

Sociologist Robin Williams (1965) identified the following core values in American society:

1. *Achievement and success* Americans place a high value on personal achievement, especially outdoing others. This value includes the concept of getting ahead at work and school, and with it the goal of attaining wealth, power, and prestige.
2. *Individualism* Americans have traditionally prized success through individual efforts and initiative. They cherish the value that in our system an individual can rise from the bottom to the very top of society. If someone does not "make it" or fails to "get ahead" to the degree that others expect, Americans generally find fault with that individual, rather than with the social system for placing roadblocks in his or her path. They tend to judge the person as having failed either through lack of ability or lack of application.
3. *Activity and work* Americans expect people to work hard and to be busily engaged in some activity even when not at work. Work is an end in itself, and, as Williams says, "It is no accident that the business so characteristic of the culture can also be spelled "busyness."
4. *Efficiency and practicality* Americans award high marks for getting things done efficiently. Even in everyday life, Americans consider it important to do things as fast or as well as possible, and constantly seek changes to increase efficiency.
5. *Science and rationality* Americans have a passion for applied science, for using science to control nature—to tame rivers and harness winds—and to develop new technology. This value forms a smaller part of the larger American view of the universe as a highly ordered place.
6. *Progress* Americans expect continued, rapid technological change. They believe that they should constantly build "more and better" gadgets and attain an ever-increasing national product. They also anticipate that all change be toward some vague ideal called "progress."
7. *Material comfort* Americans expect a high level of material comfort. This comfort includes not only nutrition, medical care, and housing, but also late-model cars and recreational playthings—from boats and motor homes to computer games. In recent years, Americans have expressed massive dissatisfaction with economic conditions that have put adequate medical care and housing out of the reach of so many. We shall cover these topics in Chapters 10, 14, and 19.
8. *Equality* It is impossible to understand Americans without first being aware of the central role that the value of equality plays in their lives. Equality of opportunity, an important concept in the ideal culture discussed below, has significantly influenced United States history and continues to mark relations between the groups that make up American society.
9. *Freedom* This core value, too, pervades American life. It underscored the American Revolution, and Americans today bristle at the suggestion of any limitation on personal freedom. The Perspectives box highlights some startling research on this core value and Native Americans.
10. *Democracy* By this term, Americans refer to the supremacy of majority rule, to the right of everyone to express an opinion, and to government by representative institutions. This value is so far-reaching that Americans fought World War I under the slogan, "Make the World Safe for Democracy."
11. *Humanitarianism* According to Williams, Americans emphasize helpfulness, personal kindness, spontaneous aid in mass disasters, and organized philanthropy. This value includes not only sympathizing with victims of disaster or oppression, but also to opening pocketbooks and purses to provide them with food and other material needs.
12. *Racism and group superiority* According to Williams, Americans value some groups more than others and have done so throughout their history. The institution of slavery in earlier American society is the most notorious example. We shall examine the consequences of sexism and racism in Chapters 11 and 12.



*Humanitarianism is one of the core values sociologists have identified in American culture.*

In an earlier publication (Henslin 1975), I updated Williams's analysis by adding the following three values.

13. *Education* Americans are expected to go as far in school as their abilities and finances allow. Over the years, the definition of an "adequate" education has changed sharply, and today the expectation of a college education is held as an appropriate goal for almost all Americans. Some even view people who have an opportunity for higher education and who do not take it as doing something "wrong," not merely making a bad choice, but somehow involved in an immoral act.
14. *Religiosity* There is a feeling that "every true American ought to be religious." This does not mean that everyone is expected to join a church or synagogue, but that everyone ought to acknowledge a belief in a Supreme Being and follow some set of matching precepts. This value is so pervasive that Americans stamp "In God We Trust" on their money and declare in their national pledge of allegiance that they are "one nation under God." We shall examine this value in Chapter 18.
15. *Romantic love and monogamy* Americans feel that the only proper basis for marriage is romantic love. Songs, literature, mass media, and "folk beliefs" all stress this value, and sometimes include the theme that "love conquers all." Similarly, the idea that the only proper form of marriage is that of one man to one woman overwhelmingly predominates in American society. When the Mormons challenged this value in the 1800s, they were driven out of several states. They finally settled in what was then a wilderness, but even there the federal government would not

## PERSPECTIVES

### Cultural Diversity in U.S. Society

#### Why Do Native Americans Like Westerns?

American audiences (and even German, French, and Japanese) have devoured westerns. In the United States, it is easy to see why Anglos might like this genre, for it is they who seemingly defy odds and emerge victorious. It is they who are portrayed as heroically taming a savage wilderness, who fend themselves from cruel, barbaric Indians intent on their destruction. But why would Indians like westerns?

