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Intercultural Communication

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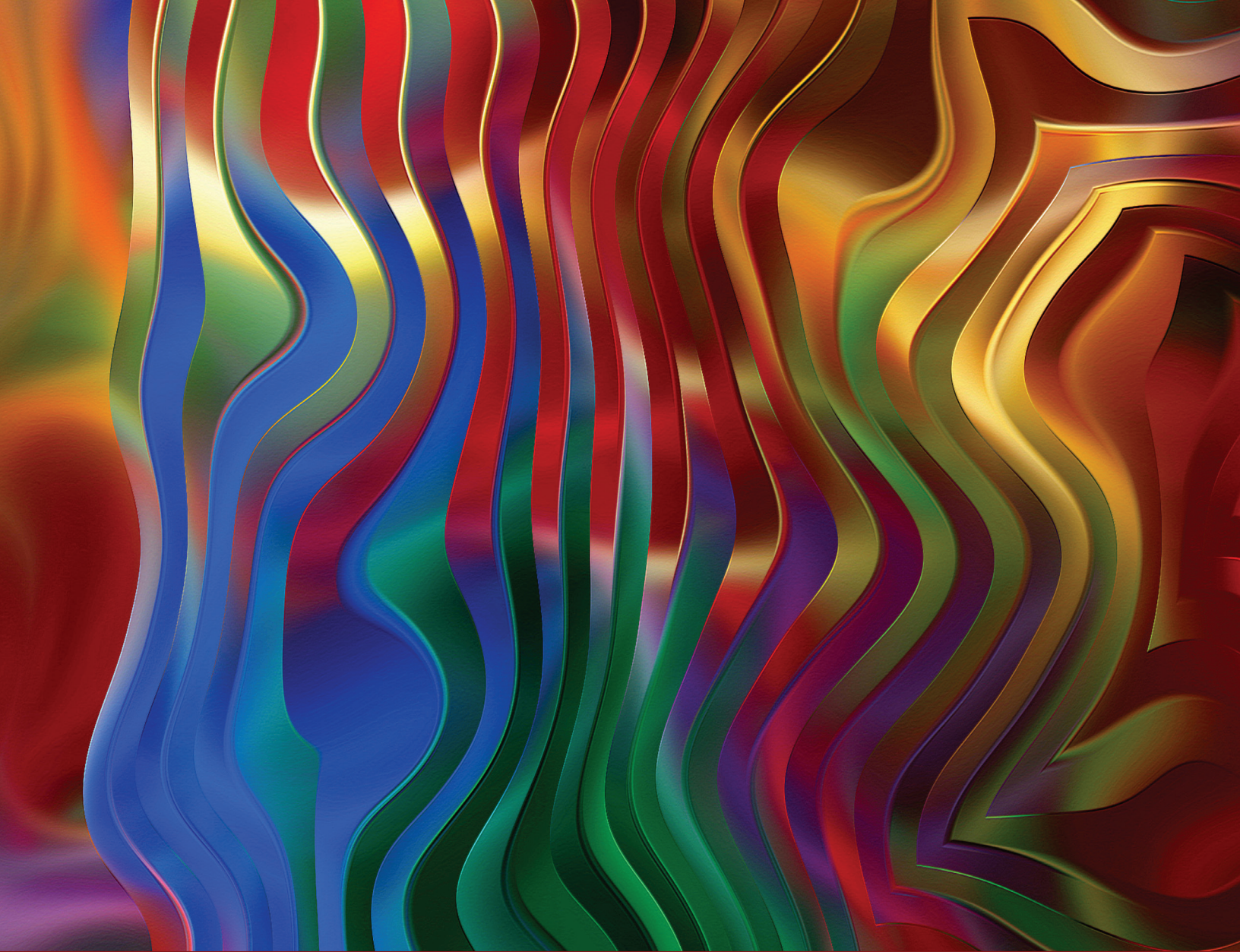


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Intercultural Communication

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A Letter to My Students

Dear Students:

As I write this in October 2020, I can safely say that our world has changed A LOT in the past few years—even over the last few months. More change and uncertainty await us. As we watch a huge shift taking place in our societies, intercultural communication is more important than ever.

If we want to move forward together as a nation and global community, we must learn how to respectfully communicate with each other across differences. Intercultural communication doesn't refer only to communication between people from different countries, but includes communication across all kinds of personal, social, and cultural identities like race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, abilities, gender, socioeconomic class, and religion.

In order to understand each other and how our identities are similar, different, and intersect, we must listen to those with different backgrounds and spotlight voices that might not typically be heard in our society. To achieve that goal, I have collected materials from a wide range of open resources and authors in order to best represent what I want to bring to you this semester: many perspectives and stories. My hope is that through this exposure, we will find what many great leaders have said: "It's harder to hate up close."

This course will open your mind to how differences can be valuable, interesting, and even worthy of celebration. If we open our minds and stay curious, we can learn how to respect and communicate across differences in a constructive way, leading to stronger relationships, communities, and nations.

Moving forward together,
Professor Shannon Ahrndt

Introduction to Intercultural Communication

SOURCE

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Define culture.
2. Define personal, social, and cultural identities.
3. Summarize nondominant and dominant identity development.
4. Explain why difference matters in the study of culture and identity.
5. Define the social constructionist view of culture and identity.
6. Trace the historical development and construction of the four cultural identities discussed.
7. Discuss how each of the four cultural identities discussed affects and/or relates to communication.
8. Define intercultural communication.
9. List and summarize the six dialectics of intercultural communication.
10. Discuss how intercultural communication affects interpersonal relationships.
11. Define intercultural communication competence.
12. Explain how motivation, self- and other-knowledge, and tolerance for uncertainty relate to intercultural communication competence.
13. Summarize the three ways to cultivate intercultural communication competence that are discussed.
14. Apply the concept of “thinking under the influence” as a reflective skill for building intercultural communication competence.

KEY TERMS

ableism	essentialize	motivation
antimiscegenation laws	ethnocentrism	nondominant identities
ascribed identities	gender	patriarchy
avowed identities	global village	personal-contextual dialectic
code-switching	history/past-present/future dialectic	personal identities
cognitive flexibility	ideology of domination	privileges-disadvantages dialectic
cultural identities	intercultural communication	race
cultural-individual dialectic	intercultural communication competence (ICC)	sex
culture	intercultural relationships	sexual orientation
dialectic	intersectional reflexivity	social constructionism
dichotomies	intersectionality	social identities
differences-similarities dialectic	medical model of disability	static-dynamic dialectic
digital divide	mindfulness	tolerance for uncertainty
dominant identities		transgender

Humans have always been diverse in their cultural beliefs and practices. But as new technologies have led to the perception that our world has shrunk, and demographic and political changes have brought attention to cultural differences, people communicate across cultures more now than ever before. The oceans and continents that separate us can now be traversed instantly with an e-mail, phone call, tweet, or status update. Additionally, our workplaces,

schools, and neighborhoods have become more integrated in terms of race and gender, increasing our interaction with domestic diversity. The Disability Rights Movement and Gay Rights Movement have increased the visibility of people with disabilities and sexual minorities. But just because we are exposed to more difference doesn't mean we understand it, can communicate across it, or appreciate it. This chapter will help you do all three.

FOUNDATIONS OF CULTURE AND IDENTITY

Culture is a complicated word to define, as there are at least six common ways that culture is used in the United States. For the purposes of exploring the communicative aspects of culture, we will define **culture** as the ongoing negotiation of learned and patterned beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors. Unpacking the definition, we can see that culture shouldn't be conceptualized as stable and unchanging. Culture is "negotiated," and as we will learn later in this chapter, culture is dynamic, and cultural changes can be traced and analyzed to better understand why our society is the way it is. The definition also points out that culture is learned, which accounts for the importance of socializing institutions like family, school, peers, and the media. Culture is patterned in that there are recognizable widespread similarities among people within a cultural group. There is also deviation from and resistance to those patterns by individuals and subgroups within a culture, which is why cultural patterns change over time. Last, the definition acknowledges that culture influences our beliefs about what is true and false, our attitudes including our likes and dislikes, our values regarding what is right and wrong, and our behaviors. It is from these cultural influences that our identities are formed.

Personal, Social, and Cultural Identities

Ask yourself the question "Who am I?" Recall from our earlier discussion of self-concept that we develop a sense of who we are based on what is reflected back on us from other people. Our parents, friends, teachers, and the media help shape our identities. While this happens from birth, most people in Western societies reach a stage in adolescence where maturing cognitive abilities and increased social awareness lead them to begin to reflect on who they are. This begins a lifelong process of thinking about who we are now, who we were before, and who we will become (Tatum, 2000). Our identities make up an important part of our self-concept and can be broken down into three main categories: personal, social, and cultural identities (see Table 1.1).

We must avoid the temptation to think of our identities as constant. Instead, our identities are formed through processes that started before we were born and will continue after we are gone; therefore our identities aren't something we achieve or complete. Two related but distinct components of our identities are our personal and social identities (Spreckels & Kotthoff, 2009). **Personal identities** include the components of self that are primarily intrapersonal and connected to our life experiences. For example, I consider myself a puzzle lover, and you may identify as a fan of hip-hop music. Our **social identities**

are the components of self that are derived from involvement in social groups with which we are interpersonally committed.

For example, we may derive aspects of our social identity from our family or from a community of fans for a sports team. Social identities differ from personal identities because they are externally organized through membership. Our membership may be voluntary (Greek organization on campus) or involuntary (family) and explicit (we pay dues to our labor union) or implicit (we purchase and listen to hip-hop music). There are innumerable options for personal and social identities. While our personal identity choices express who we are, our social identities align us with particular groups. Through our social identities, we make statements about who we are and who we are not.

Personal identities may change often as people have new experiences and develop new interests and hobbies. A current interest in online video games may give way to an interest in graphic design. Social identities do not change as often because they take more time to develop, as you must become interpersonally invested. For example, if an interest in online video games leads someone to become a member of a MMORPG, or a massively multiplayer online role-playing game community, that personal identity has led to a social identity that is now interpersonal and more entrenched. **Cultural identities** are based on socially constructed categories that teach us a way of being and include expectations for social behavior or ways of acting (Yep, 2002). Since we are often a part of them since birth, cultural identities are the least changeable of the three. The ways of being and the social expectations for behavior within cultural identities do change over time, but what separates them from most social identities is their historical roots (Collier, 1996). For example, think of how ways of being and acting have changed for African Americans since the civil rights movement. Additionally,

TABLE 1.1 Personal, Social, and Cultural Identities

Personal	Social	Cultural
Antique collector	Member of historical society	Irish American
Dog lover	Member of humane society	Male/female
Cyclist	Fraternity/sorority member	Greek American
Singer	High school music teacher	Multiracial
Shy	Book club member	Heterosexual
Athletic		Gay/lesbian



Pledging a fraternity or sorority is an example of a social identity. (IMG_2749 by Adaenn is used under CC BY-NC 2.0.)

common ways of being and acting within a cultural identity group are expressed through communication. In order to be accepted as a member of a cultural group, members must be acculturated, essentially learning and using a code that other group members will be able to recognize. We are acculturated into our various cultural identities in obvious and less obvious ways. We may literally have a parent or friend tell us what it means to be a man or a woman. We may also unconsciously consume messages from popular culture that offer representations of gender.

Any of these identity types can be ascribed or avowed. **Ascribed identities** are personal, social, or cultural identities that are placed on us by others, while **avowed identities** are those that we claim for ourselves (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). Sometimes people ascribe an identity to someone else based on stereotypes. You may see a person who likes to read science-fiction books, watches documentaries, has glasses, and collects Star Trek memorabilia and label him or her a nerd. If the person doesn't avow that identity, it can create friction, and that label may even hurt the other person's feelings. But ascribed and avowed identities can match up. To extend the previous example, there has been a movement in recent years to reclaim the label nerd and turn it into a positive, and a nerd subculture has been growing in popularity. For example, MC Frontalot, a leader in the nerdcore hip-hop movement, says that being branded a nerd in school was terrible, but now he raps about "nerdy" things like blogs to sold-out crowds (Shipman, 2007). We can see from this example that our ascribed and avowed identities change over the course of our lives, and sometimes they match up and sometimes not.

Although some identities are essentially permanent, the degree to which we are aware of them, also known as salience, changes. The intensity with which we avow an

identity also changes based on context. For example, an African American may not have difficulty deciding which box to check on the demographic section of a survey. But if an African American becomes president of her college's Black Student Union, she may more intensely avow her African American identity, which has now become more salient. If she studies abroad in Africa her junior year, she may be ascribed an identity of American by her new African friends rather than African American. For the Africans, their visitor's identity as American is likely more salient than her identity as someone of African descent. If someone is biracial or multiracial, they may change their racial identification as they engage in an identity search. One intercultural communication scholar writes of his experiences as an "Asianlatinoamerican" (Yep, 2002, p. 61). He notes repressing his Chinese identity as an adolescent living in Peru and then later embracing his Chinese identity and learning about his family history while in college in the United States. This example shows how even national identity fluctuates. Obviously one can change nationality by becoming a citizen of another country, although most people do not. My identity as a U.S. American became very salient for me for the first time in my life when I studied abroad in Sweden.

Throughout modern history, cultural and social influences have established dominant and nondominant groups (Allen, 2011). **Dominant identities** historically had and currently have more resources and influence, while **nondominant identities** historically had and currently have less resources and influence. It's important to remember that these distinctions are being made at the societal level, not the individual level. There are obviously exceptions, with people in groups considered nondominant obtaining more resources and power than a person in a dominant group. However, the overall trend is that difference based on cultural groups has been institutionalized, and exceptions do not change this fact. Because of this uneven distribution of resources and power, members of dominant groups are granted privileges while nondominant groups are at a disadvantage. The main nondominant groups must face various forms of institutionalized discrimination, including racism, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism. As we will discuss later, privilege and disadvantage, like similarity and difference, are not "all or nothing." No two people are completely different or completely similar, and no one person is completely privileged or completely disadvantaged.

Identity Development

There are multiple models for examining identity development. Given our focus on how difference matters, we

will examine similarities and differences in nondominant and dominant identity formation. While the stages in this model help us understand how many people experience their identities, identity development is complex, and there may be variations. We must also remember that people have multiple identities that intersect with each other. So, as you read, think about how circumstances may be different for an individual with multiple nondominant and/or dominant identities.

Nondominant Identity Development

There are four stages of nondominant identity development (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). The first stage is unexamined identity, which is characterized by a lack of awareness of or lack of interest in one's identity. For example, a young woman who will later identify as a lesbian may not yet realize that a nondominant sexual orientation is part of her identity. Also, a young African American man may question his teachers or parents about the value of what he's learning during Black History Month. When a person's lack of interest in their own identity is replaced by an investment in a dominant group's identity, they may move to the next stage, which is conformity.

In the conformity stage, an individual internalizes or adopts the values and norms of the dominant group, often in an effort not to be perceived as different. Individuals may attempt to assimilate into the dominant culture by changing their appearance, their mannerisms, the way they talk, or even their name. Moises, a Chicano man interviewed in a research project about identities, narrated how he changed his "Mexican sounding" name to Moses, which was easier for his middle-school classmates and teachers to say (Jones, 2009). He also identified as White instead of Mexican American or Chicano because he saw how his teachers treated the other kids with "brown skin." Additionally, some gay or lesbian people in this stage of identity development may try to "act straight." In either case, some people move to the next stage, resistance and separation, when they realize that despite their efforts they are still perceived as different by and not included in the dominant group.

In the resistance and separation stage, an individual with a nondominant identity may shift away from the conformity of the previous stage to engage in actions that challenge the dominant identity group. Individuals in this stage may also actively try to separate themselves from the dominant group, interacting only with those who share their nondominant identity. For example, there has been a Deaf culture movement in the United States for decades. This movement includes people who are hearing impaired and believe that their use of a specific language, American



Many hearing-impaired people in the United States use American Sign Language (ASL), which is recognized as an official language. (ASL interpreter by Quinn Dombrowski is used under CC BY-SA 2.0.)

Sign Language (ASL), and other cultural practices constitutes a unique culture, which they symbolize by capitalizing the D in Deaf (Allen, 2011).

While this is not a separatist movement, a person who is hearing impaired may find refuge in such a group after experiencing discrimination from hearing people. Staying in this stage may indicate a lack of critical thinking if a person endorses the values of the nondominant group without question.

The integration stage marks a period where individuals with a nondominant identity have achieved a balance between embracing their own identities and valuing other dominant and nondominant identities. Although there may still be residual anger from the discrimination and prejudice they have faced, they may direct this energy into positive outlets such as working to end discrimination for their own or other groups. Moises, the Chicano man I mentioned earlier, now works to support the Chicano community in his city and also has actively supported gay rights and women's rights.

Dominant Identity Development

Dominant identity development consists of five stages (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). The unexamined stage of

dominant identity formation is similar to nondominant in that individuals in this stage do not think about their or others' identities. Although they may be aware of differences—for example, between races and genders—they either don't realize there is a hierarchy that treats some people differently than others or they don't think the hierarchy applies to them. For example, a White person may take notice that a person of color was elected to a prominent office. However, he or she may not see the underlying reason that it is noticeable—namely, that the overwhelming majority of our country's leaders are White. Unlike people with a nondominant identity who usually have to acknowledge the positioning of their identity due to discrimination and prejudice they encounter, people with dominant identities may stay in the unexamined stage for a long time.

In the acceptance stage, a person with a dominant identity passively or actively accepts that some people are treated differently than others but doesn't do anything internally or externally to address it. In the passive acceptance stage, we must be cautious not to blame individuals with dominant identities for internalizing racist, sexist, or heterosexist "norms." The socializing institutions we discussed earlier (family, peers, media, religion, and education) often make oppression seem normal and natural. For example, I have had students who struggle to see that they are in this stage say things like "I know that racism exists, but my parents taught me to be a good person and see everyone as equal." While this is admirable, seeing everyone as equal doesn't make it so. And people who insist that we are all equal may claim that minorities are exaggerating their circumstances or "whining" and just need to "work harder" or "get over it." The person making these statements acknowledges difference but doesn't see their privilege or the institutional perpetuation of various "-isms." Although I've encountered many more people in the passive state of acceptance than the active state, some may progress to an active state where they acknowledge inequality and are proud to be in the "superior" group. In either case, many people never progress from this stage. If they do, it's usually because of repeated encounters with individuals or situations that challenge their acceptance of the status quo, such as befriending someone from a nondominant group or taking a course related to culture.

The resistance stage of dominant identity formation is a major change from the previous in that an individual acknowledges the unearned advantages they are given and feels guilt or shame about it. Having taught about various types of privilege for years, I've encountered many students who want to return their privilege or disown it. These individuals may begin to disassociate with their own dominant group because they feel like a curtain has been opened

and their awareness of the inequality makes it difficult for them to interact with others in their dominant group. But it's important to acknowledge that becoming aware of your White privilege, for instance, doesn't mean that every person of color is going to want to accept you as an ally, so retreating to them may not be the most productive move. While moving to this step is a marked improvement in regards to becoming a more aware and socially just person, getting stuck in the resistance stage isn't productive, because people are often retreating rather than trying to address injustice. For some, deciding to share what they've learned with others who share their dominant identity moves them to the next stage.

People in the redefinition stage revise negative views of their identity held in the previous stage and begin to acknowledge their privilege and try to use the power they are granted to work for social justice. They realize that they can claim their dominant identity as heterosexual, able-bodied, male, White, and so on, and perform their identity in ways that counter norms. A male participant in a research project on identity said the following about redefining his male identity:

I don't want to assert my maleness the same way that maleness is asserted all around us all the time. I don't want to contribute to sexism. So I have to be conscious of that. There's that guilt. But then, I try to utilize my maleness in positive ways, like when I'm talking to other men about male privilege (Jones, 2009, p. 130-32).

The final stage of dominant identity formation is integration. This stage is reached when redefinition is complete and people can integrate their dominant identity



Heterosexual people with gay family members or friends may join the group PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) as a part of the redefinition and/or integration stage of their dominant identity development. (Atlanta Pride Festival parade by Jason Riedy is used under CC BY 2.0.)

into all aspects of their life, finding opportunities to educate others about privilege while also being a responsive ally to people in nondominant identities. As an example, some heterosexual people who find out a friend or family member is gay or lesbian may have to confront their dominant heterosexual identity for the first time, which may lead them through these various stages. As a sign of integration, some may join an organization like PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), where they can be around others who share their dominant identity as heterosexuals but also empathize with their loved ones.

Knowing more about various types of identities and some common experiences of how dominant and nondominant identities are formed prepares us to delve into more specifics about why difference matters.

Difference Matters

Whenever we encounter someone, we notice similarities and differences. While both are important, it is often the differences that are highlighted and that contribute to communication troubles. We don't only see similarities and differences on an individual level. In fact, we also place people into in-groups and out-groups based on the similarities and differences we perceive. This is important because we then tend to react to someone we perceive as a member of an out-group based on the characteristics we attach to the group rather than the individual (Allen, 2011). In these situations, it is more likely that stereotypes and prejudice will influence our communication. Learning about difference and why it matters will help us be more competent communicators. The flip side of emphasizing difference is to claim that no differences exist and that you see everyone as a human being. Rather than trying to ignore difference and see each person as a unique individual, we should know the history of how differences came to be so socially and culturally significant and how they continue to affect us today.

Culture and identity are complex. You may be wondering how some groups came to be dominant and others nondominant. These differences are not natural, which can be seen as we unpack how various identities have changed over time in the next section. There is, however, an **ideology of domination** that makes it seem natural and normal to many that some people or groups will always have power over others (Allen, 2011). In fact, hierarchy and domination, although prevalent throughout modern human history, were likely not the norm among early humans. So one of the first reasons difference matters is that people and groups are treated unequally, and better understanding how those differences came to be can help us create a more

just society. Difference also matters because demographics and patterns of interaction are changing.

In the United States, the population of people of color is increasing and diversifying, and visibility for people who are gay or lesbian and people with disabilities has also increased. The 2010 Census shows that the Hispanic and Latino/a populations in the United States are now the second largest group in the country, having grown 43% since the last census in 2000 (Saenz, 2011). By 2030, racial and ethnic minorities will account for one-third of the population (Allen, 2011). Additionally, legal and social changes have created a more open environment for sexual minorities and people with disabilities. These changes directly affect our interpersonal relationships. The workplace is one context where changing demographics has become increasingly important. Many organizations are striving to comply with changing laws by implementing policies aimed at creating equal access and opportunity. Some organizations are going further than legal compliance to try to create inclusive climates where diversity is valued because of the interpersonal and economic benefits it has the potential to produce.

■ “Getting Real” • Diversity Training

Businesses in the United States spend \$200 to \$300 million a year on diversity training, but is it effective? (Vedantam, 2008) If diversity training is conducted to advance a company's business goals and out of an understanding of the advantages that a diversity of background and thought offer a company, then the training is more likely to be successful. Many companies conduct mandatory diversity training based on a belief that they will be in a better position in court if a lawsuit is brought against them. However, research shows that training that is mandatory and undertaken only to educate people about the legal implications of diversity is ineffective and may even hurt diversity efforts. A commitment to a diverse and inclusive workplace environment must include a multipronged approach. Experts recommend that a company put a staff person in charge of diversity efforts, and some businesses have gone as far as appointing a “chief diversity officer” (Cullen, 2007). The U.S. Office of Personnel Management offers many good guidelines for conducting diversity training: create learning objectives related to the mission of the organization, use tested and appropriate training methods and materials, provide information about course content and expectations to employees ahead of training, provide the training in a supportive and noncoercive environment, use only experienced and qualified instructors, and monitor/evaluate training and revise as needed (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, n.d.). With

these suggestions in mind, the increasingly common “real-world” event of diversity training is more likely to succeed.

1. Have you ever participated in any diversity training? If so, what did you learn or take away from the training? Which of the guidelines listed did your training do well or poorly on?
2. Do you think diversity training should be mandatory or voluntary? Why?
3. From what you’ve learned so far in this book, what communication skills are important for a diversity trainer to have? ■

We can now see that difference matters due to the inequalities that exist among cultural groups and due to changing demographics that affect our personal and social relationships. Unfortunately, there are many obstacles that may impede our valuing of difference (Allen, 2011). Individuals with dominant identities may not validate the experiences of those in nondominant groups because they do not experience the oppression directed at those with nondominant identities. Further, they may find it difficult to acknowledge that not being aware of this oppression is due to privilege associated with their dominant identities. Because of this lack of recognition of oppression, members of dominant groups may minimize, dismiss, or question the experiences of nondominant groups and view them as “complainers” or “whiners.” Recall from our earlier discussion of identity formation that people with dominant identities may stay in the unexamined or acceptance stages for a long time. Being stuck in these stages makes it much more difficult to value difference.

Members of nondominant groups may have difficulty valuing difference due to negative experiences with the dominant group, such as not having their experiences validated. Both groups may be restrained from communicating about difference due to norms of political correctness, which may make people feel afraid to speak up because they may be perceived as insensitive or racist. All these obstacles are common and they are valid. However, as we will learn later, developing intercultural communication competence can help us gain new perspectives, become more mindful of our communication, and intervene in some of these negative cycles.

EXPLORING SPECIFIC CULTURAL IDENTITIES

We can get a better understanding of current cultural identities by unpacking how they came to be. By looking at history, we can see how cultural identities that seem to have

existed forever actually came to be constructed for various political and social reasons and how they have changed over time. Communication plays a central role in this construction. As we have already discussed, our identities are relational and communicative; they are also constructed. **Social constructionism** is a view that argues the self is formed through our interactions with others and in relationship to social, cultural, and political contexts (Allen, 2011). In this section, we’ll explore how the cultural identities of race, gender, sexual orientation, and ability have been constructed in the United States and how communication relates to those identities. There are other important identities that could be discussed, like religion, age, nationality, and class. Although they are not given their own section, consider how those identities may intersect with the identities discussed next.

Race

Would it surprise you to know that human beings, regardless of how they are racially classified, share 99.9% of their DNA? This finding by the Human Genome Project asserts that race is a social construct, not a biological one. The American Anthropological Association agrees, stating that race is the product of “historical and contemporary social, economic, educational, and political circumstances” (Allen, 2011). Therefore, we’ll define **race** as a socially constructed category based on differences in appearance that has been used to create hierarchies that privilege some and disadvantage others.

Race didn’t become a socially and culturally recognized marker until European colonial expansion in the 1500s. As Western Europeans traveled to parts of the world previously unknown to them and encountered people who were different from them, a hierarchy of races began to develop that placed lighter skinned Europeans above darker



There is actually no biological basis for racial classification among humans, as we share 99.9% of our DNA. (friends by evilgurl is used under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.)

skinned people. At the time, newly developing fields in natural and biological sciences took interest in examining the new locales, including the plant and animal life, natural resources, and native populations. Over the next three hundred years, science that we would now undoubtedly recognize as flawed, biased, and racist legitimated notions that native populations were less evolved than White Europeans, often calling them savages. In fact, there were scientific debates as to whether some of the native populations should be considered human or animal. Racial distinctions have been based largely on phenotypes, or physiological features such as skin color, hair texture, and body/facial features. Western “scientists” used these differences as “proof” that native populations were less evolved than the Europeans, which helped justify colonial expansion, enslavement, genocide, and exploitation on massive scales (Allen, 2011). Even though there is a consensus among experts that race is social rather than biological, we can’t deny that race still has meaning in our society and affects people as if it were “real.”

Given that race is one of the first things we notice about someone, it’s important to know how race and communication relate (Allen, 2011). Discussing race in the United States is difficult for many reasons. One is due to uncertainty about language use. People may be frustrated by their perception that labels change too often or be afraid of using an “improper” term and being viewed as racially insensitive. It is important, however, that we not let political correctness get in the way of meaningful dialogues and learning opportunities related to difference. Learning some of the communicative history of race can make us more competent communicators and open us up to more learning experiences.

Racial classifications used by the government and our regular communication about race in the United States have changed frequently, which further points to the social construction of race. Currently, the primary racial groups in the United States are African American, Asian American, European American, Latino/a, and Native American, but a brief look at changes in how the U.S. Census Bureau has defined race clearly shows that this hasn’t always been the case (see Table 1.2). In the 1900s alone, there were twenty-six different ways that race was categorized on census forms (Allen, 2011). The way we communicate about race in our regular interactions has also changed, and many people are still hesitant to discuss race for fear of using “the wrong” vocabulary.

The five primary racial groups noted previously can still be broken down further to specify a particular region, country, or nation. For example, Asian Americans are diverse in terms of country and language of origin and cultural practices. While the category of Asian Americans can be useful when discussing broad trends, it can also generalize among groups, which can lead to stereotypes. You may find that someone identifies as Chinese American or Korean American instead of Asian American. In this case, the label further highlights a person’s cultural lineage. We should not assume, however, that someone identifies with his or her cultural lineage, as many people have more in common with their U.S. American peers than a culture that may be one or more generations removed.

History and personal preference also influence how we communicate about race. Culture and communication scholar Brenda Allen notes that when she was born in 1950, her birth certificate included an *N* for Negro. Later

TABLE 1.2 Racial Classifications in the U.S. Census

Year(s)	Development
1790	No category for race
1800s	Race was defined by the percentage of African “blood.” <i>Mulatto</i> was one Black and one White parent, <i>quadroon</i> was one-quarter African blood, and <i>octoroon</i> was one-eighth.
1830–1940	The term <i>color</i> was used instead of <i>race</i> .
1900	Racial categories included White, Black, Chinese, Japanese, and Indian. Census takers were required to check one of these boxes based on visual cues. Individuals did not get to select a racial classification on their own until 1970.
1950	The term <i>color</i> was dropped and replaced by <i>race</i> .
1960, 1970	Both <i>race</i> and <i>color</i> were used on census forms.
1980–2010	<i>Race</i> again became the only term.
2000	Individuals were allowed to choose more than one racial category for the first time in census history.
2010	The census included fifteen racial categories and an option to write in races not listed on the form.
2020	Individuals who identified as White, Black/African American, and/or American Indian or Alaska Native were asked to specifically identify their racial origins.

Adapted from Allen (2011).

she referred to herself as *colored* because that's what people in her community referred to themselves as. During and before this time, the term *Black* had negative connotations and would likely have offended someone. There was a movement in the 1960s to reclaim the word *Black*, and the slogan "Black is beautiful" was commonly used. Brenda Allen acknowledges the newer label of *African American* but notes that she still prefers *Black*. The terms *colored* and *Negro* are no longer considered appropriate because they were commonly used during a time when Black people were blatantly discriminated against. Even though that history may seem far removed to some, it is not to others. Currently, the terms *African American* and *Black* are frequently used, and both are considered acceptable. The phrase *people of color* is acceptable for most and is used to be inclusive of other racial minorities. If you are unsure what to use, you could always observe how a person refers to himself or herself, or you could ask for his or her preference. In any case, a competent communicator defers to and respects the preference of the individual.

The label *Latin American* generally refers to people who live in Central American countries. Although Spain colonized much of what is now South and Central America and parts of the Caribbean, the inhabitants of these areas are now much more diverse. Depending on the region or country, some people primarily trace their lineage to the indigenous people who lived in these areas before colonization, or to a Spanish and indigenous lineage, or to other combinations that may include European, African, and/or indigenous heritage. *Latina* and *Latino* are labels that are preferable to *Hispanic* for many who live in the United States and trace their lineage to South and/or Central America and/or parts of the Caribbean. Scholars who study Latina/o identity often use the label *Latina/o* in their writing to acknowledge women who avow that identity label (Calafell, 2007). In verbal communication you might say "Latina" when referring to a particular female or "Latino" when referring to a particular male of Latin American heritage. When referring to the group as a whole, you could say "Latinas and Latinos" or "Latinx" instead of just "Latinos," which would be more gender inclusive. While *Hispanic* is used by the U.S. Census, it refers primarily to people of Spanish origin, which doesn't account for the diversity of background of many Latinos/as. The term *Hispanic* also highlights the colonizer's influence over the indigenous, which erases a history that is important to many. Additionally, there are people who claim Spanish origins and identify culturally as Hispanic but racially as White. Labels such as *Puerto Rican* or *Mexican American*, which further specify region or country of origin, may also be used. Just as with other cultural

groups, if you are unsure of how to refer to someone, you can always ask for and honor someone's preference.

The history of immigration in the United States also ties to the way that race has been constructed. The metaphor of the melting pot has been used to describe the immigration history of the United States but doesn't capture the experiences of many immigrant groups (Allen, 2011). Generally, immigrant groups who were White, or light skinned, and spoke English were better able to assimilate, or melt into the melting pot. But immigrant groups that we might think of as White today were not always considered so. Irish immigrants were discriminated against and even portrayed as Black in cartoons that appeared in newspapers. In some Southern states, Italian immigrants were forced to go to Black schools, and it wasn't until 1952 that Asian immigrants were allowed to become citizens of the United States. All this history is important, because it continues to influence communication among races today.

Interracial Communication

Race and communication are related in various ways. Racism influences our communication about race and is not an easy topic for most people to discuss. Today, people tend to view racism as overt acts such as calling someone a derogatory name or discriminating against someone in thought or action. However, there is a difference between racist acts, which we can attach to an individual, and institutional racism, which is not as easily identifiable. It is much easier for people to recognize and decry racist actions than it is to realize that racist patterns and practices go through societal institutions, which means that racism exists and doesn't have to be committed by any one person. As competent communicators and critical thinkers, we must challenge ourselves to be aware of how racism influences our communication at individual and societal levels.

We tend to make assumptions about people's race based on how they talk, and often these assumptions are based on stereotypes. Dominant groups tend to define what is correct or incorrect usage of a language, and since language is so closely tied to identity, labeling a group's use of a language as incorrect or deviant challenges or negates part of their identity (Yancy, 2011). We know there isn't only one way to speak English, but there have been movements to identify a standard. This becomes problematic when we realize that "standard English" refers to a way of speaking English that is based on White, middle-class ideals that do not match up with the experiences of many. When we create a standard for English, we can label anything that deviates from that "nonstandard English." Differences between standard English and what has been



The “English only” movement of recent years is largely a backlash targeted at immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries. (*Welcome to America*, indeed by CGP Grey is used under CC BY 2.0.)

called “Black English” or “African American English” have gotten national attention through debates about whether or not instruction in classrooms should accommodate students who do not speak standard English. Education plays an important role in language acquisition, and class relates to access to education. In general, whether someone speaks standard English themselves or not, they tend to negatively judge people whose speech deviates from the standard.

Another national controversy has revolved around the inclusion of Spanish in common language use, such as Spanish as an option at ATMs, or other automated services, and Spanish language instruction in school for students who don’t speak or are learning to speak English. As was noted earlier, the Latino/a population in the United States is growing fast, which has necessitated inclusion of Spanish in many areas of public life. This has also created a backlash, which some scholars argue is tied more to the race of the immigrants than the language they speak and a fear that White America could be engulfed by other languages and cultures (Speicher, 2002). This backlash has led to a revived movement to make English the official language of the United States.

The U.S. Constitution does not stipulate a national language, and Congress has not designated one either. While nearly thirty states have passed English-language legislation, it has mostly been symbolic, and court rulings have limited any enforceability (Zuckerman, 2010). The Linguistic Society of America points out that immigrants are very aware of the social and economic advantages of learning English and do not need to be forced. They also point out that the United States has always had many languages represented, that national unity hasn’t rested on a single language, and that there are actually benefits to

having a population that is multilingual (Linguistic Society of America, 1986). Interracial communication presents some additional verbal challenges.

Code-switching involves changing from one way of speaking to another between or within interactions. Some people of color may engage in code-switching when communicating with dominant group members because they fear they will be negatively judged. Adopting the language practices of the dominant group may minimize perceived differences. This code-switching creates a linguistic dual consciousness in which people are able to maintain their linguistic identities with their in-group peers but can still acquire tools and gain access needed to function in dominant society (Yancy, 2011). White people may also feel anxious about communicating with people of color out of fear of being perceived as racist. In other situations, people in dominant groups may spotlight nondominant members by asking them to comment on or educate others about their race (Allen, 2011). For example, I once taught at a private university that was predominantly White. Students of color talked to me about being asked by professors to weigh in on an issue when discussions of race came up in the classroom. While a professor may have been well-intentioned, spotlighting can make a student feel conspicuous, frustrated, or defensive. Additionally, I bet the professors wouldn’t think about asking a White, male, or heterosexual student to give the perspective of their whole group.

Gender

When we first meet a newborn baby, we ask whether it’s a boy or a girl. This question illustrates the importance of gender in organizing our social lives and our interpersonal relationships. A Canadian family became aware of the deep emotions people feel about gender and the great discomfort people feel when they can’t determine gender when they announced to the world that they were not going to tell anyone the gender of their baby, aside from the baby’s siblings. Their desire for their child, named Storm, to be able to experience early life without the boundaries and categories of gender brought criticism from many (Davis & James, 2011). Conversely, many parents consciously or unconsciously “code” their newborns in gendered ways based on our society’s associations of pink clothing and accessories with girls and blue with boys. While it’s obvious to most people that colors aren’t gendered, they take on new meaning when we assign gendered characteristics of masculinity and femininity to them. Just like race, gender is a socially constructed category. While it is true that there are biological differences between who we label male and female, the meaning our society places on those differences is what actually matters in our day-to-day lives. And the biological differences are interpreted differently

around the world, which further shows that although we think gender is a natural, normal, stable way of classifying things, it is actually not. There is a long history of appreciation for people who cross gender lines in Native American and South Central Asian cultures, to name just two.

You may have noticed I use the word *gender* instead of *sex*. That's because **gender** is an identity based on internalized cultural notions of masculinity and femininity that is constructed through communication and interaction. There are two important parts of this definition to unpack. First, we internalize notions of gender based on socializing institutions, which helps us form our gender identity. Then we attempt to construct that gendered identity through our interactions with others, which is our gender expression. **Sex** is based on biological characteristics, including external genitalia, internal sex organs, chromosomes, and hormones (Wood, 2005). While the biological characteristics between men and women are obviously different, it's the meaning that we create and attach to those characteristics that makes them significant. The cultural differences in how that significance is ascribed are proof that "our way of doing things" is arbitrary. For example, cross-cultural research has found that boys and girls in most cultures show both aggressive and nurturing tendencies, but cultures vary in terms of how they encourage these characteristics between genders. In a group in Africa, young boys are responsible for taking care of babies and are encouraged to be nurturing (Wood, 2005).

Gender has been constructed over the past few centuries in political and deliberate ways that have tended to favor men in terms of power. And various academic fields joined in the quest to "prove" there are "natural" differences between men and women. While the "proof" they presented was credible to many at the time, it seems blatantly sexist and inaccurate today. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, scientists who measure skulls, also known as craniometrists, claimed that men were more intelligent than women because they had larger brains. Leaders in the fast-growing fields of sociology and psychology argued that women were less evolved than men and had more in common with "children and savages" than an adult (White) males (Allen, 2011). Doctors and other decision makers like politicians also used women's menstrual cycles as evidence that they were irrational, or hysterical, and therefore couldn't be trusted to vote, pursue higher education, or be in a leadership position. These are just a few of the many instances of how knowledge was created by seemingly legitimate scientific disciplines that we can now clearly see served to empower men and disempower women. This system is based on the ideology of **patriarchy**, which is a system of social structures and practices that maintains the values, priorities, and interests of men as a group

(Wood, 2005). One of the ways patriarchy is maintained is by its relative invisibility. While women have been the focus of much research on gender differences, males have been largely unexamined. Men have been treated as the "generic" human being to which others are compared. But that ignores that fact that men have a gender, too. Masculinities studies have challenged that notion by examining how masculinities are performed.

There have been challenges to the construction of gender in recent decades. Since the 1960s, scholars and activists have challenged established notions of what it means to be a man or a woman. The women's rights movement in the United States dates back to the 1800s, when the first women's rights convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 (Wood, 2005). Although most women's rights movements have been led by White, middle-class women, there was overlap between those involved in the abolitionist movement to end slavery and the beginnings of the women's rights movement. Although some of the leaders of the early women's rights movement had class and education privilege, they were still taking a risk by organizing and protesting. Black women were even more at risk, and Sojourner Truth, an emancipated slave, faced those risks often and gave a much noted extemporaneous speech at a women's rights gathering in Akron, Ohio, in 1851, which came to be called "Ain't I a Woman?" (Wood, 2005) Her speech highlighted the multiple layers of oppression faced by Black women. You can watch actress Alfre Woodard deliver an interpretation of the speech in [Video Clip 1.1](#).

VIDEO CLIP 1.1 [Alfre Woodard Interprets Sojourner Truth's Speech "Ain't I a Woman?"](#)

Feminism as an intellectual and social movement advanced women's rights and our overall understanding of gender. Feminism has gotten a bad reputation based on how it has been portrayed in the media and by some politicians. When I teach courses about gender, I often ask my students to raise their hand if they consider themselves feminists. I usually only have a few, if any, who do. I've found that students I teach are hesitant to identify as a feminist because of connotations of the word. However, when I ask students to raise their hand if they believe women have been treated unfairly and that there should be more equity, most students raise their hand. Gender and communication scholar Julia Wood has found the same trend and explains that a desire to make a more equitable society for everyone is at the root of feminism. She shares comments from a student that capture this disconnect (Wood, 2005):

I would never call myself a feminist, because that word has so many negative connotations. I don't hate men or anything, and I'm not interested in protesting. I don't want to go

around with hacked-off hair and no makeup and sit around bashing men. I do think women should have the same kinds of rights, including equal pay for equal work. But I wouldn't call myself a feminist.

It's important to remember that there are many ways to be a feminist and to realize that some of the stereotypes about feminism are rooted in sexism and homophobia, in that feminists are reduced to "men haters" and often presumed to be lesbians. The feminist movement also gave some momentum to the transgender rights movement. **Transgender** is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression do not match the gender they were assigned by birth. Transgender people may or may not seek medical intervention like surgery or hormone treatments to help match their physiology with their gender identity. The term *transgender* includes other labels such as *transsexual*, *transvestite*, *cross-dresser*, and *intersex*, among others. Terms like *hermaphrodite* and *she-male* are not considered appropriate. As with other groups, it is best to allow someone to self-identify first and then honor their preferred label. If you are unsure of which pronouns to use when addressing someone, you can use gender-neutral language, the pronoun that matches with how they are presenting, or the pronoun *they* or *them*. If someone has long hair, make-up, and a dress on, but you think their biological sex is male due to other cues, it would be polite to address them with female pronouns, since that is the gender identity they are expressing.

Gender as a cultural identity has implications for many aspects of our lives, including real-world contexts like education and work. Schools are primary grounds for socialization, and the educational experience for males and females is different in many ways from preschool through college. Although not always intentional, schools tend to recreate the hierarchies and inequalities that exist in society. Given that we live in a patriarchal society, there are communicative elements present in school that support this (Allen, 2011). For example, teachers are more likely to call on and pay attention to boys in a classroom, giving them more feedback in the form of criticism, praise, and help. This sends an implicit message that boys are more worthy of attention and valuable than girls. Teachers are also more likely to lead girls to focus on feelings and appearance and boys to focus on competition and achievement. The focus on appearance for girls can lead to anxieties about body image. Gender inequalities are also evident in the administrative structure of schools, which puts males in positions of authority more than females. While females make up 75% of the educational workforce, only 22% of superintendents and 8% of high school principals are women. Similar trends exist in colleges and universities, with women only accounting for 26% of full professors. These inequalities

in schools correspond to larger inequalities in the general workforce. While there are more women in the workforce now than ever before, they still face a glass ceiling, which is a barrier for promotion to upper management. Many of my students have been surprised at the continuing pay gap that exists between men and women. In 2018, the median salaries for all full-time, year-round workers showed women earning 81.6 cents for every dollar men earned, statistically the same gap as in 2017 (National Committee on Pay Equity, n.d.a). To put this into perspective, the National Committee on Pay Equity started an event called Equal Pay Day. In 2020, Equal Pay Day was on March 31. This signifies that for a woman to earn the same amount of money a man earned in a year, she would have to work three full months extra, until March 31, to make up for the difference (National Committee on Pay Equity, n.d.b).

Sexuality

While race and gender are two of the first things we notice about others, sexuality is often something we view as personal and private. Although many people hold a view that a person's sexuality should be kept private, this isn't a reality for our society. One only needs to observe popular culture and media for a short time to see that sexuality permeates much of our public discourse.

Sexuality relates to culture and identity in important ways that extend beyond sexual orientation, just as race is more than the color of one's skin and gender is more than one's biological and physiological manifestations of masculinity and femininity. Sexuality isn't just physical; it is social in that we communicate with others about sexuality (Allen, 2011). Sexuality is also biological in that it connects to physiological functions that carry significant social and political meaning like puberty, menstruation, and pregnancy. Sexuality connects to public health issues like sexually transmitted infections (STIs), sexual assault, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and teen pregnancy. Sexuality is at the center of political issues like abortion, sex education, and gay and lesbian rights. While all these contribute to sexuality as a cultural identity, the focus in this section is on sexual orientation.

The most obvious way sexuality relates to identity is through sexual orientation. **Sexual orientation** refers to a person's primary physical and emotional sexual attraction and activity. The terms we most often use to categorize sexual orientation are *heterosexual*, *gay*, *lesbian*, *bisexual*, and *asexual*. Gays, lesbians, and bisexuals are sometimes referred to as sexual minorities. While the term *sexual preference* has been used previously, *sexual orientation* is more appropriate, since *preference* implies a simple choice. Although someone's preference for a restaurant or actor may change frequently, sexuality is not as simple. The term *homosexual*

can be appropriate in some instances, but it carries with it a clinical and medicalized tone. As you will see in the timeline that follows, the medical community has a recent history of “treating homosexuality” with means that most would view as inhumane today. So many people prefer a term like *gay*, which was chosen and embraced by gay people, rather than *homosexual*, which was imposed by a then discriminatory medical system.

