

1.1 Foundational Views of Culture

We may think we have a general understanding of **culture**, but defining *culture* is not as easy as one might think. Anthropologists, sociologists, social psychologists, and others have studied human societies for decades, and although they may use the term *culture* to describe the collective identities of groups of people and various aspects of their societies, a standardized definition of the term has not yet been developed. In 1952 Alfred L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn published the results of a survey on the use of the term *culture* that yielded 164 definitions. Historically, however, the word had three primary meanings.

Culture as a Universal Measure of Civilization

The first definition relates to the fine arts, social pursuits, expression, and tastes valued by a **society** or a **social class**, as in the arts, manners, and dress. This first meaning was formed in Europe and grew out of the French Enlightenment in the second half of the 18th century. The Enlightenment, also called the Age of Reason, was a movement among European intellectuals that emphasized reason over tradition. It was a period of tremendous development in literature, music, and artistic works, as well as in technological advancement, the scientific method, and political and social reform.

The French phrase *la culture* referred to “civilization” as a measure of progress in a society (Ridley, 2004). French thinkers theorized a universal model of civilizations in which societies evolved from savagery to barbarism to civilization (Kuper, 2000). One could thus compare societies and theoretically discern, through the arts and the tastes of members of the society, the degree to which the society was civilized.

Generally, however, people are inclined to judge their own society more favorably than that of others. So, cosmopolitan European society was considered highly cultured compared to the indigenous peoples that European explorers encountered during their journeys to the Americas, whom they viewed as primitive or “uncivilized.”

This universal model of culture fell out of favor over time. It became acceptable to express civilization in different ways, and distinctive methods of being civilized were recognized in different parts of the world. The term *civilization* thus began to be used in a relative sense, and the plural *civilizations* was introduced. Around this same time, from about 1780 to 1830, the **universalism** of the 18th century shifted to a more relativistic perspective in biology, history, and linguistics as well (Kuper, 2000).

Culture as Rooted in Ethnicity and National Pride

A second meaning of the word *culture* originated in Germany, where the term *die Kultur* was rooted in ethnicity. It referred to the particular ethnic strain of Germanness, the spirit and character that distinguished German society from other cultures and, by inference, contextualized it as superior.

Whereas the first meaning of the word *culture* emphasized reason and material characteristics of a society (aspects), the contrasting view of *die Kultur* in Germany expressed a much more subjective, nationalistic view. It emphasized tradition and ritual and prioritized spiritual values over materialism and emotions over science and technology (Kuper, 2000).

Culture as the Elevation of the Human Spirit

While the first two understandings of culture developed in different directions on the European continent, both viewed the culture of civilized peoples as the embodiment of important human values. In *Culture: The Anthropologists' Account*, anthropologist Adam Kuper (2000) speculated that the Protestant Reformation had

weakened religion's hold on many intellectuals, and these two views of culture provided alternative, secular sources of values and meaning.



SuperStock

One view of culture, popularized in England, was as the elevation of the human spirit through knowledge of art, literature, and philosophy.

Babington Macaulay decried the technology and materialism of civilization. Kuper (2000) quotes Macaulay as concluding, "As civilization advances, poetry almost necessarily declines" (p. 9).

Kuper (2000) was one of the first to contend that anthropologists typically try to explain culture on their own terms, while ignoring political and economic forces, social institutions, and biological processes, which he believed must be considered in any complete explanation of why people think and behave as they do. Before we examine more contemporary views of culture and the forces that Kuper mentioned, let us consider the biological processes he also noted as critical to understanding culture and its impact on human differences.

Meanwhile, in England, a third view of culture became prevalent—one in which culture was considered the antithesis of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. This view held that culture represents the ultimate human values that form the basis of the social order. English writers believed that the arts were the windows to the human soul; they elevated humans above the apes and the educated above the barbarians. By understanding the arts, they believed, one could see the essence of the human spirit and human culture expressed most powerfully. Thus, the English claimed that knowledge of culture could be acquired and transmitted through the educational system and by familiarizing oneself with the history and great works of art, literature, and philosophy.

