

networks

There's More Online!

- ✓ **CARTOON** The Cat Did It
- ✓ **GRAPHIC ORGANIZER** Beliefs and Material Culture
- ✓ **IMAGE** U.S. Material Culture
- ✓ **SELF-CHECK QUIZ**



LESSON 4

Beliefs and Material Culture

Reading **HELP**DESK



Academic Vocabulary

- **contrast**
- **encounter**

Content Vocabulary

- **nonmaterial culture**
- **material culture**
- **beliefs**
- **ideal culture**
- **real culture**

TAKING NOTES:

Key Ideas and Details

ORGANIZING As you read about beliefs and material culture, use the headings and text from the lesson to create an outline similar to the one below.

Beliefs and Material Culture

- I. **Beliefs and Physical Objects**
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION • *How does culture influence society?*

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

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

Beliefs and Physical Objects

GUIDING QUESTION *What is the difference between material culture and nonmaterial culture?*

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

Why Beliefs Matter

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

Beliefs—like traditions, roles, and cultural expectations—provide a sense of continuity to a community. They help put into action the values that a culture considers important. For example, sociologist Jun Li has examined how immigrant Chinese parents use traditional Chinese beliefs and expectations to help their children adjust to life in their new homeland of Canada. Jun Li found that Chinese immigrant parents continue to stress the traditional Chinese belief in the value of education when they settle in Canada. Many expect their children to obtain degrees from top universities. They do this even though they often find that their own high

levels of education have not translated into well-paying jobs in Canada. In stressing the importance of education, the parents are instilling in their own children the same expectations their parents instilled in them in China.

Material Culture

Material culture consists of the concrete, tangible objects within a culture. These can be items of popular culture such as video games or objects of high culture such as fine art paintings. Material culture also includes ordinary objects such as automobiles, books, chairs, tools, and buildings. These objects can be contrasted with the beliefs, ideas, and knowledge that make up nonmaterial culture. The physical objects of material culture have no innate—or natural—meanings or uses. Their meanings and uses are assigned by the culture that creates them.

Consider newspaper and pepper. Each has some meaning for you, but can you think of a combined use for them? One way to combine the two is in the process known as “netting,” once a common practice among some midwives. Netting involved rolling a newspaper into a funnel shape to form a cone and then putting a liberal amount of pepper into the cone. At the height of labor, the midwife would use the pointed end of the cone to blow the pepper deeply into the expectant mother’s nose. The force of the resulting sneeze would help deliver the baby. Before your introduction to the practice of netting, the combination of newspaper and pepper had no meaning for you, even though you have **encountered** both newspapers and pepper in your daily life. You required the introduction to netting to gain knowledge of the connection.

Material Culture Is Related to Nonmaterial Culture

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

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

Similarly, the objects that make up material culture can carry meanings not related to their actual uses. An automobile is designed to transport people and goods. However, the type of automobile a person drives can also have social meaning. In the United States, for instance, owning certain automobiles is seen as a sign of wealth and success. These automobiles convey this message only because people have attached this meaning to them.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Discussing What determines the cultural meanings of physical objects?

nonmaterial culture ideas, knowledge, and beliefs that influence people’s behavior

material culture the concrete, tangible objects of a culture

beliefs ideas about the nature of reality

contrast dissimilar attributes among things with common natures

encounter to come across or meet

Consumers often line up in advance to be the first to purchase a new item.

CRITICAL THINKING

- Analyzing** Are these people standing in line only to purchase the item, or does the item hold additional cultural meaning for them? Explain.
- Making Connections** What item would you stand in line to buy? Why?



CARTOON >

THE CAT DID IT.

Ideal and real culture are often at odds.

► CRITICAL THINKING

- 1. Identifying Central Issues**
How does this cartoon illustrate the gap between ideal and real culture?
- 2. Speculating** Why do you think the boy lies about his role in painting the cat? Will the lie work? Explain.



Ideal and Real Culture

GUIDING QUESTION How is real culture different from ideal culture?