The gay and lesbian rights movement became widely recognizable in the United States in the 1950s and continues on today, as evidenced by prominent issues regarding sexual orientation in national news and politics. National and international groups like the Human Rights Campaign advocate for rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) communities. While these communities are often grouped together within one acronym (LGBTQ), they are different. Gays and lesbians constitute the most visible of the groups and receive the most attention and funding. Bisexuals are rarely visible or included in

popular cultural discourses or in social and political movements. Transgender issues have received much more attention in recent years, but transgender identity connects to gender more than it does to sexuality. Last, *queer* is a term used to describe a group that is diverse in terms of identities but usually takes a more activist and at times radical stance that critiques sexual categories. While *queer* was long considered a derogatory label, and still is by some, the queer activist movement that emerged in the 1980s and early 1990s reclaimed the word and embraced it as a positive. As you can see, there is a diversity of identities among sexual minorities, just as there is variation within races and genders.

As with other cultural identities, notions of sexuality have been socially constructed in different ways throughout human history. Sexual orientation didn’t come into being as an identity category until the late 1800s. Before that, sexuality was viewed in more physical or spiritual senses that were largely separate from a person’s identity. [Table 1.3](#) traces

TABLE 1.3 Developments Related to Sexuality, Identity, and Communication

Year(s)	Development
1400 BCE–565 BCE	During the Greek and Roman era, there was no conception of sexual orientation as an identity. However, sexual relationships between men were accepted for some members of society. Also at this time, Greek poet Sappho wrote about love between women.
533	Byzantine Emperor Justinian makes adultery and same-sex sexual acts punishable by death.
1533	Civil law in England indicates the death penalty can be given for same-sex sexual acts between men.
1810	Napoleonic Code in France removes all penalties for any sexual activity between consenting adults.
1861	England removes death penalty for same-sex sexual acts.
1892	The term <i>heterosexuality</i> is coined to refer a form of “sexual perversion” in which people engage in sexual acts for reasons other than reproduction.
1897	Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld founds the Scientific Humanitarian Committee in Berlin. It is the first gay rights organization.
1900–1930	Doctors “treat” homosexuality with castration, electro-shock therapy, and incarceration in mental hospitals.
1924	The first gay rights organization in the United States, the Chicago Society for Human Rights, is founded.
1933–44	Tens of thousands of gay men are sent to concentration camps under Nazi rule. The prisoners are forced to wear pink triangles on their uniforms. The pink triangle was later reclaimed as a symbol of gay rights.
1934	The terms <i>heterosexuality</i> and <i>homosexuality</i> appear in Webster’s dictionary with generally the same meaning the terms hold today.
1948	American sexologist Alfred Kinsey’s research reveals that more people than thought have engaged in same-sex sexual activity. His research highlights the existence of bisexuality.
1969	On June 27, patrons at the Stonewall Inn in New York City fight back as police raid the bar (a common practice used by police at the time to harass gay people). “The Stonewall Riot,” as it came to be called, was led by gay, lesbian, and transgender patrons of the bar, many of whom were working class and/or people of color.
1974	The American Psychiatric Association removes its reference to homosexuality as a mental illness.
1999	The Vermont Supreme Court rules that the state must provide legal rights to same-sex couples. In 2000, Vermont becomes the first state to offer same-sex couples civil unions.
2003	The U.S. Supreme Court rules that Texas’s sodomy law is unconstitutional, which effectively decriminalizes consensual same-sex relations.
2011	The U.S. military policy “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” is repealed, allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly.

Adapted from [Allen \(2011\)](#) and [University of Denver Queer and Ally Commission \(2008\)](#).

some of the developments relevant to sexuality, identity, and communication that show how this cultural identity has been constructed over the past 3,000 years.

Ability

There is resistance to classifying ability as a cultural identity, because we follow a **medical model of disability** that places disability as an individual and medical rather than social and cultural issue. While much of what distinguishes able-bodied and cognitively able from disabled is rooted in science, biology, and physiology, there are important socio-cultural dimensions. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines an individual with a disability as “a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment” (Allen, 2011, p. 12). An impairment is defined as “any temporary or permanent loss or abnormality of a body structure or function, whether physiological or psychological” (Allen, 2011). This definition is important because it notes the social aspect of disability in that people’s life activities are limited and the relational aspect of disability in that the perception of a disability by others can lead someone to be classified as such. Ascribing an identity of disabled to a person can be problematic. If there is a mental or physical impairment, it should be diagnosed by a credentialed expert. If there isn’t an impairment, then the label of *disabled* can have negative impacts, as this label carries social and cultural significance. People are tracked into various educational programs based on their physical and cognitive abilities, and there are many cases of people being mistakenly labeled disabled who were treated differently despite their protest of the ascribed label. Students who did not speak English as a first language, for example, were—and perhaps still are—sometimes put into special education classes.

Ability, just as the other cultural identities discussed, has institutionalized privileges and disadvantages



As recently disabled veterans integrate back into civilian life, they will be offered assistance and accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act. (110518-M-EC403-102 by Wounded Warrior Regiment is used under CC BY-NC 2.0.)

associated with it. **Ableism** is the system of beliefs and practices that produces a physical and mental standard that is projected as normal for a human being and labels deviations from it abnormal, resulting in unequal treatment and access to resources. Ability privilege refers to the unearned advantages that are provided for people who fit the cognitive and physical norms (Allen, 2011). I once attended a workshop about ability privilege led by a man who was visually impaired. He talked about how, unlike other cultural identities that are typically stable over a lifetime, ability fluctuates for most people. We have all experienced times when we are more or less able.

Perhaps you broke your leg and had to use crutches or a wheelchair for a while. Getting sick for a prolonged period of time also lessens our abilities, but we may fully recover from any of these examples and regain our ability privilege. Whether you’ve experienced a short-term disability or not, the majority of us will become less physically and cognitively able as we get older.

Statistically, people with disabilities make up the largest minority group in the United States, with an estimated 20% of people five years or older living with some form of disability (Allen, 2011). Medical advances have allowed some people with disabilities to live longer and more active lives than before, which has led to an increase in the number of people with disabilities. This number could continue to increase, as we have thousands of veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with physical disabilities or psychological impairments such as posttraumatic stress disorder.

As disability has been constructed in U.S. history, it has intersected with other cultural identities. For example, people opposed to “political and social equality for women cited their supposed physical, intellectual, and psychological flaws, deficits, and deviations from the male norm.” They framed women as emotional, irrational, and unstable, which was used to put them into the “scientific” category of “feeble-mindedness,” which led them to be institutionalized (Carlson, 2001). Arguments supporting racial inequality and tighter immigration restrictions also drew on notions of disability, framing certain racial groups as prone to mental retardation, mental illness, or uncontrollable emotions and actions. See Table 1.4 for a timeline of developments related to ability, identity, and communication. These thoughts led to a dark time in U.S. history, as the eugenics movement sought to limit reproduction of people deemed as deficient.

During the early part of the 1900s, the eugenics movement was the epitome of the move to rehabilitate or reject people with disabilities (Allen, 2005). This was a brand of social engineering that was indicative of a strong public

TABLE 1.4 Developments Related to Ability, Identity, and Communication

Year(s)	Development
400 BCE	The Greeks make connections between biology, physiology, and actions. For example, they make a connection between epilepsy and a disorder of the mind but still consider the source to be supernatural or divine.
30–480	People with disabilities are viewed with pity by early Christians and thought to be so conditioned because of an impurity that could possibly be addressed through prayer.
500–1500	As beliefs in the supernatural increase during the Middle Ages, people with disabilities are seen as manifestations of evil and are ridiculed and persecuted.
1650–1789	During the Enlightenment, the first large-scale movements toward the medical model are made, as science and medicine advance and society turns to a view of human rationality.
1900s	The eugenics movement in the United States begins. Laws are passed to sterilize the “socially inadequate,” and during this time, more than sixty thousand people were forcibly sterilized in thirty-three states.
1930s	People with disabilities become the first targets of experimentation and mass execution by the Nazis.
1970s	The independent living movement becomes a prominent part of the disability rights movement.
1990	The Americans with Disabilities Act is passed through Congress and signed into law.

From [Shreve \(n.d.\)](#).

support in the rationality of science to cure society’s problems ([Allen, n.d.](#)). A sterilization law written in 1914 “proposed to authorize sterilization of the socially inadequate,” which included the “feebleminded, insane, criminalistic, epileptic, inebriate, diseased, blind, deaf, deformed, and dependent” ([Lombardo, n.d.](#)). During the eugenics movement in the United States, more than sixty thousand people in thirty-three states were involuntarily sterilized ([Allen, 2011](#)). Although the eugenics movement as it was envisioned and enacted then is unthinkable today, some who have studied the eugenics movement of the early 1900s have issued warnings that a newly packaged version of eugenics could be upon us. As human genome mapping and DNA manipulation become more accessible, advanced genetic testing could enable parents to eliminate undesirable aspects or enhance desirable characteristics of their children before they are born, creating “designer children” ([Spice, 2005](#)).

Much has changed for people with disabilities in the United States in the past fifty years. The independent living movement (ILM) was a part of the disability rights movement that took shape along with other social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The ILM calls for more individual and collective action toward social change by people with disabilities. Some of the goals of the ILM include reframing disability as a social and political rather than just a medical issue, a shift toward changing society rather than just rehabilitating people with disabilities, a view of accommodations as civil rights rather than charity, and more involvement by people with disabilities in the formulation and execution of policies relating to them ([Longmore, 2003](#)). As society better adapts to people with disabilities,

there will be more instances of interability communication taking place.

Interability communication is communication between people with differing ability levels; for example, a hearing person communicating with someone who is hearing impaired or a person who doesn’t use a wheelchair communicating with someone who uses a wheelchair. Since many people are unsure of how to communicate with a person with disabilities, following are the “Ten Commandments of Etiquette for Communicating with People with Disabilities” to help you in communicating with persons with disabilities ([Office of Disability Employment Policy, n.d.](#)):

1. When talking with a person with a disability, speak directly to that person rather than through a companion or sign-language interpreter.
2. When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or an artificial limb can usually shake hands. (Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting.)
3. When meeting a person who is visually impaired, always identify yourself and others who may be with you. When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking.
4. If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen to or ask for instructions.
5. Treat adults as adults. Address people who have disabilities by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to all others. (Never patronize people who use wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.)

6. Leaning on or hanging on to a person's wheelchair is similar to leaning or hanging on to a person and is generally considered annoying. The chair is part of the personal body space of the person who uses it.
7. Listen attentively when you're talking with a person who has difficulty speaking. Be patient and wait for the person to finish, rather than correcting or speaking for the person. If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers, a nod, or a shake of the head. Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Instead, repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond. The response will clue you in and guide your understanding.
8. When speaking with a person who uses a wheelchair or a person who uses crutches, place yourself at eye level in front of the person to facilitate the conversation.
9. To get the attention of a person who is deaf, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly, and expressively to determine if the person can read your lips. Not all people who are deaf can read lips. For those who do lip read, be sensitive to their needs by placing yourself so that you face the light source and keep hands, cigarettes, and food away from your mouth when speaking.
10. Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use accepted, common expressions such as "See you later" or "Did you hear about that?" that seem to relate to a person's disability. Don't be afraid to ask questions when you're unsure of what to do.

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

It is through intercultural communication that we come to create, understand, and transform culture and identity. **Intercultural communication** is communication between people with differing cultural identities. One reason we should study intercultural communication is to foster greater self-awareness (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). Our thought process regarding culture is often "other focused," meaning that the culture of the other person or group is what stands out in our perception. However, the old adage "know thyself" is appropriate, as we become more aware of our own culture by better understanding other cultures and perspectives. Intercultural communication can allow us to step outside of our comfortable, usual frame of reference and see our culture through a different lens. Additionally, as we become more self-aware, we may also become more ethical communicators as we challenge our **ethnocentrism**, or our tendency to view our own culture as superior to other cultures.

As was noted earlier, difference matters, and studying intercultural communication can help us better negotiate

our changing world. Changing economies and technologies intersect with culture in meaningful ways (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). As was noted earlier, technology has created for some a **global village** where vast distances are now much shorter due to new technology that make travel and communication more accessible and convenient (McLuhan, 1967). However, as the following "Getting Plugged In" box indicates, there is also a **digital divide**, which refers to the unequal access to technology and related skills that exists in much of the world. People in most fields will be more successful if they are prepared to work in a globalized world. Obviously, the global market sets up the need to have intercultural competence for employees who travel between locations of a multinational corporation. Perhaps less obvious may be the need for teachers to work with students who do not speak English as their first language and for police officers, lawyers, managers, and medical personnel to be able to work with people who have various cultural identities.

■ "Getting Plugged In" • *The Digital Divide*

Many people who are now college age struggle to imagine a time without cell phones and the Internet. As "digital natives" it is probably also surprising to realize the number of people who do not have access to certain technologies. The *digital divide* was a term that initially referred to gaps in access to computers. The term expanded to include access to the Internet since it exploded onto the technology scene and is now connected to virtually all computing (van Deursen & van Dijk, 2010). Approximately two billion people around the world now access the Internet regularly, and those who don't face several disadvantages (Smith, 2011). Discussions of the digital divide are now turning more specifically to high-speed Internet access, and the discussion is moving beyond the physical access divide to include the skills divide, the economic opportunity divide, and the democratic divide. This divide doesn't just exist in developing countries; it has become an increasing concern in the United States. This is relevant to cultural identities because there are already inequalities in terms of access to technology based on age, race, and class (Sylvester & McGlynn, 2010). Scholars argue that these continued gaps will only serve to exacerbate existing cultural and social inequalities. From an international perspective, the United States is falling behind other countries in terms of access to high-speed Internet. South Korea, Japan, Sweden, and Germany now all have faster average connection speeds than the United States (Smith, 2011). And Finland in 2010 became the first country in the world to declare that all its citizens have a legal right to broadband Internet access (ben-Aaron, 2010). People in rural areas in the United States are especially disconnected from broadband service, with

about 11 million rural Americans unable to get the service at home. As so much of our daily lives go online, it puts those who aren't connected at a disadvantage. From paying bills online, to interacting with government services, to applying for jobs, to taking online college classes, to researching and participating in political and social causes, the Internet connects to education, money, and politics.

1. What do you think of Finland's inclusion of broadband access as a legal right? Is this something that should be done in other countries? Why or why not?
2. How does the digital divide affect the notion of the global village?
3. How might limited access to technology negatively affect various nondominant groups? ■

Intercultural Communication: A Dialectical Approach

Intercultural communication is complicated, messy, and at times contradictory. Therefore it is not always easy to conceptualize or study. Taking a dialectical approach allows us to capture the dynamism of intercultural communication. A **dialectic** is a relationship between two opposing concepts that constantly push and pull one another (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). To put it another way, thinking dialectically helps us realize that our experiences often occur in between two different phenomena. This perspective is especially useful for interpersonal and intercultural communication, because when we think dialectically, we think relationally. This means we look at the relationship between aspects of intercultural communication rather than viewing them in isolation. Intercultural communication occurs as a dynamic in-betweenness that, while connected to the individuals in an encounter, goes beyond the individuals, creating something unique. Holding a dialectical perspective may be challenging for some Westerners, as it asks us to hold two contradictory ideas simultaneously, which goes against much of what we are taught in our formal education. Thinking dialectically helps us see the complexity in culture and identity because it doesn't allow for dichotomies. Dichotomies are dualistic ways of thinking that highlight opposites, reducing the ability to see gradations that exist in between concepts. **Dichotomies** such as good/evil, wrong/right, objective/subjective, male/female, in-group/out-group, Black/White, and so on form the basis of much of our thoughts on ethics, culture, and general philosophy, but this isn't the only way of thinking (Martin & Nakayama, 1999). Many Eastern cultures acknowledge that the world isn't dualistic. Rather, they accept as part of their reality that things that seem opposite are actually interdependent and complement each other. I argue that

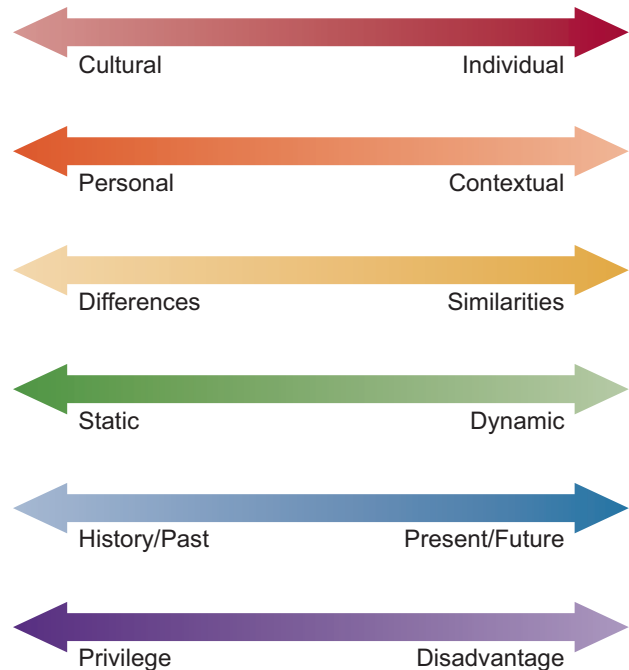


FIGURE 1.1 Dialectics of intercultural communication. (Dialectics of Intercultural Communication by Judy Schmitt is used under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0; adapted from Martin & Nakayama [1999].)

a dialectical approach is useful in studying intercultural communication because it gets us out of our comfortable and familiar ways of thinking. Since so much of understanding culture and identity is understanding ourselves, having an unfamiliar lens through which to view culture can offer us insights that our familiar lenses will not. Specifically, we can better understand intercultural communication by examining six dialectics (see Figure 1.1) (Martin & Nakayama, 1999).

The **cultural-individual dialectic** captures the interplay between patterned behaviors learned from a cultural group and individual behaviors that may be variations on or counter to those of the larger culture. This dialectic is useful because it helps us account for exceptions to cultural norms. For example, earlier we learned that the United States is said to be a low-context culture, which means that we value verbal communication as our primary, meaning-rich form of communication. Conversely, Japan is said to be a high-context culture, which means they often look for nonverbal clues like tone, silence, or what is not said for meaning. However, you can find people in the United States who intentionally put much meaning into *how* they say things, perhaps because they are not as comfortable speaking directly what's on their mind. We often do this in situations where we may hurt someone's feelings or damage a relationship. Does that mean we come from a high-context culture? Does the Japanese man who speaks more than is socially acceptable come from a low-context

culture? The answer to both questions is no. Neither the behaviors of a small percentage of individuals nor occasional situational choices constitute a cultural pattern.

The **personal-contextual dialectic** highlights the connection between our personal patterns of and preferences for communicating and how various contexts influence the personal. In some cases, our communication patterns and preferences will stay the same across many contexts. In other cases, a context shift may lead us to alter our communication and adapt. For example, an American businesswoman may prefer to communicate with her employees in an informal and laid-back manner. When she is promoted to manage a department in her company's office in Malaysia, she may again prefer to communicate with her new Malaysian employees the same way she did with those in the United States. In the United States, we know that there are some accepted norms that communication in work contexts is more formal than in personal contexts. However, we also know that individual managers often adapt these expectations to suit their own personal tastes. This type of managerial discretion would likely not go over as well in Malaysia where there is a greater emphasis put on power distance (Hofstede, 1991). So while the American manager may not know to adapt to the new context unless she has a high degree of intercultural communication competence, Malaysian managers would realize that this is an instance where the context likely influences communication more than personal preferences.

The **differences-similarities dialectic** allows us to examine how we are simultaneously similar to and different from others. As was noted earlier, it's easy to fall into a view of intercultural communication as "other oriented" and set up dichotomies between "us" and "them." When we overfocus on differences, we can end up polarizing groups that actually have things in common. When we overfocus on similarities, we **essentialize**, or reduce/overlook important variations within a group. This tendency is evident in most of the popular, and some of the academic, conversations regarding "gender differences." The book *Men Are from Mars and Women Are from Venus* makes it seem like men and women aren't even species that hail from the same planet. The media is quick to include a blurb from a research study indicating again how men and women are "wired" to communicate differently. However, the overwhelming majority of current research on gender and communication finds that while there are differences between how men and women communicate, there are far more similarities (Allen, 2011). Even the language we use to describe the genders sets up dichotomies. That's why I suggest that my students use the term *other gender* instead of the commonly used *opposite sex*. I have a mom, a sister,

and plenty of female friends, and I don't feel like any of them are the opposite of me. Perhaps a better title for a book would be *Women and Men Are Both from Earth*.

The **static-dynamic dialectic** suggests that culture and communication change over time yet often appear to be and are experienced as stable. Although it is true that our cultural beliefs and practices are rooted in the past, we have already discussed how cultural categories that most of us assume to be stable, like race and gender, have changed dramatically in just the past fifty years. Some cultural values remain relatively consistent over time, which allows us to make some generalizations about a culture. For example, cultures have different orientations to time. The Chinese have a longer-term orientation to time than do Europeans (Lustig & Koester, 2006). This is evidenced in something that dates back as far as astrology. The Chinese zodiac is done annually (The Year of the Monkey, etc.), while European astrology was organized by month (Taurus, etc.). While this cultural orientation to time has been around for generations, as China becomes more Westernized in terms of technology, business, and commerce, it could also adopt some views on time that are more short term.

The **history/past-present/future dialectic** reminds us to understand that while current cultural conditions are important and that our actions now will inevitably affect our future, those conditions are not without a history. We always view history through the lens of the present. Perhaps no example is more entrenched in our past and avoided in our present as the history of slavery in the United States. Where I grew up in the Southern United States, race was something that came up frequently. The high school I attended was 30% minorities (mostly African American) and also had a noticeable number of White teens (mostly male) who proudly displayed Confederate flags on their clothing or vehicles.

I remember an instance in a history class where we were discussing slavery and the subject of repatriation, or compensation for descendants of slaves, came up. A White male student in the class proclaimed, "I've never owned slaves. Why should I have to care about this now?" While his statement about not owning slaves is valid, it doesn't acknowledge that effects of slavery still linger today and that the repercussions of such a long and unjust period of our history don't disappear over the course of a few generations.

The **privileges-disadvantages dialectic** captures the complex interrelation of unearned, systemic advantages and disadvantages that operate among our various identities. As was discussed earlier, our society consists of dominant and nondominant groups. Our cultures and



There has been controversy over whether the Confederate flag is a symbol of hatred or a historical symbol that acknowledges the time of the Civil War. (Confederate Rebel Flag by Jim Surkamp is used under CC BY-NC 2.0.)

Identities have certain privileges and/or disadvantages. To understand this dialectic, we must view culture and identity through a lens of **intersectionality**, which asks us to acknowledge that we each have multiple cultures and identities that intersect with each other. Because our identities are complex, no one is completely privileged and no one is completely disadvantaged. For example, while we may think of a White, heterosexual male as being very privileged, he may also have a disability that leaves him without the able-bodied privilege that a Latina woman has. This is often a difficult dialectic for my students to understand, because they are quick to point out exceptions that they think challenge this notion. For example, many people like to point out Oprah Winfrey as a powerful African American woman. While she is definitely now quite privileged despite her disadvantaged identities, her trajectory isn't the norm. When we view privilege and disadvantage at the cultural level, we cannot let individual exceptions distract from the systemic and institutionalized ways in which some people in our society are disadvantaged while others are privileged.

As these dialectics reiterate, culture and communication are complex systems that intersect with and diverge from many contexts. A better understanding of all these dialectics helps us be more critical thinkers and competent communicators in a changing world.

■ Getting Critical™ • Immigration, Laws, and Religion

France, like the United States, has a constitutional separation between church and state. As many countries in Europe, including France, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden, have experienced influxes of immigrants, many of them Muslim, there have been growing tensions among

immigration, laws, and religion. In 2011, France passed a law banning the wearing of a *niqab* (pronounced *knee-cobb*), which is an Islamic facial covering worn by some women that only exposes the eyes. This law was aimed at “assimilating its Muslim population” of more than five million people and “defending French values and women’s rights” (de la Baume & Goodman, 2011). Women found wearing the veil can now be cited and fined \$150 euros. Although the law went into effect in April of 2011, the first fines were issued in late September of 2011. Hind Ahmas, a woman who was fined, says she welcomes the punishment because she wants to challenge the law in the European Court of Human Rights. She also stated that she respects French laws but cannot abide by this one. Her choice to wear the veil has been met with more than a fine. She recounts how she has been denied access to banks and other public buildings and was verbally harassed by a woman on the street and then punched in the face by the woman’s husband. Another Muslim woman named Kenza Drider, who can be seen in [Video Clip 1.2](#), announced that she will run for the presidency of France in order to challenge the law. The bill that contained the law was broadly supported by politicians and the public in France, and similar laws are already in place in Belgium and are being proposed in Italy, Austria, the Netherlands, and Switzerland (Fraser, 2011).

1. Some people who support the law argue that part of integrating into Western society is showing your face. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
2. Part of the argument for the law is to aid in the assimilation of Muslim immigrants into French society. What are some positives and negatives of this type of assimilation?
3. Identify which of the previously discussed dialectics can be seen in this case. How do these dialectics capture the tensions involved? ■

VIDEO CLIP 1.2 Veiled Woman Eyes French Presidency

Intercultural Communication and Relationships

Intercultural relationships are formed between people with different cultural identities and include friends, romantic partners, family, and coworkers. Intercultural relationships have benefits and drawbacks. Some of the benefits include increasing cultural knowledge, challenging previously held stereotypes, and learning new skills (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). For example, I learned about the Vietnamese New Year celebration Tet from a friend I made in graduate school. This same friend also taught me how to make some delicious Vietnamese foods that I continue to cook today. I likely would not have gained

this cultural knowledge or skill without the benefits of my intercultural friendship. Intercultural relationships also present challenges, however.

The dialectics discussed earlier affect our intercultural relationships. The similarities-differences dialectic in particular may present challenges to relationship formation (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). While differences between people's cultural identities may be obvious, it takes some effort to uncover commonalities that can form the basis of a relationship. Perceived differences in general also create anxiety and uncertainty that is not as present in intracultural relationships. Once some similarities are found, the tension within the dialectic begins to balance out and uncertainty and anxiety lessen. Negative stereotypes may also hinder progress toward relational development, especially if the individuals are not open to adjusting their preexisting beliefs. Intercultural relationships may also take more work to nurture and maintain. The benefit of increased cultural awareness is often achieved, because the relational partners explain their cultures to each other. This type of explaining requires time, effort, and patience and may be an extra burden that some are not willing to carry. Last, engaging in intercultural relationships can lead to questioning or even backlash from one's own group. I experienced this type of backlash from my White classmates in middle school who teased me for hanging out with the African American kids on my bus. While these challenges range from mild inconveniences to more serious repercussions, they are important to be aware of. As noted earlier, intercultural relationships can take many forms. The focus of this section is on friendships and romantic relationships, but much of the following discussion can be extended to other relationship types.

Intercultural Friendships

Even within the United States, views of friendship vary based on cultural identities. Research on friendship has shown that Latinos/as value relational support and positive feedback, Asian Americans emphasize exchanges of ideas like offering feedback or asking for guidance, African Americans value respect and mutual acceptance, and European Americans value recognition of each other as individuals (Collier, 1996). Despite the differences in emphasis, research also shows that the overall definition of a close friend is similar across cultures. A close friend is thought of as someone who is helpful and nonjudgmental, who you enjoy spending time with but can also be independent, and who shares similar interests and personality traits (Lee, 2006).

Intercultural friendship formation may face challenges that other friendships do not. Prior intercultural experience

and overcoming language barriers increase the likelihood of intercultural friendship formation (Sias et al., 2008). In some cases, previous intercultural experience, like studying abroad in college or living in a diverse place, may motivate someone to pursue intercultural friendships once they are no longer in that context. When friendships cross nationality, it may be necessary to invest more time in common understanding, due to language barriers. With sufficient motivation and language skills, communication exchanges through self-disclosure can then further relational formation. Research has shown that individuals from different countries in intercultural friendships differ in terms of the topics and depth of self-disclosure, but that as the friendship progresses, self-disclosure increases in depth and breadth (Chen & Nakazawa, 2009). Further, as people overcome initial challenges to initiating an intercultural friendship and move toward mutual self-disclosure, the relationship becomes more intimate, which helps friends work through and move beyond their cultural differences to focus on maintaining their relationship. In this sense, intercultural friendships can be just as strong and enduring as other friendships (Lee, 2006).

The potential for broadening one's perspective and learning more about cultural identities is not always balanced, however. In some instances, members of a dominant culture may be more interested in sharing their culture with their intercultural friend than they are in learning about their friend's culture, which illustrates how context and power influence friendships (Lee, 2006). A research study found a similar power dynamic, as European Americans in intercultural friendships stated they were open to exploring everyone's culture but also communicated that culture wasn't a big part of their intercultural friendships, as they just saw their friends as people. As the researcher states, "These types of responses may demonstrate that it is easiest for the group with the most socioeconomic and socio-cultural power to ignore the rules, assume they have the power as individuals to change the rules, or assume that no rules exist, since others are adapting to them rather than vice versa" (Collier, 1996). Again, intercultural friendships illustrate the complexity of culture and the importance of remaining mindful of your communication and the contexts in which it occurs.

Culture and Romantic Relationships

Romantic relationships are influenced by society and culture, and still today some people face discrimination based on who they love. Specifically, sexual orientation and race affect societal views of romantic relationships. Although the United States, as a whole, is becoming more accepting of gay and lesbian relationships, there is still a climate of prejudice and discrimination that individuals

in same-gender romantic relationships must face. Despite some physical and virtual meeting places for gay and lesbian people, there are challenges for meeting and starting romantic relationships that are not experienced for most heterosexual people (Peplau & Spalding, 2000).

As we've already discussed, romantic relationships are likely to begin due to merely being exposed to another person at work, through a friend, and so on. But some gay and lesbian people may feel pressured into or just feel more comfortable not disclosing or displaying their sexual orientation at work or perhaps even to some family and friends, which closes off important social networks through which most romantic relationships begin. In June 2020, in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, the Supreme Court ruled in accordance with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that employees shall be protected against discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity (*Bostock v. Clayton County*, 2020). There are also some challenges faced by gay and lesbian partners regarding relationship termination. Gay and lesbian couples do not have the same legal and societal resources to manage their relationships as heterosexual couples; for example, gay and lesbian relationships are not legally recognized in most states, it is more difficult for a gay or lesbian couple to jointly own property or share custody of children than heterosexual couples, and there is little public funding for relationship counseling or couples therapy for gay and lesbian couples.

While this lack of barriers may make it easier for gay and lesbian partners to break out of an unhappy or unhealthy relationship, it could also lead couples to termination who may have been helped by the sociolegal support systems available to heterosexuals (Peplau & Spalding, 2000).

Despite these challenges, relationships between gay and lesbian people are similar in other ways to those between heterosexuals. Gay, lesbian, and heterosexual people seek similar qualities in a potential mate, and once relationships are established, all these groups experience similar degrees of relational satisfaction (Peplau & Spalding, 2000). Despite the myth that one person plays the man and one plays the woman in a relationship, gay and lesbian partners do not have set preferences in terms of gender role. In fact, research shows that while women in heterosexual relationships tend to do more of the housework, gay and lesbian couples were more likely to divide tasks so that each person has an equal share of responsibility (Peplau & Spalding, 2000). A gay or lesbian couple doesn't necessarily constitute an intercultural relationship, but as we have already discussed, sexuality is an important part of an individual's identity and connects to larger social and cultural systems. Keeping in mind that identity



The Supreme Court ruled in the 1967 *Loving v. Virginia* case that states could not enforce laws banning interracial marriages. (3232601024_6ef4148de9_b by Bahá'ís of the U.S. is used under CC BY-NC 2.0.)

and culture are complex, we can see that gay and lesbian relationships can also be intercultural if the partners are of different racial or ethnic backgrounds.

While interracial relationships have occurred throughout history, there have been more historical taboos in the United States regarding relationships between African Americans and White people than other racial groups. **Antimiscegenation laws** were common in states and made it illegal for people of different racial/ethnic groups to marry. It wasn't until 1967 that the Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Loving v. Virginia*, declaring these laws to be unconstitutional (Pratt, 1995). It wasn't until 1998 and 2000, however, that South Carolina and Alabama removed such language from their state constitutions (*Loving Day*, 2012). The organization and website lovingday.org commemorates the landmark case and works to end racial prejudice through education.

Even after these changes, there were more Asian-White and Latinx-White relationships than there were African American-White relationships (Gaines & Brennan, 2011). Having already discussed the importance of similarity in attraction to mates, it's important to note that partners in an interracial relationship, although culturally different, tend to be similar in occupation and income. This can likely be explained by the situational influences on our relationship formation we discussed earlier—namely, that work tends to be a starting ground for many of our relationships, and we usually work with people who have similar backgrounds to us.

There has been much research on interracial couples that counters the popular notion that partners may be less satisfied in their relationships due to cultural differences. In fact, relational satisfaction isn't significantly different for interracial partners, although the challenges they may

face in finding acceptance from other people could lead to stressors that are not as strong for intracultural partners (Gaines & Brennan, 2011). Although partners in interracial relationships certainly face challenges, there are positives. For example, some mention that they've experienced personal growth by learning about their partner's cultural background, which helps them gain alternative perspectives. Specifically, White people in interracial relationships have cited an awareness of and empathy for racism that still exists, which they may not have been aware of before (Gaines & Liu, 2000).

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Throughout this book we have been putting various tools in our communication toolbox to improve our communication competence. Many of these tools can be translated into intercultural contexts. While building any form of competence requires effort, building intercultural communication competence often requires us to take more risks. Some of these risks require us to leave our comfort zones and adapt to new and uncertain situations. In this section, we will learn some of the skills needed to be an interculturally competent communicator.

Components of Intercultural Communication Competence

Intercultural communication competence (ICC) is the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in various cultural contexts. There are numerous components of ICC. Some key components include motivation, self- and other knowledge, and tolerance for uncertainty.

Initially, a person's motivation for communicating with people from other cultures must be considered. **Motivation** refers to the root of a person's desire to foster intercultural relationships and can be intrinsic or extrinsic (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). Put simply, if a person isn't motivated to communicate with people from different cultures, then the components of ICC discussed next don't really matter. If a person has a healthy curiosity that drives him or her toward intercultural encounters in order to learn more about self and others, then there is a foundation from which to build additional competence-relevant attitudes and skills. This intrinsic motivation makes intercultural communication a voluntary, rewarding, and lifelong learning process. Motivation can also be extrinsic, meaning that the desire for intercultural communication is driven by an outside reward like money, power, or recognition. While both types of motivation can contribute to ICC, context may further enhance or impede a person's motivation to communicate across cultures.

Members of dominant groups are often less motivated, intrinsically and extrinsically, toward intercultural communication than members of nondominant groups, because they don't see the incentives for doing so. Having more power in communication encounters can create an unbalanced situation where the individual from the nondominant group is expected to exhibit competence, or the ability to adapt to the communication behaviors and attitudes of the other. Even in situations where extrinsic rewards like securing an overseas business investment are at stake, it is likely that the foreign investor is much more accustomed to adapting to United States business customs and communication than vice versa. This expectation that others will adapt to our communication can be unconscious, but later ICC skills we will learn will help bring it to awareness.

The unbalanced situation I just described is a daily reality for many individuals with nondominant identities. Their motivation toward intercultural communication may be driven by survival in terms of functioning effectively in dominant contexts. Recall the phenomenon known as code-switching discussed earlier, in which individuals from nondominant groups adapt their communication to fit in with the dominant group. In such instances, African Americans may "talk White" by conforming to what is called "standard English," women in corporate environments may adapt masculine communication patterns, people who are gay or lesbian may self-censor and avoid discussing their same-gender partners with coworkers, and people with nonvisible disabilities may not disclose them in order to avoid judgment.

While intrinsic motivation captures an idealistic view of intercultural communication as rewarding in its own right, many contexts create extrinsic motivation. In either case, there is a risk that an individual's motivation can still lead to incompetent communication. For example, it would be exploitative for an extrinsically motivated person to pursue intercultural communication solely for an external reward and then abandon the intercultural relationship once the reward is attained. These situations highlight the relational aspect of ICC, meaning that the motivation of all parties should be considered. Motivation alone cannot create ICC.

Knowledge supplements motivation and is an important part of building ICC. Knowledge includes self- and other-awareness, mindfulness, and cognitive flexibility. Building knowledge of our own cultures, identities, and communication patterns takes more than passive experience (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). We learn who we are through our interactions with others. Developing cultural self-awareness often requires us to get out of our comfort zones. Listening to people who are different from us is a

key component of developing self-knowledge. This may be uncomfortable, because we may realize that people think of our identities differently than we thought. For example, when I lived in Sweden, my Swedish roommates often discussed how they were wary of befriending students from the United States. They perceived U.S. Americans to be shallow because they were friendly and exciting while they were in Sweden but didn't remain friends once they left. Although I was initially upset by their assessment, I came to see the truth in it. Swedes are generally more reserved than U.S. Americans and take longer to form close friendships. The comparatively extroverted nature of the Americans led some of the Swedes to overestimate the depth of their relationship, which ultimately hurt them when the Americans didn't stay in touch. This made me more aware of how my communication was perceived, enhancing my self-knowledge. I also learned more about communication behaviors of the Swedes, which contributed to my other-knowledge.

The most effective way to develop other-knowledge is by direct and thoughtful encounters with other cultures. However, people may not readily have these opportunities for a variety of reasons. Despite the overall diversity in the United States, many people still only interact with people who are similar to them. Even in a racially diverse educational setting, for example, people often group off with people of their own race. While a heterosexual person may have a gay or lesbian friend or relative, they likely spend most of their time with other heterosexuals. Unless you interact with people with disabilities as part of your job or have a person with a disability in your friend or family group, you likely spend most of your time interacting with able-bodied people. Living in a rural area may limit your ability to interact with a range of cultures, and most people do not travel internationally regularly. Because of this, we may have to make a determined effort to interact with other cultures or rely on educational sources like college classes, books, or documentaries. Learning another language is also a good way to learn about a culture, because you can then read the news or watch movies in the native language, which can offer insights that are lost in translation. It is important to note though that we must evaluate the credibility of the source of our knowledge, whether it is a book, person, or other source. Also, knowledge of another language does not automatically equate to ICC.

Developing self- and other-knowledge is an ongoing process that will continue to adapt and grow as we encounter new experiences. Mindfulness and cognitive complexity will help as we continue to build our ICC (Pusch, 2009). **Mindfulness** is a state of self- and other-monitoring that informs later reflection on communication interactions. As mindful communicators we should ask questions that

focus on the interactive process like “How is our communication going? What are my reactions? What are their reactions?” Being able to adapt our communication in the moment based on our answers to these questions is a skill that comes with a high level of ICC. Reflecting on the communication encounter later to see what can be learned is also a way to build ICC. We should then be able to incorporate what we learned into our communication frameworks, which requires cognitive flexibility. **Cognitive flexibility** refers to the ability to continually supplement and revise existing knowledge to create new categories rather than forcing new knowledge into old categories. Cognitive flexibility helps prevent our knowledge from becoming stale and also prevents the formation of stereotypes and can help us avoid prejudging an encounter or jumping to conclusions. In summary, to be better intercultural communicators, we should know much about others and ourselves and be able to reflect on and adapt our knowledge as we gain new experiences.

Motivation and knowledge can inform us as we gain new experiences, but how we feel in the moment of intercultural encounters is also important. **Tolerance for uncertainty** refers to an individual's attitude about and level of comfort in uncertain situations (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). Some people perform better in uncertain situations than others, and intercultural encounters often bring up uncertainty. Whether communicating with someone of a different gender, race, or nationality, we are often wondering what we should or shouldn't do or say. Situations of uncertainty most often become clearer as they progress, but the anxiety that an individual with a low tolerance for uncertainty feels may lead them to leave the situation or otherwise communicate in a less competent manner. Individuals with a high tolerance for uncertainty may exhibit more patience, waiting on new information to become available or seeking out information, which may then increase the understanding of the situation and lead to a more successful outcome (Pusch, 2009). Individuals who are intrinsically motivated toward intercultural communication may have a higher tolerance for uncertainty, in that their curiosity leads them to engage with others who are different because they find the self- and other-knowledge gained rewarding.

Cultivating Intercultural Communication Competence

How can ICC be built and achieved? This is a key question we will address in this section. Two main ways to build ICC are through experiential learning and reflective practices (Bednarz, 2010). We must first realize that competence isn't any one thing. Part of being competent means

that you can assess new situations and adapt your existing knowledge to the new contexts. What it means to be competent will vary depending on your physical location, your role (personal, professional, etc.), and your life stage, among other things. Sometimes we will know or be able to figure out what is expected of us in a given situation, but sometimes we may need to act in unexpected ways to meet the needs of a situation. Competence enables us to better cope with the unexpected, adapt to the nonroutine, and connect to uncommon frameworks. I have always told my students that ICC is less about a list of rules and more about a box of tools.

Three ways to cultivate ICC are to foster attitudes that motivate us, discover knowledge that informs us, and develop skills that enable us (Bennett, 2009). To foster attitudes that motivate us, we must develop a sense of wonder about culture. This sense of wonder can lead to feeling overwhelmed, humbled, or awed (Opdal, 2001). This sense of wonder may correlate to a high tolerance for uncertainty, which can help us turn potentially frustrating experiences we have into teachable moments. I've had many such moments in my intercultural encounters at home and abroad. One such moment came the first time I tried to cook a frozen pizza in the oven in the shared kitchen of my apartment in Sweden. The information on the packaging was written in Swedish, but like many college students, I had a wealth of experience cooking frozen pizzas to draw from. As I went to set the oven dial to preheat, I noticed it was strange that the oven didn't go up to my usual 425–450 degrees. Not to be deterred, I cranked the dial up as far as it would go, waited a few minutes, put my pizza in, and walked down the hall to my room to wait for about fifteen minutes until the pizza was done. The smell of smoke drew me from my room before the fifteen minutes was up, and I walked into a corridor filled with smoke and the smell of burnt pizza. I pulled the pizza out and was puzzled for a few minutes while I tried to figure out why the pizza burned so quickly, when one of my corridor-mates gently pointed out that the oven temperatures in Sweden are listed in Celsius, not Fahrenheit! Despite almost burning the kitchen down, I learned a valuable lesson about assuming my map for temperatures and frozen pizzas was the same as everyone else's.

Discovering knowledge that informs us is another step that can build on our motivation. One tool involves learning more about our cognitive style, or how we learn. Our cognitive style consists of our preferred patterns for “gathering information, constructing meaning, and organizing and applying knowledge” (Bennett, 2009). As we explore cognitive styles, we discover that there are differences in how people attend to and perceive the world, explain

events, organize the world, and use rules of logic (Nisbett, 2003). Some cultures have a cognitive style that focuses more on tasks, analytic and objective thinking, details and precision, inner direction, and independence, while others focus on relationships and people over tasks and things, concrete and metaphorical thinking, and a group consciousness and harmony.

Developing ICC is a complex learning process. At the basic level of learning, we accumulate knowledge and assimilate it into our existing frameworks. But accumulated knowledge doesn't necessarily help us in situations where we have to apply that knowledge. Transformative learning takes place at the highest levels and occurs when we encounter situations that challenge our accumulated knowledge and our ability to accommodate that knowledge to manage a real-world situation. The cognitive dissonance that results in these situations is often uncomfortable and can lead to a hesitance to repeat such an engagement. One tip for cultivating ICC that can help manage these challenges is to find a community of like-minded people who are also motivated to develop ICC. In my graduate program, I lived in the international dormitory in order to experience the cultural diversity that I had enjoyed so much studying abroad a few years earlier. I was surrounded by international students and U.S. American students who were more or less interested in cultural diversity. This ended up being a tremendous learning experience, and I worked on research about identity and communication between international and American students.

Developing skills that enable us is another part of ICC. Some of the skills important to ICC are the ability to empathize, accumulate cultural information, listen, resolve conflict, and manage anxiety (Bennett, 2009). Again, you are already developing a foundation for these skills by reading this book, but you can expand those skills to intercultural settings with the motivation and knowledge already described. Contact alone does not increase intercultural skills; there must be more deliberate measures taken to fully capitalize on those encounters. While research now shows that intercultural contact does decrease prejudices, this is not enough to become interculturally competent. The ability to empathize and manage anxiety enhances prejudice reduction, and these two skills have been shown to enhance the overall impact of intercultural contact even more than acquiring cultural knowledge. There is intercultural training available for people who are interested. If you can't access training, you may choose to research intercultural training on your own, as there are many books, articles, and manuals written on the subject.

Reflective practices can also help us process through rewards and challenges associated with developing ICC.

As we open ourselves to new experiences, we are likely to have both positive and negative reactions. It can be very useful to take note of negative or defensive reactions you have. This can help you identify certain triggers that may create barriers to effective intercultural interaction. Noting positive experiences can also help you identify triggers for learning that you could seek out or recreate to enhance the positive (Bednarz, 2010). A more complex method of reflection is called **intersectional reflexivity**. Intersectional reflexivity is a reflective practice by which we acknowledge intersecting identities, both privileged and disadvantaged, and implicate ourselves in social hierarchies and inequalities (Jones, 2010). This method brings in the concepts of dominant and nondominant groups and the privileges/disadvantages dialectic we discussed earlier.

