Unit
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Culture and Social Structures

Chapter 3

Culture

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3

Culture

Sections

1. The Basis of Culture
2. Language and Culture
3. Norms and Values
4. Beliefs and Material Culture
5. Cultural Diversity and Similarity

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will be able to

- explain how culture and heredity affect social behavior.
- describe how language and culture are related.
- name the essential components of culture.
- discuss how cultural diversity is promoted within a society.
- understand the role of ethnocentrism in society.
- identify similarities in cultures around the world.

Applying Sociology

The crowing rooster wakes Jabu very early. Already her mother has carried a bucket of water from the village tap and put it on the fire to heat. Bread is laid out on a newspaper on the ground, ready to be cut and spread with jam. Meanwhile, Jabu wraps her baby brother in a blanket and ties him on her back, soothing him with a melody as she begins her chores. The goats must be milked and the cattle need to be watered.

After her chores, Jabu dresses for the two-mile walk to school. On the way, she stops to greet a village elder who asks about her father who works in the distant diamond mines. By the time she arrives at school, Jabu sees that school assembly has already begun. The headmistress decides to set an example of Jabu and calls her up front to slap her hand with a ruler. After singing hymns and the national anthem, Jabu goes outside for her first class, held under a large acacia tree in the courtyard.

Jabu's life seems very different from yours, but if you use your sociological imagination, you will see that both you and she attend school, obey authority figures, and have strong family ties. When sociologists look at societies, they discover there are common patterns in all cultures. This chapter will look at the common elements that make up culture.

Sociology online

Chapter Overview
Visit the *Sociology and You* Web site at glencoe.com and click on **Chapter 3—Chapter Overviews** to preview chapter information.

Section 1

The Basis Of Culture

Key Terms

- **culture** *(p. 72)*
- **society** *(p. 73)*
- **instincts** *(p. 73)*
- **reflexes** *(p. 73)*
- **drives** *(p. 73)*
- **sociobiology** *(p. 74)*

Section Preview

Culture defines how people in a society behave in relation to others and to physical objects. Although most behavior among animals is instinctual, human behavior is learned. Even reflexes and drives do not completely determine how humans will behave, because people are heavily influenced by culture.

Culture and Society

- **culture** knowledge, values, customs, and physical objects that are shared by members of a society

The term **culture** refers to the knowledge, language, values, customs, and physical objects that are passed from generation to generation among members of a group. It is a human creation. On the *material* side, the culture of the United States includes such physical objects as skyscrapers, computers, cell phones, and cars. On the *nonmaterial* side, American culture includes beliefs, rules, customs, family systems, and a capitalist economy.

Culture helps to explain human social behavior. What people do and don't do, what they like and dislike, what they believe and don't believe, and what they value and discount are all based on culture. Culture provides the blueprint that people in a society use to guide their relationships with others. It is because of culture that teenage girls are encouraged to compete for a position on the women's basketball team. It is from culture that teenage boys come to believe that "pumping iron" is a gateway to masculinity.

Coming from a different culture than that of the other sunbathers doesn't prevent this Amish family from enjoying a day at the beach.

Culture and society are tightly interwoven. One cannot exist without the other, but they are not identical. A **society** is a group of people who live in a defined territory and participate in a common culture. Culture is that society's total way of life.

Human behavior, then, is based on culture. Since people are not born knowing their culture, human cultural behavior must be learned. In this section we will examine the relative importance of biology in influencing behavior.

society
a specific territory inhabited by people who share a common culture

Culture and Heredity

Instincts are genetically inherited patterns of behavior. Nonhuman animals, especially insects, are highly dependent on instincts for survival. Human infants, in contrast, cannot go very far on instincts alone. Instincts are not enough to solve the problems that humans face.

instincts
innate (unlearned) patterns of behavior

reflex
automatic reaction to physical stimulus

Why is culture more important than instinct in determining human behavior? If humans were controlled by instincts alone, they would all behave in the same way with respect to those instincts. If, for example, women had an instinct for mothering, then *all* women would want children, and all women would love and protect their children. In fact, some women do not want to have children, and some women who give birth abuse or abandon their children.

Without instincts to dictate the type of shelter to build, the kind of food to eat, the time of year to have children, or when to mate, humans are forced to create and learn their own ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. Even for meeting basic needs such as those involving reproduction, food, and survival, humans rely on the culture they have created.

Studies of identical twins show that about half of your personality traits are inherited.

How does heredity affect behavior? Of course, culture is not the only influence on human behavior. Genetic inheritance plays a role. For example, you may have heard people argue about how much of personality is a result of heredity and how much is the product of the environment. (This is sometimes called the "nature versus nurture" argument.) Using studies of identical twins, researchers have determined that about half of your personality traits are determined by your genetic makeup and about half by environmental factors (Tellegen et al., 1993).

In addition, humans have **reflexes**—simple, biologically inherited, automatic reactions to physical stimuli. A human baby, for example, cries when pinched; the pupils of the eyes contract in bright light. We also have biologically inherited **drives**, or impulses, to reduce discomfort. We want to eat, drink, sleep, and associate with others.

drive
impulse to reduce discomfort

You should realize, however, that genetically inherited personality traits, reflexes, and drives do not control human social behavior. Culture *channels* the expression of these biological characteristics. Boys in some Native American cultures, for example, are taught not to cry in response to pain. This is very different from boys in Jewish and Italian cultures, who are taught to pay more attention to physical discomfort and express it more openly (Zborowski, 1952, 1969).

Sociobiology

sociobiology
the study of the biological basis of human behavior

Sociobiology is the study of the biological basis of human behavior. It combines Darwin's theory of natural selection with modern genetics.

How do sociobiologists view human behavior? According to Darwin's theory of evolution, organisms evolve through natural selection. The plants and animals best suited to an environment survive and reproduce, while the rest perish. Sociobiologists assume that the behaviors that best help people are biologically based and transmitted in the genetic code (Degler, 1991; Wright, 1996). Behaviors that would contribute to the survival of the human species include parental affection and care, friendship, sexual reproduction, and the education of children.

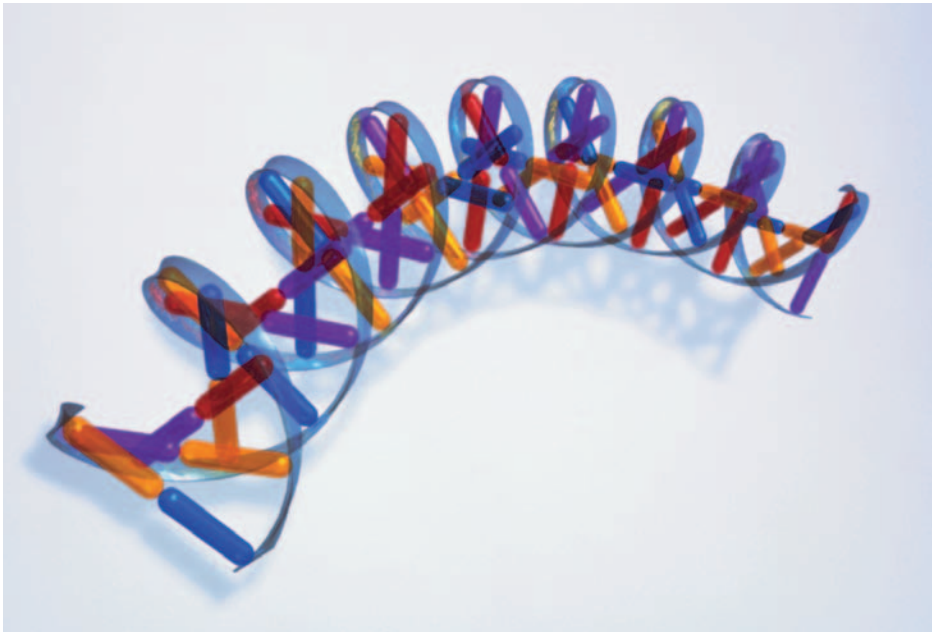
Sociobiologists do not draw a sharp line between human and nonhuman animals. They claim that nonhuman animals also act on knowledge—as when baboons use long sticks to pull ants from an anthill for a meal. Many nonhuman animals, claim sociobiologists, show intelligence of a kind formerly thought to be unique to humans, such as the ability to use language (Begley, 1993; Linden, 1993a).

Folds of skin around the eyelids of this Inuit fisherman protect his eyes from the sun's glare off the ice and snow.

What are some criticisms of sociobiology? The major criticism of sociobiology is that the importance placed on genetics could be used as a justification to label specific races as superior or inferior. Critics of sociobiology also point out that there is too much variation in societies around the world for human behavior to be explained on strictly biological grounds. They believe that the capacity for using language is uniquely human and that humans have created a social life that goes far beyond what heredity alone could accomplish.

Is there a middle ground? Some common ground has emerged in this debate. A growing body of sociologists believe that genes work with culture in a complex way to shape and limit human nature and social life. They would like this relationship to be further examined (Lopreato, 1990; Weingart, 1997; Konner, 1999).

A 1998 study found that women look for one set of characteristics in men they marry while men value different characteristics in women (Buss, Malamuth, and Windstad, 1998). The researchers believe this behavior is programmed into the genetic code. Studies have also determined that



DNA, the genetic material in all cells, is the molecular basis of heredity. Sociobiology focuses on the relationship between heredity and human behavior.

stepfathers are more likely than biological fathers to abuse their children (Daly and Wilson, 1997). Is this because men are more protective of their own biological offspring? Because of the speed of discoveries in the field of biology, the relationships between heredity, culture, and behavior are of growing interest to sociobiologists.

Section 1 Assessment

1. How is society different from culture?
2. About what percentage of personality is determined by genetics?
3. What are two arguments against the theory of sociobiology?
4. Predict which of the following are drives (D), which are reflexes (R), which are instincts (I), and which are creations of culture (C).
   a. eye blinking in dust storm
   b. need for sleep
   c. reaction to a loud noise
   d. socialism
   e. reproduction
   f. racial inequality

Critical Thinking

5. **Synthesizing Information** Name three nonmaterial and three material elements that represent American culture to you.
6. **Making Generalizations** Do you think human behavior is more a result of culture or of heredity? Give reasons to support your answer.

Another Time

The Mysterious Fall of Nacirema

The following reading is excerpted from a review of a little-known North American culture.

Although the Nacirema left a large number of documents, our linguists have been unable to decipher any more than a few scattered fragments of the Nacirema language. Eventually, with the complete translation of these documents, we will undoubtedly learn a great deal about the reasons for the sudden disappearance of what . . . must have been an explosive and expansive culture. . . .

When we examine the area occupied by these people . . . it is immediately apparent that the Nacirema considered it of primary importance to completely remake the environment. . . . Trees . . . were removed. . . . Most of the land . . . was sowed each year with a limited variety of plants. . . .

For a period of about 300 solar cycles . . . the Nacirema devoted a major part of their effort to the special environmental problem of changing the appearance of air and water. Until the last fifty solar cycles of the culture's existence, they seemed to have had only indifferent success. But during the short period before the fall of the culture, they mastered their art magnificently. They changed the color of the waters from the cool end of the spectrum (blues and greens) toward the warm ends (reds and browns). . . .

