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Chapter 2
Culture, Society, and Social Change

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, students should be able to:

2.1.1 Distinguish between culture, material culture, nonmaterial culture, and cultural universals.
2.1.2 Identify the components of nonmaterial culture.
2.1.3 Distinguish between norm, folkway, more, and taboo.
2.1.4 Distinguish between surface culture and deep culture.
2.2.1 Define ethnocentrism.
2.2.2 Define cultural relativism.
2.2.3 Define multiculturalism.
2.3.1 Explain the basic arguments and controversies of social evolution theory.
2.3.2 Explain the basic argument of modernization theory.
2.3.3 Apply the conflict perspective to culture.
2.4.1 Define language.
2.4.2 Explain the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.
2.4.3 Describe the extent of languages globally and in the United States.
2.5.1 Distinguish between society and culture.
2.5.2 Identify the major types of societies.
2.5.3 Define transitional societies.
2.5.4 Distinguish between communal and associational societies.
2.6.1 Describe how human agency and ideology create social change.
2.6.2 Describe how revolution and war promote change.
2.6.3 Differentiate between invention, discovery, and diffusion.
2.6.4 Explain how population change creates social change.
2.6.5 Describe the social effects of natural catastrophes.
2.6.6 Illustrate how technology is a major catalyst for social change.
2.7.1 Define solid modernity.
2.7.2 Contrast liquid modernity to solid modernity.
2.7.3 Indicate the reasons for the move from solid to liquid modernity.
2.8.1 Distinguish between consumption and consumerism.

Chapter Outline

I. Culture
  A. Culture from a Sociological Perspective
    2.1.1 Distinguish between culture, material culture, nonmaterial culture, and cultural universals.
    1. Sociologists consider culture to include all aspects of life within a given society.
      a. Culture consists of all the learning that is passed from one generation to the next, including abstractions such as language, reason, and thought.

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2. Culture: the mutually shared products, knowledge, and beliefs of a human group or society.
    a. Material culture: a physical object people use to accomplish tasks, such as a kitchen knife, a pencil, or a computer.
    b. Nonmaterial culture: a value, worldview, and other symbolic representations of the social and physical world.
3. Cultural universal: a solution to a problem faced by all (or almost all) societies.
    a. Example of a universal: health. All people get sick, and therefore all societies must develop ways to maintain health.
    b. All humans confront the same broad issues that are resolved with culture.

B. Components of Nonmaterial Culture: Symbols, Values, Beliefs

2.1.2 Identify the components of nonmaterial culture.

1. Sociologists divide nonmaterial culture into various components.
    a. Many fit with the symbolic interaction perspective, such as symbols (representations that stand for something else).
    b. Values: preferences people share about what is good or bad, right or wrong, desirable or undesirable.
        i. American culture stresses values such as personal achievement, morality, and hard work.
    c. Beliefs: specific ideas that people maintain as true or correct whether based in fact or not.
        i. Examples: the value of work leads to the belief that people should have jobs; the value of material comfort leads to the belief that everyone deserves decent housing.

C. Norms

2.1.3 Distinguish between norm, folkway, more, and taboo.

1. Norms: specific expectations about how people should behave in given situations.
    a. As contrasted to values and beliefs, norms are very specific.
    b. Countless norms guide our everyday life. Sociologists divide norms into three types:
        i. Folkways: normative practices concerning routine, everyday matters.
        ii. Mores: the norms set by a society concerning very serious matters.
        iii. Taboos: strict prohibitions against specific behaviors a given society finds particularly repellant.

D. Surface Culture and Deep Culture

2.1.4 Distinguish between surface culture and deep culture.

1. Surface culture: cultural items that we readily observe and take for granted, such as language, food, and dress.
    a. Becomes salient when we encounter alternatives, such as a foreign language or unfamiliar food.
    b. Culture shock: our reactions to sudden encounters with different, unfamiliar cultures.
2. Deep culture: cultural items underlying everyday life and that we take for granted.
3. Deeper culture: core cultural values that are almost imperceptible.

