Howard University

From the SelectedWorks of Kay T. Payne, Ph.D.

1986

Cultural & Linguistic Groups in the United States

Kay Payne, Howard University

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/KayTPaynePhD/8/
NATURE OF COMMUNICATION DISORDERS IN CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE POPULATIONS

Edited by
Orlando L. Taylor, Ph.D.
Howard University

COLLEGE-HILL PRESS, San Diego, California
Chapter 2

Cultural and Linguistic Groups in the United States

Key T. Payne

A FRAME OF REFERENCE FOR VIEWING CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCES

Cultural Pluralism

The United States has often been referred to as a "melting pot" of cultural groups and nationalities from throughout the world. This thesis suggests a process whereby people of various racial, social, cultural, economic, linguistic, and historical backgrounds amalgamate and produce a new and homogeneous society. It is evident throughout the history of America that the melting pot phenomenon has never become a reality. In their widely acclaimed book, Beyond the Melting Pot, Glaser and Morehian (1970) concede the futility of maintaining the melting pot theory, maintaining, however, that the American culture is still forming, with the final melting being continuously passed to the next generation. Banks (1979) points to ignore cultural difference in America or to contend that ethnic groups have melted into one is intellectually indefensible and represents a gross misinterpretation of American life.

Modern social scientists typically characterize the present sociological condition of the United States as "culturally pluralistic." The concept of cultural pluralism is based on the recognition that American society is made up of a number of diverse and distinct ethnic sub-societies that retain a high degree of group identity. Further-
more, the concept of cultural pluralism recognizes that ethnicity is an integral and salient feature of general American culture.

Principles of cultural pluralism refute some of the popular myths about ethnicity in American society. One popular myth is that the term ethnic group is synonymous with minority group. Although these terms are commonly used synonymously in the media and by the general public, an important distinction is required. A minority group is specifically defined in terms of its quantitative representation within the society or in relation to whatever larger group it is used as a referent. For example, women are sometimes referred to as a minority group in certain milieus in which they are disproportionately represented according to their actual numbers in the population.

A second widely held misconception is the notion that white Anglo-Saxon Protestants do not constitute an ethnic group. The mention of ethnic foods, ethnic dress, or the ethnic vote usually evokes images of pizza, tacos, a kimono, Blasek or Jewish political organizations, and so forth. Rarely are hot dogs and hamburgers referred to as ethnic food or blue jeans and sneakers as ethnic dress. The point is made that Anglo-Americans, although the dominant cultural group within American society, nonetheless meet all the requisite criteria for classification as an ethnic group.

At this juncture, it is appropriate to define ethnicity in the context of culture. Saville-Troike provides a definition of culture in Chapter 3. It should be added that culture is learned through direct teaching, observation, or socialization. Therefore, culture may operate within an individual at varying levels of conscious or subconscious awareness. Aspects of culture may also vary within the group. Finally, it should be noted that culture is dynamic. Thus, making accurate observations and generalizations about cultures must not be approached in a cavalier manner. Although culture and ethnicity are often used interchangeably, culture is a broader and more abstract concept than ethnicity. Ethnicity refers to the more concrete and identifiable aspects of culture, such as national or racial origin, food, dress, customs, and so forth. The National Council on Social Studies Task Force on Ethnic Studies (1976) outlines six characteristics common to "ethnic groups":

1. Origins that precede the creation of the nation or state or that were external to the state (e.g., American Indians and immigrant groups).
2. Group membership that is involuntary (although identification with the group is sometimes optional).
3. Ancestral tradition and sharing of a sense of peoplehood and interdependence of fate.
4. Distinctive value orientations, behavioral patterns, and interests.
5. Influence of the group on the lives of its members.
6. Group membership that is influenced by how members define themselves and how they are defined by others.

A third myth about American society is the belief that ethnic groups aspire to, and will eventually assimilate into, the dominant culture. To the contrary, Gordon (1964) asserts that ethnic groups develop a "sense of peoplehood" that is exceedingly resistant to change or eradication. Also, American society is highly dynamic. Rather than a one-way process wherein ethnic groups partially or totally assimilate into general American society, there is a reciprocal exchange wherein the society also adopts characteristics of the various ethnic groups of which it is composed. For example, American culture has been greatly influenced by foods from the world over, Black American musical style, Asian philosophy, and so forth. Even American English contains many "borrowed" words from other languages, which have typically become Anglicized (e.g., kindergarten, cuisine, rapping, villa, kosher).

To demonstrate this concept, Figure 2-1 shows the relationship of four ethnic subsocieties within the United States to the general American culture. The central shaded area (A) represents human traits that are common to all groups in the United States regardless of culture (e.g., self-preservation and desire for freedom). The cross-hatched area is a conceptualization of general American culture that is common to, and influenced by, all of the various subsocieties of which it is composed. The influences of the four subsocieties, Anglo-American, Black American, Mexican-American, and Jewish-American, are represented as overlapping circles to denote their relationship to each other, as well as to the general American culture.

Culture Versus Socioeconomic Class

The distinctions between culture and socioeconomic class are often confused and misrepresented. Regrettably, there are too many methodologically unsound studies on human behavior in which the variables of culture and socioeconomic class are confounded. There is no doubt that some cultural differences are class derived. Similarly, there are class differences that cut across all ethnic and cultural groups.
According to Rossi (1975), the socioeconomic class system in the United States exhibits distinctions not only in income but also in property ownership, occupation, education, personal and family life, and education of children. Five socioeconomic class distinctions are noted, along with their percentages within the society: lower class (20 to 25 percent), working class (40 to 45 percent), lower middle class (30 to 35 percent), upper middle class (10 to 15 percent) and upper class (1 to 3 percent). What is typically "middle class" in the United States is defined as having a modest to high income, accumulation of savings and property, occupation status representative of clerical service, small business ownership, and professional positions; education including college and graduate school; better physical and mental health with longer life expectancy; and attainment of college education by descendants.
It is important to note that although it is highly correlated, "middle-classness" is not defined only by income level and material or personal possessions. In fact, middle class status typically entails a specific ideology. For example, the general American middle class is marked by a particular set of values, a distinctive life-style associated with "conspicuous consumption" of goods and services and material acquisitions, and specific leisure activities. An example of a value of the general American middle class that may not necessarily be shared by working class or lower class individuals is the emphasis placed on education. Some members of the working class or lower class may value vocational education or even stress work as opposed to the typical middle class value placed on high school or college education.