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

One value of America's ideal culture is honesty. Yet in real culture, honesty is not always practiced. Some taxpayers annually violate both the letter and spirit of existing tax laws. Some businesspeople engage in dishonest business practices. Some students cheat on exams. These are not isolated instances. They are real cultural patterns passed on from generation to generation. We are not referring here to individuals whose violations of norms include murder, rape, and robbery. These types of antisocial behavior violate even real culture.

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

✓ READING PROGRESS CHECK

Stating What is an example of the gap between ideal and real culture?

ideal culture cultural guidelines that group members claim to accept

real culture actual behavior patterns of members of a group

LESSON 4 REVIEW



Reviewing Vocabulary

- 1. Summarizing** Why are beliefs important?

Using Your Notes

- 2. Organizing** Use your notes to write a paragraph summary of the lesson.

Answering the Guiding Questions

- 3. Contrasting** What is the difference between material culture and nonmaterial culture?

- 4. Explaining** How is real culture different from ideal culture?

Writing Activity

- 5. Narrative** Write a short story that illustrates the conflict between ideal and real culture in everyday life.

- CARTOON** We're Number One!
- CHART** Cultural Universals
- IMAGE** Groups of the Counterculture
- SELF-CHECK QUIZ**

Reading **HELP**DESK**Academic Vocabulary**

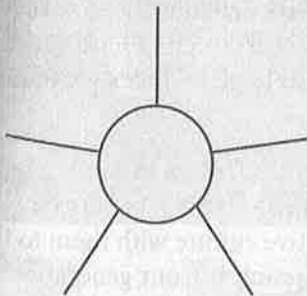
- diversity
- similarity

Content Vocabulary

- social categories
- subculture
- counterculture
- ethnocentrism
- cultural universals
- cultural particulars

TAKING NOTES: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

ORGANIZING As you read about cultural diversity and similarity, use the information from the lesson to create word webs, similar to the one below, for three of the Content Vocabulary terms.

**LESSON 5****Cultural Diversity and Similarity**

ESSENTIAL QUESTION • How does culture influence society?

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

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

Cultural Change

GUIDING QUESTION Why does culture change?

So far we have only talked briefly about how cultures can change. Actually the processes that govern cultural change are so important they will be discussed in more depth in another chapter. Briefly, however, all cultures experience change. Norms, values, and beliefs are relatively stable, but they do change over time. For example, many of your grandparents never went to college; as teenagers, your parents never texted friends. It was not that long ago that middle-class women with young children were discouraged from working outside the home. Interracial dating was once widely condemned in the United States, but it gradually became more widely accepted. A study conducted by the Pew Research Center found that in 2010 about 15% of all new marriages were between spouses who were of different races or ethnicities. These are aspects of culture that are changing in response to certain processes.

Culture changes for three reasons. One cause is *discovery*, the process of finding something that already exists. While the athletic abilities of females were once generally unrecognized, female participation in competitive sports grew rapidly in the late twentieth century. This began to change the perception of girls and women and the relationship between males and females.

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

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

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Identifying What are three reasons culture changes?

Cultural Diversity

GUIDING QUESTION *What are subcultures and countercultures?*

diversity the condition of being made up of different elements, such as racial identities, ethnicities, religious beliefs, and so on

social categories

groupings of persons who share a social characteristic

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

Factors that promote cultural diversity in the United States and other countries include immigration, globalism, better and faster communications, travel, and increased cultural relevance. *Cultural relevance* means making sure that materials are appropriate for the cultures for which they are intended. For example, having information available in multiple languages may make it more culturally relevant.

Other aspects of cultural diversity include pop and folk culture. *Folk culture* refers to cultural patterns practiced by traditional groups, often in isolation, while *pop culture* refers to cultural patterns that are widespread among a society's population. Both increase the cultural diversity of a society. A third important element affecting cultural diversity is culture shock. *Culture shock* is the feeling of surprise and confusion people may feel when they encounter cultural practices different from their own.