Early research has disclosed the importance of . . . the presence of the . . . Elibomotua [RAC] Cult, which sought to create an intense sense of individual involvement in the community effort to completely control the environment. . . .

There seems to be little doubt that the Cult of the Elibomotua was so fervently embraced by the general population, and that the daily rituals of the RAC's care and use were so faithfully performed, that the minute quantities of [chemicals] thus distributed may have had a decisive effect on the chemical characteristics of the air. The Elibomotua, therefore, may have contributed in a major way toward the prized objective of a totally man-made environment.

In summary, our evaluation of . . . the Nacirema's man-made environmental alterations . . . lead us to advance the hypothesis that they may have been responsible for their own extinction. The Nacirema culture may have been so successful in achieving its objectives that . . . its people were unable to cope with its manufactured environment.

If the Nacirema seem vaguely familiar, it's because *Nacirema* is *American* spelled backward. Neil Thompson's description strikes us as strange. This is because Americans are not used to looking at their culture as others from the outside might see it. Like fish in water, Americans are so close to their own customs and rituals that they are in a sense unaware of them. Looking at culture from the sociological perspective will heighten your awareness of your own culture as well as the cultures of others.

Source: Neil B. Thompson, "The Mysterious Fall of Nacirema." *Natural History* (December, 1972). Copyright the American Museum of Natural History (1972). Reprinted with permission.

Thinking It Over

1. Describe how your feeling toward the Nacirema changed when you knew their true identity.
2. What other items in today's American culture might be misinterpreted by future anthropologists?

Section 2

Language and Culture

Section Preview

Humans can create and transmit culture. The symbols of language play a role in determining people's views of reality.

Key Terms

- **symbols** *(p. 77)*
- **hypothesis of linguistic relativity** *(p. 78)*

Symbols, Language, and Culture

If culture is to be transmitted, it must be learned anew by each generation. Both the creation and the transmission of culture, known as *cultural transmission,* depend heavily on the use of symbols. The most powerful symbols are those that make up language.

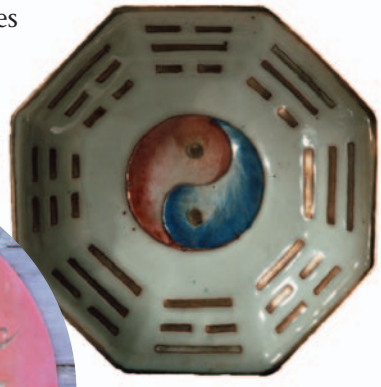
What are symbols? In Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass,* Humpty Dumpty says to Alice, "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." So it is with **symbols**—things that stand for or represent something else.

- **symbol** a thing that stands for or represents something else

Symbols range from physical objects to sounds, smells, and tastes. As you read in Chapter 1, the meaning of a symbol is not based on physical characteristics. For example, there is nothing naturally pleasing about the sound created by hands loudly clapping together. Applause warms the heart of an entertainer, a politician, or a high school athlete in the United States, but in Latin America the same sound means disapproval. In the sports world, the Nike "swoosh" has become a symbol for golfer Tiger Woods. The Confederate flag that represents oppression for many African Americans and a proud cultural heritage for many white Southerners is a symbol with different meanings attached.

How are language and culture related? Language frees humans from the limits of time and place. It allows us to create culture. The Wright brothers' successful flight did not come just from their own personal efforts. They built their airplane according to principles of flight already existing in American culture. Through language they could read, discuss, and recombine existing ideas and technology.

Equipped with language, humans can pass their experiences, ideas, and knowledge to others. Although it may take time and repetition, children can be taught the dangers of fire and heights without being burned or toppling down stairs. This process of social learning, of course, applies to other cultural patterns as well, such as eating, showing patriotism, or staying awake in class.



Some symbols are recognized and understood by people all over the world.

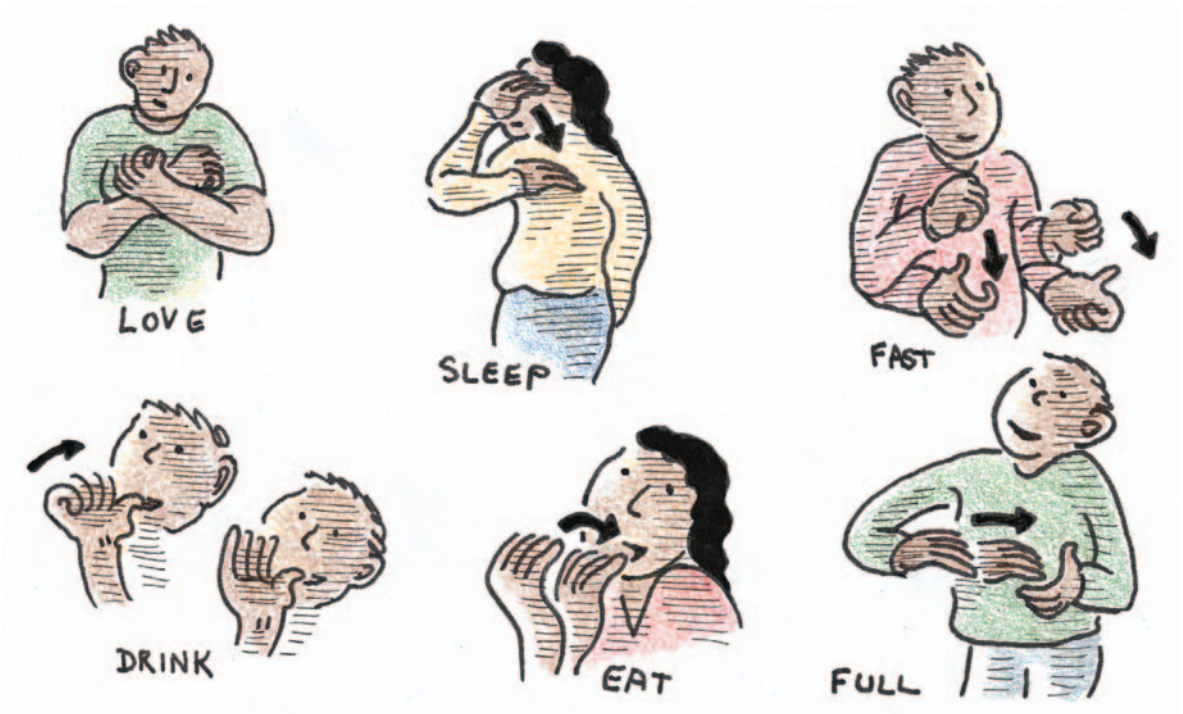


Figure 3.1 Sign Language.
Hand movements in sign language are symbols.

The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

According to Edward Sapir (1929) and Benjamin Whorf (1956), language is our guide to reality. How we think about a thing relates to the number and complexity of words available to describe that thing. In effect, our perceptions of the world depend in part on the particular language we have learned. Since languages differ, perceptions differ as well. This theory is known as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, or the **hypothesis of linguistic relativity.**

hypothesis of linguistic relativity theory stating that our idea of reality depends largely upon language

What can vocabulary tell you about a culture? When something is important to a society, its language will have many words to describe it. The importance of time in American culture is reflected in the many words that describe time intervals—*nanosecond, moment, minute, hour, era, interim, recurrence, century, light-year, and afternoon,* to name a few. When something is unimportant to people, they may not have even one word for it. When Christian missionaries first went to Asia, they were dismayed because the Chinese language contained no word for sin. Other missionaries were no less distressed to learn that Africans and Polynesians had no word to express the idea of a single, all-powerful God. While English has only a few words that describe snow, the Inuit (Eskimo) language has over twenty. The Pirahâ of Brazil lack words to express numbers greater than two.

Does the hypothesis of linguistic relativity mean we are prisoners of our language? Even if our view of the world is shaped largely by language, we are not forever trapped by our own language. Exposure to another language or to new words can alter a person's perception. (This is one reason why it is important to avoid stereotypical labels.) People can begin to view the world differently as they learn a new language. Most people do confine themselves to the language and vocabulary they learned from birth, but you can either expand or limit your outlook, depending upon how you use language.

In Japanese culture an emphasis on politeness has helped people learn to live harmoniously in close quarters.

What other factors help shape our perception of reality? How we perceive the world around us is influenced by more than vocabulary. Cultures may differ in many ways, and these differences influence how their members experience the world. The Japanese use paper walls to create the sense of privacy and are not bothered by noise in adjacent rooms. Americans staying at hotels in Japan complain they are being bombarded with noise because Westerners have not been *conditioned* (mentally trained) to screen out sound.

Privacy is so important to most Germans that German executives generally have a "closed-door policy." Problems arise, as you might imagine, in American firms located in Germany because American executives leave their doors open.

SociologyOnline

Student Web Activity
Visit the *Sociology and You* Web site at glencoe.com and click on **Chapter 3—Student Web Activities** for an activity on language.

Section 2 Assessment

1. What are symbols?
2. How does language affect culture?

Critical Thinking

3. **Understanding Cause and Effect** Describe some specific ways you see language affecting social behavior among students in your school.
4. **Drawing Conclusions** Some experts believe that without language there is no thought. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Cultural Relativism

Different behaviors, traditions, and expectations can often result in misunderstandings between people of different cultures. Learning to look at things from a point of view different from your own, and not making value judgments based on your beliefs and norms, is called *cultural relativism.* Having mutual respect and understanding for other cultures is sometimes more effective than modern technology and money in producing change and goodwill between nations.

Cultural relativism is illustrated in the true story of a young Peace Corps volunteer who was sent to a remote village to help build a well. The stream that was near the village was used for everything from watering goats to bathing to washing clothes to cooking and drinking. It was obvious that clean drinking water would benefit the village and improve health. Armed with plans, equipment, and budget and schedule, the hopeful volunteer arrived ready to begin.

At first, the village people were not very willing to help. After several weeks of lonely effort the volunteer met with the council to ask why nobody was helping her with this urgent project. "A well would be nice," the people agreed, "but what we really need is a good soccer field where we can play without getting hurt on the stones and uneven ground." So the volunteer agreed that some of the money and equipment could be used to build a good soccer field first.

After several weeks of effort, the soccer field was complete and a village soccer team was formed. Now work was able to start on the well, but once again the villagers seemed reluctant to help. Another council meeting was held, and the volunteer was told, "Ah yes, the well would be nice, but what we really need is a bridge across the stream so other villages can easily come to play soccer on our field." Since she couldn't dig the well alone, the volunteer agreed that some more time and money would be used to build a bridge. Unfortunately, the bridge proved to be more difficult than expected, and by the time it was complete, the budget and schedule were both used up.

The volunteer went back to the capital, disappointed and resentful that she had not been able to improve the village. Some weeks later, she was invited back by the villagers for a festival to celebrate the success of the soccer tournament they had arranged. When she arrived she was astonished to find a new well in the very center of the village. She asked the village elders for an explanation.

"The soccer tournament is important to us," she was told, "because it gives us pride and importance and gives us a reason to meet with the people of the other villages. We really never wanted a well."