While formal intercultural experiences like studying abroad or volunteering for the Special Olympics or a shelter for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth can result in learning, informal experiences are also important. We may be less likely to include informal experiences in our reflection if we don't see them as legitimate. Reflection should also include "critical incidents" or what I call "a-ha! moments." Think of reflection as a tool for metacompetence that can be useful in bringing the formal and informal together (Bednarz, 2010).

■ "Getting Competent" •

Thinking under the Influence

Communication and culture scholar Brenda Allen coined the phrase "thinking under the influence" (TUI) to highlight a reflective process that can help us hone our intercultural communication competence (Allen, 2011). As we discussed earlier, being mindful is an important part of building competence. Once we can become aware of our thought processes and behaviors, we can more effectively monitor and intervene in them. She asks us to monitor our thoughts and feelings about other people, both similar to and different from us. As we monitor, we should try to identify instances when

we are guilty of TUI, such as uncritically accepting the dominant belief systems, relying on stereotypes, or prejudging someone based on their identities. She recounts seeing a picture on the front of the newspaper with three men who appeared Latino. She found herself wondering what they had done, and then found out from the caption that they were the relatives of people who died in a car crash. She identified that as a TUI moment and asked herself if she would have had the same thought if they had been Black, White, Asian, or female. When we feel "surprised" by someone different, this often points to a preexisting negative assumption that we can unpack and learn from. Allen also found herself surprised when a panelist at a conference who used a wheelchair and was hearing impaired made witty comments. Upon reflection, she realized that she had an assumption that people with disabilities would have a gloomy outlook on life. While these examples focus on out-groups, she also notes that it's important for people, especially in nondominant groups, to monitor their thoughts about their own group, as they may have internalized negative attitudes about their group from the dominant culture. As a Black woman, she notes that she has been critical of Black people who "do not speak mainstream English" based on stereotypes she internalized about race, language, and intelligence. It is not automatically a bad thing to TUI. Even Brenda Allen, an accomplished and admirable scholar of culture and communication, catches herself doing it. When we notice that we TUI, it's important to reflect on that moment and try to adjust our thinking processes. This is an ongoing process, but it is an easy-to-remember way to cultivate your ICC. Keep a record of instances where you catch yourself "thinking under the influence" and answer the following questions:

1. What triggers you to TUI?
2. Where did these influences on your thought come from?
3. What concepts from this chapter can you apply to change your thought processes? ■

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Culture is an ongoing negotiation of learned patterns of beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors.
- Each of us has personal, social, and cultural identities.
- Personal identities are components of self that are primarily intrapersonal and connect to our individual interests and life experiences.
- Social identities are components of self that are derived from our involvement in social groups to which we are interpersonally invested.
- Cultural identities are components of self based on socially constructed categories that teach us a way of being and include expectations for our thoughts and behaviors.

- Nondominant identity formation may include a person moving from unawareness of the importance of their identities, to adopting the values of dominant society, to separating from dominant society, to integrating components of identities.
- Dominant identity formation may include a person moving from unawareness of their identities, to accepting the identity hierarchy, to separation from and guilt regarding the dominant group, to redefining and integrating components of identities.
- Difference matters because people are treated differently based on their identities and demographics and patterns of interaction are changing. Knowing why and how this came to be and how to navigate our increasingly diverse society can make us more competent communicators.
- The social constructionist view of culture and identity states that the self is formed through our interactions with others and in relation to social, cultural, and political contexts.
- Race, gender, sexuality, and ability are socially constructed cultural identities that developed over time in relation to historical, social, and political contexts.
- Race, gender, sexuality, and ability are cultural identities that affect our communication and our relationships.
- Studying intercultural communication, communication between people with differing cultural identities, can help us gain more self-awareness and be better able to communicate in a world with changing demographics and technologies.
- A dialectical approach to studying intercultural communication is useful because it allows us to think about culture and identity in complex ways, avoiding dichotomies and acknowledging the tensions that must be negotiated.
- Intercultural relationships face some challenges in negotiating the dialectic between similarities and differences but can also produce rewards in terms of fostering self- and other awareness.
- Getting integrated: Intercultural communication competence (ICC) is the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in various cultural contexts. ICC also has the potential to benefit you in academic, professional, personal, and civic contexts.
- A person with appropriate intrinsic or extrinsic motivation to engage in intercultural communication can develop self- and other-knowledge that will contribute to their ability to be mindful of their own communication and tolerate uncertain situations.
- We can cultivate ICC by fostering attitudes that motivate us, discovering knowledge that informs us, and developing skills that enable us.

EXERCISES

1. List some of your personal, social, and cultural identities. Are there any that relate? If so, how? For your cultural identities, which ones are dominant and which ones are nondominant? What would a person who looked at this list be able to tell about you?
2. Describe a situation in which someone ascribed an identity to you that didn't match with your avowed identities. Why do you think the person ascribed the identity to you? Were there any stereotypes involved?
3. Getting integrated: Review the section that explains why difference matters. Discuss the ways in which difference may influence how you communicate in each of the following contexts: academic, professional, and personal.
4. Do you ever have difficulty discussing different cultural identities due to terminology? If so, what are your uncertainties? What did you learn in this chapter that can help you overcome them?
5. What comes to mind when you hear the word *feminist*? How did you come to have the ideas you have about feminism?
6. How do you see sexuality connect to identity in the media? Why do you think the media portrays sexuality and identity the way it does?
7. Think of an instance in which you had an interaction with someone with a disability. Would knowing the "Ten Commandments for Communicating with People with Disabilities" have influenced how you communicated in this instance? Why or why not?
8. Why is the phrase "Know thyself" relevant to the study of intercultural communication?
9. Apply at least one of the six dialectics to a recent intercultural interaction that you had. How does this dialectic help you understand or analyze the situation?
10. Do some research on your state's laws by answering the following questions: Did your state have antiscegenation laws? If so, when were they repealed? Does your state legally recognize gay and lesbian relationships? If so, how?
11. Identify an intercultural encounter in which you did not communicate as competently as you would have liked. What concept(s) from the chapter would have helped you in this situation and how?
12. Which of the following components of ICC—motivation, mindfulness, cognitive flexibility, and tolerance for uncertainty—do you think you are most competent at, and which one needs the most work? Identify how you became so competent at the first one and some ways that you can improve the second one.
13. Choose one of the three ways discussed to cultivate ICC and make a list of five steps you can take to enhance this part of your competence.

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CHAPTER 2

Social Categorization, Stereotyping, and Discrimination

SOURCE

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Describe the fundamental process of social categorization and its influence on thoughts, feelings, and behavior.
2. Define *stereotypes* and describe the ways that stereotypes are measured.
3. Review the ways that stereotypes influence our behavior.
4. Review the causes and outcomes of ingroup favoritism.
5. Summarize the results of Henri Tajfel's research on minimal groups.
6. Outline the personality and cultural variables that influence ingroup favoritism.
7. Review the causes of discrimination and the ways that we can reduce it.
8. Summarize the conditions under which intergroup contact does or does not reduce prejudice and discrimination.

KEY TERMS

authoritarianism

black sheep effect

bogus pipeline procedure

common ingroup identity

contact hypothesis

discrimination

extended-contact hypothesis

feelings of social identity

group-serving bias

Implicit Association Test (IAT)

ingroup favoritism

interdependence

jigsaw classroom

outgroup homogeneity

prejudice

social categorization

social dominance orientation (SDO)

stereotype

stereotype threat

superordinate goals

ultimate attribution error

■ State-Sanctioned Homophobia

In recent years, the Russian government has enacted a series of laws designed to target members of its LGBT (lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender) community. These include forcing LGBT organizations to register as “foreign agents,” banning depictions of homosexuality (including carrying rainbow flags) in front of young people, and denying permission to LGBT groups wanting to organize gay pride parades.

Unfortunately, homophobic attitudes and even violence are not uncommon in Russian society. For example, groups such as Occupy Gerontilyaj have been known to lure and then beat and torture gay teenagers. In 2012, a video that surfaced online showed six members of another far-right-wing organization torturing a young man who later died, according to the Spectrum Human Rights Alliance (a group that advocated for LGBT rights in Eastern Europe).

The tone of some of the Russian media reflects these attitudes. For instance, the LGBT community are portrayed

as an “aggressive minority” whose children have venereal disease, and, in 2012, a well-known news anchor recommended on air that the hearts of victims of car accidents



LGBT activists are attacked during an action “Day of Kisses” against a homophobic bill in Moscow. (Image by Roma Yandolin is used under CC BY SA 2.0.)

that happen to be homosexual “should be buried or burnt as unfit for prolonging anybody’s life.”

In recent years, several commentators have drawn parallels between Russia’s persecution of its LGBT community and the treatment of the Jewish community by the Nazi regime in the years leading up to the Holocaust.

In 2014, public figures around the world called for a boycott (unsuccessfully) of the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, arguing that the language of the Olympic Charter explicitly denounces all forms of discrimination. Ultimately, the Winter Olympic Games went ahead as planned, although athletes and Olympic tourists alike were warned against promoting “non-traditional sexual relations.”

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Contemporary increases in globalization and immigration are leading to more culturally diverse populations in many countries. These changes will create many benefits for society and for the individuals within it. Gender, cultural, sexual orientation, and ethnic diversity can improve creativity and group performance, facilitate new ways of looking at problems, and allow multiple viewpoints on decisions (Cunningham, 2011; Mannix & Neale, 2005; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). On the other hand, as we have seen in many places in this book, perceived similarity is an extremely important determinant of liking. Members of culturally diverse groups may be less attracted to each other than are members of more homogeneous groups, may have more difficulty communicating with each other, and in some cases may actively dislike and even engage in aggressive behavior toward each other.

The principles of social psychology, including the ABCs—**affect**, **behavior**, and **cognition**—apply to the study of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination, and social psychologists have expended substantial research efforts studying these concepts (Figure 2.1). The cognitive component in our perceptions of group members is the **stereotype**—the positive or negative beliefs that we hold about the characteristics of social group. We may decide that “French people are romantic,” that “old people are incompetent,” or that “college professors are absent minded.” And

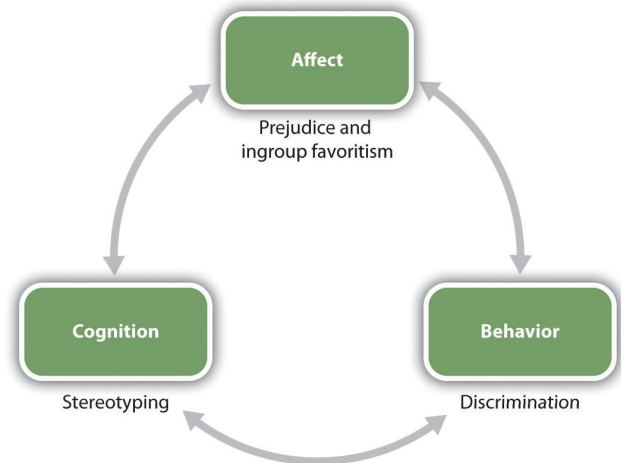


FIGURE 2.1 Relationships among social groups are influenced by the ABCs of social psychology.

we may use those beliefs to guide our actions toward people from those groups (Figure 2.2). In addition to our stereotypes, we may also develop **prejudice**—an unjustifiable negative attitude toward an outgroup or toward the members of that outgroup. Prejudice can take the form of disliking, anger, fear, disgust, discomfort, and even hatred—the kind of affective states that can lead to behavior such as the gay bashing you just read about. Our stereotypes and our prejudices are problematic because they may create **discrimination**—unjustified negative behaviors toward members of outgroups based on their group membership.

Although violence against members of outgroups is fortunately rare, stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination nevertheless influence people’s lives in a variety of ways. Stereotypes influence our academic performance (Shapiro & Neuberg, 2007), the careers that we chose to follow (Zhang et al., 2009), our experiences at work (Fiske & Lee, 2008), and the amount that we are paid for the work that we do (Jackson, 2011; Wood & Eagly, 2010).

Stereotypes and prejudice have a pervasive and often pernicious influence on our responses to others, and also in some cases on our own behaviors. To take one example, social psychological research has found that our stereotypes may in some cases lead to stereotype threat—performance decrements that are caused by the knowledge of cultural stereotypes. Spencer et al. (1999) found that when women were reminded of the (untrue) stereotype that “women are poor at math,” they performed more poorly on math tests than when they were not reminded of the stereotype, and other research has found stereotype threat in many other domains as well. We’ll consider the role of stereotype threat in more detail later in this chapter.

In one particularly disturbing line of research about the influence of prejudice on behaviors, Joshua Correll and his

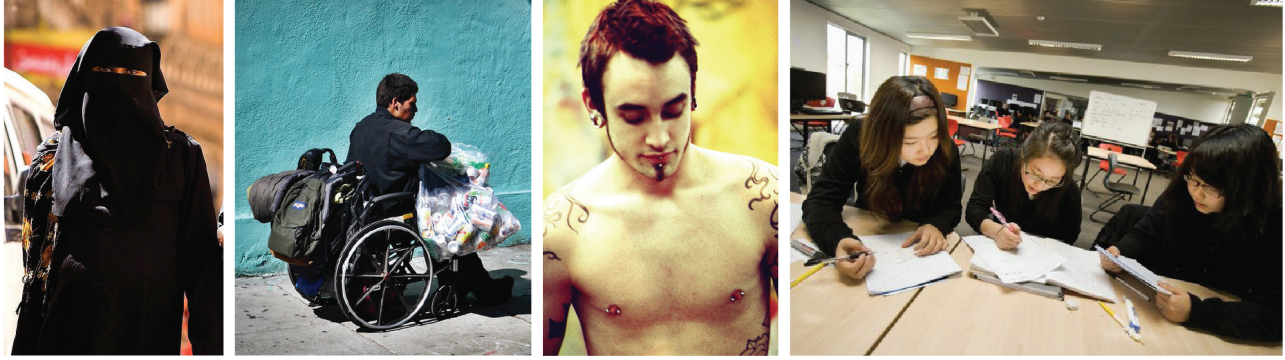


FIGURE 2.2 Do you have stereotypes about any of these people? (*Women with baby* by Francesco Veronesi is used under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0; *DSC_0957a* by andy orin is used under CC BY 2.0; *Suspension* by kris krüg is used under CC BY-SA 2.0; *ASHS students studying* by Mosborne01 is used under CC BY-SA 3.0.)

colleagues had White participants participate in an experiment in which they viewed photographs of White and Black people on a computer screen. Across the experiment, the photographs showed the people holding either a gun or something harmless such as a cell phone. The participants were asked to decide as quickly as possible to press a button to “shoot” if the target held a weapon but to “not shoot” if the person did not hold a weapon. Overall, the White participants tended to shoot more often when the person holding the object was Black than when the person holding the object was White, and this occurred even when there was no weapon present (Correll et al., 2007a; Correll et al., 2007b).

Discrimination is a major societal problem because it is so pervasive, takes so many forms, and has such negative effects on so many people. Even people who are paid to be unbiased may discriminate. Price and Wolfers (2007) found that White players in National Basketball Association games received fewer fouls when more of the referees present in the game were White, and Black players received fewer fouls when more of the referees present in the game were Black. The implication is—whether they know it or not—the referees were discriminating on the basis of race.

You may have had some experiences where you found yourself responding to another person on the basis of a stereotype or a prejudice, and perhaps the fact that you did surprised you. Perhaps you then tried to get past these beliefs and to react to the person more on the basis of his or her individual characteristics. We like some people and we dislike others—this is natural—but we should not let a person’s skin color, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnic background make these determinations for us. And yet, despite our best intentions, we may end up making friends only with people who are similar to us and perhaps even avoiding people whom we see as different.

In this chapter, we will study the processes by which we develop, maintain, and make use of our stereotypes

and our prejudices. We will consider the negative outcomes of those beliefs on the targets of our perceptions, and we will consider ways that we might be able to change those beliefs, or at least help us stop acting upon them. Let’s begin by considering the cognitive side of our group beliefs—focusing primarily on stereotypes—before turning to the important role of feelings in prejudice.

SOCIAL CATEGORIZATION AND STEREOTYPING

Thinking about others in terms of their group memberships is known as **social categorization**—the natural cognitive process by which we place individuals into social groups. Social categorization occurs when we think of someone as a man (versus a woman), an old person (versus a young person), a Black person (versus an Asian or White person), and so on (Allport, 1954/1979). Just as we categorize objects into different types, so do we categorize people according to their social group memberships. Once we do so, we begin to respond to those people more as members of a social group than as individuals.

Imagine for a moment that two college students, Farhad and Sarah, are talking at a table in the student union at your college or university. At this point, we would probably not consider them to be acting as group members, but rather as two individuals. Farhad is expressing his opinions, and Sarah is expressing hers. Imagine, however, that as the conversation continues, Sarah brings up an assignment that she is completing for her women’s studies class. It turns out that Farhad does not think there should be a women’s studies program at the college, and he tells Sarah so. He argues that if there is a women’s studies program, then there should be a men’s studies program too. Furthermore, he argues that women are getting too many breaks in job hiring and that qualified men are the targets of discrimination. Sarah feels quite the contrary—arguing that women have been the targets of sexism for many,

many years and even now do not have the same access to high-paying jobs that men do.

You can see that an interaction that began at individual level, as two individuals conversing, has now turned to the group level, in which Farhad has begun to consider himself as a man, and Sarah has begun to consider herself as a woman. In short, Sarah is now arguing her points not so much for herself as she is as a representative of one of her ingroups—namely, women—and Farhad is acting as a representative of one of his ingroups—namely, men. Sarah feels that her positions are correct, and she believes they are true not only for her but for women in general. And the same is true of Farhad. You can see that these social categorizations may create some potential for misperception, and perhaps even hostility. And Farhad and Sarah may even change their opinions about each other, forgetting that they really like each other as individuals, because they are now responding more as group members with opposing views.

Imagine now that while Farhad and Sarah are still talking, some students from another college, each wearing the hats and jackets of that school, show up in the student union. The presence of these outsiders might change the direction of social categorization entirely, leading both Farhad and Sarah to think of themselves as students at their own college. And this social categorization might lead them to become more aware of the positive characteristics of their college (the excellent rugby team, lovely campus, and intelligent students) in comparison with the characteristics of the other school. Now, rather than perceiving themselves as members of two different groups (men versus women), Farhad and Sarah might suddenly perceive themselves as members of the same social category (students at their college).

Perhaps this example will help you see the flexibility of social categorization. We sometimes think of our relationships with others at the individual level and sometimes at the group level. And which groups we use in social categorization can change over time and in different situations. You are more likely to categorize yourself as a member of your college or university when your rugby or football team has just won a really important game, or at your graduation ceremony, than you would on a normal evening out with your family. In these cases, your membership as a university student is simply more salient and important than it is every day, and you are more likely to categorize yourself accordingly.

Spontaneous Social Categorization

Social categorization occurs spontaneously, without much thought on our part (Crisp & Hewstone, 2007). Shelley

Taylor and her colleagues (Taylor, Fiske, Etcoff, & Ruderman, 1978) showed their research participants a slide and tape presentation of three male and three female college students who had supposedly participated in a discussion group. During the presentation, each member of the discussion group made a suggestion about how to advertise a college play. The statements were controlled so that across all the research participants, the statements made by the men and the women were of equal length and quality. Furthermore, one half of the participants were told that when the presentation was over, they would be asked to remember which person had made which suggestion, whereas the other half of the participants were told merely to observe the interaction without attending to anything in particular.

After they had viewed all the statements made by the individuals in the discussion group, the research participants were given a memory test (this was entirely unexpected for the participants who had not been given memory instructions). The participants were shown the list of all the statements that had been made, along with the pictures of each of the discussion group members, and were asked to indicate who had made each of the statements. The research participants were not very good at this task, and yet when they made mistakes, these errors were very systematic.

As you can see in Table 2.1, the mistakes were such that the statements that had actually been made by a man were more frequently wrongly attributed to another man in the group than to another woman, and the statements actually made by a woman were more frequently attributed to other women in the group than to a man. The participants evidently categorized the speakers by their gender, leading them to make more within-gender than across-gender confusions.

Interestingly, and suggesting that categorization is occurring all the time, the instructions that the participants had been given made absolutely no difference. There was just as much categorization for those who were not given any instructions as for those who were told to remember who said what. Other research using this technique has found that we spontaneously categorize each other on the basis of many other group memberships, including race, academic status (student versus teacher),

TABLE 2.1 Name Confusions

Instructions	Within Race Errors	Between Race Errors
Memory	5.78	4.29
No memory	6.57	4.36

From Taylor et al. (1978).



FIGURE 2.3 If you are like most people, you will have a strong desire to categorize this person as either male or female. (Chillin by Sabrina's Stash is used under CC BY 2.0.)

social roles, and other social categories (Fiske et al., 1991; Stangor et al., 1992).

The conclusion is simple, if perhaps obvious: Social categorization is occurring all around us all the time. Indeed, social categorization occurs so quickly that people may have difficulty not thinking about others in terms of their group memberships (see Figure 2.3).

The Benefits of Social Categorization

The tendency to categorize others is often quite useful. In some cases, we categorize because doing so provides us with information about the characteristics of people who belong to certain social groups (Lee et al., 1995). If you found yourself lost in a city, you might look for a police officer or a taxi driver to help you find your way. In this case, social categorization would probably be useful because a police officer or a taxi driver might be particularly likely to know the layout of the city streets. Of course, using social categories will only be informative to the extent that the stereotypes held by the individual about that category are accurate. If police officers were actually not that knowledgeable about the city layout, then using this categorization heuristic would not be informative.

The description of social categorization as a heuristic is also true in another sense: we sometimes categorize others not because it seems to provide more information about them but because we may not have the time (or the motivation) to do anything more thorough. Using our stereotypes to size up another person might simply make our life easier (Macrae et al., 1994). According to this approach, thinking about other people in terms of their social category memberships is a functional way of dealing with the

world—things are complicated, and we reduce complexity by relying on our stereotypes.

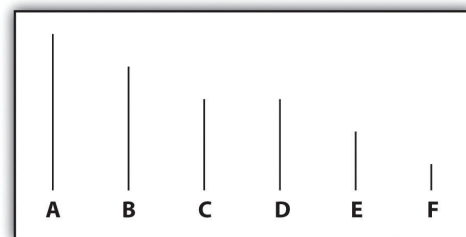
The Negative Outcomes of Social Categorization

Although thinking about others in terms of their social category memberships has some potential benefits for the person who does the categorizing, categorizing others, rather than treating them as unique individuals with their own unique characteristics, has a wide variety of negative, and often very unfair, outcomes for those who are categorized.

One problem is that social categorization distorts our perceptions such that we tend to exaggerate the differences between people from different social groups while at the same time perceiving members of groups (and particularly outgroups) as more similar to each other than they actually are. This overgeneralization makes it more likely that we will think about and treat all members of a group the same way. Tajfel and Wilkes (1963) performed a simple experiment that provided a picture of the potential outcomes of categorization. As you can see in Figure 2.4, the experiment involved having research participants judge the length of six lines. In one of the experimental conditions, participants simply saw six lines, whereas in the other condition, the lines were systematically categorized into two groups—one comprising the three shorter lines and one comprising the three longer lines.

Tajfel found that the lines were perceived differently when they were categorized, such that the differences

No categorization condition:



Categorization condition:

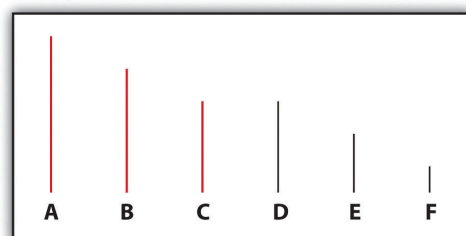


FIGURE 2.4 Perceptual accentuation. Lines C and D were seen as the same length in the noncategorized condition, but line C was perceived as longer than line D when the lines were categorized into two groups. (From Tajfel [1970].)

between the groups and the similarities within the groups were emphasized. Specifically, he found that although lines C and D (which are actually the same length) were perceived as equal in length when the lines were not categorized, line D was perceived as being significantly longer than line C in the condition in which the lines were categorized. In this case, categorization into two groups—the “short lines group” and the “long lines group”—produced a perceptual bias such that the two groups of lines were seen as more different than they really were.

Similar effects occur when we categorize other people. We tend to see people who belong to the same social group as more similar than they actually are, and we tend to judge people from different social groups as more different than they actually are. The tendency to see members of social groups as similar to each other is particularly strong for members of outgroups, resulting in **outgroup homogeneity**—the tendency to view members of outgroups as more similar to each other than we see members of ingroups (Linville et al., 1986; Ostrom & Sedikides, 1992; Meissner & Brigham, 2001). Perhaps you have had this experience yourself when you found yourself thinking or saying, “Oh, them, they’re all the same!”

Patricia Linville and Edward Jones (1980) gave research participants a list of trait terms and asked them to think about either members of their own group (e.g., Blacks) or members of another group (e.g., Whites) and to place the trait terms into piles that represented different types of people in the group. The results of these studies, as well as other studies like them, were clear: people perceive outgroups as more homogeneous than their ingroup. Just as White people used fewer piles of traits to describe Blacks than Whites, young people used fewer piles of traits to describe elderly people than they did young people, and students used fewer piles for members of other universities than they did for members of their own university.

Outgroup homogeneity occurs in part because we don’t have as much contact with outgroup members as we do with ingroup members, and the quality of interaction with outgroup members is often more superficial. This prevents us from really learning about the outgroup members as individuals, and as a result, we tend to be unaware of the differences among the group members. In addition to learning less about them because we see and interact with them less, we routinely categorize outgroup members, thus making them appear more cognitively similar (Haslam et al., 1996).

Once we begin to see the members of outgroups as more similar to each

other than they actually are, it then becomes very easy to apply our stereotypes to the members of the groups without having to consider whether the characteristic is actually true of the particular individual. If men think that women are all alike, then they may also think that they all have the same positive and negative characteristics (e.g., they’re nurturing, emotional). And women may have similarly simplified beliefs about men (e.g., they’re strong, unwilling to commit). The outcome is that the stereotypes become linked to the group itself in a set of mental representations (Figure 2.5). The stereotypes are “pictures in our heads” of the social groups (Lippman, 1922). These beliefs just seem right and natural, even though they are frequently distorted overgeneralizations (Hirschfeld, 1996; Yzerbyt et al., 1994).

Our stereotypes and prejudices are learned through many different processes. This multiplicity of causes is unfortunate because it makes stereotypes and prejudices even more likely to form and harder to change. For one, we learn our stereotypes in part through our communications with parents and peers (Aboud & Doyle, 1996) and from the behaviors we see portrayed in the media (Brown, 1995). Even five-year-old children have learned cultural norms about the appropriate activities and behaviors for boys and girls and also have developed stereotypes about age, race, and physical attractiveness (Bigler & Liben, 2006). And there is often good agreement about the stereotypes of social categories among the individuals within a given culture. In one study assessing stereotypes, Stephanie Madon and her colleagues (Madon et al., 2001) presented U.S. college students with a list of 84 trait terms and

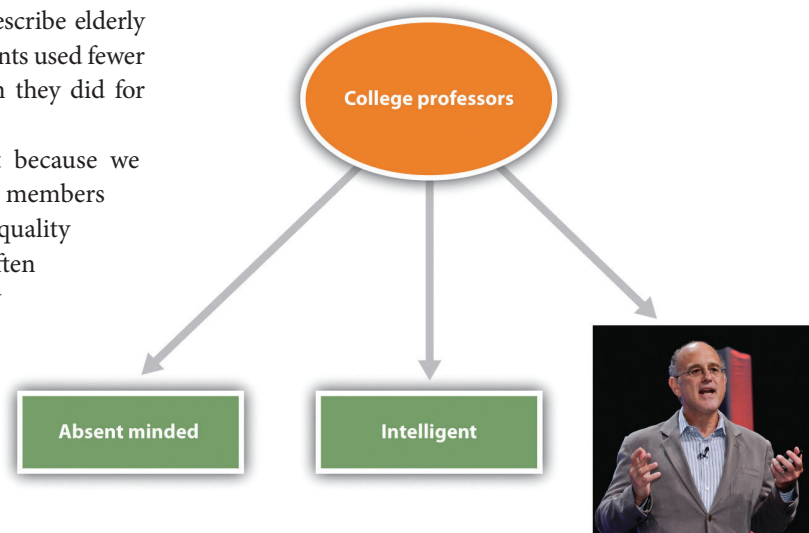


FIGURE 2.5 Stereotypes are the beliefs associated with social categories. The figure shows links between the social category of college professors and its stereotypes as a type of neural network or schema. The representation also includes one image (or exemplar) of a particular college professor whom the student knows. (Image courtesy of Dan Gilbert.)

Americans	%	Blacks	%	Italians	%
Materialistic	53.6	Musical	27.6	Loyal to family ties	62.7
Lazy	30.4	Pleasure loving	26	Tradition loving	47.5
Individualistic	28.6	Loud	20.7	Passionate	39
Pleasure loving	28	Aggressive	15.5	Religious	37.3
Industrious	23.2	Artistic	13.8	Quick tempered	35.6

Germans	%	Jews	%	Chinese	%
Intelligent	45.8	Very religious	52.5	Intelligent	60.3
Industrious	37.3	Intelligent	49.2	Loyal to family ties	41.4
Nationalistic	30.5	Tradition loving	32.2	Reserved	36.2
Scientifically minded	27.1	Shrewd	30.5	Industrious	32.8
Methodical	20.3	Loyal to family ties	28.8	Tradition loving	31

FIGURE 2.6 Current stereotypes held by college students. (From Madon et al. [2001].)

asked them to indicate for which groups each trait seemed appropriate (Figure 2.6). The participants tended to agree about what traits were true of which groups, and this was true even for groups of which the respondents were likely to never have met a single member (Arabs and Russians). Even today, there is good agreement about the stereotypes of members of many social groups, including men and women and a variety of ethnic groups.

Once they become established, stereotypes (like any other cognitive representation) tend to persevere. We begin to respond to members of stereotyped categories as if we already knew what they were like. Yaacov Trope and Eric Thompson (1997) found that individuals addressed fewer questions to members of categories about which they had strong stereotypes (as if they already knew what these people were like) and that the questions they did ask were likely to confirm the stereotypes they already had.

In other cases, stereotypes are maintained because information that confirms our stereotypes is better remembered than information that disconfirms them. When we see members of social groups perform behaviors, we tend to better remember information that confirms our stereotypes than we remember information that disconfirms our stereotypes (Fyock & Stangor, 1994). If we believe that women are bad drivers and we see a woman driving poorly, then we tend to remember it, but when we see a woman

who drives particularly well, we tend to forget it. This illusory correlation is another example of the general principle of assimilation—we tend to perceive the world in ways that make it fit our existing beliefs more easily than we change our beliefs to fit the reality around us.

And stereotypes become difficult to change because they are so important to us—they become an integral and important part of our everyday lives in our culture. Stereotypes are frequently expressed on TV, in movies, and in social media, and we learn a lot of our beliefs from these sources. Our friends also tend to hold beliefs similar to ours, and we talk about these beliefs when we get together with them (Schaller & Conway, 1999). In short, stereotypes and prejudice are powerful largely because they are important social norms that are part of our culture (Guimond, 2000).

Because they are so highly cognitively accessible, and because they seem so “right,” our stereotypes easily influence our judgments of and responses to those we have categorized. The social psychologist John Bargh once described stereotypes as “cognitive monsters” because their activation was so powerful and because the activated beliefs had such insidious influences on social judgment (Bargh, 1999). Making things even more difficult, stereotypes are strongest for the people who are in most need of change—the people who are most prejudiced (Lepore & Brown, 1997).

Because stereotypes and prejudice often operate out of our awareness, and also because people are frequently unwilling to admit that they hold them, social psychologists have developed methods for assessing them indirectly. In the Research Focus box following, we will consider two of these approaches—the bogus pipeline procedure and the Implicit Association Test (IAT).

■ Research Focus • *Measuring Stereotypes Indirectly*

One difficulty in measuring stereotypes and prejudice is that people may not tell the truth about their beliefs. Most people do not want to admit—either to themselves or to others—that they hold stereotypes or that they are prejudiced toward some social groups. To get around this problem, social psychologists make use of a number of techniques that help them measure these beliefs more subtly and indirectly.

One indirect approach to assessing prejudice is called the **bogus pipeline procedure** (Jones & Sigall, 1971). In this procedure, the experimenter first convinces the participants that he or she has access to their “true” beliefs, for instance, by getting access to a questionnaire that they completed at a prior experimental session. Once the participants are convinced that the researcher is able to assess their “true” attitudes, it is expected that they will be more honest in answering the rest of the questions they are asked because they want to be sure that the researcher does not catch them lying. Interestingly, people express more prejudice when they are in the bogus pipeline than they do when they are asked the same questions more directly, which suggests that we may frequently mask our negative beliefs in public.

Other indirect measures of prejudice are also frequently used in social psychological research; for instance, assessing nonverbal behaviors such as speech errors or physical closeness. One common measure involves asking participants to take a seat on a chair near a person from a different racial or ethnic group and measuring how far away the person sits (Sechrist & Stangor, 2001; Word et al., 1974). People who sit farther away are assumed to be more prejudiced toward the members of the group.

Because our stereotypes are activated spontaneously when we think about members of different social groups, it is possible to use reaction-time measures to assess this activation and thus to learn about people’s stereotypes and prejudices. In these procedures, participants are asked to make a series of judgments about pictures or descriptions of social groups and then to answer questions as quickly as they can, but without making mistakes. The speed of these responses is used to determine an individual’s stereotypes or prejudice.

The most popular reaction-time implicit measure of prejudice—the **Implicit Association Test (IAT)**—is frequently

used to assess stereotypes and prejudice (Nosek et al., 2007). In the IAT, participants are asked to classify stimuli that they view on a computer screen into one of two categories by pressing one of two computer keys, one with their left hand and one with their right hand. Furthermore, the categories are arranged so that the responses to be answered with the left and right buttons either “fit with” (match) the stereotype or do not “fit with” (mismatch) the stereotype. For instance, in one version of the IAT, participants are shown pictures of men and women and are also shown words related to academic disciplines (e.g., *History*, *French*, or *Linguistics* for the Arts, or *Chemistry*, *Physics*, or *Math* for the Sciences). Then the participants categorize the photos (“Is this picture a picture of a man or a woman?”) and answer questions about the disciplines (“Is this discipline a *science*?”) by pressing either the Yes button or the No button using either their left hand or their right hand.

When the responses are arranged on the screen in a way that matches a stereotype, such that the male category and the “science” category are on the same side of the screen (e.g., on the right side), participants can do the task very quickly and they make few mistakes. It’s just easier, because the stereotypes are matched or associated with the pictures in a way that makes sense or is familiar. But when the images are arranged such that the female category and the “science” category are on the same side, whereas the men and the weak categories are on the other side, most participants make more errors and respond more slowly. The basic assumption is that if two concepts are associated or linked, they will be responded to more quickly if they are classified using the same, rather than different, keys.

Implicit association procedures such as the IAT show that even participants who claim that they are not prejudiced do seem to hold cultural stereotypes about social groups. Even Black people themselves respond more quickly to positive words that are associated with White rather than Black faces on the IAT, suggesting that they have subtle racial prejudice toward their own racial group.

Because they hold these beliefs, it is possible—although not guaranteed—that they may use them when responding to other people, creating a subtle and unconscious type of discrimination. Although the meaning of the IAT has been debated (Tetlock & Mitchell, 2008), research using implicit measures does suggest that—whether we know it or not, and even though we may try to control them when we can—our stereotypes and prejudices are easily activated when we see members of different social categories (Barden et al., 2004).

Do you hold implicit prejudices? Try the IAT yourself, here: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit> ■

Although in some cases the stereotypes that are used to make judgments might actually be true of the individual being judged, in many other cases they are not. Stereotyping is problematic when the stereotypes we hold about a social group are inaccurate overall, and particularly when they do not apply to the individual who is being judged (Stangor, 1995). Stereotyping others is simply unfair. Even if many women are more emotional than are most men, not all are, and it is not right to judge any one woman as if she is.

In the end, stereotypes become self-fulfilling prophecies, such that our expectations about the group members make the stereotypes come true (Snyder et al., 1977; Word et al., 1974). Once we believe that men make better leaders than women, we tend to behave toward men in ways that makes it easier for them to lead. And we behave toward women in ways that makes it more difficult for them to lead. The result? Men find it easier to excel in leadership positions, whereas women have to work hard to overcome the false beliefs about their lack of leadership abilities (Phelan & Rudman, 2010). This is likely why female lawyers with masculine names are more likely to become judges (Coffey & McLaughlin, 2009) and masculine-looking applicants are more likely to be hired as leaders than feminine-looking applicants (von Stockhausen et al., 2013).

These self-fulfilling prophecies are ubiquitous—even teachers' expectations about their students' academic abilities can influence the students' school performance (Jussim et al., 2009).

Of course, you may think that you personally do not behave in these ways, and you may not. But research has found that stereotypes are often used out of our awareness, which makes it very difficult for us to correct for them. Even when we think we are being completely fair, we may nevertheless be using our stereotypes to condone discrimination (Chen & Bargh, 1999). And when we are distracted or under time pressure, these tendencies become even more powerful (Stangor & Duan, 1991).

Furthermore, attempting to prevent our stereotype from coloring our reactions to others takes effort. We experience more negative affect (particularly anxiety) when we are with members of other groups than we do when we are with people from our own groups, and we need to use more cognitive resources to control our behavior because of our anxiety about revealing our stereotypes or prejudices (Butz & Plant, 2006; Richeson & Shelton, 2003). When we know that we need to control our expectations so that we do not unintentionally stereotype the other person, we may try to do so—but doing so takes effort and may frequently fail (Macrae et al., 1994).

Social Psychology in the Public Interest

Our stereotypes influence not only our judgments of others but also our beliefs about ourselves, and even our own performance on important tasks. In some cases, these beliefs may be positive, and they have the effect of making us feel more confident and thus better able to perform tasks. Because Asian students are aware of the stereotype that “Asians are good at math,” reminding them of this fact before they take a difficult math test can improve their performance on the test (Walton & Cohen, 2003). On the other hand, sometimes these beliefs are negative, and they create negative self-fulfilling prophecies such that we perform more poorly just because of our knowledge about the stereotypes.

One of the long-standing puzzles in the area of academic performance concerns why Black students in the United States perform more poorly on standardized tests, receive lower grades, and are less likely to remain in school in comparison with White students, even when other factors such as family income, parents' education, and other relevant variables are controlled. Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson (1995) tested the hypothesis that these differences might be due to the activation of negative stereotypes. Because Black students are aware of the (inaccurate) stereotype that “Blacks are intellectually inferior to Whites,” this stereotype might create a negative expectation, which might interfere with their performance on intellectual tests through fear of confirming that stereotype.

In support of this hypothesis, Steele and Aronson's research revealed that Black college students performed worse (in comparison with their prior test scores) on math questions taken from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) when the test was described to them as being “diagnostic of their mathematical ability” (and thus when the stereotype was relevant) but that their performance was not influenced when the same questions were framed as “an exercise in problem solving.” And in another study, Steele and Aronson found that when Black students were asked to indicate their race before they took a math test (again activating the stereotype), they performed more poorly than they had on prior exams, whereas the scores of White students were not affected by first indicating their race.

Steele and Aronson argued that thinking about negative stereotypes that are relevant to a task that one is performing creates **stereotype threat**—performance decrements that are caused by the knowledge of cultural stereotypes. That is, they argued that the negative impact of race on standardized tests may be caused, at least in part, by the performance situation itself. Because the threat is “in the air,” Black students may be negatively influenced by it.

Research has found that the experience of stereotype threat can help explain a wide variety of performance decrements among those who are targeted by negative stereotypes. For instance, when a math task is described as diagnostic of intelligence, Latinos and particularly Latinas perform more poorly than do Whites (Gonzales et al., 2002). Similarly, when stereotypes are activated, children with low socioeconomic status perform more poorly in math than do those with high socioeconomic status, and psychology students perform more poorly than do natural science students (Brown et al., 2003). Even groups who typically enjoy advantaged social status can be made to experience stereotype threat. White men performed more poorly on a math test when they were told that their performance would be compared with that of Asian men (Aronson et al., 1999), and Whites performed more poorly than Blacks on a sport-related task when it was described to them as measuring their natural athletic ability (Stone, 2002).

Stereotype threat is created in situations that pose a significant threat to self-concern, such that our perceptions of ourselves as important, valuable, and capable individuals are threatened. In these situations, there is a discrepancy between our positive concept of our skills and abilities and the negative stereotypes suggesting poor performance. When our stereotypes lead us to believe that we are likely to perform poorly on a task, we experience a feeling of unease and status threat.

Research has found that stereotype threat is caused by both cognitive and affective factors. On the cognitive side, individuals who are experiencing stereotype threat show an impairment in cognitive processing that is caused by increased vigilance toward the environment and attempts to suppress their stereotypical thoughts. On the affective side, stereotype threat creates stress as well as a variety of affective responses including anxiety (Schmader et al., 2008).

Stereotype threat is not, however, absolute—we can get past it if we try. What is important is to reduce the self-concern that is engaged when we consider the relevant negative stereotypes. Manipulations that affirm positive characteristics about oneself or one's group are successful at reducing stereotype threat (Alter et al., 2010; Greenberg et al., 2003; McIntyre et al., 2003). In fact, just knowing that stereotype threat exists and may influence performance can help alleviate its negative impact (Johns et al., 2005).

INGROUP FAVORITISM AND PREJUDICE

We have now seen that social categorization occurs whenever we think about others in terms of their category memberships rather than on the basis of other, more

personal information about the individual. And we have seen that social categorization can have a variety of negative consequences for the people who are the targets of our stereotypes. But social categorization becomes even more important, and has even more powerful effects on our reactions to others, when the categorization becomes more emotionally involving, and particularly when the categorization involves categorization into liked ingroups and potentially disliked outgroups (Amodio & Devine, 2006).

Because our ancestors lived in small social groups that were frequently in conflict with other groups, it was evolutionarily functional for them to view members of other groups as different and potentially dangerous (Brewer & Caporael, 2006; Navarrete et al., 2004). Differentiating between “us” and “them” probably helped keep us safe and free from disease, and as a result, the human brain became very efficient in making these distinctions (Mahajan et al., 2011; Phelps et al., 2000; Van Vugt & Schaller, 2008; Zárate et al., 2008). The problem is that these naturally occurring tendencies may lead us to prefer people who are like us, and in some cases even to unfairly reject people from outgroups.

Liking “Us” More Than “Them”: Ingroup Favoritism

In his important research on group perceptions, Henri Tajfel and his colleagues (Tajfel et al., 1971) demonstrated how incredibly powerful the role of self-concern is in group perceptions. He found that just dividing people into arbitrary groups produces **ingroup favoritism**—the tendency to respond more positively to people from our ingroups than we do to people from outgroups.

In Tajfel's research, small groups of high school students came to his laboratory for a study supposedly concerning “artistic tastes.” The students were first shown a series of paintings by two contemporary artists, Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky. Supposedly on the basis of their preferences for each painting, the students were divided into two groups (they were called the X group and the Y group). Each boy was told which group he had been assigned to and that different boys were assigned to different groups. But none of them were told the group memberships of any of the other boys.

The boys were then given a chance to allocate points to other boys in their own group and to boys in the other group (but never to themselves) using a series of payoff matrices, such as those shown in Figure 2.7. The charts divided a given number of rewards between two boys, and the boys thought that the rewards would be used to determine how much each boy would be paid for his

Ingroup	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7
Outgroup	1	3	5	7	9	11	13	15	17	19	31	23	25
Ingroup	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11
Outgroup	5	7	9	11	13	15	17	19	21	23	25	27	29
Ingroup	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Outgroup	1	3	5	7	9	11	13	15	17	19	21	23	25
Ingroup	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Outgroup	5	7	9	11	13	15	17	19	21	23	25	27	29

FIGURE 2.7 Examples of matrices used in the minimal intergroup studies of Tajfel and his colleagues. (From Tajfel [1970].)

participation. In some cases, the division was between two boys in the boy's own group (the ingroup); in other cases, the division was between two boys who had been assigned to the other group (the outgroup); and in still other cases, the division was between a boy in the ingroup and a boy in the outgroup. Tajfel then examined the goals that the boys used when they divided up the points.

A comparison of the boys' choices in the different matrices showed that they allocated points between two boys in the ingroup or between two boys in the outgroup in an essentially fair way, so that each boy got the same amount. However, fairness was not the predominant approach when dividing points between ingroup and outgroup. In this case, rather than exhibiting fairness, the boys displayed ingroup favoritism, such that they gave more points to other members of their own group in relationship to boys in the other group. For instance, the boys might assign 8 points to the ingroup boy and only 3 points to the outgroup boy, even though the matrix also contained a choice in which they could give the ingroup and the outgroup boys 13 points each. In short, the boys preferred to maximize the gains of the other boys in their own group in comparison with the boys in the outgroup, even if doing so meant giving their own group members fewer points than they could otherwise have received.

Perhaps the most striking part of Tajfel's results is that ingroup favoritism was found to occur on the basis of such arbitrary and unimportant groupings. In fact, ingroup favoritism occurs even when the assignment to groups is on such trivial things as whether people "overestimate" or "underestimate" the number of dots shown on a display, or on the basis of a completely random coin toss (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Locksley et al., 1980). Tajfel's research, as well as other research demonstrating ingroup favoritism, provides a powerful demonstration of a very important social psychological process: groups exist simply because individuals perceive those groups as existing. Even in a case where there really is no group (at least no meaningful group in

any real sense), we still perceive groups and still demonstrate ingroup favoritism.