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

Subcultures

A **subculture** is part of the dominant culture but differs from it in some important respects. The subculture of San Francisco's Chinatown is a good example. Early Chinese immigrants brought much of their native culture with them to the United States and have attempted to retain it by passing it from generation to generation. Although Chinese residents of Chinatown have been greatly affected by American culture, they have kept many cultural patterns of their own, such as language, diet, and family structure.

Several problems are associated with subcultures. Members of American subcultures can be labeled with negative stereotypes, from both within and outside the society. Some Americans associate teenagers of various ethnicities as being gang members prone to criminality and violence. Many stereotypes are promoted and reinforced through popular culture, such as the movies. American "Westerns" have popularized certain images and stereotypes of American cowboys and Native Americans around the world. People from other countries

subculture a group that is part of the dominant culture but that differs from it in some important respects

sometimes think of Americans in terms of these stereotypes; for example, Americans can be seen as rough, untamed cowboys. Not all stereotypes are negative, however. The stereotypical American cowboy may be seen as rough and untamed, but he is also perceived as being brave and true to his convictions.

Subcultures can also be prone to social problems. For example, rates of alcoholism are higher than average for many Native American groups. Non-Latino African Americans have higher than average obesity rates.

Countercultures

A **counterculture** is a subculture that is deliberately and consciously opposed to certain central beliefs or attitudes of the dominant culture. A counterculture can be understood only within the context of this opposition. The rise of the youth counterculture in the latter 1960s—the “hippie” movement—set the stage for adolescent rebellion throughout the world. More recent examples of primarily teenage countercultures include the “goth” and the “punk” scenes. *Goth* is a shortening of the term *gothic*, meaning “dark, strangely mysterious, and remote.” Punk is a philosophy of rebellion and sexual revolution popularized by the lyrics and music of punk-rock bands.

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

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Explaining What are social categories?

counterculture a subculture deliberately and consciously opposed to certain central beliefs or attitudes of the dominant culture

Punks, beatniks, the Occupy Wall Street Movement, and right-wing militia are examples of American countercultures.

CRITICAL THINKING

Comparing and Contrasting

Why do we label these groups as countercultures? How are they alike? How are they different?



Connecting Sociology to History

THE HIPPIES

When many Americans hear the word *counterculture*, they think of young people in the 1960s. The 1960s were a collision of some important demographic and cultural forces. Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, during the Great Depression and World War II, the birthrate declined. Following the war, a “baby boom” occurred, and by the 1960s, young people aged 14–25 comprised a much larger share of the population. These young people grew up in a time of strong economic growth. Some came to reject their Depression-raised parents’ sturdy work ethic and social conformity and sought personal fulfillment instead.

The 1960s were a time of social and cultural upheaval. The civil rights struggle, anti-Vietnam war protests, women’s liberation, and other social movements raised serious questions about American society and culture. Some young people, who came to be known as

hippies, answered these questions by rejecting mainstream society and culture, which they saw as materialistic, class-based, and separated from nature.

Hippies believed that they could create a new culture, free from the pressures of material gain, the corporate “rat race,” and a reliance on technology. Their new culture would be built on egalitarian principles and achieved through individual self-awareness, self-fulfillment, and self-expression. This quest was marked by nonconformity in dress, hairstyles, and personal habits. It also often led to an indulgence in drugs and sexual expression.

► CRITICAL THINKING

- 1. Analyzing** How did the social movements of the 1960s influence hippies?
- 2. Differentiating** Why are the hippies considered a counterculture and not a subculture?



