



# **SOCI10103: General Sociology**

## **May Intersession 2025**

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Chapter 3: culture

Textbook: Sociology in Our Time, Diana Kendall 12th edition

# Chapter outlines

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Culture and society in a  
changing world

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Components of culture

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Technology, cultural change,  
and diversity

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Sociological analysis of  
culture

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Looking ahead

# Culture and society in a changing world

What is culture? Culture is the knowledge, language, values, customs, and material objects that are passed from person to person and from one generation to the next in a human group or society.

culture is essential for our individual survival and our communication with other people. We rely on culture because we are not born with the information we need to survive.

We do not know how to take care of ourselves, how to behave, how to dress, what to eat, which deities to worship, or how to make or spend money.

# Hand gestures meanings



a. HORNS: "Hook 'em Horns" or "Your spouse is unfaithful."



b. CIRCLE WITH THUMB AND FOREFINGER: "Okay" or "I'll kill you."



c. THUMBS UP: "Great" or an obscenity.

# Cultural components

symbols

language

values

and norms



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# symbols

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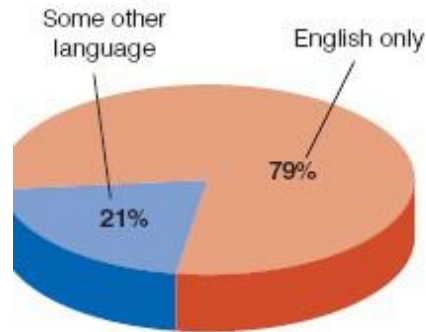


Natalie Foley/The Image Bank Unreleased/Getty Images

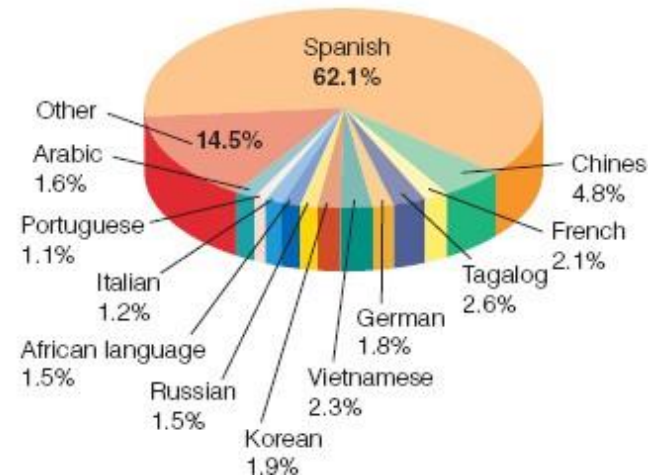
- A symbol is anything that meaningfully represents something else.
- For example, flags can stand for patriotism, nationalism, team spirit, or religious beliefs held by members of a group or society.
- Symbols can stand for love (a heart on a valentine), peace (a dove), or discrimination and hate (a noose or Nazi swastika),
- A siren is a symbol that denotes an emergency situation and sends the message with light and sound to clear the way immediately.
- Gestures are also a symbolic form of communication—a movement of the head, body, or hands can express our ideas or feelings to others.



What percent speak English only in the home?



Among those who speak a language other than English, what do they speak?



# language

- Language is a set of symbols that expresses ideas and enables people to think and communicate with one another. Verbal (spoken) language and nonverbal (written or gestured) language help us describe reality.



Alabama (1990)  
 Alaska (1998)  
 Arizona (2006)  
 Arkansas (1987)  
 California (1986)  
 Colorado (1988)  
 Florida (1988)  
 Georgia (1996)  
 Hawaii (1978)

Massachusetts (1975)  
 Mississippi (1987)  
 Missouri (2008)  
 Montana (1995)  
 Nebraska (1920)  
 New Hampshire (1995)  
 North Carolina (1987)  
 North Dakota (1997)  
 Oklahoma (2010)

Values are collective ideas about what is right or wrong, good or bad, and desirable or undesirable in a particular culture.

## Core American Values

- Individualism.
- Achievement and success
- Activity and work
- Science and technology
- Progress and material comfort
- Efficiency and practicality
- Equality: equality of opportunity, “an assumed equal chance to achieve success” not as “equality of outcome.”
- Morality and humanitarianism
- Freedom and liberty
- Ethnocentrism and group superiority





# Norms

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- Values provide ideals or beliefs about behavior but do not state explicitly how people should behave.
- Norms, on the other hand, do have specific behavioral expectations. Norms are established rules of behavior or standards of conduct.
  - Folkways: Folkways are informal norms or everyday customs that may be violated without serious consequences within a particular culture.

# Norms

## Mores

- strongly held norms with moral and ethical connotations that may not be violated without serious consequences in a particular culture.

## Laws

- Laws are formal, standardized norms that have been enacted by legislatures and are enforced by formal sanctions.

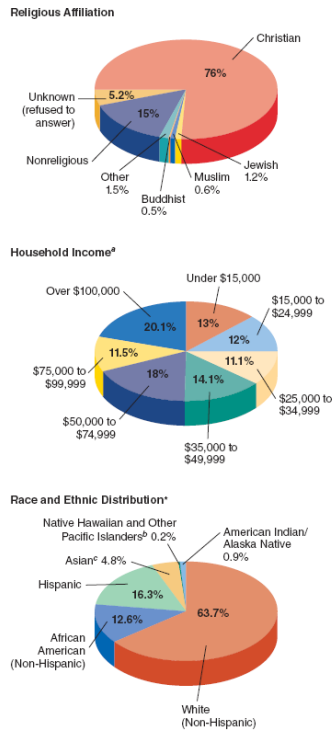


## Technology, cultural change, and diversity

- Societies continually experience cultural change at both material and nonmaterial levels. Changes in technology continue to shape the material culture of society.

# Cultural diversity

- Cultural diversity refers to the wide range of cultural differences found between and within nations.



\*May not total to 100% due to rounding

<sup>a</sup>In Census Bureau terminology, a household consists of people who occupy a housing unit.

<sup>b</sup> Includes Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, and other Pacific Islanders.



# Cultural shock

- Culture shock is the disorientation that people feel when they encounter cultures radically different from their own and believe they cannot depend on their own taken-for-granted assumptions about life.



# Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism

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- When observing people from other cultures, many people use their own culture as the yardstick by which they judge others' behavior. Sociologists refer to this approach as ethnocentrism—the practice of judging all other cultures by one's own culture.
- An alternative to ethnocentrism is cultural relativism—the belief that the behaviors and customs of any culture must be viewed and analyzed by the culture's own standards.

# Sociological analysis of culture

Functionalist perspectives are based on the assumption that society is a stable, orderly system with interrelated parts that serve specific functions.

Conflict perspectives are based on the assumption that social life is a continuous struggle in which members of powerful groups seek to control scarce resources.

symbolic interactionists engage in a microlevel analysis that views society as the sum of all people's interactions. From this perspective, people create, maintain, and modify culture as they go about their everyday activities.

postmodernists believe that we should speak of cultures rather than culture.



# Looking ahead

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- Schools continue to face the challenge of embracing widespread cultural diversity while conveying a sense of community and national identity to students.