II. Culture and Conflict

A. Ethnocentrism

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2.2.1 Define ethnocentrism.

1. Ethnocentrism: a belief that one's own culture is superior to all other cultures.
    a. So deeply ingrained in us that we are unaware of it.
    b. Sometimes morphs into nativism and xenophobia, or the dislike and hatred of anything foreign.

B. Cultural Relativism

2.2.2 Define cultural relativism.

1. Cultural relativism: the belief that each culture is unique and must be analyzed and judged on its own terms.
    a. Today, most sociologists endorse cultural relativism—but cautiously.
        i. The practice of female genital cutting illustrates the need for caution and sensitivity.
            (a) Genital cutting is common and culturally endorsed in many parts of the world.
            (b) Opposed by many, who use the term genital mutilation.
            (c) Opposing the practices of other cultures creates a moral morass when we consider the practices of our culture (i.e., circumcision).

C. Multiculturalism

2.2.3 Define multiculturalism.

1. Multiculturalism: an ideology promoting equality for the various groups that make up society.
    a. Began in education in the 1960s and has gained currency.
    b. One goal of multicultural education is to incorporate other cultural viewpoints into the curriculum.
        i. Example: Rather than teach history exclusively through the eyes of White Europeans, multicultural educators try to teach minority viewpoints as well.

III. Sociological Perspectives: Explaining Culture

A. Social Evolution

2.3.1 Explain the basic arguments and controversies of social evolution theory.

1. Early social theories were based on analogy to biological evolution: Just as biological competition selects the fittest animals for survival, social competition selects the fittest society for survival.
    a. Argued that social evolution was unilineal—all societies followed a single path of development from simple to complex.
2. Contemporary sociologists do not accept evolutionary arguments.
    a. Theory has logical and empirical flaws.
    b. Arguments are extremely ethnocentric.
3. Social evolution has been linked to the underlying notions of structural functionalism.
    a. Talcott Parsons introduced concept of differentiation: a division of a single social unit into units that are independent but related to one another.
4. Contemporary theorists recognize that development occurs in different ways in different societies; social evolution is multilineal.
    a. Evolution is not the same as progress, and industrial societies are not superior to traditional societies.
    b. Societies may remain stable for long periods, regress in development, or even become extinct.

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B. Modernization Theory

2.3.2 Explain the basic argument of modernization theory.

1. Modernization theory: traditional societies will eventually take on the characteristics of an industrial society (manufacturing will become the basic means of sustenance, jobs will become highly specialized, urban areas will expand).
    a. Assumes that the benefits of industrialization outweigh its disadvantages.
    b. Assumes incorrectly that the history of traditional societies will be like the history of the United States and other industrialized nations.
    c. Assumes that traditional societies have stagnant cultures and would benefit from Western values, political beliefs, and technology.

C. Conflict Perspective

2.3.3 Apply the conflict perspective to culture.

1. Social scientists pay close attention to the possibility that "culture is power."
    a. Control of deep culture represents an awesome amount of power.
        i. Antonio Gramsci: Those who control deep culture, control society.
            (a) Gramsci distinguished between materially based power and culturally based power.
2. Gramsci introduced the concept of cultural hegemony: the ability of the ruling class to make its value system the taken-for-granted value system of the society.

IV. Importance of Language

A. Definition of Language

2.4.1 Define language.

1. Language: a collection of words that are symbols and have rules for conveying complex ideas.

B. Language Is Power: The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

2.4.2 Explain the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

1. We have little choice but to interpret the world in terms of the words and grammar of our native language.
    a. This shapes our perception of the world.
2. As culture changes, vocabularies also change.
    a. Some words are no longer needed, while new words are invented to help deal with new developments.