England was becoming increasingly industrialized in the 18th century, and English intellectuals and literary figures such as poet Percy Bysshe Shelley and essayist Thomas

1.2 The Biological Component of Our Identity

In his foreword to the book *The Double Helix*, the Nobel laureate in physics Sir William Lawrence Bragg describes James Watson's and Francis Crick's 1953 discovery of the structure of **deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA)** as one of the major scientific events of the 20th century. According to Bragg, the unraveling of the complex double-helix structure of the human genetic code launched the era of molecular biology and transformed the field of biochemistry (Watson, 1968). This and other biological discoveries not only contributed to scientific advancements, but informed the relationship between biology, culture, and human individualism.

The Human Genome Project (HGP)

The **Human Genome Project (HGP)** was equally transformational in its goal to identify and map the sequence of components in the DNA structure and to determine their functions in human variation. This 13-year international effort, which was coordinated by the U.S. Department of Energy and the National Institutes of Health, concluded in April 2003 (the 50th anniversary year of Watson and Crick's discovery).

By the time the HGP concluded, scientists had analyzed the components of human cells and identified 23 distinct pairs of chromosomes, their genes, and the sequence of the 3 billion chemical base pairs that constitute human DNA (see Figure 1.1). They had also been able to determine many of the ways in which genes, proteins, and other molecules work together to regulate cellular functions in the human body. This research provided the basis to understand the role DNA plays in human heredity, which at its core is the study of human variation.

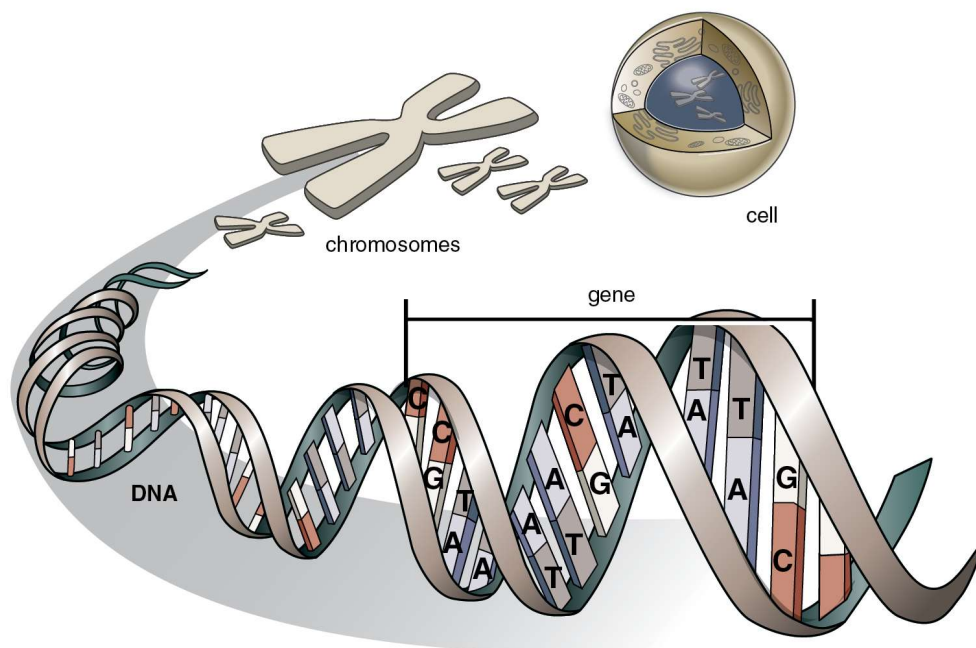


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James Watson and Francis Crick's discovery of the double helix as the structure of DNA was one of the major scientific breakthroughs of the 20th century.

Figure 1.1: DNA molecule

Each human cell contains 46 chromosomes; 2 meters of DNA; 3 billion chemical base subunits of DNA (A, T, C, G); and approximately 30,000 genes that code for proteins.



Source: Adapted from U.S. Department of Energy Human Genome Project. (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.ornl.gov/hgmis> (<http://www.ornl.gov/hgmis>)

Interactions Among Genes, the Environment, and Behavioral Tendencies

Although genetic discoveries are important to our understanding of human diversity, continued research has revealed that biology is not determinism. The interactions among genes, the external environment, and our behavioral tendencies have been surprising and are far more complex than originally thought. Scientists once believed, for example, that more complex species such as humans would have significantly more genes than less complex species. However, human genes are estimated to number between 23,000 and 30,000—close to that of mice and roundworms. Among all animals that have been gene sequenced so far, the creature with the most genes is the common water flea, which possesses about 31,000 genes (Gonzaga, 2011). Obviously, the number of genes alone cannot account for human diversity.

