

Real and Ideal Culture

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial will cover the following topic of sociology:

1. Ideal Vs. Real Culture

1. IDEAL VS. REAL CULTURE

The ideal image that society strives for might not always be reflective of what is actually happening on the ground level in society. **Ideal culture** is the values that a society aspires to hold, while **real culture** represents what people are actually doing in a society or culture.

Ideal and real culture can align or be the same, but often the ideal image is different, and more favorable, than the real culture--what actually happened.

IN CONTEXT

Americans have prided themselves on their superiority dating back to their origins. At that time, there was the narrative of American Exceptionalism, which declared that America was different from Europe--America was special.

Later this narrative transformed into 'America as the global superpower and the best place to live on Earth.' This may be America's ideal image of itself, but in reality, when you look at the ground level, America has a lagging education system, massive inequality, poverty, gun violence, millions of uninsured Americans without health care, and a lack of good, stable, high-paying jobs. America hasn't figured out how to survive in the new economy as well as some of their European peers.

This is the real representation of America. It's not the same as the ideal version of American Exceptionalism that Americans like to pride themselves on.

🔗 **EXAMPLE** Americans claim to value marriage, yet marriage in this country is decreasing. The divorce rate is extremely high, and many people are choosing to live alone and to never marry. Do you see how the ideal culture of a society is not always the same as the real culture?



TERMS TO KNOW

Real Culture

What people really do on the ground level in society, and what cultural patterns people really have.

Ideal Culture

The cultural values and positive self-images to which a society aspires.



SUMMARY

Today you learned about **ideal culture** versus **real culture**.

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



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Ideal Culture

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