C. Languages Globally and in the United States

2.4.3 Describe the extent of languages globally and in the United States.

1. As the world becomes a smaller place, more and more people speak fewer and fewer languages.
    a. Approximately 7,000 languages now exist; only a few hundred are spoken by enough people to remain secure for the immediate future.
    b. Mandarin and Hindi are widely spoken because the populations of India and China are very large.
    c. English and Spanish also are widely spoken.
2. With many immigrants arriving in the United States, the issue of language has taken on political importance.
    a. The United States does not have an official language.
    b. Almost 80 percent of the U.S. population speaks only English.

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c. The demise of the English language in the United States has been greatly exaggerated.

V. Analyzing Society from a Sociological Perspective

A. Definition of Society

2.5.1 Distinguish between society and culture.

1. Society: a grouping of people who share a common culture, obey the same political authority, and occupy a given territory.

B. Types of Societies

2.5.2 Identify the major types of societies.

1. Major types of societies vary across the globe according to their mode of subsistence: the manner in which a society obtains the basic materials necessary to sustain itself.
   a. Hunting and gathering society: derive sustenance from non-domesticated animals and wild plants.
   b. Horticultural society: base sustenance on the cultivation of domestic plants.
   c. Pastoral society: base sustenance on domestic animals.
   d. Agrarian society: base sustenance on agriculture and farming.
   e. Industrial society: derive sustenance from technology and mechanization.
   f. Postindustrial society: derive sustenance primarily from the creation and transmitting of specialized knowledge.

C. Transitional Societies

2.5.3 Define transitional societies.

1. Most societies of the world are considered transitional: they fall somewhere between agrarian and industrial and have elements of both types.
   a. Example: China

D. Communal and Associational Societies

2.5.4 Distinguish between communal and associational societies.

1. Communal societies rely on a relatively basic technology and emphasize social units such as the family, clan, tribe, or village.
   a. Leadership passes along traditional lines, such as family, gender, and kinship.
   b. Characterized by rich personal relationships.
   c. Hunting and gathering, horticultural, and agrarian societies are largely communal.
2. Associational society: a grouping of people for whom social relationships are often highly impersonal and among whom the main social units are organizations, corporations, and bureaucracies.
   a. Government is heavily bureaucratic, and formal rules take on great importance.
   b. Interpersonal relationships are impersonal and formal.

VI. Catalysts for Change

A. Human Agency and Ideology

2.6.1 Describe how human agency and ideology create social change.

1. Human agency: an activity of individuals or groups aimed at attaining a goal or result.
2. Change is often caused by the organized efforts of individuals and groups working for or against a goal—that is, by a social movement.
   a. An important aspect of a social movement is its ideology: a pattern of beliefs that support and justify a particular social arrangement.

B. Revolution and War

2.6.2 Describe how revolution and war promote change.

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1. War produces economic and political changes as well as huge social changes.
    a. New governments and entirely new nations are established by war.
    b. War speeds up the pace of innovation.

C. Cultural Processes: Invention, Discovery, and Diffusion

2.6.3 Differentiate between invention, discovery, and diffusion.

1. Invention: a new material or nonmaterial product resulting from the combination of known cultural elements in a novel manner.
2. Discovery: a process of noticing or finding something that has not been known before.
    a. Inventions and discoveries that depart too radically from current ways of thinking are usually rejected.
        i. Example: Gregor Mendel's work with plant genetics.
3. Diffusion: the transmission of a cultural element from one group or society to another.
    a. May be physical, such as a tool, or social, such as a custom, an idea, or a belief.
    b. One of the most dramatic diffusions of the twentieth century was the cell phone.

D. Population Change

2.6.4 Explain how population change creates social change.

1. Demographers are mainly interested in birth, mortality, and migration. Changes in any of these processes may produce substantial changes in society.