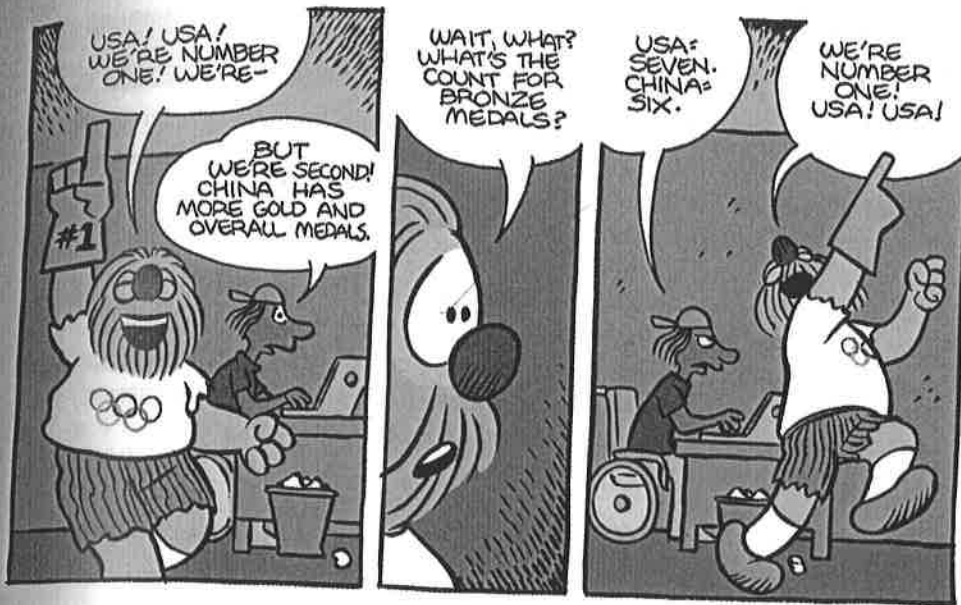
Hippie counterculture grew in the 1960s.

WE'RE NUMBER ONE!

Ethnocentrism can affect the way we look at the world.

► **CRITICAL THINKING**

1. **Interpreting** How is ethnocentrism affecting this sports fan's reasoning?
2. **Identifying Bias** What examples of ethnocentrism have you encountered recently?



Ethnocentrism

GUIDING QUESTION How does ethnocentrism affect perceptions?

Once people learn their culture, they tend to become strongly committed to it. In fact, they often cannot imagine any other way of life. They may judge others in terms of their own cultural standards—a practice referred to as **ethnocentrism**. Ethnocentrism is not unique to any one country or group. Because people internalize their own culture, they often feel uncomfortable when confronted by an unfamiliar culture. Ethnocentrism is at the heart of the culture shock some people experience when they travel to new places.

Examples of Ethnocentrism

Examples of ethnocentrism are plentiful. The Olympic Games are much more than an arena of athletic competition. The Games are also an expression of ethnocentrism. Political and nationalistic undercurrents run through the Olympics. A country's final ranking in this competition for gold, silver, and bronze medals is frequently taken as a reflection of the country's status on the world stage.

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

Ethnocentrism, Globalism, and Diversity

Ethnocentrism is almost always in conflict with globalism. As the countries of the world become more interconnected, cultural diffusion brings new ideas. In the United States as well as in other countries, these new ideas can cause either positive or negative reactions in societies. For example, think about how U.S. soldiers serving in Afghanistan and Iraq sometimes encountered suspicion or hostility from the local populations because of differing cultural values. But also think about what you might eat for lunch. Pizza (from Italy), tacos (from Mexico), falafel (from the Middle East), and sushi (from Japan) are just a few of the foreign foods that have met with wide acceptance in the United States. Even in a foreign country, you could probably find a hamburger or hot dog.

ethnocentrism judging others in terms of one's own cultural standards

Quick Case Study

HOW DO STEREOTYPES AFFECT YOU?

Many of our ideas about different groups of people in different social categories are unexamined. In this experiment, you will look more closely at how people perceive other groups.

Procedure

1. With a partner, list five different social categories (groups that share a social characteristic such as age, gender, or religion). Examples are senior citizens, teenagers, women, Muslims, and evangelical Christians.
2. Read your list to another pair of students and have each of them say five words that come to mind immediately. Write down the words.

Analysis

As you read through the lists of words, consider these questions.

1. Do any of the words show stereotyping?
2. Is the stereotyping positive or negative?
3. What might be the basis or reason for each word listed?