"Then why did you build it?" she asked.

"We didn't build it because we wanted it," was the answer. "We built it because YOU wanted it."

Doing Sociology

1. What assumptions did the volunteer make about the needs of the villagers? What were the actual needs? Who was more right about what the villagers needed? Why?
2. Describe a time when you made assumptions that turned out to be culturally based.

Section 3

Norms and Values

Section Preview

Two essential components of culture are norms and values. There are several types of norms—folkways, mores, and laws. Sanctions are used to encourage conformity to norms. Values, the broadest cultural ideas, form the basis for norms.

Key Terms

- norms *(p. 81)*
- folkways *(p. 83)*
- mores *(p. 84)*
- taboo *(p. 84)*
- law *(p. 84)*
- sanctions *(p. 87)*
- formal sanctions *(p. 87)*
- informal sanctions *(p. 88)*
- values *(p. 89)*

- **norms** rules defining appropriate and inappropriate behavior

Norms: The Rules We Live By

If you wanted to describe your culture, what would you look for? How could you begin to classify the elements of the American way of life? Sociologists begin with the defining components of a culture: its norms, its values and beliefs, and its use of material objects.

Norms are rules defining appropriate and inappropriate behavior. A Hindu peasant in India can be found lying dead of starvation beside perfectly healthy cattle. In order to strengthen bonds between clans, a young Basarwa girl in Africa might become engaged to a man she has not met. Roman emperors routinely exiled relatives to small isolated islands for "disgracing" the family. Each of these instances reflects cultural norms—ways of behaving in specific situations. Norms help to explain why people in a society or group behave similarly in similar circumstances.

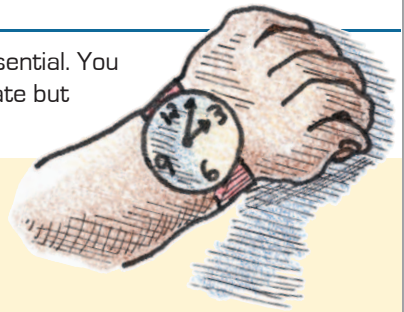
William Graham Sumner (1906) was an early sociologist who wrote about norms. Anything, he stated, can be considered appropriate when norms approve of it. This is because once norms are learned, members of a society

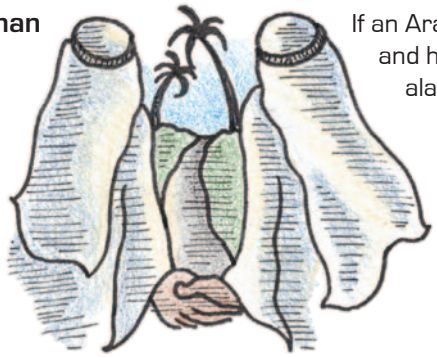
All cultures have norms relating to marriage and family life; weddings are always important occasions. This Hindu couple is celebrating their marriage with a garland ritual.

Figure 3.2 Cultural Etiquette

It might prevent some embarrassing moments if you were aware of norms and customs before traveling to foreign places.

Country	Custom
England, Scotland, and Wales	Appointments are essential. You may be ten minutes late but not ten minutes early.
Greece	Be careful not to praise a specific object too enthusiastically or the host may insist on giving it to you.
Libya	If you are invited to a Libyan home for dinner, only men will be present. Take a gift for the host but not for his wife.
Senegal	Never eat food with the left hand, as this is considered offensive.
Zambia	Avoid direct eye contact with members of the opposite sex—it may suggest romantic overtures.
Saudia Arabia	It is an insult to sit in such a way as to face your host with the soles of your shoes showing. Do not place your feet on a desk, table, or chair.
Oman	If an Arab businessman takes your hand and holds it as you walk, do not be alarmed. He means it only as a sign of friendship.
China	A visit to a Chinese home is rare—unless the government has given prior approval.
Japan	If you are offered a gift, thank the person and wait for one or two more offers before accepting it. Receive the gift with both hands.
South Korea	Men go through doors first. Women help men with their coats.





Source: Roger E. Axtell, *Do's and Taboos Around the World,* 3rd ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1993).

Norms help define a culture's perception of beauty for both males and females. What are some norms that shape the American ideal of beauty?

use them to guide their social behavior. Norms are so ingrained they guide behavior without our awareness. In fact, we may not be consciously aware of a norm until it has been broken. For instance, you may not think about standing in line for concert tickets as a norm until someone attempts to step in front of you. Then it immediately registers that waiting your turn in line is expected behavior. Cutting in front of someone violates that norm. Norms range from relatively minor rules, such as the idea that we should applaud after a performance, to extremely important ones, such as laws against stealing.

Folkways, Mores, and Laws

Sumner identified three basic types of norms: f*olkways, mores,* and *laws*. These three types of norms vary in their importance within a society. Accordingly, their violation is tolerated to different degrees.

What are folkways? Rules that cover customary ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving but lack moral overtones are called **folkways.** For example, sleeping in a bed versus sleeping on the floor is not a moral issue; it qualifies as a folkway. Folkways in the United States include supporting school activities, speaking to other students in the hall, and, if you are male, removing your hat in church.

folkways
norms that lack moral significance

Because folkways are not considered vital to group welfare, disapproval of those who break them is not very great. Those who consistently violate folkways—say, by talking loudly in quiet places, wearing shorts with a suit coat and tie, or wearing a different-colored sock on each foot—may appear odd. We may avoid these people, but we do not consider them wicked or immoral.

Some folkways are more important than others, and the social reaction to their violation is more intense. Failure to offer a woman a seat on a crowded bus draws little notice today. In contrast, obnoxious behavior at a party after excessive drinking may bring a strong negative reaction from others.

mores
norms that have moral dimensions and that should be followed by members of the society

What are mores? The term **mores** (pronounced "MOR-ays") is based on the word *moral*. Morality deals with conduct related to right and wrong. Mores are norms of great moral significance. They are vital to the well-being of a society. Conformity to mores draws strong social approval; violation of this type of norm brings strong disapproval. For example, Americans believe that able-bodied men should work for a living. Able-bodied men who do not work are scorned.

Although following folkways is generally a matter of personal choice, conformity to mores is a social requirement. Still, some mores are more vital to a society than others. Failure to stand at attention while the national anthem is being played is not as serious a violation of American mores as using loud profanity during a religious service.

taboo
a rule of behavior, the violation of which calls for strong punishment

The most serious mores are taboos. A **taboo** is a norm so strong that its violation demands punishment by the group (or, some people think even the supernatural). In India, followers of Hinduism have a taboo forbidding the killing of cows. Other taboos are related to sexual behaviors. Although definitions of incest vary from society to society, the incest taboo (forbidding sexual contact with close relatives) is generally regarded as the only taboo that is present in all societies. The "mother-in-law" taboo existing in some societies prohibits or severely restricts social contact between a husband and his wife's mother.

law
a norm that is formally defined and enforced by officials

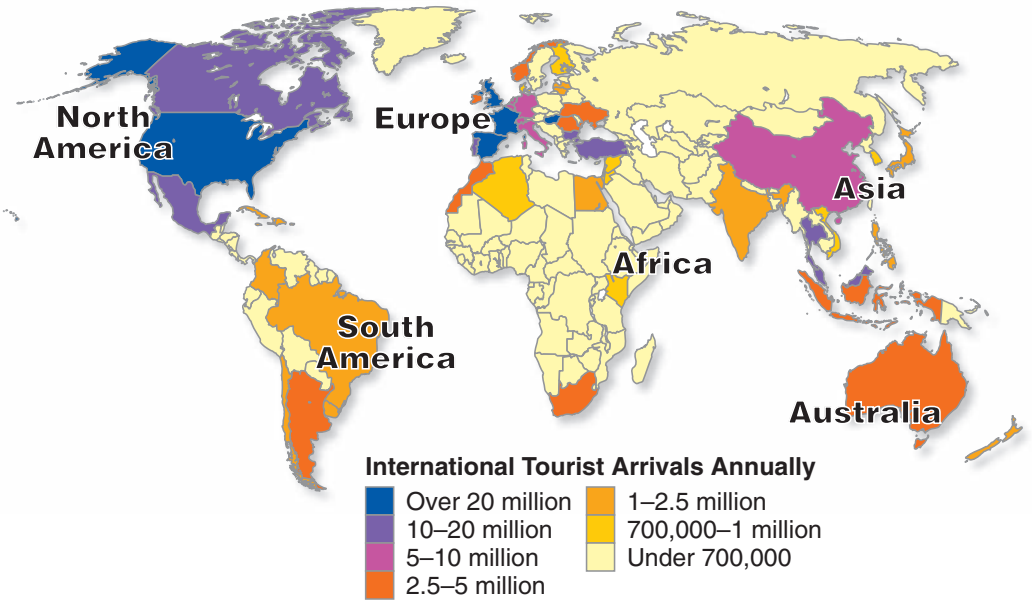
How do laws differ from mores? The third type of norm is **law.** Laws are norms that are formally defined and enforced by officials. Folkways and mores emerge slowly and are often unconsciously created, while laws are consciously created and enforced.

What folkways, mores, or laws are being demonstrated (or broken) in these scenes?

World View

Patterns of Tourism

Although people often want to observe and experience cultures different from their own, exposure to cultural diversity can be uncomfortable. Most international tourist travel occurs among countries sharing common cultural traditions and languages.



Interpreting the Map

1. Identify the world regions that receive the highest and lowest number of tourists.
2. Are there any reasons to believe that these travel patterns might change in the near future? If so, what factors might bring about this change?

Adapted from the *Student Atlas:* DK Publishing, Inc.

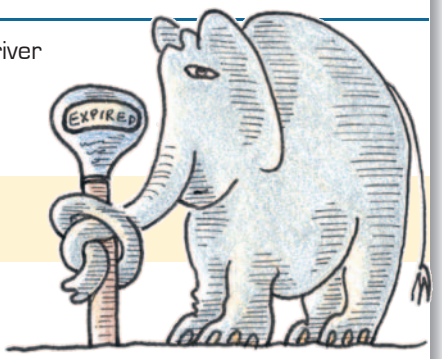
Mores are an important source for laws. At one time, the norm against murder was not written down. But as civilization advanced, the norm against murder became formally defined and enforced by public officials.

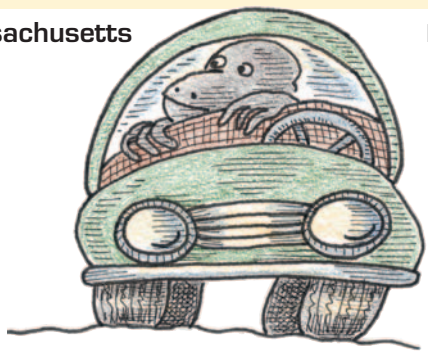
Folkways can become mores or laws. Smoking, for example, was an acceptable behavior to most Americans until the late 1970s, when mounting health concerns convinced many that smoking should be limited or banned in public places. Today, many states have laws against smoking in airports, government buildings, restaurants, and other places open to the general public.