The Outcomes of Ingroup Favoritism

The tendency to favor their ingroup develops quickly in young children, increasing up to about six years of age, and almost immediately begins to influence their behavior (Aboud, 2003; Aboud & Amato, 2001). Young children show greater liking for peers of their own sex and race and typically play with same-sex others after the age of three. And there is a norm that we should favor our ingroups: people like people who express ingroup favoritism better than those who are more egalitarian (Castelli & Carraro, 2010). Amazingly, even infants as young as nine months old prefer those who treat similar others well and dissimilar others poorly (Hamlin et al., 2013). Ingroup favoritism is found for many different types of social groups, in many different settings, on many different dimensions, and in many different cultures (Bennett et al., 2004; Pinter & Greenwald, 2011). Ingroup favoritism also occurs on trait ratings, such that ingroup members are rated as having more positive characteristics than are outgroup members (Hewstone, 1990). People also take credit for the successes of other ingroup members, remember more positive than negative information about ingroups, are more critical of the performance of outgroup than of ingroup members, and believe that their own groups are less prejudiced than are outgroups (Shelton & Richeson, 2005).

People also talk differently about their ingroups than their outgroups, such that they describe the ingroup and its members as having broad positive traits ("We are *generous* and *friendly*") but describe negative ingroup behaviors in terms of the specific behaviors of single group members ("Our group member, Bill, hit someone") (Maass & Arcuri, 1996; Maass et al., 1996; von Hippel et al., 1997). These actions allow us to spread positive characteristics to all members of our ingroup but reserve negative aspects for individual group members, thereby protecting the group's image.

People also make trait attributions in ways that benefit their ingroups, just as they make trait attributions that benefit themselves. This general tendency, known as the **group-serving bias** (or **ultimate attribution error**), results in the tendency for each of the competing groups to perceive the other group extremely and unrealistically negatively (Hewstone, 1990). When an ingroup member engages in a positive behavior, we tend to see it as a stable internal characteristic of the group as a whole. Similarly, negative behaviors on the part of the outgroup are seen as caused by stable negative group characteristics. On the other hand, negative behaviors from the ingroup and positive behaviors from the outgroup are more likely to be seen as caused by temporary situational variables or by behaviors of specific individuals and are less likely to be attributed to the group.

Ingroup Favoritism Has Many Causes

Ingroup favoritism has a number of causes. For one, it is a natural part of social categorization; we categorize into ingroups and outgroups because it helps us simplify and structure our environment. It is easy, and perhaps even natural, to believe in the simple idea that “we are better than they are.” People who report that they have strong needs for simplifying their environments also show more ingroup favoritism (Stangor & Leary, 2006).

Ingroup favoritism also occurs at least in part because we belong to the ingroup and not the outgroup (Cadinu & Rothbart, 1996). We like people who are similar to ourselves, and we perceive other ingroup members as similar to us. This also leads us to favor other members of our ingroup, particularly when we can clearly differentiate them from members of outgroups. We may also prefer ingroups because they are more familiar to us (Zebrowitz et al., 2007).

But the most important determinant of ingroup favoritism is simple self-enhancement. We want to feel good about ourselves, and seeing our ingroups positively helps us do so (Brewer, 1979). Being a member of a group that has positive characteristics provides us with the **feelings of social identity**—the positive self-esteem that we get from our group memberships. When we can identify ourselves as a member of a meaningful social group (even if it is a relatively trivial one), we can feel better about ourselves.

We are particularly likely to show ingroup favoritism when we are threatened or otherwise worried about our self-concept (Maner et al., 2005; Solomon et al., 2000). And people express higher self-esteem after they have been given the opportunity to derogate outgroups, suggesting that ingroup favoritism does make us feel good (Lemyre & Smith, 1985; Rubin & Hewstone, 1998).

Furthermore, when individuals feel that the value of their ingroup is being threatened, they respond as if they are trying to regain their own self-worth—by expressing more positive attitudes toward ingroups and more negative attitudes toward outgroups (Branscombe et al., 1993; Spears et al., 1997). Fein and Spencer (1997) found that participants expressed less prejudice after they had been given the opportunity to affirm and make salient an important and positive part of their own self-concept. In short, when our group seems to be good, we feel good; when our group seems to be bad, we feel bad.

In some cases, we may be able to feel good about our group memberships even when our own individual outcomes are not so positive. Schmitt et al. (2000) had groups of female college students perform a creativity task and then gave them feedback indicating that although they themselves had performed very poorly, another woman in their group had performed very well. Furthermore, in some experimental conditions, the women were told that the research was comparing the scores of men and women (which was designed to increase categorization by gender). In these conditions, rather than being saddened by the upward comparison with the other woman, participants used the successful performance of the other woman to feel good about themselves, as women.

When Ingroup Favoritism Does Not Occur

Although people have a general tendency to show ingroup favoritism, there are at least some cases in which it does not occur. One situation in which ingroup favoritism is unlikely is when the members of the ingroup are clearly inferior to other groups on an important dimension. The players on a baseball team that has not won a single game all season are unlikely to be able to feel very good about themselves as a team and are pretty much forced to concede that the outgroups are better, at least as far as playing baseball is concerned. Members of low-status groups show less ingroup favoritism than do members of high-status groups and may even display outgroup favoritism, in which they admit that the other groups are better than they are (Clark & Clark, 1947).

Another case in which people judge other members of the ingroup very negatively occurs when a member of one's own group behaves in a way that threatens the positive image of the ingroup. A student who behaves in a way unbecoming to university students, or a teammate who does not seem to value the importance of the team, is disparaged by the other group members, often more than the same behavior from an outgroup member would be. The strong devaluation of ingroup members who threaten the

positive image and identity of the ingroup is known as the **black sheep effect** (Pinto et al., 2010).

Personality and Cultural Determinants of Ingroup Favoritism

To this point, we have considered ingroup favoritism as a natural part of everyday life. Because the tendency to favor the ingroup is a normal byproduct of self-concern, most people do, by and large, prefer their ingroups over outgroups. And yet not everyone is equally ingroup-favoring in all situations. There are a number of individual difference measures that predict prejudice, and these differences are particularly likely to show up under circumstances in which the desire to protect the self becomes important (Guimond et al., 2003).

Some people are more likely than others to show ingroup favoritism because they are particularly likely to rely on their group memberships to create a positive social identity. These differences in group identification can be measured through self-report measures such as the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). The scale assesses the extent to which the individual values his or her memberships in groups in public and private ways, as well as the extent to which he or she gains social identity from those groups. People who score higher on the scale show more ingroup favoritism in comparison with those who score lower on it (Stangor & Thompson, 2002). The scale, from Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) is shown in Table 2.2.

Another personality dimension that relates to the desires to protect and enhance the self and the ingroup and thus also relates to greater ingroup favoritism, and in some cases prejudice toward outgroups, is the personality dimension of authoritarianism (Adorno et al., 1950; Altemeyer, 1988). **Authoritarianism** is a personality dimension that characterizes people who prefer things to be simple rather than complex and who tend to hold traditional and conventional values. Authoritarians are ingroup-favoring in part because they have a need to self-enhance and in part because they prefer simplicity and thus find it easy to think simply: “We are all good and they are all less good.” Political conservatives tend to show more ingroup favoritism than do political liberals, perhaps because the former are more concerned with protecting the ingroup from threats posed by others (Jost et al., 2003; Stangor & Leary, 2006).

People with strong goals toward other-concern display less ingroup favoritism and less prejudice. People who view it as particularly important to connect with and respect other people—those who are more focused on tolerance and fairness toward others—are less ingroup-favoring and more positive toward the members of groups other than their own. The desire to be fair and to accept others can be assessed by individual difference measures such as desire to control one’s prejudice (Plant & Devine, 1998) and humanism (Katz & Hass, 1988).

Social dominance orientation (SDO) is a personality variable that refers to the tendency to see and to accept

TABLE 2.2 The Collective Self-Esteem Scale

Membership	I am a worthy member of the social groups I belong to.
	I feel I don’t have much to offer to the social groups I belong to [R].
	I am a cooperative participant in the social groups I belong to.
	I often feel I’m an unclean member of my social group [R].
Private	I often regret that I belong to some of the social groups I do [R].
	In general, I’m glad to be a member of the social groups I belong to.
	Overall, I often feel that the social groups of which I am a member are not worthwhile [R].
Public	I feel good about the social groups I belong to.
	Overall, my social groups are considered good by others.
	Most people consider my social groups, on the average, to be more ineffective than other social groups [R].
	In general, others respect the social groups that I am a member of.
Identity	In general, others think that the social groups I am a member of are unworthy [R].
	Overall, my group memberships have very little to do with how I feel about myself [R].
	The social groups I belong to are an important reflection of who I am.
	The social groups I belong to are unimportant in my sense of what kind of a person I am [R].
	In general, belonging to social groups is an important part of my self-image.

[R] = Item is reversed before scoring.
From Luhtanen and Crocker (1992).

inequality among different groups (Pratto et al., 1995). People who score high on measures of SDO believe that there are and should be status differences among social groups, and they do not see these as wrong. High SDO individuals agree with statements such as “Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups,” “In getting what you want, it is sometimes necessary to use force against other groups,” and “It’s OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others.” Those who are low on SDO, on the other hand, believe that all groups are relatively equal in status and tend to disagree with these statements. People who score higher on SDO also show greater ingroup favoritism.

Stereotyping and prejudice also varies across cultures. Spencer-Rodgers et al. (2007) tested the hypothesis that Chinese participants, because of their collectivistic orientation, would find social groups more important than would Americans (who are more individualistic) and that as a result, they would be more likely to infer personality traits on the basis of group membership—that is, to stereotype. Supporting the hypothesis, they found that Chinese participants made stronger stereotypical trait inferences than Americans did on the basis of a target’s membership in a fictitious group.

REDUCING DISCRIMINATION

We have seen that social categorization is a basic part of human nature and one that helps us to simplify our social worlds, to draw quick (if potentially inaccurate) conclusions about others, and to feel good about ourselves. In many cases, our preferences for ingroups may be relatively harmless—we may prefer to socialize with people who share our race or ethnicity for instance, but without particularly disliking the others. But categorizing others may also lead to prejudice and discrimination, and it may even do so without our awareness. Because prejudice and discrimination are so harmful to so many people, we must all work to get beyond them.

Discrimination influences the daily life of its victims in areas such as employment, income, financial opportunities, housing and educational opportunities, and medical care. Even with the same level of education and years of experience, ethnic minorities in Canada are 40% less likely to receive callbacks for an interview following a job application (Oreopoulos, 2011). Blacks have higher mortality rates than Whites for eight of the 10 leading causes of death in the United States (Williams, 1999) and have less access to and receive poorer-quality health care, even controlling for other variables such as level of health insurance. Suicide rates among lesbians and gays are substantially higher than rates for the general population,

and it has been argued that this in part due to the negative outcomes of prejudice, including negative attitudes and resulting social isolation (Halpert, 2002). And in some rare cases, discrimination even takes the form of hate crimes such as gay bashing.

More commonly, members of minority groups also face a variety of small hassles, such as bad service in restaurants, being stared at, and being the target of jokes (Swim et al., 2003). But even these everyday “minor” forms of discrimination can be problematic because they may produce anger and anxiety among stigmatized group members and may lead to stress and other psychological problems (Klonoff et al., 2000; Klonoff et al., 1999). Stigmatized individuals who report experiencing more exposure to discrimination or other forms of unfair treatment also report more depression, anger, and anxiety and lower levels of life satisfaction and happiness (Swim et al., 2001).

Of course, most of us do try to keep our stereotypes and our prejudices out of mind, and we work hard to avoid discriminating (Richeson & Shelton, 2007). But even when we work to keep our negative beliefs under control, this does not mean that they easily disappear. Neil Macrae and his colleagues (Macrae et al., 1994) asked British college students to write a paragraph describing a skinhead (a member of a group that is negatively stereotyped in England). One half of the participants were asked to be sure to not use their stereotypes when they were judging him, whereas the other half simply wrote whatever came to mind. Although the participants who were asked to suppress their thoughts were able to do it, this suppression didn’t last very long. After they had suppressed their stereotypes, these beliefs quickly popped back into mind, making it even more likely that they would be used immediately later.

But stereotypes are not always and inevitably activated when we encounter people from other groups. We can and we do get past them, although doing so may take some effort on our part (Blair, 2002). There are a number of techniques that we can use to try to improve our attitudes toward outgroups, and at least some of them have been found to be effective. Kawakami et al. (2000) found that students who practiced responding in nonstereotypical ways to members of other groups became better able to avoid activating their negative stereotypes on future occasions. And a number of studies have found that we become less prejudiced when we are exposed to and think about group members who have particularly positive or nonstereotypical characteristics. For instance, Blair et al. (2001) asked their participants to imagine a woman who was “strong” and found that doing so decreased stereotyping of women. Similarly, Bodenhausen et al. (1995) found that

when White American students thought about positive Black role models—such as Oprah Winfrey and Michael Jordan—they became less prejudiced toward Blacks.

Reducing Discrimination by Changing Social Norms

One variable that makes us less prejudiced is education. People who are more educated express fewer stereotypes and prejudice in general. This is true for students who enroll in courses that are related to stereotypes and prejudice, such as a course on gender and ethnic diversity (Rudman et al., 2001), and is also true more generally—education reduces prejudice, regardless of what particular courses you take (Sidanius et al., 2006).

The effects of education on reducing prejudice are probably due in large part to the new social norms that people are introduced to in school. Social norms define what is appropriate and inappropriate, and we can effectively change stereotypes and prejudice by changing the relevant norms about them. Jetten et al. (1997) manipulated whether students thought that the other members of their university favored equal treatment of others or believed that others thought it was appropriate to favor the ingroup. They found that perceptions of what the other group members believed had an important influence on the beliefs of the individuals themselves. The students were more likely to show ingroup favoritism when they believed that the norm of their ingroup was to do so, and this tendency was increased for students who had high social identification with the ingroup.

Sechrist and Stangor (2001) selected White college students who were either high or low in prejudice toward Blacks and then provided them with information indicating that their prejudiced or unprejudiced beliefs were either shared or not shared by the other students at their university. Then the students were asked to take a seat in a hallway to wait for the next part of the experiment. A Black confederate was sitting in one seat at the end of the row,

and the dependent measure was how far away the students sat from her.

As you can see in Figure 2.8, high prejudice students who learned that other students were also prejudiced sat farther away from the Black confederate in comparison with high prejudice individuals who were led to believe that their beliefs were not shared. On the other hand, students who were initially low in prejudice and who believed these views were shared sat closer to the Black confederate in comparison with low prejudice individuals who were led to believe that their beliefs were not shared. These results demonstrate that our perceptions of relevant social norms can strengthen or weaken our tendencies to engage in discriminatory behaviors.

White college students who were low in prejudice toward Blacks sat closer to the Black confederate when they had been told that their beliefs were shared with other group members at their university. On the other hand, White college students who were high in prejudice sat farther away from the Black confederate when they had been told that their beliefs were shared with other group members at their university. Data are from Sechrist and Stangor (2001).

The influence of social norms is powerful, and long-lasting changes in beliefs about outgroups will occur only if they are supported by changes in social norms. Prejudice and discrimination thrive in environments in which they are perceived to be the norm, but they die when the existing social norms do not allow it. And because social norms are so important, the behavior of individuals can help create or reduce prejudice and discrimination. Discrimination, prejudice, and even hate crimes such as gay bashing will be more likely to continue if people do not respond to or confront them when they occur.

What this means is that if you believe that prejudice is wrong, you must confront it when you see it happening. Czopp et al. (2006) had White participants participate in a task in which it was easy to unintentionally stereotype

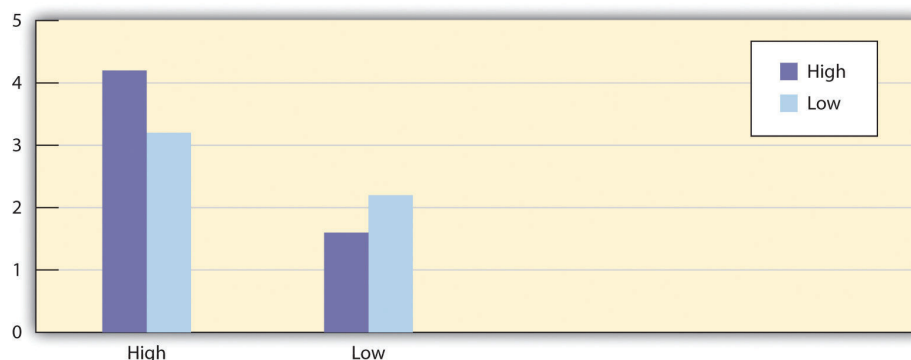


FIGURE 2.8 The role of norms in intergroup behavior. (Data are from Sechrist and Stangor [2001].)

a Black person, and as a result, many of the participants did so. Then, confederates of the experimenter confronted the students about their stereotypes, saying things such as “Maybe it would be good to think about Blacks in other ways that are a little more fair?” or “It just seems that you sound like some kind of racist to me. You know what I mean?” Although the participants who had been confronted experienced negative feelings about the confrontation and also expressed negative opinions about the person who confronted them, the confrontation did work. The students who had been confronted expressed less prejudice and fewer stereotypes on subsequent tasks than did the students who had not been confronted.

As this study concluded, taking steps to reduce prejudice is everyone’s duty—having a little courage can go a long way in this regard. Confronting prejudice can lead other people to think that we are complaining and therefore to dislike us (Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Shelton & Stewart, 2004), but confronting prejudice is not all negative for the person who confronts. Although it is embarrassing to do so, particularly if we are not completely sure that the behavior was in fact prejudice, when we fail to confront, we may frequently later feel guilty that we did not (Shelton et al., 2006).

Reducing Prejudice through Intergroup Contact

One of the reasons that people may hold stereotypes and prejudices is that they view the members of outgroups as different from them. We may become concerned that our interactions with people from different racial groups will be unpleasant, and these anxieties may lead us to avoid interacting with people from those groups (Mallett et al., 2008). What this suggests is that a good way to reduce prejudice is to help people create closer connections with members of different groups. People will be more favorable toward others when they learn to see those other people as more similar to them, as closer to the self, and to be more concerned about them.

The idea that intergroup contact will reduce prejudice, known as the **contact hypothesis**, is simple: If children from different ethnic groups play together in school, their attitudes toward each other should improve. And if we encourage college students to travel abroad, they will meet people from other cultures and become more positive toward them.

One important example of the use of intergroup contact to influence prejudice came about as a result of the important U.S. Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. In this case, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed, based in large part on the testimony of psychologists, that busing Black children to schools attended primarily by White children, and vice versa, would produce positive

outcomes on intergroup attitudes, not only because it would provide Black children with access to better schools, but also because the resulting intergroup contact would reduce prejudice between Black and White children. This strategy seemed particularly appropriate at the time it was implemented because most schools in the United States then were highly segregated by race.

The strategy of busing was initiated after the Supreme Court decision, and it had a profound effect on schools in the United States. For one, the policy was very effective in changing school makeup—the number of segregated schools decreased dramatically during the 1960s after the policy was begun. Busing also improved the educational and occupational achievement of Blacks and increased the desire of Blacks to interact with Whites; for instance, by forming cross-race friendships (Stephan, 1999). Overall, then, the case of desegregating schools in the United States supports the expectation that intergroup contact, at least in the long run, can be successful in changing attitudes. Nevertheless, as a result of several subsequent U.S. Supreme Court decisions, the policy of desegregating schools via busing was not continued past the 1990s.

Although student busing to achieve desegregated schools represents one prominent example of intergroup contact, such contact occurs in many other areas as well. Taken together, there is substantial support for the effectiveness of intergroup contact in improving group attitudes in a wide variety of situations, including schools, work organizations, military forces, and public housing. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) conducted a meta-analysis in which they reviewed over 500 studies that had investigated the effects of intergroup contact on group attitudes. They found that attitudes toward groups that were in contact became more positive over time. Furthermore, positive effects of contact were found on both stereotypes and prejudice and for many different types of contacted groups.

The positive effects of intergroup contact may be due in part to increases in other-concern. Galinsky and Moskowitz (2000) found that leading students to take the perspective of another group member—which increased empathy and closeness to the person—also reduced prejudice. And the behavior of students on college campuses demonstrates the importance of connecting with others and the dangers of not doing so. Sidanius et al. (2004) found that students who joined exclusive campus groups, including fraternities, sororities, and minority ethnic organizations (such as the African Student Union), were more prejudiced to begin with and became even less connected and more intolerant of members of other social groups over the time that they remained in the organizations. It appears that memberships in these groups focused the students on themselves and other people who were very

similar to them, leading them to become less tolerant of others who are different.

Although intergroup contact does work, it is not a panacea because the conditions necessary for it to be successful are frequently not met. Contact can be expected to work only in situations that create the appropriate opportunities for change. For one, contact will only be effective if it provides information demonstrating that the existing stereotypes held by the individuals are incorrect. When we learn more about groups that we didn't know much about before, we learn more of the truth about them, leading us to be less biased in our beliefs. But if our interactions with the group members do not allow us to learn new beliefs, then contact cannot work.

When we first meet someone from another category, we are likely to rely almost exclusively on our stereotypes (Brodt & Ross, 1998). However, when we get to know the individual well (e.g., as a student in a classroom learns to know the other students over a school year), we may get to the point where we ignore that individual's group membership almost completely, responding to him or her entirely at the individual level (Madon et al., 1998). Thus contact is effective in part because it leads us to get past our perceptions of others as group members and to individuate them.

When we get past group memberships and focus more on the individuals in the groups, we begin to see that there is a great deal of variability among the group members and that our global and undifferentiating group stereotypes are actually not that informative (Rothbart & John, 1985). Successful intergroup contact tends to reduce the perception of outgroup homogeneity. Contact also helps us feel more positively about the members of the other group, and this positive affect makes us like them more.

Intergroup contact is also more successful when the people involved in the contact are motivated to learn about the others. One factor that increases this motivation is **interdependence**—a state in which the group members depend on each other for successful performance of the group goals (Neuberg & Fiske, 1987). The importance of interdependence can be seen in the success of cooperative learning techniques, such as the jigsaw classroom (Aronson et al., 1978; Aronson, 2004).

The **jigsaw classroom** is an approach to learning in which students from different racial or ethnic groups work together, in an interdependent way, to master material. The class is divided into small learning groups, where each group is diverse in ethnic and gender composition. The assigned material to be learned is divided into as many parts as there are students in the group, and members of different groups who are assigned the same task meet together to help develop a strong report. Each student then learns his or her own part of the material and

presents this piece of the puzzle to the other members of his or her group. The students in each group are therefore interdependent in learning all the material. A wide variety of techniques, based on principles of the jigsaw classroom, are in use in many schools around the world, and research studying these approaches has found that cooperative, interdependent experiences among students from different social groups are effective in reducing negative stereotyping and prejudice (Stephan, 1999).

In sum, we can say that contact will be most effective when it is easier to get to know, and become more respectful of, the members of the other group and when the social norms of the situation promote equal, fair treatment of all groups. If the groups are treated unequally, for instance, by a teacher or leader who is prejudiced and who therefore treats the different groups differently, or if the groups are in competition rather than cooperation, there will be no benefit. In cases when these conditions are not met, contact may not be effective and may in fact increase prejudice, particularly when it confirms stereotypical expectations (Stangor et al., 1996). Finally, it is important that enough time be allowed for the changes to take effect. In the case of busing in the United States, for instance, the positive effects of contact seemed to have been occurring, but they were not happening particularly fast.

Let's consider (in the following Research Focus) still another way that intergroup contact can reduce prejudice—the idea that prejudice can be reduced for people who have friends who are friends with members of the outgroup, known as the **extended-contact hypothesis**.

■ Research Focus •

The Extended-Contact Hypothesis

Although the contact hypothesis proposes that direct contact between people from different social groups will produce more positive attitudes between them, recent evidence suggests that prejudice can also be reduced for people who have friends who are friends with members of the outgroup, even if the individual does not have direct contact with the outgroup members himself or herself. This hypothesis is known as the extended-contact hypothesis. Supporting this prediction, Wright et al. (1997) found in two correlational studies that college students who reported that their own friends had friends who were from another ethnic group reported more positive attitudes toward that outgroup than did students who did not have any friends who had outgroup friends, even controlling for the participants' own outgroup friendships.

Wright and his colleagues (1997) also tested the extended-contact hypothesis experimentally. Participants were four groups of 14 students, and each group spent a whole

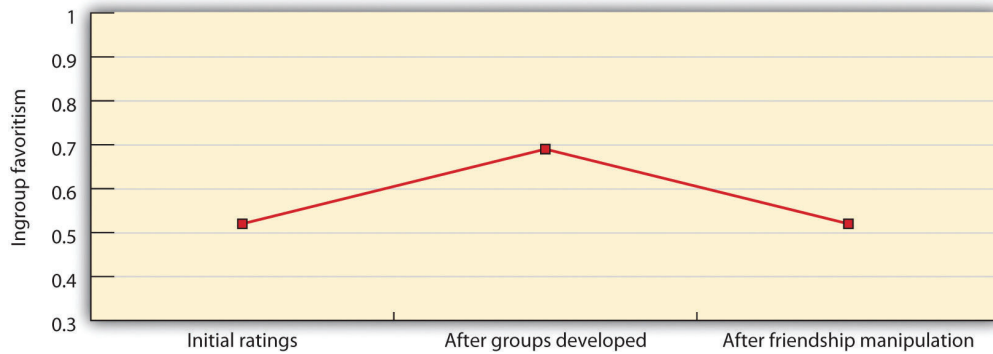


FIGURE 2.9 The extended-contact hypothesis. This figure shows how members of the two groups, which were in competition with each other, rated each other before and after the experimental manipulation of friendship. You can see that group relationships, which were becoming more negative, changed to being more positive after the intervention. (Data are from Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, and Ropp [1997].)

day in the lab. On arrival, seven participants were assigned to the “green” group, and seven to the “blue” group, supposedly on the basis of similar interests. To create strong ingroup identity and to produce competition between the groups, the group members wore blue and green T-shirts and engaged in a series of competitive tasks. Participants then expressed their initial thoughts and feelings about the outgroup and its members.

Then, supposedly as part of an entirely different study, one participant was randomly selected from each group, and the two were taken to a separate room in which they engaged in a relationship-building task that has been shown to quickly create feelings of friendship between two strangers. Then the two members from each team were then reunited with their original groups, where they were encouraged to describe their experience with the other group member in the friendship-building task.

In the final phase, the groups then engaged in another competitive task, and participants rated their thoughts and feelings about the outgroup and its members again. As you can see in [Figure 2.9](#), and supporting the extended-contact hypothesis, results showed that the participants (including those who did not participate in the closeness task themselves) were more positive toward the outgroup after than before the two team members had met. This study, as well as many other studies, supports the importance of cross-group friendships in promoting favorable outgroup attitudes ([Page-Gould et al., 2008](#); [Shook & Fazio, 2008](#)). ■

Moving Others Closer to Us: The Benefits of Recategorization

The research on intergroup contact suggests that although contact may improve prejudice, it may make it worse if it is not implemented correctly. Improvement is likely only when the contact moves the members of the groups to feel

that they are closer to each other rather than further away from each other. In short, groups are going to have better attitudes toward each other when they see themselves more similarly to each other—when they feel more like one large group than a set of smaller groups.

This fact was demonstrated in a very convincing way in what is now a classic social psychological study. In the “Robbers’ Cave Experiment,” [Sherif et al. \(1961\)](#) studied the group behavior of 11-year-old boys at a summer camp. Although the boys did not know it, the researchers carefully observed the behaviors of the children during the camp session, with the goal of learning about how group conflict developed and how it might be resolved among the children.

During the first week of the camp, the boys were divided into two groups that camped at two different campsites. During this time, friendly relationships developed among the boys within each of the two groups. Each group developed its own social norms and group structure and became quite cohesive, with a strong positive social identity. The two groups chose names for themselves (the Rattlers and the Eagles), and each made their own group flag and participated in separate camp activities.

At the end of this one-week baseline period, it was arranged that the two groups of boys would become aware of each other’s presence. Furthermore, the researchers worked to create conditions that led to increases in each group’s social identity and at the same time created negative perceptions of the other group. The researchers arranged baseball games, a tug-of-war, and a treasure hunt and offered prizes for the group that won the competitions. Almost immediately, this competition created ingroup favoritism and prejudice, and discrimination quickly followed. By the end of the second week, the Eagles had sneaked up to the Rattlers’ cabin and stolen their flag. When the Rattlers discovered the theft, they in turn raided the Eagles’ cabin,

stealing things. There were food fights in the dining room, which was now shared by the groups, and the researchers documented a substantial increase in name-calling and stereotypes of the outgroup. Some fistfights even erupted between members of the different groups.

The researchers then intervened by trying to move the groups closer to each other. They began this third stage of the research by setting up a series of situations in which the boys had to work together to solve a problem. These situations were designed to create interdependence by presenting the boys with **superordinate goals**—goals that were both very important to them and yet that required the cooperative efforts and resources of both the Eagles and the Rattlers to attain. These goals involved such things as the need to pool money across both groups in order to rent a movie that all the campers wanted to view, or the need to pull together on ropes to get a food truck that had become stuck back onto the road. As the children worked together to meet these goals, the negative perceptions of the group members gradually improved; there was a reduction of hostility between the groups and an emergence of more positive intergroup attitudes.

This strategy was effective because it led the campers to perceive both the ingroup and the outgroup as one large group (“we”) rather than as two separate groups (“us” and “them”). As differentiation between the ingroup and the outgroup decreases, so should ingroup favoritism, prejudice, and conflict. The differences between the original groups are still present, but they are potentially counteracted by perceived similarities in the second superordinate group. The attempt to reduce prejudice by creating a superordinate categorization is known as the goal of creating a **common ingroup identity** (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2008), and we can diagram the relationship as follows:

Interdependence and cooperation →
common ingroup identity → favorable intergroup attitudes

A substantial amount of research has supported the predictions of the common ingroup identity model. For instance, Samuel Gaertner and his colleagues (Gaertner et al., 1989) tested the hypothesis that interdependent cooperation in groups reduces negative beliefs about outgroup members because it leads people to see the others as part of the ingroup (by creating a common identity). In this research, college students were brought to a laboratory where they were each assigned to one of two teams of three members each, and each team was given a chance to create its own unique group identity by working together. Then, the two teams were brought into a single room to work on a problem. In one condition, the two teams were told to work together as a larger, six-member team to solve the problem, whereas in the other condition, the two teams worked on the problem separately.

Consistent with the expected positive results of creating a common group identity, the interdependence created in the condition where the teams worked together increased the tendency of the team members to see themselves as members of a single larger team, and this in turn reduced the tendency for each group to show ingroup favoritism.

But the benefits of recategorization are not confined to laboratory settings—they also appear in our everyday interactions with other people. Jason Neir and his colleagues had Black and White interviewers approach White students who were attending a football game (Neir et al., 2001). The dependent measure was whether or not they agreed to help the interviewer by completing a questionnaire. However, the interviewers also wore hats representing either one of the two universities who were playing in the game. As you can see in Figure 2.10, the data were analyzed both by whether the interviewer and the student were of the same race (either both White or one White and one Black) and also by whether they wore hats from the same or different universities. As expected on the basis of recategorization and the common ingroup identity approach, the

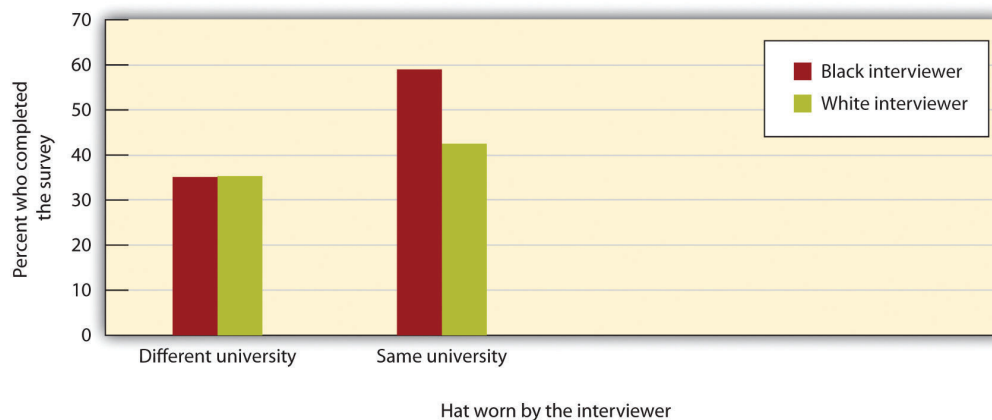


FIGURE 2.10 Recategorization and helping behavior. (Data are from Neir et al. [2001].)

White students were significantly more likely to help the Black interviewers when they wore a hat of the same university as that worn by the interviewee. The hat evidently led the White students to recategorize the interviewer as part of the university ingroup, leading to more helping. However, whether the individuals shared university affiliation did not influence helping for the White participants, presumably because they already saw the interviewer as a member of the ingroup (the interviewer was also White).

In this field study, White and Black interviewers asked White students attending a football game to help them by completing a questionnaire. The data were analyzed both by whether the request was to a White (ingroup) or Black (outgroup) student and also by whether the individual whose help was sought wore the same hat that they did or a different hat. Results supported the common ingroup identity model. Helping was much greater for outgroup members when hats were the same. Data are from [Neir et al. \(2001\)](#).

Again, the implications of these results are clear and powerful. If we want to improve attitudes among people, we must get them to see each other as more similar and less different. And even relatively simple ways of doing so, such as wearing a hat that suggests an ingroup identification, can be successful.

THINKING LIKE A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGIST ABOUT STEREOTYPING, PREJUDICE, AND DISCRIMINATION

This chapter has focused on the ways in which people from different social groups feel about, think about, and behave toward each other. In most cases, we have positive thoughts and feelings about others, and our interactions with them are friendly and positive. And yet in other cases, there is a potential for negative interactions, and in rare cases, even hostility and violence.

Look again at the pictures in [Figure 2.2](#) and carefully consider your thoughts and feelings about each person. Does the image bring some stereotypes to mind? What about prejudices? How do you think your impressions of the individuals might influence your behavior toward them? Do you hold these beliefs yourself, or do you know people who do? Can you see how quickly you or other people might make judgments about these individuals, based on the culturally relevant stereotypes, and how those judgments might lead to discrimination? What might be the negative outcomes of the stereotypes on the person?

We hope that you can now see, perhaps more clearly than you did before, that social categorization is all around us. We think about other people in terms of their group memberships, and this is entirely natural. But perhaps

you are now able to see the processes more fully. We hope you can see that categorization has some benefits—it allows us to think about ourselves as members of valued groups, for instance—but it also has some potential negative outcomes, including overgeneralized stereotyping and ingroup favoritism. We hope that you are now more aware how easily we categorize others, how quickly we learn stereotypes, and how fast ingroup favoritism develops and that you can better see the impact these processes have on our judgments of others.

You will now be able to see that prejudice, discrimination, and stereotypes reflect, respectively, the ABCs of affect, behavior, and cognition. And because you are thinking like a social psychologist, you will realize that prejudice is not unusual—that it results in large part from self-concern. We like our own groups because we feel good about them and see them as similar. But we can improve our attitudes toward outgroups by focusing on other-concern—by being more inclusive and including more different people into our ingroups. Perhaps the best thing we can do is to recategorize such that we see all people as human beings; we are all in the same ingroup, and we should treat everyone the way we would like them to treat us—with respect.

We hope your new knowledge can help you in your own relationships with others. Is it possible that you have ingroup favoritism that you were not aware of? Or perhaps you hold stereotypes about other groups that you would like to avoid holding? You should now be able to see how better to avoid being prejudiced yourself. And you are now perhaps more aware of the importance of social norms—we must work to prevent those norms from allowing prejudice. To stop prejudice, you must be willing to interact with people from other groups, and you must confront prejudice when you see it occurring. These behaviors may be difficult, but in the end they will help you be a better citizen.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The social groups that are part of a given nation or society become essential parts of the culture itself. We easily develop beliefs about the characteristics of the groups and the members of those groups (stereotypes) as well as prejudice (an unjustifiable negative attitude toward an outgroup). Our stereotypes and our prejudices are problematic because they may create discrimination—unjustified negative behaviors toward members of outgroups based on their group membership. Discrimination is a societal and health problem because it is so pervasive, takes so many forms, and has such negative effects on so many people.

Stereotyping and prejudice begin from social categorization—the natural cognitive process by which we

place individuals into social groups. Social categorization is in many cases quite helpful and useful. In some cases, we might categorize others because doing so provides us with information about the characteristics of people who belong to certain social groups or categories. And we may categorize others because we may not have time to do anything more thorough.

A problem is that social categorization distorts our perceptions of others such that we tend to exaggerate the differences between social groups while at the same time perceiving members of groups (and particularly outgroups) as more similar to each other than they actually are. One particularly strong outcome of social categorization is outgroup homogeneity—the tendency to view members of outgroups as more similar to each other than we see members of ingroups.

Once we begin to categorize other people, and we start to see the members of those groups as more similar to each other than they actually are, it then becomes very easy to apply our stereotypes to the members of the groups, without having to consider whether the characteristic is actually true of the particular individual. If men think that women are all alike, then they may act toward all women in the same way, and doing so is unfair.

Our stereotypes and prejudices are learned through both cognitive and affective processes. Once they become established, stereotypes (like any other cognitive representation) tend to persevere—they are difficult to change. In the end, stereotypes become self-fulfilling prophecies, such that our expectations about the group members make the stereotypes come true. And our stereotypes also influence our performance on important tasks through stereotype threat.

Ingroup favoritism occurs on the basis of even arbitrary and unimportant groupings and is found for many different types of social groups, in many different settings, on many different dimensions, and in many different cultures.

The most important determinant of ingroup favoritism is simple self-enhancement. We want to feel good about ourselves, and being a member of a group that has positive characteristics provides social identity—the positive self-esteem that we get from our group memberships. In cases when our groups do not provide positive social identity, we must try to restore a positive self-worth. If we cannot leave the group, we may try to perceive the group as positively as possible, perhaps by focusing on dimensions on which the group does not compare so unfavorably.

Although it is assumed that most people gain at least some positive social identity through their group memberships, people differ in the extent to which they use their

group memberships to create social identity. Personality dimensions related to prejudice include authoritarianism and social dominance orientation. And there is also at least some evidence that stereotyping varies across cultures.

Because social categorization is a basic human process that provides some benefits for us, stereotypes and prejudices are easy to develop but difficult to change. But stereotypes and prejudice are not inevitable.

The positive effects of education on reducing prejudice are probably due in large part to the new social norms that people experience in school, which people who do not go to school do not learn. True changes in beliefs will only occur if they are supported by changes in social norms. And because social norms are so important, the behavior of individuals can help create or reduce it. Prejudice will be more likely to continue if people allow it to by not responding to it or confronting it when it occurs.

Intergroup attitudes will be improved when we can lead people to focus relatively more on their concerns for others and relatively less on their desires to feel good about themselves. Intergroup contact is effective in this regard, although only under conditions that allow us to individuate others. And individuation is more successful when the people involved in the contact are interdependent, such as in cooperative educational contexts like the jigsaw classroom. Prejudice can also be reduced for people who have friends who are friends with members of the outgroup—the extended-contact hypothesis.

In the “Robbers’ Cave Experiment,” as well as in many other studies, it has been found that superordinate goals that help us see others as part of the same category as we are provide a common ingroup identity and are successful at improving intergroup attitudes.

You can now see how important social categorization is but also that it has many potential negative outcomes. You are now more aware how easily we categorize others, how quickly we learn stereotypes, and how fast ingroup favoritism develops, and you can better see the impact that these processes have on our judgments of others. You can use that new knowledge to help you avoid being prejudiced yourself and to help others from being prejudiced too. Doing so will be difficult, but in the end it will be useful.

But just because we have stereotypes or hold prejudices does not mean that we cannot change them or that we must act on them. If sports referees learn about their prejudices, they can work harder to overcome them, and they may well be successful. And when you learn about your own stereotypes and your own prejudices, and the effects of those beliefs on yourself and others, you may be able to change your own behavior and respond more appropriately to the stereotypes and prejudices expressed by others.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Beliefs about the characteristics of the groups and the members of those groups are known as *stereotypes*.
- Prejudice refers to an unjustifiable negative attitude toward an outgroup.
- Stereotypes and prejudice may create discrimination.
- Stereotyping and prejudice begin from social categorization—the natural cognitive process by which we place individuals into social groups.
- Social categorization influences our perceptions of groups—for instance, the perception of outgroup homogeneity.
- Once our stereotypes and prejudices become established, they are difficult to change and may lead to self-fulfilling prophecies, such that our expectations about the group members make the stereotypes come true.
- Stereotypes may influence our performance on important tasks through stereotype threat.
- Ingroup favoritism is a fundamental and evolutionarily functional aspect of human perception, and it occurs even in groups that are not particularly meaningful.
- Ingroup favoritism is caused by a variety of variables, but particularly important is self-concern: we experience positive social identity as a result of our membership in valued social groups.
- Ingroup favoritism develops early in children and influences our behavior toward ingroup and outgroup members in a variety of ways.
- Personality dimensions that relate to ingroup favoritism include authoritarianism and social dominance orientation—dimensions that relate to less ingroup favoritism include a desire to control one’s prejudice and humanism.
- There are at least some cultural differences in the tendency to show ingroup favoritism and to stereotype others.
- Changing our stereotypes and prejudices is not easy, and attempting to suppress them may backfire. However, with appropriate effort, we can reduce our tendency to rely on our stereotypes and prejudices.
- One approach to changing stereotypes and prejudice is by changing social norms—for instance, through education and laws enforcing equality.
- Prejudice will change faster when it is confronted by people who see it occurring. Confronting prejudice may be embarrassing, but it also can make us feel that we have done the right thing.
- Intergroup attitudes will be improved when we can lead people to focus more on their connections with others. Intergroup contact, extended contact with others who share friends with outgroup members, and a common ingroup identity are all examples of this process.

EXERCISES

1. Look again at the pictures in [Figure 2.2](#), and consider your thoughts and feelings about each person. What are your stereotypes and prejudices about them? Do you think your stereotypes are accurate?
2. Visit the website <http://www.understandingprejudice.org/drawline/> and take one of the two interviews listed on the page.
3. Think of a task that one of the social groups to which you belong is considered to be particularly good or poor at. Do you think the cultural stereotypes about your group have ever influenced your performance on a task?
4. Visit the website <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html> and complete one of the tests posted there. Write a brief reflection on your results.
5. Describe a time when the members of one of your important social groups behaved in a way that increased group identity (e.g., showing the black sheep effect). What was the outcome of the actions?
6. Visit the website <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/divided/etc/view.html> and watch the program “A Class Divided.” Do you think Jane Elliott’s method of teaching people about prejudice is ethical?
7. Have you ever confronted or failed to confront a person who you thought was expressing prejudice or discriminating? Why did you confront (or not confront) that person, and how did doing so make you feel?
8. Imagine you are a teacher in a classroom and you see that some children expressing prejudice or discrimination toward other children on the basis of their race. What techniques would you use to attempt to reduce these negative behaviors?

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Beliefs, Values, and Cultural Universals

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. List the five questions that every society must answer, according to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, and identify the three potential responses to each question.
2. List and define Hofstede’s six dimensions of culture.
3. Identify four problems that critics have identified with Hofstede’s theory.

KEY TERMS

Dimensions of Culture theory
individualism vs. collectivism
indulgence vs. self-restraint

Kluckhohn-Strodtbeck Value Orientations theory
long-term vs. short-term orientation

masculinity vs. femininity
power distance
uncertainty avoidance

VALUE ORIENTATIONS THEORY

The **Kluckhohn-Strodtbeck Value Orientations theory** represents one of the earliest efforts to develop a cross-cultural theory of values. According to **Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961)**, every culture faces the same basic survival needs and must answer the same universal questions. It is out of this need that cultural values arise. The basic questions faced by people everywhere fall into five categories and reflect concerns about (1) human nature, (2) the relationship between human beings and the natural world, (3) time, (4) human activity, and (5) social relations. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck hypothesized three possible responses or orientations to each of the concerns (**Table 3.1**).

What Is the Inherent Nature of Human Beings?

This is a question, say Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, that all societies ask, and there are generally three different responses. The people in some societies are inclined to believe that people are inherently evil and that the society must exercise strong measures to keep the evil impulses

of people in check. On the other hand, other societies are more likely to see human beings as born basically good and possessing an inherent tendency towards goodness. Between these two poles are societies that see human beings as possessing the potential to be either good or evil depending upon the influences that surround them. Societies also differ on whether human nature is immutable (unchangeable) or mutable (changeable).

What Is the Relationship between Human Beings and the Natural World?

Some societies believe nature is a powerful force in the face of which human beings are essentially helpless. We could describe this as “nature over humans.” Other societies are more likely to believe that through intelligence and the application of knowledge, humans can control nature. In other words, they embrace a “humans over nature” position. Between these two extremes are the societies who believe humans are wise to strive to live in “harmony with nature.”