Sociologist JoEllen Shively, a Chippewa who grew up on Indian reservations in Montana and North Dakota, found that westerns are so popular that Native Americans bring bags of paperbacks into taverns to trade with one another. They even call one another "cowboy."

Intrigued, Shively decided to investigate the matter by showing a western movie to adult Native Americans and Anglos in a reservation town. To select the movie, Shively (1991) previewed over seventy westerns and then chose a John Wayne movie, *The Searchers*, because it focuses not only on conflict between Indians and cowboys but also shows the cowboys defeating the Indians. The viewers were matched on education, age, income, and percentage of unemployment. After the movie, she had the viewers fill out questionnaires and interviewed them.

Shively found something surprising: *all* Native Americans and Anglos identified with the cowboys; *none* identified with the Indians.

The ways in which Anglos and Native Americans

identified with the cowboys, however, were quite different, for each projected a different fantasy onto the story. While Anglos saw the movie as an accurate portrayal of the Old West and a justification of their own status in the social system, Native Americans saw it as embodying a free, natural way of life. In fact, Native Americans said that they were the "real cowboys." By this, they referred to their idealization of freedom and being "one's own man."

Shively concludes:

In westerns, Indians express the ways in which they are different from the dominant society through one of the core myths of the dominant society. . . . To express their real identity—a combination of marginality on the one hand, with a set of values which are about the land, autonomy, and being free—they (use) a cultural vehicle (that is) written for Anglos about Anglos, but it is one in which Indians invest a distinctive set of meanings that speak to their own experience, which they can read in a manner that affirms a way of life they value, or a fantasy they hold to.

In other words, values, not ethnicity, are the central issue. If a Native American film industry were to portray Native Americans with the same values as the Anglo movie industry projects onto cowboys, then Native Americans would identify with their own group. Thus, says Shively, Native American viewers make cowboys "honorary Indians," for the cowboys express their values of bravery, autonomy, and toughness.

let them practice polygyny (one man having more than one wife). Utah's statehood was even made conditional on its acceptance of monogamy (Anderson 1942, 1966). In some respects this value has changed somewhat; Americans now tolerate more than one spouse—but still only one at a time, a marital practice sometimes called “serial monogamy.”

## Value Clusters

As you can see, values are not independent units; **value clusters** come together to form a larger whole. In the value cluster surrounding success, for example, we find hard work, education, efficiency, material comfort, and individualism all bound up together. Americans are expected to go far in school, to work hard afterwards, to be efficient, and then to attain a high level of material comfort, which, in turn, demonstrates success. Success is considered attributable to the individual's own efforts, the lack of success to his or her own faults.

## Value Contradictions and Social Change

Not all values fall into neat, integrated packages. Some, indeed, conflict with one another, leading to **value contradictions**. For example, the value that stresses group superiority comes into direct conflict with the values of democracy and equality. There simply cannot be full expressions of democracy, equality, racism, and sexism at the same time. Something has to give. One way in which Americans have sidestepped this particular contradiction in the past is to say that the values of democracy and equality apply only to certain groups. The contradiction was bound to surface over time, however, and so it did in this case. Americans have responded by continuing to stress the values of equality and democracy, while extending these values to more groups.

As society changes, then, some values are challenged and undergo modification. Although the Civil War put an end to slavery, this did not mean the end of some of the values that belonged to its cluster. Values that support racial superiority have only gradually been modified. Values of male supremacy in American society have also changed slowly as they have been challenged by conflicting values of equality. It is precisely at the point of value contradictions that one can see a major force for social change in a society.

## Emergent Values

Because values are dynamic, changing over time, a core value can not only shrink in significance, while another takes on greater emphasis, but new values also evolve. Four interrelated core values now appear to be emerging in the United States: leisure, physical fitness, self-fulfillment, and the environment.