Figure 3.3 Silly Laws Still on the Books

There are many laws throughout the country whose purposes and existence have long been forgotten. At the time, they may have been perfectly logical. As society changed, the need for them disappeared.

State	Law
Alabama	It is illegal for a driver to be blindfolded while operating a vehicle.
Arizona	Hunting camels is prohibited.
Florida	If an elephant is left tied to a parking meter, the fee has to be paid just as it would be for a vehicle.
Illinois	You must contact the police before entering the city in an automobile.
Iowa	Kisses may last for as much as, but no more than, five minutes.
Maine	You must not step out of a plane in flight.
Massachusetts	No gorilla is allowed in the back seat of any car.
Minnesota	A person may not cross state lines with a duck atop his or her head.
Vermont	Whistling underwater is illegal.
Washington	It is illegal to pretend that one's parents are rich.





Not all mores become laws. For example, it is not against the law to cheat on an exam (although you may be suspended or punished by the teacher). Furthermore, not all laws started out as mores. Fines for overtime parking and laws against littering have never been mores.

Laws often remain on the books for a long time after the mores of a society have changed. It is illegal in Minnesota to hang male and female undergarments on the same clothesline. New York prohibits card playing on trains; elephants in Natchez, Mississippi, cannot legally drink beer; and it is against the law to wear roller skates in public bathrooms in Portland, Oregon. (For additional laws that seem strange to us today, see Figure 3.3.)

Enforcing the Rules

People do not automatically conform to norms. Norms must be learned and accepted. Groups teach norms, in part, through the use of *sanctions*. **Sanctions** are rewards and punishments used to encourage conformity to norms. They can be formal or informal.

- **sanctions**
  rewards and punishments used to encourage people to follow norms

What are formal sanctions?

Formal sanctions are sanctions that may be applied only by officially designated persons, such as judges and teachers. Formal sanctions can take the form of positive as well as negative rewards. A soldier earns a Congressional Medal of Honor as a positive sanction for heroism. Teachers reward outstanding students with A's. Of course, formal sanctions can also take the form of punishments.

- **formal sanctions**
  sanctions imposed by persons given special authority

Formal punishments range widely in their severity. From the Middle Ages to the Protestant Reformation, it was an unpardonable sin for lenders to charge interest on money. (This practice was called *usury* and was condemned in the Bible.) This crime was punishable on the third offense

Formal sanctions often involve action in the criminal or civil judicial systems.

by public humiliation and social and economic ruin. More recently, a few courts across the United States have handed down sentences involving public shaming. For example, some courts have required child molesters to display, in front of their homes, signs describing their crimes (El Nasser, 1996). In 2004, an American Hockey League player lost eligibility for the remainder of the season after slamming his hockey stick into the face of an opponent. The victim of this attack subsequently required twenty stitches to close the injury to his face.

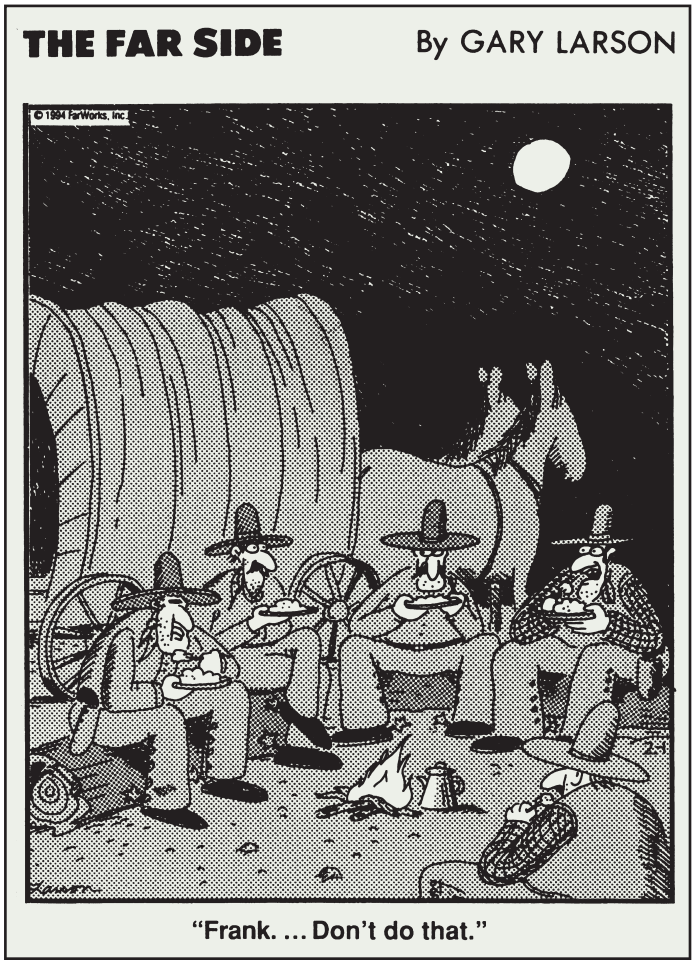
informal sanctions rewards or punishments that can be applied by most members of a group

What are informal sanctions?

Informal sanctions are sanctions that can be applied by most members of a group. They, too, can be positive or negative. Informal sanctions include thanking someone for pushing a car out of a snowbank (positive) or staring at someone who is talking loudly during a movie (negative).

Sanctions are not used randomly or without reason. Specific sanctions are associated with specific norms. A high school student who violates his parents' curfew is not supposed to be locked in a closet, for example.

After we reach a certain age, most of us conform without the threat of sanctions. We may conform to norms because we believe that the behavior expected of us is appropriate, because we wish to avoid guilt feelings, or because we fear social disapproval. In other words, we sanction ourselves mentally.



Frank seems to have forgotten that "real men" don't cross their legs. This informal sanction will probably bring him into line.

Values—The Basis for Norms

Norms and sanctions are relatively specific. The next major component of culture—*values*—is much more general.

What are values? **Values** are broad ideas about what most people in a society consider to be desirable. Values are so general that they do not dictate precise ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. Thus, different societies or different groups within the same society can have quite different norms based on the same value.

For instance, consider the norms used to express the value of freedom in America and in the former Soviet Union. Soviet leaders said their people were free because the leaders claimed to provide full employment, medical care, and education. Americans have different norms based on the value of freedom. These norms include the right to free speech and assembly, the right to engage in private enterprise, and the right to a representative government. Identical values do not result in identical norms.

values
broad ideas about what is good or desirable shared by people in a society

Why are values important? Values have a tremendous influence on human social behavior because they form the basis for norms. A society that values democracy will have norms ensuring personal freedom. A society that values human welfare will have norms providing for its most unfortunate members. A society that values hard work will have norms against laziness.

Values are also important because they are so general that they are involved in most aspects of daily life. In America, for example, the influence of the value of freedom goes beyond political life. The value of freedom affects how family relationships are conducted, how people are treated within the legal system, how organizations are run, and how people worship.

After winning a gold medal in the 2004 Olympics, members of the U.S. women's soccer team became role models for many girls. What cultural values do these women demonstrate?

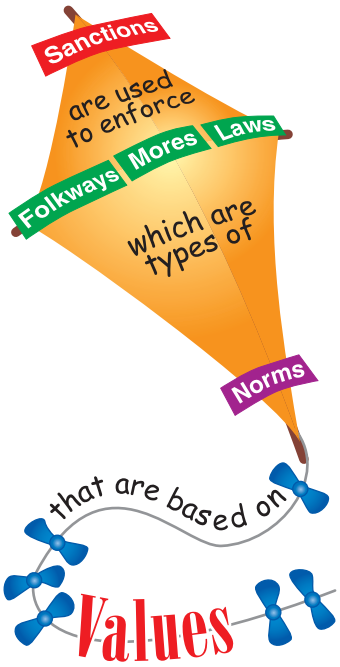


Figure 3.4 **The Norm Kite.** If a society is to fly, it must have these basic elements of social structure. Sanctions (rewards and punishments) are needed to enforce norms (folkways, mores, laws). Guiding the Norm Kite are a society's values, the basis for norms.

Basic Values in the United States

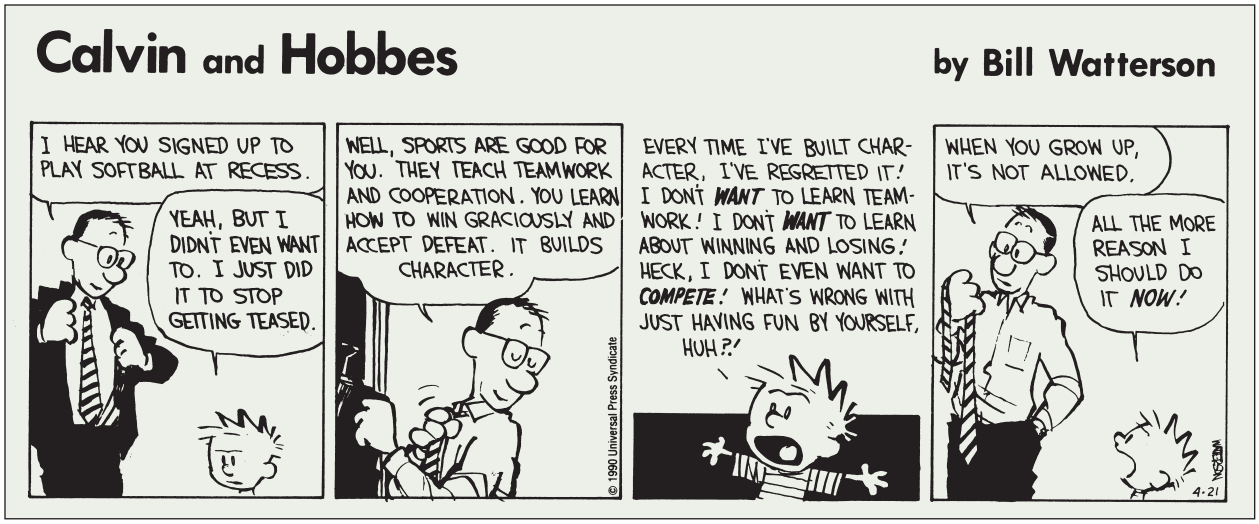
The United States is home to many different groups. No single set of values is likely to hold across the entire country. Despite this problem, sociologist Robin Williams (1970) identified important values that guide the daily lives of most people in the U.S. A partial list includes:

- *Achievement and success.* People emphasize achievement, especially in the world of work. Success is supposed to be based on effort and competition and is viewed as a reward for performance. Wealth is viewed as a symbol of success and personal worth.
- *Activity and work.* People tend to prefer action over inaction in almost every case. For most Americans, continuous and regular work is a goal in itself. Promotion should be for merit rather than favoritism. Finally, all citizens should have the opportunity to perform at their best.
- *Efficiency and practicality.* People pride themselves on getting things done by the most rational means. We search for better (faster) ways of doing things, praise good workmanship, and judge performance by the results. We love to rely on science and technology.
- *Equality.* From the very beginning of our history as a nation, we have declared a belief in equality for all citizens. As minority groups and women achieved citizenship, our concept of equality grew. We tend to treat one another as equals, defend everyone's legal rights, and favor equal opportunity—if not equal results—for everyone.
- *Democracy.* People emphasize that all citizens are entitled to equal rights and equal opportunity under the law. In a democracy, the people elect their government officials. Power is not in the hands of an elite few.
- *Group superiority.* Despite their concern for equality of opportunity, people in the U.S. tend to place a greater value on people of their own race, ethnic group, social class, or religious group.