Despite the income level needed for identification with the middle class, many working class and lower class individuals may share middle-class ideologies. A value often shared by all socioeconomic classes relates to the acquisition of material possessions. It is also important to note that there can be cultural variation in "middle classness." For example, leisure time activities and what is considered fun often vary greatly among ethnic groups, even those of similar income levels who share other typical middle class values.

The ideologies associated with the general American middle class are not entirely arbitrary. In most cases, these ideologies represent the values and traditions that will perpetuate the quality of life enjoyed by the economically privileged. It is also no accident that in the United States, middle class ideologies are overwhelmingly synonymous with those of Anglo-Americans. By virtue of their economic power, Anglo-Americans also achieve social prestige. Together, their total representation within the population, their economic power, and their social prestige establish Anglo-Americans as the dominant culture within the society. Other ethnic groups have the option of adopting the ideologies of the middle class Anglo-American or holding to those of their own group. The degree to which other ethnic groups adopt Anglo-American middle class ideologies depends, in part, on (1) the degree of association with Anglo-American middle class individuals, (2) the strength of the individual's ethnic identification, and, (3) the individual's preference for his or her own ethnic ideologies.

Herein lies a major reason why socioeconomic class and culture are often not distinguished. Although it is evident that the middle class is made up of Anglo-Americans to an overwhelming extent, both economically and in ideology, there is no doubt that members of
other ethnic groups are also threatened. Since a disproportionate number of non-Anglo Americans are relegated to the working and lower classes owing to the unavailability of economic opportunities, behaviors or values exhibited by individuals in these groups are often misinterpreted as having origins in their ethnicity when the behavior is actually attributable to socioeconomic class.

Cultural Stereotyping

In any discussion of culture, a word about stereotyping is warranted. Stereotyping exists when an unritical judgment is made about an entire group based on the actions of a few members. Sometimes stereotyping is the result of a misinterpretation or exaggeration of an actual cultural behavior, either intentionally or unintentionally. For example, a cultural group that places high value on physical cleanliness and touching—even across gender lines—may be erroneously stereotyped as being prudish by a group that prefers physical distance and disdains touching.

To avoid stereotyping, it is necessary to understand these critical influences on human behavior. Two of these influences—culture and social class—were discussed previously. A third influence is individual choices within the interpersonal realm. Many human behaviors are indeed idiosyncratic, stemming either from ethnic or from social class influences. Also included in the interpersonal realm are family, gender, and peer group influences, since identification with these groups is more readily amenable to conscious selection. Therefore, generalizations about cultures or ethnic groups are valid only when influences of class and personality can be factored out or when historical evidence is unquestionable.

Language and Culture

Having gained a general understanding of culture, we may now consider the phenomenon of linguistic difference. There is no doubt that language shares an intimate relationship with culture. This relationship may be demonstrated by comparing two accepted definitions of these terms. Goodenough (1957) defines culture as, "whatever one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to the society's members." He further elaborates that, culture is not objects, people, behavior, or emotions, but an organization of these things. Language is defined by Sapir (1921) as "a purely human and non-innate method of communicating ideas, emo-
tions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols. By analogy, if culture is an organization (system) of objects, behaviors, and emotions, and language is a system (organization) of symbols representing ideas, emotions, and desires, it must be concluded that language is a part of culture, albeit a very important part. The intimacy of language and culture is epitomized in the example of how idioms of one language are often not easily translated and, in fact, may lose some meaning when translated to other languages.

The depth of the relationship of language and culture is further demonstrated in the recognition that language is acquired only in a cultural context. Although the human brain is uniquely organized to acquire language, studies of children reared by wolves show that devoid of the human social context, language does not emerge. Studies of language acquisition also show that language is acquired through active social participation (Bloom and Lahey, 1978). Thus, the expectation that children will learn language through passive listening to radio and television is a serious misconception.

Understanding of the relationship of language and culture is a prime requisite in both the educational and therapeutic contexts. Many teachers and speech-language therapists have been perplexed as to why certain elements of language in linguistic minority groups have been highly resistant to change. The explanation lies in the fact that the linguistic system used by any group is directly and intricately related to the indigenous culture. For any group, language is the most important means through which the culture is communicated. Consequently, there is a strong cultural allegiance to the indigenous language. In addition, language is an important vehicle for cultural identification and solidarity. Some cultures resist any change in their language or dialect. Consider, for example, France's Académie Française, a government sanctioned institution that exists to preserve the purity of the French national language.

Given that the roots of language are deeply embedded in culture, it is logical, therefore, to state that language cannot be studied properly except in its cultural context. For linguists, the basic entity for language study is the speech community. Speech community has been variously defined by linguists and sociolinguists. Bauman (1972) follows Hymes in defining a speech community as "a social group sharing both rules for the conduct and interpretation of acts of speech and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic code." Fishman (1968) asserts that a speech community is ultimately defined in terms of its set of shared norms, rather than agreement in the use of language elements. That is, speech communities are not
merely identifiable as groups producing a particular language variety or sharing the same geographical region, ethnicity, or social class. Rather, a speech community is defined by its particular set of shared attitudes, values, and beliefs concerning speech and language, as well as the norms for speech and language use.