Researchers have found that alterations, called mutations or variants, occasionally occur within genetic material. These mutations and variants might be inherited, but they also might arise spontaneously or be caused by chemicals, viruses, or radiation in the external environment (Cuschieri, 2013). Many mutations appear to have a neutral effect on human biology and behavior, though some can lead to or increase the risk for diseases such as cystic fibrosis, sickle-cell anemia, various cancers, and a number of birth defects, including Down syndrome. The discovery of the existence of these mutations, called **susceptibility genes**, could help explain why people are different (McInerney, 1999). In an intriguing twist, in 2012 an international team of researchers studying susceptibility genes discovered that subtle changes in these genes may explain individual differences in intelligence (Schmidt, 2012).

Particularly important for our study of human diversity is the discovery that in addition to being biologically unique, humans also have diverse behavioral tendencies that may have a biological basis. Genetic research has shown that the external environment influences these behavioral tendencies and the genes associated with them. This research has added to the nature versus nurture debate and opened a new interdisciplinary field of study known as **human behavioral genetics**, which seeks to understand both the genetic and environmental contributions to human behavior.

An example of such research was published in 1999 by Joseph D. McInerney, director of the Foundation for Genetic Education and Counseling, who reported on studies that were designed to sort biological from

environmental influences on behavior. This research provided significant insight into behaviors associated with inherited disorders. For example, we know that an extra chromosome 21 is associated with the mental retardation that accompanies Down syndrome, although the processes that disrupt brain function are not yet clear.

In general, though, it is easier to discern the relationship between biology and behavior for chromosomal and single-gene disorders, such as occurs with Down syndrome, than it is for diseases such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. In these latter disorders, biological roots are undeniable yet unknown, and the diseases' unpredictable onset reminds us of the importance of environmental contributions. We do not yet have the keys to unlock the more complex relationships among genes, the external environment, and behavior as they pertain to human issues such as personality traits, sexual preference, and substance abuse.

Genes can do nothing by themselves. As scientists Robinson, Fernald, and Clayton (2008) explain, "Genes do not specify behavior directly, but rather encode molecular products that build and govern the functioning of the brain through which behavior is expressed" (p. 896). These scientists emphasize, however, that brain development, brain activity, and behavior are influenced both by inherited and environmental influences. Behaviors, in particular, are complex traits that involve multiple genes, whose actions are mediated by proteins—and proteins and cells themselves are influenced by the external environment.

The Relationship Between Social Behavior and Genetics

To further complicate matters, we also must consider the fact that genetics play a role in behavior, and behavior influences genetics. Evidence suggests that social behavior can impact **gene expression**, the flexibility of our genes to respond to the environment and our **social behavior**. This gene expression, in turn, can influence immediate or future behavior. Like other animals, humans engage in a variety of social behaviors as we go about our lives: We work, find mates, and care for our offspring or other relatives. Our behaviors become "social" when we interact with others in ways that influence immediate or future behavior (Robinson et al., 2008).

Human social behaviors, and the relationship of these behaviors to genetics, have been studied extensively over the past decade or so. This research has strengthened the link between the life sciences and the social and behavioral sciences. Rather than viewing nature and nurture as a dichotomy of behavioral causation, 21st-century researchers are taking a more integrative approach to biology and social construction. They have accumulated significant data on what are being dubbed **epigenetic factors of influence**—a bidirectional interaction between genes and the environment that results in changes in gene expression that are beyond those attributable to DNA (Jackson, Niculescu, & Jackson, 2013). For instance, having a genetic variant does not necessarily mean that someone will develop a specific trait. A person may have a genetic variant that is known to increase his or her risk for developing emphysema from smoking, an environmental factor. If that person never smokes, then emphysema will most likely not develop (U.S. Department of Energy, 2008). Genes are turned on and off, and other factors, such as social behavior, may keep a gene from being turned on or may modify a protein in a way that affects its ability to carry out cellular functions (U.S. Department of Energy, 2008).

A common denominator among these social behaviors is the production, reception, and interpretation of signals that influence brain function and immediate or future behavior. The fundamental signals in human social behavior are verbal and nonverbal communication, subjects we will discuss in more detail in Chapter 9.

Case Study: Epigenetics

What if what you do, how you think, and your ideas and beliefs are not the product of your experiences alone but are actually genetically programmed into your DNA? This is the idea behind epigenetics, a new interpretation of the interrelation between genes and genetic expressions toward our environments.