What cultural values are represented in these photos?

These values are clearly interrelated. Achievement and success affect and are affected by efficiency and practicality, for example. But we can also see conflicts among some values. For instance, people in the U.S. value group superiority while at the same time stressing equality and democracy.

How fluid are America's basic values? Williams identified these major values more than thirty-five years ago—about the time many of your parents were teenagers or young adults. Although these values have remained remarkably stable over the years, some have changed. Today there is less emphasis on group superiority in America than in the past. This can be seen in the decline of openly racist attitudes and behaviors (Farley, 1998; Rochen, 2000). In reality, however, it is usually norms and behavior rather than underlying values that change radically. It is probably because of the passage of civil rights laws that many Americans are now less likely to make overt racist statements. Racism, based on a belief in the superiority of one group over another, remains part of the fabric of American culture.



Calvin's father is trying to transmit the cultural value of competition. As usual, Calvin has his own view. What is yours?

The norms related to hard work and activity have also changed in recent years. Many Americans now work as hard at their leisure activities (for example, long-distance running and mountain climbing) as they do at their jobs.

Although Williams's analysis of major American values remains basically sound today, some sociologists believe that his list is incomplete. They would add, for example, optimism, honesty, and friendliness to the list of major values in the United States.

Section 3 Assessment

1. Indicate whether these statements best reflect a folkway (F), a more (M), a law (L), or a value (V).
   - **a.** norm against cursing aloud in church
   - **b.** norm encouraging eating three meals daily
   - **c.** idea of progress
   - **d.** norm against burning a national flag
   - **e.** norm encouraging sleeping in a bed
   - **f.** norm prohibiting murder
   - **g.** norm against overtime parking
   - **h.** idea of freedom
2. Sociologists make a distinction between norms and values. How are these concepts different? Support your answer with examples.

Critical Thinking

3. **Analyzing Information** You have been thinking about Americal values, norms, and sanctions. What Iraqi values, norms, and sanctions do you think influence the conflict in Iraq?

Section 4

Beliefs and Material Culture

Key Terms

- **nonmaterial culture** *(p. 92)*
- **beliefs** *(p. 92)*
- **material culture** *(p. 92)*
- **ideal culture** *(p. 94)*
- **real culture** *(p. 94)*

- **nonmaterial culture** ideas, knowledge, and beliefs that influence people's behavior
- **beliefs** ideas about the nature of reality
- **material culture** the concrete, tangible objects of a culture

Section Preview

Besides norms and values, beliefs and physical objects make up culture. Ideal culture includes the guidelines we claim to accept, while real culture describes how we actually behave.

Beliefs and Physical Objects

The **nonmaterial culture** involves beliefs, ideas, and knowledge. The *material culture* is about how we relate to physical objects. Values, norms, knowledge, ideas (nonmaterial), and physical objects (material) make up a culture.

Why do beliefs matter?

Beliefs are ideas about the nature of reality. Beliefs can be true or false. The Romans believed Caesar Augustus to be a god; the Tanala, a hill tribe of Madagascar, believed that the souls of their kings passed into snakes; and many Germans believed that pictures of Hitler on their walls would prevent the walls from crumbling during bombing raids. We would certainly consider these beliefs to be false. In contrast, other beliefs—such as the belief that the human eye can distinguish over seven million colors and the belief that no intelligent life exists on Mars—are supported by factual evidence. We consider these to be true. Beliefs are important because people base their behavior on what they believe, regardless of how true or false the beliefs are.

What is material culture?

Material culture consists of the concrete, tangible objects within a culture—automobiles, Harry Potter books, chairs, highways, art. These physical objects have no meaning or use apart from the meanings people give them.

Acres of discarded cars in a junkyard plainly show that the automobile is one of the most common objects of America's material culture.

Consider newspaper and pepper as physical objects. Each has some meaning for you, but can you think of a use for them in combination? Some Americans have used pepper and newspaper in a process known as "nettling." An elderly medical doctor tells the story of his first encounter with nettling:

> *The ink of my medical license was hardly dry, and as I was soon to find out, my ears would not be dry for some time. I had never delivered a baby on my own and faced my maiden voyage with some fear.*
>
> *Upon entering Mrs. Williamson's house, I found a local midwife and several neighbors busily at work preparing for the delivery. My fear caused me to move rather slowly and my happiness over my reprieve prompted me to tell the women that they were doing just fine and to proceed without my services.*
>
> *Having gotten myself off the hook, I watched the ladies with a fascination that soon turned to horror.*
>
> *At the height of Mrs. Williamson's labor pains, one of the neighbors rolled a piece of newspaper into a funnel shape. Holding the bottom end of the cone, she poured a liberal amount of pepper into it. Her next move was to insert the sharp end of the cone, into Mrs. Williamson's nose. With the cone in its "proper" place, the neighbor inhaled deeply and blew the pepper from the cone into the inner recesses of Mrs. Williamson's nose—if not her mind.*
>
> *Suddenly alert, Mrs. Williamson's eyes widened as her senses rebelled against the pepper. With a mighty sneeze, I was introduced to nettling. The violence of that sneeze reverberated through her body to force the baby from her womb in a skittering flight across the bed. An appropriately positioned assistant fielded the baby in midflight and only minor details of Orville's rite of birth remained.*

For this country doctor, the physical objects of newspaper and pepper took on new meaning.

Before this doctor was introduced to nettling, this particular combination of newspaper and pepper had no meaning for him. And until nettling was devised, the combination was without meaning for anyone, even though the separate physical objects existed as part of the culture.

How is material culture related to nonmaterial culture?

The uses and meanings of physical objects can vary among societies. Although it is conventional to use a 787 jet for traveling, it is possible that a 787 downed in a remote jungle region of the world could be used as a place of worship, a storage bin, or a home. In the United States, out-of-service buses, trains, and trolley cars have been converted to restaurants.

Clearly, the cultural meaning of physical objects is not determined by the physical characteristics of the objects. The meanings of physical objects are based on the beliefs, norms, and values people hold with regard to them. This is obvious when new meanings of a physical object are considered. At one time, only pianos and organs were used in church services. Guitars, drums, and trumpets were not "holy" enough to accompany a choir. Yet many churches today use these "worldly" instruments regularly in their worship activities. The instruments have not changed, but the cultural meanings placed on them have.

Though American ideal culture values natural athletic ability, in reality, some professional and amateur athletes use drugs or steroids to improve their performances.

Ideal and Real Culture

- **ideal culture** cultural guidelines that group members claim to accept
- **real culture** actual behavior patterns of members of a group

A gap sometimes exists between cultural guidelines and actual behavior. This gap is captured in the concepts of ideal and real culture. **Ideal culture** refers to cultural guidelines publicly embraced by members of a society. **Real culture** refers to actual behavior patterns, which often conflict with these guidelines.

One value of America's ideal culture is honesty. Yet in real culture, honesty is not always practiced. Some taxpayers annually violate both the letter and spirit of existing tax laws. Some businesspeople engage in dishonest business practices. Some students cheat on exams. Some college athletes do the "high $500" handshake, during which a team booster leaves illegal money in their palms. These are not isolated instances. They are real cultural patterns passed on from generation to generation.

It is important to remember that we are not referring here to individuals whose violations of norms include murder, rape, and robbery. These types of antisocial behavior violate even real culture.

Does the fact that we sometimes ignore cultural guidelines make ideal culture meaningless? Absolutely not. In an imperfect world, ideal culture provides high standards. These ideals are targets that most people attempt to reach most of the time. Ideal culture also permits the detection of deviant behavior. Individuals who deviate too far from the ideal pattern are sanctioned. This helps to preserve the ideal culture.

Section 4 Assessment

1. How is the material culture influenced by the nonmaterial culture?
2. How is real culture different from ideal culture?

Critical Thinking

3. **Drawing Conclusions** Think of an example of real and ideal culture in your school. Should the aspect of ideal culture be abandoned? Why or why not?

Section 5

Cultural Diversity and Similarity

Section Preview

Cultures change according to three major processes. Cultures contain groups within them called *subcultures* and *countercultures* that differ in important ways from the main culture. People tend to make judgments based on the values of their own cultures. While apparently very different on the surface, all cultures have common traits or elements that sociologists call *cultural universals*.

Key Terms

- **social categories** *(p. 98)*
- **subculture** *(p. 98)*
- **counterculture** *(p. 98)*
- **ethnocentrism** *(p. 98)*
- **cultural universals** *(p. 100)*
- **cultural particulars** *(p. 100)*

Cultural Change

So far we have talked about culture as if it did not change. Actually the processes that govern cultural change are so important they are discussed in Chapter 17 on social movements and collective behavior. Briefly, however, you should realize that all cultures experience change. Norms, values, and beliefs are relatively stable, but they do change over time. For example, many of your grandparents never went to college; as teenagers, your parents never e-mailed friends or made last-minute dates on their cell phones. It was not that long ago that middle-class women with young children were discouraged from working outside the home. Interracial dating, while still relatively uncommon, is becoming more acceptable in the United States. These are aspects of culture that are changing in response to certain processes.

Why does culture change? Culture changes for three reasons. One cause is *discovery*, the process of finding something that already exists. The United States is currently discovering the generally unrecognized athletic abilities of females. This is changing the perception of women and the relationship between males and females.

Culture also changes through *invention*, the creation of something new. Science has led to inventions that have changed the world since the fifteenth century, from the creation of the steam engine to the cellular phone and the iPod. Such inventions have greatly altered our way of life.

A third cause of cultural change is *diffusion*, the borrowing of aspects of culture from other cultures. One aspect of culture that diffuses rapidly is food. Tacos, pizza, and hamburgers can be found on menus all over the world. Christmas trees and piñatas are part of celebrations in many countries. Ideas are also diffused. Japanese society has been fundamentally transformed as a result of the adoption of democracy and capitalism after World War II. As stated earlier, these three processes will be examined more closely in a later chapter.

Modern technology can bring new and different ideas to people in remote parts of the world.

Focus on Research

Survey Research: How Do Schools and Parents Fail Teens?