Properly conceived, these definitions set up the possibility for the existence of an infinite number of speech communities for any given society. In addition, speech communities may have any number of sociological factors as the basis for their existence (e.g., region, ethnicity, social class, gender, and age). One individual, therefore, may be a member of several speech communities concurrently, consciously or unconsciously using the language of each as appropriate for the social context.

It must be noted that there is much overlap in the linguistic patterns of speech communities, such that no speech community within the same language nation is completely autonomous. The linguistic patterns, together with the norms and rules for language usage, that are germane to separate speech communities are known as dialects. Although a single language may consist of many dialects, which have varying degrees of similarities and differences, linguists view all dialects as equal, to the extent that each codifies and communicates the cultural experience of the speech community. Much in the sense that no culture is superior to another, different languages and dialects are not arranged hierarchically.

Nonetheless, for most languages, one dialect tends to emerge as a normative exemplar for the language nation. This variety is known as the linguistic standard. There are several observations about the standard variety of American English. Bloomfield (1933) observed that standard English is generally spoken by those born into homes of privilege, wealth, or education. He also observed that standard English is that which receives institutional support and endorsement through use in schools, churches, and other formal situations, as well as being the only form of English acceptable for written communication.

Quirk (1968) discussed why standard English emerged as the normative variety of American English, stating that its prominence is not achieved through its esthetic qualities, though these may be sincerely believed in by its speakers. Rather, standard Eng- lish became the norm for American society because of the prestige of its representative speakers—that is, middle and upper class individ- uals. Thus, standard English achieved its prominence through a so- cially constructed reality rather than through factors inherent in its linguistic structure.
There are two basic characteristics of standard varieties of any language that help to preserve its status. First, as Garvin and Mathiot (1960) stated, the standard variety of language is characteristically less free to vary than other language varieties, owing to the fact that it is the written language variety, and that rules of grammar and pronunciation are explicitly stated. Second, the standard variety enjoys the privilege of “language loyalty” or that attitude which leads its speakers to defend its “purity” against “corruption.”

Through concepts such as the speech community and recognition of the equality of dialects, sociolinguists have modified the general notion of the linguistic standard. Standard English, as it is generally known, is recognized as formal language and the language of education. In the modified notion, standard English is given freedom of variation in terms of spoken patterns. Therefore, it is possible to recognize other standard varieties of language. For example, Taylor (1974) calls for the recognition of an ethnic variety of standard English to accommodate the dialect that is spoken by educated Black Americans and which reflects a uniquely Black influence on general American standard English. Likewise, McDavid (1966) discusses regional varieties of standard English. Hence, Southern English is no longer stigmatized as a nonstandard variety of English.

Although the linguistic notions discussed in this chapter reflect novel exceptions to traditional views of language, all are consistent with, and indeed crucial to, the concept of cultural pluralism. For disciplines such as communication disorders, in which the study of language is a major component, it is unwise for us to operate from a conceptual framework that ignores the principles of cultural pluralism.

**MAJOR CULTURAL GROUPS IN THE UNITED STATES**

The culturally pluralistic character of the United States was largely developed through territorial acquisitions and immigration policies. In addition, the slave trade prior to 1864 was mainly responsible for the presence of the majority of the Black population in America.

At present, the United States is the protectorate of several acquired territories, including Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands in the Caribbean; Guam, Samoa, Mariana, Midway, Wake, Canton, and Ensenada Islands in the Pacific; and Panama Canal Zone. Inhabitants of these territories are citizens of the United States but possess distinct cultural or language characteristics, or both.
Within the 50 states, diverse indigenous cultural groups exist, including American Indians, Eskimos, and Hawaiians. Also, by immigration, the United States is composed of representatives from cultures and nationalities from throughout the world. In many cases, settlement patterns have produced distinct cultural and linguistic communities.

Settlement patterns of the immigrants were influenced by proximity to the nation of origin, industrial opportunities, agricultural opportunities, and the slave trade. For example, the industrial revolution in the Northeastern and Midwestern states attracted many immigrants from Western Europe. Thus, New York, Illinois, and Michigan contain many cultural communities of Western European origin (see Fig. 2-2). Similarly, the Asian populations of the Western states, the Mexican-American population of the Southwest, and the Black American population of the Southern states all reflect these settlement trends. It is no surprise, therefore, that California, New York, and Texas, for example, are among the most culturally diverse states within the nation, owing to their unique features such as port activity and agricultural or industrial economies.

Inevitably, the pattern of settlement and cultural mix resulted in the development of various linguistic communities and distinct dialects. The most prominent regional dialects of the United States are Southern, New York City, New England, Appalachian, and Midwestern. In addition, some social dialects emerged as a result of historical factors within a cultural group. Black English is one example of a social dialect that has been shown to have deep historical roots and many survivals from African languages (Turner, 1945).

American Indians

It is rumored that when Christopher Columbus "discovered" America, he called the inhabitants "Indians" since he thought he had reached India. Whether they are called Indians, American Indians, or Native Americans, it is undeniable that this cultural group is the one true indigenous culture of the United States.

According to the 1980 census, the population of American Indians numbered 1,420,000. However, these figures are often disputed since many American Indians do not cooperate in the census count, and there is no established definition that identifies a person as American Indian. Indeed, Alaskan Aleuts and Eskimos are sometimes counted as "Indians" because of their racial features, although they did not inhabit the continental United States at the inception of the nation. Since Native Alaskans have had a different historical
Figure 2.2: Map of the major white ethnic groups in the United States. After Brenner, D. M. (1973). The major ethnic minorities in Minneapolis, Western Press.
experience from American Indians, for purposes of this chapter they will be dealt with as separate cultural groups.

Racially, American Indians represent a distinct and homogeneous population. Yet, culturally there is a high degree of diversity. Although there is controversy over the definition of the word “tribe,” the Bureau of Indian Affairs identifies some 360 to 380 American Indian nations in existence.

