

# Aspects of U.S. Mainstream Culture

- 1. History:** Mainstream culture in the United States derives from Anglo-core culture of the English who colonized America.
- 2. Social Group Interaction Patterns**
  - Intra-group: English immigrants institutionalized English culture in the United States.
  - Inter-group: Starting in colonial times, white members of U.S. national culture display “nativism” toward groups perceived as different (anti-foreign, anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic, anti-black).
- 3. Social Status:** Middle class culture is the norm, yet there are a range of classes—poverty, working, middle, and upper class. Since the 1970s the upper and poor classes have been growing, with the middle class declining.
- 4. Value Orientations**
  - emphasis on patriarchal nuclear family
  - emphasis on doing, “getting things done” (keeping busy)
  - emphasis on measurable and visible accomplishments
  - emphasis on individual choice, responsibility, and achievement
  - emphasis on self-reliance and self-motivation
  - emphasis on pragmatism: “if an idea works, use it”
  - emphasis on “the new” (and change)
  - emphasis of causal agent; things do not just happen
  - emphasis on equality, informality, and fair play simultaneously with widespread nativism and micro and macro institutional discrimination
  - emphasis on competition

- emphasis on direct communication
  - emphasis on controlling nature; nature “should” serve humans
  - emphasis on materialism, machines and technology, and progress
  - emphasis on private property (is valued more than human rights)
  - emphasis on precise reckoning of time which is perceived as lineal
- 5. Language and Communication**
    - verbal: English language spoken; most do not speak second language, nor is it valued
    - low context communication style: direct, explicit, and informal
    - nonverbal: not recognized as important as verbal communication
  - 6. Family Life Processes: Traditionally, patriarchal nuclear family structure. Currently much variation in family structure due to economic change impacting families. Two-paycheck families are the norm.**
    - gender roles: traditionally male job holder, female homemaker, but changing gender roles since 1960s
    - occupations: varies with socioeconomic status (with less industrial jobs and more service jobs since 1970s economic restructuring)
    - education: varies with socioeconomic status
    - marriage customs: changing; marriage in later 20s increasing
    - divorce practice: high rate of divorce and serial monogamy common
    - parenting beliefs and practices: emphasize individualism, self-reliance, and competition
  - 7. Healing Beliefs and Practices: biomedical model promoted**
  - 8. Religion: Protestant religions, biblical tradition emphasized**
  - 9. Art and Expressive Forms: music and visual art emphasized, not verbal arts, for example**
  - 10. Diet: hamburger, hot dogs, but diets vary by regions**
  - 11. Recreation: sports, TV, and many other options (much variation)**
  - 12. Clothes: styles change in time and place (region)**

by Mikel Hogan-Garcia 1991

Adapted from: Dan Rose, *Patterns of American Culture*, University of Pennsylvania Press (1989).

Edward Stewart and Milton Bennet, *American Cultural Patterns*, Intercultural Press (1991).

Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*, Harper and Row (1985).

John Hodge et al., *The Cultural Basis of Racism* (1975).