16. *Leisure* The emergence of leisure as a value is reflected in the phenomenal growth of a recreational infrastructure—from computer games, boats, and motor homes, to sports arenas, vacation homes, and a gigantic travel and vacation industry (Caplow 1991; Hamilton 1991). Table 2.1 illustrates the growth from 1970 to 1989 in the numbers of Americans who pursue recreational activities. This value can also be seen in the increasing concern for “retirement benefits,” sometimes even expressed by college graduates as they apply for their first job.
17. *Physical fitness* Physical fitness is not a new American value, but the increased emphasis on it is moving it into the core. This trend can be seen in the “natural” foods craze; brew bars, obsessive concerns about weight and diet; the many joggers, runners, cyclists, and backpackers; and, of course, the mushrooming of health clubs and physical fitness centers.
18. *Self-fulfillment* This value is reflected in the “human potential” movement, a preoccupation with becoming “all one can be,” “self-help,” “relating,” and “personal development.” This process sometimes takes the form of “consciousness

**value clusters:** a series of inter-related values that together form a larger whole

**value contradictions:** values that conflict with one another; to follow the one means to come into conflict with the other

TABLE 2.1 Leisure in the United States

<i>Number of participants (in millions)</i>	1970	1980	1989
Amateur softball players	16	30	41
Bowlers	52	72	71
Golfers	11	15	25
Major league baseball attendance		44	56
Opera attendance	5	11	
Recreational boats owned	9	12	1
Visitors to national parks and national recreation areas			283
		\$17	\$44

Note: These figures reflect not only increases in the recreational pursuits of Americans, but also changing tastes in recreation. Note the slight decline that followed the sharp increase in the number of bowlers.

Source: *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 1980, Table 417; 1991, Tables 386, 395, 403, 404.

raising," of "getting in contact with one's inner being." In some instances it is called the "new age movement." Whatever its name, it represents a profound change regarding what one ought to expect out of life.

19. *Concern for the environment* During most of American history, the environment was seen as a challenge—a wilderness to be settled, forests to be chopped down for farms and building materials, rivers and lakes to be fished, and animals to be hunted. The lack of concern for the environment that characterized earlier Americans is illustrated by the near extinction of the bison and the extinction in 1914 of the passenger pigeon, a bird previously so numerous that its annual migration would darken the skies for days. Today, Americans have developed a genuine, and hopefully long-term, concern for the environment, as illustrated by pressures that citizen groups have put on Congress to improve the quality of the country's air and water, a federal list of endangered species that merit special protection, and the requirement that construction projects file environmental impact statements. We shall return to this emergent value in Chapter 22.

These four emergent values form their own interrelated value cluster. Americans have come to a point in their economic development where millions of people are freed from long hours of work, and millions more are able to retire from work when they can still expect decades of life ahead of them. Concern for the environment is similar to concerns about physical fitness and self-fulfillment—for each is now viewed as an essential part of life that should be improved or come close to "its potential." This emergent value of environmental concern is also related to the current stage of United States economic development, a point that becomes clearer when we note that people focus and act on environmental concerns only after basic needs are met. At this point in their development, for example, Third World nations, which we shall study in Chapter 14, have a much more difficult time "affording" this value. These four values, then, are a logical response to new needs and interests resulting from fundamental changes in American society.

### Reactions to Changes in Core Values

Core values do not change without meeting strong resistance from traditionalists who hold them dear. Consequently, many people are upset at the changes swirling around them, seeing their way of life challenged and their future growing insecure. A major criticism of these emerging values is that they encourage individualism at the cost of social responsibility. By encouraging people to be self-indulgent, it is argued, they

# American Values: Let's super-size 'em!!!!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. Achievement and success: What do Americans especially value?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. In which realms do we want to achieve this success?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What do we hope to achieve?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Individualism: What does our system allow the individual to accomplish?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. If one does not succeed past expectations, who do Americans tend to "blame"?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What do Americans fault the individual with when he/she fails?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Activity and work: What do Americans believe about people?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Efficiency and practicality: Give an example that best proves that this value is prevalent in our society: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Science and rationality: What do Americans believe about the universe?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Progress: What do Americans expect?  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Material comfort: What kinds of comforts do Americans expect?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Equality: What kind of equality do Americans truly value?  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. Do you think that Americans have truly attained this equality? \_\_\_\_\_
14. Give an example to support your answer:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. Freedom: How has this value affected our lives today?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. Democracy: What does this value refer to?

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17. Humanitarianism: How is this value practiced by Americans?

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18. Racism and group superiority: What would be an example that supports this value?

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19. Do you think that this is a value that most Americans have today? \_\_\_\_\_

20. Give an example to best support your answer:

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21. Education: What do Americans expect of individuals?

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22. What level of education is now deemed as appropriate? \_\_\_\_\_

23. Religiosity: What does American society expect of everyone? Should they believe in God?

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24. What are the two examples the author provides to best support his view?

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25. Romantic love and monogamy: What should be the basis of marriage? \_\_\_\_\_

26. What is the American idea of marriage/love?

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27. How has this value changed somewhat over the years?

