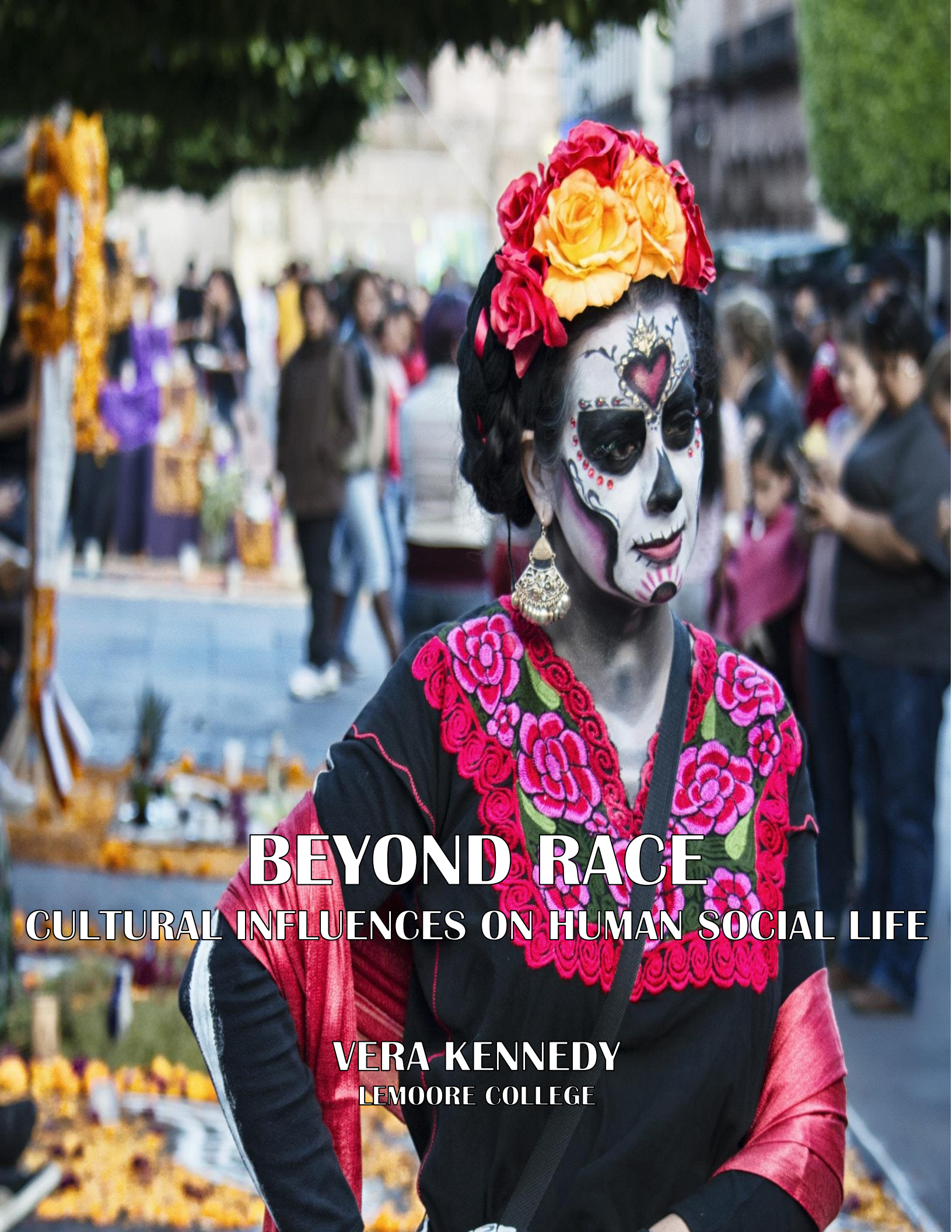




BEYOND RACE
CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON HUMAN SOCIAL LIFE

VERA KENNEDY
LEMOORE COLLEGE

To

Mí Familia

whose nurturing and strength taught me perseverance

Mí Amor

whose love inspired my “inner Snoopy”

and

Mí Shamrocks

who gave me unconditional love to stay the course

COPYEDIT

Neomi Daniels
Lemoore College

CONTENT REVIEW

Katie Conklin
Lemoore College

Greg Kennedy
California State University, Fresno

COVER IMAGE

“[Photo of Woman Wearing Traditional Dress](#)” by [Genaro Servín](#) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

COPYRIGHT

Originally produced and distributed under a Creative Commons License in August 2018.
Updated Edition, September 2025.

“Beyond Race: Cultural Influences on Human Social Life” by Vera Kennedy is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#).



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Module 1: Culture and Meaning	1
Learning Objectives	1
Link Between Culture and Society.....	1
Defining Culture	2
Non-Material vs. Material Culture	2
Sociological Application: Cultural Inventory	3
Cultural Sociology.....	4
Sociological Application: Cultural Identity in Art.....	5
Ethnographers and Native Anthropologists	5
Theoretical Perspectives on Culture	6
Sociological Application: Perceptions of Reality	7
The Theoretical Paradigms	8
Applying Theories	9
Sociological Application: Theoretical Application	10
References.....	10
Key Terms and Concepts	12
Module 2: Culture As A Social Construct	13
Learning Objectives	13
Social Production of Culture.....	13
Sociological Application: Dissecting Cultural Construction	15
Collective Culture	15
Cultural and Social Bonds	15
Group and Organizational Culture	17
Sociological Application: Collective Identity and Social Movements.....	18
Sociological Application: Cultural Solidarity.....	19
Sociological Application: Organizational Culture	20
Levels of Culture	20
Sociological Application: Sport as a Subculture	21
Doing Culture.....	21



Cultural Change	22
References	23
Key Terms and Concepts	24
Module 3: Cultural Power	25
Learning Objectives	25
Cultural Hierarchies	25
Social and Cultural Capital	26
Sociological Application: The Significance of Cultural Capital.....	27
Sociological Application: College Success and Cultural Capital.....	28
Cultural Hegemony.....	29
Sociological Application: Is Brown the New Green?	30
Prejudice and Discrimination	30
Sociological Application: Privilege and Life Chances	32
Sociological Application: Visual Ethnography	33
References	34
Key Terms and Concepts	35
Module 4: Cultural Identity	36
Learning Objectives	36
Identity Formation	36
Identity Labels and Categories	36
Age Cohorts	37
Sex and Gender	39
Sociological Application: Gender Labels.....	39
Sociological Application: Sex-Role Inventory Traits	41
Sexuality and Sexual Orientation	41
Geographic Region	43
Sociological Application: Your Regional Culture.....	44
Body and Mind	44
Race and Ethnicity	47
Sociological Application: Reducing Ethnic Conflict.....	50
Religion and Belief Systems.....	51



Social Class.....	52
Sociological Application: Hidden Rules of Class	54
Identity Today.....	55
Sociological Application: Native Anthropologist	56
References	59
Key Terms and Concepts	62
Module 5: The Multicultural World.....	63
Learning Objectives	63
Globalization and Identity	63
Sociological Application: Our Online Future	65
Culture Today	65
Sociological Application: Cultural Transformation	66
Building Cultural Intelligence	66
Sociological Application: Cultural Intelligence Resources.....	67
Sociological Application: Ethnography	70
References	71
Key Terms and Concepts	72



PREFACE

Beyond Race: Cultural Influences on Human Social Life was written for introductory courses on cultural sociology. The book is for faculty and students searching for an open educational resource (OER) that provides sociological terms, concepts, and theories in the study of culture. To adapt to the educational needs of individuals using this book, the instructor or learner must understand the underlying content and instructional approach, which may require additional resources and/or other methods to make the learning experience their own.

The book draws on theory and research in cultural sociology to support its analysis. *Beyond Race: Cultural Influences on Human Social Life* has stressed learner-centered teaching with the instructor taking on the role of a facilitator of learning. As such, the instructor should serve as the mediator between the content of this book and learners' understanding of material on multiple and higher levels. This book does not offer a set of rules for teaching cultural sociology. Instead, it suggests content and applications to consider and modify as needed by the ever-changing dynamics of instructors and learners.

I prepared the first edition of this book in partnership with colleagues from Lemoore College and California State University, Fresno. My thanks go to copyeditor Neomi Daniels, peer reviewers Katie Conklin and Greg Kennedy, the West Hills Community College District Office for their support in OER, and the Lemoore College SOC 5 class of spring 2018:

Marissa Barbosa	Yudisleisy Hernandez	Monica Morales
Karen Beemus	Mekennah Lander	Yvette Padilla
Destiny Castro	Celene Lizaola	Mayra Pantoja
Mariel Cisneros	Timothy Maldonado	Guadalupe Ramirez
Amanda Conduff	Brittany Martinez	Lizbeth Ramirez
Michael Dey	Elizabeth Martinez	Angel Robles
Alexia Garcia	Mariana Martinez	Mason Silva
Michael Garcia	Tiffany Medina	Mayra Valdivia

Thank you, scholars, for sharing your voices, ideas, and feedback.

Vera Kennedy



MODULE 1: CULTURE AND MEANING

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the module, students will be able to:

1. explain the relationship between culture and the social world
2. understand the role and impact of culture on society
3. describe concepts central to cultural sociology
4. summarize and apply the theoretical perspectives on the study of culture

INTRODUCTION

Culture is an expression of our lives. It molds our identity and connection to the social world. Whether it is our values, beliefs, norms, language, or everyday artifacts, each element of culture reflects who we are and influences our position in society.

If you consider how we live, communicate, think, and act, these aspects of our existence develop from the values, beliefs, and norms we learn from others, the language and symbols we understand, and the artifacts or materials we utilize. Culture is embedded in everyday life and is the attribute by which others view and understand us.

LINK BETWEEN CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Culture is both expressive and social. Neither culture nor society exists in the real world; instead, it is the thoughts and behaviors of people that construct a society, its culture, and meanings (Griswold 2013). People build the world we live in, including the cultural attributes we choose to obtain, exhibit, and follow. Societies communicate and teach culture as part of the human experience.

Historically, culture referred to characteristics and qualities of the fine arts, performing arts, and literature, connecting culture to social status. This perspective highlighted a subculture associated with the social elite or upper class, historically described as “civilized culture.” This perspective within the humanities studied the “ideal type” or “high culture” of affluent social groups, depicting whom was “cultured” or instead were wealthy and educated in society, lending itself to a ranking of cultures in its study.



[Image](#) by [Pixabay](#) is licensed under [CC0 1.0](#)

In the 19th century, anthropologist Edward B. Tyler (1871) introduced culture as a complex social structure encompassing “. . . knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” This definition focused on culture as a social attribute of humanity. Social scientists adopted this perspective, expanding the study of culture beyond the ethnocentric elitism of “high culture.” With emphasis on human social life as a reflection of culture, social scientists sought to understand not only how culture reflects society but also how society reflects culture. These new insights inspired social scientists to examine the practices of people, lending itself to a sociological perspective on culture.

DEFINING CULTURE

Culture is universal. Every society has a culture. Culture touches every “aspect of who and what we are” and becomes a lens of how we see and evaluate the world around us (Henslin 2011:36). Culture molds human nature, and people learn to express nature in cultural ways. The sociological perspective acknowledges that all people are cultured.

Each generation transmits culture to the next, providing us a roadmap and instructions on how to live our lives. Cultural transmission occurs through the learning and expression of traditions and customs. Learning your own group’s culture is **enculturation**. Adults are agents of enculturation responsible for passing on culture to each generation.

Through learning, people develop individual cultural characteristics that are part of a social pattern and an integrated set of traits expressing a group’s core values (Kottak and Kozitis 2003). Thus, cultures are integrated and patterned systems serving a variety of social functions within groups. Enculturation gives members of a group a process to think symbolically, use language and tools, share everyday experiences and knowledge, and learn by observation, experience, as well as unconsciously from each other (Kottak and Kozitis 2003). The commonalities we share through culture establish familiarity and comfort among members of our own group.

Non-Material vs. Material Culture

Culture is either non-material or material. **Non-material culture** includes psychological and spiritual elements influencing the way individuals think and act. **Material culture** refers to physical artifacts that people use and consume.

Immaterial aspects of culture reflect social values, beliefs, norms, expressive symbols, and practices. Though these cultural elements are intangible, they often take on a physical form in our minds. Non-material culture becomes real in our perceptions, and we begin to view it as objects, such as in the belief in God or other deities. Though we cannot physically see, hear, or touch a God, belief makes them real and imaginable to us.



Values or ideals define what is desirable in life and guide our preferences and choices. Changes in core values may seem threatening to some individuals or societies as “a threat to a way of life” (Henslin 2011:53). A strong bind to core values can also blind individuals to reality or objectivity, reinforcing fallacies and stereotypes. Throughout history, there have always been differences between what people value (their ideal or public culture) and how they actually live their lives (their real or personal culture).

Beliefs sometimes mirror values. One’s belief system may align with or determine their values, influencing thoughts and actions. Beliefs are not always spiritual or supernatural. For example, the belief in love or feelings of affection are internal emotions or physical reactions that exhibit physiological changes in human chemistry. Some beliefs are accurate representations of metaphysical or abstract thinking that transcend the laws of nature, such as faith or superstitions.

CULTURAL INVENTORY

1. What is your personal cultural inventory? Describe your values and beliefs, the social norms in which you conform, the expressive symbols (including language) you understand and use regularly, your daily practices, and the artifacts you use frequently and those you treasure.
2. How did you learn culture? Explain the socializing agents responsible for teaching you the traditions, customs, and rituals you live by and follow.
3. What impact does culture have on your identity? Discuss how your culture influences your self-image, views, and role in society.
4. How does culture influence your thinking and behavior towards others? Explain how your culture impacts the image or understanding you have about others including assumptions, stereotypes, and prejudices.

Norms or rules develop out of a group’s values and beliefs. When people defy the rules, they receive social reactions resulting in a sanction. Sanctions are a form of social control (Griffiths, Keirns, Strayer, Cody-Rydzewski, Scaramuzzo, Sadler, Vyain, Byer, and Jones 2015). When people follow the rules, they receive a positive sanction or reward, and when they break the rules, they receive a negative one or punishment that may include social isolation.

Symbols help people understand the world (Griffiths et al. 2015). Symbols include gestures, signs, signals, objects, and words. Language is the symbolic system people use to communicate both verbally and in writing (Griffiths et al. 2015). Language constantly evolves and provides the basis for sharing cultural experiences and ideas.

The **Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis** suggests people experience the world through symbolic language that derives from culture itself (Griffiths et al. 2015). When you see, hear, or think of a word, it creates a mental image in your mind, helping you understand and interpret its meaning. Suppose you are not familiar with a word or its language. In that case, you are unable to comprehend the meaning, creating a cultural gap or boundary between you and the cultural world around you. Language makes symbolic thought possible.



Practices or the behaviors we carry out develop from or in response to our thoughts. We fulfill rituals, traditions, or customs based on our values, beliefs, norms, and expressive symbols. Culture dictates and influences how people live their lives. Cultural practices become habitual from frequent repetition (Henslin 2011). Habitualization leads to institutionalization by consensus of a social group. This results in cultural patterns and systems becoming logical and viewed as the norm.

Material culture is inherently unnatural, such as buildings, machines, electronic devices, clothing, hairstyles, etc. (Henslin 2011). Dialogue about culture often ignores its close tie to material realities in society. The cultural explanations we receive from family, friends, school, work, and media justify cultural realities and the utility of the artifacts we use and consume. Human behavior is purposeful, and material culture in our lives derives from the interests of our socializing agents in our environment.

CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY

There is a division among sociologists who study culture. Those who study the sociology of culture have limitations on the categorizations of cultural topics and objects, restricting the view of culture as a social product or consequence. The theoretical works of Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber, and the field of anthropology, shaped the sociology of culture. Durkheim found that culture and society are interrelated. He explained that social structures or institutions serve functions in society. As a collective group, society's culture, including its social, political, and economic values, is essentially part of and reflected in all structures or institutions (Durkheim 1965). Marx believed social power influences culture. He suggested that cultural products depend on economics, and people who have power can produce and distribute culture (Marx 1977). Weber, in alignment with the traditional humanities viewpoint, emphasized the ability of culture to influence human behavior. His perspective argued that some cultures and cultural works are ideal types that could be lost if they were not preserved or archived (Weber 1946). Until the late twentieth century, anthropologists emphasized the importance of art and culture to educate, instill morality, critique society to inspire change (Best 2007). Initial thoughts on culture focused on how culture makes a person. These works emphasized the idea that certain cultural elements (i.e., elite or high culture) define a person as cultured.

In contrast, the study of cultural sociology suggests that social phenomena are inherently cultural (Alexander 2003). Cultural sociology examines culture as a framework for understanding social phenomena. During the cultural turn movement of the 1970s, cultural sociology emerged as a distinct field of study among anthropologists and social scientists, examining the role of culture in society. Academics expanded their research to the social process in which people communicate meaning, understand the world, construct identity, and express values and beliefs (Best 2007). This new approach incorporates analyzing culture using data from interviews, discussions, and observations of people to understand the social, historical structures, and ideological forces that produce and confine culture.



Cultural sociology examines the social meanings and expressions associated with culture. Cultural sociologists study representations of culture, including elitist definitions and understanding, such as art, literature, and classical music, but also investigate the broad range of culture in everyday social life (Back, Bennett, Edles, Gibson, Inglis, Jacobs, and Woodward 2012). Recognizing the importance of culture in human social life, sociologists empirically investigate culture, its impact on social order, the relationship between culture and society, and the persistence and durability of cultural practices over time (Griswold 2013). Cultural sociology incorporates an interdisciplinary approach drawing on different disciplines because of the broad scope and social influences culture has on people. Culture is inseparable from the acts and influence of cultural practices embedded within social categories (i.e., gender, ethnicity, and social class) and social institutions (i.e., family, school, and work), which construct the identities and lifestyle practices of individuals (Giddens 1991; Chaney 1996). In the effort to understand the relationship between culture and society, sociologists study cultural practices, institutions, and systems, including the forms of power exhibited among social groups related to age, body and mind, ethnicity, gender, geography, race, religion and belief systems, sex, sexuality, and social class.

CULTURAL IDENTITY IN ART

1. What forms of identity and symbolism did you see within the music video *This is America* by Childish Gambino (<https://youtu.be/VYOjWnS4cMY>)?
2. Now, watch the breakdown video that explains the hidden symbolism and forms of cultural identity in the music video *This is America* by Childish Gambino (https://youtu.be/9_LIP7qguYw).
3. Compare your list and note what things you were able to identify and what things you missed.

"Cultural Identity in Art" by Kristen Kennedy is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Ethnographers and Native Anthropologists

In the study of cultural sociology, many practitioners examine both quantitative and qualitative data to develop an understanding of cultural experiences. **Quantitative** or numeric data provides a framework for understanding observable patterns or trends, while **qualitative** or categorical data presents the reasoning behind thoughts and actions associated with patterns or trends.

The collection of qualitative data incorporates scientific methodological approaches, including participant observation (observing people as a member of the group), interviews (face-to-face meetings), focus groups (group discussions), or images (pictures or video). Each method focuses on collecting specific types of information to develop a deep understanding of a particular culture and the experiences associated with being a member of that culture.