Conrad Hal Waddington introduced the concept of epigenetics in the mid-20th century to describe a developmental phenomenon of the genome and its outer layer, the epigenome (Jamniczky et al., 2010). Waddington's research discovered that the epigenome uses tags to attach to active cells and absorbs signals from the external world, such as behaviors, nutritional habits, and stress (as cited in Rozanov, 2012). The epigenome records experiences onto our DNA and adapts to its changing environment, learning from its experiences through cellular memory.

The experiences incorporated into the epigenome are passed from mother to embryo as epigenetic inheritances. The supposition is in direct contrast with early scientific findings, which claimed that the epigenome in embryos was erased and rebuilt from scratch (University of Utah Genetic Science Learning Center, 2015a). However, current research shows that some epigenetic tags remain in place as genetic information passes from generation to generation, a process called epigenetic inheritance. University of Utah Genetic Science Learning Center (2015b) notes that

epigenetic inheritance is an unconventional finding. It goes against the idea that inheritance happens only through the DNA code that passes from parent to offspring. It means that a parent's experiences, in the form of epigenetic tags, can be passed down to future generations. (para. 1)

The epigenetic researchers believe that the early programming of biochemical, physiological, and behavioral influences follow us throughout our lives (Rozanov, 2012). Some of our beliefs about people, cultures, and dimension of diversity are inherited. How we behave toward specific groups, how we emote, or even how we manage stress have been given to us before birth. To change our perceptions and beliefs, then, is to change our epigenetic structure. Because epigenomes are influenced by environment, we do have the ability to alter them. They are not permanent structures in the DNA.

Tremblay and Szyf (2010) encourage us to look at the gene–environment interaction as a way of understanding how we will interrelate throughout our lives and to construct modifications that will eliminate behavioral disturbances (bad behavior) or potential psychological disorders.

Critical Thinking Question

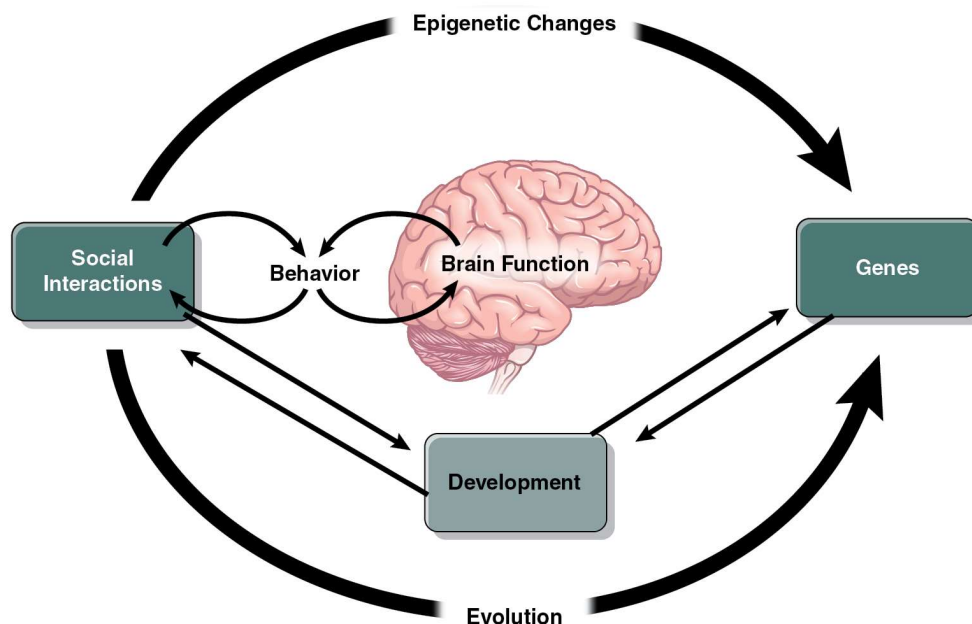
1. If your actions, thoughts, ideas, and beliefs are genetically programmed into your DNA, how might you go about changing your environment to positively impact the epigenomes that you will pass down to your children and grandchildren?