TABLE 3.1 Summary of Kluckhohn-Strodtbeck Values Orientation Theory

Basic Concerns	Orientations		
Human nature	Evil	Mixed	Good
Relationship to natural world	Subordinate	Harmony	Dominant
Time	Past	Present	Future
Activity	Being	Becoming	Doing
Social relations	Hierarchical	Collateral	Individual

What Is the Best Way to Think about Time?

Some societies are rooted in the past, believing that people should learn from history and strive to preserve the traditions of the past. Other societies place more value on the here and now, believing people should live fully in the present. Then there are societies that place the greatest value on the future, believing people should always delay immediate satisfactions while they plan and work hard to make a better future.

What Is the Proper Mode of Human Activity?

In some societies, “being” is the most valued orientation. Striving for great things is not necessary or important. In other societies, “becoming” is what is most valued. Life is regarded as a process of continual unfolding. Our purpose on earth, the people might say, is to become fully human. Finally, there are societies that are primarily oriented to “doing.” In such societies, people are likely to think of the inactive life as a wasted life. People are more likely to express the view that we are here to work hard and that human worth is measured by the sum of accomplishments.

What Is the Ideal Relationship between the Individual and Society?

Expressed another way, we can say the concern is about how a society is best organized. People in some societies think it most natural that a society be organized hierarchically. They hold to the view that some people are born to lead and others to follow. Leaders, they feel, should make all the important decisions. Other societies are best described as valuing collateral relationships. In such societies, everyone has an important role to play in society; therefore, important decisions should be made by consensus. In still other societies, the individual is the primary unit of society. In societies that place great value on individualism, people are likely to believe that each person should have control over his/her own destiny. When groups convene to make decisions, they should follow the principle of “one person, one vote.”

In an early application of the theory, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck interviewed members of five cultural groups in the American Southwest: (1) Navajo people traveling around the Southwest seeking work, (2) White homesteaders in Texas, (3) Mexican-Americans, (4) Mormon villagers, and (5) Zuni pueblo dwellers. Researchers have found the framework useful in making sense of diverse cultures around the world.

As Hill (2002) has observed, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck did not consider the theory to be complete. In fact, they originally proposed a sixth value orientation—Space: here, there, or far away, which they could not quite figure out how to investigate at the time. And Hill has proposed

a number of additional questions that one might expect cultural groups to grapple with:

- Space: Should space belong to individuals, to groups (especially the family) or to everybody?
- Work: What should be the basic motivation for work? To make a contribution to society, to have a sense of personal achievement, or to attain financial security?
- Gender: How should society distribute roles, power and responsibility between the sexes? Should decision-making be done primarily by men, by women, or by both?
- The Relationship between State and Individual: Should rights and responsibilities be granted to the nation or the individual?

Today, the Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck framework is just one among many attempts to study universal human values. Others include those of Hofstede (1997), Rokeach (1979), and Schwartz (2006).

HOFSTEDE’S DIMENSIONS OF CULTURE THEORY

Geert Hofstede articulated a **Dimensions of Culture theory** in the 1980s, and has updated and revised it over the years. Hofstede’s theory currently gets a lot of attention in basic texts that include discussion of cultural values. Based on survey data collected from IBM employees, Hofstede has argued that his theory is particularly useful for highlighting similarities and differences between national cultures. Hofstede initially identified four dimensions.

Power Distance

Power distance is a measure of the degree to which less powerful members of society expect and accept an unequal distribution of power. There is a certain degree of inequality in all societies, notes Hofstede; however, there is relatively more equality in some societies than in others. Countries vary along a continuum from countries where power distance is very low to countries where power distance is very high (Table 3.2). Measured on a scale of 1–100 for instance, Denmark scores very low and Mexico scores quite high. The U.S. falls somewhere in between.

Countries with lower PDI values tend to be more egalitarian. For instance, there is more equality between parents and children with parents more likely to accept it if children argue with them, or “talk back” to use a common expression. In the work place, bosses are more likely to ask employees for input, and in fact, subordinates expect to be consulted. On the other hand, in countries with high power distance, parents expect children to obey without questioning. People of higher status may expect

TABLE 3.2 Power Distance Index (PDI) for 50 Countries and 3 Regions

Country/Region	PDI	Country/Region	PDI	Country/Region	PDI	Country/Region	PDI
Malaysia	*104	France	68	South Korea	60	Australia	36
Guatemala	95	Hong Kong	68	Iran	58	Costa Rica	35
Panama	95	Colombia	67	Taiwan	58	Germany	35
Philippines	94	El Salvador	66	Spain	57	Great Britain	35
Mexico	81	Turkey	66	Pakistan	55	Switzerland	34
Venezuela	81	Belgium	65	Japan	54	Finland	33
Arab countries	80	East Africa	64	Italy	50	Norway	31
Ecuador	78	Peru	64	Argentina	49	Sweden	31
Indonesia	78	Thailand	64	South Africa	49	Ireland	28
India	77	Chile	63	Jamaica	45	New Zealand	22
West Africa	77	Portugal	63	USA	40	Denmark	18
Yugoslavia	76	Uruguay	61	Canada	39	Israel	13
Singapore	74	Greece	60	Netherlands	38	Austria	11
Brazil	69						

*A country may score above 100 if it was added after a formula for the scale had already been fixed. From Hofstede (1997), p. 26.

conspicuous displays of respect from subordinates. In the workplace, superiors and subordinates are not likely to see each other as equals, and it is assumed that bosses will make decisions without consulting employees. In general, status is more important in high power distance countries.

Individualism vs. Collectivism

Individualism vs. collectivism anchor opposite ends of a continuum that describes how people define themselves and their relationships with others. Countries that score

higher on individualism measure are considered by definition less collectivistic than countries that score lower (Table 3.3). In more highly individualistic societies, the interests of individuals receive more emphasis than those of the group (e.g., the family, the company, etc.). Individualistic societies put more value on self-striving and personal accomplishment, while more collectivistic societies put more emphasis on the importance of relationships and loyalty. People are defined more by what they do in individualistic societies while in collectivistic societies,

TABLE 3.3 Individualism Index (IDV) for 50 Countries and 3 Regions

Country/Region	IDV	Country/Region	IDV	Country/Region	IDV	Country/Region	IDV
USA	91	Germany	67	Turkey	37	Thailand	20
Australia	90	South Africa	65	Uruguay	36	El Salvador	19
Great Britain	89	Finland	63	Greece	35	South Korea	18
Canada	80	Austria	55	Philippines	32	Taiwan	17
Netherlands	80	Israel	54	Mexico	30	Peru	16
New Zealand	79	Spain	51	Yugoslavia	27	Costa Rica	15
Italy	76	India	48	East Africa	27	Indonesia	14
Belgium	75	Japan	46	Portugal	27	Pakistan	14
Denmark	74	Argentina	46	Malaysia	26	Colombia	13
France	71	Iran	41	Hong Kong	25	Venezuela	12
Sweden	71	Jamaica	39	Chile	23	Panama	11
Ireland	70	Arab countries	38	West Africa	20	Ecuador	8
Norway	69	Brazil	38	Singapore	20	Guatemala	6
Switzerland	68						

From Hofstede (1997), p. 53.

TABLE 3.4 Masculinity Index (MAS) for 50 Countries and 3 Regions

Country/Region	MAS	Country/Region	MAS	Country/Region	MAS	Country/Region	MAS
Japan	95	USA	62	Singapore	48	South Korea	39
Austria	79	Australia	61	Israel	47	Uruguay	38
Venezuela	73	New Zealand	58	Indonesia	46	Guatemala	37
Italy	70	Hong Kong	57	West Africa	46	Thailand	34
Switzerland	70	Greece	57	Turkey	45	Portugal	31
Mexico	69	India	56	Taiwan	45	Chile	28
Ireland	69	Argentina	56	Panama	44	Finland	26
Jamaica	68	Belgium	54	France	43	Yugoslavia	21
Germany	66	Arab countries	53	Iran	43	Costa Rica	21
Great Britain	66	Canada	52	Peru	42	Denmark	16
Philippines	64	Malaysia	50	Spain	42	Netherlands	14
Colombia	64	Pakistan	50	East Africa	41	Norway	8
Ecuador	63	Brazil	49	El Salvador	40	Sweden	5
South Africa	63						

From Hofstede (1997), p. 84.

they are defined more by their membership in particular groups. Communication is more direct in individualistic societies but more indirect in collectivistic societies. The U.S. ranks very high in individualism, and South Korea ranks quite low. Japan falls close to the middle.

Masculinity vs. Femininity

Masculinity vs. femininity refers to a dimension that describes the extent to which strong distinctions exist between men's and women's roles in society. Societies that score higher on the masculinity scale tend to value assertiveness, competition, and material success (Table 3.4). Countries that score lower in masculinity tend to embrace values more widely thought of as feminine values, e.g., modesty, quality of life, interpersonal relationships, and greater concern for the disadvantaged of society. Societies high in masculinity are also more likely to have strong opinions about what constitutes men's work vs. women's work while societies low in masculinity permit much greater overlapping in the social roles of men and women.

Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance measures the extent to which people value predictability and view uncertainty or the unknown as threatening. People in societies that measure high in uncertainty avoidance prefer to know exactly what to expect in any given situation (Table 3.5). They want firm rules and strict codes of behavior. They dislike ambiguity. People from countries that score low on uncertainty avoidance generally have a higher tolerance for ambiguity. They are happy to have few rules and prefer less structured rather

than more tightly structured contexts. In educational settings, people from countries high in uncertainty avoidance expect their teachers to be experts with all of the answers. People from countries low in uncertainty avoidance don't mind it when a teacher says, "I don't know."

Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation

Long-term vs. short-term orientation is a fifth dimension developed some years after the initial four. It emerged as a result of an effort by a research group (Chinese Culture Connection, 1987) to develop a universal values framework with a non-Western bias. According to Hofstede (1997), the resulting Chinese Values Survey overlapped with three of Hofstede's dimensions: power distance, individualism, and masculinity although not with the uncertainty avoidance dimension. In addition, the group found a unique factor not reflected in Hofstede's work, which they called Confucian dynamism. Hofstede has since incorporated Confucian dynamism into his own theory as long-term vs. short-term orientation. Long-term orientation is associated with thrift, savings, persistence toward results, and the willingness to subordinate oneself for a purpose (Table 3.6). Short-term orientation is associated with less saving, a preference for quick results, and unrestrained spending in response to social pressure (often referred to in English as "keeping up with the Joneses").

Indulgence vs. Self-Restraint

Indulgence vs. self-restraint represents another new dimension. People living in countries that score high on indulgence are more likely to value the free gratification of

TABLE 3.5 Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) for 50 Countries and 3 Regions

Country/Region	UAI	Country/Region	UAI	Country/Region	UAI	Country/Region	UAI
Greece	112	Costa Rica	86	Ecuador	67	Indonesia	48
Portugal	104	Turkey	85	Germany	65	Canada	48
Guatemala	101	South Korea	85	Thailand	64	USA	46
Uruguay	100	Mexico	82	Iran	59	Philippines	44
El Salvador	94	Israel	81	Finland	59	India	40
Belgium	94	Colombia	80	Switzerland	58	Malaysia	36
Japan	92	Venezuela	76	West Africa	54	Great Britain	35
Yugoslavia	88	Brazil	76	Netherlands	53	Ireland	35
Peru	87	Italy	75	East Africa	52	Hong Kong	29
Panama	86	Pakistan	70	Australia	51	Sweden	29
France	86	Austria	70	Norway	50	Denmark	23
Chile	86	Taiwan	69	South Africa	49	Jamaica	13
Spain	86	Arab countries	68	New Zealand	49	Singapore	8
Argentina	86						

From Hofstede (1997), p. 113.

TABLE 3.6 Long-Term Orientation (LTO) for 23 Countries

Country	LTO	Country	LTO	Country	LTO	Country	LTO
China	118	India	61	Poland	32	Zimbabwe	25
Hong Kong	96	Thailand	56	Germany	31	Canada	23
Taiwan	87	Singapore	48	Australia	31	Philippines	19
Japan	80	Netherlands	44	New Zealand	30	Nigeria	16
South Korea	75	Bangladesh	40	USA	29	Pakistan	0
Brazil	65	Sweden	33	Great Britain	25		

From Hofstede (1997), p. 166.

TABLE 3.7 Indulgence vs. Restraint. Ranking of 40 Countries from Most to Least Indulgent

High-Indulgence Countries		High-Restraint Countries	
1 Venezuela	11 Australia	74 Morocco	83 Iraq
2 Mexico	12 Cyprus	75 China	85 Estonia
3 Puerto Rico	12 Denmark	76 Azerbaijan	85 Bulgaria
4 El Salvador	14 Great Britain	77 Russia	85 Lithuania
5 Nigeria	15 Canada	77 Montenegro	88 Belarus
6 Colombia	15 Netherlands	77 Romania	88 Albania
7 Trinidad	15 USA	77 Bangladesh	90 Ukraine
8 Sweden	18 Iceland	81 Moldova	91 Latvia
9 New Zealand	19 Switzerland	82 Burkina Faso	92 Egypt
10 Ghana	19 Malta	83 Hong Kong	93 Pakistan

From Jandt (2016), p. 175.

human desires (Table 3.7). Enjoying life and having fun are important to them. On the other hand, people in countries high on restraint are more likely to believe that gratification should be curbed and that it should be regulated by strict social norms (Hofstede et al., 2010).

CRITIQUE OF HOFSTEDÉ'S THEORY

Among the various attempts by social scientists to study human values from a cultural perspective, Hofstede's is certainly popular. In fact, it would be a rare culture text that did not pay special attention to Hofstede's theory. The current text is a case in point. However, Hofstede's theory has also been seriously questioned, and we will summarize some of the most common criticisms below.

First, Hofstede's methodology has been criticized. To begin with, the way in which the questionnaire was developed has been described as haphazard (Orr & Hauser, 2008). Indeed, the questionnaire was not even originally developed to explore cultural values but instead to assess job satisfaction within IBM. It is hard to believe that questions framed to explore workplace attitudes are relevant to broader cultural attitudes outside of the work place.

Critics also point out that Hofstede's conclusions are based on insufficient samples (McSweeney, 2002). Although 117,000 questionnaires were administered, only the results from 40 countries were used. Furthermore, only 6 countries had more than 1000 respondents, and in 15 countries, there were fewer than 200 respondents. Surely it is not appropriate for 200 people to speak on behalf of a country of millions.

Critics have also been skeptical about the assumption that IBM employees are representative of national cultures as a whole. And even within IBM, the surveys were administered only to certain categories of workers, i.e., "marketing-plus-sales," leaving out many other employee categories, including blue-collar workers, full-time students, retired employees, etc. (McSweeney, 2002). Hofstede has suggested that restricting the sample in this way

effectively controls for the effects of occupational category and class, insuring that the relevant variable of comparison is nationality. However, it seems hard to escape the conclusion that since the study consisted solely of IBM employees, the results may have more to say about IBM corporate culture than about anything broader. Moreover, we should not forget that when Hofstede's research was first conducted, IBM employed mostly men, so women's perspectives are also largely missing (Orr & Hauser, 2008).

Hofstede's theory has also been faulted for promoting a largely static view of culture (Hamden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1997). As Orr and Hauser (2008) have suggested, the world has changed in dramatic ways since Hofstede's research began. The world map has changed, cultures themselves may have changed, and the original data is likely to be out of date. In fact, it is somewhat of a puzzle why Hofstede's theory continues to enjoy the popularity that it does. Indeed, over the years, attempts by many researchers to replicate Hofstede's findings have not been very successful (Orr & Hauser, 2008).

FINAL REFLECTION

In this chapter, we have surveyed two approaches to the study of cultural values: that of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, that of Hofstede. The study of values will no doubt remain a vibrant subject for cross-cultural researchers.

However, implicit in Hofstede's work, in particular, is the idea that there exists such a thing as a national culture. In discussing cultural values, we have temporarily gone along with this suggestion. However, in closing, let us raise the question of whether the idea of national culture actually makes any sense. McSweeney (2002, p. 110), echoing the sentiments of many other scholars insists that "the prefixing of the name of a country to something to imply national uniformity is grossly over-used." In his view, Hofstede's dimensions are little more than statistical myths. Perhaps *culture* is a term better applied to small collectivities and any such thing as national culture is a mere illusion.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The Kluckhohn-Strodtbeck Value Orientations theory posits that every culture faces the same basic survival needs and must answer the same universal questions.
- The basic questions faced by people everywhere fall into five categories and reflect concerns about human nature, the relationship between human beings and the natural world, time, human activity, and social relations.
- Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck hypothesized three possible responses or orientations to each of the concerns.
- Hofstede's Dimensions of Culture theory highlights similarities and differences between national cultures.
- Hofstede's theory identifies six dimensions: power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term vs. short-term orientation, and indulgence vs. self-restraint.
- Despite its popularity, Hofstede's theory has been criticized for a number of reasons, including its methodology, conclusions, and poor representation of current cultures.

EXERCISES

1. Choose two national cultures that interest you. Compare and contrast them using Hofstede's six dimensions of culture.
2. Choose a community that you know well and decide where you think most members of the community would place themselves within Table 3.1—the Kluckhohn-Strodtbeck Value Orientations framework. Explain your reasoning. Are your views the same or different from those of your primary community?
3. Is your primary cultural community a “high-indulgence” or a “high-restraint” community? How does this cultural orientation align with your own personal orientation? Are you a “high-indulgence” or a “high-restraint” person?
4. Do you think it is possible to identify national values, or do you think values differ significantly from person to person and place to place? Explain.

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Introduction to Race and Ethnicity

SOURCE

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the difference between race and ethnicity.
2. Define a majority group (dominant group).
3. Define a minority group (subordinate group).
4. Explain the difference between stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, and racism.
5. Identify different types of discrimination.
6. View racial tension through a sociological lens.
7. Describe how major sociological perspectives view race and ethnicity.
8. Identify examples of culture of prejudice.
9. Explain different intergroup relations in terms of their relative levels of tolerance.
10. Give historical and/or contemporary examples of each type of intergroup relation.
11. Compare and contrast the different experiences of various ethnic groups in the United States.
12. Apply theories of intergroup relations, race, and ethnicity to different subordinate groups.

KEY TERMS

amalgamation

assimilation

colorism

culture of prejudice

de facto segregation

discrimination

dominant group

ethnicity

expulsion

genocide

institutional racism

intersection theory

minority group

model minority

pluralism

prejudice

racial profiling

racial steering

racism

redlining

scapegoat theory

sedimentation of racial inequality

segregation

social construction of race

stereotypes

subordinate group

White privilege

Trayvon Martin was a seventeen-year-old Black teenager. On the evening of February 26, 2012, he was visiting with his father and his father's fiancée in the Sanford, Florida multi-ethnic gated community where his father's fiancée lived. Trayvon went on foot to buy a snack from a nearby convenience store. As he was returning, George Zimmerman, a White Hispanic male and the community's neighborhood watch program coordinator, noticed him. In light of a recent rash of break-ins, Zimmerman called the police to report a person acting suspiciously, which he had done on many other occasions. The 911 operator told Zimmerman not to follow the teen, but soon after Zimmerman and Martin had a physical confrontation. According to Zimmerman, Martin attacked him, and in the ensuing scuffle Martin was shot and killed (CNN Editorial Research, 2014).

A public outcry followed Martin's death. There were allegations of **racial profiling**—the use by law enforcement of race alone to determine whether to stop and detain someone—a national discussion about “Stand Your Ground Laws,” and a failed lawsuit in which Zimmerman accused NBC of airing an edited version of the 911 call that made him appear racist. Zimmerman was not arrested until April 11, when he was charged with second-degree murder by special prosecutor Angela Corey. In the ensuing trial, he was found not guilty (CNN Editorial Research, 2014).

The shooting, the public response, and the trial that followed offer a snapshot of the sociology of race. Do you think race played a role in Martin's death or in the public reaction to it? Do you think race had any influence on the initial decision not to arrest Zimmerman, or on his later



The Million Hoodies rally in New York's Union Square, protesting the shooting of Trayvon Martin. (Photo by David Shankbone is in the public domain.)

acquittal? Does society fear Black men, leading to racial profiling at an institutional level? What about the role of the media? Was there a deliberate attempt to manipulate public opinion? If you were a member of the jury, would you have convicted George Zimmerman?

RACIAL, ETHNIC, AND MINORITY GROUPS

While many students first entering a sociology classroom are accustomed to conflating the terms “race,” “ethnicity,” and “minority group,” these three terms have distinct meanings for sociologists. The idea of race refers to superficial physical differences that a particular society considers significant, while ethnicity describes shared culture. And the term “minority groups” describe groups that are subordinate, or that lack power in society regardless of skin color or country of origin. For example, in modern U.S. history, the elderly might be considered a minority group due to a diminished status that results from popular prejudice and discrimination against them. Ten percent of nursing home staff admitted to physically abusing an elderly person in the past year, and 40% admitted to committing psychological abuse (World Health Organization, 2011). In this chapter we focus on racial and ethnic minorities.

What Is Race?

Historically, the concept of race has changed across cultures and eras, and has eventually become less connected with ancestral and familial ties, and more concerned with superficial physical characteristics. In the past, theorists have posited categories of race based on various geographic regions, ethnicities, skin colors, and more. Their labels for racial groups have connoted regions (Mongolia and the Caucus Mountains, for instance) or skin tones (black, white, yellow, and red, for example).

Social science organizations including the American Association of Anthropologists, the American Sociological Association, and the American Psychological Association have all taken an official position rejecting the biological explanations of race. Over time, the typology of race that developed during early racial science has fallen into disuse, and the **social construction of race** is a more sociological way of understanding racial categories. Research in this school of thought suggests that race is not biologically identifiable and that previous racial categories were arbitrarily assigned, based on pseudoscience, and used to justify racist practices (Omi & Winant, 1994; Graves, 2003). When considering skin color, for example, the social construction of race perspective recognizes that the relative darkness or fairness of skin is an evolutionary adaptation to the available sunlight in different regions of the world. Contemporary conceptions of race, therefore, which tend to be based on socioeconomic assumptions, illuminate how far removed modern understanding of race is from biological qualities. In modern society, some people who consider themselves “White” actually have more melanin (a pigment that determines skin color) in their skin than other people who identify as “Black.” Consider the case of the actress Rashida Jones. She is the daughter of a Black man (Quincy Jones), and her best-known roles include Ann Perkins on *Parks and Recreation*, Karen Filippelli on *The Office*, and Zoey Rice in *I Love You Man*, none of whom are Black characters. In some countries, such as Brazil, class is more important than skin color in determining racial categorization. People with high levels of melanin may consider themselves “White” if they enjoy a middle-class lifestyle. On the other hand, someone with low levels of melanin might be assigned the identity of “Black” if he or she has little education or money.

The social construction of race is also reflected in the way names for racial categories change with changing times. It's worth noting that race, in this sense, is also a system of labeling that provides a source of identity; specific labels fall in and out of favor during different social eras. For example, the category “negroid,” popular in the nineteenth century, evolved into the term “negro” by the 1960s, and then this term fell from use and was replaced with “African American.” This latter term was intended to celebrate the multiple identities that a Black person might hold, but the word choice is a poor one: it lumps together a large variety of ethnic groups under an umbrella term while excluding others who could accurately be described by the label but who do not meet the spirit of the term. For example, actress Charlize Theron is a blonde-haired, blue-eyed “African American.” She was born in South Africa and later became a U.S. citizen. Is

her identity that of an “African American” as most of us understand the term?

What Is Ethnicity?

Ethnicity is a term that describes shared culture—the practices, values, and beliefs of a group. This culture might include shared language, religion, and traditions, among other commonalities. Like race, the term ethnicity is difficult to describe and its meaning has changed over time. And as with race, individuals may be identified or self-identify with ethnicities in complex, even contradictory, ways. For example, ethnic groups such as Irish, Italian American, Russian, Jewish, and Serbian might all be groups whose members are predominantly included in the “White” racial category. Conversely, the ethnic group British includes citizens from a multiplicity of racial backgrounds: Black, White, Asian, and more, plus a variety of race combinations. These examples illustrate the complexity and overlap of these identifying terms. Ethnicity, like race, continues to be an identification method that individuals and institutions use today—whether through the census, affirmative action initiatives, nondiscrimination laws, or simply in personal day-to-day relations.

What Are Minority Groups?

Sociologist [Louis Wirth \(1945\)](#) defined a **minority group** as “any group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination.” The term minority connotes discrimination, and in its sociological use, the term **subordinate group** can be used interchangeably with the term minority, while the term **dominant group** is often substituted for the group that’s in the majority. These definitions correlate to the concept that the dominant group is that which holds the most power in a given society, while subordinate groups are those who lack power compared to the dominant group.

Note that being a numerical minority is not a characteristic of being a minority group; sometimes larger groups can be considered minority groups due to their lack of power. It is the lack of power that is the predominant characteristic of a minority, or subordinate group. For example, consider apartheid in South Africa, in which a numerical majority (the Black inhabitants of the country) were exploited and oppressed by the White minority.

According to [Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris \(1958\)](#), a minority group is distinguished by five characteristics: (1) unequal treatment and less power over their lives, (2) distinguishing physical or cultural traits like skin

color or language, (3) involuntary membership in the group, (4) awareness of subordination, and (5) high rate of in-group marriage. Additional examples of minority groups might include the LGBT community, religious practitioners whose faith is not widely practiced where they live, and people with disabilities.

Scapegoat theory, developed initially from [Dollard et al.’s \(1939\)](#) Frustration-Aggression theory, suggests that the dominant group will displace its unfocused aggression onto a subordinate group. History has shown us many examples of the scapegoating of a subordinate group. An example from the last century is the way Adolf Hitler was able to blame the Jewish population for Germany’s social and economic problems. In the United States, recent immigrants have frequently been the scapegoat for the nation’s—or an individual’s—woes. Many states have enacted laws to disenfranchise immigrants; these laws are popular because they let the dominant group scapegoat a subordinate group.

DISCRIMINATION, STEREOTYPES, PREJUDICE AND RACE

The terms stereotype, prejudice, discrimination, and racism are often used interchangeably in everyday conversation. Let us explore the differences between these concepts. **Stereotypes** are oversimplified generalizations about groups of people. Stereotypes can be based on race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation—almost any characteristic. They may be positive (usually about one’s own group, such as when women suggest they are less likely to complain about physical pain) but are often negative (usually toward other groups, such as when members of a dominant racial group suggest that a subordinate racial group is stupid or lazy). In either case, the stereotype is a generalization that doesn’t take individual differences into account.

Where do stereotypes come from? In fact new stereotypes are rarely created; rather, they are recycled from subordinate groups that have assimilated into society and are reused to describe newly subordinate groups. For example, many stereotypes that are currently used to characterize Black people were used earlier in American history to characterize Irish and Eastern European immigrants.

Prejudice and Racism

Prejudice refers to the beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes someone holds about a group. A prejudice is not based on experience; instead, it is a prejudgment, originating outside actual experience. A 1970 documentary called *Eye of the Storm* illustrates the way in which prejudice develops, by showing how defining one category of people

as superior (children with blue eyes) results in prejudice against people who are not part of the favored category.

While prejudice is not necessarily specific to race, **racism** is a stronger type of prejudice used to justify the belief that one racial category is somehow superior or inferior to others; it is also a set of practices used by a racial majority to disadvantage a racial minority. The Ku Klux Klan is an example of a racist organization; its members' belief in White supremacy has encouraged over a century of hate crime and hate speech.

Institutional racism refers to the way in which racism is embedded in the fabric of society. For example, the disproportionate number of Black men arrested, charged, and convicted of crimes may reflect racial profiling, a form of institutional racism.

Colorism is another kind of prejudice, in which someone believes one type of skin tone is superior or inferior to another within a racial group. Studies suggest that darker skinned African Americans experience more discrimination than lighter skinned African Americans (Herring et al., 2004; Klonoff & Landrine, 2000). For example, if a White employer believes a Black employee with a darker skin tone is less capable than a Black employee with lighter skin tone, that is colorism. At least one study suggested the colorism affected racial socialization, with darker-skinned Black male adolescents receiving more warnings about the danger of interacting with members of other racial groups than did lighter-skinned Black male adolescents (Landor et al., 2013).

Discrimination

While prejudice refers to biased thinking, **discrimination** consists of actions against a group of people. Discrimination can be based on age, religion, health, and other indicators; race-based laws against discrimination strive to address this set of social problems.

Discrimination based on race or ethnicity can take many forms, from unfair housing practices to biased hiring systems. Overt discrimination has long been part of U.S. history. In the late nineteenth century, it was not uncommon for business owners to hang signs that read, "Help Wanted: No Irish Need Apply." And southern Jim Crow laws, with their "Whites Only" signs, exemplified overt discrimination that is not tolerated today.

However, we cannot erase discrimination from our culture just by enacting laws to abolish it. Even if a magic pill managed to eradicate racism from each individual's psyche, society itself would maintain it. Sociologist **Émile Durkheim (1982)** calls racism a social fact, meaning that it does not require the action of individuals to continue. The reasons for this are complex and relate to the educational,

criminal, economic, and political systems that exist in our society.

For example, when a newspaper identifies by race individuals accused of a crime, it may enhance stereotypes of a certain minority. Another example of racist practices is **racial steering**, in which real estate agents direct prospective homeowners toward or away from certain neighborhoods based on their race. Racist attitudes and beliefs are often more insidious and harder to pin down than specific racist practices.

Prejudice and discrimination can overlap and intersect in many ways. To illustrate, here are four examples of how prejudice and discrimination can occur. Unprejudiced nondiscriminators are open-minded, tolerant, and accepting individuals. Unprejudiced discriminators might be those who unthinkingly practice sexism in their workplace by not considering females for certain positions that have traditionally been held by men. Prejudiced nondiscriminators are those who hold racist beliefs but don't act on them, such as a racist store owner who serves minority customers. Prejudiced discriminators include those who actively make disparaging remarks about others or who perpetrate hate crimes.

Discrimination also manifests in different ways. The scenarios above are examples of individual discrimination, but other types exist. Institutional discrimination occurs when a societal system has developed with embedded disenfranchisement of a group, such as the U.S. military's historical nonacceptance of minority sexualities (the "don't ask, don't tell" policy reflected this norm).

Institutional discrimination can also include the promotion of a group's status, such in the case of **White privilege**, which is the benefits people receive simply by being part of the dominant group (McIntosh, 1989).

While most White people are willing to admit that non-White people live with a set of disadvantages due to the color of their skin, very few are willing to acknowledge the benefits they receive.

Racial Tensions in the United States

The death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, on August 9, 2014, illustrates racial tensions in the United States as well as the overlap between prejudice, discrimination, and institutional racism. On that day, Brown, a young unarmed Black man, was killed by a White police officer named Darren Wilson. During the incident, Wilson directed Brown and his friend to walk on the sidewalk instead of in the street. While eyewitness accounts vary, they agree that an altercation occurred between Wilson and Brown. Wilson's version has him shooting Brown in self-defense after Brown assaulted him, while

Dorian Johnson, a friend of Brown also present at the time, claimed that Brown first ran away, then turned with his hands in the air to surrender, after which Wilson shot him repeatedly (Nobles & Bosman, 2014). Three autopsies independently confirmed that Brown was shot six times (Lowery & Fears, 2014).

The shooting focused attention on a number of race-related tensions in the United States. First, members of the predominantly Black community viewed Brown's death as the result of a White police officer racially profiling a Black man (Nobles & Bosman, 2014). In the days after, it was revealed that only three members of the town's fifty-three-member police force were Black (Nobles & Bosman, 2014). The national dialogue shifted during the next few weeks, with some commentators pointing to a nationwide **sedimentation of racial inequality** and identifying **redlining** in Ferguson as a cause of the unbalanced racial composition in the community, in local political establishments, and in the police force (Bouie, 2014). Redlining is the practice of routinely refusing mortgages for households and businesses located in predominately minority communities, while sedimentation of racial inequality describes the intergenerational impact of both practical and legalized racism that limits the abilities of Black people to accumulate wealth.

Ferguson's racial imbalance may explain in part why, even though in 2010 only about 63% of its population was Black, in 2013 Blacks were detained in 86% of stops, 92% of searches, and 93% of arrests (Missouri Attorney General's Office, 2014). In addition, **de facto segregation** in Ferguson's schools, a race-based wealth gap, urban sprawl, and a Black unemployment rate three times that of the White unemployment rate worsened existing racial

tensions in Ferguson while also reflecting nationwide racial inequalities (Bouie, 2014).

Multiple Identities

Prior to the twentieth century, racial intermarriage (referred to as miscegenation) was extremely rare, and in many places, illegal. In the later part of the twentieth century and in the twenty-first century, as Figure 4.1 shows, attitudes have changed for the better. While the sexual subordination of slaves did result in children of mixed race, these children were usually considered Black, and therefore, property. There was no concept of multiple racial identities with the possible exception of the Creole. Creole society developed in the port city of New Orleans, where a mixed-race culture grew from French and African inhabitants. Unlike in other parts of the country, "Creoles of color" had greater social, economic, and educational opportunities than most African Americans (Caver & Williams, 2011).

Increasingly during the modern era, the removal of miscegenation laws and a trend toward equal rights and legal protection against racism have steadily reduced the social stigma attached to racial exogamy (exogamy refers to marriage outside a person's core social unit). It is now common for the children of racially mixed parents to acknowledge and celebrate their various ethnic identities. Golfer Tiger Woods, for instance, has Chinese, Thai, African American, Native American, and Dutch heritage; he jokingly refers to his ethnicity as "Cablinasian," a term he coined to combine several of his ethnic backgrounds. While this is the trend, it is not yet evident in all aspects of our society. For example, the U.S. Census only recently added additional categories for people to identify

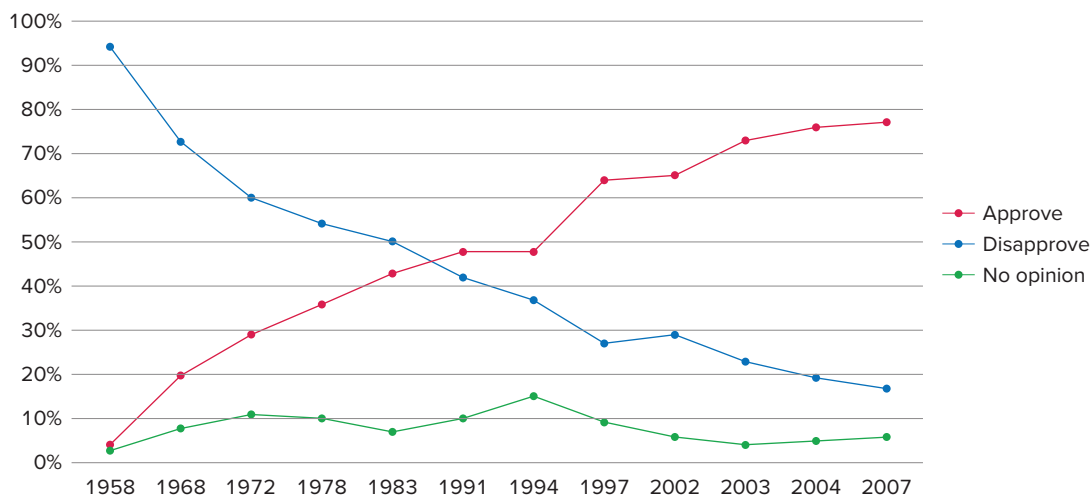


FIGURE 4.1 Historical public opinion of approval/disapproval of interracial marriage in the United States (Source: Gallup, Inc., 2007). (This work, Approval of Interracial Marriage US, is a derivative of Public opinion of interracial marriage in the United States by Yerevanci/Wikimedia Commons, used under CC BY-SA 3.0. Approval of Interracial Marriage US is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 by Judy Schmitt.)



Golfer Tiger Woods has Chinese, Thai, African American, Native American, and Dutch heritage. Individuals with multiple ethnic backgrounds are becoming more common. (Tiger Woods by Omar Rawlings is used under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.)

themselves, such as non-White Hispanic. A growing number of people chose multiple races to describe themselves on the 2010 Census, paving the way for the 2020 Census to provide yet more choices.

■ Big Picture • *The Confederate Flag vs. the First Amendment*

In January 2006, two girls walked into Burleson High School in Texas carrying purses that displayed large images of Confederate flags. School administrators told the girls that they were in violation of the dress code, which prohibited apparel with inappropriate symbolism or clothing that discriminated based on race. To stay in school, they'd have to have someone pick up their purses or leave them in the office. The



This Confederate flag outside the South Carolina State House was permanently removed in 2015. To some, the Confederate flag is a symbol of pride in Southern history. To others, it is a grim reminder of a degrading period of the United States' past. (222 - Columbia, South Carolina by Jason Lander is used under CC BY 2.0.)

girls chose to go home for the day but then challenged the school's decision, appealing first to the principal, then to the district superintendent, then to the U.S. District Court, and finally to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals (Hudson, 2009).

Why did the school ban the purses, and why did it stand behind that ban, even when being sued? Why did the girls, identified anonymously in court documents as A.M. and A.T., pursue such strong legal measures for their right to carry the purses? The issue, of course, is not the purses: it is the Confederate flag that adorns them. The parties in this case join a long line of people and institutions that have fought for their right to display it, saying such a display is covered by the First Amendment's guarantee of free speech. In the end, the court sided with the district and noted that the Confederate flag carried symbolism significant enough to disrupt normal school activities.

While many young people in the United States like to believe that racism is mostly in the country's past, this case illustrates how racism and discrimination are quite alive today. If the Confederate flag is synonymous with slavery, is there any place for its display in modern society? Those who fight for their right to display the flag say such a display should be covered by the First Amendment: the right to free speech. But others say the flag is equivalent to hate speech. Do you think that displaying the Confederate flag should be considered free speech or hate speech? ■

THEORIES OF RACE AND ETHNICITY

Theoretical Perspectives

We can examine issues of race and ethnicity through three major sociological perspectives: functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. As you read through these theories, ask yourself which one makes the most sense and why. Do we need more than one theory to explain racism, prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination?

Functionalism

In the view of functionalism, racial and ethnic inequalities must have served an important function in order to exist as long as they have. This concept, of course, is problematic. How can racism and discrimination contribute positively to society? A functionalist might look at "functions" and "dysfunctions" caused by racial inequality. Nash (1964) focused his argument on the way racism is functional for the dominant group, for example, suggesting that racism morally justifies a racially unequal society. Consider the way slave owners justified slavery in the antebellum South, by suggesting Black people were fundamentally inferior to White and preferred slavery to freedom.

Another way to apply the functionalist perspective to racism is to discuss the way racism can contribute

positively to the functioning of society by strengthening bonds between in-group members through the ostracism of out-group members. Consider how a community might increase solidarity by refusing to allow outsiders access. On the other hand, [Rose \(1958\)](#) suggested that dysfunctions associated with racism include the failure to take advantage of talent in the subjugated group, and that society must divert from other purposes the time and effort needed to maintain artificially constructed racial boundaries. Consider how much money, time, and effort went toward maintaining separate and unequal educational systems prior to the civil rights movement.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theories are often applied to inequalities of gender, social class, education, race, and ethnicity. A conflict theory perspective of U.S. history would examine the numerous past and current struggles between the White ruling class and racial and ethnic minorities, noting specific conflicts that have arisen when the dominant group perceived a threat from the minority group. In the late nineteenth century, the rising power of Black Americans after the Civil War resulted in draconian Jim Crow laws that severely limited Black political and social power. For example, Vivien Thomas (1910–1985), the Black surgical technician who helped develop the groundbreaking surgical technique that saves the lives of “blue babies” was classified as a janitor for many years, and paid as such, despite the fact that he was conducting complicated surgical experiments. The years since the Civil War have showed a pattern of attempted disenfranchisement, with gerrymandering and voter suppression efforts aimed at predominantly minority neighborhoods.

Feminist sociologist [Patricia Hill Collins \(1990\)](#) further developed **intersection theory**, originally articulated in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, which suggests we cannot separate the effects of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other attributes. When we examine race and how it can bring us both advantages and disadvantages, it is important to acknowledge that the way we experience race is shaped, for example, by our gender and class. Multiple layers of disadvantage intersect to create the way we experience race. For example, if we want to understand prejudice, we must understand that the prejudice focused on a White woman because of her gender is very different from the layered prejudice focused on a poor Asian woman, who is affected by stereotypes related to being poor, being a woman, and her ethnic status.

Interactionism

For symbolic interactionists, race and ethnicity provide strong symbols as sources of identity. In fact, some

interactionists propose that the symbols of race, not race itself, are what lead to racism. Famed Interactionist [Herbert Blumer \(1958\)](#) suggested that racial prejudice is formed through interactions between members of the dominant group: Without these interactions, individuals in the dominant group would not hold racist views. These interactions contribute to an abstract picture of the subordinate group that allows the dominant group to support its view of the subordinate group, and thus maintains the status quo. An example of this might be an individual whose beliefs about a particular group are based on images conveyed in popular media, and those are unquestionably believed because the individual has never personally met a member of that group. Another way to apply the interactionist perspective is to look at how people define their races and the race of others. As we discussed in relation to the social construction of race, since some people who claim a White identity have a greater amount of skin pigmentation than some people who claim a Black identity, how did they come to define themselves as Black or White?

Culture of Prejudice

Culture of prejudice refers to the theory that prejudice is embedded in our culture. We grow up surrounded by images of stereotypes and casual expressions of racism and prejudice. Consider the casually racist imagery on grocery store shelves or the stereotypes that fill popular movies and advertisements. It is easy to see how someone living in the Northeastern United States, who may know no Mexican Americans personally, might gain a stereotyped impression from such sources as Speedy Gonzalez or Taco Bell’s talking Chihuahua. Because we are all exposed to these images and thoughts, it is impossible to know to what extent they have influenced our thought processes.

INTERGROUP RELATIONSHIPS

Intergroup relations (relationships between different groups of people) range along a spectrum between tolerance and intolerance. The most tolerant form of intergroup relations is pluralism, in which no distinction is made between minority and majority groups, but instead there’s equal standing. At the other end of the continuum are amalgamation, expulsion, and even genocide—stark examples of intolerant intergroup relations.

Genocide

Genocide, the deliberate annihilation of a targeted (usually subordinate) group, is the most toxic intergroup relationship. Historically, we can see that genocide has included both the intent to exterminate a group and the function of exterminating of a group, intentional or not.

Possibly the most well-known case of genocide is Hitler's attempt to exterminate the Jewish people in the first part of the twentieth century. Also known as the Holocaust, the explicit goal of Hitler's "Final Solution" was the eradication of European Jewry, as well as the destruction of other minority groups such as Catholics, people with disabilities, and homosexuals. With forced emigration, concentration camps, and mass executions in gas chambers, Hitler's Nazi regime was responsible for the deaths of 12 million people, 6 million of whom were Jewish. Hitler's intent was clear, and the high Jewish death toll certainly indicates that Hitler and his regime committed genocide. But how do we understand genocide that is not so overt and deliberate?

The treatment of aboriginal Australians is also an example of genocide committed against indigenous people. Historical accounts suggest that between 1824 and 1908, White settlers killed more than 10,000 native aborigines in Tasmania and Australia (Tatz, 2006). Another example is the European colonization of North America. Some historians estimate that Native American populations dwindled from approximately 12 million people in the year 1500 to barely 237,000 by the year 1900 (Lewy, 2004). European settlers coerced American Indians off their own lands, often causing thousands of deaths in forced removals, such as occurred in the Cherokee or Potawatomi Trail of Tears. Settlers also enslaved Native Americans and forced them to give up their religious and cultural practices. But the major cause of Native American death was neither slavery nor war nor forced removal: it was the introduction of European diseases and Indians' lack of immunity to them. Smallpox, diphtheria, and measles flourished among indigenous American tribes who had no exposure to the diseases and no ability to fight them. Quite simply, these diseases decimated the tribes. How planned this genocide was remains a topic of contention. Some argue that the spread of disease was an unintended effect of conquest, while others believe it was intentional citing rumors of smallpox-infected blankets being distributed as "gifts" to tribes.

Genocide is not a just a historical concept; it is practiced today. Recently, ethnic and geographic conflicts in the Darfur region of Sudan have led to hundreds of thousands of deaths. As part of an ongoing land conflict, the Sudanese government and their state-sponsored Janjaweed militia have led a campaign of killing, forced displacement, and systematic rape of Darfuri people. Although a treaty was signed in 2011, the peace is fragile.

Expulsion

Expulsion refers to a subordinate group being forced, by a dominant group, to leave a certain area or country. As seen in the examples of the Trail of Tears and the Holocaust,

expulsion can be a factor in genocide. However, it can also stand on its own as a destructive group interaction. Expulsion has often occurred historically with an ethnic or racial basis. In the United States, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 in 1942, after the Japanese government's attack on Pearl Harbor. The Order authorized the establishment of internment camps for anyone with as little as one-eighth Japanese ancestry (i.e., one great-grandparent who was Japanese). Over 120,000 legal Japanese residents and Japanese U.S. citizens, many of them children, were held in these camps for up to four years, despite the fact that there was never any evidence of collusion or espionage. (In fact, many Japanese Americans continued to demonstrate their loyalty to the United States by serving in the U.S. military during the War.) In the 1990s, the U.S. executive branch issued a formal apology for this expulsion; reparation efforts continue today.

Segregation

Segregation refers to the physical separation of two groups, particularly in residence, but also in workplace and social functions. It is important to distinguish between *de jure* segregation (segregation that is enforced by law) and *de facto* segregation (segregation that occurs without laws but because of other factors). A stark example of *de jure* segregation is the apartheid movement of South Africa, which existed from 1948 to 1994. Under apartheid, Black South Africans were stripped of their civil rights and forcibly relocated to areas that segregated them physically from their White compatriots. Only after decades of degradation, violent uprisings, and international advocacy was apartheid finally abolished.