Ethnographers study people and cultures by using qualitative methods. Ethnography or ethnographic research is the firsthand, field-based study of a particular culture by spending at least one year living with people and learning their customs and practices (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). In the field, ethnographers are participant observers and participants of the group or society under study. Participant observers face challenges in remaining objective, non-biased, and ensuring their participation does not lead or influence others of the group in a specific direction (Kennedy, Norwood, and Jendian 2017). This research approach requires ethnographers to minimize the risk of contaminating data with interference or biased interpretations as much as possible.



Image by [Follow Alice](#) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

Some researchers choose to study their own culture. These practitioners refer to themselves as **native anthropologists**. Many native anthropologists have experience studying other cultures before researching their own (Kottak and Kozaitis, 2012). The practice of learning about other cultures equips practitioners with the skills and knowledge necessary to study their own culture more objectively. In addition, by studying other cultures than one's own, native anthropologists can compare and analyze similarities and differences in cultural perceptions and practices.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CULTURE

The social structure plays an integral role in the **social location** (i.e., place or position) people occupy in society. Your social location is a result of the cultural values and norms prevalent during the time period and place in which you live. Culture affects personal and social development, including the way people think or behave. Cultural characteristics, including age, gender, race, education, income, and other social factors, influence the location people occupy at any given time.

Furthermore, social location influences how people perceive and understand the world in which we live. People have a difficult time being objective in all contexts because of their social location within cultural controls and standards derived from values and norms. Objective conditions exist without bias because they are measurable and quantifiable (Carl 2013). Subjective concerns rely on judgments rather than external facts. Personal feelings and opinions from a person's social location drive subjective concerns. The **sociological imagination** is a tool that helps people step outside their subjective or personal biography and examine the objective facts and historical context of a situation, issue, society, or person (Carl 2013).



PERCEPTIONS OF REALITY

The time period we live (history) and our personal life experiences (biography) influence our perspectives and understanding about others and the world. Our history and biography guide our perceptions of reality reinforcing our personal bias and subjectivity. Relying on subjective viewpoints and perspectives leads to diffusion of misinformation and fake news that can be detrimental to our physical and socio-cultural environment and negatively impact our interactions with others. We must seek out facts and develop knowledge to enhance our objective eye. By using valid, reliable, proven facts, data, and information, we establish credibility and make better decisions for the world and ourselves.

1. Consider a socio-cultural issue you are passionate about and want to change or improve.
2. What is your position on the issue? What ideological or value-laden reasons or beliefs support your position? What facts or empirical data support your position?
3. What portion of your viewpoint or perspective on the issue relies on personal values, opinions, or beliefs in comparison to facts?
4. Why is it important to identify and use empirical data or facts in our lives rather than relying on ideological reasoning and false or fake information?

According to C. Wright Mills (1959), the sociological imagination requires individuals to “think themselves away” in examining personal and social influences on people’s life choices and outcomes. Large-scale or macrosociological influences help create understanding about the effect of the social structure and history on people’s lives. Whereas, small-scale or microsociological influences focus on interpreting personal viewpoints from an individual’s biography. Using only a microsociological perspective can lead to a limited understanding of the world, characterized by biased perceptions and assumptions about people, social groups, and society (Carl 2013).

Sociologists use theories to study people. “The **theoretical paradigms** provide different lenses into the social constructions of life and the relationships of people” (Kennedy, Norwood, and Jendian 2017:22). The theoretical paradigms in sociology help us examine and understand cultural reflections, including the social structure and social value culture creates and sustains to fulfill human needs as mediated by society itself. Each paradigm provides an objective framework for analysis and evaluation, enabling understanding of the social structure, including the construction of cultural values and norms, and their influence on thinking and behavior.



Image by [Element5 Digital](#) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)



The Theoretical Paradigms

Macrosociology studies large-scale social arrangements or constructs in the social world. The macro perspective examines how groups, organizations, networks, processes, and systems influence the thoughts and actions of individuals and groups (Kennedy et al. 2017).

Functionalism, Conflict Theory, Feminism, and Environmental Theory are macrosociological perspectives.

Microsociology studies the social interactions of individuals and groups. The micro perspective observes how thinking and behavior influence the social world, such as groups, organizations, networks, processes, and systems (Kennedy et al. 2017). Symbolic Interactionism and Exchange Theory are microsociological perspectives.

Functionalism is a macrosociological perspective examining the purpose or contributions of interrelated parts within the social structure. Functionalists examine how various parts of society contribute to the overall functioning of the whole. Everything in society has a purpose or function. Even a negative contribution helps society discern its function. For example, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs inspired society to define the behavior as undesirable, develop laws, and impose consequences for people committing such an act. A manifest function in society results in expected outcomes (i.e., using a pencil to develop written communication). In contrast, a latent function has an unexpected result (i.e., using a pencil to stab someone). When a function creates unexpected results that cause hardships, problems, or adverse consequences, the result is a latent dysfunction.

Conflict Theory is a macrosociological perspective exploring the fight among social groups over resources in society. Groups compete for status, power, control, money, territory, and other resources for economic or other social gain. Conflict Theory explores the struggle between those in power and those who are not in power within the context of the struggle. Cultural wars are common in society, whether over a deity and way of life, or ownership and rights to the Holy Land.

Symbolic Interactionism is a microsociological perspective observing the influence of interactions on thinking and behavior. Interactionists consider how people interpret meaning and symbols to understand and navigate the social world. Individuals create social reality through verbal and non-verbal interactions. These interactions form thoughts and behaviors in response to others, influencing motivation and decision-making. Hearing or reading a word in a language one understands develops a mental image and comprehension about information shared or communicated (i.e., the English word “bread” is most commonly visualized as a slice or loaf and considered a food item).

There are three modern approaches to sociological theory (Carl 2013). **Feminism**, a macrosociological perspective, examines the experiences of women and minorities in the social world, including the outcomes of inequality and oppression for these groups. One primary focus of the feminist theoretical approach is to understand how age, ethnicity, race, sexuality, and social



class interact with gender to determine outcomes for people (Carl 2013). **Exchange Theory** examines the decision-making of individuals in society. This microsociological perspective focuses on understanding how people consider a cost versus benefit analysis, accentuating their self-interest to make decisions. **Environmental Theory** explores how people adjust to ecological (environmental and social) changes over time (Carl 2013). The focal point of this macrosociological perspective is to figure out how people adapt or evolve and share the same ecological space.

Applying Theories

Functionalists view how people work together to create society as a whole. From this perspective, societies need culture to exist (Griffiths, Keirns, Strayer, Cody-Rydzewsk, Scaramuzzo, Sadler, Vyain, Byer, and Jones 2015). For example, cultural norms or rules function to support the social structure of society, and cultural values guide people in their thoughts and actions. Consider how education is an essential concept in the United States because it is valued. The culture of education, including the norms surrounding registration, attendance, grades, graduation, and material culture (i.e., classrooms, textbooks, libraries), all support the emphasis placed on the value of education in the United States. Just as members of a society work together to fulfill the needs of society, culture exists to meet the basic needs of its members.

Conflict theorists understand the social structure as inherently unequal, resulting from the differences in power based on age, class, education, gender, income, race, sexuality, and other social factors. For a conflict theorist, culture reinforces issues of "privilege" groups and their status in social categories (Griffiths et al. 2015). Inequalities exist in every cultural system. Therefore, cultural norms benefit people with status and power while harming others and at the expense of others. For example, although cultural diversity is a value in the United States, some people and states prohibit interracial marriages, same-sex marriages, and polygamy (Griffiths et al. 2015).

Symbolic interactionists see culture as created and maintained by the interactions and interpretations of each other's actions. These theorists conceptualize human interactions as a continuous process of deriving meaning from the physical and social environment. "Every object and action has a symbolic meaning, and language serves as a means for people to represent and communicate their interpretations of these meanings to others" (Griffiths et al. 2015:72). Interactionists evaluate how culture depends on the interpretation of meaning and how individuals interact when exchanging comprehension and meaning. For instance, derogatory terms such as the "N" word might be acceptable among people of the same cultural group but viewed as offensive and antagonistic when used by someone outside of the group.

Feminists explore the cultural experiences of women and minorities. For example, women in Lebanon do not have the right to dissolve a marriage without their husband's consent, even in cases of spousal abuse (Human Rights Watch 2015). Feminism explicitly examines oppression



structures within cultural systems and the inequity some groups confront in relation to their age, gender, race, social class, sexuality, or other social category.

Exchange theorists observe how culture influences decision-making. Cultural values and beliefs often influence people's choices about premarital sex and cohabitation before marriage. If you evaluate your decisions daily, you might see elements of culture behind the motivation driving your choices.

Environmental theorists assess how culture, as part of the social and physical environment, adapts and changes over time. If you consider any rule of law, you can see how culture has evolved due to shifts in social ideas or ecological fluctuations. Consider the anti-tobacco laws in the United States, making it illegal to smoke in public areas, as an example of social shifts towards health and wellness, or water meters to control and regulate residential water usage and waste, as an example of ecological drought and prolonged water shortages in the United States.

THEORETICAL APPLICATION

Popular culture reflects prominent values, beliefs, norms, symbolic expressions, and practices while re-enforcing American ideologies and myths. Develop a written response exploring the depiction of contemporary American culture in an episode of a contemporary television show drama (i.e., NCIS, Game of Thrones, Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D., Breaking Bad, etc.)

1. Describe American cultural ideologies or principles portrayed in the show (i.e., unity, diversity, patriotism, etc.).
2. Explain which myths or untruths are evident in the film that express fundamental cultural values or norms.
3. Discuss how the show mirrors social and cultural trends.
4. Analyze the culture portrayed in the television show using each of the theoretical paradigms: Functionalism, Conflict Theory, Interactionism, Feminism, Exchange Theory, and Environmental Theory.

REFERENCES

Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2003. "The Strong Program in Cultural Sociology: Elements of a Structural Hermeneutic (with Philip Smith)." Pp. 11-26 in *The Meanings of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Back, Les, Andy Bennett, Laura Desfor Edles, Margaret Gibson, David Inglis, Ronald Joacobs, and Ian Woodward. 2012. *Cultural Sociology: An Introduction*. United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell.

Best, Stephen. 2007. "Cultural Turn." *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Carl, John D. 2013. *Think Social Problems*. 2nd ed. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.



- Chaney, D. 1996. *Lifestyles*. London: Routledge.
- Durkheim, Emile. 1965. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. New York: Free Press.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Griffiths, Heather, Nathan Keirns, Eric Strayer, Susan Cody-Rydzewski, Gail Scaramuzzo, Tommy Sadler, Sally Vayn, Jeff Byer, and Faye Jones. 2015. *Introduction to Sociology 2e*. Houston, TX: OpenStax College.
- Griswold, Wendy. 2013. *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Henslin, James M. 2011. *Essentials of Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach*. 11th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Human Rights Watch. 2015. "Unequal and Unprotected: Women's Rights under Lebanese Personal Status Laws." Retrieved January 9, 2018 (<https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/01/19/unequal-and-unprotected/womens-rights-under-lebanese-personal-status-laws>).
- Kennedy, Vera, Romney Norwood, and Matthew Jendian. 2017. *Critical Thinking about Social Problems*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company.
- Kottak, Conrad Phillip and Kathryn A. Kozaitis. 2012. *On Being Different: Diversity and Multiculturalism in the North American Mainstream*. 4th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
- Marx, Karl. 1977. "Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy." Pp. 388-392 in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, edited by David McLellan. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Mills, C. Wright. 2000 [1959]. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tyler, Edward. B. 1958 [1871]. *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*. Gloucester, MA: Smith.
- Weber, Max. 1946. From *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, edited by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press.



KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Beliefs	Native Anthropologists
Conflict Theory	Non-Material Culture
Cultural Sociology	Norms
Culture	Practices
Enculturation	Qualitative Data
Environmental Theory	Quantitative Data
Ethnographers	Sapir-Worf Hypothesis
Exchange Theory	Social Location
Feminism	Sociological Imagination
Functionalism	Symbolic Interactionism
Macrosociology	Symbols
Material Culture	Theoretical paradigms
Microsociology	Values



MODULE 2: CULTURE AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the module, students will be able to:

1. illustrate how culture is constructed and received
2. describe the influence of context on cultural creation and acceptance
3. explain the significance of collective culture on group solidarity and cohesion
4. discuss and assess the impact of cultural change on the social structure

SOCIAL PRODUCTION OF CULTURE

How does culture affect your thinking and behavior? How do you communicate the influence of culture on your life to others? How do you justify your culture as true, real, or tangible?

Because culture is a socially meaningful expression that can be articulated and shared, it often takes physical form in our minds. A spiritual or philosophical expression that is not physical in nature becomes tangible in our minds and is equivalent to an “object” (Griswold 2013). The cultural expression is so real that people perceive it as something achievable or concrete (even if only in psychological form). The mental picture is the object, and the meaning associated with the object is the expression when we are speaking about non-material culture. When people discuss love, they imagine it in their minds and feel it in their hearts, even though no one can truly touch love in a physical form. We associate love with a variety of mental and physical interactions, but love itself is intangible and abstract.



Image by [Acharaporn Kamornboonyarush](#) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

In contrast, material culture includes physical artifacts that project a clear understanding of their nature, as they are visible, audible, and tangible. We buy and give gifts to express our love. The material artifact we give to someone is a tangible expression of love. In this example, the expression of non-material culture is evident in material culture (love = gift) and material culture represents non-material culture (gift = love), making both forms cultural “objects.”

Cultural objects become representations of many things and can have many meanings based on the history and biography of an individual, group, or society. Think about the mantra, “Follow your dreams.” The expression is often used in the United States when discussing educational and career motivation and planning. For many U.S. citizens, this statement creates an open space for academic or professional choices and opportunities. However, the “object” is



limited to the culture of the individual. In other words, your “dream” is limited to the cultural environment and social location you occupy. For example, suppose you are in a family where men and women fill different roles in work and family. In that case, your educational and career choices or pathways are limited to the options within the context of your culture (i.e., values, beliefs, and norms). Afghan culture does not value or permit the education of girls. In Afghanistan, one-third of girls marry before 18, and marriage forces them to drop out of school. (Human Rights Watch 2017). The educational and career choices of Afghan girls are limited to the culture of their country and the social location of their gender. To “follow your dreams” in Afghanistan is confined to what a dream as an object can represent based on the gender of the person.

How does culture become an “object” or solidified, socially accepted, and followed? According to Griswold (2013), people create, articulate, and communicate culture. However, society does not accept every cultural idea or creation. Although people create culture, others must receive or accept it to make it tangible, real, or recognized as an object, including artifacts. The creation of cultural ideas and concepts must have an audience to receive them and articulate their meaning for culture to be established and accepted. The context of the social world, including time, place, conditions, and social forces, influences whether an audience accepts or rejects a cultural object. Consider the many social media applications available to us today. With so many social media outlets and options available, which are the most recognized and used? Which social media apps have become part of our everyday lives, and which do we expect people to use and be familiar with as a norm?

When Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams created Twitter, they introduced a cultural idea to society. As word spread about the application and people began to use it, communication about its relevance and usefulness grew. As the network of users grew, more and more people were intrigued to discover the application and make it part of their lives, leading to Twitter becoming a cultural object. Not only did Twitter need to demonstrate relevance to reach potential users, but it also had to be timely and applicable in context or to the needs of modern society.

Since the development of the Internet, many people and organizations have developed a variety of social media applications. Still, only a few apps have transcended time to become part of our culture because they were able to develop a significant audience or cultural receivers to legitimize them. Other than Twitter, what social media applications have become part of our culture? Research and describe the demographics of the audience or recipients for each identified application, and discuss the context or environment that made the app relevant at the time and to its users.



DISSECTING CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION

Consider the social issue of cyberbullying.

1. Describe the social context or environment that has led to the development and growth of this issue.
2. What cultural elements do we associate with cyberbullying? What are the values, beliefs, norms, symbolic expressions, and artifacts or materials used by perpetrators to create a culture of cyberbullying?
3. How do victims, observers, and the public receive this culture? What meanings do people associate by the expressions used by perpetrators that make the issue "real"?
4. Reflecting on your responses to Questions 1-3, explain how social context, cultural creation, and cultural acceptance work to make the issue of cyberbullying a cultural object.

COLLECTIVE CULTURE

Among humans, there are universal cultural patterns or elements across groups and societies. **Cultural universals** are common to all humans worldwide. Some cultural universals include cooking, dancing, ethics, greetings, personal names, and taboos, among others. Can you identify at least five other cultural universals shared by all humans?

When considering cultural universals, you may have noticed variations or differences in the practice of these cultural patterns or elements. Even though humans share several cultural universals, the practice of culture expresses itself in a variety of ways across different social groups and institutions. When different groups identify a **shared culture**, we often speak in generalizations or refer to general characteristics and principles that humans share. The description of cultural universals refers to the generalization of culture, as seen in the practice of marriage. Different social groups share the institution of marriage, but the process, ceremony, and legal commitments are different depending on the culture of the group or society.

Cultural generalities help us understand the similarities and connections that all humans share in the way we understand and live, even though we may have particular ways of applying them. Some cultural characteristics are unique to a single place, culture, group, or society. These particularities may develop or adapt from social and physical responses to time, geography, ecological changes, group member traits, and composition, including power structures or other phenomena.

Cultural and Social Bonds

By living together in society, people “learn specific ways of looking at life” (Henslin 2011:104). Through daily interactions, people construct reality. The construction of reality provides a forum for interpreting experiences in life expressed through culture.

Emile Durkheim ([1893] 1933) believed social bonds hold people together. When people live in small, integrated communities that share common values and beliefs, they develop a shared or



collective consciousness. Durkheim referred to this type of social integration as **mechanical solidarity**, meaning members of the community are all working parts of the group or work in unity, creating a sense of togetherness, forming a collective identity. In this example, members of the community think and act alike because they share a common culture and have similar experiences from living in remote, close-knit areas.



Image by Pixabay is licensed under [CC0 1.0](#)

As society evolves and communities grow, people become more specialized in the work they do. This specialization leads individuals to work independently to contribute to a segment or part of a larger society (Henslin 2011). Durkheim referred to this type of social unity as **organic solidarity**, meaning each member of the community has a specific task or place in the group, in which they contribute to the overall function of the community that is spatially and culturally diverse. In this example, community

members do not necessarily think or act alike but participate by fulfilling their roles or tasks as part of the larger group. If members fulfill their parts, then everyone is contributing and exchanging labor or production for the community to function as a whole.

Both mechanical and organic solidarity explain how people cooperate to create and sustain social bonds relative to group size and membership. Each form of solidarity develops its own culture to hold society together and function. However, when society transitions from mechanical to organic solidarity, chaos or normlessness ensues. Durkheim referred to this transition as social **anomie**, meaning “without law,” resulting from a lack of a firm collective consciousness. As people transition from social dependence (mechanical solidarity) to interdependence (organic solidarity), they become increasingly isolated and alienated from one another until a new set of shared norms emerges. We see examples of this transition when there are changes in social institutions such as governments, industry, and religion. Transitions to democracy across the continent of Africa have shown countries contending with poverty, illiteracy, militarization, underdevelopment, and monopolization of power, all forms of anomie, as they move from social dependence to interdependence (The National Academic Press 1992).