According to Highwater (1975), the usual anthropological method of classifying American Indians was based on how they sought food (i.e., hunting, fishing, gathering) or by shelter, religious conviction, or language. Eight major linguistic groups are identified by Highwater: Algonquian, Iroquoian, Caddoan, Muskogean, Siouan, Penutian, Athapaskan, and Uto-Aztecan.

Today American Indians are overwhelmingly concentrated in the West and Southeastern states. Previously, the greatest number of American Indians resided in Oklahoma as a result of the forced migration from the East after 1830 and resettlement on reservations. In recent years, however, American Indians who have migrated from reservations to cities have made California the state with the largest American Indian concentration, with Oklahoma being the state with the second largest concentration of American Indians.

The state with the third largest population density of American Indians is Arizona, home of the Navajo nation. The Navajo nation occupies the largest reservation, and is the fastest growing Indian nation in the United States. In addition, substantial numbers of American Indians may be found in New York, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, North Carolina, Montana, New Mexico, Washington, and Oregon.

Today, almost all American Indians speak English or a variety of English that has been influenced by Indian language. In addition, many older persons may speak one of the 50 to 100 Indian languages still in existence. Highwater (1975) states further that American Indians possess a great admiration of words, oration, and proper form. Yet elements of what others call friendliness is often perceived as invasion of privacy, to which American Indians react with a deep, uncomfortable silence.

Although there is a great diversity among American Indian nations, there are other cultural generalities that are important to note in cross-cultural relations. For example, Highwater states that paternalism is the most repulsive condition in the relationship between Anglo-Americans and American Indians. He further elabo-
rates that racist terms such as "chief," "squat," and "redskin," and beating the hand against the mouth while making a "wow-wow" sound, are highly offensive to American Indians since they, as other groups, feel a great sense of cultural pride.

In general, American Indians feel a kinship with nature, a world view which Highwater (1981) characterizes as the "primal mind." Individual identity, a highly valued aspect of American culture, is virtually nonexistent in traditional Indian cultures. Instead, American Indians tend to value the concept of "communal homogeneity," in which each member of the nation is related in some unique way to the community. Thus, it is sometimes astonishing to non-Indians that handicapping conditions are so easily accepted. Harris (1982) in a published interview provides a unique insight into perceptions of handicapping conditions by American Indians.

There is no doubt that American Indian cultures are as complex as any other. Subsequent chapters provide a more in-depth view of American Indian cultures as they relate to the nature, diagnosis, and treatment of communication disorders.

Whites

Approximately 83 percent of the population of the United States is classified as "white." However, within this group there are many cultural variations. Based on nationality of ancestry, the following major "white ethnic groups" and percentages within the population are recorded in the 1980 census data: Italian (13 percent), German (11 percent), English (7 percent), Polish (7 percent), Russian (5 percent), and Irish (4 percent). Other groups, particularly from other Western European nations, Canadians, and Jewish-Americans contribute to the total percentage of whites within the population.

There are many similarities and differences in the cultural tendencies of white ethnic groups. Ethnic identification, the number of post-European generations, and patterns of intermarriage contribute to whether or not individuals operate according to ethnic and cultural standards.

Although whites reside in large numbers in all of the states, there are particular regions in which specific ethnic communities other than Anglo-Americans may be found. Northern states, particularly those east of the Mississippi, and states surrounding the Great Lakes exhibit the greatest diversity among white ethnic groups. Southern states exhibit the least amount of diversity, being composed largely of persons of Anglo-Saxon descent. Cities, such as New
York City, Chicago, Milwaukee, Boston, Detroit, and Baltimore, contain many white ethnic communities that maintain a high degree of cultural identification and allegiance.

White ethnic groups of non-English speaking heritage may also maintain their native language. In fact, recent census reports show that more than 600,000 Americans speak European languages other than Spanish. Among these groups, 36.8 percent of those who speak Portuguese have difficulty speaking English, as do 29 percent of Greek speakers, 15.9 percent of those who speak Italian, 10.6 percent of Polish speakers, 6.4 percent of French speakers, and 5 percent of German speakers.

Even when keeping native dress, foods, holidays, and other overt aspects of culture, white ethnic groups are generally able to assimilate with ease into general American society. However, the development to this stage has been difficult for some groups. In 1899, Ripley published a treatise, The Races of Europe, which popularized the notion that the Teutonic race of northern Europe was genetically superior to other white races of southern and eastern nations. In the United States, laws such as the Alien and Sedition Acts, the nativist era of the 1860s, and the Know-Nothings movement of the 1850s reflected bigotry and intolerance. Tests containing cultural bias are not a recent phenomenon; heavily biased literacy tests were used extensively during the period of greatest immigration from southern Europe to discourage and prohibit immigrants from entering the United States.

Among white ethnic groups, Jewish-Americans of European ancestry are a highly visible cultural-religious group. Cutting across many nationalities, and several races, the Jewish people possess a unique historical experience. For centuries, Jewish peoples were scattered throughout the world and severely persecuted; the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was an attempt to provide a Jewish homeland. At present, approximately 6 million Jews reside in the United States, constituting about 3 percent of the nation's population. Jews have lived in this nation since the original 13 colonies, settling predominantly in the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam. A great influx of Jews from Germany occurred from 1820 to 1880. Most German Jews settled in the Ohio and Mississippi valleys, establishing themselves as merchants and traders. From 1881 to 1924, more than 2 million Jews immigrated from Eastern Europe, settling mainly in the Northeastern port cities of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore.

Many Jews have moved away from the traditions of Orthodox re-
liegen. This has produced these separate movements within the religion. Those who remain faithful to ancestral traditions are known as Orthodox Jews. Those who do not conform totally to traditional practices, yet wish to retain some aspects of the religion, adopt the principles of either Conservative or Reform Judaism.