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28. What is a value cluster?

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29. Leisure: What have more Americans been concerned with in regards to this value?

How would this concern fall under this value?

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30. Physical fitness: How can this be justified when Americans are getting more and more obese each year?

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31. Self-fulfillment: What do Americans want to become?

\_\_\_\_\_

Whatever its name, it represents a profound change regarding what one \_\_\_\_\_ to become

32. Concern for the environment: Give an example that shows how Americans in the past did not really concern themselves with the environment:

\_\_\_\_\_

33. What proof does the author provide that supports his view that this is an emerging value?

\_\_\_\_\_

34. The four emerging values can be clustered together. The author believes that Americans are starting to share these values primarily because:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

35. If you could choose the 5 of the 15 true American values, which would they be?

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

e. \_\_\_\_\_

36. With which 4 of the 15 core values do you most disagree?

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

37. Which emerging value do you most support? \_\_\_\_\_

38. Which emerging value do you most refute? \_\_\_\_\_

# SOCIAL CONTROL

## INTERNALIZATION AND SANCTIONS

### INTERNALIZATION

- 
- 
- Can you give examples of this?

### SANCTIONS

- POSITIVE:
- NEGATIVE:
- FORMAL:
- INFORMAL:

### AGENTS OF SOCIAL CONTROL

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- CAN YOU THINK OF ANY OTHERS?

GIVE TWO EXAMPLES OF EACH OF THE FOLLOWING:

- A POSITIVE FORMAL SANCTION:
- A NEGATIVE FORMAL SANCTION:
- A POSITIVE INFORMAL SANCTION:
- A NEGATIVE INFORMAL SANCTION:



Make a comprehensive list that completes the following:

“In \_\_\_\_\_, I am a \_\_\_\_\_.”

- i.e. In school I am a student.
- i.e. In the universe I am, but a speck.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Social Structure

- The network of interrelated statuses and roles that guides human interaction.
  - Status =

- Role =

Status Categories

- Ascribed Status =

- 
- 
- 

- Achieved Status =

- 
- 
- 
- 

- Master Status =

## NOW GO BACK TO YOUR LIST AND ...

- Circle your ascribed statuses.
- Underline your achieved statuses.
- Star or highlight your master status.

### Role Categories

- Reciprocal Roles =
- Role set =
- Role conflict =
- Role expectation =
- Role performance =
- Role strain =
- How have the roles of wife and mother changed over the years?
- List the roles you play today. Do any of these conflict?
- Write down the future statuses you intend to have. What behaviors will these roles entail?
- Do you already exhibit these behaviors in any of your current roles?
- How does culture affect our roles?

# CULTURAL DIFFUSION

- List traits that Americans have borrowed from other cultures

Are there any traits that Americans have given to other cultures?

## Subculture

### Subculture Categories

## LIST SOME MATERIAL ASPECTS OF CULTURE

- HOW ABOUT OF THESE SUBCULTURES:
  - TEENS:
  - BASEBALL:
  - SOUTHERNERS-- UNITED STATES:

## CULTURAL UNIVERSALS

According to George Murdock, an anthropologist in the 1940's, there are over 60 cultural universals, features common to all cultures.

### EXAMPLES OF CULTURAL UNIVERSALS

- |                  |                      |                     |                      |
|------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| • COOKING        | • RELIGION           | • FORMS OF GREETING | • HOUSING MUSIC      |
| • FEASTING       | • MYTHS AND FOLKLORE | • MEDICINE          | • FUNERAL CEREMONIES |
| • TOOLMAKING     | • SPORTS             | • DANCING           | • GIFT GIVING        |
| • BODY ADORNMENT | • EDUCATION          | • FAMILY            | • LANGUAGE           |

Any others?