People develop an understanding of their culture, specifically their role and place in society, through social interactions. Charles Horton Cooley ([1902] 1964) suggested people develop self and identity through interpersonal interactions such as perceptions, expectations, and judgments of others. Cooley referred to this practice as the **looking-glass self**. We imagine how others observe us, and we develop ourselves in response to their observations. The concept develops over three phases of interaction. First, we imagine how others might respond to our behavior or appearance. We envision their judgment, and lastly, we have an emotional response to their judgment, influencing our self-image or identity (Griswold 2013). Interpersonal interactions play a significant role in helping us create social bonds and understand our place in society.



Group and Organizational Culture

The term **group** refers to any collection of at least two people who interact frequently and share identity traits aligned with the group (Griffiths et al. 2015). Groups play different roles in our lives. **Primary groups** are usually small groups characterized by face-to-face interaction, intimacy, and a strong sense of commitment. Primary groups remain “inside” us throughout our lifetime (Henslin 2011). **Secondary groups** are large and impersonal groups that form from sharing a common interest. Different types of groups influence our interactions, identity, and social status. George Herbert Mead (1934) called individuals affecting a person’s life significant others, and he conceptualized “generalized others” as the organized and generalized attitude of a social group.

Different types of groups influence our interactions, identity, and social status. An **in-group** is a group toward which one feels particular loyalty and respect. The traits of in-groups are virtues, whereas the traits of out-groups are vices (Henslin 2011). An **out-group** is a group toward which one feels antagonism and contempt. Consider fans at a sporting event, people cheering on and supporting the same team will develop an in-group admiration and acceptance, while viewing fans of the opposing team as members of their out-group.



Image by Pixabay is licensed under [CC0 1.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

Reference groups are also influential groups in someone’s life. A **reference group** provides a standard for judging one’s own attitudes or behaviors within a social setting or context (Henslin 2011). People use reference groups as a method for self-evaluation and social location. People commonly use reference groups in the workplace by watching and emulating the interactions and practices of others so they fit in and garner acceptance by the group.

Group dynamics focus on how groups influence individuals and how individuals affect groups. The social dynamics between individuals play a significant role in forming group solidarity. Social unity reinforces a collective identity and shared thinking among group members, thereby constructing a common culture (Griswold 2013). Commonalities of group membership are essential for mobilizing individual members. When people attempt to create social change or establish a social movement group, solidarity helps facilitate the motivation of individuals and the framing of their actions. The sense of belonging and trust among the group makes it easier for members to align and recognize the problem, accept a possible solution, and take specific actions that are congruent and complementary to the collective identity of the group (Griswold 2013). People accept the group’s approach based on solidarity and cohesiveness that overall amplifies personal mobilization and commitment to the group and its goals.



COLLECTIVE IDENTITY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Research TED Talks videos on social movements and social change such as the following:

- *How to Start a Movement* by Derek Sivers
(https://www.ted.com/talks/derek_sivers_how_to_start_a_movement)
 - *Online Social Change* by Zeynep Tufekci
(https://www.ted.com/talks/zeynep_tufekci_how_the_internet_has_made_social_change_easy_to_organize_hard_to_win)
1. What lessons can you learn about collective identity from the stories presented?
 2. How does group culture make it possible to construct a social movement? Explain how microsociological acts (social interactions) lead to macrosociological changes (systems, organizations, and processes) in society.
 3. What impact does intrinsic or internal motivation and framing of the issue have on organizing a social movement?

An **organization** refers to a group of people with a collective goal or purpose linked to bureaucratic tendencies, including a hierarchy of authority, clear division of labor, explicit rules, and impersonal (Giddens, Duneier, Applebaum, and Carr 2013). Organizations function within existing cultures and produce their own. Formal organizations fall into three categories: normative, coercive, and utilitarian (Etzioni 1975). People join **normative or voluntary organizations** based on shared interests (e.g., a club or cause). **Coercive organizations** are groups that people are coerced or forced to join (e.g., an addiction rehabilitation program or jail). People join **utilitarian organizations** to obtain a specific material reward (e.g., a private school or college).

When we work or live in organizations, multiple levels of interaction affect social unity and operations. On an individual level, people must learn and assimilate into the culture of the organization. All organizations face the problem of motivating their members to work together to achieve common goals (Griswold 2013). Generally, in organizations, small group subcultures develop with their own meaning and practices to help facilitate and safeguard members within the organizational structure. Group members will exercise force (peer pressure and incentives), actively socialize (guide feelings and actions with normative controls), and model behavior (exemplary actors and stories) to build cohesiveness (Griswold 2013). Small groups play an integral role in managing individual members to maintain the function of the organization. Think about the school or college you attend. There are many subcultures within any educational setting, and each group establishes the norms and behaviors members must follow for social acceptance. Can you identify at least two subcultures on your school campus and speculate how members of the group pressure each other to fit in?

On a group level, symbolic power matters in recruiting members and sustaining the culture of a group within the larger social culture (Hallet 2003). **Symbolic power** is the power of constructing reality to guide people in understanding their place in the organizational hierarchy (Bourdieu 1991). This power occurs in everyday interactions through unconscious cultural and social domination. The dominant group of an organization influences the prevailing culture. It



provides its function in communications, forcing all groups or subcultures to define themselves by their distance from the dominant culture (Bourdieu 1991). The instrument of symbolic power is the instrument of domination in the organization by creating the ideological systems of its goals, purpose, and operations. Symbolic power not only governs the culture of the organization but also manages solidarity and division between groups. We see examples of symbolic power in the military. Each branch of the military has a hierarchy of authority where generals serve as the dominant group and are responsible for the prevailing culture. Each rank socializes members according to their position within the organization in relation to the hierarchy and fulfills their role to achieve collective goals and maintain functions.



Image by Pixabay is licensed under [CC0 1.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

CULTURAL SOLIDARITY

Describe the culture of an organization where you have worked, volunteered, or attended school.

1. What are the stories and symbols that everyone who works, volunteers, or attends there knows?
2. What subculture groups exist within the organization, and what forms of conflict take place between units or classifications?
3. How do the heads of the organization use symbolic power to motivate people?

There are external factors that influence **organizational culture**. The context and atmosphere of a nation shape an organization. When an organization's culture aligns with national ideology, it can receive special attention or privileges in the form of financial incentives or policy changes (Griswold 2013). In contrast, the government and economy may suppress, marginalize, or deny support to organizations opposing national culture. Organizations must also operate across a multiplicity of cultures (Griswold 2013). Cultural differences between organizations may affect their operations and the achievement of goals. To be successful, organizations must be able to operate in a variety of contexts and cultures. Griswold (2013) suggested one way to work across cultural contexts is to maintain an overarching organizational mission but be willing to adapt to insignificant or minor issues. Financial and banking institutions use this approach. Depending on the region, banks offer different cultural incentives for opening an account or obtaining a loan. In California, homeowners may obtain low-interest loans for ecological improvements, including the installation of solar panels, weatherproof windows, or drought-resistant landscaping. In the state of Michigan, affluent homeowners may acquire a low-interest property improvement loan, and very low-income homeowners may receive grants for repairing, improving, or modernizing their homes to remove health and safety hazards.



Working across organizational cultures also requires some dimension of trust. Organizational leaders must model forms and symbols of trust between organizations, groups, and individuals (Mizrachi, Drori, and Anspach 2007). Authority figures must draw on the organization's internal and external diversity of cultures to show its ability to adapt and work in a variety of cultural and political settings and climates. Organizations often focus on internal allegiance, forgetting that shared meaning across the marketplace, sector, or industry is what moves understanding of the overall system and each organization's place in it (Griswold 2013). The lack of cultural coordination and understanding undermines many organizations and has significant consequences for accomplishing their goals and their ability to sustain themselves.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Consider the culture of an organization where you have worked, volunteered, or attended school. Describe a time when you witnessed someone receive a nonverbal, negative sanction (e.g., a look of disgust, a shake of the head, or some other nonverbal sign of disapproval).

1. What organizational norm was being broken (i.e., what was the act that led the person to give a nonverbal negative sanctioning)?
2. Was the norm broken considered a structural or cultural violation?
3. What was the reaction of the norm violator to the negative sanction?
4. Was the norm being enforced a result of peer pressure, external forces, mimicking, or modeling?

Levels of Culture

There are three recognized levels of culture in society (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Each level of culture signifies particular cultural traits and patterns within groups. **International culture** is one level referring to culture that transcends national boundaries. These cultural traits and patterns spread through migration, colonization, and the expansion of multinational organizations (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Some illustrations are evident in the adoption and use of technology and social media across continents. For example, computers and mobile devices allow people to live and operate across national boundaries, enabling them to create and sustain an international culture around a common interest or purpose (i.e., Olympics, United Nations, etc.).

In contrast, cultural traits and patterns shared within a country are the **national culture**. National culture is most easily recognizable in the form of symbols such as flags, logos, and colors, as well as sound, including national anthems and musical styles. Think about American culture, which values, beliefs, norms, and symbols are shared only among people living in the United States? How about those living in China and Brazil?

Subcultures, another level of culture, are subgroups of people within the same country (e.g., doctors, lawyers, teachers, athletes, etc.). Subcultures have shared experiences and common cultural distinctions, but they blend into the larger society or cultural system. Subcultures have their own set of symbols, meanings, and behavioral norms, which develop by interacting with



one another. Subcultures develop their own self-culture or idioculture that has significant meaning to members of the group and creates social boundaries for membership and social acceptance (Griswold 2013). Think about how we categorize social cliques—as jocks, nerds, hipsters, punks, or stoners. Each group has a particular subculture, from the artifacts they wear to the values and beliefs they exhibit. All groups form a subculture, resulting in group cohesion and shared consciousness among their members.

SPORT AS A SUBCULTURE

Research the sport, quadriplegic rugby. Examine the rules of the game, search for information or testimonials about any of the athletes, and watch videos of game highlights and athlete stories or interviews available online.

1. Describe the subculture of the athletes (i.e., values, beliefs, symbols including meanings and expressions, behavioral norms, and artifacts relevant to the game).
2. Discuss the socialization process of athletes into the sport.
3. Explain how social context, cultural creation, and cultural acceptance work to create the idioculture of quadriplegic rugby.

Doing Culture

All people are cultured. Social scientists argue that all people have a culture represented in values, beliefs, norms, expressive symbols, practices, and artifacts. This viewpoint transcends the humanities perspective that suggests one must project refined tastes, manners, and have a good education, as exhibited by the elite class, to have culture. The perspective of social scientists reinforces the ideology that cultures are integrated and patterned systems, not simply desired characteristics that distinguish the ruling class.

Cultural patterns are a set of integrated traits transmitted by communication or social interactions (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Consider the cultural patterns associated with housing. Each cultural group or society maintains a housing system comprised of particular cultural traits, including a kitchen, sofa, bed, toilet, etc. The **cultural traits** or each cultural item are part of the home or accepted cultural pattern for housing.

Not only do people share cultural traits, but they may also share personality traits. These traits are actions, attitudes, and behaviors (e.g., honesty, loyalty, courage, etc.). Shared personality traits develop through social interactions from core values within groups and societies (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Core values are formally (legally or recognized) and informally (unofficially) emphasized to develop a shared meaning and social expectations. The use of positive (reward) and negative (punishment) **sanctions** helps in controlling desired and undesired personality traits. For example, if we want to instill courage, we might highlight people and moments depicting bravery with verbal praise or accepting awards. To prevent cowardice, we show a deserter or runaway to depict weakness and social isolation.



Doing culture is not always an expression of **ideal culture**. People's practices and behaviors do not always abide by or fit into the ideal ethos we intend or expect. The Christmas holiday is one example where an ideal culture does not match the **real culture** people live and convey. Christmas traditionally represents an annual celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ; however, many individuals and families do not worship Christ or attend church on Christmas Day but instead exchange gifts and eat meals together. The ideal or public definition of Christmas does not match the real or individual practices people express on the holiday. Throughout history, there have always been differences between what people value (ideal culture) and how they actually live their lives (real culture).

CULTURAL CHANGE

People biologically and culturally adapt. **Cultural change** or evolution is influenced directly (e.g., intentionally), indirectly (e.g., inadvertently), or by force. These changes are a response to fluctuations in the physical or social environment (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Social movements often start in response to shifting circumstances, such as an event or issue, in an effort to evoke cultural change. People will voluntarily join for collective action to either preserve or alter a cultural base or foundation. The fight over control of a cultural base has been the central conflict among many civil and human rights movements. On a deeper level, many of these movements are about cultural rights and control over what will be the prevailing or dominant culture.

Changes in cultural traits are either **adaptive** (better suited for the environment) or **maladaptive** (inadequate or inappropriate for the environment). During times of natural disasters, people must make cultural changes to daily norms and practices, such as donating time and money to help relief efforts (adaptive) while also rebuilding homes and businesses. However, not all relief efforts direct money, energy, or time into long-term contributions of modifying physical infrastructures, including roads, bridges, dams, etc., or helping people relocate away from high-disaster areas (maladaptive). People adjust and learn to cope with cultural changes, whether adaptive or maladaptive, in an effort to soothe psychological or emotional needs.

Though technology continues to have an impact on society, culture does not always change at the same pace. There is a **lag** in how rapidly cultural changes occur—generally, material culture changes before non-material culture. Contact between groups diffuses cultural change among groups, and people are usually open to adapting or trying new artifacts or material possessions before modifying their values, beliefs, norms, expressive symbols (i.e., verbal and non-verbal language), or practices. Influencing fashion trends is easier than altering people's religious beliefs.

Through travel and technological communications, people are sharing cultural elements worldwide. With the ability to travel and communicate across continents, time, and space, the exchange of culture is possible. Modern society is operating on a global scale (known as globalization), and people are now interlinked and mutually dependent. **Acculturation**, or the



merging of cultures, is growing. Groups are adopting the cultural traits and social patterns of other groups, leading to the blending of cultures. **Cultural leveling** is the process by which cultures are becoming similar to one another because of globalization.

REFERENCES

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.
- Cooley, Charles Horton. 1964 [1902]. *Human Nature and the Social Order*. New York: Schocken.
- Durkheim, Émile. 1960 [1893]. *The Division of Labor in Society*. Translated by George Simpson. New York: Free Press.
- Etzioni, Amitai. 1975. *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations: On Power, Involvement, and Their Correlates*. New York: Free Press.
- Giddens, Anthony, Mitchell Duneier, Richard P. Applebaum, and Deborah Carr. 2013. *Essentials of Sociology*. 4th ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Griffiths, Heather, Nathan Keirns, Eric Strayer, Susan Cody-Rydzewski, Gail Scaramuzzo, Tommy Sadler, Sally Vayn, Jeff Byer, and Faye Jones. 2015. *Introduction to Sociology 2e*. Houston, TX: OpenStax College.
- Griswold, Wendy. 2013. *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Hallet, Tim. 2003. "Symbolic Power and Organizational Culture." *Sociological Theory*. 21:128-149.
- Henslin, James M. 2011. *Essentials of Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach*. 11th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Human Rights Watch. 2017. "Afghanistan: Girls Struggle for an Education." Retrieved January 11, 2018 (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/10/17/afghanistan-girls-struggle-education>).
- Kottak, Conrad Phillip and Kathryn A. Kozaitis. 2012. *On Being Different: Diversity and Multiculturalism in the North American Mainstream*. 4th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
- Mead, George Herbert. 1934. *Mind, Self and Society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.



Mizrachi, Nissim, Israel Drori, and Renee R. Anspach. 2007. *"Repertoires of Trust: The Practice of Trust in a Multinational Organization Amid Political Conflict."* American Sociological Review. 72:143-165.

The National Academic Press. 1992. "Democratization in Africa: African Views, African Voices." Retrieved August 4, 2018 (<https://www.nap.edu/read/2041/chapter/4>).

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Acculturation	Looking Glass Self
Adaptive	Maladaptive
Anomie	Mechanical Solidarity
Coercive Organizations	National Culture
Collective Consciousness	Normative Organizations
Cultural Change	Organic Solidarity
Cultural Generalities	Organizational Culture
Cultural Lag	Organizations
Cultural Leveling	Out-Group
Cultural Objects	Primary Group
Cultural Patterns	Reference Group
Cultural Traits	Sanctions
Cultural Universals	Secondary Group
Group	Shared Culture
Group Dynamics	Subcultures
Ideal Culture	Symbolic Power
In-Group	Utilitarian Organizations
International Culture	



MODULE 3: CULTURAL POWER

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the module, students will be able to:

1. explain the implications of culture on social status and stratification
2. summarize the mechanisms used by dominant groups to develop and sustain cultural power
3. understand cultural hegemony
4. describe the consequences of social conflicts over cultural power
5. identify and evaluate cultural prejudice and discrimination

CULTURAL HIERARCHIES

All humans have the same biological structure and matter. The unique distinctions among us stem from our culture (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). The differences in our values, beliefs, norms, expressive language, practices, and artifacts are what stand us apart from each other—being culturally unique projects exclusivity that draws attention to our variations and differences. People find **cultural fit** or acceptance from those who share uniqueness or the same cultural characteristics. Consequently, people may find or experience intolerance or rejection from those with different cultural traits.

Cultural distinctions make groups unique, but they also provide a social structure for creating and ranking cultures based on similarities or differences. A cultural group's size and strength influence its power over a region, area, or other groups. **Cultural power** lends itself to social power that influences people's lives by controlling the prevailing norms or rules and making individuals adhere to the dominant culture voluntarily or involuntarily.

Culture is not a direct reflection of the social world (Griswold 2013). Humans mediate culture to define meaning and interpret the social world around them. As a result, dominant groups can manipulate, reproduce, and influence culture among the masses. Common culture found in society is actually the selective transmission of elite-dominated values (Parenti 2006). This practice, known as **cultural hegemony**, suggests that culture is not autonomous; it is conditionally dictated, regulated, and controlled by dominant groups. The major forces shaping culture are in the power of elite-dominated interests who make limited and marginal adjustments to appear that culture is changing in alignment with evolving social values (Parenti 2006). The culturally dominating group often sets the standard for living and governs the distribution of resources.



Social and Cultural Capital

Social and cultural relationships have productive benefits in society. Research defines **social capital** as a form of economic (e.g., money and property) and cultural (e.g., norms, fellowship, trust) assets central to a social network (Putnam 2000). The social networks people create and maintain with each other enable society to function. However, the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1972) found that social capital produces and reproduces inequality when examining how people gain powerful positions through direct and indirect social connections. Social capital, or a social network, can help or hinder someone personally and socially. For example, strong and supportive social connections can facilitate job opportunities and promotions that are beneficial to the individual and the social network. Weak and unsupportive social ties can jeopardize employment or advancement, which is harmful to the individual and the social group as well.

People make cultural objects meaningful (Griswold 2013). Interactions and reasoning develop cultural perspectives and understanding. The “social mind” of groups processes incoming signals, influencing culture within the social structure, including the social attributes and status of members in a society (Zerubavel 1999). Language and symbols express a person’s position in society and the expectations associated with their status. For example, the clothes people wear or the car they drive represent style, fashion, and wealth. Owning designer clothing or a high-performance sports car depicts a person’s access to financial resources and worth. The use of formal language and titles also represents social status, such as salutations including your majesty, your highness, president, director, chief executive officer, and doctor.