Yiddish is the native language of Eastern European Jews, although almost all Jews in the United States speak English. Another common language, Hebrew, is reserved for prayer and religious activities. Hebrew is the official language of Israel, however. Both of these languages have greatly influenced American English.

The Jewish culture places high value on education. On the whole, Jews represent one of the best educated groups in American society. Achievement is also valued highly, and Jews have made tremendous contributions to medicine, science, and technology.

Black Americans

There is perhaps no cultural group with greater diversity than Black Americans. Indeed, Black Americans cut across all socioeconomic classes, religions, educational backgrounds, skin colors, political persuasions, and social beliefs and traditions. Therefore, any discussion of Black Americans must be qualified by specific descriptions, such as urban Blacks, rural Blacks, Southern Blacks, and working-class Blacks. A typical error of much of past and current research, as well as of many media accounts today, is the failure to provide such descriptors. Regardless of the accuracy of such reports for the specific group of Blacks in question, if the results are applied to all Black Americans, they amount to no more than stereotypes.

A particular cultural tendency of Black Americans is their public sense of social solidarity. For example, middle-class Blacks, although they have achieved success, often align themselves with the struggles of less fortunate members of the group. Words such as “brother” and “blood” used in reference to other group members denote this solidarity. This cultural trait also leads some non-Blacks to the misperception of Blacks as separatists and helps to fuel stereotypes.

Black Americans constitute approximately 11 percent of the population of the United States, numbering about 26.5 million persons. More than one half of the Black American population resides in Southern states. In addition, about one third of all Blacks reside in urban centers of the Midwest and Northeast, particularly Chicago, Detroit, Baltimore, Washington DC, New York, and Philadelphia.

It should be noted that the Black American population includes
not only direct descendants of the African slaves in America but also other immigrants from Caribbean nations. Though similar in heritage and some structural aspects of language, these groups present somewhat different cultural tendencies. For example, Glazer and Moynihan (1957) observed that, on the whole, Blacks from Caribbean nations achieve more education and higher social status than do Blacks whose ancestral roots are in American soil. However, the cause of this phenomenon is not known, seemingly perhaps from selective migration from Caribbean nations of those who wish to better their lives in general. Nonetheless, the language, foods, traditions, and some values differ between native American Blacks and Caribbean immigrants.

As a race, Blacks have endured severe bigotry and intolerance in the United States. Physical features and overt cultural tendencies that are at maximal contrast to those of the dominant American society have made assimilation more difficult. As a result, Black Americans have developed strong in-group defenses, cultural allegiances, and a tremendous sense of cultural pride. In addition, Black Americans, irrespective of socioeconomic status, tend to possess a strong sense of justice, especially on racial issues, sometimes appearing to others as overly defensive. Much like the Jewish dedication to preserving the memory of the Holocaust, Blacks are always wary of possible inequalities or violations of their civil rights.

Among many urban and working-class Blacks, the language is an element of culture that is used to denote solidarity. Many educated and middle-class Blacks consider themselves to be bidialectal, using standard English as required for formal situations or communication with non-Blacks and Black English vernacular as an in-group linguistic code. One reason why Black English vernacular has been so resistant to eradication is its function within the culture as a unifying device.

Few would argue that Black Americans should be proficient in standard English for use when required. Yet, issues of language loyalty, as previously defined, if not afforded to all cultures will hinder progression in education as well as social achievement. The language of Black Americans will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter.

The basic unit of Black American culture is the family. In 1971, the National Urban League issued a monograph entitled The Strengths of Black Families. Five attributes were cited that characterize Black families, including (1) strong kinship bonds, (2) strong work orientation, (3) flexibility of family rules, (4) strong achievement, and (5) strong religious orientation. Flexibility of family roles
should be particularly noted because recent statistics show that 47.1 percent of Black families exist in female-headed households.

As in many cultures worldwide, the traditional American model in a family structure headed by a male. It is necessary for a family unit to have some strong authority figure regardless of that person's sex. In many urban and working-class Black families, authority is relegated to mothers or even grandmothers. It is not uncommon, however, to have males within the household (e.g., brothers, uncles) who assume authoritative roles. The full implications of what it means to have female dominated roles is not known. It is known, however, that these families tend to have lower incomes than those in which males are heads of households.

In addition to other cultural tendencies, Black Americans possess distinct communication styles, both verbal and nonverbal. These styles, however, vary according to social class, gender, age, region, and so forth. Many descriptions, especially Thomas Kochman's Black and White Styles in Conflict, purport to describe Black-white relations in general, yet they fail to present an accurate account since they compare working-class Black styles, particularly those of young Black males, to the styles of middle class whites.

On the basis of a review of available literature and anecdotal reports, Taylor (1985) listed some general verbal and nonverbal communication styles of working-class Black Americans and Anglo-Americans. Some of these differences, and some similar differences between Hispanic and Asian Americans and working-class Anglo-Americans, are presented in Table 2-1.

Hispanics

Hispanic refers to any person of Spanish, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. Needless to say, Hispanics include a broad representation of cultures bound together by one language. In the United States, major Hispanic populations include Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, and Cuban Americans. It is estimated that there are 15 million persons of Hispanic origin in the United States. The 1980 census figures also indicate that Spanish is the major home language of approximately 6.7 million persons. About 48 percent of these persons, primarily adults, reportedly have difficulty with English.

