I. Culture and Society
   A. Culture: The mutually shared products, knowledge, and beliefs, oh a human group or society. It includes all aspects of life within a given society. As the book mentions, every aspect of our society constitutes our culture (polit., econ., gov., ed., relig., pop culture, etc.)
   1. Culture consists of the beliefs, values, behavior, and material objects that define a people's way of life
      a. Sociology breaks it into two types: material and non-material culture.
         - Material culture: physical or tangible objects used by people to accomplish goals (tools and machinery, computers, etc.)
         - Non-Material culture: this consists of more metaphysical, esoteric, or intangible aspects of a society (values, beliefs, art, language, religion, and other symbolic representations of the social and physical world)
   2. Only humans depend on culture rather than instincts to ensure the survival of the species
      a. Culture gives us the ability to actively shape the natural environment for ourselves

3. Keep in mind that society and culture are different things
   a. Society is the actual aspect that provides us with an overarching or all-encompassing social structure.
      - A society has the characteristics of being in a given territory, obeying a common and central authority, as well as sharing a common culture.
      - Sometimes these two concepts are used interchangeably, but in general a culture is more the product of human society, while a society is an entity or separate structure that divides people into a specific group.
B. Components of Culture

- When we think of communication with each other, we usually think of spoken or written language. That is the main way that we get our points across to other people and the main way that social interaction occurs in modern society.

1. Yet there is a deeper meaning to communication that takes place through the use of symbols – representations that stand for something else.
2. Symbols are defined as anything that carries a particular meaning recognized by people who share culture
   a. The meaning of the same symbol varies from society to society, within a single society, and over time
3. These symbols can be sounds, objects, or events, anything members of a group assign meaning to.
   a. Both written and spoken words are symbols for the actual thing we are talking about. They provide the symbolic representation in our minds so we all know what the other person is actually trying to communicate to us.
      - Almost anything we use to communicate or relate information to one another can be considered a symbol.
      - Some symbols can represent important aspects of our lives and society like values or have political importance (the cross, the flag, singing the national anthem, etc.)
4. Of all the symbols used in communication, language is not only the most powerful, but complex as well.
5. Language is a system of symbols that allows members of a society to communicate with one another
   a. Language consists of words that are symbols standing for ideas and objects, and rules for combining these words into extremely complex constructions.
   b. Language is a key to cultural transmission, the process by which one generation passes culture to the next
      - Through most of human history, cultural transmission has been accomplished through oral transmission
      - It consists of a grammar and vocabulary and is more complex than any type of animal communication.
c. Some of theorized that language is so powerful and complex that it actually shapes our perceptions of the world – our reality.

- Something called the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis states that we are forced to interpret the world in terms of the words and grammar of our original language. Thus those people who were taught two languages from birth have a more “cosmopolitan” outlook on life.
- Thus, different languages produce different cultures. Language and culture are closely intertwined to the point that if a language were to disappear off the face of the earth – so might the associated culture.
C. Values and Norms: Any society, no matter where or when it is, has its own set of values, belief system, customs, and way of making sense and order out of the world.

1. Values are culturally defined standards by which people judge desirability, goodness, and beauty and which serve as broad guidelines for social living.
   a. They support beliefs, specific statements that people who share a culture hold to be true.

2. They are preferences people share about what is good or bad, right or wrong, ought to be done, morals, etc.
   a. They are the central beliefs of a culture that provide a standard by which norms are judged.
   b. Even C.W. Mills talked about values, these values can be extremely strong – they can affect our behavior, emotions, thought, and motivate us to action (including violent action).
   c. Values can take on a life of their own, change over time, be empty, hollow, or meaningless, and may not be believed by everyone in the entire society (Why no pork or shellfish?).
      • American society has its own core value system that includes hard work – or the work ethic (set of beliefs associated with the rise of capitalism), individualism, and equality (of opportunity).
      • The American Ethos is a set of core values guiding the beliefs and behaviors of Americans.
      • American society values individualism, hard work, and equality to the point that we are willing to go to war over it or deny people government aid because it is their responsibility.
         • Robin Williams identifies 10:
            • Equal opportunity
            • Achievement and success
            • Material comfort
            • Activity and work
            • Practicality and efficiency
            • Progress
            • Science
            • Democracy and Free enterprise
            • Freedom
            • Racism and group superiority
            • I add Individualism