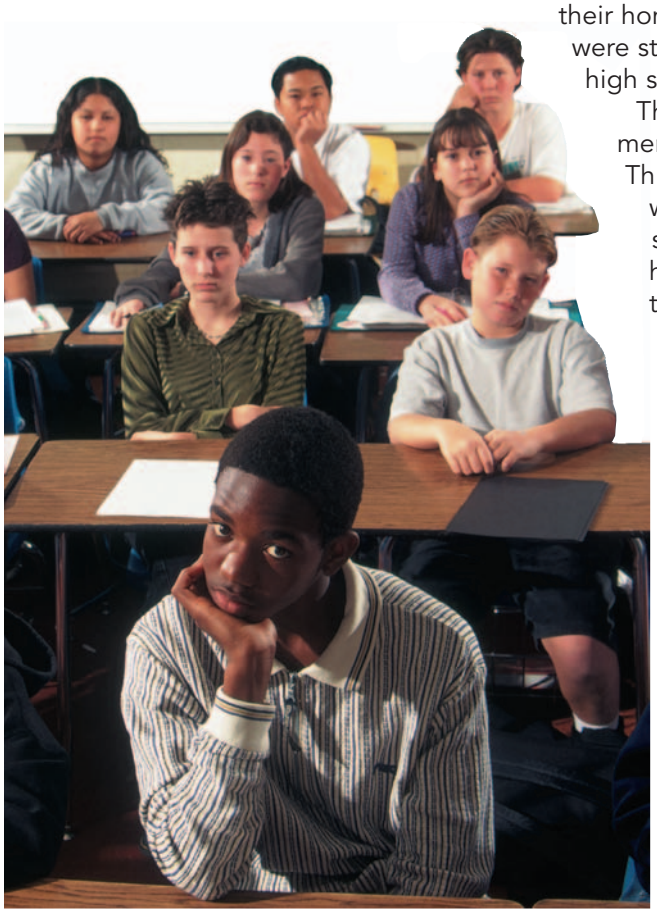
Adolescence is often marked with drama and difficulty. Jacquelynne Eccles (1993) investigated the experience of American teenagers entering a midwestern junior high school and discovered that some teenage troubles are more than hormonal—they are cultural as well.

Eccles studied 1,500 early adolescents moving from sixth-grade elementary schools to seventh-grade junior high schools. The junior high schools were located in twelve school districts in middle-class Michigan communities. Students filled out questionnaires at school for two consecutive years—the sixth and seventh grades. This procedure permitted Eccles to document changes the teenagers experienced after the first year of their transition.

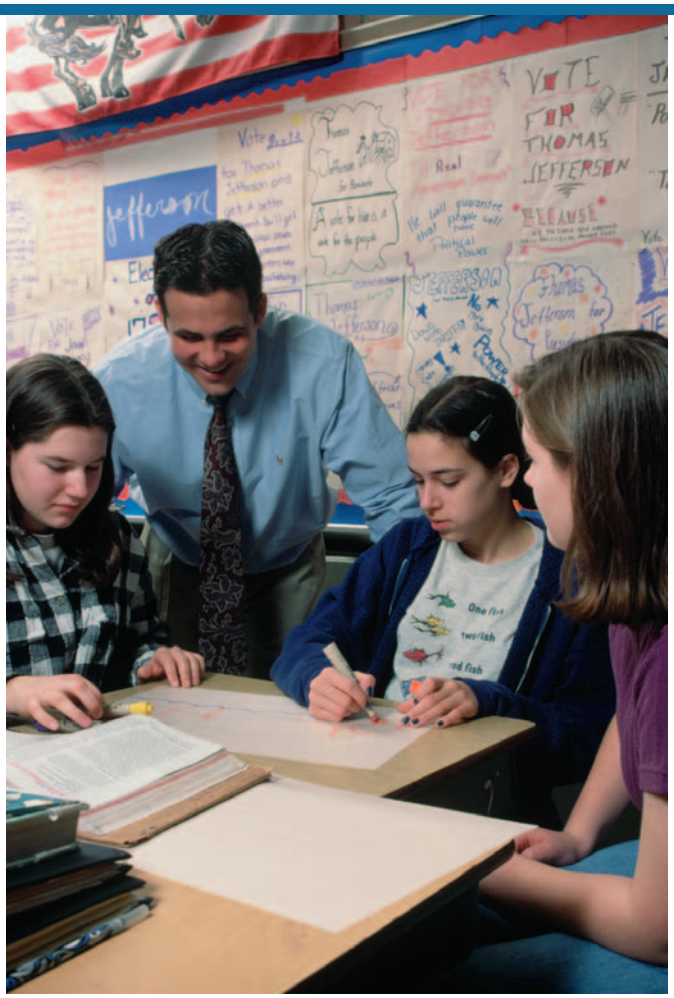
The findings were not encouraging. The relationships between students and teachers tended to worsen over the year. At the very time when the young adolescents especially needed supportive relationships outside of their homes, personal and positive relationships with teachers were strained by cultural and organizational changes in junior high school.

There was more grouping based on academic achievement and more comparing of students with one another. This increased emphasis on student ranking comes just when young adolescents are most insecure about their status relative to their peers. In addition, in the junior high culture, the students experienced less opportunity to participate in classroom decision making.

As a result, student motivation and self-confidence declined. Eccles concluded that junior high school culture denies adolescents the emotionally supportive environment they need for proper social development.



Junior high students who are in supportive environments are more likely to have higher motivation and self-esteem than students in less supportive schools and families.



Eccles's news was no better on the home front. Changes in family paralleled those of the school system. Parental control over teenagers went up during the year, often to excessive levels. At the same time, school motivation and self-esteem of the junior high students went down.

As a check on these general findings, Eccles compared students in more supportive schools and families with those in less supportive ones. In both the school and the family settings, she found more positive results in supportive environments. Students who were able to participate in school and family decision making showed higher levels of academic motivation and self-esteem than their peers with less opportunity to participate.

The solution to this problem, Eccles concludes, lies in a change in the norms and values of the schools and families. Schools and families need to develop balanced cultural expectations of young adolescents based on their developmental needs. Adolescents, Eccles points out, have a growing need for independence that is rarely encouraged in the culture of the public school system. Neither cracking down on them nor giving up control strikes the proper balance. The task is for the family and school to provide "an environment that changes in the right way and at the right pace" (Eccles, 1993:99).

Working with the Research

1. Do you recall your junior high experience? Was your situation similar to the one described by Eccles? Did you feel the same pressures?
2. Which of the three theoretical perspectives do you think is most helpful in understanding the social relationships Eccles describes? Apply this perspective to explain her findings.

Cultural Diversity

- **social categories** groupings of persons who share a social characteristic

Cultural diversity exists in all societies. Some diversity is a result of **social categories**—groups that share a social characteristic such as age, gender, or religion. Certain behaviors are associated with particular ages, genders, or religions. For example, devout Catholics are expected to attend Mass regularly.

What are subcultures and countercultures?

Cultural diversity also comes from groups that differ in particular ways from the larger culture. These groups participate in the larger culture. They may speak the language, work regular jobs, eat and dress like most others, and attend recognized houses of worship. But despite sharing in the broader culture, these groups have some ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving that set them apart. Such groups—known as *subcultures* and *countercultures*—are usually found in large, complex societies.

- **subculture** a group that is part of the dominant culture but that differs from it in some important respects
- **counterculture** a subculture deliberately and consciously opposed to certain central beliefs or attitudes of the dominant culture
- **ethnocentrism** judging others in terms of one's own cultural standards

Subculture is part of the dominant culture but differs from it in some important respects. The subculture of San Francisco's Chinatown is a good example. Early Chinese immigrants brought much of their native culture with them to America and have attempted to retain it by passing it from generation to generation. Although Chinese residents of Chinatown have been greatly affected by American culture, they have kept many cultural patterns of their own, such as language, diet, and family structure. Other examples of subcultures are those formed by youth, circus people, musicians, and mental patients (Fine, 1996; Redhead, 1997; Kephart and Zellner, 2000).

Counterculture is a subculture deliberately and consciously opposed to certain central beliefs or attitudes of the dominant culture. A counterculture can be understood only within the context of this opposition.

Examples of primarily teenage countercultures include the "goth" and the "punk" scenes. Goth is a shortening of the term *gothic*, meaning dark, strangely mysterious, and remote. Punk is a philosophy of rebellion and sexual revolution popularized by the lyrics and music of punk-rock bands.

Prison counterculture surfaced at the trial of John King, a man convicted of the gruesome truck-dragging murder of James Byrd, Jr. During an earlier prison stretch, King had become a member of a white supremacist gang that promoted many forms of violence. The gang's motto was "blood in, blood out," meaning that entry into the gang demanded a violent act, and leaving the gang would result in violence as well (Galloway, 1999). Delinquent gangs, motorcycle gangs, certain types of drug groups, and revolutionary or religious groups may also form countercultures (Zellner, 1999).

The punk movement began in Britain and quickly developed into an American counterculture.

Ethnocentrism

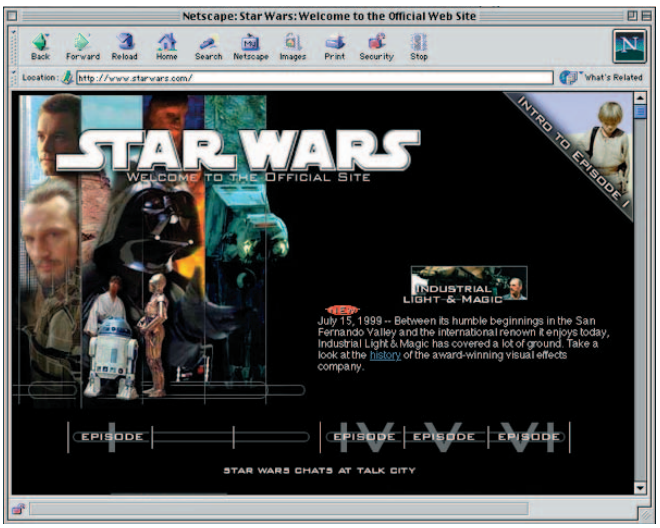
Once people learn their culture, they tend to become strongly committed to it. In fact, they often cannot imagine any other way of life. They may judge others in terms of their own cultural standards—a practice referred to as **ethnocentrism.**

TECH TRENDS

Star Wars and the Internet

When *Star Wars* first appeared in theaters in the late 1970s, director George Lucas probably did not realize that he had almost single-handedly created a full-fledged cultural phenomenon. Virtually everyone in the United States now recognizes Luke Skywalker, Darth Vader, and Yoda. Most Americans know what "May the Force be with you" means.

The movies in the *Star Wars* series have certainly been extremely popular in their own right, but the Internet has also been important in their penetration into popular culture. In 1999, *Star Wars* fans kept in touch over the Internet as they eagerly awaited *The Phantom Menace,* the first new *Star Wars* film in sixteen years. Anticipation of the first "prequel" was incredibly intense, and pirated footage spread to more than sixty Web sites within hours of first being posted. In response, Lucasfilm's official Web site posted the film's trailer and was promptly overwhelmed with 340 "hits" per second. The impact of the Internet on this bit of American culture is undeniable.



"Everyone said this was the most top-secret movie ever made, that it was tighter than Fort Knox, no leaks whatsoever," says Scott Chitwood, age twenty-five, who's the emperor of TheForce.net. "Well, most web site operators knew the plot a year ago. That's all because of the Internet."

Of course, the cultural effects of *Star Wars* are not limited to the box office. Over the years, *Star Wars* has become much more than a movie to people worldwide. It has its own icons, symbols, and language. It has become a mini-culture, or subculture unto itself.