Much like American English, British English, and Australian English, the language spoken by Hispanics of various nationalities is minimally variable. Except for a few phonological, lexical, and idi-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2-1: Some Verbal and Nonverbal Communication Styles of Various Ethnic Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black Americans</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweat and emphasis are sometimes considered as aggressive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greeting and approval are given through gestures such as &quot;giving a hug.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching one's hate by another person is often considered offensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public behavior (e.g., a play or concert) is emotionally involving, expressive, and demonstrative as in laughter, shouts, and so forth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Signifying&quot; as a form of verbal in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>train is an extreme among met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking personal questions of someone else, how far, or for the first time, is seen as impervious and intrusive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of direct questions is sometimes seen as harassment, asking when something will be finished is seen as rude, and humor is used to finish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Breaking in&quot; during conversation is usually ignored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations are regarded as private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between the recognized participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Breaking in&quot; is seen as rude, and dropping it is not tolerated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of &quot;you people&quot; is seen as prescriptive and rude.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Hispanic Culture</strong></th>
<th><strong>Anglo-Americans</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having to gain attention is acceptable.</td>
<td>Miming is considered impolite and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having and having at a play or concert indicated extreme approval.</td>
<td>indicated extreme approval.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table continues on opposite page.
Table 2-1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asian Americans</th>
<th>Angle Americans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching or hand-holding between members of the same sex is acceptable.</td>
<td>Teaching or hand-holding between members of the same sex may be considered a sign of homosexuality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand-holding, hugging, kissing between men and women in public looks ridiculous.</td>
<td>Hand-holding, hugging, kissing between men and women in public is acceptable to some groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A slap on the back is insulting.</td>
<td>A slap on the back denotes friendliness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is not customary to shake hands with persons of the opposite sex.</td>
<td>It is customary to shake hands with persons of the opposite sex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waving motions are considered by adults to call little children and not vice-versa.</td>
<td>Waving motions are often used to call people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbols of the old South, such as confederate flags and Black lungpout lawn ornaments are acceptable to some groups.</td>
<td>Black view confederate flags and Black lungpout ornaments as offensive and racist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using cultural group gestures such as &quot;giving a hand&quot; and bowing is seen as acceptable.</td>
<td>Using cultural group gestures is seen as patronizing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including a minority person in group activities is seen as democratic.</td>
<td>Purposely including a minority person in group activities is seen as taken for granted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopting the dance pattern or music style of other cultural groups is seen as free exchange.</td>
<td>Adopting the dance pattern or music style of other cultural groups is offensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining eye contact in conversation is regarded as respectful or as a sign of soreness.</td>
<td>Maintaining eye contact in conversation is regarded as staring or a sign of condescension.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black view confederate flags and Black lungpout ornaments as offensive and racist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using cultural group gestures is seen as patronizing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposely including a minority person in group activities is seen as taken for granted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopting the dance pattern or music style of other cultural groups is offensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining eye contact in conversation is regarded as staring or a sign of condescension.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
matic differences, the language of Spain, Mexico, Cuba, and Puerto Rico is virtually the same. There is no doubt, however, that despite the similarities in the language, the cultures of these groups are very distinct.

The island of Puerto Rico has been a United States territory since 1898. Although Puerto Rico is not a state, its residents have been citizens of the United States since 1917. Since this time, there has been a constant influx of Puerto Ricans to the mainland, especially in the Northeastern states of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. At present, there are more than two million Puerto Ricans residing on the mainland, of which approximately 1.2 million reside in the three Northeastern states cited.

Puerto Ricans share a mixed racial heritage of Indian, African, and Spanish ancestry. On the island, racial differences and color distinctions are noted, albeit much less than on the mainland. In Puerto Rico, although it is preferable to be white rather than Black, social class status is more important than race. This phenomenon causes some problems for Puerto Ricans who migrate to the mainland, because Puerto Ricans, as a group, are subjected to prejudice and discrimination. In addition, some Puerto Ricans face identity problems as they try to adjust to life in the general society.

In general, Puerto Rico is a multilingual society. When immigrants arrive in the States, Spanish is usually their only means of communication. After residing on the mainland for some time, they may achieve various levels of English proficiency. Because Spanish is the official language of the community, homes, churches, and most institutions, the school is the major vehicle for learning English for new arrivals from Puerto Rico. Thus, bilingual education is important for these children. Adults, however, face many problems in adjusting to the language difference.

Mexican-Americans compose the second largest Hispanic cultural group in the United States. In 1980, about 8.7 million Mexican-Americans lived within United States boundaries. It is important to note that not all Mexican-Americans are immigrants. Indeed, Mexicans inhabited the land that is now the state of Texas prior to its annexation in 1845. Today, Texas still maintains the second largest Mexican-American population among the states.

California contains by far the largest Mexican-American community. Substantial numbers of Mexican-Americans also reside in Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona. Smaller pockets of Mexican-Americans are to be found in all the states, including Alaska and Hawaii. Racially, most Mexicans are a mixture of Spanish and In-
dian ancestry. Also, through Spanish contact with the Moors and a small slave trade in Mexico, there is an African strain present in some Mexicans.

Prior to 1848, the border between the United States and Mexico was a "free border." During the gold rush of 1849, many Mexicans immigrated to work the mines of California. Also, during the early settlements of the Southwest, Mexicans were needed to develop the agricultural economy. The Mexican Revolution of 1910 forced many peasants across the border seeking refuge from the war. By the beginning of World War II, Mexicans were again recruited to fill the labor demands created by the war. At this time, anti-Mexican sentiment was already high in the United States. In addition, seasonal workers were frequently brought into the states on a temporary basis to perform unskilled work as needed, and to return to Mexico when the work season ended.

Mexican laborers have always been exploited. Yet many prefer this exploitation to the poverty conditions in their own nation. As a result, many undocumented aliens continue to flock across the border from Mexico. Most recent immigration laws permit 20,000 persons per year to legally emigrate to the United States from Mexico.

As in other Hispanic cultures, the family is the center of Mexican culture. An extended family, including grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins, may reside under the same roof. Ironically, American homes are not constructed to accommodate the extended family, so by American standards, Mexican-American dwellings seem to be overcrowded. Although there are distinct roles, the Mexican-American families are closely intertwined and involved in almost all aspects of each individual's life. It is not unusual for family members to accompany each other to the market, to the clinic, for a stroll, and so forth.