De jure segregation occurred in the United States for many years after the Civil War. During this time, many former Confederate states passed Jim Crow laws that required segregated facilities for Blacks and Whites. These



In the "Jim Crow" South, it was legal to have "separate but equal" facilities for Blacks and Whites. (Billiard Hall for Colored by Marion Post Wolcott/U.S. Farm Security Administration is in the public domain.)

laws were codified in 1896's landmark Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which stated that “separate but equal” facilities were constitutional. For the next five decades, Blacks were subjected to legalized discrimination, forced to live, work, and go to school in separate—but *unequal*—facilities. It wasn't until 1954 and the *Brown v. Board of Education* case that the Supreme Court declared that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal,” thus ending *de jure* segregation in the United States.

De facto segregation, however, cannot be abolished by any court mandate. Segregation is still alive and well in the United States, with different racial or ethnic groups often segregated by neighborhood, borough, or parish. Sociologists use segregation indices to measure racial segregation of different races in different areas. The indices employ a scale from zero to 100, where zero is the most integrated and 100 is the least. In the New York metropolitan area, for instance, the Black-White segregation index was seventy-nine for the years 2005–2009. This means that 79% of either Blacks or Whites would have to move in order for each neighborhood to have the same racial balance as the whole metro region ([Population Studies Center, 2010](#)).

Pluralism

Pluralism is represented by the ideal of the United States as a “salad bowl”: a great mixture of different cultures where each culture retains its own identity and yet adds to the flavor of the whole. True pluralism is characterized by mutual respect on the part of all cultures, both dominant and subordinate, creating a multicultural environment of acceptance. In reality, true pluralism is a difficult goal to reach. In the United States, the mutual respect required by pluralism is often missing, and the nation's past pluralist model of a melting pot posits a society where cultural differences aren't embraced as much as erased.

Assimilation

Assimilation describes the process by which a minority individual or group gives up its own identity by taking on the characteristics of the dominant culture. In the United States, which has a history of welcoming and absorbing immigrants from different lands, assimilation has been a function of immigration.

Most people in the United States have immigrant ancestors. In relatively recent history, between 1890 and 1920, the United States became home to around 24 million immigrants. In the decades since then, further waves of immigrants have come to these shores and have eventually been absorbed into U.S. culture, sometimes after facing extended periods of prejudice and discrimination. Assimilation may lead to the loss of the minority group's cultural identity as they become absorbed into the dominant



For many immigrants to the United States, the Statue of Liberty is a symbol of freedom and a new life. Unfortunately, they often encounter prejudice and discrimination. ([Statue of Liberty, NY](#) by Francisco Antunes is used under CC BY 2.0.)

culture, but assimilation has minimal to no impact on the majority group's cultural identity.

Some groups may keep only symbolic gestures of their original ethnicity. For instance, many Irish Americans may celebrate Saint Patrick's Day, many Hindu Americans enjoy a Diwali festival, and many Mexican Americans may celebrate Cinco de Mayo (a May 5 acknowledgment of Mexico's victory at the 1862 Battle of Puebla). However, for the rest of the year, other aspects of their originating culture may be forgotten.

Assimilation is antithetical to the “salad bowl” created by pluralism; rather than maintaining their own cultural flavor, subordinate cultures give up their own traditions in order to conform to their new environment. Sociologists measure the degree to which immigrants have assimilated to a new culture with four benchmarks: socioeconomic status, spatial concentration, language assimilation, and intermarriage. When faced with racial and ethnic discrimination, it can be difficult for new immigrants to fully assimilate. Language assimilation, in particular, can be a formidable barrier, limiting employment and educational

options and therefore constraining growth in socioeconomic status.

Amalgamation

Amalgamation is the process by which a minority group and a majority group combine to form a new group. Amalgamation creates the classic “melting pot” analogy; unlike the “salad bowl,” in which each culture retains its individuality, the “melting pot” ideal sees the combination of cultures that results in a new culture entirely.

Amalgamation, also known as miscegenation, is achieved through intermarriage between races. In the United States, antimiscegenation laws flourished in the South during the Jim Crow era. It wasn’t until 1967’s *Loving v. Virginia* that the last antimiscegenation law was struck from the books, making these laws unconstitutional.

RACE AND ETHNICITY IN THE UNITED STATES

When colonists came to the New World, they found a land that did not need “discovering” since it was already occupied. While the first wave of immigrants came from Western Europe, eventually the bulk of people entering North America were from Northern Europe, then Eastern Europe, then Latin America and Asia (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2010). And let us not forget the forced immigration of African slaves. Most of these groups underwent a period of disenfranchisement in which they were relegated to the bottom of the social hierarchy before they managed (for those who could) to achieve social mobility. Today, our society is multicultural, although the extent to which this multiculturalism is embraced varies,

and the many manifestations of multiculturalism carry significant political repercussions. The sections below will describe how several groups became part of U.S. society, discuss the history of intergroup relations for each faction, and assess each group’s status today.

Native Americans

The only nonimmigrant ethnic group in the United States, Native Americans once numbered in the millions but by 2010 made up only 0.9% of U.S. populace; see above (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Currently, about 2.9 million people identify themselves as Native American alone, while an additional 2.3 million identify them as Native American mixed with another ethnic group (Norris et al., 2012).

■ Sociology in the Real World •

Sports Teams with Native American Names

The sports world abounds with team names like the Indians, the Warriors, the Braves, and even the Savages and Redskins. These names arise from historically prejudiced views of Native Americans as fierce, brave, and strong savages: attributes that would be beneficial to a sports team, but are not necessarily beneficial to people in the United States who should be seen as more than just fierce savages.

Since the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) has been campaigning against the use of such mascots, asserting that the “warrior savage myth . . . reinforces the racist view that Indians are uncivilized and uneducated and it has been used to justify policies of forced assimilation and destruction of Indian culture” (National Congress of American Indians, 2005). The



Many Native Americans (and others) believe sports teams with names like the Indians, Braves, and Warriors perpetuate unwelcome stereotypes. (Chief Sitting Bull by D.F. Barry is in the public domain; Francisco Lindor by Erik Drost is used under CC BY 2.0.)

campaign has met with only limited success. While some teams have changed their names, hundreds of professional, college, and K–12 school teams still have names derived from this stereotype. Another group, [American Indian Cultural Support \(2005\)](#), is especially concerned with the use of such names at K–12 schools, influencing children when they should be gaining a fuller and more realistic understanding of Native Americans than such stereotypes supply.

What do you think about such names? Should they be allowed or banned? What argument would a symbolic interactionist make on this topic? ■

How and Why They Came

The earliest immigrants to America arrived millennia before European immigrants. Dates of the migration are debated with estimates ranging from between 45,000 and 12,000 BCE. It is thought that early Indians migrated to this new land in search of big game to hunt, which they found in huge herds of grazing herbivores in the Americas. Over the centuries and then the millennia, Native American culture blossomed into an intricate web of hundreds of interconnected tribes, each with its own customs, traditions, languages, and religions.

History of Intergroup Relations

Native American culture prior to European settlement is referred to as Pre-Columbian: that is, prior to the coming of Christopher Columbus in 1492. Mistakenly believing that he had landed in the East Indies, Columbus named the indigenous people “Indians,” a name that has persisted for centuries despite being a geographical misnomer and one used to blanket 500 distinct groups who each have their own languages and traditions.

The history of intergroup relations between European colonists and Native Americans is a brutal one. As discussed in the section on genocide, the effect of European settlement of the Americas was to nearly destroy the indigenous population. And although Native Americans’ lack of immunity to European diseases caused the most deaths, overt mistreatment of Native Americans by Europeans was devastating as well.

From the first Spanish colonists to the French, English, and Dutch who followed, European settlers took what land they wanted and expanded across the continent at will. If indigenous people tried to retain their stewardship of the land, Europeans fought them off with superior weapons. A key element of this issue is the indigenous view of land and land ownership. Most tribes considered the earth a living entity whose resources they were stewards of, the concepts of land ownership and conquest didn’t exist in Native

American society. Europeans’ domination of the Americas was indeed a conquest; one scholar points out that Native Americans are the only minority group in the United States whose subordination occurred purely through conquest by the dominant group ([Marger, 1994](#)).

After the establishment of the United States government, discrimination against Native Americans was codified and formalized in a series of laws intended to subjugate them and keep them from gaining any power. Some of the most impactful laws are as follows:

- The Indian Removal Act of 1830 forced the relocation of any native tribes east of the Mississippi River to lands west of the river.
- The Indian Appropriation Acts funded further removals and declared that no Indian tribe could be recognized as an independent nation, tribe, or power with which the U.S. government would have to make treaties. This made it even easier for the U.S. government to take land it wanted.
- The Dawes Act of 1887 reversed the policy of isolating Native Americans on reservations, instead forcing them onto individual properties that were intermingled with White settlers, thereby reducing their capacity for power as a group.

Native American culture was further eroded by the establishment of Indian boarding schools in the late nineteenth century. These schools, run by both Christian missionaries and the United States government, had the express purpose of “civilizing” Native American children and assimilating them into White society. The boarding schools were located off-reservation to ensure that children were separated from their families and culture. Schools forced children to cut their hair, speak English, and practice Christianity. Physical and sexual abuses were rampant for decades; only in 1987 did the Bureau of Indian Affairs issue a policy on sexual abuse in boarding schools. Some scholars argue that many of the problems that Native Americans face today result from almost a century of mistreatment at these boarding schools.

Current Status

The eradication of Native American culture continued until the 1960s, when Native Americans were able to participate in and benefit from the civil rights movement. The Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968 guaranteed Indian tribes most of the rights of the United States Bill of Rights. New laws like the Indian Self-Determination Act of 1975 and the Education Assistance Act of the same year recognized tribal governments and gave them more power. Indian boarding schools have dwindled to only a few, and Native American

cultural groups are striving to preserve and maintain old traditions to keep them from being lost forever.

However, Native Americans (some of whom now wished to be called American Indians so as to avoid the “savage” connotations of the term “native”) still suffer the effects of centuries of degradation. Long-term poverty, inadequate education, cultural dislocation, and high rates of unemployment contribute to Native American populations falling to the bottom of the economic spectrum. Native Americans also suffer disproportionately with lower life expectancies than most groups in the United States.

African Americans

As discussed in the section on race, the term African American can be a misnomer for many individuals. Many people with dark skin may have their more recent roots in Europe or the Caribbean, seeing themselves as Dominican American or Dutch American. Further, actual immigrants from Africa may feel that they have more of a claim to the term African American than those who are many generations removed from ancestors who originally came to this country. This section will focus on the experience of the slaves who were transported from Africa to the United States, and their progeny. Currently, the [U.S. Census Bureau \(2014\)](#) estimates that 13.2% of the United States’ population is Black.

How and Why They Came

If Native Americans are the only minority group whose subordinate status occurred by conquest, African Americans are the exemplar minority group in the United States whose ancestors did not come here by choice. A Dutch sea captain brought the first Africans to the Virginia colony of Jamestown in 1619 and sold them as indentured servants. This was not an uncommon practice for either Blacks or Whites, and indentured servants were in high demand. For the next century, Black and White indentured servants worked side by side. But the growing agricultural economy demanded greater and cheaper labor, and by 1705, Virginia passed the slave codes declaring that any foreign-born non-Christian could be a slave, and that slaves were considered property.

The next 150 years saw the rise of U.S. slavery, with Black Africans being kidnapped from their own lands and shipped to the New World on the trans-Atlantic journey known as the Middle Passage. Once in the Americas, the Black population grew until U.S.-born Blacks outnumbered those born in Africa. But colonial (and later, U.S.) slave codes declared that the child of a slave was a slave, so the slave class was created. By 1808, the slave trade was

internal in the United States, with slaves being bought and sold across state lines like livestock. In 1808, during Thomas Jefferson’s presidency, Congress prohibited the international importation of humans to be used as slaves.

History of Intergroup Relations

There is no starker illustration of the dominant-subordinate group relationship than that of slavery. In order to justify their severely discriminatory behavior, slaveholders and their supporters had to view Blacks as innately inferior. Slaves were denied even the most basic rights of citizenship, a crucial factor for slaveholders and their supporters. Slavery poses an excellent example of conflict theory’s perspective on race relations; the dominant group needed complete control over the subordinate group in order to maintain its power. Whippings, executions, rapes, denial of schooling and health care were all permissible and widely practiced.

Slavery eventually became an issue over which the nation divided into geographically and ideologically distinct factions, leading to the Civil War. And while the abolition of slavery on moral grounds was certainly a catalyst to war, it was not the only driving force. Students of U.S. history will know that the institution of slavery was crucial to the Southern economy, whose production of crops like rice, cotton, and tobacco relied on the virtually limitless and cheap labor that slavery provided. In contrast, the North didn’t benefit economically from slavery, resulting in an economic disparity tied to racial/political issues.

A century later, the civil rights movement was characterized by boycotts, marches, sit-ins, and freedom rides: demonstrations by a subordinate group that would no longer willingly submit to domination. The major blow to America’s formally institutionalized racism was the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This Act, which is still followed today, banned discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Some sociologists, however, would argue that institutionalized racism persists.

Current Status

Although government-sponsored, formalized discrimination against African Americans has been outlawed, true equality does not yet exist. The National Urban League’s *2011 Equality Index* reports that Blacks’ overall equality level with Whites has dropped in the past year, from 71.5% to 71.1% in 2010. The *Index*, which has been published since 2005, notes a growing trend of increased inequality with Whites, especially in the areas of unemployment, insurance coverage, and incarceration. Blacks also trail Whites considerably in the areas of economics, health, and education.

To what degree do racism and prejudice contribute to this continued inequality? The answer is complex. 2008 saw the election of this country's first African American president: Barack Hussein Obama. Despite being popularly identified as Black, we should note that President Obama is of a mixed background that is equally White, and although all presidents have been publicly mocked at times (Gerald Ford was depicted as a klutz, Bill Clinton as someone who could not control his libido), a startling percentage of the critiques of Obama have been based on his race. The most blatant of these was the controversy over his birth certificate, where the "birther" movement questioned his citizenship and right to hold office. Although Blacks have come a long way from slavery, the echoes of centuries of disempowerment are still evident.

Asian Americans

Like many groups this section discusses, Asian Americans represent a great diversity of cultures and backgrounds. The experience of a Japanese American whose family has been in the United States for three generations will be drastically different from a Laotian American who has only been in the United States for a few years. This section primarily discusses Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese immigrants and shows the differences between their experiences. The most recent estimate from the [U.S. Census Bureau \(2014\)](#) suggest about 5.3% of the population identify themselves as Asian.

How and Why They Came

The national and ethnic diversity of Asian American immigration history is reflected in the variety of their experiences in joining U.S. society. Asian immigrants have come to the United States in waves, at different times, and for different reasons.

The first Asian immigrants to come to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century were Chinese. These immigrants were primarily men whose intention was to work for several years in order to earn incomes to support their families in China. Their main destination was the American West, where the Gold Rush was drawing people with its lure of abundant money. The construction of the Transcontinental Railroad was underway at this time, and the Central Pacific section hired thousands of migrant Chinese men to complete the laying of rails across the rugged Sierra Nevada mountain range. Chinese men also engaged in other manual labor like mining and agricultural work. The work was grueling and underpaid, but like many immigrants, they persevered.

Japanese immigration began in the 1880s, on the heels of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Many Japanese

immigrants came to Hawaii to participate in the sugar industry; others came to the mainland, especially to California. Unlike the Chinese, however, the Japanese had a strong government that negotiated with the U.S. government to ensure the well-being of their immigrants. Japanese men were able to bring their wives and families to the United States, and were thus able to produce second- and third-generation Japanese Americans more quickly than their Chinese counterparts.

The most recent large-scale Asian immigration came from Korea and Vietnam and largely took place during the second half of the twentieth century. While Korean immigration has been fairly gradual, Vietnamese immigration occurred primarily post-1975, after the fall of Saigon and the establishment of restrictive communist policies in Vietnam. Whereas many Asian immigrants came to the United States to seek better economic opportunities, Vietnamese immigrants came as political refugees, seeking



Thirty-five Vietnamese refugees wait to be taken aboard the amphibious USS *Blue Ridge* (LCC-19). They are being rescued from a thirty-five-foot fishing boat 350 miles northeast of Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, after spending eight days at sea. (35 Vietnamese Boat People 2 by PH2 Phil Eggman/U.S. Navy is in the public domain.)

asylum from harsh conditions in their homeland. The Refugee Act of 1980 helped them to find a place to settle in the United States.

History of Intergroup Relations

Chinese immigration came to an abrupt end with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This act was a result of anti-Chinese sentiment burgeoned by a depressed economy and loss of jobs. White workers blamed Chinese migrants for taking jobs, and the passage of the Act meant the number of Chinese workers decreased. Chinese men did not have the funds to return to China or to bring their families to the United States, so they remained physically and culturally segregated in the Chinatowns of large cities. Later legislation, the Immigration Act of 1924, further curtailed Chinese immigration. The Act included the race-based National Origins Act, which was aimed at keeping U.S. ethnic stock as undiluted as possible by reducing “undesirable” immigrants. It was not until after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 that Chinese immigration again increased, and many Chinese families were reunited.

Although Japanese Americans have deep, long-reaching roots in the United States, their history here has not always been smooth. The California Alien Land Law of 1913 was aimed at them and other Asian immigrants, and it prohibited aliens from owning land. An even uglier action was the Japanese internment camps of World War II, discussed earlier as an illustration of expulsion.

Current Status

Asian Americans certainly have been subject to their share of racial prejudice, despite the seemingly positive stereotype as the model minority. The **model minority** stereotype is applied to a minority group that is seen as reaching significant educational, professional, and socioeconomic levels without challenging the existing establishment.

This stereotype is typically applied to Asian groups in the United States, and it can result in unrealistic expectations, by putting a stigma on members of this group that do not meet the expectations. Stereotyping all Asians as smart and capable can also lead to a lack of much-needed government assistance and to educational and professional discrimination.

Hispanic Americans

Hispanic Americans have a wide range of backgrounds and nationalities. The segment of the U.S. population that self-identifies as Hispanic in 2013 was recently estimated at 17.1% of the total (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, about 75% of the respondents who identify as Hispanic report being of Mexican, Puerto

Rican, or Cuban origin. Of the total Hispanic group, 60% reported as Mexican, 44% reported as Cuban, and 9% reported as Puerto Rican. Remember that the U.S. Census allows people to report as being more than one ethnicity.

Not only are there wide differences among the different origins that make up the Hispanic American population, but there are also different names for the group itself. The 2010 U.S. Census states that “Hispanic” or “Latino” refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.” There have been some disagreements over whether Hispanic or Latino is the correct term for a group this diverse, and whether it would be better for people to refer to themselves as being of their origin specifically, for example, Mexican American or Dominican American. This section will compare the experiences of Mexican Americans and Cuban Americans.

How and Why They Came

Mexican Americans form the largest Hispanic subgroup and also the oldest. Mexican migration to the United States started in the early 1900s in response to the need for cheap agricultural labor. Mexican migration was often circular; workers would stay for a few years and then go back to Mexico with more money than they could have made in their country of origin. The length of Mexico’s shared border with the United States has made immigration easier than for many other immigrant groups.

Cuban Americans are the second-largest Hispanic subgroup, and their history is quite different from that of Mexican Americans. The main wave of Cuban immigration to the United States started after Fidel Castro came to power in 1959 and reached its crest with the Mariel boatlift in 1980. Castro’s Cuban Revolution ushered in an era of communism that continues to this day. To avoid having their assets seized by the government, many wealthy and educated Cubans migrated north, generally to the Miami area.

History of Intergroup Relations

For several decades, Mexican workers crossed the long border into the United States, both legally and illegally, to work in the fields that provided produce for the developing United States. Western growers needed a steady supply of labor, and the 1940s and 1950s saw the official federal Bracero Program (*bracero* is Spanish for *strong-arm*) that offered protection to Mexican guest workers. Interestingly, 1954 also saw the enactment of “Operation Wetback,” which deported thousands of illegal Mexican workers. From these examples, we can see the U.S. treatment of immigration from Mexico has been ambivalent at best.

Sociologist [Douglas Massey \(2006\)](#) suggests that although the average standard of living than in Mexico may be lower in the United States, it is not so low as to make permanent migration the goal of most Mexicans. However, the strengthening of the border that began with 1986's Immigration Reform and Control Act has made one-way migration the rule for most Mexicans. Massey argues that the rise of illegal one-way immigration of Mexicans is a direct outcome of the law that was intended to reduce it.

Cuban Americans, perhaps because of their relative wealth and education level at the time of immigration, have fared better than many immigrants. Further, because they were fleeing a Communist country, they were given refugee status and offered protection and social services. The Cuban Migration Agreement of 1995 has curtailed legal immigration from Cuba, leading many Cubans to try to immigrate illegally by boat. According to a 2009 report from the Congressional Research Service, the U.S. government applies a “wet foot/dry foot” policy toward Cuban immigrants; Cubans who are intercepted while still at sea will be returned to Cuba, while those who reach the shore will be permitted to stay in the United States.

Current Status

Mexican Americans, especially those who are here illegally, are at the center of a national debate about immigration. [Myers \(2007\)](#) observes that no other minority group (except the Chinese) has immigrated to the United States in such an environment of illegality. He notes that in some years, three times as many Mexican immigrants may have entered the United States illegally as those who arrived legally. It should be noted that this is due to enormous disparity of economic opportunity on two sides of an open border, not because of any inherent inclination to break laws. In his report, “Measuring Immigrant Assimilation in the United States,” [Jacob Vigdor \(2008\)](#) states that Mexican immigrants experience relatively low rates of economic and civic assimilation. He further suggests that “the slow rates of economic and civic assimilation set Mexicans apart from other immigrants, and may reflect the fact that the large numbers of Mexican immigrants residing in the United States illegally have few opportunities to advance themselves along these dimensions.”

By contrast, Cuban Americans are often seen as a model minority group within the larger Hispanic group. Many Cubans had higher socioeconomic status when they arrived in this country, and their anti-Communist agenda has made them welcome refugees to this country. In south Florida, especially, Cuban Americans are active in local politics and professional life. As with Asian Americans,

however, being a model minority can mask the issue of powerlessness that these minority groups face in U.S. society.

■ Social Policy and Debate •

Arizona's Senate Bill 1070

As both legal and illegal immigrants, and with high population numbers, Mexican Americans are often the target of stereotyping, racism, and discrimination. A harsh example of this is in Arizona, where a stringent immigration law—known as SB 1070 (for Senate Bill 1070)—has caused a nationwide controversy. The law requires that during a lawful stop, detention, or arrest, Arizona police officers must establish the immigration status of anyone they suspect may be here illegally. The law makes it a crime for individuals to fail to have documents confirming their legal status, and it gives police officers the right to detain people they suspect may be in the country illegally.

To many, the most troublesome aspect of this law is the latitude it affords police officers in terms of whose citizenship they may question. Having “reasonable suspicion that the person is an alien who is unlawfully present in the United States” is reason enough to demand immigration papers ([State of Arizona, 2010](#)). Critics say this law will encourage racial profiling (the illegal practice of law enforcement using race as a basis for suspecting someone of a crime), making it hazardous to be caught “Driving While Brown,” a takeoff on the legal term Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) or the slang reference of “Driving While Black.” Driving While Brown refers to the likelihood of getting pulled over just for being non-White.

SB 1070 has been the subject of many lawsuits, from parties as diverse as Arizona police officers, the American Civil Liberties Union, and even the federal government, which is suing on the basis of Arizona contradicting federal



Protesters in Arizona dispute the harsh new anti-immigration law. (Image by [prathap ramamurthy](#) is used under CC BY 2.0.)

immigration laws (American Civil Liberties Union, 2011). The future of SB 1070 is uncertain, but many other states have tried or are trying to pass similar measures. Do you think such measures are appropriate? ■

Arab Americans

If ever a category was hard to define, the various groups lumped under the name “Arab American” is it. After all, Hispanic Americans or Asian Americans are so designated because of their countries of origin. But for Arab Americans, their country of origin—Arabia—has not existed for centuries. In addition, Arab Americans represent all religious practices, despite the stereotype that all Arabic people practice Islam. As Myers (2007) asserts, not all Arabs are Muslim, and not all Muslims are Arab, complicating the stereotype of what it means to be an Arab American. Geographically, the Arab region comprises the Middle East and parts of northern Africa. People whose ancestry lies in that area or who speak primarily Arabic may consider themselves Arabs.

The U.S. Census has struggled with the issue of Arab identity. The 2010 Census, as in previous years, did not offer an “Arab” box to check under the question of race. Individuals who want to be counted as Arabs had to check the box for “Some other race” and then write in their race. However, when the Census data is tallied, they will be marked as White. This is problematic, however, denying Arab Americans opportunities for federal assistance. According to the

best estimates of the U.S. Census Bureau, the Arabic population in the United States grew from 850,000 in 1990 to 1.2 million in 2000, an increase of 0.07% (Asi & Beaulieu, 2013).

Why They Came

The first Arab immigrants came to this country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were predominantly Syrian, Lebanese, and Jordanian Christians, and they came to escape persecution and to make a better life. These early immigrants and their descendants, who were more likely to think of themselves as Syrian or Lebanese than Arab, represent almost half of the Arab American population today (Myers, 2007). Restrictive immigration policies from the 1920s until 1965 curtailed all immigration, but Arab immigration since 1965 has been steady. Immigrants from this time period have been more likely to be Muslim and more highly educated, escaping political unrest and looking for better opportunities.

History of Intergroup Relations

Relations between Arab Americans and the dominant majority have been marked by mistrust, misinformation, and deeply entrenched beliefs. Helen Samhan (2001) of the Arab American Institute suggests that Arab-Israeli conflicts in the 1970s contributed significantly to cultural and political anti-Arab sentiment in the United States. The United States has historically supported the State of Israel, while some Middle Eastern countries deny the existence of



The proposed Park51 Muslim Community Center generated heated controversy due to its close proximity to Ground Zero. In these photos, people march in protest against the center, while counter-protesters demonstrate their support. (Ground Zero Mosque Protesters 10 by David Shankbone is used under CC BY 2.0; Ground Zero Mosque Supporters 2 by David Shankbone is used under CC BY 2.0.)

the Israeli state. Disputes over these issues have involved Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine.

As is often the case with stereotyping and prejudice, the actions of extremists come to define the entire group, regardless of the fact that most U.S. citizens with ties to the Middle Eastern community condemn terrorist actions, as do most inhabitants of the Middle East. Would it be fair to judge all Catholics by the events of the Inquisition? Of course, the United States was deeply affected by the events of September 11, 2001. This event has left a deep scar on the American psyche, and it has fortified anti-Arab sentiment for a large percentage of Americans. In the first month after 9/11, hundreds of hate crimes were perpetrated against people who looked like they might be of Arab descent.

Current Status

Although the rate of hate crimes against Arab Americans has slowed, Arab Americans are still victims of racism and prejudice. Racial profiling has proceeded against Arab Americans as a matter of course since 9/11. Particularly when engaged in air travel, being young and Arab-looking is enough to warrant a special search or detainment. This Islamophobia (irrational fear of or hatred against Muslims) does not show signs of abating. Scholars noted that White domestic terrorists like Timothy McVeigh, who detonated a bomb at an Oklahoma courthouse in 1995, have not inspired similar racial profiling or hate crimes against Whites.

White Ethnic Americans

As we have seen, there is no minority group that fits easily in a category or that can be described simply. While sociologists believe that individual experiences can often be understood in light of their social characteristics (such as race, class, or gender), we must balance this perspective with awareness that no two individuals' experiences are alike. Making generalizations can lead to stereotypes and prejudice. The same is true for White ethnic Americans, who come from diverse backgrounds and have had a great variety of experiences. According to the [U.S. Census Bureau \(2014\)](#), 77.7% of U.S. adults currently identify themselves as White alone. In this section, we will focus on German, Irish, Italian, and Eastern European immigrants.

Why They Came

White ethnic Europeans formed the second and third great waves of immigration, from the early nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. They joined a newly minted United States that was primarily made up of White Protestants from England. While most immigrants came searching for a better life, their experiences were not all the same.

The first major influx of European immigrants came from Germany and Ireland, starting in the 1820s. Germans came both for economic opportunity and to escape political unrest and military conscription, especially after the Revolutions of 1848. Many German immigrants of this period were political refugees: liberals who wanted to escape from an oppressive government. They were well-off enough to make their way inland, and they formed heavily German enclaves in the Midwest that exist to this day.

The Irish immigrants of the same time period were not always as well off financially, especially after the Irish Potato Famine of 1845. Irish immigrants settled mainly in the cities of the East Coast, where they were employed as laborers and where they faced significant discrimination.

German and Irish immigration continued into the late 19th century and earlier 20th century, at which point the numbers for Southern and Eastern European immigrants started growing as well. Italians, mainly from the Southern part of the country, began arriving in large numbers in the 1890s. Eastern European immigrants—people from Russia, Poland, Bulgaria, and Austria-Hungary—started arriving around the same time. Many of these Eastern Europeans were peasants forced into a hardscrabble existence in their native lands; political unrest, land shortages, and crop failures drove them to seek better opportunities in the United States. The Eastern European immigration wave also included Jewish people escaping pogroms (anti-Jewish massacres) of Eastern Europe and the Pale of Settlement in what was then Poland and Russia.

History of Intergroup Relations

In a broad sense, German immigrants were not victimized to the same degree as many of the other subordinate groups this section discusses. While they may not have been welcomed with open arms, they were able to settle in enclaves and establish roots. A notable exception to this was during the lead up to World War I and through World War II, when anti-German sentiment was virulent.

Irish immigrants, many of whom were very poor, were more of an underclass than the Germans. In Ireland, the English had oppressed the Irish for centuries, eradicating their language and culture and discriminating against their religion (Catholicism). Although the Irish had a larger population than the English, they were a subordinate group. This dynamic reached into the new world, where Anglo Americans saw Irish immigrants as a race apart: dirty, lacking ambition, and suitable for only the most menial jobs. In fact, Irish immigrants were subject to criticism identical to that with which the dominant group characterized African Americans. By necessity, Irish immigrants formed tight communities segregated from their Anglo neighbors ([Greeley, 1972](#)).

The later wave of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe was also subject to intense discrimination and prejudice. In particular, the dominant group—which now included second- and third-generation Germans and Irish—saw Italian immigrants as the dregs of Europe and worried about the purity of the American race (Myers, 2007). Italian immigrants lived in segregated slums in Northeastern cities, and in some cases were even victims of violence and lynchings similar to what African Americans endured. They worked harder and were paid less than other workers, often doing the dangerous work that other laborers were reluctant to take on.

Current Status

The U.S. Census from 2008 shows that 16.5% of respondents reported being of German descent: the largest

group in the country. For many years, German Americans endeavored to maintain a strong cultural identity, but they are now culturally assimilated into the dominant culture.

There are now more Irish Americans in the United States than there are Irish in Ireland. One of the country's largest cultural groups, Irish Americans have slowly achieved acceptance and assimilation into the dominant group.

Myers (2007) states that Italian Americans' cultural assimilation is "almost complete, but with remnants of ethnicity." The presence of "Little Italy" neighborhoods—originally segregated slums where Italians congregated in the nineteenth century—exist today. While tourists flock to the saints' festivals in Little Italies, most Italian Americans have moved to the suburbs at the same rate as other White groups.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Race is fundamentally a social construct. Ethnicity is a term that describes shared culture and national origin. Minority groups are defined by their lack of power.
- Stereotypes are oversimplified ideas about groups of people. Prejudice refers to thoughts and feelings, while discrimination refers to actions. Racism refers to the belief that one race is inherently superior or inferior to other races.
- Functionalist views of race study the role dominant and subordinate groups play to create a stable social structure. Conflict theorists examine power disparities and struggles between various racial and ethnic groups. Interactionists see race and ethnicity as important sources of individual identity and social symbolism. The concept of culture of prejudice recognizes that all people are subject to stereotypes that are ingrained in their culture.
- Intergroup relations range from a tolerant approach of pluralism to intolerance as severe as genocide. In pluralism, groups retain their own identity. In assimilation, groups conform to the identity of the dominant group. In amalgamation, groups combine to form a new group identity.
- The history of the U.S. people contains an infinite variety of experiences that sociologists understand follow patterns. From the indigenous people who first inhabited these lands to the waves of immigrants over the past 500 years, migration is an experience with many shared characteristics. Most groups have experienced various degrees of prejudice and discrimination as they have gone through the process of assimilation.

EXERCISES

1. Why do you think the term *minority* has persisted when the word *subordinate* is more descriptive?
2. How do you describe your ethnicity? Do you include your family's country of origin? Do you consider yourself multiethnic? How does your ethnicity compare to that of the people you spend most of your time with?
3. How do redlining and racial steering contribute to institutionalized racism?
4. Give an example of stereotyping that you see in everyday life. Explain what would need to happen for this to be eliminated.
5. Give three examples of White privilege. Do you know people who have experienced this? From what perspective?
6. What is the worst example of culture of prejudice you can think of? What are your reasons for thinking it is the worst?
7. Do you believe immigration laws should foster an approach of pluralism, assimilation, or amalgamation? Which perspective do you think is most supported by current U.S. immigration policies?
8. Which intergroup relation do you think is the most beneficial to the subordinate group? To society as a whole? Why?
9. In your opinion, which group had the easiest time coming to this country? Which group had the hardest time? Why?
10. Which group has made the most socioeconomic gains? Why do you think that group has had more success than others?

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The Impacts of Social Class

SOURCE

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Describe how socioeconomic status relates to the distribution of social opportunities and resources.
2. Describe how a low socioeconomic status can impact the health status of individuals.
3. Define mental health and explain why it is regarded as a socially constructed concept.
4. Give examples of effects of social class on marriage, birth rates, and family composition.
5. Discuss three factors contributing to educational inequality.
6. Explain how social class relates to religious affiliation, denomination, and religiosity.
7. Evaluate how social class impacts political participation and political influence.
8. Describe how the administration of punishment has changed throughout history.

KEY TERMS

adjudication

birth rate

courts

educational attainment

environmental hazards

family life

health inequality

hierarchy

law enforcement

legacy student

mental disorder

mental health

overpopulation

political influence

political participation

private schools

religiosity

religious affiliation

social determinants of health

socioeconomic status

In the United States, a person's social class has far-reaching consequences. Social class refers to the grouping of individuals in a stratified **hierarchy** based on wealth, income, education, occupation, and social network (though other factors are sometimes considered) ("**Hierarchy**," 2019). One's position in the social class hierarchy may impact, for example, health, family life, education, religious affiliation, political participation, and experience with the criminal justice system.

Social class in the United States is a controversial issue, with social scientists disagreeing over models, definitions, and even the basic question of whether or not distinct classes exist. Many Americans believe in a simple three-class model that includes the rich or upper class, the middle class, and the poor or working class ("**Social Class**," 2020). More complex models that have been proposed by social scientists describe as many as a dozen class levels. Regardless of which model of social classes used, it is clear that socioeconomic status (SES) is tied to particular opportunities and resources. **Socioeconomic status** refers to a person's position in the social hierarchy and is determined

by their income, wealth, occupational prestige, and educational attainment.

While social class may be an amorphous and diffuse concept, with scholars disagreeing over its definition, tangible advantages are associated with high socioeconomic status. People in the highest SES bracket, generally referred to as the upper class, likely have better access to healthcare, marry people of higher social status, attend more prestigious schools, and are more influential in politics than people in the middle class or working class. People in the upper class are members of elite social networks, effectively meaning that they have access to people in powerful positions who have specialized knowledge. These social networks confer benefits ranging from advantages in seeking education and employment to leniency by police and the courts. Sociologists may dispute exactly how to model the distinctions between socioeconomic statuses, but the higher up the class hierarchy one is in America, the better health, educational, and professional outcomes one is likely to have ("**Social Class**," 2020).

PHYSICAL HEALTH

A person's social class has a significant impact on their physical health, their ability to receive adequate medical care and nutrition, and their life expectancy. While gender and race play significant roles in explaining healthcare inequality in the United States, SES is the greatest social determinant of an individual's health outcome. **Social determinants of health** are the economic and social conditions that influence individual and group differences in health status. Social determinants are environmental, meaning that they are risk factors found in one's living and working conditions (including the distribution of income, wealth, influence, and power), rather than individual factors (such as behavioral risk factors or genetics). Social determinants can be used to predict one's risk of contracting a disease or sustaining an injury, and can also indicate how vulnerable one is to the consequences of a disease or injury ("Social Determinants of Health," 2019). Individuals of lower socioeconomic status have lower levels of



Farmers markets are visible sources of fresh produce and healthy foods. These markets are concentrated in middle to upper income neighborhoods and are not found in food deserts. (SOJ Farmers Market by AuthenticEccentric is used under CC BY-SA 2.0.)

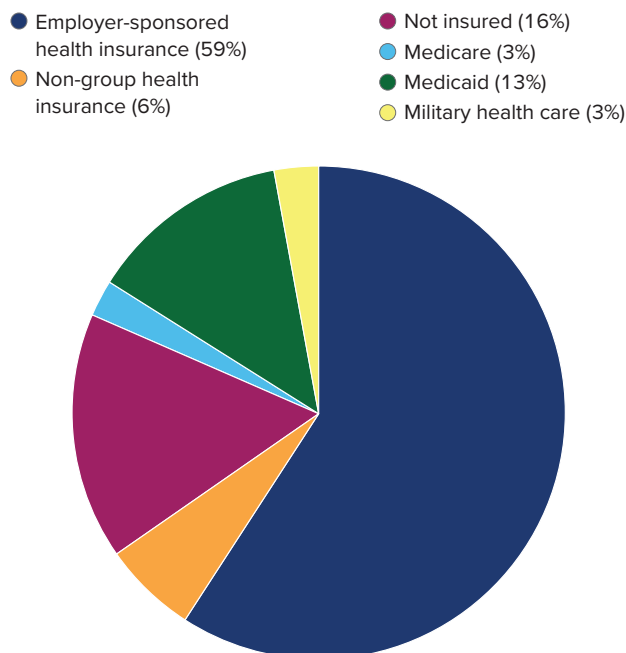


FIGURE 5.1 Health insurance distribution (under 65 years). As seen in this graph, with insurance needed for most health services, access to healthcare is not evenly distributed among Americans. The largest group of insured Americans consists of middle and upper class employees who receive health insurance through employers. As of 2007, 16% of the population had no health insurance coverage and, thus, had greatly limited access to healthcare. (This work, Health Insurance Status 2007, is a derivative of *U.S. Health Insurance Status - Under 65 yrs* by White House Council of Economic Advisors/Wikimedia Commons, which resides in the public domain. *Health Insurance Status 2007* is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 by Judy Schmitt.)

overall health, less insurance coverage, and less access to adequate healthcare than those of higher SES (Figure 5.1).

Individuals with a low SES in the United States experience a wide array of health problems as a result of their economic position ("Health Equity," 2020). They are unable to use healthcare as often as people of higher status and when they do, it is often of lower quality. Additionally, people with low SES tend to experience a much higher rate of health issues than those of high SES ("Social Class," 2020). Many social scientists hypothesize that the higher rate of illness among those with low SES can be attributed to **environmental hazards**. For example, poorer neighborhoods tend to have fewer grocery stores and more fast food chains than wealthier neighborhoods, increasing nutrition problems and the risk of conditions, such as heart disease ("Health Equity," 2020). Similarly, poorer neighborhoods tend to have fewer recreational facilities and higher crime rates than wealthier ones, which decreases the feasibility of routine exercise.

In addition to having an increased level of illness, lower socioeconomic classes have lower levels of health insurance than the upper class. Much of this disparity can be explained by the tendency for middle and upper class people to work in professions that provide health insurance benefits to employees, while lower status occupations often do not provide benefits to employees. For many employees who do not have health insurance benefits through their job, the cost of insurance can be prohibitive. Without insurance, or with inadequate insurance, the cost of healthcare can be extremely high. Consequently, many uninsured or poorly insured individuals do not

have access to preventative care or quality treatment. This group of people has higher rates of infant mortality, cancer, cardiovascular disease, and disabling physical injuries than are seen among the well insured (“[Health Care in the United States](#),” 2020).

Health inequality refers to the unequal distribution of environmental health hazards and access to health services between demographic groups, including social classes. For example, poor and affluent urban communities in the United States are geographically close to each other and to hospitals. Still, the affluent communities are more likely to have access to fresh produce, recreational facilities for exercise, preventative healthcare programs, and routine medical visits. Consequently, affluent communities are likely to have better health outcomes than nearby impoverished ones. The role of socioeconomic status in determining access to healthcare results in health inequality between the upper, middle, and lower or working classes, with the higher classes having more positive health outcomes (“[Health Equity](#),” 2020).

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health describes a level of psychological well-being or the presence/absence of a **mental disorder** (“[Mental Health](#),” 2018). From the perspective of “positive psychology” or “holism,” mental health may include an individual’s ability to enjoy life and to demonstrate psychological resilience when confronted with challenges. The World Health Organization defines **mental health** as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (“[Mental Health](#),” 2020).

What counts as healthy enjoyment and resilience depends upon one’s class perspective. Members of different classes encounter different stressors—lower class people likely face more financial stress as it pertains to day-to-day sustenance and well-being, while upper class people might experience stress from the intense social pressures associated with elite circles. The evaluation of which mental states can be considered healthy and which require medical intervention also varies by class.

Mental health is a socially constructed and socially defined concept; different societies, groups, cultures, institutions, and professions have very different ways of conceptualizing its nature and causes, determining what is mentally healthy, and deciding what interventions are appropriate. Definitions of mental health depend on cultural understandings in addition to biological and neurological findings. Members of different social classes often hold different views on mental health. Similarly, different



To say that mental health is socially constructed means that its definition and criteria can change across time and culture. This 1857 lithograph illustrates the eight mental health disorders that were thought to be prominent in England during the early-19th century: dementia, megalomania, acute mania, melancholia, idiocy, hallucination, erotic mania, and paralysis. Since 1857, many of those disorders have been erased from medical textbooks or modified in light of changing social norms.

(Gautier - Salpetriere by Armand Gautier is in the public domain.)

social classes have different levels of access to mental health interventions and to information about mental health. Thus, the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders varies widely by social class.

FAMILY LIFE

Family life—marriage and childbearing patterns, household composition, and home stability—are strongly influenced by social class (“[Introduction to Sociology/Family](#),” 2017). In the United States, the probability of a first marriage ending is substantially higher for couples with low socioeconomic statuses than for those in the middle or upper class ([Figure 5.2](#)). Research shows that the higher rates of divorce for individuals in lower social classes can often be attributed to the greater financial stress these couples face, though factors like class expectations can also play a role.

Globally, the **birth rate** in countries with large impoverished populations is much higher than in wealthier countries, indicating that income and wealth play a role in shaping family structures. Demographers have identified a direct relationship between average number of children per household and the economic development of a nation. Today, less developed countries struggle with **overpopulation** while many governments in developed countries are instituting policies to deal with low birth rates. In nations with high levels of fertility, upper class individuals tend to have more children than their lower class peers. In nations with low levels of fertility, upper class families exhibit even lower fertility than average (“[Birth Rate](#),” 2020).

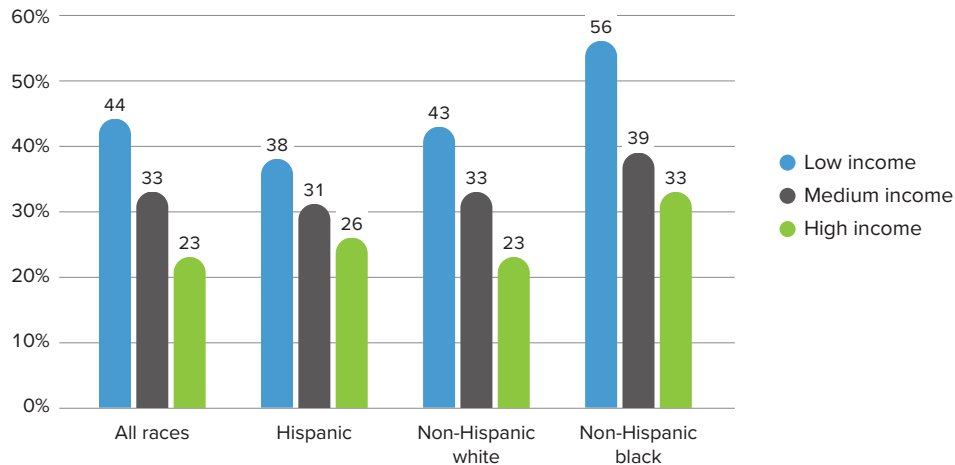


FIGURE 5.2 Probability of first marriage dissolution by race/ethnicity and income (1995). This graph shows that among all races and ethnicities, low income households are more likely to experience divorce than middle and high income households are. Thus, social class bears on rates of marriage dissolution. (*First-Marrriage Dissolution by Race and Income 1995* by Judy Schmitt is used under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.)

Social class has both a cause and an effect relationship with family composition (“[Introduction to Sociology/Family](#),” 2017). For example, single-parent households are likely to have a lower social class because they violate social norms. At the same time, single-parent families can contribute to financial and social instability. A single parent will often face higher costs (in the form of paid child-care), lower earnings (loss of the second parent’s income or loss of time spent at work), or both.