People may occupy multiple statuses in a society. At birth, people are **ascribed** social status in alignment with their physical and mental features, gender, and race. In some cases, societies differentiate status according to physical or mental disability, as well as whether a child is female or male, or a racial minority. According to Dr. Jody Heymann, Dean of the World Policy Analysis Center at the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health, “Persons with disabilities are one of the last groups whose equal rights have been recognized” around the world (Brink 2016). A report by the World Policy Analysis Center (2016) shows that only 28% of 193 countries participating in the global survey guarantee a right to quality education for people with disabilities, and only 18% guarantee a right to work.

In some societies, people may earn or **achieve** status from their talents, efforts, or accomplishments (Griffiths et al. 2015). Obtaining higher education or being an artistic prodigy often corresponds to high status. For example, a college degree awarded from an “Ivy League” university carries higher status than a degree from a public state college. Just as talented artists, musicians, and athletes receive honors, privileges, and celebrity status.

Additionally, the social and political hierarchy of a society or region designates social status. Consider the social labels within class, race, ethnicity, gender, education, profession, age, and family. **Labels** defining a person’s characteristics serve as their position within the larger group. People in a majority or **dominant group** have higher status (e.g., rich, white, male, physician,



etc.) than those in the minority or **subordinate group** (e.g., poor, black, female, housekeeper, etc.). Overall, the location of a person on the social strata influences their social power and participation (Griswold 2013). Individuals with inferior power have limitations to social and physical resources, including a lack of authority, influence over others, formidable networks, capital, and money.

Social status serves as a method for building and maintaining boundaries among and between people and groups. Status dictates social inclusion or exclusion, resulting in **cultural stratification** or hierarchy, whereby a person's position in society regulates their cultural participation by others. Cultural attributes within social networks build community, group loyalty, and personal and social identity.

People sometimes engage in **status shifting** to garner acceptance or avoid attention. DuBois (1903) described the act of people looking through the eyes of others to measure social place or position as double consciousness. His research explored the history and cultural experiences of American slavery and the plight of black folk in translating thinking and behavior between racial contexts. DuBois' research helped sociologists understand how and why people display one identity in specific settings and another in different ones. People must negotiate a social situation to decide how to project their social identity and assign a label that fits (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Status shifting is evident when people move from informal to formal contexts. Our cultural identity and practices are very different at home than at school, work, or church. Each setting demands different aspects of who we are and our place in the social setting.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CULTURAL CAPITAL



Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002)

This short video summarizes Pierre Bourdieu's (1930-2002) theory of cultural capital or "the cultural knowledge that serves as currency that helps us navigate culture and alters our experiences and the opportunities available to us." The video discusses three different forms of cultural capital: embodied state, objectified state, and institutionalized state with examples of each type that students can apply to their own lives. At the end of the video, discussion questions are included to assist students in applying the concept of cultural capital to what is happening in the world today. Prepare a written response addressing the four discussion questions presented in the video to share with the class.

Link to Video: <https://youtu.be/5DBEYiBkgp8>

Submitted By: Sociology Live!, Cindy Hager

"Cultural Capital" by [The Sociological Cinema](#) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#).

Sociologists find that **cultural capital**, or the social assets of a person (including intellect, education, speech patterns, mannerisms, and dress), promotes social mobility (Harper-Scott and Samson 2009). People who accumulate and display the cultural knowledge of a society or group may earn social acceptance, status, and power. Bourdieu (1991) explained that the accumulation and transmission of culture is a social investment from **socializing agents**, including family, peers, and community. People learn culture and cultural characteristics and traits from one another; however, social status affects whether people share, spread, or communicate cultural knowledge to each other. A person's social status in a group or society influences their ability to access and develop cultural capital.

COLLEGE SUCCESS AND CULTURAL CAPITAL

Cultural capital evaluates the validity of culture (i.e., language, values, norms, and access to material resources) on success and achievement. You can measure your cultural capital by examining the cultural traits and patterns of your life. The following questions examine student values and beliefs, parental and family support, residency status, language, childhood experiences focusing on access to cultural resources (e.g., books) and neighborhood vitality (e.g., employment opportunities), educational and professional influences, and barriers affecting college success (Kennedy 2012).

1. What are the most important values or beliefs influencing your life?
2. What kind of support have you received from your parents or family regarding school and your education?
3. How many generations has your family lived in the United States?
4. What do you consider your primary language? Did you have any difficulty learning to read or write the English language?
5. Did your family have more than fifty books in the house when you were growing up? What type of reading materials were in your house when you were growing up?
6. Did your family ever go to art galleries, museums, or plays when you were a child? What types of activities did your family do with their time other than work and school?
7. How would you describe the neighborhood where you grew up?
8. What illegal activities, if any, were present in the neighborhood where you grew up?
9. What employment opportunities were available to your parents or family in the neighborhood where you grew up?
10. Do you have immediate family members who are doctors, lawyers, or other professionals? What types of jobs have your family members had throughout their lives?
11. Why did you decide to go to college? What has influenced you to continue or complete your college education?
12. Did anyone ever discourage or prevent you from pursuing academics or a professional career?
13. Do you consider school easy or difficult for you?
14. What has been the biggest obstacle for you in obtaining a college education?
15. What has been the greatest opportunity for you in obtaining a college education?
16. How did you learn to navigate educational environments? Who taught you the "ins" and "outs" of college or school?

Cultural capital provides people access to cultural connections such as institutions, individuals, materials, and economic resources (Kennedy 2012). Status guides people in choosing who and when culture or cultural capital is transferable. Bourdieu (1991) believed cultural inheritance and personal biography contribute to individual success more than intelligence or talent. With status comes access to social and cultural capital that generates access to privileges and power



among and between groups. Individuals with cultural capital deficits face social inequalities (Reay 2004). Suppose someone does not have the cultural knowledge and skills to maneuver the social world they occupy. In that case, they will not find acceptance within a group or society and access to support and resources.

CULTURAL HEGEMONY

The very nature of cultural creation and production requires an audience to receive a cultural idea or product. Without people willing to receive culture, it cannot be sustainable or become an object (Griswold 2013). Power and influence play an integral part in **cultural creation** and marketing. The ruling class can establish cultural norms and manipulate society while turning a profit. Culture is a commodity, and those in a position of power to create, produce, and distribute culture gain further social and economic power.

Culture-producing organizations such as multinational corporations and media industries are in the business of producing mass culture products for profit. These organizations have the power to influence people throughout the world. Paul Hirsch (1972) referred to this enterprise as the **culture industry system** or the “market.” In the culture industry system, multinational corporations and media industries (i.e., cultural creators) produce an excess supply of cultural objects to draw in public attention and flood the market to ensure the receipt and acceptance of at least one cultural idea or artifact by the people for monetary gain.

The culture industry system produces mass culture products to generate a **culture of consumption** (Grazian 2010). The production of mass culture thrives on the notion that culture influences people. In line with the humanities’ perspective on culture, multinational corporations and media industries believe they can control and manipulate culture by creating objects or products that people want and desire. This viewpoint suggests that **cultural receivers**, or the people, are weak, apathetic, and consume culture for recognition and social status (Griswold 2013). If you consider the cultural object of buying and owning a home, the concept of owning a home represents attaining the “American dream.” Even though not all Americans can buy and own a home, the culture industry system has embedded home ownership as a requisite to success and achievement in America.



Image by [Jose Francisco Fernandez Saura](#) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

In contrast, **popular culture** implies that people influence culture. This perspective indicates people are active makers in the creation and acceptance of cultural objects (Griswold 2013). Take into account one of the most popular musical genres today, rap music. The creative use of language and rhetorical styles and strategies of rap music gained local popularity in New York during the 1970s and entered mainstream acceptance in the mid-1980s to early '90s



(Caramanica 2005). The early developments of rap music by the masses led to the genre becoming a cultural object.

IS BROWN THE NEW GREEN?

Latinos are the largest and fastest growing ethnic group in the United States. The culture industry system is seeking ways to profit from this group. As multinational corporations and media industries produce cultural objects or products geared toward this population, their cultural identity is transformed into a new subculture blending American and Latino values, beliefs, norms, and practices. Phillip Rodriguez (<https://www.philliprodriquez.co/about/>) is a documentary filmmaker on Latino culture, history, and identity. He and many other race and diversity experts are exploring the influence of consumption on American Latino culture.

1. Research the products and advertisements targeting Latinos in the United States. Describe the cultural objects and messaging encouraging a culture of consumption among this group.
2. What type of values, beliefs, norms, and practices are reinforced in the cultural objects or projects created by the culture industry system?
3. How might the purchase or consumption of the cultural objects or products you researched influence the self-image, identity, and social status of Latinos?
4. What new subculture arises by the blending of American and Latino culture? Describe the impact of uniting or combining these cultures on Latinos and Americans.

Today, rap music, like other forms of music, is being created and produced by major music labels and related media industries. The culture industry system uses media gatekeepers to regulate information, including culture (Grazian 2010). Even with the ability of the people to create popular culture, multinational corporations and media industries maintain power to spread awareness, control access, and messaging. This power to influence the masses also gives the **hegemonic ruling class**, known as the culture industry system, the ability to reinforce stereotypes, close minds, and promote fear to encourage acceptance or rejection of specific cultural ideas and artifacts.

PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

Cultural intolerance may arise when individuals or groups confront new or differing values, beliefs, norms, expressive symbols, practices, or artifacts. Think about a time when you came across someone who did not fit the cultural “norm” either expressively or behaviorally. How did the person’s presence make you feel? What type of thoughts ran through your head? Were you compelled to understand the differences between you and the other person, or were you eager to dismiss, confront, or ignore the other person?

Living in a culturally diverse society requires us to tackle our anxiety of the unknown or unfamiliar. The discomfort or **cognitive dissonance** we feel when we are around others who live and think differently from ourselves makes us alter our thoughts and behaviors towards acceptance or rejection of the “different” person to restore cognitive balance (Festinger 1957). When people undergo culture shock or surprise from experiencing a new culture, their minds



undergo dissonance. Similar to a fight or flight response, we choose to learn and understand cultural differences or mock and run away from them.

People tend to judge and evaluate each other daily. Assessing other people and our surroundings is necessary for interpreting and interacting in the social world. Problems arise when we judge others using our own cultural standards. We call the practice of judging others through our own cultural lens, **ethnocentrism**. This practice is a cultural universal. People everywhere think their culture is true, moral, proper, and right (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). By its very definition, ethnocentrism creates division and conflict between social groups, whereby mediating differences is challenging when everyone believes they are culturally superior. Their culture should be the standard for living.



Image by [vjiapratama](#) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

In contrast, **cultural relativism** insinuates that judging a culture by the standards of another is objectionable. It seems reasonable to evaluate a person's values, beliefs, and practices according to their own cultural standards rather than judging them by the criteria of another (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Learning to receive cultural differences from a place of empathy and understanding serves as a foundation for living together despite variances. Like many aspects of human civilization, culture is not absolute but relative, suggesting values, beliefs, and practices are only standards of living as long as people accept and live by them (Boas 1887). Developing knowledge about cultures and cultural groups different from our own allows us to view and evaluate others through their cultural lens.

Sometimes people act on ethnocentric thinking and feel justified in disregarding cultural relativism. Overcoming negative attitudes about people who are culturally different from us is challenging when we believe our culture and thinking are justified. Consider the social issue of infanticide or the killing of unwanted children after birth. The historical practice occurred in times of famine or hardship when resources were scarce to keep non-productive humans alive. Many people find infanticide a human rights violation regardless of a person's cultural traditions and beliefs, and think the practice should stop. People often feel justified in condemning the practice of infanticide and the people who believe and practice the tradition.

Stereotypes are oversimplified ideas about groups of people (Griffiths et al. 2015). **Prejudice** is an attitude of thoughts and feelings directed at someone based on prejudging or making negative assumptions. Negative attitudes about another's culture are a form of prejudice or bias. Prejudice is a learned behavior. Prejudicial attitudes can lead to discriminatory acts and



behaviors. **Discrimination** is an action of unfair treatment against someone based on characteristics such as age, gender, race, religion, etc.

PRIVILEGE AND LIFE CHANCES

Research You-Tube user-created videos on privilege and life chances such as the following:

- Privilege Activity by Adam Doyné (<https://youtu.be/EIJqtWUiUCs>)
- What is Privilege by BuzzFeedYellow (<https://youtu.be/hD5f8GuNuGQ>)
- Check Your Perspective, Not Your Privilege by Rachel West (<https://youtu.be/zvWGINdhGiQ>)

Complete the [Test Your Life Chances](#) exercise and type a written response addressing the following questions:

1. What life barriers or issues are you able to identify about yourself after completing the exercise?
2. What life advantages or opportunities are you able to distinguish about yourself after completing the exercise?
3. Were there any statements you found more difficult or easier to answer? Explain.
4. Were there any life challenges or obstacles that you have faced missing in the exercise? If so, explain.
5. Were there any life privileges you have experienced missing in the exercise? If so, explain.
6. Did you ever answer untruthfully on any of the statements? If you are comfortable sharing, explain which one(s)? Why did you not answer truthfully?
7. How do life's barriers and opportunities influence people's lives? What connections do you see among upward mobility and life chances in regards to: disability, racial-ethnic identity, gender identity, language, sexuality, and social class?



[Image](#) by [Quinn Dombrowski](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

Thinking the practice of infanticide should stop, and those who practice it maliciously are prejudiced. Trying to stop the practice with force is discriminatory. There are times in the case of human rights issues like this where the fine line between criticizing with action (ethnocentrism) and understanding with empathy (cultural relativism) is clear. However, knowing the appropriate context when to judge or be open-minded is not always evident. Do we allow men to treat women as subordinates if their religion or faith justifies it? Do we allow people to eat sea turtles or live octopus if it is a delicacy? Should we stop children who do not receive vaccinations from attending school? All of these issues stem from cultural differences, and distinguishing the appropriate response is not always easy.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#).

When social groups have or are in power, they can discriminate on a large scale. A dominant group or the ruling class imparts its culture in society by passing laws and informally using the culture industry system, or “market” to spread it. Access to these methods allows hegemonic groups to institutionalize discrimination. This results in unjust and unequal treatment of people by society and its institutions—those who culturally align with the ruling class fare better than those who are different.

VISUAL ETHNOGRAPHY

PART 1

Visual ethnography is a qualitative research method of photographic images with socio-cultural representations. The experience of producing and discussing visual images or texts develops ethnographic knowledge and provides sociological insight into how people live.

In your home or the place you live, take one photo of the following:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The street you live on • Your home • Front door of your home • Your family • The living room • The ceiling • Your sofa or seating • Lamps or lighting • The stove • The kitchen sink • Your cutlery drawer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pantry or where you store food • The toilet • The shower or bathing area • Your toothbrush • Your bedroom • Your wardrobe • Your shoes • Children’s toys (if applicable) • Children’s playground (if applicable) • Your pets • Your car or method of transportation |
|--|---|

PART 2

1. Watch the video by Anna Rosling Ronnlund entitled *See How the Rest of the World Lives, Organized by Income*: <https://goo.gl/uJc6Vd>
2. Next visit the website *Dollar Street*: <https://goo.gl/Rb8WUJ>
3. Once you have accessed the Dollar Street website, take the **Quick Tour** for a tutorial on how to use the site. If the Quick Tour does not appear when you click the site link, click the menu on the **right-hand top corner** and select **Quick Guide**, which will open the Quick Tour window.
4. After completing the Quick Tour, access **your visual ethnography photos** and compare your photographs with other people throughout the world.
5. For your analysis, in complete sentences explain the differences and similarities based on income and country. Specifically, describe what the **poorest conditions** are for each item as well as the **richest conditions** and what cultural similarities and/or differences exist in **comparison to your items**.



REFERENCES

- Boas, Franz. 1887. "Museums of Ethnology and their classification." *Science* 9:589.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1972. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1991. *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.
- Brink, Susan. 2016. "How is the World Treating People with Disabilities?" *National Public Radio*. Retrieved March 12, 2018 (<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2016/12/18/504964701/how-is-the-world-treating-people-with-disabilities>).
- Caramanica, Jon. 2005. "Hip-Hop's Raiders of the Lost Archives." *The New York Times*. Retrieve March 19, 2018 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/26/arts/music/hiphops-raiders-of-the-lost-archives.html>).
- DuBois, W.E.B. 1903. *The Soul of Black Folk*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Festinger, L. 1957. *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Grazian, David. 2010. *Mix It Up Popular Culture, Mass Media, and Society*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Griffiths, Heather, Nathan Keirns, Eric Strayer, Suasn Cody-Rydzewsk, Gail Scaramuzzo, Tommy Sadler, Sally Vyain, Jeff Byer, and Faye Jones. 2015. *Introduction to Sociology 2e*. Houston, TX: OpenStax College.
- Griswold, Wendy. 2013. *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Harper-Scott, J.P.E. and Jim Samson. 2009. *An Introduction to Music Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hirsch, Paul M. 1972. "Processing Fads and Fashions: An Organization Set Analysis of Culture Industry Systems." *American Journal of Sociology* 77:639-659.
- Kennedy, Vera. 2012. "The Influence of Cultural Capital on Hispanic Student College Graduation Rates." EDD dissertation, College of Education, Argosy University.
- Kottak, Conrad Phillip and Kathryn A. Kozaitis. 2012. *On Being Different: Diversity and Multiculturalism in the North American Mainstream*. 4th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.



Parenti, Michael. 2006. *The Culture Struggle*. New York: Seven Stories Press.

Putnam, Robert. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Reay, D. 2004. "Education and cultural capital: The implications of changing trends in education policies." *Cultural Trends* 13(2):73-86.

World Policy Analysis Center. 2016. Putting Fundamental Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the Map. Retrieved March 12, 2018 (<https://ph.ucla.edu/news/press-release/2016/nov/putting-fundamental-rights-persons-disabilities-map>).

Zerubavel, Eviatar. 1999. *Social Mindscapes: An Invitation to Cognitive Sociology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Achieved Status	Discrimination
Ascribed Status	Dominant Group
Cognitive Dissonance	Ethnocentrism
Cultural Capital	Hegemonic Ruling Class
Cultural Creation	Popular Culture
Cultural Fit	Prejudice
Cultural Hegemony	Social Capital
Cultural Power	Social Labels
Cultural Receivers	Social Status
Cultural Relativism	Socializing Agents
Cultural Stratification	Status Shifting
Culture Industry System	Stereotypes
Culture Of Consumption	Subordinate Group
Culture Producing Organizations	



MODULE 4: CULTURAL IDENTITY

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the module, students will be able to:

1. explain the influence of culture on social and self-identity
2. discuss how personal, cultural, and universal identities shape perceptions
3. illustrate the relationship between self and social labels on status
4. assess the impact of technological advances and innovation on identity

IDENTITY FORMATION

Trying to figure out who you are, what you value and believe, and why you think the way you do is a lifelong process. In the first chapter of *Thinking Well*, Stewart E. Kelly suggests, “we all have lenses through which we view reality, and we need to know what our individual lens is composed of and how it influences our perception of reality.” Take a moment to reflect and hypothetically paint a picture of yourself with words. Try to capture the core of your being by describing who you are. Once you have formulated a description of yourself, evaluate what you wrote. Does your description focus on your personal characteristics or your cultural characteristics you learned from other people in your life (i.e., family, friends, congregation, teachers, community, etc.)?