Although many Mexican-Americans are bilingual, most maintain a special allegiance to their native language of Spanish. There is a growing number of Mexican-American newspapers and radio and television programs broadcasting in Spanish. Even among third and fourth generation Mexican-Americans, bilingual programs within the schools may be necessary.

A third major Hispanic group within the United States is Cuban-Americans. Although there is a sizable difference in the number of Cuban Americans compared with Puerto Ricans and Mexican-Americans, this group is highly visible. Of the 800,000 Cuban-Americans presently residing within the United States, more than half are found in Florida, particularly Miami. The second largest
concentration of Cuban-Americans is in New York City. However, in all of New York State, there are only 30,000 Cuban-American residents. Cuban-Americans represent a distinct racial group, in comparison with Puerto Ricans and Mexican-Americans. For the most part, Cuban-Americans are of direct European ancestry.

Unlike most other immigrants who entered the United States for economic reasons, Cuban-Americans overwhelmingly came from the middle and upper classes who were threatened by the political regime of Fidel Castro. Since the revolution of 1959, there have been four stages of Cuban immigration to the United States. Between 1959 and 1962, Cuban immigrants were given preferred status. In 1962, the Cuban missile crisis ended commercial airflights between the United States and Cuba, forcing immigrants to employ more clandestine means of entry. The third stage of immigration was known as the Cuban Refugee Airlift, whereby the United States government sponsored flights to Miami. This program was terminated in 1973. Finally, during the Carter administration in 1979, Cubans were again permitted to enter the United States in large numbers. Immigrants entering during this recent stage have faced greater adjustment problems, because it is alleged that Castro exported many undesirable citizens, such as those in prisons and mental hospitals.

Because of their socioeconomic status, Cuban-Americans have generally been easily accepted into American society because they brought with them cultural values that are similar to the dominant society in the United States. Teachers report that Cuban-American students are highly motivated. As in the general American culture, education, hard work, and personal accomplishments are valued highly in Cuban-American culture. Yet, the adjustment of many Cuban-Americans to American culture has not been easy. The refugee situation has fostered separation of families. Many customs, such as chastened dating, which is virtually unknown in American society, frequently cause adjustment problems, especially for second generation Cuban-Americans.

Asian Americans

The term Asian American, as commonly used today, refers to all people of Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Burmese, Vietnamese, Laotian, Malaysian, Cambodian, and Thai descent. This term replaces the term "oriental" which is less preferred by Asian Americans. Even Asian American is a somewhat loose title because the groups differ in physical and cultural characteristics as well as in
the languages spoken. According to the 1960 census, the three most populous groups of Asian Americans include those of Chinese (890,000), Filipino (775,000), and Japanese (704,000) descent. The overwhelming proportion of each of these three major groups resides in Western states, particularly California and Hawaii, although there is a substantial representation of Chinese Americans in New York.

The gold rush of 1849 attracted many Chinese immigrants to California. By 1862, many Chinese were employed in the Central Pacific Railroad. As a result, there was a migration of Chinese people inward toward the Eastern states. During their initial migration, Chinese people suffered severe exploitation and racial prejudice. From 1882 until 1965, the Chinese Exclusion Act and other subsequent revisions were passed, which limited Chinese immigration. The Geary Act of 1892 not only excluded Chinese laborers from entering the United States but also restricted immigrants' legal rights as well. It was not until 1965 that the new immigration law eliminated the rational origins quota system and established fair immigration policies for all foreign nations.

Despite the racism they experienced, Chinese-Americans have made many contributions to American life, having made a great number of achievements in education, sciences, and the arts. Although many Chinese-Americans still reside in Chinatowns, many upwardly mobile descendants of the first immigrants have moved into other communities. Almost one third of Chinese-American workers are employed in professional and technical occupations, of which only 4 percent work as laborers. Moreover, the median income of Chinese-Americans is higher than that of the general population. Almost half of Chinese-Americans have some difficulty with the English language, including about 11 percent of the school-age population. Thus, bilingual education programs are of extreme importance. In fact, it was the celebrated case of Loe v. Nichols in 1974 that became the legal basis for bilingual education in the United States. In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that the San Francisco School District was denying Chinese students who did not speak English their constitutional right by not giving them the opportunity for a meaningful education in their native language.

Perhaps more than any other group, Chinese-Americans still adhere to the traditions of their homeland. Many Chinese-Americans maintain their native food, dress, attitudes, holidays, and customs. The family is tremendously influential in individual lives. Thus, Chinese-Americans rarely take advantage of social services, with o-
ception to those within the community. The Chinese-American family is a male-dominated organization. Traditionally, women, regardless of age, are submissive. Several generations of married sons may still live with their parents. Chinese-Americans tend to give tremendous respect to age and authority.

Japanese immigration into the United States was much like that of the Chinese. Currently, during the years when the Chinese Exclusion Act was in effect, many Japanese persons entered the United States to fill the void left by Japanese workers. Japanese farm workers arrived in California and Hawaii. The racism that the Chinese immigrants experienced was soon extended to the Japanese. Immigration restrictions were imposed through the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907 and the Immigration Act of 1924. Other laws were passed, as in the case of Chinese immigrants, to limit Japanese citizenship, land ownership, and upward mobility.

The most blatant violation of Japanese civil rights was the internment of 1942. Because of a prevalent and irrational fear that they would remain loyal to Japan and turn against the United States during World War II, Japanese-Americans were removed from their homes and placed in concentration camps. Since World War II, racism against Japanese has still been pervasive, however subtle.

Japanese-Americans have made tremendous adjustments to American life. On most social indicators they are found above the norms for the general society. The internment caused a serious disruption of traditional Japanese cultural life. In addition, a growing rate of intermarriages within the community has contributed to the discontinuity of cultural traditions. Among Japanese-Americans, who remain faithful to their cultural traditions, factors such as family, strong group orientation, and strong moral training may dictate individual behavior.

