Cultural Variations
Defining Cultural Variations

• Sociologists focus on similarities and differences between different cultures
• Sociologists try to examine differences in culture in an unbiased manner and try to focus on the principles of the culture for what they are
Cultural Universals

- Cultural Universals are commonalities that almost all cultures share.
- There are differences in how they are expressed by different cultures, but they are all present in some way or another.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Leisure</td>
<td>athletic sports, dancing, decorative art, games, music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Needs</td>
<td>clothing, cooking, housing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>body adornment, dream interpretation, folklore, funeral rites, religious ritual, weather control</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication and Education</td>
<td>education, greetings, language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>courtship, family feasting, kin groups, marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government and Economy</td>
<td>calendar, division of labor, government, law, property rights, status differentiation, trade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>medicine, toolmaking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Subculture

- Within cultures there are differences between ages, genders, politics, ethnicities, and geography
- Regional variations develop within larger cultures as subcultures
  - Subcultures not a threat to larger culture
  - Ex. Midwest culture as part of American Culture
Counterculture

• Countercultures are groups that go directly against the main culture
• Designed to challenge the values of the culture
  • Ex. Goths, Hippies, etc...
  • Described as Anti-Conformists
Responses to Variation

- Ethnocentrism – Judging another culture based off the values and principles off your own culture – Cultures labeling cultural traits as “wrong”
- Xenophobia - Viewing foreigners as a threat or a danger – Leads to the rejection or hatred of groups of people
- Ethnic/Cultural Conflict - Rejection or persecution against cultural or ethnic groups that can lead to conflict
- Racism - The persecution or denial of rights to a person because of their perceived physical differences
Cultural Diffusion

- Cultural Diffusion is the spread of a cultural trait from a originating hearth
  - Can spread from a variety of methods
    - Spread by cultural elites
    - Spread by movement of people from one area to another
    - Spread by contact from one person to another