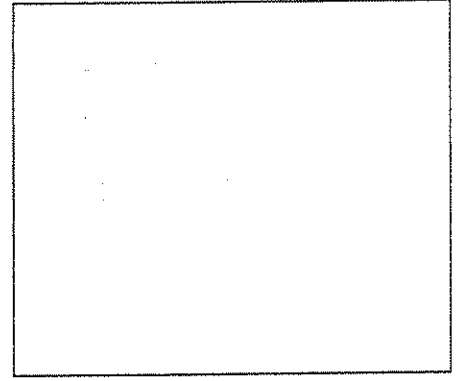
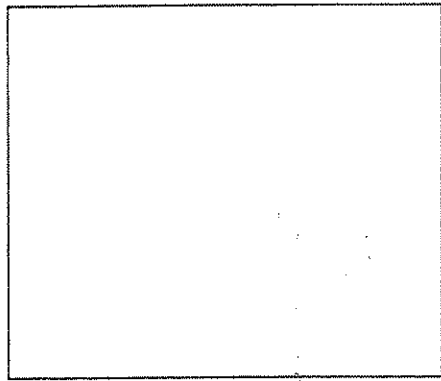
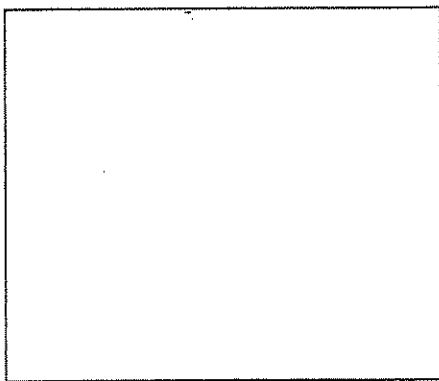
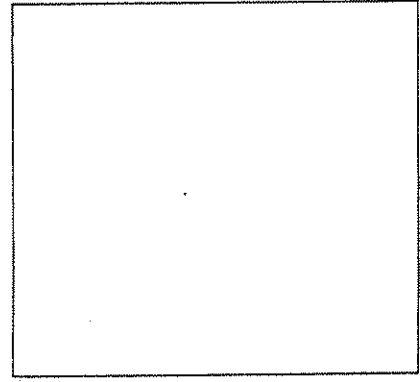
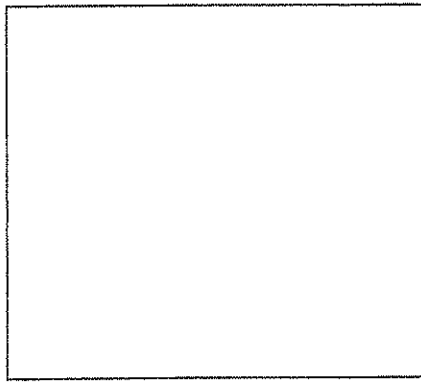
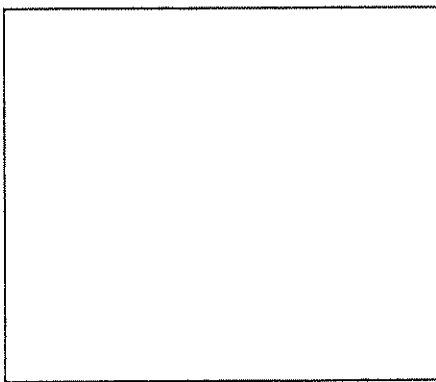
# PIECING IT ALL TOGETHER

**SOCIETY**

*SUB-CULTURES*

*COUNTER-CULTURES*

**CULTURE**



# Language

# What Did They Say?

Language unites a culture. However, English speaking culture is so large that it includes many sub-cultures, each speaking its version of English. Sometimes it is very difficult to understand the language because of the different names given to things. Sub-cultures and different versions of English are created around jobs or by ethnic groups of different cultural backgrounds who speak English as their language. Youth groups also create their own special version of English.

See if you can identify the group by the language they use and figure out what they are saying.

1. John was in a hurry to play a game of netball. It was wet and cold outside so he put on his Wellington and macintosh. He packed his plimsoles in a bag and he put the bag in the boot of his car. On his way he decided to stop for a banger and some potato crisps.

2. This jack-leg preacher saw these two chumps pimping down the street. They were shuckin' an' jivin' with each other. They were stylin' in some bad rags and looked like they really knew the turf. This preacher was looking for a place to get some ribs and he decided to aks them. They told him to turn left at the next asphalt and rip a taste for about two blocks.

3. I picked up a load down in Alligator Alley. I was this super slab when a smokey got on my tail with his candle lit. I was doing the double nickel in an 18 wheeler. I didn't know what he wanted with me. Turned out he was after a Willy Weaver.

4. I ran the program up on the CRT. I could see there were glitches all over the place. I figured out there must have been some dust on one of my floppies. It wiped out some of the bytes on the program. After I put a new disk in the drive it came on line.

5. This belly cheater on this drive I was on could fix some fine vittles. He would light up the prairie coal and make some calf fries with skunk eggs. And then he would make some calf slobber and fluff-duff that would melt in your mouth.

\* on the back, write a short dialogue you would have with a person, which might be difficult for an outsider to understand.