Chapter 2

Culture
What is Culture?

• Language, Beliefs, Values, Norms
  – Behavior Passed from One Generation to the Next
• Material vs. Nonmaterial Cultures
• Patterns of behavior
  – Language, gestures, and other forms of interaction
Culture and Taken-for-Granted Orientations

• What is Normal, Natural, or Usual?
• The Culture Within Us
• Culture as Lens
• Culture Shock
• Ethnocentrism
• The many ways in which culture affects our lives fascinate sociologists
Practicing Cultural Relativism

• Understanding Cultures on Their Own Terms
• “Sick Cultures” - Robert Edgerton
• Confronting Contrasting Views of Reality
• None of us can be entirely successful at practicing cultural relativism
Components of Symbolic Culture

• Gestures
• Conveying Messages without Words
• Gestures’ Meaning Differ Among Cultures
• Can Lead to Misunderstandings
• Is it really true that there are no universal gestures?
FIGURE 2.1 Gestures to Indicate Height, Southern Mexico
Components of Symbolic Culture

• Language
  – Allows Cumulative Human Experience
  – Provides Social or Shared Past
  – Provides Social or Shared Future
  – Allows Shared Perspective
  – Allows Complex, Shared, Goal-Directed Behavior
Language and Perception: Sapir-Whorf

• Language Has Embedded Within It Ways of Looking at the World

• Sapir-Whorf Reverses Common Sense
  – Rather than objects and events forcing themselves onto our consciousness, it is our
  – Language that determines our consciousness, & hence our perception of objects and events
Values, Norms, and Sanctions

• Values - What is Desirable in Life
• Norms - Expectations or Rules for Behavior
• Sanctions - Reaction to Following or Breaking Norms
  – Positive & Negative Sanctions
• Moral Holidays and Places
Folkways and Mores

• Folkways - Norms not Strictly Enforced
• Mores - Core Values: We Insist on Conformity
• One group’s folkways may be another group’s mores
• Taboos
Subcultures and Countercultures

• Groups of people in a small corner in life, (occupation) tend to develop specialized
  – Ways to communicate with one another
• Subculture - A World Within the Dominant Culture
• Countercultures - Groups With Norms and Values at Odds With the Dominant Culture
Values in U.S. Society

• Achievement and Success
• Individualism
• Hard Work
• Efficiency and Practicality
• Science and Technology
• Material Comfort
• Freedom
Values in U.S. Society

• Democracy
• Equality
• Group Superiority
• Education
• Religiosity
• Romantic Love
Emerging Values

• Leisure
• Self-fulfillment
• Physical Fitness
• Youthfulness
• Concern for the Environment
Values and Culture

• Culture Wars: When Values Clash
• Value and Distorting Lenses
• “Ideal” vs. “Real” Culture
  – The values, norms, and goals that a group considers ideal, worth aiming for
Technology in the Global Village

• The New Technology - New Tools
  – The long-accepted idea that it is proper to
    • Withhold rights on the basis of someone’s sex can no longer be sustained

• Cultural Lag and Cultural Change

• Technology and Cultural Leveling