   d. Values within our society are frequently inconsistent and conflict with one another.
3. **Norms** are specific rules and expectations about how people behave in a given situation (A syllabus for life) Unconscious, unspoken
   a. They provide us with a set of guidelines and expectations in a society so everyone conforms to the same set of behaviors, making life more predictable (less dangerous?)
   b. Norms are an extremely strong force in society. Not following norms or using the wrong ones can cause confusion, anxiety, embarrassment, and violence.
      - There are different kinds of norms that vary in importance to society and us.
      - *Folkways* are norms that deal with relatively unimportant matters (fart, greetings, apologies, etiquette, etc.). If they are violated it is not that big of a deal (mild punishment). They are approved standards of behavior passed on from one generation to the next.
      - *Mores* are norms that concern more serious matters. They deal with the general welfare of society and its very survival or existence (killing, stealing, sex, cheating, etc.). They mostly deal with moral and ethical behavior. They also bring down heavy punishment – including death.
      - *Laws* are norms that govern behavior considered essential to group survival.
      - *Taboos* are norms that are so serious that violation brings down the full wrath of society. They are as close to instinct in human beings as you can get socially. These can vary from one society to another (sex with animals, cannibalism). A universal taboo found in all human societies is the incest taboo (sexual relations with immediate relatives).
   c. It is important to realize that as we internalize norms, we respond critically to our own behavior through shame or guilt, or embarrassment
   d. Issues of social control to conform to norm expectations.
   e. What happens when we go against the norm expectations (BREAKING A NORM) – glue that holds society together – never think about it – but we know it when they are broken
      - Revisit this when we talk about Ethnomethodology

4. **Rituals** are culturally patterned ways of expressing central values and recurring concerns – provide solidarity and group affirmation.
D. Cultural Diversity

1. **Cultural Diversity**: Concept of _cultural diversity_, many distinct cultures that exist within a large _heterogeneous_ society.

2. **Cultural or Ideological Hegemony**: Refers to control over the production of values and norms by those in power.

3. **Subcultures**: Consist of variations in values, beliefs, norms, and behavior among societal subgroups.
   a. Subcultures appear whenever access to some members of society is different. Can be caused by the division of labor, class, race, etc. (ex. Religions – Jews, Amish, etc., Racial Groups, etc.)

4. **Countercultures**: Cultural patterns that strongly oppose accepted culture within society
   a. Represent alternative life-styles for those not conforming to the dominant culture (ex. Cults, 60’s, etc.).

5. Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativity
   a. **Ethnocentrism** is the tendency to judge other cultures by the standards of our own culture. It is the belief that our culture is superior to all other cultures.
      • Remember in Mills we discussed the idea that people tend only to see their own narrow existence and lives – never seeing another culture’s reality or having any desire to see such a reality.
      • This can create a sense that your way of existence is the best because it is the only one you know. Tend to fear or despise (abnormal, weird, or inferior) other cultures.
      • A case of prizing the familiar over the unknown – we tend to fear the unknown. This causes misunderstandings and problems in our own thought processes.
      • Example of Hamburger and India, dog story with grandparents and China
   b. To combat this way of thinking about the world, we must adopt an open mind an acceptance of other cultures and societies
      • Just as Mills and Berger spoke of, what is needed is a form of relativism – in this case – **cultural relativism**.
      • This view recognizes that every culture is _unique_ and _valid_. That just because it is different – it is not wrong, sick, weird, or to be fought. It is an effort to understand a culture the way members of that culture understand it.
      • Judge culture by its own standards
   c. **Multiculturalism**: is an educational program recognizing past and present cultural diversity in US society and promoting equality of all cultural traditions
      • This involves the same aspects of cultural relativism but has its origins in education during the 1960’s.
      • It allows us to see the influences that “foreign” cultures as well as “domestic” cultures have on our society and us.
E. Theoretical Analysis of Culture

1. **Cultural Universals**: Things that you would find in common in most societies OR among all people in the same society (reproduction, child rearing, maintaining order, food, etc.).

2. **Cultural Variability**: Reflects the variety of customs, beliefs, and artifacts, devised by humans to meet universal needs.