American Culture & Society
Eight Markers and One Tension

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What are two things you heard about Americans before arriving here in the United States?
Assignment

Compare and contrast your list with the eight markers of US culture that I’m going to present and explore with you.
Thesis
American culture is torn between a discomfort with but dependence on collective identity (land and race) and a celebration of personal choice (of religion, in support of violence, of politics, of food, about independence and self-improvement, of entertainment).
Markers of U.S. Culture and Society

Collective Identity
Race
Land

Personal Choice
Religion
Violence
Politics
Food
Independence and self-improvement
Entertainment
Markers of U.S. Culture and Society

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Civilian firearms per 100 people

Selected countries

- United States: 270
- France: 19
- Canada: 10
- Germany: 25
- Angola: 3
- Thailand: 10
- Australia: 3
- Colombia: 3
- South Africa: 6
- Turkey: 9
- Pakistan: 18
- Russia: 13
- Brazil: 15
- Britain*: 3
- India: 46
- China: 40

Source: Small Arms Survey 2007

* England and Wales
Current Worldwide Homicide/Murder Rate

Source: http://chartsbin.com/view/1454
World prison populations and incarceration rates

Figure 2: Murders Committed by Male and Female Youth: Relationship to Victim

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Source: http://gizmodo.com/5960290/this-is-the-real-political-map-of-america-hint-we-are-not-that-divided
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The United States of beer vs. wine

Source: Beer vs. consumption - http://knowmore.washingtonpost.com/2015/02/19/the-united-states-of-beer-vs-wine/
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OUT OF BALANCE

A Harvard business prof and a behavioral economist recently asked more than 5,000 Americans how they thought wealth is distributed in the United States. Most thought that it’s more balanced than it actually is. Asked to choose their ideal distribution of wealth, 92% picked one that was even more equitable.

Source: Michael I. Norton, Harvard Business School; Dan Ariely, Duke University
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Super Bowl XLVII Falls Short of Ratings Record
Average audience during Super Bowl broadcasts in the United States (in millions)
Leisure time on an average day

- Watching TV (2.7 hours)
- Relaxing and thinking (17 minutes)
- Other leisure activities (17 minutes)
- Socializing and communicating (38 minutes)
- Reading (18 minutes)
- Participating in sports, exercise, recreation (19 minutes)
- Playing games; using computer for leisure (25 minutes)

Total leisure and sports time = 5.0 hours

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Time Use Survey
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“the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line.”
“After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight* in this American world,-a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One- ever feels his two-ness, -an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.”
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A Happy Ending
Special thanks to:
Julie Edwards, Steve Edwards,
Chris Pastore, Cheryl Shearer,
and Zachary Shearer.

Background photos from: cover of Pablo DeLano’s *Faces of America*