EDUCATION

Education is a major component of social class, both directly and indirectly. Directly, individuals from higher social classes are more likely to have the means to attend more prestigious schools, and are therefore more likely to receive higher educations (“[Social Class](#),” 2020). Indirectly, individuals who

benefit from such higher education are more likely to land prestigious jobs, and in turn, higher salaries. Just as education and social class are closely intertwined, stratification in education contributes to stratification in social class.

Educational attainment refers to the level of schooling a person completes—for instance, high school, some college, college, or a graduate degree. Upper class individuals are likely to attend schools of higher quality and of greater prestige than those attended by their lower class counterparts (“[Educational Attainment in the United States](#),” 2020). Because members of high social classes tend to be better educated and have higher incomes, they are able to offer greater educational advantages, such as private schooling, to their children as well ([Figure 5.3](#)).

Upper-class parents are better able to send their children not only to exclusive **private schools**, but also to

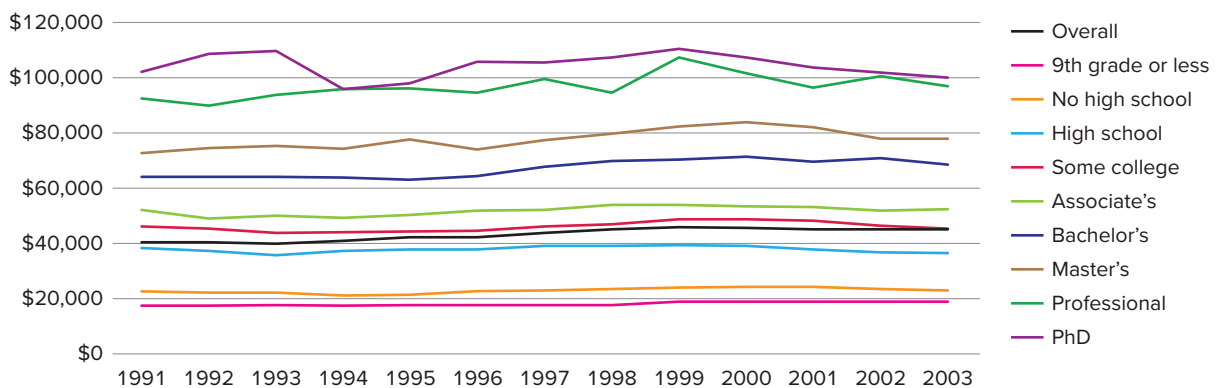


FIGURE 5.3 Educational attainment and income (1991–2003). Households with higher educational attainment are likely to have higher incomes than those with low educational attainment; members of the lowest income bracket tend to have no more than a high school education, while the highest income bracket members tend to hold graduate degrees. (This work, *Household Income by Education 2003*, is a derivative of [Income Education 91 to 03](#) by BrendelSignature, which is used under CC BY-SA 3.0. *Household Income by Education 2003* is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0 by Judy Schmitt.)

public state-funded schools. Such schools are likely to be of higher quality in affluent areas than in impoverished ones, since they are funded by property taxes within the school district. Wealthy areas will provide more property taxes as revenue, which leads to higher quality schools. Educational inequality is one factor that perpetuates the class divide across generations.

Such educational inequality is further reinforced by **legacy student** admission, the preference given by educational institutions to applicants who are related to alumni of that institution (“[Legacy Preferences](#),” 2020). Germane to university and college admissions (particularly in the United States), this practice emerged after World War I, primarily in response to the resulting immigrant influx. Ivy League institutions admit roughly 10% to 30% of students from each incoming class based on this factor.

RELIGION

Social class, measured by socioeconomic status, is associated with individuals’ religious affiliations and practices. **Religious affiliation** has more to do with how religion is practiced rather than degree of religiosity (“[Introduction to Sociology/Religion](#),” 2018). Members of lower classes tend to be affiliated with more fundamentalist religions and sect-like groups. Members of the middle class tend to belong to more formal churches. For example, American

Presbyterians and Episcopalians (two highly formal Protestant denominations), tend to have above average socioeconomic statuses. Methodists and Lutherans (two moderately formal Protestant denominations) tend to have about average SES. Baptists and members of Protestant fundamentalist sects (which tend to be decentralized and informal) have below average SES (“[Introduction to Sociology/Religion](#),” 2018). Variations in SES across denomination reveal a correlation between religious affiliation and social class.

Social class is not significantly correlated to **religiosity**, an index of how strongly religious a person is. Religiosity is measured by tracking frequency of church attendance, church group involvement, frequency of prayer, and other such markers of strength of religious practice. Members of each social class show a range of religiosity.

On the other hand, income, and therefore social class, is related to an individual’s denomination. When one looks at average income by religion, there are clear differences. The highest-earning religion on average is Judaism, with an average income of \$72,000 in 2000 ([Figure 5.4](#)). This is dramatically higher than average; the next highest-earning denomination is Unitarianism at \$56,000. Jehovah’s Witness, Church of God, and Seventh Day Adventists are at the bottom of the income distribution, with \$24,000, \$26,000, and \$31,000, respectively (“[Introduction to Sociology/Religion](#),” 2018).

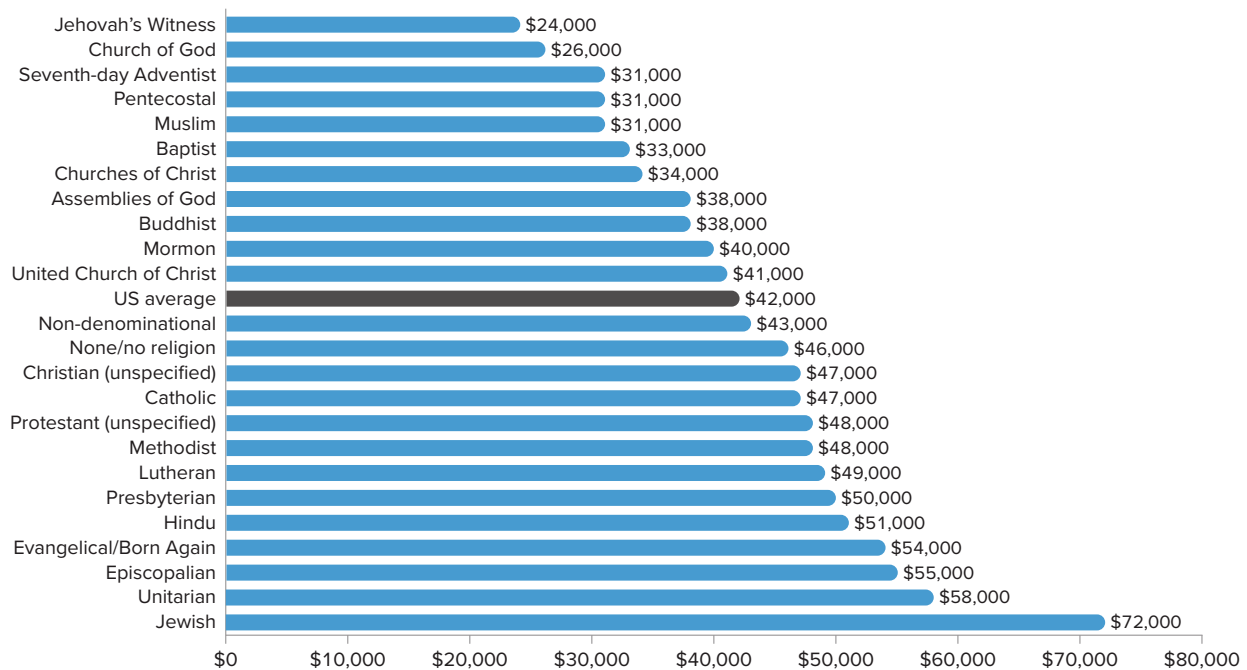


FIGURE 5.4 Religious affiliation by median household income (2000). Household income, an indicator of social class, can also indicate what religious denomination a person is likely to embrace. America’s top income bracket is more likely than other groups to be Jewish, while the lowest bracket is more likely to be Jehovah’s Witnesses. (This work, Household Income by Religion 2000, is a derivative of [Income Ranking by Religious Group - 2000](#) by Rcragun/Wikimedia Commons, which is used under [CC BY 3.0](#). Household Income by Religion 2000 is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#) by Judy Schmitt.)

Religion is also linked with education. 72% of Unitarian and 67% of Hindu adherents are college graduates, while only 12% of Jehovah’s Witness and 15% of Church of God members graduated from college (“Introduction to Sociology/Religion,” 2018).

POLITICS

Social class impacts one’s level of political participation and political influence. **Political participation** refers to whether or not a person votes in elections, donates to campaigns, or attends public forums where decisions are made, such as town meetings or city council meetings, for example. **Political influence** refers to the extent to which one’s political participation achieves its desired results. For example, if one attends a public forum, is their opinion likely to be heard, or if they donate money, is a politician likely to support their desired policy?

Wealthy, well-educated Americans are more likely to vote and to donate money to politicians than lower class individuals (Figure 5.5). This trend means that middle and upper class individuals have greater political participation and greater political influence than those in lower positions. Additionally, higher status people are more likely to hold political positions than lower class people. An illustration of this is the presidential election between George W. Bush and John Kerry in 2004. Both had millions of dollars of accumulated wealth, and they had higher degrees

from Harvard and Yale, respectively (“Introduction to Sociology/Politics,” 2017).

Those who vote as members of a social class can be said to be participating in identity politics. Identity politics is a phenomenon that arose first at the radical margins of liberal democratic societies in which human rights are recognized, and the term is not usually used to refer to dissident movements within single-party or authoritarian states. Some groups have combined identity politics and Marxist social class analysis and class consciousness. During the 1980s, the politics of identity became very prominent and was linked with new social movement activism (“Identity Politics,” 2020).

CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Criminal justice is the system of practices and government institutions directed at upholding social control, deterring, and mitigating crime, or sanctioning those who violate laws with criminal penalties and rehabilitation efforts. The American criminal justice system consists of three main parts: (1) enforcement; (2) adjudication; and (3) corrections. These distinct agencies are the principal means of maintaining the rule of law within society (“Criminal Justice,” 2020).

The first contact an offender has with the criminal justice system is usually with **law enforcement**, most often the police who investigate a suspected violation and make

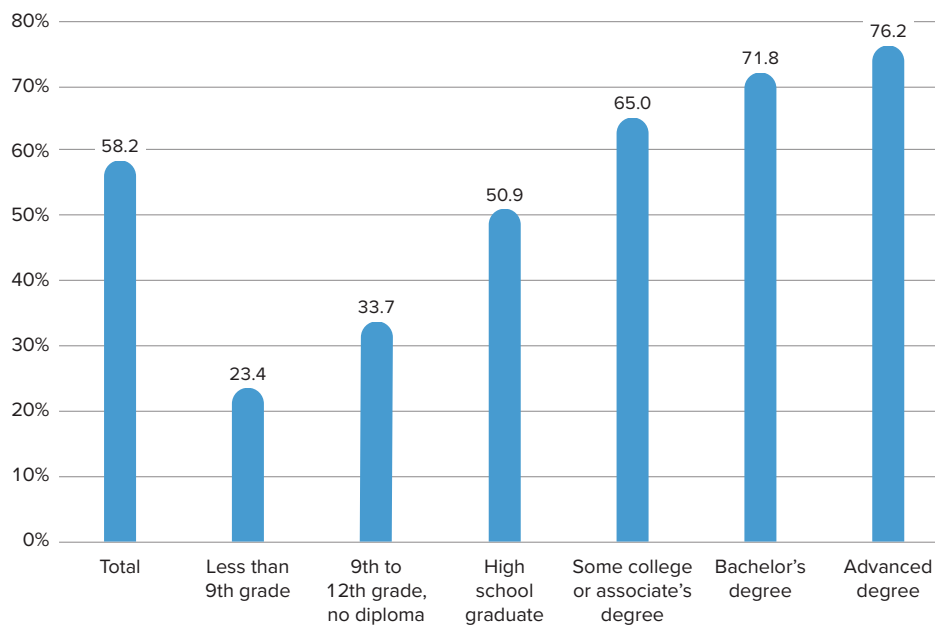


FIGURE 5.5 Percentage of voter turnout by educational attainment (2008 presidential election). Educational attainment, an indicator of social class, can predict one’s level of political participation. Those with high educational attainment are more likely to vote in elections than those with little education. (This work, Voter Turnout by Education 2008, is a derivative of *Voter Turnout by Educational Attainment, 2008 US Presidential Election* by Rcragun/Wikimedia Commons, which is used under CC BY 3.0. *Voter Turnout by Education 2008* is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0 by Judy Schmitt.)



Police officers are the most visible members of the law enforcement branch of the criminal justice system and are charged with maintaining social order by arresting offenders who violate the law. (OTB St. Louis-274 by Shane McCoy/Office of Public Affairs/U.S. Marshals Service is used under CC BY 2.0.)



The criminal justice system includes adjudication, wherein the courts legally process suspects to determine their guilt or innocence and sentencing. (Dred Scott Courtroom by stepnout is used under CC BY 2.0.)

an arrest. Next, the courts carry out **adjudication** or the legal processing of offenders to determine their guilt or innocence and sentencing. The **courts** serve as the venue where disputes are settled and justice is administered. Depending on the offense, either a judge or a jury determines whether the suspect violated the law and what their punitive sentence will be. If found guilty by the court, offenders are then turned over to correctional authorities. Correctional authorities may include prison wardens or social workers, depending on the type of offense (“[Criminal Justice](#),” 2020).

Like all other aspects of criminal justice, the administration of punishment has taken many different forms throughout history. Early on, when civilizations lacked the resources necessary to construct and maintain prisons, exile and execution were the primary forms of punishment. Historically, shame punishments have also been used as forms of censure (“[Criminal Justice](#),” 2020).

The most publicly visible form of punishment in the modern era is the prison. Prisons may serve as detention centers for prisoners after trial. Jails are used for containment of the accused before trial. Early prisons were used

primarily to sequester criminals and little thought was given to living conditions within their walls. In America, the Quaker movement is commonly credited with establishing the idea that prisons should be used to reform criminals. This can also be seen as a critical moment in the debate regarding the purpose of punishment (“[Criminal Justice](#),” 2020).

In the United States, criminal justice policy has been guided by the 1967 President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, which issued a ground-breaking report titled *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society*. This report made more than 200 recommendations as part of a comprehensive approach toward crime prevention. Some of those recommendations found their way into the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968. The commission advocated a “systems” approach to criminal justice, with improved coordination among law enforcement, courts, and correctional agencies. The commission defined the criminal justice system as the means for society to “enforce the standards of conduct necessary to protect individuals and the community” ([President’s Commission, 1967](#), p. 7).

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- While sociologists debate exactly how social classes are divided, there is substantial evidence that socioeconomic status is tied to tangible advantages and outcomes.
- Social class in the United States is a controversial issue, with social scientists disagreeing over models, definitions, and even the basic question of whether or not distinct classes exist.
- Many Americans believe in a simple three-class model that includes the rich or upper class, the middle class, and the poor or working class.
- Social class is correlated to environmental hazards that increase one’s risk of contracting a disease or sustaining an injury; low access to fresh produce, exercise facilities, and preventative

health programs are all environmental hazards that negatively impact health outcomes.

- Health inequality refers to the unequal distribution of environmental hazards and access to health services between demographic groups, including social classes, as well as to the disparate health outcomes experienced by these groups.
- In addition to environmental hazards, lower socioeconomic classes have lower levels of health insurance than the upper class. Much of this disparity can be explained by the tendency for lower status occupations to not provide benefits to employees.
- Mental health describes a person's level of psychological well-being, or the presence/absence of mental disorder. Mental health can include one's ability to enjoy life and demonstrate psychological resilience.
- Mental health is socially constructed and defined; it is determined by both scientific and cultural knowledge, and it is understood differently by various groups, institutions, and professions.
- The evaluation of which mental states can be considered healthy and which require medical intervention also varies by class.
- In the United States, the probability of a first marriage ending is substantially higher for couples with low socioeconomic statuses than for those in the middle or upper class.
- Globally, the birth rate in countries with large impoverished populations is much higher than in wealthier countries.
- In nations with high levels of fertility, upper class individuals tend to have more children than their lower class peers, while in nations with low levels of fertility, upper class families exhibit even lower fertility than average.
- Social class has both a cause and an effect relationship with family composition, and lower social class is often correlated with one-parent households.
- Those in high social classes are likely to have greater educational attainment than those in low social classes.

- Educational inequality is also perpetuated by legacy admission.
- Because members of high social classes tend to be better educated and have higher incomes, they are more able to provide educational advantages to their children as well.
- Educational inequality is one factor that perpetuates the class divide across generations.
- Social class is an indicator of religious affiliation, with upper class members concentrated in formal denominations and lower class members concentrated in informal denominations.
- Social class is not an indicator of religiosity; members of each social class practice their faiths with a range of intensities.
- Income, and therefore social class, is related to an individual's denomination. Religion is also strongly linked to level of education.
- Political office holders tend to be of high socioeconomic status, furthering the impact of class on American politics.
- Wealthy, well-educated Americans are more likely to vote and to donate money to politicians than lower class individuals are.
- Those who vote as members of a social class can be said to be participating in identity politics.
- When a person is suspected of violating a law, they are processed through the criminal justice system.
- The criminal justice system includes law enforcement (such as police or sheriffs), the courts, and corrections authorities (such as prison wardens and social workers).
- Legislation can attempt to refocus and restructure the criminal justice system in the United States, as when the 1967 President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice issued recommendations to improve the efficacy of criminal justice.
- These reforms reflected a change in the purpose of the criminal justice system. Historically, it had been used as a way to deter crime and punish criminals, but it now has the added goal of rehabilitating offenders.

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Gender and Gender Inequality

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Define sex and gender and femininity and masculinity.
2. Critically assess the evidence on biology, culture and socialization, and gender.
3. Discuss agents of gender socialization.

KEY TERMS

androgynous

femininity

gender

gender identity

gender roles

masculinity

non-binary

primary sex characteristics

secondary sex characteristics

sex

sexual orientation

■ Social Issues in the News

September 2009 was Rape Awareness Month at the University of Missouri–Columbia. The coordinator of the Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Center (RSVP), the group sponsoring the month-long series of events, said they chose September because of the high rates of sexual violence committed against new women students during the first few weeks of the semester. As on many campuses around the country since the late 1970s, a Take Back the Night march and rally was the highlight of RSVP’s effort to call attention to violence against women. An RSVP staff member explained that Take Back the Night marches began when women decided, “No, we’re not going to live in fear, we’re not going to stay inside, these are our streets. This is our community; we’re not going to be frightened.” At her own campus, she said, “It’s women getting together and saying, ‘You know what, these are our lives. We own these streets just like anyone else, we walk these streets just like anyone else.’ It’s a very empowering kind of event and evening” (Silverman, 2009). ■

It was the early 1970s. Susan (a pseudonym), a sophomore college student, wanted to become a physician, so she went to talk to her biology professor about the pre-med program at her school. The professor belittled her interest in medicine and refused to discuss the program. Women,

he advised her, should just become wives and mothers and leave the doctoring to men.

At the same college and about the same time, John (also a pseudonym) went to talk to a draft counselor for advice as he considered his options, including military service in Vietnam. John said he had something very embarrassing to say and hesitated a long time before speaking. Finally John explained, as if revealing a deep secret, that he had never liked to fight, not even as a young boy, and wondered aloud if there was something wrong with him. It was not that he was scared to fight, he assured the draft counselor, it was that he thought fighting was wrong, even though his friends had sometimes called him a “sissy” and other words for refusing to fight. John was advised that he might qualify as a conscientious objector and was informed about that and his other alternatives to being drafted. He left the room, and the draft counselor never saw him again.

Much has changed during the almost four decades since these two real-life stories occurred and since Take Back the Night marches began. Women have entered medicine, engineering, and other professions and careers in unprecedented numbers, no doubt dismaying the biology professor who thought them best suited as wives and mothers. Many men have begun to realize that “real men” do not necessarily have to enjoy fighting and other traditionally male behaviors and attitudes. Our society now has an awareness of rape and other violence against women that would astonish students of the 1970s. Still, gender roles

and gender inequality persist and violence against women continues, with important consequences for both women and men and for society as a whole. To begin our discussion of gender and gender inequality, this chapter begins with a critical look at the concepts of sex and gender.

UNDERSTANDING SEX AND GENDER

Although the terms *sex* and *gender* are sometimes used interchangeably and do in fact complement each other, they nonetheless refer to different aspects of what it means to be a woman or man in any society.

Sex refers to the anatomical and other biological differences between females and males that are determined at the moment of conception and develop in the womb and throughout childhood and adolescence. Females, of course, have two X chromosomes, while males have one X chromosome and one Y chromosome. From this basic genetic difference spring other biological differences. The first to appear are the different genitals that boys and girls develop in the womb and that the doctor (or midwife) and parents look for when a baby is born (assuming the baby's sex is not already known from ultrasound or other techniques) so that the momentous announcement, "It's a boy!" or "It's a girl!" can be made. The genitalia are called **primary sex characteristics**, while the other differences that develop during puberty are called **secondary sex characteristics** and stem from hormonal differences between the two sexes. In this difficult period of adolescents' lives, boys generally acquire deeper voices, more body hair, and more muscles from their flowing testosterone. Girls develop breasts and wider hips and begin menstruating as nature prepares them for possible pregnancy and childbirth. For better or worse, these basic biological differences between the sexes affect many people's perceptions of what it means to be female or male, as we shall soon discuss.

Gender as a Social Construction

If sex is a biological concept, then **gender** is a social concept. It refers to the social and cultural differences a society assigns to people based on their (biological) sex. A related concept, **gender roles**, refers to a society's expectations of people's behavior and attitudes based on whether they are females or males. Understood in this way, gender, like race, is a *social construction*. How we think and behave as females and males is not etched in stone by our biology but rather is a result of how society expects us to think and behave based on what sex we are. As we grow up, we learn these expectations as we develop our **gender identity**, or our beliefs about ourselves as females or males.

These expectations are called *femininity* and *masculinity*. **Femininity** refers to the cultural expectations we



Infant girls traditionally wear pink, while infant boys wear blue. This color difference reflects the different cultural expectations we have for babies based on their (biological) sex. (Bed Time! by Matthew H. is used under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.)

have of girls and women, while **masculinity** refers to the expectations we have of boys and men. A familiar nursery rhyme nicely summarizes these two sets of traits:

*What are little boys made of?
Snips and snails,
And puppy dog tails,
That's what little boys are made of.
What are little girls made of?
Sugar and spice,
And everything nice,
That's what little girls are made of.*

As this nursery rhyme suggests, our traditional notions of femininity and masculinity indicate that we think females and males are fundamentally different from each other. In effect, we think of them as two sides of the same coin of being human. What we traditionally mean by femininity is captured in the adjectives, both positive and negative, we traditionally ascribe to women: gentle, sensitive, nurturing, delicate, graceful, cooperative, decorative, dependent, emotional, passive, and weak. Thus when we say that a girl or woman is very feminine, we have some combination of these traits, usually the positive ones, in mind: she is soft, dainty, pretty, even a bit flighty. What we traditionally mean by masculinity is captured in the adjectives, again both positive and negative, our society traditionally ascribes to men: strong, assertive, brave, active, independent, intelligent, competitive, insensitive, unemotional, and aggressive. When we say that a boy or man is very masculine, we have some combination of these traits in mind: he is tough, strong, and assertive.

These traits might sound like stereotypes of females and males in today's society, and to some extent they are, but differences between men and women in attitudes and

behavior do in fact exist (Aulette et al., 2009). For example, women cry more often than men do. Men are more physically violent than women. Women take care of children more than men do. Women smile more often than men. Men curse more often than women. When women talk with each other, they are more likely to talk about their personal lives than men are when they talk with each other (Tannen, 2001). The two sexes even differ when they hold a cigarette (not that anyone should smoke). When a woman holds a cigarette, she usually has the palm of her cigarette-holding hand facing upward. When a man holds a cigarette, he usually has his palm facing downward.

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation refers to a person's preference for sexual relationships with individuals of the other sex (*heterosexuality*), one's own sex (*homosexuality*), both sexes (*bisexuality*), or neither sex (*asexuality*).

It is difficult to know precisely how many people are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or asexual. One problem is conceptual. For example, what does it mean to be gay or lesbian? Does one need to actually have sexual relations with a same-sex partner to be considered gay? What if someone is attracted to same-sex partners but does not actually engage in sex with such persons? What if someone identifies as heterosexual but engages in homosexual sex for money (as in certain forms of prostitution) or for power and influence (as in much prison sex)? These conceptual problems make it difficult to determine the extent of homosexuality.

A second problem is empirical. Even if we can settle on a definition of homosexuality, how do we then determine how many people fit this definition? For better or worse, our best evidence of the number of gays and lesbians in the United States comes from surveys of national samples of Americans in which they are asked various questions about their sexuality. Although these are anonymous surveys, obviously at least some individuals may be reluctant to disclose their sexual activity and thoughts to an interviewer. Still, scholars think the estimates from these surveys are fairly accurate but that they probably underestimate by at least a small amount the number of gays and lesbians.

A widely cited survey carried out by researchers at the University of Chicago found that 2.8% of men and 1.4% of women identified themselves as gay/lesbian or bisexual, with greater percentages reporting having had sexual relations with same-sex partners or being attracted to same-sex persons (see Table 6.1). In the 2008 General Social Survey, 2.2% of men and 3.5% of women identified themselves as gay/lesbian or bisexual. Among individuals having had any sexual partners since turning 18, 2.2%

TABLE 6.1 Prevalence of Homosexuality in the United States

Activity, Attraction, or Identity	Men (%)	Women (%)
Find same-sex sexual relations appealing	4.5	5.6
Attracted to people of same sex	6.2	4.4
Identify as gay or bisexual	2.8	1.4
At least one sex partner of same sex during past year among those sexually active	2.7	1.3
At least one sex partner of same sex since turning 18	4.9	4.1

Data from Laumann et al. (1994).

of men reported having had at least some male partners, while 4.6% of women reported having had at least some female partners. Although precise numbers must remain unknown, it seems fair to say that between about 2% and 5% of Americans are gay/lesbian or bisexual.

If it is difficult to determine the number of people who are gay/lesbian or bisexual, it is even more difficult to determine why some people have this sexual orientation while most do not have it. Scholars disagree on the “causes” of sexual orientation (Engle et al., 2006; Sheldon et al., 2007). Some scholars attribute it to unknown biological factor(s) over which individuals have no control, just as individuals do not decide whether they are left-handed or right-handed. Supporting this view, many gays say they realized they were gay during adolescence, just as straights would say they realized they were straight during their own adolescence. Other scholars say that sexual orientation is at least partly influenced by cultural norms, so that individuals are more likely to identify as gay or straight depending on the cultural views of sexual orientation into which they are socialized as they grow up. At best, perhaps all we can say is that sexual orientation stems from a complex mix of biological and cultural factors that remain to be determined.

The Development of Gender Differences

What accounts for differences in female and male behavior and attitudes? Do the biological differences between the sexes account for other differences? Or do these latter differences stem, as most sociologists think, from cultural expectations and from differences in the ways in which the sexes are socialized? These are critical questions, for they ask whether the differences between boys and girls and women and men stem more from biology or from society. Biological explanations for human behavior implicitly support the status quo. If we think behavioral and other

differences between the sexes are due primarily to their respective biological makeups, we are saying that these differences are inevitable or nearly so and that any attempt to change them goes against biology and will likely fail.

As an example, consider the obvious biological fact that women bear and nurse children and men do not. Couple this with the common view that women are also more gentle and nurturing than men, and we end up with a “biological recipe” for women to be the primary caretakers of children. Many people think this means women are therefore much better suited than men to take care of children once they are born, and that the family might be harmed if mothers work outside the home or if fathers are the primary caretakers. [Figure 6.1](#) shows that more than one-third of the public agrees that “it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family.” To the extent this belief exists, women may not want to work outside the home or, if they choose to do so, they face difficulties from employers, family, and friends. Conversely, men may not even think about wanting to stay at home and may themselves face difficulties from employees, family, and friends if they want to do so. A belief in a strong biological basis for differences between women and men implies, then, that there is little we can or should do to change these differences. It implies that “anatomy is destiny,” and destiny is, of course, by definition inevitable.

This implication makes it essential to understand the extent to which gender differences do, in fact, stem from biological differences between the sexes or, instead, stem

from cultural and social influences. If biology is paramount, then gender differences are perhaps inevitable and the status quo will remain. If culture and social influences matter much more than biology, then gender differences can change and the status quo may give way. With this backdrop in mind, let’s turn to the biological evidence for behavioral and other differences between the sexes and then examine the evidence for their social and cultural roots.

Biology and Gender

Several biological explanations for gender roles exist, and we discuss two of the most important ones here. One explanation is from the related fields of sociobiology and evolutionary psychology ([Workman & Reader, 2009](#)) and argues an evolutionary basis for traditional gender roles.

Scholars advocating this view reason as follows ([Barash, 2007](#); [Thornhill & Palmer, 2000](#)). In prehistoric societies, few social roles existed. A major role centered on relieving hunger by hunting or gathering food. The other major role centered on bearing and nursing children. Because only women could perform this role, they were also the primary caretakers for children for several years after birth. And because women were frequently pregnant, their roles as mothers confined them to the home for most of their adulthood. Meanwhile, men were better suited than women for hunting because they were stronger and quicker than women. In prehistoric societies, then, biology was indeed destiny: for biological reasons, men in effect worked outside the home (hunted), while women stayed at home with their children.

Evolutionary reasons also explain why men are more violent than women. In prehistoric times, men who were more willing to commit violence against and even kill other men would “win out” in the competition for female mates. They thus were more likely than less violent men to produce offspring, who would then carry these males’ genetic violent tendencies. By the same token, men who were prone to rape women were more likely to produce offspring, who would then carry these males’ “rape genes.” This early process guaranteed that rape tendencies would be biologically transmitted and thus provided a biological basis for the amount of rape that occurs today.

If the human race evolved along these lines, socio-biologists and evolutionary psychologists continue, natural selection favored those societies where men were stronger, braver, and more aggressive and where women were more fertile and nurturing. Such traits over the millennia became fairly instinctual, meaning that men’s and women’s biological natures evolved differently. Men became, by nature, more assertive, daring, and violent than women,

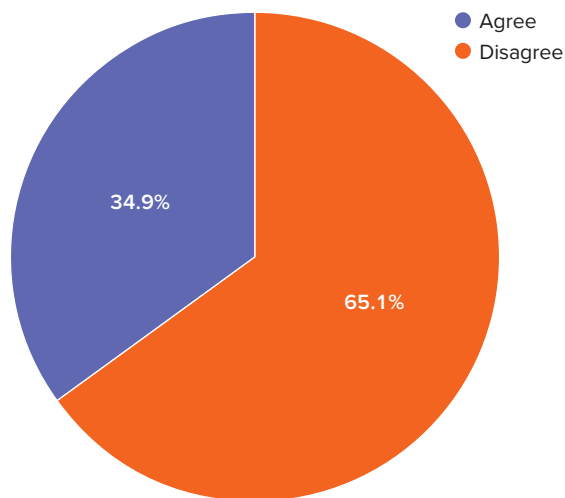


FIGURE 6.1 Belief that women should stay at home. Agreement or disagreement with statement that “it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family.” ([Belief that Women Should Stay at Home](#) by [Judy Schmitt](#) is used under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Data from General Social Survey, 2008.)



According to some sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists, today's gender differences in strength and physical aggression are ultimately rooted in certain evolutionary processes that spanned millennia. (Couple by Vladimir Pustovit is used under CC BY 2.0)

and women are, by nature, more gentle, nurturing, and maternal than men. To the extent this is true, these scholars add, traditional gender roles for women and men make sense from an evolutionary standpoint, and attempts to change them go against the sexes' biological natures. This in turn implies that existing gender inequality must continue because it is rooted in biology. As the title of a book presenting the evolutionary psychology argument summarizes this implication, "biology at work: rethinking sexual equality" (Browne, 2002).

Critics challenge the evolutionary explanation on several grounds (Hurley, 2007; Buller, 2006; Begley, 2009a). First, much greater gender variation in behavior and attitudes existed in prehistoric times than the evolutionary explanation assumes. Second, even if biological differences did influence gender roles in prehistoric times, these differences are largely irrelevant in today's world, in which, for example, physical strength is not necessary for survival. Third, human environments throughout the millennia have simply been too diverse to permit the simple, straightforward biological development that the evolutionary explanation assumes. Fourth, evolutionary arguments implicitly justify existing gender inequality by implying the need to confine women and men to their traditional roles.

Recent anthropological evidence also challenges the evolutionary argument that men's tendency to commit violence, including rape, was biologically transmitted. This evidence instead finds that violent men have trouble finding female mates who would want them and that the female mates they find and the children they produce are often killed by rivals to the men. The recent evidence also finds those rapists' children are often abandoned and then die.

As one anthropologist summarizes the rape evidence, "The likelihood that rape is an evolved adaptation [is] extremely low. It just wouldn't have made sense for men in the [pre-historic epoch] to use rape as a reproductive strategy, so the argument that it's preprogrammed into us doesn't hold up" (Begley, 2009a, p. 54).

A second biological explanation for traditional gender roles centers on hormones and specifically on testosterone, the so-called male hormone. One of the most important differences between boys and girls and men and women in the United States and many other societies is their level of aggression. Simply put, males are much more physically aggressive than females and in the United States commit about 85%–90% of all violent crimes. Why is this so? This gender difference is often attributed to males' higher levels of testosterone (Mazur, 2009).

To see whether testosterone does indeed raise aggression, researchers typically assess whether males with higher testosterone levels are more aggressive than those with lower testosterone levels. Several studies find that this is indeed the case. For example, a widely cited study of Vietnam-era male veterans found that those with higher levels of testosterone had engaged in more violent behavior (Booth & Osgood, 1993). However, this correlation does not necessarily mean that their testosterone increased their violence: as has been found in various animal species, it is also possible that their violence increased their testosterone. Because studies of human males can't for ethical and practical reasons manipulate their testosterone levels, the exact meaning of the results from these testosterone-aggression studies must remain unclear, according to a review sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences (Miczek et al., 1994).

Another line of research on the biological basis for sex differences in aggression involves children, including some as young as ages 1 or 2, in various situations (Card et al., 2008). They might be playing with each other, interacting with adults, or writing down solutions to hypothetical scenarios given to them by a researcher. In most of these studies, boys are more physically aggressive in thought or deed than girls, even at a very young age. Other studies are more experimental in nature. In one type of study, a toddler will be playing with a toy, only to have it removed by an adult. Boys typically tend to look angry and try to grab the toy back, while girls tend to just sit there and whimper. Because these gender differences in aggression are found at very young ages, researchers often say they must have some biological basis. However, critics of this line of research counter that even young children have already been socialized along gender lines (Begley, 2009b; Eliot, 2009), a point to which we return later. To the extent

this is true, gender differences in children's aggression may simply reflect socialization and not biology.

In sum, biological evidence for gender differences certainly exists, but its interpretation remains very controversial. It must be weighed against the evidence, to which we next turn, of cultural variations in the experience of gender and of socialization differences by gender. One thing is clear: to the extent we accept biological explanations for gender, we imply that existing gender differences and gender inequality must continue to exist. This implication prompts many social scientists to be quite critical of the biological viewpoint. As [Linda L. Lindsey \(2011, p. 52\)](#) notes, "Biological arguments are consistently drawn upon to justify gender inequality and the continued oppression of women." In contrast, cultural and social explanations of gender differences and gender inequality promise some hope for change. Let's examine the evidence for these explanations.

Culture and Gender

Some of the most compelling evidence against a strong biological determination of gender roles comes from anthropologists, whose work on preindustrial societies demonstrates some striking gender variation from one culture to another. This variation underscores the impact of culture on how females and males think and behave.

[Margaret Mead \(1935\)](#) was one of the first anthropologists to study cultural differences in gender. In New Guinea she found three tribes—the Arapesh, the Mundugumor, and the Tchambuli—whose gender roles differed dramatically. In the Arapesh both sexes were gentle and nurturing. Both women and men spent much time with their children in a loving way and exhibited what we would normally call maternal behavior. In the Arapesh, then, different gender roles did not exist, and in fact, both sexes conformed to what Americans would normally call the female gender role.

The situation was the reverse among the Mundugumor. Here both men and women were fierce, competitive, and violent. Both sexes seemed to almost dislike children and often physically punished them. In the Mundugumor society, then, different gender roles also did not exist, as both sexes conformed to what we Americans would normally call the male gender role.

In the Tchambuli, Mead finally found a tribe where different gender roles did exist. One sex was the dominant, efficient, assertive one and showed leadership in tribal affairs, while the other sex liked to dress up in frilly clothes, wear makeup, and even giggle a lot. Here, then, Mead found a society with gender roles similar to those found in the United States, but with a surprising twist. In



Margaret Mead made important contributions to the anthropological study of gender. Her work suggested that culture dramatically influences how females and males behave and that gender is rooted much more in culture than in biology. (Dr. Margaret Mead, half-length portrait, facing right, reading book by Edward Lynch/New York World-Telegram/U.S. Library of Congress is in the public domain.)

the Tchambuli, women were the dominant, assertive sex that showed leadership in tribal affairs, while men were the ones wearing frilly clothes and makeup.

Mead's research caused a firestorm in scholarly circles, as it challenged the biological view on gender that was still very popular when she went to New Guinea. In recent years, Mead's findings have been challenged by other anthropologists. Among other things, they argue that she probably painted an overly simplistic picture of gender roles in her three societies ([Scheper-Hughes, 1987](#)). Other anthropologists defend Mead's work and note that much subsequent research has found that gender-linked attitudes and behavior do differ widely from one culture to another ([Morgan, 1989](#)). If so, they say, the impact of culture on what it means to be a female or male cannot be ignored.

Extensive evidence of this impact comes from anthropologist George Murdock, who created the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample of almost 200 preindustrial societies studied by anthropologists. [Murdock \(1937\)](#) found that some tasks in these societies, such as hunting and trapping, are almost always done by men, while other tasks, such as cooking and fetching water, are almost always done by women. These patterns provide evidence for the evolutionary argument presented earlier, as they probably stem from the biological differences between the sexes. Even so there were at least some societies in which women hunted and in which men cooked and fetched water.

More importantly, Murdock found much greater gender variation in several of the other tasks he studied,

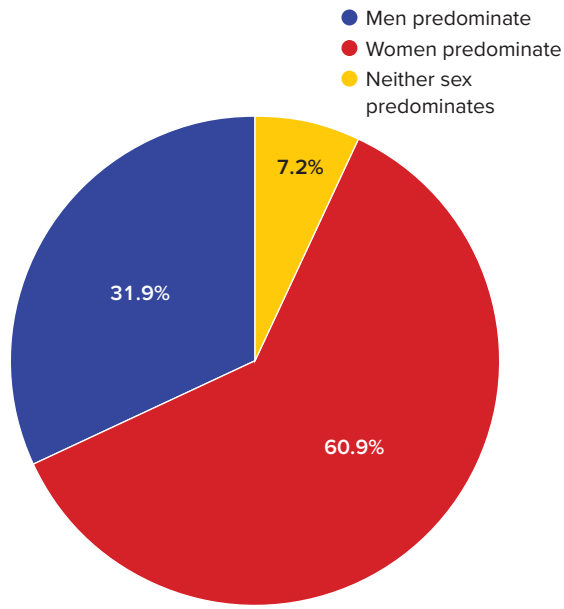


FIGURE 6.2 Gender responsibility for weaving. (*Gender Responsibility for Weaving* by Judy Schmitt is used under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Data from Standard Cross-Cultural Sample.)

including planting crops, milking, and generating fires. Men primarily performed these tasks in some societies, women primarily performed them in other societies, and in still other societies both sexes performed them equally. Figure 6.2 shows the gender responsibility for yet another task, weaving. Women are the primary weavers in about 61% of the societies that do weaving, men are the primary weavers in 32%, and both sexes do the weaving in 7% of the societies. Murdock's findings illustrate how gender roles differ from one culture to another and imply they are not biologically determined.

Anthropologists since Mead and Murdock have continued to investigate cultural differences in gender. Some of their most interesting findings concern gender and sexuality (Morgan, 1989; Brettell & Sargent, 2009). Although all societies distinguish “femaleness” and “maleness,” gender is not always binary; **non-binary** is an adjective that describes a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Although many non-binary people also identify as transgender, not all do (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.).

Non-binary gender categories exist in some societies. The Native Americans known as the Mohave, for example, recognize four genders: a woman, a woman who acts like a man, a man, and a man who acts like a woman. In some societies, a third, intermediary gender category is recognized. Anthropologists call this category the *berdache*, who is usually a man who takes on a woman's role. This intermediary category combines aspects of both femininity

and masculinity of the society in which it is found and is thus considered an **androgynous** gender. Although some people in this category are born as *intersexed* individuals (formerly known as *hermaphrodites*), meaning they have genitalia of both sexes, many are born biologically as one sex or the other but adopt an androgynous identity.

An example of this intermediary gender category may be found in India, where the *hijra* role involves males who wear women's clothing and identify as women (Reddy, 2006). The *hijra* role is an important part of Hindu mythology, in which androgynous figures play key roles both as humans and as gods. Today people identified by themselves and others as *hijras* continue to play an important role in Hindu practices and in Indian cultural life in general. Serena Nanda (1997, pp. 200–201) calls *hijras* “human beings who are neither man nor woman” and says they are thought of as “special, sacred beings” even though they are sometimes ridiculed and abused.

Anthropologists have found another androgynous gender composed of women warriors in 33 Native American groups in North America. Walter L. Williams (1997) calls these women “amazons” and notes that they dress like men and sometimes even marry women. In some tribes girls exhibit such “masculine” characteristics from childhood, while in others they may be recruited into “amazonhood.” In the Kaska Indians, for example, a married couple with too many daughters would select one to “be like a man.” When she was about 5 years of age, her parents would begin to dress her like a boy and have her do male tasks. Eventually she would grow up to become a hunter.

The androgynous genders found by anthropologists remind us that gender is a social construction and not just a biological fact. If culture does affect gender roles, socialization is the process through which culture has this effect. What we experience as girls and boys strongly influences how we develop as women and men in terms of behavior and attitudes. To illustrate this important dimension of gender, let's turn to the evidence on socialization.

Socialization and Gender

Sociologists identify several agents of socialization, including the family, peers, schools, the mass media, and religion. Ample evidence of these agents' impact on gender-role socialization exists. Such socialization helps boys and girls develop their gender identity (Andersen & Hysock, 2009).

The Family

Socialization into gender roles begins in infancy, as almost from the moment of birth parents begin to socialize their children as boys or girls without even knowing it (Begley, 2009b; Eliot, 2009). Many studies document this process



Parents play with their daughters and sons differently. For example, fathers generally roughhouse more with their sons than with their daughters. (Roughhousing by Jagrap is used under CC BY-NC 2.0.)

(Lindsey, 2011). Parents commonly describe their infant daughters as pretty, soft, and delicate and their infant sons as strong, active, and alert, even though neutral observers find no such gender differences among infants when they do not know the infants' sex. From infancy on, parents play with and otherwise interact with their daughters and sons differently. They play more roughly with their sons—for example, by throwing them up in the air or by gently wrestling with them—and more quietly with their daughters. When their infant or toddler daughters cry, they warmly comfort them, but they tend to let their sons cry longer and to comfort them less. They give their girls dolls to play with and their boys “action figures” and toy guns. While these gender differences in socialization are probably smaller now than a generation ago, they certainly continue to exist. Go into a large toy store and you will see pink aisles of dolls and cooking sets and blue aisles of action figures, toy guns, and related items.

Peers

Peer influences also encourage gender socialization. As they reach school age, children begin to play different games based on their gender (see the [Sociology Making a Difference](#) feature). Boys tend to play sports and other

competitive team games governed by inflexible rules and relatively large numbers of roles, while girls tend to play smaller, cooperative games such as hopscotch and jumping rope with fewer and more flexible rules. Although girls are much more involved in sports now than a generation ago, these gender differences in their play as youngsters persist and continue to reinforce gender roles. For example, they encourage competitiveness in boys and cooperation and trust among girls. Boys who are not competitive risk being called “sissy” or other words by their peers. The patterns we see in adult males and females thus have their roots in their play as young children (King et al., 1991).

■ Sociology Making a Difference •

Gender Differences in Children's Play and Games

In considering the debate, discussed in the text, between biology and sociology over the origins of gender roles, some widely cited studies by sociologists over gender differences in children's play and games provide important evidence for the importance of socialization.

Janet Lever (1978) studied fifth-grade children in three different communities in Connecticut. She watched them play and otherwise interact in school and also had the children keep diaries of their play and games outside school. One of her central aims was to determine how complex the two sexes' play and games were in terms of such factors as number of rules, specialization of roles, and size of the group playing. In all of these respects, Lever found that boys' play and games were typically more complex than girls' play and games. She attributed these differences to socialization by parents, teachers, and other adults and argued that the complexity of boys' play and games helped them to be better able than girls to learn important social skills such as dealing with rules and coordinating actions to achieve goals.