The Case for Human Nature and Human Nurture

Early in this chapter we asserted that humans are social beings who often describe themselves in terms of their relationships with other people. From this starting point, we briefly examined various views of culture, our biological nature, and the interactions among our genes, the external environment, our behavioral tendencies, and our social behavior. These influences, interactions, and relationships are shown in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2: Relationship between genes, the brain, and social behavior

The diversity of human beings and the complexity of the factors that influence our identity suggest that both nature and nurture play roles in determining who we are.



The findings of scientific research over the past several decades should lead us to admit that the nature versus nurture debate is over. We must conclude, as did scientist and writer Matt Ridley in his 2004 book *The Agile Gene: How Nature Turns on Nurture*: “No longer is it nature versus nurture but nature via nurture” (pp. 3–4). The complexity of the factors that influence our identity, and the sheer diversity among us, suggests that nature influences nurture and nurture influences nature. To further understand how these influences play out, we now examine how our external environment and social interactions contribute to our individual differences.

Introduction

To adopt a holistic appreciation for the factors that contribute to an individual's perceptions of the world, we must examine various layers of cultural distinctions. In Chapter 1 we explored historical views of culture and the biological, environmental, and social variation that has created diverse peoples and cultures throughout the world. We learned how the biological component of our identity and the interactions among genes, the environment, and behavioral tendencies create complexities in understanding diversity and individual differences. We also examined multidisciplinary views of cultural diversity. In Chapter 2 we delve a little deeper into contemporary views of culture and the levels, dimensions, and functions of culture in societies. We also explore in more depth the concepts of assimilation versus acculturation and social constructionism, and we examine attribution theory, communication, and saving face as cultural characteristics.

2.1 Contemporary Views of Culture

If you have done any traveling, you know that concrete, observable elements such as architecture, language, food, and dress usually create our first impressions of a culture. We first notice what we can see. As we spend more time in a particular culture, however, we gain a deeper understanding of the foundations that underlie those observable features. By learning more about the various dimensions of culture, we can grow more aware of the invisible layers of culture that many of us take for granted. Typically, we do not consider or even realize that these dimensions exist.

Social scientists tend to talk of culture as human beings' social heritage—the ways of acting and doing that are passed down from one generation to the next, not by genes but by formal and informal methods of teaching and demonstration. Most researchers agree that culture is both explicit (material) and implicit (nonmaterial). It includes the observable, physical artifacts and objects that societies create and that shape or reflect the lives of their members. These artifacts are referred to as **material culture** and consist of distinctive clothing, architecture, inventions, food, artwork, and so on. Culture also includes knowledge, beliefs, customs, values, attitudes, and prescribed norms of conduct. These are referred to as **nonmaterial culture** and are expressed through language, emotions, social rituals, traditions, and prescribed behaviors (Gordon, 1964).

People have created culture; it is a social phenomenon. It is often passed from one generation to another and influenced and reshaped by contemporary economic, political, and social shifts. It changes over time as a society changes and as people within a culture interact with people from other cultures.

Culture, like other living systems, is dynamic and influenced by the world around it. Thus, a region's geography, environmental changes, and history help create aspects of culture. Because culture encompasses both tangible and intangible aspects of a society, that society's political, legal, economic, religious, social, and educational institutions affect its culture as well. In the United States, for example, American culture shifted after President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Democrats and Republicans stood together to mourn. Similarly, the nation's culture was shaped by the heightened level of security that followed the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Even weather can shift a culture. When Hurricane Katrina struck the American South, racial disparities in American culture were suddenly thrust into the consciousness of observers and precipitated renewed discussion of this cultural issue.

Hofstede's Analogy of Groups to Individuals

Clearly, culture is a complex phenomenon. Geert Hofstede (1991), an influential Dutch researcher in the field of organizational studies, described the culture of a group as comparable to the personality of an individual. In his view, just as an individual acquires a workable personality over the course of his or her life, a human group develops a collective, integrated system of values and behaviors that aids the group's survival in an evolving environment (as cited in Wilson, Hoppe, & Sayles, 1996). These values and behaviors are transferred throughout a culture in a number of different ways.