Cultural identity, like culture itself, is a social construct. The values, beliefs, norms, expressive symbols, practices, and artifacts we hold develop from the social relationships we experience throughout our lives. Not only does cultural identity make us aware of who we are, but it also defines what we stand for in comparison to others. Cultural identity is relational between individuals, groups, and society, meaning that through culture, people can form social connections or refrain from them. It is real to each of us with real social consequences.

As defined in Module 1, we learn culture through the process of enculturation. Socializing agents, including family, peers, school, work, and the media, transmit traditions, customs, language, tools, and shared experiences and knowledge. The passage of culture from one generation to the next ensures the sustainability of that culture by instilling specific traits and characteristics of a group or society that become part of each group member’s identity.

IDENTITY LABELS AND CATEGORIES

Identity shapes our perceptions and the way we categorize people. Our individual and collective views influence our thinking. Regardless of personal, cultural, or universal identity, people naturally focus on traits, values, behaviors, and practices that they identify with and have a tendency to dismiss those they do not.



Age Cohorts

Our numeric ranking of age is associated with particular cultural traits. Even the social categories we assign to age express cultural characteristics of that age group or cohort. Age signifies one's cultural identity and social status (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Many of the most common labels we use in society signify age categories and attributes. For example, the terms “newborns and infants” generally refer to children from birth to age four, whereas “school-age children” signifies youngsters old enough to attend primary school.

Each age range has social and cultural expectations placed upon it by others (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). We have limited social expectations of newborns, but we expect infants to develop some language skills and behaviors like “potty training” or the practice of controlling bowel movements. Even though cultural expectations by age vary across other social categories (e.g., gender, geography, ethnicity, etc.), there are universal stages and understanding of intellectual, personal, and social development associated with each age range or cohort.

Throughout a person's **life course**, they will experience and transition across different cultural phases and stages. Life course is the period from one's birth to death (Griffiths et al. 2015). Each stage in the life course aligns with age-appropriate values, beliefs, norms, expressive language, practices, and artifacts. Like other social categories, age can be a basis of social ranking (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Society finds it perfectly acceptable for a baby or infant to wear a diaper, but considers it a taboo or fetish among a 30-year-old adult 30 years old. However, diaper wearing becomes socially acceptable again as people age into the senior years of life, when biological functions become harder to control. These are illustrations of how people will experience more than one age-based status during their lifetime.

Aging is a human universal (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Maneuvering life's course is sometimes challenging. Cultural socialization occurs throughout the life course. Learning the cultural traits and characteristics needed at certain stages of life is essential for developing self-identity and group acceptance. People engage in **anticipatory socialization** to prepare for future life roles or expectations (Griffiths et al. 2015). By engaging in social interactions with other people, we learn the cultural traits, characteristics, and expectations in preparation for the next phase or stage of life. Thinking back to “potty training”, infants, parents, and caregivers teach young children to control bowel movements. Hence, they can urinate and defecate in socially appropriate settings (i.e., restrooms or outhouses) and times.

Generations have a **collective identity** or shared experiences based on the time period during which the group lived. Consider the popular culture of the 1980s to today. In the 1980s, people used a landline or fixed-line phone rather than a cellular phone to communicate, and went to a movie theater to see a film rather than downloading a video to a mobile device. Therefore, someone who spent their youth and most of their adulthood without or with limited technology may not deem it necessary to have or operate it in daily life. Whereas someone born in the 1990s or later will only know life with technology and find it a necessary part of human existence.





Image by [Tojo Tantely](#) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

Each generation develops a perspective and cultural identity from the time and events surrounding their life. Generations experience life differently, resulting from cultural and social shifts over time. The difference in life experience alters perspectives towards values, beliefs, norms, expressive symbols, practices, and artifacts. Political and social events often mark an era and influence generations. The ideology of white supremacy, reinforced by events of Nazi Germany and World War II during the 1930s and 1940s, instilled racist beliefs in society. Many adults living

at this time believed the essays of Arthur Gobineau (1853-1855) regarding the existence of biological differences between racial groups (Biddis 1970). It was not until the 1960s and 1970s that philosophers and critical theorists studied the underlying structures in cultural products and used analytical concepts from linguistics, anthropology, psychology, and sociology to interpret race, discovering no biological or phenotypical variances between human groups and finding race is a social construct (Black and Solomos 2000). Scientists found cultural likeness did not equate to biological likeness. Nonetheless, many adults living in the 1930s and 1940s held racial beliefs of white supremacy throughout their lives because of the ideologies spread and shared during their lifetime. Whereas modern science verifies that the DNA of all people living today is 99.9% alike, and a new generation of people are learning that there is only one human race despite the physical variations in size, shape, skin tone, and eye color (Smithsonian 2018).

Because there are diverse cultural expectations based on age, there can be conflict between age cohorts and generations. **Age stratification** theorists suggest that members of society are classified and have a social status associated with their age (Riley, Johnson, and Foner 1972). Conflict often develops from age-associated cultural differences influencing the social and economic power of age groups. For example, the economic power of working adults conflicts with the political and voting power of the retired or elderly.

Age and generational conflicts are also highly influenced by government or state-sponsored milestones. In the United States, there are several age-related markers, including the legal age of driving (16 years old), the use of tobacco products (21 years old), the consumption of alcohol (21 years old), and the age of retirement (65-70 years old). Regardless of knowledge, skill, or condition, people must abide by formal rules with the expectations assigned to each age group within the law. Because the state reinforces age as a basis of social control, different age groups access political and economic power and resources unequally (Griffiths et al. 2015). For example, the United States is the only industrialized nation that does not respect the abilities of older adults by assigning a marker of 65-70 years old as the indicator for someone to become a dependent of the state and an economically unproductive member of society.



Sex and Gender

Each of us is born with physical characteristics that represent and socially assign our sex and gender. **Sex** refers to our biological differences, and **gender** the cultural traits assigned to females and males (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Our physical make-up distinguishes our sex as either female or male, implicating the **gender socialization** process we will experience throughout our lives, associated with becoming a woman or a man.



Image by Pixabay is licensed under [CC0 1.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Gender identity is an individual's self-concept of being female or male and their association with feminine and masculine qualities. People teach gender traits based on sex or biological composition (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Our sex signifies the gender roles (i.e., psychological, social, and cultural) we will learn and experience as members of society. Children learn gender roles and acts of sexism in society through socialization (Griffiths et al. 2015). Girls learn feminine qualities and characteristics, and boys masculine ones, forming gender identity. Children become aware of gender roles between the ages of two and three, and by four to five years old, they are fulfilling gender roles based on their sex (Griffiths et al. 2015). Nonetheless, gender-based characteristics do not always match one's self or cultural identity as people grow and develop.

GENDER LABELS

1. Why do people need and use gender labels?
2. Why do people create gender roles or expectations?
3. Do gender labels and roles influence limitations on individuals or the social world? Explain.

Gender stratification focuses on the unequal access females have to socially valued resources, power, prestige, and personal freedom as compared to men based on differing positions within the socio-cultural hierarchy (Light, Keller, and Calhoun 1997). Traditionally, society treats women as second-class citizens. The design of dominant gender ideologies and inequality maintains the prevailing social structure, presenting male privilege as part of the natural order (Parenti 2006). Theorists suggest society is a male-dominated patriarchy where men think of themselves as inherently superior to women, resulting in unequal distribution of rewards between men and women (Henslin 2011).



The media portrays women and men in stereotypical ways that reflect and sustain socially endorsed views of gender (Wood 1994). Media affects the perception of social norms, including gender. People think and act according to stereotypes associated with one's gender broadcast



Image by [rawpixel.com](https://www.rawpixel.com) is licensed under [CC0 1.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

by the media (Goodall 2016). Media stereotypes reinforce **gender inequality** of girls and women. According to Wood (1994), the underrepresentation of women in media implies that men are the cultural standard and women are unimportant or invisible. Stereotypes of men in media display them as independent, driven, skillful, and heroic, leading them to higher-level positions and power in society.

In countries throughout the world, including the United States, women face discrimination in wages, occupational training, and job promotion (Parenti 2006). As a result, society tracks girls and women into career pathways that align with gender roles and match gender-linked aspirations such as teaching, nursing, and human services (Henslin 2011). Society views men's work as having higher value than that of women. Even if women have the same job as men, they make 77 cents for every dollar in comparison (Griffiths et al. 2015). Inequality in career pathways, job placement, and promotion or advancement results in an income gap between genders, affecting the buying power and economic vitality of women in comparison to men.

The United Nations found that prejudice and violence against women are firmly rooted in cultures around the world (Parenti 2006). Gender inequality has allowed men to harness and abuse their social power. The leading cause of injury among women of reproductive age is domestic violence, and rape is an everyday occurrence and seen as a male prerogative throughout many parts of the world (Parenti 2006). Depictions in the media emphasize male-dominant roles and normalize violence against women (Wood 1994). Culture plays an integral role in establishing and maintaining male dominance in society, ascribing men the power and privilege that reinforces the subordination and oppression of women.

Cross-cultural research shows that gender stratification decreases when women and men make equal contributions to human subsistence or survival (Sanday 1974). Since the industrial revolution, attitudes about gender and work have been evolving with the need for women and men to contribute to the labor force and economy. Gendered work, attitudes, and beliefs have transformed in response to American economic needs (Margolis 1984, 2000). Today's society is encouraging gender flexibility resulting from cultural shifts among women seeking college degrees, prioritizing career, and delaying marriage and childbirth.



SEX-ROLE INVENTORY TRAITS

Your task is to find the ten words on the sex-role inventory trait list below that are most often culturally associated with each of the following labels and categories: femininity, masculinity, wealth, poverty, President, teacher, mother, father, minister, or athlete. Write down the label or category and ten terms to compare your lists with other students.

- | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. self-reliant | 21. reliable | 41. warm |
| 2. yielding | 22. analytical | 42. solemn |
| 3. helpful | 23. sympathetic | 43. willing to take a stand |
| 4. defends own beliefs | 24. jealous | 44. tender |
| 5. cheerful | 25. leadership ability | 45. friendly |
| 6. moody | 26. sensitive to other's needs | 46. aggressive |
| 7. independent | 27. truthful | 47. gullible |
| 8. shy | 28. willing to take risks | 48. inefficient |
| 9. conscientious | 29. understanding | 49. act as leader |
| 10. athletic | 30. secretive | 50. childlike |
| 11. affectionate | 31. makes decisions easily | 51. adaptable |
| 12. theatrical | 32. compassionate | 52. individualistic |
| 13. assertive | 33. sincere | 53. does not use harsh language |
| 14. flatterable | 34. self-sufficient | 54. unsystematic |
| 15. happy | 35. eager to soothe hurt feelings | 55. competitive |
| 16. strong personality | 36. conceited | 56. loves children |
| 17. loyal | 37. dominant | 57. tactful |
| 18. unpredictable | 38. soft-spoken | 58. ambitious |
| 19. forceful | 39. likable | 59. gentle |
| 20. feminine | 40. masculine | 60. conventional |

Compare your results with other students in the class and answer the following questions:

1. What are the trait similarities and commonalities between femininity, masculinity, wealth, poverty, President, teacher, mother, father, minister, and athlete?
2. How are masculinity and femininity used as measures of conditions and vocations?

Sexuality and Sexual Orientation

Sexuality is an inborn person's capacity for sexual feelings (Griffiths et al. 2015). Normative standards about sexuality are different throughout the world. **Cultural codes** prescribe sexual behaviors as legal, normal, deviant, or pathological (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). In the United States, people have restrictive attitudes about premarital sex, extramarital sex, and homosexuality compared to other industrialized nations (Griffiths et al. 2015). The debate on sex education in U.S. schools focuses on abstinence and contraceptive curricula. In addition, people in the U.S. have restrictive attitudes about women and sex, believing men have more



urges. Therefore, it is more acceptable for them to have multiple sexual partners than for women to set a double standard.

Sexual orientation is a biological expression of sexual desire or attraction (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Culture sets the parameters for sexual norms and habits. Enculturation dictates and controls social acceptance of sexual expression and activity. Eroticism, like all human activities and preferences, is learned and malleable (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Sexual orientation labels categorize personal views and representations of sexual desire and activities. Most people ascribe and conform to the sexual labels constructed and assigned by society (i.e., heterosexual or desire for the opposite sex, homosexual or attraction to the same sex, bisexual or appeal to both sexes, and asexual or lack of sexual attraction and indifference).

The projection of one's sexual personality is often through gender identity. Most people align their sexual disposition with what is socially or publicly appropriate (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Because sexual desire or attraction is inborn, people within the socio-sexual dominant group (i.e., heterosexual) often believe their sexual preference is "normal." However, a heterosexual fit or type is not normal. History has documented diversity in sexual preference and behavior since the dawn of human existence (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). There is diversity and variance in people's libido and psychosocial relationship needs.



Image by [Brett Sayles](#) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

Additionally, sexual activity or fantasy does not always align with sexual orientation (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Sexual pleasure from the use of sexual toys, homoerotic images, or kinky fetishes does not necessarily correspond to a specific orientation, sexual label, or mean someone's desire will alter or convert to another type because of the activity. Regardless, society uses **sexual identity** as an indicator of status, dismissing the fact that sexuality is a learned behavior, flexible, and contextual (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). People feel and display sexual variety, erotic impulses, and sensual expressions throughout their lives.

Individuals develop sexual understanding around middle childhood and adolescence (APA 2008). There is no genetic, biological, developmental, social, or cultural evidence linked to homosexual behavior. The difference is in society's discriminatory response to homosexuality. Alfred Kinsley was the first to identify that sexuality is a continuum rather than a dichotomy of gay or straight (Griffiths et al. 2015). His research showed people do not necessarily fall into the sexual categories, behaviors, and orientations constructed by society. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) expanded on Kinsley's research to find that women are more likely to express homosocial relationships such as hugging, handholding, and physical closeness. Whereas men often face negative sanctions for displaying homosocial behavior.

Society ascribes meaning to sexual activities (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Variance reflects the cultural norms and sociopolitical conditions of a time and place. Since the 1970s, organized



efforts by LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning) activists have helped establish a gay culture and civil rights (Herdt 1992). **Gay culture** provides social acceptance for persons rejected, marginalized, and punished by others because of sexual orientation and expression. **Queer theorists** are reclaiming the derogatory label to help in broadening the understanding of sexuality as flexible and fluid (Griffiths et al. 2015). **Sexual culture** is not necessarily subject to sexual desire and activity, but rather dominant affinity groups linked by common interests or purpose to restrict and control sexual behavior.

Geographic Region

The place people live or occupy renders a lifestyle and cultural identity. People identify with the geographic location they live in as a part of who they are and what they believe (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Places have subcultures specific to their geographic location, environmental surroundings, and population.

As one of the largest cities in the United States, New York City is home to 21 million people speaking over 200 languages (U.S. News and World Report 2017). The city itself is fast-paced, and its large population supports the need for around-the-clock services as the “city that never sleeps.” With so many people living in the metropolis, it is a diverse melting pot of racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. However, each neighborhood is its own enclave with its own identity. This large, heterogeneous population affects the impersonal, sometimes characterized as “dismissive and arrogant” attitudes of its residents. By the very nature and size of the city, people can maintain anonymity but cannot develop or sustain intimacy with the entire community or its residents. With millions of diverse people living, working, and playing in 304 square miles, it is understandable why tourists or newcomers feel that residents are in a rush, rude, and unfriendly.



[Image](#) by [Pixabay](#) is licensed under [CC0 1.0](#)

On the opposite side of the nation, in the Central Valley of California, many residents live in rural communities. The Central Valley is home to 6.5 million people across 18,000 square miles (American Museum of Natural History 2018). Though there is a significant metropolitan hub of Fresno, surrounding communities identify themselves as small, agricultural, with a country lifestyle. Here, residents seek face-to-face interactions, and communities operate as kin or families.

Like other social categories or labels, people use location to denote status or lifestyle. Consider people in the U.S. who “live in Beverly Hills” or “work on Wall Street.” These locations imply socio-economic status and privilege. Values of a **dominant regional culture** marginalize those who do not possess or have the cultural characteristics of that geographic location (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). People who do not culturally fit in a place face social stigma and rejection.



People move to explore new areas, experience new cultures, or change status. Changing where we live means changing our social and cultural surroundings, including the family, friends, acquaintances, etc. The most desirable spaces are distributed inequitably (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Wealth and privilege provide access to desirable locations and living conditions. The poor, immigrants, and ethnic minorities are most likely to be concentrated in poor communities with less than optimal living standards (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Impoverished groups are the most likely to be exposed to environmental hazards and dangerous living conditions. The disproportionate impact of ecological hazards on people of color has led to the development of the environmental justice movement to abolish environmental racism and harm (Energy Justice Network 2018).

Geographic places also convey or signify stereotypes. People living in or being from an area inherent the region's stereotypes, whether they are accurate or not. Think about the previous U.S. examples of "living in Beverly Hills" or "working on Wall Street." Stereotypes associated with these labels imply wealth and status. However, approximately 10% of people living in Beverly Hills are living below the poverty rate, and most people employed on Wall Street do not work for financial institutions; instead, they are police, sanitation workers, street vendors, and public employees, to name a few (Data USA 2018).

YOUR REGIONAL CULTURE

The place someone lives influences his or her value system and life. Describe the geographic location you live and the culture of your community. What values and beliefs do the social norms and practices of your neighborhood instill or project among residents? What type of artifacts or possessions (i.e., truck, luxury car, recreational vehicle, fenced yard, swimming pool, etc.) do people living in your community seek out, dismiss, or condone? Do you conform to the cultural standards where you live or deviate from them? Explain how the place you live influences your perceptions, choices, and life.

Body and Mind

Like other human characteristics, society constructs meaning and defines normality in terms of physical and mental ability and appearance (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Behavior categorized as "normal" is the standard for determining appropriate thinking and behavior from an illness or disorder. An example of this construct is the criteria for determining mental illness that involves examining a person's functionality around accepted norms, roles, status, and behavior appropriate for social situations and settings (Cockerham 2014). The difficulty in defining mental disorders, similar to defining other illnesses or deformities, is the ever-changing perspectives of society. For example, "homosexuality was considered a mental disorder by American psychiatrists until the early 1970s" (Cockerham, 2014:3). Researchers or clinicians have either eliminated or evolved other terms and classifications, including Melancholia (now called Depression), Amentia (formerly referred to as Mental Retardation, now no longer used), and Neurosis (now classified into subtypes).



Primitive society believed mental illness derived from supernatural phenomena (Cockerham 2014). Because mental disorders were not always observable, people thought supernatural powers were the cause of illness. Preliterate cultures believed that people lost their souls, were invaded by an evil spirit, violated a taboo, or fell victim to witchcraft when they became sick (Cockerham 2014). Witch doctors or shamans used folk medicine and religious beliefs to produce cures. Many of these healers, older in age, had high intellect, were sometimes sexual deviants, orphans, disabled, or mentally ill themselves (Cockerham 2014). Nonetheless, healers helped reduce anxiety and reinforce faith in social norms and customs.