Ethnocentrism: Advantages and Disadvantages

Ethnocentrism has two faces—it offers both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, ethnocentrism builds group loyalty. People feel good about themselves and about others in their group when they believe that what they are doing is right and superior to what other groups do. The patriotism that people feel for the actions of their own country during times of war is an example of this side of ethnocentrism. The belief that the actions of their own country are just helps make people more willing to accept the sacrifices necessary in war. Similarly, ethnocentrism helps maintain traditions and values that are central to a society. People are more likely to uphold traditions and values if they believe that these traditions and values are superior to the traditions and values held by other groups. By supporting traditions and values, ethnocentrism adds to the stability of a society.

If a society is too rigid, however, it becomes inflexible. Extreme ethnocentrism can prevent change for the better. Societies whose members are firmly convinced of their superiority tend not to create anything new or accept new ideas. The ancient Chinese, for example, built a series of walls to keep invaders out. The walls helped unify China, but they also kept new ideas out. As a result China's culture changed slowly over the centuries.

Extreme ethnocentrism can have a much darker side. It can divide people and lead to hatred and violence. Adolf Hitler's Final Solution was ethnocentrism at its worst. Hitler and his Nazi regime attempted to wipe out European Jewry and other minorities in an effort to establish racial purity. The result was the slaughter of some 6 million Jews and large numbers of people from other targeted groups. In the United States, racial ethnocentrism led to discrimination against African Americans and other minority populations. The civil rights movement was born to combat the effects of this ethnocentrism. Today, many states are passing laws that increase the penalties against people who commit violent acts against others based on their race, origin, or religion.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Discussing What are some dangers of extreme ethnocentrism?

Cultural Universals

GUIDING QUESTION *What are cultural universals, and why do they exist?*

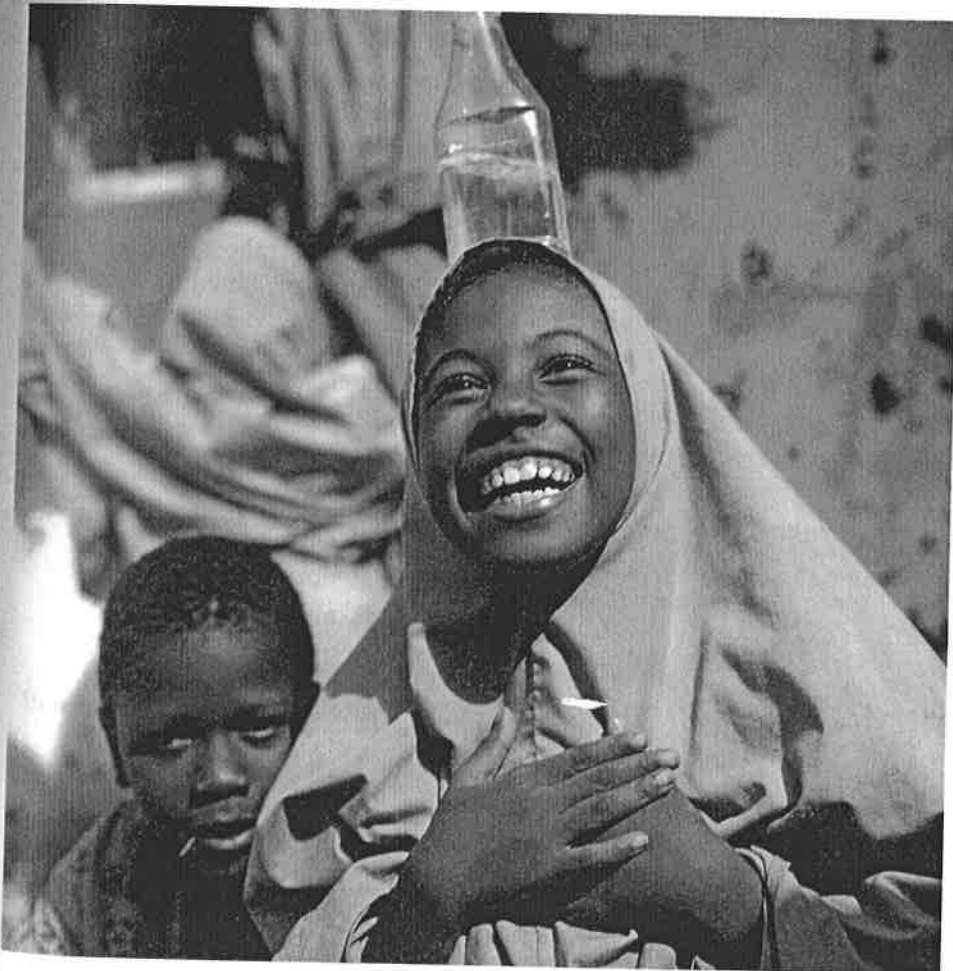
Although it may seem that different cultures have little in common, researchers have identified more than seventy common cultural traits that exist in all cultures. Social scientists refer to these common traits as **cultural universals**. The American anthropologist George Murdock attempted to define these cultural universals in his pioneering 1945 paper "The Common Denominators of Cultures." He identified such cultural universals as sports, cooking, courtship, division of labor, education, etiquette, funeral rites, family, government, hospitality, housing, inheritance rules, joking, language, medicine, marriage, mourning, music, property rights, religious rituals, sexual restrictions, status differences, and tool making. Because all societies have these cultural universals, they are more similar than you think.