Holiday traditions are one example. Thanksgiving is a harvest festival known by many different names and celebrated in many places around the world. The celebrations vary greatly, however, from one culture to another. The foods and activities associated with the holiday range widely; in Korea people eat crescent-shaped rice cakes stuffed with sesame seeds and participate in archery competitions at the Chu Suk festival; in Malaysia they drink homemade rice wine and enjoy traditional costumes and carnivals at Tadau Ka'amatan. In some areas of the United Kingdom, children sing hymns while distributing fruits and vegetables; in the United States it is customary to carve a roasted turkey and eat it with corn, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin pie (Thanksgiving Day, 2013). Through these types of demonstrated traditions and rituals, culture is perpetuated from generation to generation.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner: Culture as Layers of an Onion

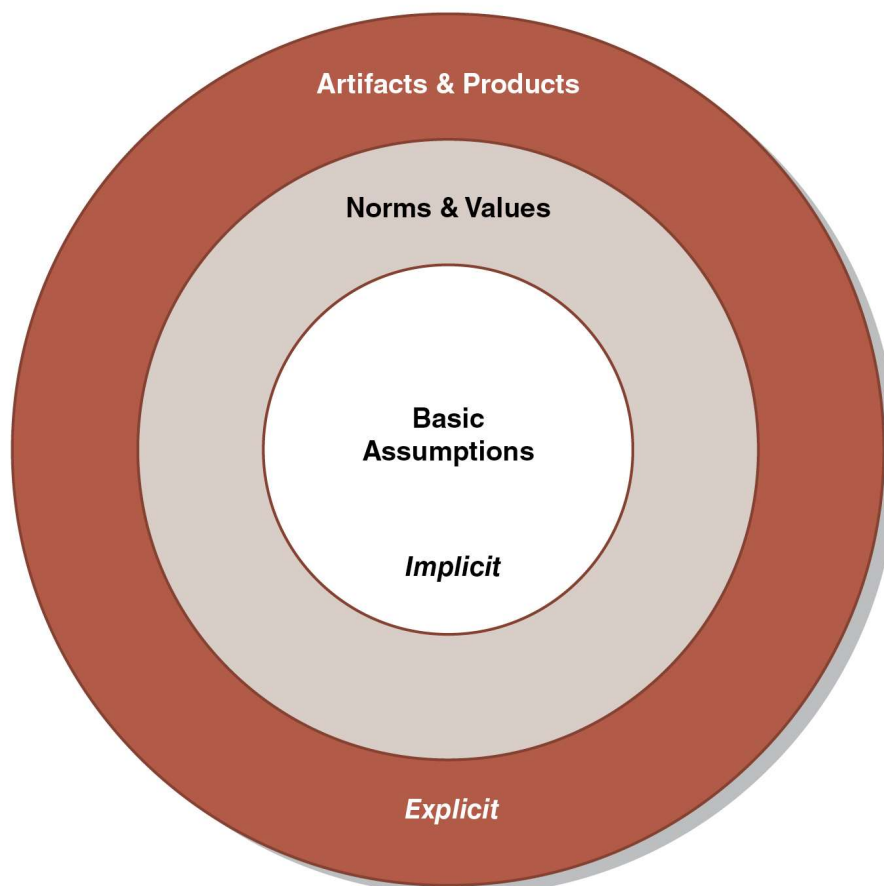
In their 2012 book *Riding the Waves of Culture*, Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner describe culture using the analogy of an onion. “To understand it,” they say, “you have to unpeel it layer by layer” (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012, p. 8).

The two researchers cite the example of arriving in the United States and observing the soaring skyscrapers of downtown New York City. In their view the skyscrapers are the outer layer of the onion, artifacts that represent society’s unspoken norms and values. These include material success; upward mobility (with higher floors on the skyscrapers more highly prized and usually more expensive); the idea that “more is better;” individual power; and status. On the surface, we see the artifacts, but the norms and values are embedded deeply within. Norms sometimes become explicit when they are codified and written into law. Values, however, are the beliefs or ideals shared by a group about desirable states or types of behavior; they usually serve as unwritten rules among group members (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) wondered why norms and values are often unexamined and why they vary around the world. They theorized that unless something is a problem, it disappears from consciousness and becomes a basic assumption—an underlying premise. Consider that we tend to forget about our need for oxygen until after we have held our breath as long as possible. Thus, in their view, unquestioned reality, in the form of implicit assumptions, is the core of the onion. Once we recognize an assumption or issue, it becomes conscious and explicit (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s model of culture

Culture exists in layers. Some of these layers are observable; others, such as norms, values, and basic assumptions, are at deeper levels of the culture, and their existence may not be as obvious to members of the culture.



Source: Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner, C. (2012). Riding the waves of culture: Understanding diversity in global business (3rd ed.). New York McGraw-Hill, p. 29.