It is commerce over the Internet, or e-commerce, that has allowed many elements of this subculture to enter the larger culture. By 2005, the now six-film *Star Wars* franchise had earned nearly $20 billion, much of it through merchandising over the Internet. Among the many items sold are toys, soundtracks, costumes, licensing fees, and DVDs.

Analyzing the Trends

1. What other recent events are now part of popular culture in the United States? Tell what aspects of these events have made their way into our thinking, feeling, and behaving.
2. Predict ways in which the increasing popularity of the Internet may alter our understanding of culture.

What are some examples of ethnocentrism? Examples of ethnocentrism are plentiful. The Olympic Games are much more than an arena of competition for young men and women. In addition to competition, the games are an expression of ethnocentrism. Political and nationalistic undercurrents run through the Olympics. A country's final ranking in this athletic competition for gold, silver, and bronze medals is frequently taken as a reflection of the country's worth and status on the world stage.

Ethnocentrism also exists within societies. Regional rivalries in the United States are a source of many humorous stories, but these jokes reflect an underlying ethnocentrism. Boston is said by some (mostly Bostonians) to be the hub of the universe. Texans often claim to have the biggest and best of everything. New Yorkers bemoan the lack of culture in Los Angeles. Finally, members of churches, schools, and political parties all over America feel that their particular ways of living should be adopted by others.

Ethnocentrism is still a divisive force in Germany. A riot erupts when members of the ultraright National Democratic Party march in support of their racist policies.

Does ethnocentrism help or hurt society? Ethnocentrism has two faces—it offers both advantages and disadvantages. People feel good about themselves and about others in their group when they believe that what they are doing is right and superior to what other groups do. Stability is promoted because traditions and behaviors are highly valued. If a society is too rigid, however, it becomes inflexible. Extreme ethnocentrism can prevent change for the better. Societies whose members are firmly convinced of their superiority tend not to create anything new. The ancient Chinese built a wall to keep both invaders and new ideas out. The civil rights movement was born to combat racial ethnocentrism. Hitler's Final Solution was ethnocentrism at its worst. Today many states are passing laws that increase the penalties against people who commit violent acts against others based on their race, origin, or religion. (Civil rights and hate crimes are discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.)

Cultural Universals

cultural universals
general cultural traits that exist in all cultures

Although it may seem that different cultures have little in common, researchers have identified more than seventy common cultural traits. These **cultural universals** are traits that exist in all cultures. They include such things as sports, cooking, courtship, division of labor, education, etiquette, funeral rites, family, government, hospitality, housing, inheritance rules, joking, language, medicine, marriage, mourning, music, property rights, religious rituals, sexual restrictions, status differences, and tool making (Murdock, 1945). Because all societies have these cultural universals, they are more similar than you think. (See Figure 3.5 on page 102 for a more detailed list of cultural universals.)

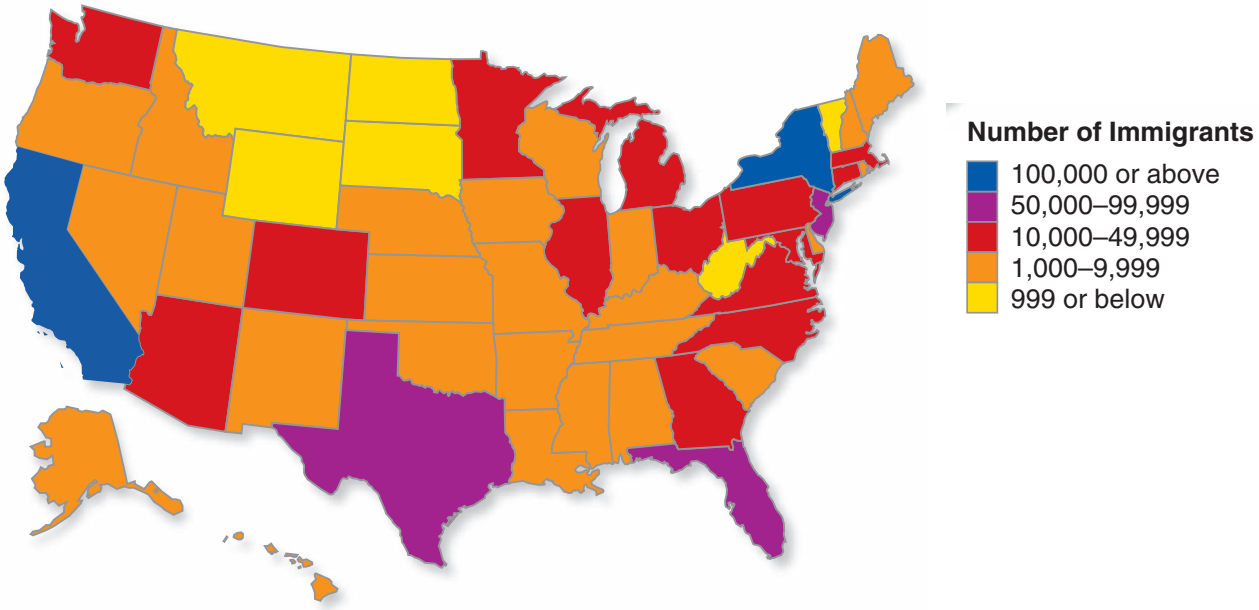
How are cultural universals expressed? Cultural universals are not always carried out in the same way. In fact, different cultures have developed quite different ways to express universals. These are called **cultural particulars.** One cultural universal is caring for children. In the United States, women have traditionally worked within the home caring for children, and men have worked outside the home. (Although this is changing,

cultural particulars
the ways in which a culture expresses universal traits

Snapshot of America

Immigration to the United States

The United States has long been the destination of immigrants from around the world. These immigrants have contributed to the nation's rich cultural diversity in a wide variety of ways. This map shows the number of immigrants who came to the United States in 2004 and the states in which they settled.



Interpreting the Map

1. Which states had the most immigrants in 2004? Which states had the fewest?
2. About how many immigrants settled in your state in 2004?
3. Why would it be correct to say that the United States is a nation of immigrants?

Source: Bureau of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services: *2004 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics.*

women in this country are still largely responsible for child care.) Among the Manus of New Guinea, in contrast, the man is completely in charge of child rearing. Among the Mbuti pygmies, the Lovedu of Africa, and the Navajo and Iroquois Indians, men and women share equally in domestic and economic tasks (Little, 1975).

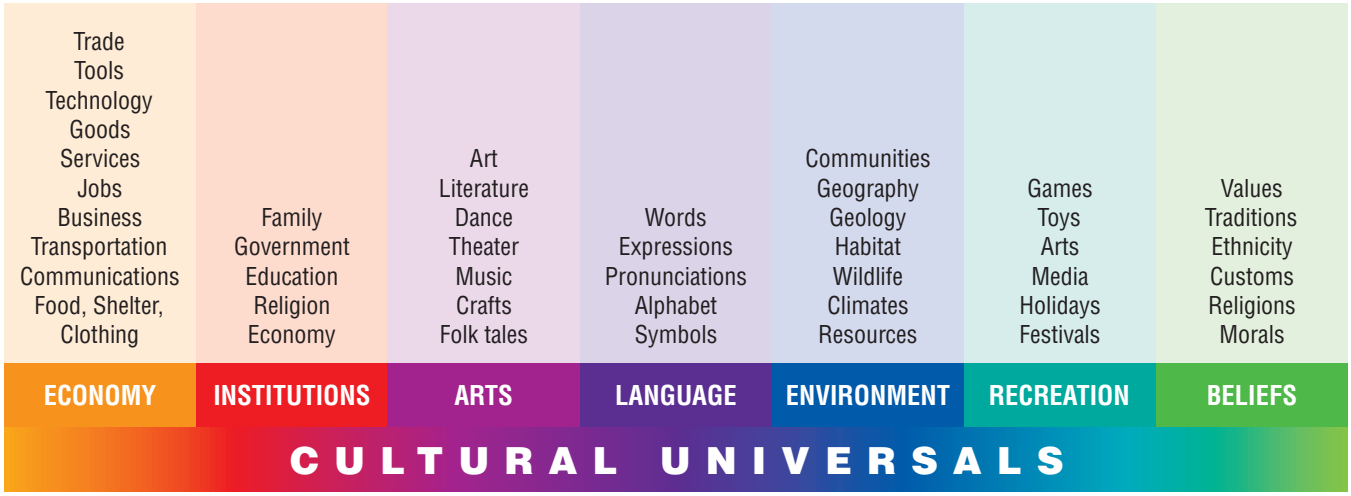


Figure 3.5 **Cultural Universals** Researchers have identified more than seventy traits that appear to one degree or another in all cultures.

Why do cultural universals exist? The biological similarity shared by all human beings helps to account for many cultural universals. If a society is to survive, children must be born and cared for, and some type of family structure must exist. (Groups that deliberately eliminate the family—such as the Shakers religious sect of New England—disappear.) Because people become ill, there must be some sort of medical care. Because people die, there must be funeral rites, mourning, and inheritance rules. Because food is necessary, cooking must be done.

The physical environment provides another reason why cultural universals exist. Because humans cannot survive without protection from the environment, some form of shelter must be created. Armies were formed to settle disputes over boundaries and important waterways.

Finally, cultural universals exist because societies face many of the same social problems. If a society is to survive, new members must be taught the culture. Goods and services must be produced and distributed. Tasks must be assigned, and work must be accomplished. Cultures develop similar methods of solving these problems.

Section 5 Assessment

1. Identify each of the following as a social category (SC), subculture (S), or counterculture (C).
   a. Chinatown in New York City
   b. motorcycle gang
   c. Catholics
   d. females
   e. revolutionary political group
   f. the super rich
2. Define ethnocentrism.
3. What are cultural universals? Why do they exist?

Critical Thinking

4. **Analyzing Information** Are you and your friends members of a subculture? If so, describe some specific elements of that subculture.
5. **Making Comparisons** From the chart above, choose a cultural universal. Compare or contrast how this cultural universal is addressed by two different cultures. For example, how do the United States and Mexico differ in recreational activities?

Chapter 3

Assessment

Summary

Section 1: The Basis Of Culture

Main Idea: Culture defines how people in a society behave in relation to others and to physical objects. Although most behavior among animals is instinctual, human behavior is learned.

Section 2: Language and Culture

Main Idea: Humans can create and transmit culture. The symbols of language play a role in determining people's view of reality.

Section 3: Norms and Values

Main Idea: Two essential components of culture are norms and values. Norms include folkways, mores, and laws. Sanctions are used to encourage conformity to norms. Values, the broadest cultural ideas, form the basis for norms.

Section 4: Beliefs and Material Culture

Main Idea: Besides norms and values, beliefs and physical objects make up culture. Ideal culture includes the guidelines we claim to accept, while real culture describes how we actually behave.

Section 5: Cultural Diversity and Similarity

Main Idea: Cultures, which contain subcultures and countercultures, change through three major processes.

Self-Check Quiz
Visit the *Sociology and You* Web site at glencoe.com and click on **Chapter 3—Self-Check Quizzes** to prepare for the chapter test.