Both physical and mental health conditions become part of a person's identity. Medical professionals, as was the case with witch doctors and shamans, play a role in labeling illness or defect, internalizing a person's condition as part of one's identity (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). As a result, the culture-free, scientific objectivity of medicine has come into question. For centuries in Western society, science sought to validate religious ideologies and texts, including the natural inferiority of women and the mental and moral deficiencies of people of color and people experiencing poverty (Parenti 2006). Many scientific opinions about the bodies and minds of minority groups have been disproven and found to be embellished beliefs posing as objective findings. Medicine and psychiatry, like other aspects of social life, have entrenched interests and do not always come from a place of bias-free science.



Image by meo is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

People adopt behaviors to minimize the impact of their illness or ailment on others. A sick person takes on a **sick role** when ill, and society does not hold them responsible for their poor health or disorder. The sick individual is entitled to release from normal responsibilities and must take steps to regain their health under the care of a physician or medical expert (Parsons 1951). Because society views illness as a dysfunction or abnormality, people who are ill or have a condition learn the sick role or social expectations to demonstrate their willingness to cooperate with society, though they are unable to perform or maintain standard responsibilities (i.e., attend school, work, participate in physical activity, etc.).

Social attributes around an ideal body and mind center on youthfulness and wellness without deformity or defect. Though a person's physical and mental health ultimately affects them intrinsically, society influences the social or extrinsic experience related to one's body and mind attributes. People face **social stigma** when they suffer from an illness or condition. Erving Goffman (1963) defined stigma as a characteristic that society devalues and considers unwanted. Society labels health conditions or defects (e.g., cancer, diabetes, mental illness, disability, etc.) as abnormal and undesirable, creating a negative social environment for people with physical or mental differences.



Individuals with health issues or disparities face suspicion, hostility, or discrimination (Giddens, Duneier, Applebaum, and Carr 2013). Social stigma accentuates one's illness or disorder, marginalizing and alienating persons with physical or cognitive limitations. During the Middle Ages, people categorized the mentally ill as fools and village idiots. Society tolerated some for amusement, families cared for others, and authorities placed some on ships to send them to distant locations (Cockerham 2014). People often blame the victim, suggesting one's illness or disability resulted from personal choice or behavior, and it is their responsibility to resolve, cope, and adapt. Blaming the victim ignores the reality that an illness or defect is always preventable; people cannot always afford health care or purchase the medications to prevent or alleviate conditions, and care or treatment is not always available.

Social stigma often results in individuals avoiding treatment for fear of social labeling, rejection, and isolation. One in four people worldwide will suffer a mental disorder in their lifetime (Cockerham 2014). In a recent study of California residents, data showed that approximately 77% of the population with mental health needs received no or inadequate treatment (Tran and Ponce 2017). Children, older adults, men, Latinos, and Asians, people with low education, the uninsured, and limited English speakers were most likely to have an unmet need for treatment. Respondents in the study reported that the cost of treatment and social stigma were the contributing factors to not receiving treatment. Untreated mental disorders have high economic and social costs, including alcoholism, drug abuse, divorce, domestic violence, suicide, and unemployment (Cockerham 2014). The lack of treatment has devastating effects on those in need, their families, and society.

Society promotes health and wellness as the norm and ideal life experience. Media upholds these ideals by portraying the body as a commodity and the value of being young, fit, and strong (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). This **fitness-minded culture** projects individuals who are healthy with a greater social status than those afflicted with illness or body and mind differences. In today's society, there is low tolerance for unproductive citizens characterized by the inability to work and contribute to the economy. Darwinian (1859) ideology embedded in modern-day principles promotes a culture of strength, endurance, and self-reliance under the guise of survival of the fittest. This culture reinforces the modern-day values of productivity associated with being healthy to compete, conquer, and be successful in work and life.

There are body and mind differences associated with age, gender, and race. Ideal, actual, and normal body characteristics vary from culture to culture and even within one culture over time (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Nonetheless, cultures throughout the world are obsessed with youth and beauty. We see examples of this in media and fashion, where actors and models are fit to match regional stereotypes of the young and beautiful. In the United States, most Hollywood movies portray heroines and heroes who are fit without ailment or defect, under the age of 30, and reinforce beauty labels of hyper-femininity (i.e., thin, busty, sexy, cooperative, etc.) and hyper-masculinity (i.e., built, strong, aggressive, tough, etc.). The fashion industry also emphasizes this body by depicting unrealistic ideals of beauty for people to compare themselves to, while nonetheless achievable by buying the clothes and products that models sell.



Body and mind depictions in the media and fashion create appearance stereotypes that imply status and class. If one has the resources to purchase high-end brands or expensive apparel, they are able to project status through wealth. If one is attractive, they can project status through beauty. Research shows stereotypes influence the way people speak to each other. People respond warmly and friendly to attractive people and cold, reserved, and humorless to unattractive (Snyder 1993). Additionally, attractive people earn 10-15% more than ordinary or unattractive people (Judge et al. 2009; Hamermesh 2011). We must also note that if one can achieve beauty through plastic surgery or exercise and have no health conditions or deformities, they are also more likely to be socially accepted and obtain status.

People with disabilities have worked to dispel misconceptions, promote nondiscrimination, and fair representation (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Individuals with body and mind illnesses and differences form support groups and establish membership or affinity based on their condition to organize politically. By acknowledging differences and demanding civil rights, people with illnesses and disabilities can receive equal treatment and protection under the law, eliminating the stigma and discriminatory labels society has long placed on them. Political organization for social change has given people with body and mind differences the ability to redefine culture and insist on social inclusion and participation of all people regardless of physical or mental differences, challenges, or limitations.

An illustration of civil rights changes occurred in the 20th century with a paradigm shift and growth of professionals, paraprofessionals, and laypeople in mental health (Cockerham 2014). Practitioners shifted treatment to focus on psychoanalysis and psychoactive drugs rather than institutionalizing patients. With this new approach, hospital discharges increased and hospitalization stays decreased (Cockerham 2014). The most recent revolution in mental health treatment was the development of the community mental health model. The model emphasizes local community support as a method of treatment where relationships are the focus of care. This therapeutic approach uses mental health workers who live in the community to fill the service gaps between the patient and professionals, stressing a social rather than medical model (Cockerham 2014). The community mental health model extends civil rights, putting consent to treatment and service approach in the hands of patients.

Race and Ethnicity

There are two myths or ideas about race. The first suggests that people inherit physical characteristics distinguishing race. Second, the idea that one race is superior to others or that one “pure” race exists. In actuality, scientific research mapping of the human genome system found that humans are homogenous (Henslin 2011). **Race** is truly an arbitrary label that has become part of society’s culture with no justifiable evidence to support differences in physical appearance, substantiating the idea that there are a variety of human species. Traditionally, racial terms classify and stratify people by appearance and inherently assign racial groups as inferior or superior in society (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Scientific data finds only one human species, making up only one human race. Evidence shows physical differences in human



appearance, including skin color, are a result of human migration patterns and adaptations to the environment (Jablonski 2012). Nonetheless, people use physical characteristics to identify, relate to, and interact with one another.

Ethnicity refers to the cultural characteristics related to ancestry and heritage. Ethnicity describes shared culture, such as group practices, values, and beliefs (Griffiths et al. 2015). People who identify with an ethnic group share common cultural characteristics (i.e., nationality, history, language, religion, etc.). Ethnic groups select rituals, customs, ceremonies, and other traditions to help preserve shared heritage (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Lifestyle requirements and other identity characteristics, such as geography and region, influence how we adapt our ethnic behaviors to fit the context or setting in which we live. Culture is also key in determining how human bodies grow and develop, such as food preferences and diet, and cultural traditions promote certain activities and abilities, including physical well-being and sport (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Someone of Mexican descent living in Central California who is a college professor will project different ethnic behaviors than someone of the same ethnic culture who is a housekeeper in Las Vegas, Nevada. Differences in profession, social class, and region will influence each person's lifestyle, physical composition, and health. However, both may identify and affiliate themselves as Mexican.

Not all people see themselves as belonging to an ethnic group or view ethnic heritage as necessary to their identity. People who do not identify with an ethnic identity either have no distinct cultural background because their ancestors come from a variety of cultural groups and offspring have not maintained a specific culture, instead have a blended culture, or they lack awareness about their ethnic heritage (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). It may be difficult for some people to feel a sense of solidarity or association with any specific ethnic group because they do not know where their cultural practices originated and how their cultural behaviors have adapted over time. What is your ethnicity? Is your ethnic heritage very important, somewhat important, or not necessary in defining who you are? Why?

Race and ethnic identity, like other cultural characteristics, influence social status or position in society. **Minority groups** are people who receive unequal treatment and discrimination based on social categories such as age, gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity, religious beliefs, or socioeconomic class. Minority groups are not necessarily numerical minorities (Griffith et al. 2015). For example, a large group of people may be a minority group because they lack social power. The physical and cultural traits of minority groups "are held in low esteem by the dominant or majority group, which treats them unfairly" (Henslin 2011:217). The dominant group has higher power and status in society and receives greater privileges. As a result, the dominant group uses its position to discriminate against those who are different. White, middle-class, Protestant people of northern European descent represent the dominant group in the United States (Doane 2005). Minority groups can garner power by expanding political boundaries or through expanded migration. However, neither of these efforts occurs with ease and requires societal support from minority and dominant group members. The loss of power among dominant groups threatens not only their authority over other groups but also the privileges and way of life established by the majority.



There are seven **patterns of intergroup relations** between dominant and minority groups, influencing not only the racial and ethnic identity of people but also the opportunities and barriers each will experience through social interactions. Maladaptive contacts and exchanges include genocide, population transfer, internal colonialism, and segregation. **Genocide** attempts to destroy a group of people because of their race or ethnicity. “Labeling the targeted group as inferior or even less than fully human facilitates genocide” (Henslin 2011:225). **Population transfer** moves or expels a minority group through direct or indirect transfer. Indirect transfer forces people to leave by making living conditions unbearable, whereas direct transfer literally expels minorities by force.

Another form of rejection by the dominant group is a type of colonialism. **Internal colonialism** refers to a country’s dominant group exploiting the minority group for economic advantage. Internal colonialism generally accompanies segregation (Henslin 2011). In **segregation**, minority groups live physically separate from the dominant group by law.

Three adaptive intergroup relations include assimilation, multiculturalism, and pluralism. The pattern of **assimilation** is the process by which a minority group assumes the attitudes and language of the dominant or mainstream culture. An individual or group gives up its identity by taking on the characteristics of the dominant culture (Griffiths et al. 2015). When minorities assimilate by force into dominant ideologies and practices, they can no longer practice their own religion, speak their own language, or follow their own customs. In permissible assimilation, minority groups adopt the dominant culture in their own way and at their own speed (Henslin 2011).



Image by [mentatdgt](#) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

Multiculturalism is the most accepting intergroup relationship between dominant and minority groups. Multiculturalism or pluralism encourages variation and diversity. Multiculturalism promotes affirmation and practice of ethnic traditions while socializing individuals into the dominant culture (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). This model works well in diverse societies comprised of a variety of cultural groups and a political system supporting freedom of expression. **Pluralism** is a mixture of cultures where each retains its own identity (Griffiths et al. 2015). Under pluralism, groups

exist separately and equally while working together, such as through economic interdependence, where each group fills a different societal niche and then exchanges activities



or services for the sustainability and survival of all. Both the multicultural and pluralism models stress interactions and contributions to their society by all ethnic groups.

REDUCING ETHNIC CONFLICT

Research three online sources on methods and approaches to reducing ethnic conflict such as the following:

- *The Path to Ending Ethnic Conflicts* by Stefan Wolff
https://www.ted.com/talks/stefan_wolff_the_path_to_ending_ethnic_conflicts
1. What is your reaction or feelings about the suggestions or ideas for ending ethnic conflicts presented in the sources you identified?
 2. Why does type of leadership, approaches to diplomacy, and collective or organizational design matter in reducing ethnic conflicts?
 3. What is the most important idea from the sources you identified as they relate to peacekeeping and multiculturalism?

Race reflects a social stigma or marker of superiority (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). When discrimination centers on race, it is **racism**. There are two types of racial discrimination: individual and institutional. **Individual discrimination** is “unfair treatment directed against someone” (Henslin 2011:218). Whereas, **institutional discrimination** is a negative systematic treatment of individuals by society through education, government, economy, health care, etc. According to Perry (2000), when people focus on racial-ethnic differences, they engage in the process of identity formation through structural and institutional norms. As a result, racial-ethnic identity conforms to normative perceptions people have of race and ethnicity, reinforcing the structural order without challenging the socio-cultural arrangement of society. Maintaining racial-ethnic norms reinforces differences, creates tension, and disputes between racial-ethnic groups, sustaining the status quo and reasserting the dominant group's position and hierarchy in society.

Upon the establishment of the United States, white legislators and leaders limited the roles of racial minorities and made them subordinate to those of white Europeans (Konradi and Schmidt 2004). This structure systematically created governmental and social disadvantages for minority groups and people of color. Today, companies continue to locate toxic waste dumps disproportionately in areas with nonwhite populations (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). It has taken over 200 years to ensure civil rights and equal treatment of all people in the United States; however, discriminatory practices continue because of policies, precedents, and practices historically embedded in U.S. institutions and individuals acting based on ideas of racial stereotypes. Think about the differences people have in employment qualifications, compensation, obtaining home loans, or getting into college. What racial and ethnic stereotypes persist about different racial and ethnic groups in these areas of life? Whites in the United States infrequently experience racial discrimination, making them unaware of the importance of race in their own and others' thinking in comparison to people of color or ethnic minorities (Konradi and Schmidt 2004). Many argue that racial discrimination is outdated and are uncomfortable with the blame, guilt, and accountability of individual acts and



institutional discrimination. By paying no attention to race, people think racial equality is an act of **color blindness**, and it will eliminate racist atmospheres (Konradi and Schmidt 2004). They do not realize that the experience of not “seeing” race itself is **racial privilege**. Research shows that the distribution of resources and opportunities is not equal among racial and ethnic categories. White groups do better than other groups, and Blacks are predominantly among the underclass (Konradi and Schmidt 2004). Regardless of social perception, in reality, there are institutional and cultural differences in government, education, criminal justice, and media, and racial-ethnic minorities received subordinate roles and treatment in society.

Religion and Belief Systems

The concept of a higher power or spiritual truth is a cultural universal. Like ethnicity, religion is the basis of identity and solidarity (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). People’s beliefs and faith support their values, norms, and practices. Individual faith influences one’s extrinsic motivation and behaviors, including treatment of others.

Religion is malleable and adaptive, for it changes and adapts within cultural and social contexts. Human groups have diverse beliefs and different functions of their faith and religion. Historically, religion has driven both social union and division (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). When religious groups unite, they can be a strong mobilizing force; however, when they divide, they can work to destroy each other.



Image by Pixabay is licensed under [CC0 1.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

Religion may be formal or informal (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Someone who is a member of an organized religious group, attends religious services, and practices rituals is a participant in **formal or institutional religion**. Whereas, someone participating in **informal religion** may or may not be a member of an organized religious group, and may experience a communal spirit, solidarity, and togetherness through shared experience. Informal religion may occur when we participate as members of a team or during a group excursion, such as a camp.

Religion is a vehicle for guiding values, beliefs, norms, and practices. People learn religion through socialization. The meaning and structure of religion control lives through sanctions, rewards, and punishments. Religion prescribes a code of ethics to guide behavior (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). One who abides by religious teachings receives rewards such as the afterlife, and one who contradicts its instruction accepts punishment, including damnation. People engage in religion and religious practices because they think it works (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). The connection between religious faith and emotion sustains belief, playing a strong role in personal and social identity. What formal or informal religious experiences have you encountered during your life? How does your faith and spirituality conform or deviate from your family of origin and friends?



Social Class

A person's **socio-economic status** influences their personal and social identity. In society, we rank individuals on their wealth, power, and prestige (Weber [1968] 1978). The calculation of **wealth** is the addition of one's income and assets minus their debts. The **net worth** of a person is wealth, whereas income from work and investments is the resources a person has available to access. **Power** is the ability to influence others directly or indirectly, and prestige is the esteem or respect associated with social status (Carl 2013). This **social stratification system** or ranking creates inequality in society and determines one's social position in areas such as income, education, and occupation.

Multiple factors influence social standing; however, people often assume hard work and effort lead to a high status and wealth. Socialization reinforces the ideology that social stratification is a result of personal effort or merit (Carl 2013). The concept of **meritocracy** is a social ideal or value, but no society exists where the determination of social rank is purely on merit. Inheritance alone shows that social standing is not always individually earned. Some people have to put little to no effort to inherit social status and wealth. Additionally, societies operating under a caste system where birth determines lifelong status undermine meritocracy. Caste systems function on the structure that someone born into a low-status group remains low status regardless of their accomplishments, and those born into high-status groups stay high status (Henslin 2011). The caste system reinforces ascribed status rather than achieved status to ensure the sustainment of multiple roles and occupations in society.

In modern societies, there is evidence of merit-based standing in academics and job performance, but other factors, such as age, disability, gender, race, and region, influence life's opportunities and challenges for obtaining social standing. A significant flaw of meritocracy is how society measures social contributions. Janitorial and custodial work is necessary in society to reduce illness and manage waste just as much as surgery is to keep people healthy and alive, but surgeons receive greater rewards than janitors do for their contributions.

Marx and Engels (1967) suggested there is a social class division between the capitalists who control the means of production and the workers. In 1985, Erik Wright interjected that people can occupy contradictory class positions throughout their lifetime. People who have occupied various class positions (e.g., bookkeeper to manager to chief operating officer) relate to the experiences of others in those positions, and as a result, may feel internal conflict in handling situations between positions or favoring one over another. Late in the twentieth century, Joseph Kahl and Dennis Gilbert (1992) updated the theoretical perspective of Max Weber by developing a six-tier model portraying the United States class structure, including underclass, working-poor, working, lower middle, upper middle, and capitalists. The social class model depicts the distribution of property, prestige, and power in society based on income and education.

Each class lifestyle requires a certain level of wealth to acquire the material necessities and comforts of life (Henslin 2011). The correlation between the standard of living and quality of life



or life chances (i.e., opportunities and barriers) influences one's ability to afford food, shelter, clothing, healthcare, other basic needs, and luxury items. A person's standards of living, including income, employment, class, and housing, affect their cultural identity.

Social class serves as a marker or indication of resources. These markers are noticeable in the behaviors, customs, and norms of each stratified group (Carl 2013). People living in impoverished communities have different cultural norms and practices compared to those with middle incomes or families of wealth. For example, the urban poor often sleep on cardboard boxes on the ground or on sidewalks and feed themselves by begging, scavenging, and raiding garbage (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Middle-income and wealth families tend to sleep in housing structures and nourish themselves with food from supermarkets or restaurants.



Image by [Sergio Omassi](#) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

Language and fashion also vary among these classes because of educational attainment, employment, and income. People will use language like “white trash” or “welfare mom” to marginalize people in the lower class and use distinguished labels to identify the upper class, such as “noble” and “elite.” Sometimes people often engage in conspicuous consumption or purchase and use certain products (e.g., buy a luxury car or jewelry) to make a social statement about their status (Henslin 2011). Nonetheless, the experience of poor people is very different in comparison to

others in the upper and middle classes, and the lives of people within each social class may vary based on their position within other social categories, including age, disability, gender, race, region, and religion.