Expression of Cultural Universals

Cultural universals are not always carried out in the same way. In fact, different cultures have developed quite different ways to express universals. These are called **cultural particulars**. One cultural universal is caring for children. In the United States, women historically worked within the home caring for children, and men worked outside the home. Although this has changed, women in this country are still largely responsible for child care. Among the Manus of New Guinea, in contrast, the man is completely in charge of child rearing. Among the Mbuti pygmies and the Lovedu of Africa and the Navajo and Iroquois of North America, men and women share equally in domestic and economic tasks.

cultural universals general cultural traits that exist in all cultures

cultural particulars the ways in which a culture expresses universal traits



A smile means the same thing in every culture.

► CRITICAL THINKING

- 1. Identifying** What cultural universals can you identify in this photo?
- 2. Describing** What cultural particulars do you see in this photo?

Cultural Universals

Economy	Institutions	Arts	Language	Environment	Recreation	Beliefs
Trade Tools Technology Goods Services Jobs Business Transportation Communications Food Shelter Clothing	Family Government Education Religion Economy	Art Literature Dance Theater Music Crafts Folktales	Words Expressions Pronunciations Alphabets Symbols	Communities Geography Geology Habitat Wildlife Climates Resources	Games Toys Arts Media Holidays Festivals	Values Traditions Ethnicity Customs Religions Morals

CHART

CULTURAL UNIVERSALS

Researchers have identified more than 70 traits that appear in all cultures.

► CRITICAL THINKING

1. Analyzing Choose one of the traits in the chart and explain how it can be applied to all cultures.

2. Contrasting How is the trait expressed differently in two different cultures?

similarity the quality of being alike

Accounting for Cultural Universals

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

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

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

✓ READING PROGRESS CHECK

Identifying What is one factor that explains why cultural universals exist?

LESSON 5 REVIEW



Reviewing Vocabulary

- 1. Identifying** What is ethnocentrism?
- 2. Questioning** Why do cultural particulars exist?

Using Your Notes

- 3. Organizing** Use your word webs to write a statement for each of your words telling how the idea influences cultural change. Then give an example that supports your statement.

Answering the Guiding Questions

- 4. Identifying Central Issues** Why does culture change?

- 5. Explaining** What are subcultures and countercultures?
- 6. Theorizing** How does ethnocentrism affect perceptions?
- 7. Explaining** What are cultural universals, and why do they exist?

Writing Activity

- 8. Informative/Explanatory** Think of a social norm in the United States. Then write a paragraph describing how two American subcultures differ in their approaches to the social norm. The subcultures could be based on ethnicity, national origin, age, socioeconomic status, or gender.