Meanwhile, Barrie Thorne (1993) spent many months in two different working-class communities in California and Michigan observing fourth and fifth graders sit in class and lunchrooms and play on the school playgrounds. Most children were White, but several were African American or Latino. As you might expect, the girls and boys she observed usually played separately from each other, and the one-sex groups in which they played were very important for the development of their gender identity, with boys tending to play team sports and other competitive games and girls tending to play cooperative games such as jump rope. These differences led Thorne to conclude that gender-role socialization stems not only from practices by adults but also from the children's own activities without adult involvement. When boys and girls did interact, it was often “girls against the boys” or vice versa in classroom spelling contests and in games such as

tag. Thorne concluded that these “us against them” contests helped the children learn that boys and girls are two different and antagonistic sexes and that gender itself is antagonistic, even if there were also moments when both sexes interacted on the playground in more relaxed, noncompetitive situations. Boys also tended to disrupt girls’ games more than the reverse and in this manner both exerted and learned dominance over females. In all of these ways, children were not just the passive recipients of gender-role socialization from adults (their teachers), but they also played an active role in ensuring that such socialization occurred.

The studies by Lever and Thorne were among the first to emphasize the importance of children’s play and peer relationships for gender socialization. They also called attention to the importance of the traits and values learned through such socialization for outcomes later in life. The rise in team sports opportunities for girls in the years since Lever and Thorne did their research is a welcome development that addresses the concerns expressed in their studies, but young children continue to play in the ways that Lever and Thorne found. To the extent children’s play has the consequences just listed, and to the extent these consequences impede full gender inequality, these sociological studies suggest the need for teachers, parents, and other adults to help organize children’s play that is more egalitarian along the lines discussed by Lever, Thorne, and other scholars. In this way, their sociological work has helped to make a difference and promises to continue to do so. ■

Schools

School is yet another agent of gender socialization (Klein, 2007). First of all, school playgrounds provide a location for the gender-linked play activities just described to occur. Second, and perhaps more important, teachers at all levels treat their female and male students differently in subtle ways of which they are probably not aware. They tend to call on boys more often to answer questions in class and to praise them more when they give the right answer. They also give boys more feedback about their assignments and other school work (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). At all grade levels, many textbooks and other books still portray people in gender-stereotyped ways. It is true that the newer books do less of this than older ones, but the newer books still contain some stereotypes, and the older books are still used in many schools, especially those that cannot afford to buy newer volumes.

Mass Media

Gender socialization also occurs through the mass media (Dow & Wood, 2006). On children’s television shows, the

major characters are male. On Nickelodeon, for example, the very popular *SpongeBob SquarePants* is a male, as are his pet snail, Gary; his best friend, Patrick Star; their neighbor, Squidward Tentacles; and SpongeBob’s employer, Eugene Crabs. Of the major characters in Bikini Bottom, only Sandy Cheeks is a female. For all its virtues, *Sesame Street* features Bert, Ernie, Cookie Monster, and other male characters. Most of the Muppets are males, and the main female character, Miss Piggy, depicted as vain and jealous, is hardly an admirable female role model. As for adults’ prime-time television, more men than women continue to fill more major roles in weekly shows, despite notable women’s roles in shows such as *The Good Wife* and *Grey’s Anatomy*. Women are also often portrayed as unintelligent or frivolous individuals who are there more for their looks than for anything else. Television commercials reinforce this image (Yoder et al., 2008). Cosmetics ads abound, suggesting not only that a major task for women is to look good but also that their sense of self-worth stems from looking good. Other commercials show women becoming ecstatic over achieving a clean floor or sparkling laundry. Judging from the world of television commercials, then, women’s chief goals in life are to look good and to have a clean house. At the same time, men’s chief goals, judging from many commercials, are to drink beer and drive cars.

Women’s and men’s magazines reinforce these gender images (Milillo, 2008). Most of the magazines intended for teenaged girls and adult women are filled with pictures of thin, beautiful models, advice on dieting, cosmetics ads, and articles on how to win and please your man. Conversely, the magazines intended for teenaged boys and men are filled with ads and articles on cars and sports, advice on how to succeed in careers and other endeavors, and pictures of thin, beautiful (and sometimes nude)



Women’s magazines reinforce the view that women need to be slender and wear many cosmetics in order to be considered beautiful. (Glamour/Fashion Retouching by Tucia by Photo Editing Services Tucia.com is used under CC BY 2.0.)

women. These magazine images again suggest that women's chief goals are to look good and to please men and that men's chief goals are to succeed, win over women, and live life in the fast lane.

Religion

Another agent of socialization, religion, also contributes to traditional gender stereotypes. Many traditional interpretations of the Bible yield the message that women are subservient to men (Tanenbaum, 2009). This message begins in Genesis, where the first human is Adam, and Eve was made from one of his ribs. The major figures in the rest of the Bible are men, and women are for the most part depicted as wives, mothers, temptresses, and prostitutes; they are praised for their roles as wives and mothers and condemned for their other roles. More generally, women are constantly depicted as the property of men. The Ten Commandments includes a neighbor's wife with his house, ox, and other objects as things not to be coveted (Exodus 20:17), and many biblical passages say explicitly that women belong to men, such as this one from the New Testament:

Wives be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church. As the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. (Ephesians 5:22–24)

Several passages in the Old Testament justify the rape and murder of women and girls. The Koran, the sacred book of Islam, also contains passages asserting the subordinate role of women (Mayer, 2009).

This discussion suggests that religious people should believe in traditional gender views more than less religious people, and research confirms this relationship (Morgan, 1988). To illustrate this, Figure 6.3 shows the relationship in the General Social Survey between frequency of prayer and the view (seen first in Figure 6.1) that “it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family.”

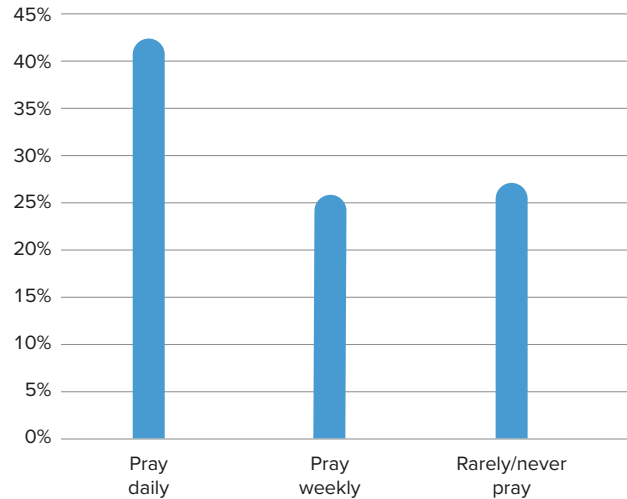


FIGURE 6.3 Frequency of prayer and acceptance of traditional gender roles in the family. Percentage agreeing that “it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family.” (Prayer Frequency and Gender Roles by Judy Schmitt is used under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Data from General Social Survey, 2008.)

People who pray more often are more likely to accept this traditional view of gender roles.

A Final Word on the Sources of Gender

Scholars in many fields continue to debate the relative importance of biology and of culture and socialization for how we behave and think as girls and boys and as women and men. The biological differences between females and males lead many scholars and no doubt much of the public to assume that masculinity and femininity are to a large degree biologically determined or at least influenced. In contrast, anthropologists, sociologists, and other social scientists tend to view gender as a social construction. Even if biology does matter for gender, they say, the significance of culture and socialization should not be underestimated. To the extent that gender is indeed shaped by society and culture, it is possible to change gender and to help bring about a society where both men and women have more opportunity to achieve their full potential.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Sex is a biological concept, while gender is a social concept and refers to the social and cultural differences a society assigns to people based on their sex.
- Several biological explanations for gender roles exist, but sociologists think culture and socialization are more important sources of gender roles than biology.
- Families, schools, peers, the mass media, and religion are agents of socialization for the development of gender identity and gender roles.

EXERCISES

1. Write a short essay about one or two events you recall from your childhood that reflected or reinforced your gender socialization.
2. Do you think gender roles are due more to biology or to culture and socialization? Explain your answer.

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Socialization and Human Sexuality

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Examine the various ways in which a person is sexually socialized, specifically through religion, law, and the media.
2. Analyze the impact of Kinsey's study of sexuality related to how it changed the public's perception of sexuality and how people are sexually socialized.
3. Summarize the impact of the *Kinsey Report* and the sexual revolution of the 1960s on American sexuality.
4. Explain the development of sexual orientation (heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or asexual) in terms of both static and fluid sexuality.
5. Describe the phenomenon of homophobia (both institutional and informal) and the implications it has for LGBTQ individuals in modern-day America.
6. Analyze the efforts of the LGBT rights movement to achieve equal rights and opportunities for homosexual, bisexual, and transgendered individuals.
7. Discuss the various ways people can express sexual desire, in both emotional and physical terms.

KEY TERMS

asexuality

context

Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)

flirtation

heteronormativity

heterosexual/homosexual binary

Holocaust

homophobia

informal discrimination

institutional discrimination

Kinsey Report

oral contraception

pornography

same-sex civil unions

sexology

sexual revolution

sodomy laws

socialization

One learns from society how to express one's sexuality. As such, sexual expression is part of socialization, the lifelong process of inheriting and disseminating norms, customs, and ideologies and providing an individual with the skills and habits necessary for participating within one's own society. Socialization necessarily implies the inculcation of norms, or behaviors that society marks as valued as opposed to those marked as deviant ("[Socialization](#)," 2020).

In regards to sexuality, socialization in the U.S. and Western countries most notably adheres to **heteronormativity**, or the marking of heterosexual unions as normal and homosexual unions as socially abnormal and deviant. While homosexual unions are the types of unions most commonly marked in opposition to normative heterosexual unions, heteronormativity marks any type of non-heterosexual sexual activity as deviant, as heterosexual sexual acts are considered the norm ("[Heteronormativity](#)," 2020).

There is extreme variation in sexual expression across historical periods and cultures. This indicates that there are no universal sexual norms. Rather, an individual is

taught sexual norms of their particular cultural and historical moment through socialization ("[Human Sexuality](#)," 2020). At the current moment in Western societies, sexuality is evaluated along a continuum of heterosexuality and homosexuality, with heterosexuality as the privileged mode of sexual expression. Obviously, this is a basic schematic; it does not capture all of the existing ways in which people behave sexually, but it is the basic rubric by which sexual behaviors are evaluated.

In contrast, the Ancient Greeks categorized sexuality not in terms of homosexuality and heterosexuality, but in terms of active and passive sexual subjects. What was salient for the Ancient Greeks was whether one took an active or passive sexual position, whether one was the penetrator or was penetrated. In this sense, biological gender was obviously relevant, but not in the same way as evaluating homosexual or heterosexual orientation. Men could be either active or passive, but women could only be passive ("[Homosexuality in Ancient Greece](#)," 2020). It is misleading to say that homosexuality was tolerated in Ancient Greece; rather, the Ancient Greeks conceived of



A heterosexual couple. Heterosexuality is a social norm.
(Bride and Groom by Jenni is used under CC BY-SA 2.0.)

sexuality in completely different ways than the current Western norm.

So how is it that one becomes socialized into certain sexual behaviors and proclivities? The rest of this section seeks to explore how socializing agents impress sexual norms into their members by looking at three primary agents of socialization: religion, the law, and the media.

Given that most religions seek to instruct their followers on the proper and holy ways in which to live life, it follows that most religions seek to offer guidance on the proper ways to sexually comport oneself. For example, many evangelical Christians value abstinence and believe that men and women should wait until marriage to engage in sexual activity (“[Human Sexuality](#),” 2020). The Catholic Church asserts that homosexuality is unholy. Leaders of the Jewish faith promote sexual activity between married couples to reinforce the marital bond and produce children. Like most of the other denominations of monotheistic religions, Islam encourages sexual activity so long as it is practiced by married partners (“[Human Sexuality](#),” 2020). This is not to say, of course, that all adherents to a particular faith stringently follow the faith’s guidelines, but rather that individuals growing up within a particular religion are instructed on how to behave sexually.

The legal system is another mechanism through which individuals are instructed on proper sexual conduct. The

laws within a particular jurisdiction simultaneously reflect and create social norms regarding sexuality. For example, based on American law, Americans are socialized to believe that prostitution and rape are improper forms of sexual behavior. The interactions of homosexual sexual acts and their (il)legality provides an opportunity to see how the law both mirrors and molds American understandings of sexual norms. **Sodomy laws**, or laws prohibiting particular sexual acts between two consenting partners such as anal sex between two men, were on the books in most American states for decades. While sodomy laws in the United States often targeted sexual acts between persons of the same sex, many statutes employed definitions broad enough to outlaw certain sexual acts between persons of different sexes as well, sometimes even acts between married persons (“[Sodomy Law](#),” 2020; “[Lawrence v. Texas](#),” 2020).

The media is one final example of a cultural program through which individuals encounter normative discourses of sexuality. Individuals are socialized to replicate the sexual behaviors that they see on television, in movies, and in books. These representations are typically heteronormative. **Pornography**—the explicit depiction of sexual subject matter or a display of material of an erotic nature—presents another way in which individuals are socialized towards particular sexual practices through the media. Over 70% of men ages 18–34 who use the Internet view at least one pornographic website a month (“[Pornography](#),” 2016). Follow-up studies show that many of these individuals—in addition to female pornography viewers—attempt to incorporate the actions they witness in pornography into their own sex lives.

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR: KINSEY’S STUDY

Background

Dr. Alfred Kinsey was an American biologist who is considered to be the founder of **sexology**, or the scientific study of human sexuality, including human sexual interests, behavior, and function (“[Sexology](#),” 2020). Kinsey trained as a biologist and entomologist at Harvard and obtained a teaching post at Indiana University. There, he became interested in human sexuality. In 1935, Kinsey delivered a lecture to a faculty discussion group where he attacked the “widespread ignorance of sexual structure and physiology” and advanced the notion that delayed sexual experience, or waiting to engage in sexual activity until marriage, was psychologically harmful. This lecture sparked intensive research that resulted in the *Kinsey Report*. The report refers to two different book publications based on his research of human sexuality: *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953). The books

were widely read and Kinsey became a media star (“Alfred Kinsey,” 2020).

The *Kinsey Report* was the most extensive analysis of human sexuality conducted to its day. Data was gathered primarily by means of subjective interviews, conducted according to a structured questionnaire memorized by the experimenters. Significantly, the Kinsey research team went out and conducted the interviews themselves, rather than relying upon pre-collected data. What resulted was the largest collection of statistical information about adult sexuality in the United States (“Kinsey Reports,” 2020).

The Kinsey Scale

A large section of the *Kinsey Report* was devoted to the idea of sexual orientation. The *Kinsey Report* is frequently invoked to support the common estimate of one in ten Americans being a homosexual. However, Kinsey disapproved of using terms like homosexual or heterosexual, as he firmly believed that sexuality is prone to change over time and that sexual behavior must be understood both as physical contact as well as purely psychological phenomena, such as desire, attraction, and fantasy. Instead of using the homosexual/heterosexual categorization, Kinsey developed the Kinsey Scale system. This system attempts to describe a person’s sexual history or episodes of sexual activity at a given point in time, rather than assigning an individual an overarching and permanent sexual orientation (“Kinsey Reports,” 2020).

The scale ranked sexual behavior from zero to six, with zero being completely heterosexual and six being completely homosexual. As one can see, Kinsey rejected the idea of a permanent status of sexual orientation and instead chose to rely on a rating relating to a particular



The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction. The photo shows Morrison Hall at Indiana University, home of the Kinsey Institute. (Morrison Hall by McAnt/ Wikimedia Commons is used under CC BY-SA 3.0.)

moment in one’s life, indicating that sexuality changes over time. Nevertheless, Kinsey’s Scale is effectively a segmented version of the **heterosexual/homosexual binary**, not allowing for other interpretations of sexuality (“Sexual Orientation,” 2020). Kinsey’s associates actually added an additional category, X, to represent asexuals, or people who experience no sexual desire (“Kinsey Reports,” 2020). In this way, Kinsey’s report is of its particular cultural and historical moment, in that it conceives of American sexuality as only occurring along this binary. According to Kinsey, 11.6% of White males aged 20 to 35 were given a rating of three for this period in their lives, meaning that they were equally heterosexual and homosexual. Kinsey further found that 7% of single females aged 20 to 35 and 4% of previously married females were given a rating of three for this period of their lives (“Kinsey Reports,” 2020). The report also states that nearly 46% of the male interview subjects had “reacted” sexually to persons of both sexes in the course of their adult lives, and 37% had at least one homosexual experience.

Sexuality Within Marriage

The Kinsey study also gave statistics on sexuality within marriage that had never before been reported. According to Kinsey, the average frequency of marital sex reported by women in their late teens was 2.8 times per week, 2.2 times per week for women by the age of 30, and once per week by women by the age of 50. Kinsey estimated that approximately half of all married males had some extramarital experience at some point in their married lives. Among Kinsey’s sample, 26% of females had extramarital sex by their forties. Kinsey found that between 10 and 16% of married females aged 26 to 50 were engaged in extramarital sex (“Kinsey Reports,” 2020).

Critical Response

Kinsey’s report was wildly successful. The two books together sold over 750,000 copies and were translated into thirteen languages. They may be considered some of the most successful and influential scientific literature of the twentieth century. The reports are associated with a significant change in public perceptions of sexuality. A mere decade after the reports were published, the first oral contraceptive was introduced and the sexual revolution began. The sexual revolution was a social movement from the 1960s to the 1980s that increased acceptance of sex outside of marriage (“Sexual Revolution,” 2020).

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR SINCE KINSEY

The publication of the *Kinsey Report*, the findings of norms in American sexuality by Dr. Alfred Kinsey, in the early

1950s contributed to the sparking of the **sexual revolution**, or the loosening of sexual mores demanding sex between heterosexual married partners that occurred in the 1960s. While other sexualities were still stigmatized in most post-Kinsey environments, the sexual revolution was marked by popular acceptance of premarital sex. Studies have shown that between 1965 and 1975, the number of women who had had sexual intercourse prior to marriage showed a marked increase. The social and political climate of the 1960s was a unique one in which traditional values were often challenged loudly by a very vocal minority (“Sexual Revolution,” 2020; “Sexual Revolution in 1960s America,” 2019).

Kinsey’s 1950s study of sexuality contributed to the sexual revolution of the 1960s in two ways. First, prior to the *Kinsey Report*, no one had interviewed and published such an exhaustive and comprehensive analysis of Americans’ sexual desires and practices. Kinsey’s report reached the conclusion that few Americans are completely heterosexual in desire or practice as indicated by the Kinsey Scale, or a numeric scaling of individuals along a continuum from complete heterosexuality to complete homosexuality. Though the *Kinsey Report* was published in the popular press, it was a scientific study conducted by a biologist at an academic institution. Popular readers of the *Kinsey Report* imbued the findings with a sense of scientific authority and professed faith in their accuracy. While other sexual orientations and acts were still marked as non-normative, society began to accept that other sexualities existed. The *Kinsey Report* was one step towards non-heterosexual orientations and behaviors becoming accepted by society as normal. Second, one cannot underestimate the significance of the mere publication of the *Kinsey Report*, independent of its findings. Prior to its publication, sexuality was considered uncouth to include in conversation. Kinsey’s publication initiated a national environment more tolerant to conversations about sexuality, which in and of itself loosened the grip of normalized, marital heterosexual relations (“Kinsey Reports,” 2020).

Another scientific product had a profound impact on the development of the sexual revolution: the development of **oral contraception**. “The pill” provided many women a more affordable way to avoid pregnancy. Before the pill, there was a lack of affordable and safe options for contraception, rendering unwanted pregnancy a serious risk of premarital sexual activity. In 1960, the Food and Drug Administration licensed the drug, enabling its legal sale. However, many states still outlawed the use of contraceptives in order to reflect and enforce an ethic in which sexual activity was only acceptable for reproduction. The



“The pill.” The landmark Supreme Court case *Griswold v. Connecticut* affirmed women’s right to use birth control. (Photo a Day Project: February 2006: Birth Control by Jenny Lee Silver is used under CC BY-NC 2.0.)

pill became an even more favored and socially acceptable means of birth control in 1965 when the Supreme Court decided the case of *Griswold v. Connecticut*. In its opinion, the Supreme Court held that the government could not dictate the use of contraception by married couples because such action would be a violation of the right to marital privacy implied in the Bill of Rights. The ruling furthered access to birth control and contributed to a post-Kinsey sexual environment in which society increasingly accepted premarital sex (“Sexual Revolution in 1960s America,” 2019).

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Sexual orientation describes an enduring pattern of attraction—emotional, romantic, sexual, or some combination of these—to the opposite sex, the same sex, both, or neither (“Sexual Orientation,” 2020). The varying forms of these attractions are generally divided into the following categories:

- heterosexuality, or attraction to members of the opposite biological sex
- homosexuality, or attraction to members of the same biological sex
- bisexuality, or attraction to members of both biological sexes
- **asexuality**, or attraction to neither biological sex

Some individuals have tried to avoid these categories of sexual orientation by not describing themselves as hetero-, homo-, bi-, or asexual and preferring the umbrella term “queer.” Part of the opposition to the gender binary is that it creates heteronormative assumptions that mark heterosexuality as normal and homosexuality deviant merely because it is the opposite of heterosexuality.

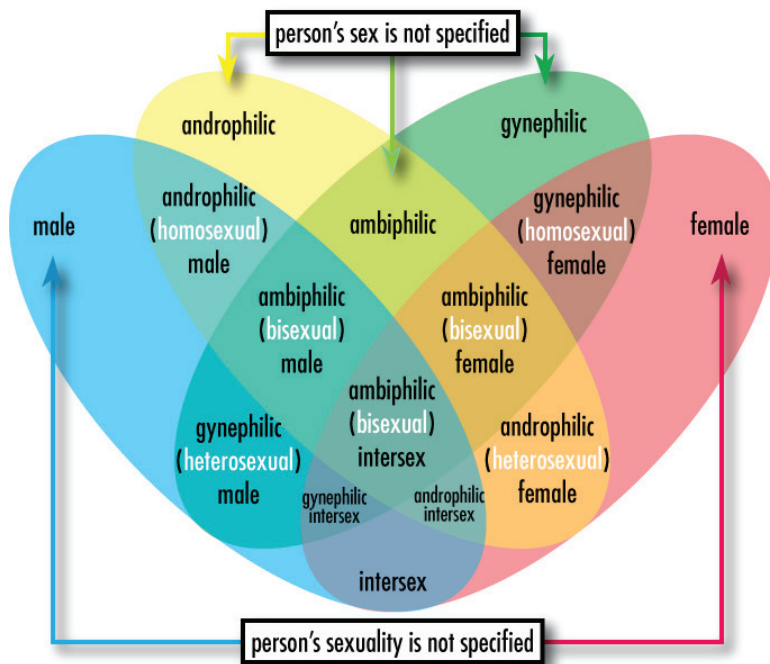


FIGURE 7.1 Venn diagram depicting the relationships between assigned sex and sexual orientation. Androphilia and gynephilia are preferred terms for some populations, because homosexual and heterosexual assign a sex to the person being described.

(Sex-Sexuality Venn by Andrea James/Wikimedia Commons is used under CC BY-SA 3.0.)

Significantly, sexual orientation does not only refer to one's sexual practices, but also includes a psychological component, like the direction of an individual's erotic desire. Sexual identity and sexual behavior are closely related to sexual orientation, but they are distinguishable. Sexual identity refers to an individual's conception of their own sexuality, while sexual behavior limits one's understanding of sexuality to behaviors performed (Figure 7.1). People may or may not express their sexual orientation in their behaviors ("Sexual Orientation," 2020).

Development of Sexual Orientation

The primary tension in conversations about sexual orientation addresses whether sexual orientation is static or fluid, whether one is born with an immutable sexual orientation, or whether one develops sexual orientation. Each interpretation of sexuality manages our understanding of what sexual orientation means in different ways, particularly when combined with political debates about homosexuality. Organizations that subscribe to the static interpretation of sexual orientation fall on both sides of the political divide. Some organizations are socially and politically conservative, advancing the view that sexuality, left untreated, is static. These organizations tend to pathologize non-heterosexual orientations, or conceive of them as an illness that must be corrected through medical or therapeutic means. Some of these institutions offer sexual reorientation therapies in which individuals who are attracted to members of the opposite sex but do not want to have those attractions can try to become solely attracted to members of the opposite biological sex. Many of these programs are

religiously motivated; 79% of men who said that they had changed their sexual orientation said that they had done so for religious reasons, while 93% indicated that religion was "extremely" or "very" important to them ("Sexual Orientation Change Efforts," 2020).

Sexual Reorientation

A significant amount of professional and academic doubt exists about the efficacy of these reorientation programs. No major mental health professional organization has sanctioned efforts to change sexual orientation and virtually all of them have adopted policy statements cautioning the profession. These include the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Counseling Association, the National Association of Social Workers in the USA, and the Royal College of Psychiatrists. According to the American Psychological Association and the Royal College of Psychiatrists' Gay and Lesbian Mental Health Special Interest Group, there is no sound scientific evidence that sexual orientation can be changed ("Sexual Orientation Change Efforts," 2020).

Though they obviously disagree with the conceit that homosexuality needs to be treated, many major gay rights advocacy groups mirror the underlying assumption that homosexuality is a static sexual orientation. The idea that sexual orientation is not a choice, but that rather one is born with an assigned orientation, is pervasive in popular conceptions of sexual orientation. This idea runs up against studies that demonstrate how widely sexual orientation varies in light of cultural and historical circumstances, indicating that one's environment and cultural context play significant roles in determining one's sexual orientation ("Sexual Orientation," 2020).

HOMOPHOBIA

Homophobia is a range of negative attitudes and feelings towards homosexuality or people perceived as homosexual. Homophobia is observable in critical and hostile behavior like discrimination and violence. Much like



A homophobic protest in the United States. Frequently, homophobia is prompted by religious beliefs. (04.WBC. MarriageEqualityRally,SupremeCourt.WDC.26March2013 by Elvert Barnes is used under CC BY-SA 2.0.)

racism or sexism, homophobia involves the targeting of a specific population of individuals with certain traits. Homophobia, or the fear of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals, is often the impetus for discrimination, which can be expressed through either institutional or informal means (“Homophobia,” 2020).

Institutional discrimination involves the state apparatus. If homophobic discrimination is institutional, it means either that non-heterosexual sex acts are criminalized or that LGBTQ individuals are denied the same legal rights as heterosexuals (“Discrimination,” 2020; “Employment Non-Discrimination Act,” 2020; “Homophobia,” 2020).

Informal discrimination is not necessarily sanctioned by the state, but involves social pressures against LGBTQ individuals, behaviors, and identities.

In the United States, the social disapproval of homosexuality is not evenly distributed throughout society. That being said, it is more or less pronounced according to age, ethnicity, geographic location, race, sex, social class, education, political identification, and religious status (“Societal Attitudes toward Homosexuality,” 2020). Republicans are far more likely than Democrats to have negative attitudes about people who are LGBTQ. Likewise, people who consider themselves to be religious are more likely than secular individuals to hold negative views about LGBTQ people.

Historical Institutional Homophobia: Holocaust

On many occasions in Western nations in the twentieth century, LGBTQ individuals have been stigmatized because of homophobia. After the rise of Adolf Hitler, homosexuals were one of the many groups targeted by the Nazi Party and became victims of the **Holocaust**. Beginning in 1933, gay organizations were banned, scholarly books about homosexuality were burned, and homosexuals within the Nazi

Party itself were murdered. Between 1933 and 1945, an estimated 100,000 men were arrested as homosexuals, of whom some 50,000 were officially sentenced to imprisonment. Most of these German men served time in regular prisons, but an estimated 5,000 to 15,000 were forced to serve their time in concentration camps. Like Jews and the disabled, Hitler labeled homosexuals as defective and systematically persecuted them (“Persecution of Homosexuals in Nazi Germany,” 2020).

Current Institutional Persecution of Homosexuals

Today, homosexuality is still punishable by death in some countries around the world. Uganda, for example, criminalizes non-heterosexual sex acts and most Ugandans consider non-heterosexuality to be taboo. In October, 2009, a member of the Ugandan Parliament introduced the Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Bill to broaden the criminalization of same-sex relationships and apply the death penalty to repeat offenders (“LGBT Rights in Uganda,” 2020). Under the statutes of the bill, individuals convicted of a single act of non-heterosexual sex would receive life imprisonment. Additionally, individuals or companies promoting LGBTQ rights would be nationally penalized. The bill also created a public policing policy under which Ugandan citizens would be required to report any homosexual activity within 24 hours or face a maximum penalty of three years in prison. Additionally, if Ugandan citizens were found to be engaging in same-sex sexual or romantic activities outside the country, Uganda would request extradition. The bill was signed into law in February 2014 but annulled just five months later (“Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2014,” 2020).

Homophobia and the United States

Although non-heterosexual sex acts are legal in the United States, LGBTQ people still face institutional discrimination because they are not afforded the same rights as heterosexual couples. Most evidently, same-sex couples are not allowed to wed in most states. Gay marriage has become a sensitive political issue over the past decade, partially due to the fact that the federal government and state governments have different laws about gay marriage. Until 2015, the federal government did not recognize gay marriage, but individual states could choose to recognize it (Figure 7.2). In 1996, the federal government passed the Defense of Marriage Act. According to this act, the federal government could not recognize gay marriages, and a state that did not recognize gay marriage did not have to accept the marriage license given to a same-sex couple in a different state that did recognize same-sex marriages (“Defense of Marriage Act,” 2012). Supreme Court decisions in 2013

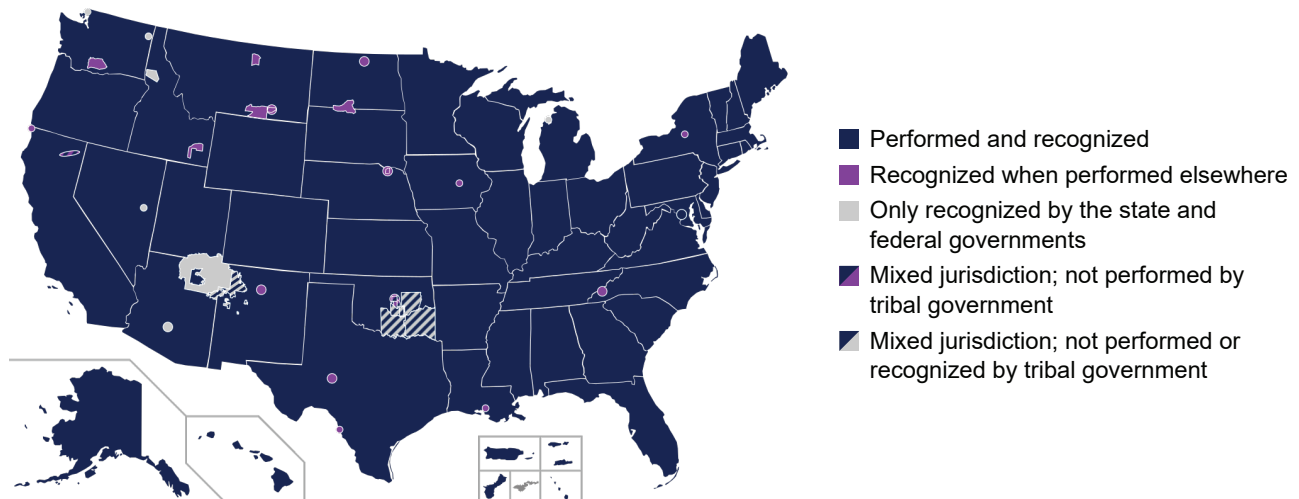


FIGURE 7.2 Same-sex marriage in the United States (2019). Laws regarding same-sex marriage varied by state in the U.S. The federal government could not recognize gay marriage, and individual states could choose whether or not they would recognize the practice. (This work, *Same-Sex Marriage in the US 2019*, is a derivative of *Same-Sex Marriage in the United States* by Lokal_Profil with data from Stephen Macmanus/Wikimedia Commons, which is used under [CC BY-SA 2.5](#). *Same-Sex Marriage in the US 2019* is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#) by Judy Schmitt.)

and 2015 ruled the act's provisions unconstitutional and unenforceable (“[Defense of Marriage Act](#),” 2020; “[Same-Sex Marriage in the United States](#),” 2020).

Informal Homophobia

Prejudices do not have to be institutionalized to be harmful. Many instances of homophobia and discrimination occur by informal means. Homophobia can occur when heterosexual individuals feel anxiety about being perceived as gay by others. This phenomenon is most commonly experienced by adolescent boys. The taunting of boys seen as eccentric, many of whom are usually not gay, is said to be endemic in rural and suburban American schools. At times, this abuse can lead taunted individuals to take dangerous risks in efforts to prove a normative masculinity. Adolescents in the United States often use phrases like “that’s so gay” in a pejorative sense.

THE MOVEMENT FOR GAY AND LESBIAN CIVIL RIGHTS

The LGBT Rights Movement refers to the attempts of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender advocates to improve the legal and social status of LGBT people. Historically, LGBT people have faced prejudice and discrimination (“[LGBT Rights in the United States](#),” 2020). Since the mid-1900s, individuals and organizations have worked to overcome prejudice against LGBT people.

The first organizations in the U.S. that worked to improve the standing of LGBT people were known as homophile organizations. Homophile organizations were clubs of gay men and lesbian women who sought equality for gays and lesbians. These clubs served as social spaces in which gay

men and lesbian women could meet other homosexuals with whom they could form romantic and sexual relationships. Moreover, they were early sites of political action on behalf of gays and lesbians. Homophile organizations such as the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis lobbied politicians and business owners to create gay-friendly establishments. The efforts of these types of clubs led to a growth in the number of gay-friendly bars and social clubs, making it easier for homosexual individuals to find other homosexuals to associate with. Homophile organizations, however, did not lead to any large-scale demonstrations or protests, and did not result in widespread legal or social changes for LGBT people.

Prior to the 1970s, most states in the United States had laws against sodomy, generally defined as any sexual contact other than heterosexual intercourse (“[Sodomy Laws in the United States](#),” 2020). Thus, homosexuality was essentially illegal. The surge in the number of gay-friendly bars in the 1950s led to police crackdowns against establishments that were frequented by gays and lesbians in the 1950s and 1960s. One such crackdown was the raid on the Stonewall Inn, a bar in Greenwich Village, New York City that was frequented by gay men, drag queens, and male cross-dressers. When police raided the bar in June 1969, the customers resisted arrest. Neighborhood residents joined in the resistance, resulting in several nights of rioting. The Stonewall Riots are often cited as the first major protest by LGBT people against the criminalization of homosexuality. The riots gained much media attention and served as visible evidence that there was a large population of homosexual people that could be organized into a politically active group (“[Stonewall Riots](#),” 2020).

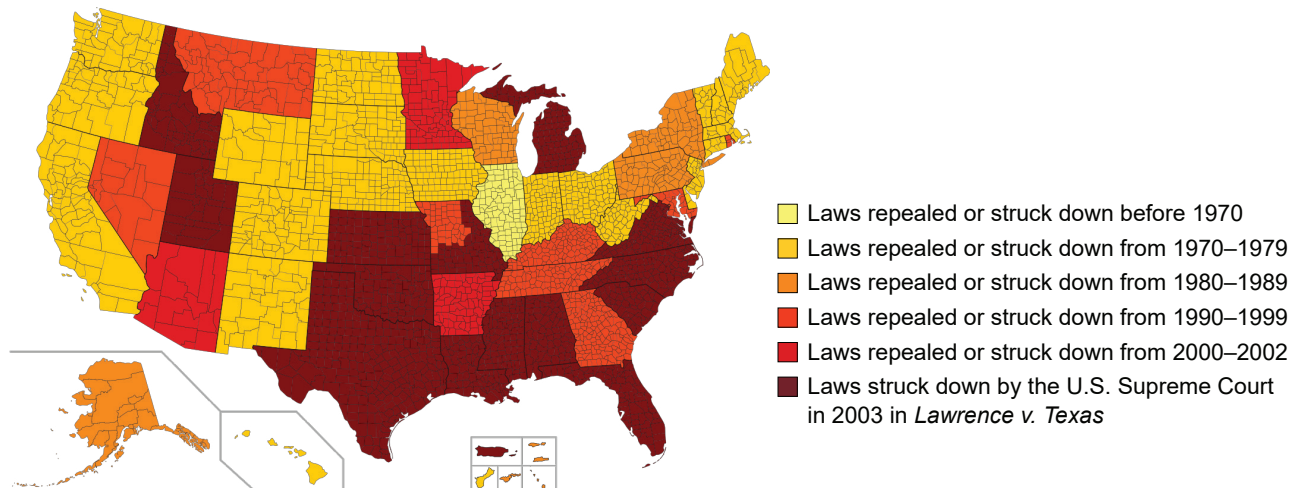


FIGURE 7.3 Anti-sodomy laws in the United States (2016). This map depicts when anti-sodomy laws that criminalized non-heterosexual sex were overturned by state in the United States. (This work, Anti-Sodomy Laws in the US 2016, is a derivative of [Map of US Sodomy Laws](#) by Lokal_Profil with data from CL8/Wikimedia Commons, which is used under CC BY-SA 2.5. Anti-Sodomy Laws in the US 2016 is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0 by Judy Schmitt.)

After Stonewall, large organizations of LGBT advocates arose to challenge discrimination against LGBT people. For example, leaders organized the first Gay Pride march to commemorate the one year anniversary of the Stonewall Riots and to loudly declare their desire for equality (“Stonewall Riots,” 2020). First and foremost on the gay rights platform was the need to overturn laws that made homosexuality illegal. Throughout the 1970s, activists in many states succeeded in having state legislatures overturn laws banning homosexuality. This coincided with a period in which sexual mores were generally liberalized in the U.S. Nonetheless, by the mid-1980s many states still outlawed homosexuality. It was not until 2003 that the Supreme Court decided that states could not criminalize homosexuality (Figure 7.3) (“Sodomy Laws in the United States,” 2020).

An issue that has been central to the LGBT rights movement since the late 1980s is same-sex marriage. At the 1987 National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, recognition of lesbian and gay relationships was a primary demand made by demonstrators. Indeed, many protestors participated in a mass wedding in front of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to highlight the ways in which U.S. tax code benefits married heterosexual couples. Because they were denied the right to marry, gay and lesbian couples could not file taxes jointly, often could not share custody of children, and lacked hospital visitation rights and rights of inheritance, among other benefits of marriage (“Second National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights,” 2020).

In response to same sex couples’ attempts to gain state marriage licenses, the U.S. Congress passed the

Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in 1996. DOMA defined marriage as between one man and one woman in federal law, meaning that the federal government would not confer benefits to same-sex couples granted marriage licenses by states. It additionally stated that states did not need to recognize same-sex marriages granted by other states (“Defense of Marriage Act,” 2012). Nonetheless, by the early 2000s, many states began to consider legalizing same-sex marriage. The first to do so was Massachusetts in 2004. Connecticut, Iowa, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont passed similar laws between 2008 and 2011, and, since then, the remaining states have followed suit. Other states have passed laws allowing for **same-sex civil unions**. Civil unions provide the legal benefits of marriage to same-sex couples, but not the title of marriage. Beginning with Denmark in 1989, civil unions under one name or another have been established by law in several, mostly developed, countries in order to provide same-sex couples with rights, benefits, and responsibilities similar (in some countries, identical) to opposite-sex civil marriage (“Civil Union,” 2020; “Same-Sex Unions in the United States,” 2019).

On June 26, 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that state laws banning same-sex marriage violate the Fourteenth Amendment and that states must license and recognize same-sex marriages (“Same-Sex Unions in the United States,” 2019).

SOCIAL CONTEXT AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

Sexual behavior refers to the manner in which humans experience and express their sexuality. People engage in a variety of sexual acts from time to time, and for a wide

variety of reasons. Sexual activity normally results in sexual arousal and physiological changes in the aroused person, some of which are pronounced while others are more subtle. Sexual activity also includes conduct and activities which are intended to arouse the sexual interest of another, such as strategies to find or attract partners (mating and display behavior), and personal interactions between individuals, such as flirting and foreplay.

Human sexual activity has sociological, cognitive, emotional, behavioral and biological elements, including physiological processes such as the reproductive mechanism, the sex drive and pathology; sexual intercourse and sexual behavior in all its forms; and personal bonding and shared emotions during sexual activity (“[Human Sexual Activity](#),” 2020).

Socialization and Sexual Behavior

Since sexuality is expressed through means learned by socialization, social **context** is bound to influence sexual behavior. **Socialization** is the lifelong process of inheriting and disseminating norms, customs, and ideologies and providing an individual with the skills and habits necessary for participating within one’s own society. Socialization necessarily implies the inculcation of norms, or behaviors that society marks as valued. Because socialization teaches members of a society how to behave, behaviors that are not specifically taught as normalized and socially acceptable are marked as deviant (“[Socialization](#),” 2020).

Understanding Sexual Behavior

Individuals are taught to use social cues to interpret sexual intent. This is most obviously demonstrated in behaviors associated with **flirtation**. Flirting is a playful activity involving verbal communication and body language by one person toward another, used to sometimes indicate an interest in a deeper relationship with the other (“[Flirting](#),” 2020). In some social contexts, a hug could demonstrate platonic friendship, as in the case of two coworkers hugging upon hearing the news that their project was



An embrace: context matters. Russian President Boris Yeltsin (right) and President Mintimer Shaimiyev (left) of Tatarstan congratulate each other on a treaty signed in 1994 between Russia and Tatarstan on the delimitation of powers between them. In a different context, the same gesture could have very different connotations. ([RIAN archive 65537 Yeltsin and Shaimiyev](#) by Alexander Makarov/RIA Novosti/Wikimedia Commons is used under CC BY-SA 3.0.)

successfully received. In other contexts, the hug could be interpreted as sexual interest. Thus, social context is essential when one considers potentially sexual behavior.

Socialization and Normalized Sexual Behavior

Because sexual behavior is influenced by socialization, what is deemed “normal” can vary widely across cultures. In some cultures, sexual activity is considered acceptable only within marriage, although premarital and extramarital sex are also common. Some sexual activities are illegal either universally or in some countries, and some are considered against the norms of a society. For example, sexual activity with a person below some age of consent and sexual assault in general are criminal offenses in most jurisdictions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- With regard to sexuality, socialization in the U.S. and Western countries most notably adheres to heteronormativity, or the marking of heterosexual unions as normal and homosexual unions as socially abnormal and deviant.
- Religion, the law, and the media are three primary agents of socialization that teach people how to behave sexually.
- There is extreme variation in sexual expression across historical periods and cultures. This indicates that there are no universal sexual norms.
- In the current Western moment, heteronormative norms are privileged, meaning that heterosexual expressions of sexuality are more accepted than homosexual expressions. However, sexuality is not thought of in the same way across space and time; rather, different cultures and different historical moments think of sexuality in entirely different ways.
- Kinsey developed the Kinsey Scale, which was a numerical ranking of sexual behavior on a scale of complete heterosexuality to complete homosexuality.

- Kinsey's open discussion of sexuality in the 1950s contributed to the sexual revolution of the following decade, in which social standards that limited sex to heterosexual marriage were loosened.
- The *Kinsey Report* is frequently invoked to support the common estimate of one in ten Americans being a homosexual.
- The *Kinsey Report* was the largest study of norms in American sexuality to its time, conducted by Dr. Alfred Kinsey.
- The development of oral contraception also contributed to the loosening of social regulations on sexuality.
- The sexual revolution was a social movement in which social rules of sexuality became more lax.
- The Kinsey scale is a numeric scaling of individuals along a continuum of complete heterosexuality to complete homosexuality.
- The varying forms of these attractions are generally divided into the following categories: heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality and asexuality.
- In place of these categories, some prefer to think of "queer" sexual orientations; a broader term that refers to any non-heterosexual form of sexuality. The heterosexual/homosexual binary is a continuum of complete heterosexuality to complete homosexuality, with bisexuality in the middle.
- Heteronormativity is the assumption that heterosexual orientations are normal to the exclusion of other sexual orientations.
- Sexual identity is an individual's conception of their own sexuality.
- The primary debate in conversations about sexual orientation is whether sexual orientation is static or fluid, whether one is born with an immutable sexual orientation, or whether one develops sexual orientation.
- Sexual reorientation therapies seek to "convert" homosexuals into heterosexuals.
- Sexual reorientation therapies seek to convert "homosexuals" into "heterosexuals."
- Homophobia is expressed through prejudice and discrimination, which can either be institutional or informal.
- The phrase LGBTQ refers to the community of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals.
- Institutional discrimination involves the state and the law, while informal discrimination refers to social controls and prejudices.
- In the United States, social disapproval of homosexuality is not evenly distributed throughout society. That being said, it is more or less pronounced according to age, ethnicity, geographic location, race, sex, social class, education, political identification, and religious status.
- Civil unions are ceremonies that grant same-sex couples in some states legal equality, even if not by the name of "marriage."
- Though some states have equal rights laws, many gay and lesbian couples are still denied the same marriage rights as heterosexual couples and cannot file joint taxes, share custody of children, have hospital visitation rights, or inherit equally.
- The first organizations in the U.S. that worked to improve LGBT issues were known as homophile organizations, such as the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis.
- Sodomy laws are laws against any sexual contact other than heterosexual intercourse.
- The Stonewall Riots were riots in New York City in 1969 that is frequently thought of as the start of the movement by LGBT people to decriminalize homosexuality.
- In 1986, the U.S. Supreme Court found that states could criminalize homosexuality in *Bowers v. Hardwick*.
- In 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Lawrence v. Texas* that anti-sodomy laws violated an individual's right to privacy.
- In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that states must license and recognize same-sex marriages.
- Sexual behavior refers to the manner in which humans experience and express their sexuality.
- Individuals are taught to use social cues to interpret sexual intent. This is most obviously demonstrated in behaviors associated with flirtation.
- Human sexual activity has sociological elements. Social context is therefore essential when one considers potentially sexual behavior.

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