Similar to people, nations are also stratified. The most extreme social class differences are between the wealthiest in industrialized countries and the poorest in the least developed nations (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). The most industrialized or modern countries have the greatest property and wealth. Most industrialized nations are leaders in technology and progress, allowing them to dominate, control, and access global resources. Industrializing nations have much lower incomes and standards of living than those living in most industrialized nations (Henslin 2011). The least industrialized nations are not modern, and people living in these nations tend to be impoverished and live on farms and in villages.



HIDDEN RULES OF CLASS

Could you survive in poverty, middle class, or wealth? In her book *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (2005), Dr. Ruby K Payne presents lists of survival skills needed by different societal classes. Test your skills by answering the following questions:

Could you survive in . . . (mark all that apply)

POVERTY

- ☐ find the best rummage sales.
- ☐ locate grocery stores' garbage bins that have thrown away food.
- ☐ bail someone out of jail.
- ☐ get a gun, even if I have a police record.
- ☐ keep my clothes from being stolen at the laundromat.
- ☐ sniff out problems in a used car.
- ☐ live without a checking account.
- ☐ manage without electricity and a phone.
- ☐ entertain friends with just my personality and stories.
- ☐ get by when I don't have money to pay the bills.
- ☐ move in half a day.
- ☐ get and use food stamps.
- ☐ find free medical clinics.
- ☐ get around without a car.
- ☐ use a knife as scissors.

MIDDLE CLASS know how to....

- ☐ get my children into Little League, piano lessons, and soccer.
- ☐ set a table properly.
- ☐ find stores that sell the clothing brands my family wears.
- ☐ use a credit card, checking and /or savings account.
- ☐ evaluate insurance: life, disability, 20/80 medical, homeowners, and personal-property.
- ☐ talk to my children about going to college.
- ☐ get the best interest rate on my car loan.
- ☐ help my children with homework and don't hesitate to make a call if I need more information.

WEALTH, check if you....

- ☐ can read a menu in French, English and another language.
- ☐ have favorite restaurants in different countries around the world.
- ☐ know how to hire a professional decorator to help decorate your home during the holidays.
- ☐ can name your preferred financial advisor, lawyer, designer, hairdresser, or domestic-employment service.
- ☐ have at least two homes that are staffed and maintained.
- ☐ know how to ensure confidentiality and loyalty with domestic staff.
- ☐ use two or three "screens" that keep people whom you don't wish to see away from you
- ☐ fly in your own plane, the company plane, or the Concorde.
- ☐ know how to enroll your children in the preferred private schools.
- ☐ are on the boards of at least two charities.
- ☐ know the hidden rules of the Junior League.
- ☐ know how to read a corporate balance sheet and analyze your own financial statements.
- ☐ support or buy the work of a particular artist.



IDENTITY TODAY

All forms of media and technology teach culture, including values, norms, language, and behaviors by providing information about activities and events of social significance (Griffiths et al. 2015). Media and technology socialize us to think and act within socio-cultural appropriate norms and accepted practices. Watching and listening to people act and behave through media and technology shows the influence this social institution has, like family, peers, school, and work, on teaching social norms, values, and beliefs.

Technological innovations and advancements have influenced social interactions and communication patterns in the twenty-first century, creating new social constructions of reality. These changes, particularly in information technology, have led to further segmentation of society based on user-participant affinity groups (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). The internet and web-based applications link people together, transcending local, state, and national boundaries, centered on common interests. People who share interests, ideas, values, beliefs, and practices can connect through web-based and virtual worlds. These shared interests create solidarity among user-participants while disengaging them from others with differing or opposing interests. **Cybersocial interactions** have reinforced affinity groups, creating attitudes and behaviors that strongly encourage tribalism or loyalty to the social group and indifference to others.

Even though there are so many media, news, and information outlets available online, they are homogenous and tell the same stories using the same sources, delivering the same message (McManus 1995). Regardless of the news or information outlets one accesses, the coverage of events is predominantly the same, with differences focusing on commentary, perspective, and analysis. Shoemaker and Vos (2009) found that this practice allows outlets to serve as **gatekeepers** by shaping stories and messages into mass media-appropriate forms and reducing them to a manageable amount for the audience. Fragmentation of stories and messages occurs solely on ideology related to events rather than actual coverage of accounts, reports, or news.

People no longer form and take on identity solely from face-to-face interactions; they also construct themselves from online communication and cybersocial interactions. Approximately 73 percent of adults engage in some online social networking, extending their cultural identity to virtual space and time (Pew Research Center 2011). Technological innovations and advancements have even led some people to reconstruct a new online identity different from the one they have in face-to-face contexts. Both identities and realities are real to the people who construct and create them, as they are the cultural creators of their personas.

Technology, like other resources in society, creates inequality among social groups (Griffiths et al. 2015). People with greater access to resources can purchase and use online services and applications. Privilege access to technological innovations and advancements depends on one's age, family, education, ethnicity, gender, profession, race, and social class (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Signs of technological stratification are visible in the increasing knowledge gap for those with less access to information technology. People with exposure to technology gain further



proficiency that makes them more marketable and employable in modern society (Griffiths et al. 2015). Inflation of the knowledge gap results from the lack of technological infrastructure among races, classes, and geographic areas, creating a digital divide between those who have internet access and those who do not.

NATIVE ANTHROPOLOGIST

Native anthropologists study their own culture. For this project, you will explore your own culture by answering the questions below. Your response to each question must be a minimum of one paragraph consisting of 3-5 sentences, typed, and in ASA format (i.e., paragraphs indented and double-spaced). You must include parenthetical citations if you ask or interview someone in your family or kin group to help you understand and answer any one of the questions. Here is a helpful link with information on citing interviews in ASA format:

<https://libguides.tru.ca/c.php?g=194012&p=1277266>.

PART 1

1. In examining your background and heritage, what traditions or rituals do you practice regularly? To what extent are traditional cultural group beliefs still held by individuals within the community? To what extent and in what areas has your ethnic or traditional culture changed in comparison to your ancestors?
2. What major stereotypes do you have about other cultural groups based on age, gender, sex, sexuality, race, ethnicity, region, and social class?
3. Reflecting on your cultural background, how do you define family?
4. What is the hierarchy of authority in your family?
5. What do you think are the functions and obligations of the family as a large social unit to individual family members? To school? To work? To social events?
6. What do you think are the rights and responsibilities of each family member? For example, do children have an obligation to work and help the family?
7. In your culture, what stage of life is most valued?
8. What behaviors are appropriate or unacceptable for children of various ages? How might these conflict with behaviors taught or encouraged in the school, work, or by other social groups?
9. How does your cultural group compute age? What commemoration is recognized or celebrated, if any (i.e., birthdays, anniversaries, etc.)?



NATIVE ANTHROPOLOGIST CONT.**PART 2**

1. Considering your cultural heritage, what roles within a group are available to whom and how are they acquired?
2. Are there class or status differences in the expectations of roles within your culture?
3. Do particular roles have positive or malevolent characteristics?
4. Is language competence a requirement or qualification for family or cultural group membership?
5. How do people greet each other?
6. How is deference or respect shown?
7. How are insults expressed?
8. Who may disagree with whom in the cultural group? Under what circumstances? Are mitigating forms used?
9. Which cultural traditions or rituals are written and how widespread is cultural knowledge found in written forms?
10. What roles, attitudes, or personality traits are associated with particular ways of speaking among the cultural group?
11. What is the appropriate decorum or manners among your cultural group?
12. What counts as discipline in terms of your culture, and what doesn't? What is its importance and value?
13. Who is responsible and how is blame ascribed if a child misbehaves?
14. Do means of social control vary with recognized stages in the life cycle, membership in various social categories (i.e., gender, region, class, etc.), or according to setting or offense?
15. What is the role of language in social control? What is the significance of using the first vs. the second language?

PART 3

1. What is considered sacred (religious) and what secular (non-religious)?
2. What religious roles and authority are recognized in the community?
3. What should an outsider not know, or not acknowledge knowing about your religion or culture?
4. Are there any external signs of participation in religious rituals (e.g., ashes, dress, marking)?
5. Are dietary restrictions to be observed including fasting on particular occasions?
6. Are there any prescribed religious procedures or forms of participation if there is a death in the family?
7. What taboos are associated with death and the dead?
8. Who or what is believed to cause illness or death (e.g., biological vs. supernatural or other causes)?
9. Who or what is responsible for treating or curing illness?
10. Reflecting on your culture, what foods are typical or favorites? What are taboo?
11. What rules are observed during meals regarding age and sex roles within the family, the order of serving, seating, utensils used, and appropriate verbal formulas (e.g., how, and if, one may request, refuse, or thank)?
12. What social obligations are there with regard to food giving, preparation, reciprocity, and honoring people?
13. What relation does food have to health? What medicinal uses are made of food, or categories of food?
14. What are the taboos or prescriptions associated with the handling, offering, or discarding of food?
15. What clothing is common or typical among your cultural group? What is worn for special occasions?
16. What significance does dress have for group identity?
17. How does dress differ for age, sex, and social class? What restrictions are imposed for modesty (e.g., can girls wear pants, wear shorts, or shower in the gym)?
18. What is the concept of beauty, or attractiveness in the culture? What characteristics are most valued?
19. What constitutes a compliment of beauty or attractiveness in your culture (e.g., in traditional Latin American culture, telling a woman she is getting fat is a compliment)?
20. Does the color of dress have symbolic significance (e.g., black or white for mourning, celebrations, etc.)?



NATIVE ANTHROPOLOGIST CONT.**PART 4**

1. In your culture, what individuals and events in history are a source of pride for the group?
2. How is knowledge of the group's history preserved? How and in what ways is it passed on to new generations (e.g., writings, aphorisms or opinions, proverbs or sayings)?
3. Do any ceremonies or festive activities re-enact historical events?
4. Among your cultural group, what holidays and celebrations are observed? What is their purpose? What cultural values do they intend to inculcate?
5. What aspects of socialization/enculturation do holidays and celebrations observed further?
6. In your culture, what is the purpose of education?
7. What methods for teaching and learning are used at home (e.g., modeling and imitation, didactic stories and proverbs, direct verbal instruction)?
8. What is the role of language in learning and teaching?
9. How many years is it considered 'normal' for children to go to school?
10. Are there different expectations with respect to different groups (e.g., boys vs. girls)? In different subjects?
11. Considering your culture, what kinds of work are prestigious and why?
12. Why is work valued (e.g., financial gain, group welfare, individual satisfaction, promotes group cohesiveness, fulfillment or creation of obligations, position in the community, etc.)?

PART 5

1. How and to what extent may approval or disapproval be expressed in you culture?
2. What defines the concepts of successful among your cultural group?
3. To what extent is it possible or proper for an individual to express personal vs. group goals?
4. What beliefs are held regarding luck and fate?
5. What significance does adherence to traditional culture have for individual success or achievement?
6. What are the perceptions on the acquisition of dominant group culture have on success or achievement?
7. Do parents expect and desire assimilation of children to the dominant culture as a result of education and the acquisition of language?
8. Are the attitudes of the cultural community the same as or different from those of cultural leaders?
9. Among your cultural group, what beliefs or values are associated with concepts of time? How important is punctuality, speed, patience, etc.?
10. Are particular behavioral prescriptions or taboos associated with the seasons?
11. Is there a seasonal organization of work or other activities?
12. How do individuals organize themselves spatially in groups during cultural events, activities, or gatherings (e.g., in rows, circles, around tables, on the floor, in the middle of the room, etc.)?
13. What is the spatial organization of the home in your culture (e.g., particular activities in various areas of the home, areas allotted to children, or open to children,)?
14. What geo-spatial concepts, understandings, and beliefs (e.g., cardinal directions, heaven, hell, sun, moon, stars, natural phenomena, etc.) exist among the cultural group or are known to individuals?
15. Are particular behavioral prescriptions or taboos associated with geo-spatial concepts, understandings, and beliefs? What sanctions are there against individuals violating restrictions or prescriptions?
16. Which animals are valued in your culture, and for what reasons?
17. Which animals are considered appropriate as pets and which are inappropriate? Why?
18. Are particular behavioral prescriptions or taboos associated with particular animals?
19. Are any animals of religious significance? Of historical importance?
20. What forms of art and music are most highly valued?
21. What art medium and musical instruments are traditionally used?
22. Are there any behavioral prescriptions or taboos related to art and music (e.g., both sexes sing, play a particular instrument, paint or photograph nude images, etc.)?



REFERENCES

- American Museum of Natural History. 2018. *GRACE California Central Valley*. American Museum of Natural History Curriculum Collections. Retrieved June 14, 2018 (<https://www.amnh.org/explore/curriculum-collections/grace/grace-tracking-water-from-space/california-central-valley>).
- American Psychological Association (APA). 2008. "Answers to Your Questions: For a Better Understanding of Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality." Washington, DC. Retrieved June 13, 2018 (<http://www.apa.org/topics/sexuality/orientation.aspx>).
- Biddiss, Michael D. 1970. *Father of Racist Ideology: Social and Political Thought of Count Gobineau*. New York: Weybright and Talley, Inc.
- Black, Les and John Solomos. 2000. *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Carl, John D. 2013. *Think Social Problems*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Cockerham, William C. 2014. *Sociology of Mental Disorder*. 9th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Darwin, Charles. 1859. *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. London: John Murray. Retrieved June 18, 2018 (<http://darwin-online.org.uk/content/frameset?itemID=F373&viewtype=text&pageseq=1>).
- Data USA. 2018. *Beverly Hills, CA*. Deloitte, Datawheel, and Collective Learning. Retrieved June 14, 2018 (<https://datausa.io/profile/geo/beverly-hills-ca/>).
- Doane, Ashley W. 2016. "Dominant Group Ethnic Identity in the United States: The Role of 'Hidden' Ethnicity in Intergroup Relations." *The Sociological Quarterly*. 38(3):375-397.
- Energy Justice Network. 2018. *Environmental Justice/Environmental Racism*. Retrieved June 14, 2018 (<https://www.ejnet.org/ej/>).
- Giddens, Anthony, Mitchell Duneier, Richard P. Applebaum, and Deborah Carr. 2013. *Essentials of Sociology*. 4th ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Gilbert, Dennis, and Joseph A. Kahal. 1992. *American Class Structure*. 4th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Company.



- Goffman, Irving. 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Goodall, Heather. 2016. "Media's Influence on Gender Stereotypes." *Media Asia*. 39(3):160-163.
- Griffiths, Heather, Nathan Keirns, Eric Strayer, Suasn Cody-Rydzewsk, Gail Scaramuzzo, Tommy Sadler, Sally Vyain, Jeff Byer, and Faye Jones. 2015. *Introduction to Sociology 2e*. Houston, TX: OpenStax College.
- Hamermersh, Daniel. 2011. *Beauty Pays: Why Attractive People Are More Successful*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Henslin, James M. 2011. *Essentials of Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach*. 11th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Herdt, Gilbert. 1992. *Gay Culture in America: Essays from the Field*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Jablonski, Nina. 2012. *Living Color: The Biological and Social Meaning of Skin Color*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Judge, Timothy A. and Daniel M. Cable. 2004. "The Effect of Physical Height on Workplace Success and Income: Preliminary Test of a Theoretical Model." *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 89(3):428-441.
- Kelly, Stewart E. 2000. *Thinking Well: An Introduction to Critical Thinking*. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
- Konradi, Amanda and Martha Schmidt. 2004. *Reading Between the Lines: Toward an Understanding of Current Social Problems*. 3rd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Kottak, Conrad Phillip and Kathryn A. Kozaitis. 2012. *On Being Different: Diversity and Multiculturalism in the North American Mainstream*. 4th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
- Light, Donald, Suzanne Keller, and Craig Calhoun. 1997. *Sociology*. 7th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
- Margolis, Maxine L. 1984. *Mothers and Such: American Views of Women and How They Changed*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Margolis, Maxine L. 2000. *True to Her Nature: Changing Advice to American Women*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1967. *Communist Manifesto*. New York: Pantheon.



- McManus, John. 1995. "A Market-Based Model of News Production." *Communication Theory* 5:301–338.
- Parenti, Michael. 2006. *The Culture Struggle*. New York: Seven Stories Press.
- Parsons, Talcott. 1951. *The Social System*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Payne, Ruby K. 2005. *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. 4th ed. Highlands, TX: aha! Process Inc.
- Perry, Barbara. 2000. "Beyond Black and White." *Sociology of Crime, Law and Deviance*. 2:301–323.
- Pew Research Center. 2011. "Demographics of Internet Users." Pew Internet and American Life Project, May. Retrieved June 29, 2018 (<http://www.pewinternet.org/Trend-Data/Whos-Online.aspx>).
- Riley, Matilda White, Marilyn Johnson, and Anne Foner. 1972. *Aging and Society. Volume III, A Sociology of Age Stratification*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Sanday, Peggy R. 1974. Female Status in the Public Domain." Pp. 189–206 in *Woman, Culture, and Society* edited by Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. 1990. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Shoemaker, Pamela and Tim Vos. 2009. "Media Gatekeeping." Pp. 75–89 in *An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research* edited by D. Stacks and M. Salwen. New York: Routledge.
- Smithsonian Natural Museum of History. 2018. *What Does It Mean To Be Human?* Smithsonian Institution. Retrieved June 12, 2018 (<http://humanorigins.si.edu/evidence/genetics/one-species-living-worldwide>).
- Snyder, Mark. 1993. "Self-Fulfilling Stereotypes." Pp. 153–160 in *Down to Earth Sociology: Introductory Readings*, edited by James M. Henslin. New York: Free Press.
- Tran, Linda Diem and Ninez A. Ponce. 2017. "Who Gets Needed Mental Health Care? Use of Mental Health Services among Adults with Mental Need in California." Retrieved August 4, 2018 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5515380/>).



U.S. News and World Report. 2017. *Best Places to Live: New York City, NY*. U.S. News Services. Retrieved June 14, 2018 (<https://realestate.usnews.com/places/new-york/new-york-city>).

Weber, Max. 1978 [1968]. *Economy and Society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Wood, Julia T. 1994. "Gendered Media: The Influence of Media on Views of Gender." Pp. 231-244 in *Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender, and Culture* by Julia T. Wood. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.

Wright, Erik Olin. 1985. *Class*. London: Verso.

