the American value
system?

AMERICAN VALUES

QUICK
FACTS

American society is made up of many diverse groups, but there is a core set of values that the majority of these groups share.

Personal Achievement

Doing well at school and at work is important. Gaining wealth and prestige is a sign of success.

Progress and Material Comfort

History is marked by ongoing progress, and this progress improves people's lives.

Work

Discipline, dedication, and hard work are signs of virtue.

Individualism

Hard work, initiative, and individual effort are the keys to personal achievement.

Efficiency and Practicality

Every problem can be solved through efficiency and practicality. Getting things done well in the shortest time is very important.

Morality and Humanitarianism

Judgments should be based on a sense of right and wrong. This sense of morality also involves helping the less fortunate.

Equality and Democracy

Everyone should have an equal chance at success and the right to participate freely in government.

Freedom

Personal freedoms, such as freedom of religion, speech, and the press, are central to the American way of life.

Other Core Values

- **Nationalism**
 - **Patriotism**
 - **Science and rationality**
 - **Racial and group superiority**
 - **Education**
 - **Religion**
 - **Romantic love**
-

American Values: What's Your Opinion?

Do young Americans still uphold traditional American values? Or are the core values of American culture changing? Poll your fellow students to discover what they think.

PROCEDURE

- 1 Review the traditional American values listed in this section.
- 2 Working in a group with two or three classmates, develop a questionnaire addressing these values. Each question should take the form of a statement on one of the values with several possible responses—strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, and strongly disagree, for example.
- 3 Make copies of your questionnaire and distribute them to the rest of the class.

ANALYSIS

1. Collate all the responses to the questionnaires and present your findings to the class.
2. Lead a class discussion of your findings, using questions such as: Which core values do young people still hold? Which core values seem to be falling out of favor? Are there other values that should be considered core American values?

Quick Lab



Reading Check

Summarize

List and describe four traditional American values.

Answer: *Students should list and describe any four of the following: personal achievement, progress and material comfort, hard work, individualism, efficiency and practicality, morality and humanitarianism, equality and democracy, freedom*

Our Changing Values

While the United States has a set of core values, new values or changed values are sometimes noted.

New Values

- Leisure
- Physical fitness
- Youthfulness
- **Self-fulfillment**
- Environmentalism
- Progress

Self-fulfillment and Narcissism

- Some scholars see self-fulfillment as a healthy new value, while others view its extreme, **narcissism**, as detrimental to society as a whole.

Reading Check

Analyze

In what ways have
American values changed?

Answer: *There has been an increased emphasis on values such as leisure, physical fitness, and youthfulness that can be termed self-fulfillment, as well as an increased interest in protecting the environment.*

Lab: Applying What You've Learned

Analyzing Material Culture

How can material culture be used to tell about cultural values and differences?

1. Introduction

- In this lab, you will compare your values with others in the American Teen subculture.
- Bring two items that reveal your values.
- Compare your items with those of classmates.

2. Selecting Your Items

- Choose one item you value highly and one that you place little value on.
- Decide what value, if any, you place on the item.

Lab (cont.)

3. Analyzing Your Selection

- Write an analysis of your chosen items.
- Describe the process you used to choose your items.



4. Presenting and Judging the Items

- The class will decide for each item whether the item has value or not.
- Each student will then explain what his or her items were, and why he or she placed such a value on the items.

Lab (cont.)

5. Discussion

- Hold a group discussion about the differences in valuation that you discovered.
- How would these valuations change over time or place?