

# Cultural Change and Integration

*by Sophia Tutorial*



## WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial will cover the concepts of cultural integration and cultural lag, through the definition and discussion of:

1. Cultural Integration
2. Cultural Lag

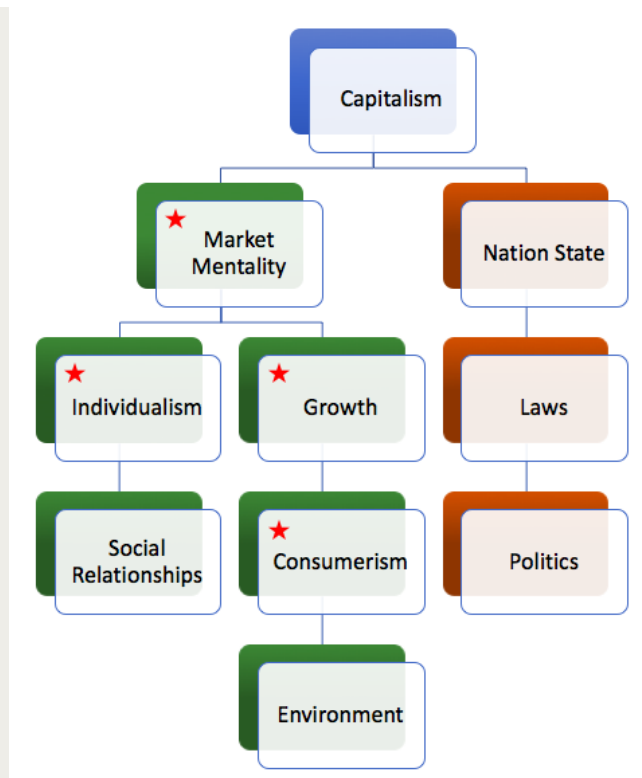
## 1. CULTURAL INTEGRATION

**Cultural integration** is the idea that a cultural system is cohesive and systematic. In other words, when one element of a culture changes, other elements are likely to change as well.

### IN CONTEXT

Take the example of the culture of capitalism. Capitalism is the dominant economic system in the global economy, and it has its own associated culture. Capitalism is a system for organizing production and consumption in society, and in turn, it then structures culture, it structures politics, and it structures institutions.

Capitalism has its own cultural logic that must be in place in order for the whole system to function.



In the diagram above, you can see that capitalism has an associated market mentality. This means that you're hardwired for the idea of a market transaction involving money--buy cheaply, sell more expensively. This in turn leads you to individualism.

Capitalism, then, has an associated focus on the individual as opposed to the focus on the family and a broader social close-knit group. As an individual, you always focused on selling yourself, continually selling your commodities in the marketplace.

This, then, permeates social relationships. If the focus is always on the individual, and everyone is accustomed to this market mentality, you're going to have fewer close social relationships. Social relationships become more fluid and loose, with more weak ties.

Next is growth. Capitalism must constantly grow; you must produce more output, otherwise, the system comes undone. This, in turn, leads to consumerism, which is the single most important cultural outgrowth of capitalism. People are all trained how to be consumers, and if you're not constantly buying, the system will come unraveled.

It follows that the growth mentality and a consumerist ideology have effects on the environment. If you're always wrenching as much from the environment as you can in the way of raw materials to produce more goods and to keep the system turning, capitalism then affects your treatment and viewpoint of the environment.

Finally, capitalism is also related to the state, the idea of the nation-state in the country. There are laws in place that protect property rights, to ensure that the system can continue to function. The nation-state is an entire set of laws and politics, with politicians continually arguing about how best to run it and ensure its smooth functioning.

All the items starred in red are the important cultural outgrowths of capitalism. Capitalism has its own internal cultural logic. All parts of the system are related, and they all flow from the singular organizational cultural facet: capitalism.



#### TERM TO KNOW

### Cultural Integration

The idea that a cultural system is cohesive and systematic; when one element of culture changes, other elements are likely to change with it.

## 2. CULTURAL LAG

With the idea of cultural integration and the systematic aspect of culture comes the concept of cultural lag.

**Cultural lag** states that some parts of culture change faster than others, which can cause disruptions or inconsistencies in the system.

Material objects typically change faster than our ideas of the material objects, or our cultural understanding of them and how to use them. Technologies change and you have to adjust to that change.



**EXAMPLE** The **technology** of the computer created an information society and computer-aided processing in production. The last 30 years, then, have been a process of coming to terms with how to use computers in society. 'technology changes first, and ideas follow. Recall that technology is defined as any useful tool or skill, so when your tools change, your ideas change as well. This is a cultural lag.



#### TERMS TO KNOW

### Cultural Lag

Some parts of a culture change faster than others, causing disruptions and adjustments in the system.

### Technology

Any useful tool or skill. Technology is more than just "high tech" computers and electronics, which are things that we commonly think of today when we hear the term. A simple hammer and nail was at one point a revolutionary technology. Looking at technology as any useful tool or skill introduces a historical component to the concept.



#### SUMMARY

Today you learned about the idea of **cultural integration**--how culture is systematic and when one part of culture changes, the other parts change as well. You also learned about **cultural lag** and the way that technological change produces cultural change.

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia author Zach Lamb.



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