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Age Stratification	Life Course
Anticipatory Socialization	Meritocracy
Assimilation	Minority Groups
Collective Identity	Multiculturalism
Color Blind Racism	Net-Worth
Cultural Codes	Patterns Of Intergroup Relations
Cultural Identity	Pluralism
Cybersocial Interactions	Population Transfer
Dominant Regional Culture	Power
Ethnicity	Queer Theory
Fitness-Minded Culture	Race
Formal Religion	Racial Privilege
Gatekeepers	Racism
Gay Culture	Religion
Gender	Segregation
Gender Identity	Sex
Gender Inequality	Sexual Identity
Gender Socialization	Sexual Orientation
Gender Stratification	Sexuality
Genocide	Sick Role
Individual Discrimination	Social Stigma
Informal Religion	Social Stratification
Institutional Discrimination	Socio-Economic Status
Internal Colonialism	Wealth



MODULE 5: THE MULTICULTURAL WORLD

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the module, students will be able to:

1. understand the influence of globalization on culture and cultural identity
2. differentiate between the social patterns of cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization
3. explain the role of technological advancements in cultural creation and transmission
4. summarize the process for creating cultural awareness and building cultural intelligence
5. demonstrate methods and approaches for working with others in a culturally diverse society

GLOBALIZATION AND IDENTITY

Everyday production of culture centers on local and global influences (Giddens 1991). With the advancements in technology and communications, people are experiencing greater social forces in the construction of their cultural reality and identity. The boundaries of locality have expanded to global and virtual contexts that create complexities in understanding the creation, socialization, adaptation, and sustainability of culture.

Globalization is typically associated with the creation of world-spanning free markets and the global reach of capitalist systems resulting from technological advances (Back, Bennett, Edles, Gibson, Inglis, Jacobs, and Woodward 2012). However, globalization has the unintended consequences of connecting every person in the world. In this era, everyone's life connects to everyone else's life in both obvious and hidden ways (Albrow 1996). A food production shortage in the United States affects the overall economic and physical well-being and livelihoods of people throughout the world in an obvious way. Our hidden connections stem from the individuals who grow, produce, and transport the food people eat. It is easier for people to recognize the big picture or macrosociological influences we have on each other. Still, sometimes it is harder to recognize the role individuals have on each other across the globe.



Image by [Negative Space](#) is licensed under [CCO 1.0](#)

Globalization also influences our cultural identity and affinity groups. Technology allows us to eliminate communication boundaries and interact with each other on a global scale. Globalization lends itself to cultural **homogenization**, that is, the world becoming culturally similar (Back et al. 2012). However, the cultural similarities we now share center on capitalist enterprises, including fashion and fast food. Globalization has resulted in the worldwide spread



of capitalism (Back et al. 201). **Transnational corporations** or companies with locations throughout the world, like McDonald's, Coca-Cola, and Nike, dominate the global market with goods and services spreading and embedding their cultural artifacts on a global scale. These corporations increase the influence of global practices on people's lives, which sometimes result in economic and social consequences, including closing factories in one country and moving to another where costs and regulations are lower.

Along with people throughout the world becoming culturally similar, sociologists also recognize patterns of **cultural heterogenization** where aspects of our lives are becoming more complex and differentiated, resulting from globalization. Our social relationships and interactions have become unconstrained by geography (Back et al.). People are no longer restricted to spatial locales and can interact beyond time and space with those sharing common culture, language, or religion (Giddens 1990; Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). People can travel across the globe within hours, but also connect with others by phone or the Internet within seconds. These advancements in technology and communications alter what people perceive as close and far away (Back et al. 2012). Our social and cultural arrangements in an era of globalization are adapting and changing the way we think and act.

Today, people can form and live across national borders. Advances in transportation and communications give people the opportunity to affiliate with multiple countries as **transnationals**. At different times in their lives or different times of the year, people may live in two or more countries.

We are moving beyond local, state, and national identities to broader identities developing from our global interactions, forming **transnational communities**. A key cultural development has been the construction of **globality** or thinking of the whole earth as one place (Beck 2000). Social events like Earth Day and the World Cup of soccer are examples of globality. People associate and connect in ways that they identify. Today, people frame their thinking about who they are within global lenses of reference (Back et al. 2012). Even in our global and virtual interactions, people align themselves with the **affinity groups** relative to where they think they belong and will find acceptance. Think about your global and virtual friend and peer groups. How did you meet or connect? Why do you continue to interact? What value do you have in each other's lives even though you do not physically interact?



OUR ONLINE FUTURE

Research three online sources on how online interactions and social media influence human social life such as the following:

- *The Future of the Web May Not be Social* by Mitch Joel (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xh0obyhZPM8>)
1. What is the relationship between inputting information online and privacy?
 2. Do you think the web re-enforces narcissism? How does narcissistic behavior influence our connections to the social world and other people?
 3. Even if we choose NOT to participate or be part of the online universe, how does the behavior of other people online affect what the world knows about us?
 4. Should everything we do online be open and available to the public? Who should be able to view your browsing patterns, profile, photos, etc.?
 5. What rights do you think people should have in controlling their privacy online?

CULTURE TODAY

With the world in flux from globalization and technological advances, people are developing **multiple identities** apparent in their local and global linkages. Cultural identity is becoming increasingly contextual in the postmodern world, where people transform and adapt depending on time and place (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Social and cultural changes now adapt in response to single events or issues. The instant response and connections to others beyond time and place immediately impact our lives, and we have the technology to react quickly with our thoughts and actions.



Image by [Christina Morillo](#) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

Approximately two-thirds of American adults are online, connecting with others, working, studying, or learning (Griswold 2013). The increasing use of the Internet makes virtual worlds and cybersocial interactions powerful in constructing new social realities. Having a networked society allows anyone to be a cultural creator and develop an audience by sharing their thoughts, ideas, and work online. Amateurs are now **cultural creators** and can control the dissemination of their creations (Griswold 2013). Individuals now have the freedom to restrict or share cultural meaning and systems.

Postmodern culture and the new borderless world fragment traditional social connections into new cultural elements beyond place, time, and diversity without norms. People can now live within **global electronic cultural communities** and reject cultural meta-narratives (Griswold 2013). Postmodern culture also blurs history by rearranging and juxtaposing unconnected signs to produce new meanings. We find references to actual events in fictional culture and fictional events in non-fictional culture (Barker and Jane 2016). Many U.S. television dramas refer to



9/11 in episodes focusing on terrorists or terrorist activities. Additionally, U.S. social activities and fundraising events will highlight historical figures or icons. The blurring of non-fiction and fiction creates a new narrative or historical reality that people begin to associate with and recognize as actual or factual.

CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

1. How has globalization and technology changed culture and cultural tastes?
2. How have people harnessed these changes into cultural objects or real culture?
3. How do you envision the growth or transformation of receivers or the audience as participants in cultural production?
4. What cultural objects are threatened in the age of postmodern culture?

BUILDING CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

In a culturally diverse society, it is becoming increasingly important to be able to interact effectively with others. Our ability to communicate and interact with each other plays an integral role in the successful development of our relationships for personal and social prosperity. Building **cultural intelligence** requires active awareness of self, others, and context (Bucher 2008). Self-awareness requires an understanding of our cultural identity, including the intrinsic or extrinsic bias we have about others and the social categories of people. Cultural background greatly influences perception and understanding, and how we identify ourselves reflects on how we communicate and get along with others. It is easier to adjust and change our interactions if we can recognize our own uniqueness, broaden our perceptions, and respect others (Bucher 2008). We must be aware of our cultural identity, including any multiple or changing identities we take on in different contexts, as well as those we keep hidden or hide to avoid marginalization or recognition.



Image by [Min An](#) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

Active awareness of others requires us to use new **cultural lenses**. We must learn to recognize and appreciate commonalities in our culture, not just differences. This practice develops understanding of each other's divergent needs, values, behaviors, interactions, and approach to teamwork (Bucher 2008). Understanding others involves evaluating assumptions and cultural truths. Cultural lens filters perceptions of others and conditions us to view the world and others in one way, closing our eyes to what we have to offer or complement

each other (Bucher 2008). Active awareness of others broadens one's sociological imagination to see the world and others through a different lens and understand diverse perspectives that ultimately help us interact and work together effectively.



Today's workplace requires us to have a **global consciousness** that encompasses awareness, understanding, and skills to work with people of diverse cultures (Bucher 2008). Working with diverse groups involves us learning about other cultures to manage complex and uncertain social situations and contexts. What may be culturally appropriate or specific in one setting may not apply in another. We must develop a cultural understanding of not only differences and similarities, but also those of cultural significance, to identify which interactions fit certain situations or settings.

CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE RESOURCES

1. How do you develop collaboration among people with different backgrounds and experiences?
2. What role does power play in our ability to collaborate with others and develop deep levels of understanding?
3. How might power structures be created when one group tries to provide aid to another?
4. Research the Cultural Intelligence Center (<https://culturalq.com/>) and online videos on the topic of building cultural intelligence such as *Cultural Intelligence: A New Way of Thinking* by Jeff Thomas (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3S76gAKp6Q&feature=youtu.be>). Describe what information and free services are available online to help people improve their knowledge and communication skills with people of different cultural backgrounds and experiences.
5. Provide examples of how you will apply the following skills to develop global consciousness:
 - Minimize culture shock
 - Recognize ethnocentrism
 - Practice cultural relativism
 - Develop multiple consciousness
 - Step outside your comfort zone

As we come into contact with diverse people, one of our most significant challenges will be managing **cross-cultural conflict**. When people have opposing cultural values, beliefs, norms, or practices, they tend to create a mindset of division or the “us vs. them” perspective. This act of loyalty to one side or another displays tribalism and creates an ethnocentric and scapegoating environment where people judge and blame each other for any issues or problems. Everyone attaches some importance to what one values and believes. As a result, people from different cultures might attach greater or lesser importance to family and work. Suppose people are arguing over the roles and commitment of women and men in the family and workplace. In that case, their personal values and beliefs are likely to influence their willingness to compromise or listen to one another. Learning to manage conflict among people from different cultural backgrounds increases our ability to build trust, respect all parties, deal with people's behaviors, and assess success (Bucher 2008). How we deal with conflict influences productive or destructive results for others and ourselves.

Self-assessment is key to managing cross-cultural conflicts. Having everyone involved in the conflict assess themselves first and recognize their **cultural realities** (i.e., history and biography) will help individuals see where they may clash or conflict with others. If someone comes from the perspective that men should lead, their interactions with others will display women in low regard or subordinate positions to men. Recognizing our cultural reality will help us identify



how we might be stereotyping and treating others, and give us cause to adapt and avoid conflict with those with differing realities.

Some form of **cultural bias** is evident in everyone (Bucher 2008). Whether you have preferences based on gender, sexuality, disability, region, social class, or all social categories, they affect your thoughts and interactions with others. Many people believe women are nurturers and are responsible for child rearing, so they do not believe men should get custody of the children when a family gets a divorce. Bias serves as the foundation for stereotyping and prejudice (Bucher 2008). Our ingrained ideas about others shape us, and we must unlearn them to reduce or manage bias. Removing biased perspectives requires **resocialization** through an ongoing conscious effort in recognizing our bias, then making a diligent effort to learn about others to dispel fiction from fact. Dealing with bias commands personal growth, and the biggest obstacles are our fears and complacency to change.

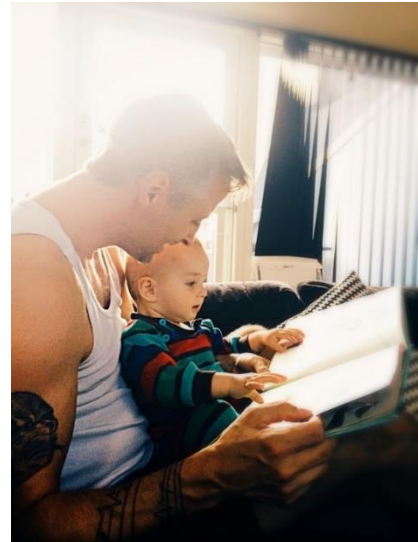


Image by [Rene Asmussen](#) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

Additionally, power structures and stratification emerge in cross-cultural conflicts—the **dynamics of power** impact each of us (Bucher 2008). Our assumptions and interactions with each other are a result of our position and power in a particular context or setting. The social roles and categories we each fall into affect how and when we respond to each other. A Hispanic, female, college professor has the position and authority to speak and control conflicts among people in her classroom, but may have to show deference and humility when conflict arises at the Catholic Church she attends. The professor's position in society is contextual, and in some situations, she has the privileges of power, but in others, she may be marginalized or disregarded.

Power affects how others view, relate to, and interact with us (Bucher 2008). Power comes with the ability to change, and when you have power, you can invoke change. For example, the racial majority in the United States holds more economic, political, and social power than other groups in the nation. The dominant group's power in the United States allows the group to define social and cultural norms as well as condemn or contest opposing views and perspectives. This group has consistently argued the reality of "reverse racism," even though racism is the practice of the dominant race benefiting from the oppression of others. Because the dominant group has felt prejudice and discrimination by others, they want to control the narrative and use their power to create a reality that further benefits their race by calling thoughts and actions against the group "reverse racism."

However, when you are powerless, you may not have or be allowed to participate or have a voice. Think about when you are communicating with someone who has more power than you. What do your tone, word choice, and body language project? So now imagine you are the person in a position of power because of your age, gender, race, or other social category. What privilege does your position give you? Power implies authority, respect, significance, and value,



so those of us who do not have a social position of power in a time of conflict may feel and receive treatment that reinforces our lack of authority, disrespect, insignificance, and devaluation. Therefore, power reinforces social exclusion of some, inflating cross-cultural conflict (Ryle 2008). We must assess our cultural and social power as well as that of others we interact with to develop an inclusive environment that builds on respect and understanding to deal with conflicts more effectively.

Communication is essential when confronted with cross-cultural conflict (Bucher 2008). Conflicts escalate from our inability to express our cultural realities or interact appropriately in diverse settings. To relate to each other with empathy and understanding, we must learn to employ positive words, phrases, and body language. Rather than engaging in negative words to take sides (e.g., “Tell your side of the problem” or “How did that affect you?”), Use positive words that describe an experience or feeling. Use open-ended questions that focus on the situation or concern (e.g., “Could you explain to be sure everyone understands?” or “Explain how this is important and what needs to be different”) in your communications with others (Ryle 2008). In addition, our body language expresses our emotions and feelings to others. People can recognize sadness, fear, and disgust through the expressions and movements we make. It is important to project expressions, postures, and positions that are open and inviting, even when we feel different or uncomfortable around others. Remember, words and body language have meaning and set the tone or atmosphere in our interactions with others. The words and physical expressions we choose either inflate or de-escalate cross-cultural conflicts.

The act of **reframing** or rephrasing communications is also helpful in managing conflicts between diverse people. Reframing requires active listening skills and patience to translate negative and value-laden statements into neutral statements that focus on the actual issue or concern. This form of transformative mediation integrates neutral language that focuses on changing the message delivery, syntax, or working, meaning, and context or situation to resolve destructive conflict. For example, reframe “That’s a stupid idea” to “I hear you would like to consider all possible options.” Conversely, reframe a direct verbal attack, “She lied! Why do you want to be friends with her?” to “I’m hearing that confidentiality and trust are important to you.” There are four steps to reframing: 1) actively listen to the statement; 2) identify the feelings, message, and interests in communications; 3) remove toxic language; and 4) re-state the issue or concern (Ryle 2008). These tips for resolving conflict help people hear the underlying interests and cultural realities.



ETHNOGRAPHY

PART 1

1. Interview another student in class. Record the student's responses to the following:

CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS

- What are typical foods served in the culture?
- Are there any typical styles of dress?
- What do people do for recreation?
- How is space used (e.g., How close should two people who are social acquaintances stand next to one another when they are having a conversation?)
- How is public space used? For example, do people tend to "hang out" on the street, or are they in public because they are going from one place to the next?

STANDARD BEHAVIORS

- How do people greet one another?
- Describe how a significant holiday is celebrated.
- How would a visitor be welcomed into a family member's home?
- What are the norms around weddings? Births? Deaths?

SPECIFIC BELIEFS

- How important is hierarchy or social status?
- How are gender roles perceived?
- How do people view obligations toward one another?
- What personal activities are seen as public? What activities are seen as private?
- What are the cultural attitudes toward aging and the elderly?

ENTRENCHED IDEOLOGIES

- How important is the individual in the culture? How important is the group?
- How is time understood and measured? (e.g., How late can you be to class, work, family event, or appointment before you are considered rude?)
- Is change considered positive or negative?
- What are the criteria for individual success?
- What is the relationship between humans and nature? (e.g., Do humans dominate nature? does nature dominate humans? Do the two live in harmony?)
- What is considered humorous or funny?
- How do individuals "know" things? (e.g., Are people encouraged to question things? Are they encouraged to master accepted wisdom?)
- Are people encouraged to be more action-oriented (i.e., doers) or to be contemplative (i.e., thinkers)?
- What is the role of luck in people's lives?
- How is divine power or spirituality viewed?



ETHNOGRAPHY CONT.

PART 2

1. Exchange the photos each of you took in the exercise.
2. Next visit the website *Dollar Street*: <https://goo.gl/Rb8WUJ>
3. Compare the visual ethnography **photos** with other people throughout the world.
4. In complete sentences, explain the differences and similarities based on income and country. Specifically, describe what the **poorest conditions** are for each item as well as the **richest conditions** and what similarities and/or differences exist in **comparison** to the student photos.

PART 3

Write a paper summarizing the ethnographic data you collected and examined. Your paper must include a description and analysis of the following:

- Thesis statement and introductory paragraph (3-5 sentences) about the student you studied and learned about for this project and methods used to gather data.
- A summary of the ethnography interview containing a minimum of five paragraphs (3-5 sentences each) with first level headings entitled cultural expressions, standard behaviors, specific beliefs, and entrenched ideologies.
- A comparison of visual ethnography photos with other people throughout the world using the *Dollar Street* website (<https://www.gapminder.org/dollar-street/matrix>). Write a minimum of 10 paragraphs (3-5 sentences each) discussing the poorest and richest conditions of the archived photos on the website, and explain the similarities and/or differences to the 22 photos shared by your study subject.
- Concluding paragraph (3-5 sentences) telling what you learned by completing an ethnography project and the significance to understanding cultural sociology.

Type and double-space project papers with paragraphs comprised of three to five sentences in length and first level headers (left justified, all caps) as appropriate. Do not write your paper in one block paragraph. Include parenthetical and complete reference citations in ASA format as appropriate.

REFERENCES

- Albrow, Martin. 1996. *The Global Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Back, Les, Andy Bennett, Laura Desfor Edles, Margaret Gibson, David Inglis, Ronald Joacobs, and Ian Woodward. 2012. *Cultural Sociology: An Introduction*. United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Barker, Chris and Emma A. Jane. 2016. *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. 5th ed. Los Angeles: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Beck, U. 2000. *What Is Globalization?* Cambridge: Polity Press.



- Bucher, Richard. D. 2008. *Building Cultural Intelligence (CQ): 9 Megaskills*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Griswold, Wendy. 2013. *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Kottak, Conrad Phillip and Kathryn A. Kozaitis. 2012. *On Being Different: Diversity and Multiculturalism in the North American Mainstream*. 4th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
- Ryle, Jacqueline L. 2008. *All I Want is a Little Peace*. Fresno, CA: Central California Writers Press.

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Affinity Groups	Global Electronic Cultural Communities
Cross-Cultural Conflict	Globality
Cultural Bias	Globalization
Cultural Creator	Multiple Identities
Cultural Heterogenization	Postmodern Culture
Cultural Homogenization	Reframing
Cultural Intelligence	Resocialization
Cultural Lenses	Transnational Communities
Cultural Realities	Transnational Corporations
Dynamics Of Power	Transnational Migration
Global Consciousness	