Slightly more than one fourth of Japanese-Americans have difficulty with English. This difficulty lies overwhelmingly among adults. Educational achievement is a major priority among Japanese-Americans. As a result, Japanese-Americans represent one of the most highly educated groups within the United States.

Regardless of their adherence to cultural tradition, most Japanese-Americans place great value on hard work. Perseverance and wholesomeness are also cultural traits. Another cultural trait that makes Japanese-Americans easily accepted into general American society is their polite and respectful style of communication. Japanese-Americans are seen as agreeable, nonaggressive, loyal, and devoted.
OTHER CULTURAL GROUPS

Within the United States, there are many other cultural groups with lesser visibility than those discussed previously. Some are immigrant groups who have entered in fewer numbers. Other immigrants, such as Filipinos, may be present in large numbers but are more widely dispersed throughout the nation. Still other groups are citizens of the United States but live in remote or isolated locations. Among the latter, there are three distinct cultural groups that deserve consideration. These are Eskimos, Native Hawaiians, and Virgin Islanders.

Eskimos

Eskimos represent one of the three native Alaskan groups that together total one sixth of the state’s population. Eskimos represent over half of this total. Also represented are Indians and Aleuts.

In a land that is one of the richest reserves in the world, nearly all Eskimos live in dire poverty. Previously, Eskimos were a migratory people. More recently, however, many small permanent villages have been established, varying in size from a few families to 1,000 persons. Eskimo villages are distributed throughout the state, usually along coastal areas and far from the state’s population centers.

Although many Eskimos still depend on the land and fishing for subsistence, there is a growing interest in the cash-based economy of American culture. Poor educational opportunities and high unemployment are the rule in Eskimo villages. Thus, many people are dependent on public assistance. Because of harsh weather conditions for most of the year, there are many health problems among Eskimos. As discussed in a later chapter, the incidence ofstitial media is higher than for the general population. Respiratory disease, tuberculosis, influenza, pneumonia, and enteric diseases are among the principal causes of death in Eskimo villages.

Language is a major barrier to education. The Eskimo language has a number of dialects. The dialects most commonly spoken are Inupiak and Yupik, both of which are written languages. Most Eskimos in the remote villages do not speak English; thus English is learned primarily in the schools. On the average, however, Eskimos complete 7.3 years of school.

The future for Eskimos can be improved. Eskimo people are known to be a very diplomatic and peace-loving people. Although they hold to many of their cultural traditions, they have begun to
participate in the general society. Moreover, improved bilingual educational programs and better health care can be expected to facilitate their economic continued development.

Native Hawaiians

Until the arrival of Captain Cook in 1788, Hawaiians existed virtually in splendid isolation. Whereas some 300,000 Hawaiians inhabited the islands at the time of his arrival, today only 125,000 Native Hawaiians remain, constituting a minority group in their own land. Diseases introduced by contact with Westerners were responsible for the tragic decline in the Hawaiian population. Even this population has been diluted so much through intermarriage that very few pure Hawaiians currently remain.

At present, very little remains of the highly structured culture that existed prior to contact with the European sailors and American missionaries from New England. The Hawaiian language, which is a branch of the Polynesian family, is currently spoken only in remote and rural locales. Of the cultural tendencies that remain, Native Hawaiians continue to place strong emphasis on group-oriented values and de-emphasize individual achievements. Contrary to the values of general American society, Native Hawaiians tend to be extremely non-competitive. Peace and harmony are preferred, and Native Hawaiians chose to invest resources in social relationships rather than accumulate material wealth.

In a state that has tremendous resources, Native Hawaiians share very little of the wealth. In general, the incomes of Native Hawaiians are 15 percent below those of other residents, and approximately one-fifth of Native Hawaiians are below the poverty level. Native Hawaiians also have a disproportionately higher incidence of health conditions such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, prematurity, infant mortality, and congenital birth defects.

Virgin Islanders

Composed of three main islands—St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John—the Virgin Islands lie in the Caribbean Sea, approximately 950 miles from Marigot. Although these islands were transferred to the United States from Denmark in 1917, very little evidence of Danish influence on the people remains.

Native Virgin Islanders are of mixed African and European de-
scent. Natives make up at least 60 percent of the population of St. Thomas and 40 percent of the population of St. Croix. Natives of both of these islands possess their own distinct variations of American English.

Because the islands are territorial possessions of the United States, many of the sociological conditions are similar to those of the mainland, with some exceptions. The availability of health care is considered to be a serious problem because there is a shortage of physicians in the specialty areas. The major health problems of the islands are heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. The incidence of cancer is noted to be on the increase. In addition, the infant mortality rate is above that for the general American population.

Because of government subsidies, economic conditions on the islands are fair, although they are below the levels for most states. There are distinct class differences among natives and non-natives, and even among natives themselves. The average income of native Virgin Islanders is substantially less than that of their non-native counterparts. In addition, the class distinctions have created two separate educational systems. The higher status population tends to prefer private schools, whereas people of lower social status send their children to lesser quality public schools.

The culture of native Virgin Islanders is similar to that of other African descendants in the United States and Caribbean nations. Within the family, children tend to be revered and protected. Each successive generation is encouraged to raise itself by education and personal achievement. However, a cultural "brain drain" is created as many individuals prefer to leave the islands for better economic and social opportunities on the mainland.

CONCLUSION

There is no argument that American society is culturally pluralistic. The concept of cultural diversity gives recognition to the fact that all cultures can maintain their identity while making unique and valuable contributions to the improvement of the quality of life for the general society. In this chapter we have seen that there are more similarities among cultures than differences. The family is always the central unifying force. This concept extended, the most perfect society is a family of mankind.
REFERENCES