E. Natural Catastrophes

2.6.5 Describe the social effects of natural catastrophes.

1. Dramatic social changes can be triggered by natural catastrophes such as floods or typhoons.

F. Technology

2.6.6 Illustrate how technology is a major catalyst for social change.

1. The impact of technology is based on cultural factors.
    a. New technology may be accepted in incremental steps.

VII. Solid Modernity/Liquid Modernity

A. Solid Modernity

2.7.1 Define solid modernity.

1. Solid modernity: a pattern of life that is orderly, stable, and predictable.
    a. Overriding goal is to clearly anticipate the future and prepare for it accordingly.
    b. Change occurs in known, orderly ways.
    c. Individuals develop a sense of identity and self that is consistent with the broader society: stable, rational, orderly, and predictable.

B. Liquid Modernity

2.7.2 Contrast liquid modernity to solid modernity.

1. Liquid modernity: a pattern of life in a society characterized by relentless and ubiquitous change.
    a. Contemporary life contains elements of liquid society.
        i. Social relations are becoming more fluid.

C. From Solid to Liquid Modernity

2.7.3 Indicate the reasons for the move from solid to liquid modernity.

1. Reasons societies move to liquid modernity:
    a. Increasing migration of people across the globe.
    b. Computerized technologies create networks of business, travel, recreation, and communication.

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c. Declining power of central governments to control events.
d. Business corporations have decentralized into network organizations.

2. Bauman argues that elements of solid and liquid modernity may be found in a given society.

VIII. Coda: Culture and Society in Our Times

A. Consumption and Consumerism

2.8.1 Distinguish between consumption and consumerism.

1. Consumption: the acquisition and use of goods and services.
2. Consumerism: a set of values that encourages people to acquire numerous and ever-changing goods and services in large quantities.

Revel Video Titles

1. *Immigration*
2. *Family, Modernity, and Social Change*

In-Class/Group Activities

1. Divide the class into small groups and have them work together to come up with a list of folkways, norms, mores, and taboos. Have them explain why they put certain items in specific categories.

2. Help students take a deeper dive into the concept of culture by exploring the topics of subcultures and countercultures. (Although these topics are not mentioned in Chapter 2, they are useful in helping students expand their understanding of culture in general.) After a brief lesson on subcultures and countercultures, have students work individually or together and write about some of the subcultures they belong to. Also, have them come up with a list of countercultures.

3. Ask students to come up with a list of what they consider to be important symbols of American culture. For instance, if they had to pick five symbols of American culture, what would they be?

Dynamic Lecture Topics

1. It is often difficult for students to explain culture because it is everything we know and understand. A good way to get a conversation going is to ask students how they would describe American culture to someone who has never seen or heard about America. What words would they use to describe American culture? Some common descriptors you might discuss include:
    a. Competitive
    b. Individualistic
    c. Technology driven
    d. Achievement
    e. Success
    f. Democracy
    g. Equality

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h. Romantic love

2. Look online (Buzzfeed is a good source) for topics about how people in other cultures dress, how they define beauty, what foods they eat, etc. This is a good way to start a conversation about how "we" (as Americans) view our culture. It is also a great way to discuss ethnocentrism and cultural relativism because it is likely that many students will find other cultures' ideas about beauty, food, clothing, etc. undesirable.

3. The urinal game is about men's bathroom etiquette. You can search for images using "urinal game" or go to the website (www.urinalman.com) that simulates a man's urinal. In these scenarios, the professor asks the men of the classroom if they had to choose a urinal, which one would they choose? This demonstrates ideas about norms and the unspoken nature of culture—how it is understood to exist, but no one questions it or where it began. Furthermore, while physiology may determine if the body has to urinate/defecate, it is social/cultural norms that dictate where one goes to do those activities.

Homework Assignments

1. Have students read Horace Miner's classic article "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema." Then, have them write about the daily activities they perform with the same types of descriptions Miner uses. The goal is to get students to see the strange in the familiar.

2. As a critical-thinking exercise, have students find memes and analyze the symbols, values, norms, and assumptions the memes reflect about culture. This could be an individual assignment or something that is shared with the class to spark discussion.

3. The authors of the text distinguish between consumption and consumerism. In a visual sociology exercise, have students capture images that distinguish between the two concepts. This can be a paper assignment or something to share in class.

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