AMERICAN CULTURAL SYSTEM
CULTURE OF PARADOXES

• Peace-loving People
  – 6 major wars & 26 limited military actions
• Rugged Individualism
  – conformity
• Human Equality
  – pre-occupation with race, class, sex
• Humanitarians
CONFORMITY

- Margaret Mead = configurative
  - prevailing model for members of our society is the behavior of their contemporaries
  - peer groups
CONFORMITY

• CONCERNED WITH PEOPLE OF OUR SOCIAL POSITION, AGE-SET
  – HAVE, THINK OR DO
  – not to appear peculiar (different)
CONFORMITY

• Love affair with Machines
  – mass-production makes conformity easier
  – we all get the same messages, wear the same clothes
  – easier to buy & use what everyone else does
CONFORMITY

• Democratic beliefs
  – if majority adopt an opinion you set yourself up as being better or different from the majority if you question

  – Individual variation is frowned upon

  – “There ought to be a law!”
COMMON MAN CULT

• Associated with conformity

• can admit you are more fortunate than others, but, not that you are better than others

• identity with common people
AUTHORITY

• Difficult to exercise in American

• rejection of authority
YOUTH & PROGRESS

• Valued, yet distrusted

• keeping up with new trends, ideas is to be young

• America is a future-oriented society
YOUTH & PROGRESS

• Each generation is confronted with
  – new set of technology
  – changing social condition
YOUTH & PROGRESS

• Result = lack of confidence in the methods of the past
  • but, no dependable solution in the present

• “Experts”
YOUTH & PROGRESS

• Progress = new things, new developments
• Machines provide new things
• Conformity = wanting new things that others may have

• Happiness in America, often becomes associated with material things
SELF-RELIANCE & HARD WORK ETHIC

• Individualism and hard work

• “boot straps”

• Fear of Failure = Failure becomes personal
SELF-RELIANCE AND HARD WORK ETHIC

• PARADOX:
  • Individualism vs. Responsibility for individual actions
    – We want credit, but, not blame
    – None of us are truly self-reliant, we all depend on others
EDUCATION IN AMERICA

• Solving of complex problems

• Valued: education that deals most directly with practical problems

• “What can you do with that kind of education?”
EDUCATION IN AMERICA

• Less emphasis on what you learn in college than what you can do with a college diploma

• Solves problems?
  – Not if we don’t learn
INDIVIDUAL VS. FAMILY

• Nuclear Family; Neolocal Residence
• American family is INDIVIDUAL-CENTERED
• Concept of Romantic Love
• Traditional family
  = Breadwinner’s Family
INDIVIDUAL VS. FAMILY

- Divorce common (1 out of 3 marriages)
- High rate of Remarriages
  - matrifocal domestic groups
ECONOMICS

• Industrialism
• Machine as “Sacred Cow”

• Automation
  – Alienation
  – indifferent to Quality
ECONOMICS

• Impersonal Social System

• Concentration of Wealth
  – 1% of U.S. Families own 49% of public stock
  – controls Capital
ECONOMICS

• Most families = wealth is in Residences and Automobiles
• System of Social Stratification
  – based on economic wealth

• Poverty = 13.5% of American families
  – 25% of American children under the age of 6
RELIGION

- 96% believe in God
- only 13% say religion is not important in their lives
- Yet, only 60% claim church membership
- Protestant Christian
RELIGION

- Crises of Spirit and Meaning
- “Worldly Themes”
- Not anti-religious
- Mostly indifference