Reviewing Vocabulary

Complete each sentence using each term once.

a. sociobiology
b. sanctions
c. real culture
d. beliefs
e. society
f. laws
g. mores
h. subculture
i. ethnocentrism
j. informal sanctions

1. _____ are the ideas about the nature of reality.
2. A group that belongs to the larger culture but differs from it in some significant way is called _____ .
3. _____ is the study of the biological basis of human behavior.
4. Formally defined norms enforced by officials are called _____ .
5. _____ are rewards and punishments that can be applied by most members of a group.
6. Actual behavior patterns of the members of a group are called _____ .
7. _____ are rewards and punishments used to encourage desired behaviors.
8. Norms with moral dimensions are called ____ .
9. A specific territory composed of people who share a common culture is called a _____ .
10. Judging others in terms of one's own cultural standards is called _____ .

Reviewing the Facts

11. According to sociobiology, how is human behavior influenced?
12. What are the differences between reflexes and drives?
13. What are folkways? Give three examples of folkways in the United States.

Chapter 3

Assessment

14. Explain the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.
15. What are the three basic types of norms?
16. Describe the relationship between norms and sanctions.
17. How does a social category differ from a subculture?
18. What are cultural universals?

Thinking Critically

19. Making Inferences

More than any other symbol of our country, the American flag provokes emotional responses. Some people are willing to give their lives for it, while others have burned it in protest. In groups, discuss why this symbol is so powerful.

20. Applying Concepts

All societies have cultural universals, as discussed in this chapter. Why, then, are so many groups in conflict? Think of examples of groups in this country that seem to be in conflict (such as animal rights activists and fur shop owners), and examine the reasons for these conflicts.

21. Making Comparisons

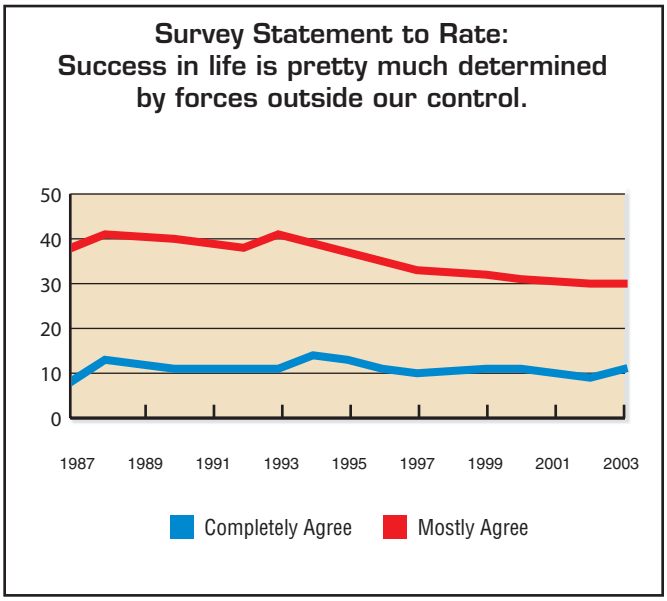
Discuss how you think a functionalist would look at the topic of culture. How do you think a conflict theorist would view it?

22. Evaluating Information

Some Amish parents have gone to jail rather than enroll their children in public schools. What does this say about Amish cultural values?

23. Categorizing Information

We have created a whole new language as a result of computers—a mouse is no longer necessarily an animal. Make a list of the words in your school that are unique to your community and that would need to be learned.



Pew Research Center, *The 2004 Political Landscape*

24. Interpreting Graphs

The Pew Research Center has conducted surveys of basic politicial, economic and social values over a number of years. One question and the responses to it is traced in the graph above.

a. Expain how this question relates to American values about the nation's economic system?
b. In 1987 what percentage of Americans believed that people did control their chances of success? How did that percent change in 2003?

Sociology Projects

25. Culture

You are an archaeologist and you have just uncovered a civilization called "America." Find at least one item from each of these aspects of culture: economy, religion, sports, science/technology, education, families, and politics/government. For example, you might uncover a checkbook as an example of the economy. As you find these items, try to imagine what they might mean to this American culture by answering the following questions.

a. Is this item culturally universal? Can it be found in other cultures?
b. What uses might someone from another culture find for this item? Be creative.
c. What does this item tell us about this culture?

26. Handshakes in U.S. Cultures

Handshakes are also symbolic representations of cultures. List some situations in which people shake hands in U.S. culture. For example, do boyfriends and girlfriends shake hands in the hallway when they meet? Do some students use special handshakes when they greet other students? As a class, determine all the ways in which handshakes are used in U.S. culture, and explain how the social situation can change the meaning of a handshake.

27. Cultural Lag

Material tools of a culture, such as computers, change faster than nonmaterial tools, such as norms and values. This difference creates what has been called *cultural lag*. (You will learn more about this topic in Chapter 17.) Computers have been around for some time. Still, many Americans lag behind in their proficiency with the technology. Interview people you know of varying ages: someone under age twelve, some fellow teens, some young adults, and some elderly adults. Ask them how computer literate they are. Do they know how to use Windows? The Internet? Does cultural lag exist in your sample? If so, try to find reasons or explanations for the lag.

28. Cultural Norms

Create a chart comparing cultural norms among U.S. subculture groups such as ethnic, socioeconomic strata, and gender groups.

www.cartoonstock.com

29. Cultural Change

The cartoon above touches on the subject of cultural change discussed in this chapter. Write a paragraph that describes the cartoonist's point of view on: 1) how parents and children view each other; and, 2) how values change. Conclude this activity by finding one other cartoon in a magazine or newspaper that addresses cultural change in some way.

Technology Activities

30. Compare the use of language between two social categories within your culture (e.g., teenagers and parents). Make a list of ten examples of words or phrases that differ in meaning between the members of each social category. Using the Internet and your school or local library, find the original derivation of the word or phrase. Record your information in a database.

Enrichment Reading

Cultural Explanations for Teen Violence

from an article by James Gilbert

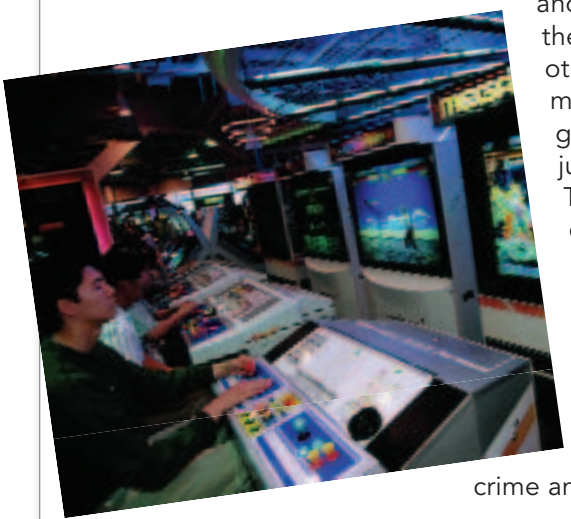
Every social crisis generates its share of easy explanations, but adolescent crime wins the contest for pat answers. Not only is everyone an expert, but out-of-control children are often already the focus of uneasiness about social change, general anxiety, and just plain undisguised dislike. The tragic shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, have generated more than the usual number of theories. Few of these are original, and, in fact, many of them repeat a formula tried out almost 45 years ago, during the national panic over juvenile delinquency. True, the supposed cultural influences have changed, with blame pointed now at the dark lyrics of Marilyn Manson or virtual-reality, murder-and-mayhem computer games, but the ultimate message is pretty much the same: our children's behavior is out of control because our culture is out of control. The only solution is to find a form of censorship that can block adolescents' access to the violent images that impel them to behave violently.

One problem with the cultural explanation for teen violence is that, notwithstanding numerous scientific attempts to do so, it is impossible to prove—there are simply too many other possible causes.... Not that this should necessarily deter critics of our current teen culture. But it is one thing to regard what young people listen to, play, or consume as strange or vulgar or even mildly threatening, and another to argue that it incites specific behavior. Teenagers might be persuaded by advertising to buy a Big Mac or smoke a Camel, but that doesn't mean that song lyrics can make them commit mass murder.

Another problem with the cultural explanation is that we have been there before and ought to recognize from our experience some of the outcomes and implications of the argument. In the mid-'50s, especially between 1954 and 1956, Americans worried as deeply about juvenile delinquency as they did about the cold war, atomic **annihilation,** unemployment, and other social ills. The reason for this is not hard to figure out. Government commissions, the FBI . . . , and a number of leading psychologists and social critics were all warning of a terrible **scourge** of juvenile crime. Cities and towns rushed to pass new ordinances. . . . The favorites of these were local curfews, naming the hour when children under 18 had to be home. Quite naturally, this led to some increased incidence of lawbreaking by youths. But, overall, during the '50s juvenile crime was no higher than the decade that preceded it. Yet fears of juvenile delinquency continued to soar.

While there were many explanations offered for delinquency, the one most printed in the pages of popular magazines and voiced during congressional hearings convened to examine the problem was the malevolent **malevolent** transcribed influence of crime and horror comic books. . . . Comic books, on the other hand,

- **annihilation**
  total destruction
- **scourge**
  a cause of widespread distress
- **malevolent**
  vicious or harmful



concerted
organized; mutually arranged

particularly violent and horror comics, . . . became the focus of a concerted effort to censor youth culture. The effort was founded on the psychological theories of Fredric Wertham, whose 1954 best-seller, *Seduction of the Innocent,* inspired a vast outcry against the comics. Wertham's theory was based on asking teenage criminals if they read comic books—not much different from the logic behind today's blaming of computer games or music. . . .

If the anti–comic-book agitation did nothing much to end juvenile crime . . . what explains this panic? Clearly, something was happening in the '50s. . . . The postwar era was a revolutionary time, the first generation in American history wherein children had substantial amounts of spending money. The result was the explosion of a youth culture designed to appeal specifically and exclusively to young people. The teenage market expanded rapidly. . . . Children were growing up faster; they acted more like adults or at least demanded adult privileges. All of this looked immensely threatening. . . . Parents and parenting experts in our age are also confronting a major new development. In this case, it's the advent of the Internet—which has exponentially increased the amount and scope of influences to which American kids are exposed.

So what can we learn from the experience of the '50s . . . ? First, we should be wary of the attempt to link behavior directly and precisely to culture. There is no clear evidence to support this, and, besides, we can probably never develop a form of acceptable censorship anyway. It is also important to separate things that we don't like (or understand) from those social problems that might, in fact, cause teenage alienation and criminal behavior. Banning Marilyn Manson, hip-hop clothes, and rap music will certainly have an effect, but not the desired one. And, finally, we need to remind ourselves that youth culture is something that modern society has invented and celebrated. By extending affluence to children, by giving them computers and spending money, by making them consumers and therefore members of the marketplace, we have given them access to an adult world and an adult culture. We will have to learn to live with the consequences of that.

Source: Excerpted from James Gilbert, "Juvenilia," *The New Republic* (June 14, 1999), 54. Reprinted by permission of *The New Republic,* © 1999, *The New Republic,* Inc.

Read and React

1. Why does Gilbert think it is not possible to scientifically prove how culture affects a particular behavior?
2. In two or three sentences, state the main point that the author makes. Do you agree or disagree with him and why?