The lack of awareness of the norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes that underlie our culture is not trivial; it often has consequences for our behavior and how we view ourselves and others. We may be oblivious to the absence of logic in our own behavior while we ridicule the behavior of those in a culture we do not understand. As anthropologist Donald E. Brown (2004) reminded us in Chapter 1, ethnocentrism, or viewing one's own culture as inherently superior to other cultures, is a very human tendency and is considered a cultural universal.

2.2 The Levels of Culture

Culture exists on various levels within a society. At the highest level is the society's or nation's **primary or dominant culture**. Examples would include the culture of nations such as France, China, or the United States (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). In the literature the terms *primary*, *dominant*, *prevailing*, *mainstream*, and *majority* are often used to describe the national culture. These terms are nuanced and are often used intentionally to reflect these nuances—as will be done in this text.

Aspects of the Primary Culture

The *primary* or *dominant culture* creates for society a common, unifying core and represents the overarching principles to which most members of the society subscribe. Liberty and justice for all, for example, are overarching principles in the dominant culture of the United States.

Within the dominant culture are usually numerous other levels of culture, which conform to the dominant culture in many ways but may interpret some principles differently or disagree about how they should be implemented. Anthropologist James L. Peacock (2001) points out that there are aspects of the dominant American culture that we take for granted as immutable truths, when in fact they are constructions of our society and not necessarily shared with other cultures.

For example, in 1959 anthropologist Edward T. Hall pointed out that Americans conceive of time as linear—as stretching from the past through the present to the future. Everyone is expected to make “forward progress” and overcome obstacles to “get ahead.” In the Christian religious tradition, this linear orientation reveals itself from the creation of the world at one end, through Abraham, Moses, and the prophets, to the end of the world. It was intensified, in Peacock's view, by the machine age, which forces us to plan and sequence with precision. It is also reflected in our education system, which carries us through a succession of grade levels and degree paths.

This concept of linear thinking has likely led to the constructs of setting goals and timelines and of creating metrics to measure success. Similarly, it affects students by emphasizing alignment in writing and suggesting advanced project planning, outlining, and scheduling.

These kinds of cultural constructions have their strengths and challenges. While goal setting and completing a project in steps may offer some benefits, it also creates cultural norms and expectations—to which humans have emotional reactions. When goals are met or interrupted, when plans are completed or derailed, when dreams are realized or unobtainable, Americans respond emotionally.

Hall reminded us that time is not always viewed as linear. He studied the people of the Trobriand Islands in the Western Pacific, who held different assumptions. Hall found that these islanders did not particularly mind interruptions or see them as obstacles to completing a task. To them, time was directionless, “not so much a line along which one moved as it was a puddle in which one sat, splashed, or wallowed” (Hall, 1959/1981, p. 5). Whereas an American might feel conflicted when a goal is not met on time, the Trobriand Islanders whom Hall studied might have felt conflicted if asked to set a goal.

Regional Cultures

Within the primary societal culture are often various **regional cultures**, which have their own unique expressions of that primary culture. Differences in values, attitudes, behavior, social customs, and language can be significant among regional cultures, often due to different historical settlement patterns. These settlement patterns can result in ethnic, linguistic, and/or religious differences among people in various geographic locations.

In the United States, for example, the cultural differences in regions such as the West Coast, the East Coast, and the South are, in many respects, as great as those among sovereign nations (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). These differences are evident both in variations in the dominant culture and in selected aspects of that culture. Ethnic and regional variations about the concept of time, for example, are noticeable when comparing the fast pace of life in New York City with the slower pace common in many areas of the South. We discuss U.S. regional differences in more detail in Chapter 6.

Differences among regional cultures can be seen outside the United States as well. The primary culture of Iraq, for instance, is ethnically Arab and religiously Islamic, and the nation shares many customs and traditions with other Arab nations. However, Iraq has extensive cultural diversity, and ongoing civil unrest in the country is due to significant differences between the regional cultures of the Shiites, the Sunnis, and the Kurds.

After World War I, when Iraq was carved out of the Ottoman Empire, the land included nomadic tribes in the south and west (related to the Bedouin of neighboring states and primarily the Shiite sect of Islam), peasant farmers in central Iraq and the northeast (primarily of the Sunni sect of Islam), and mountain herders of northern Kurdistan (Anderson, 2014). Adaptations to these different environments had generated distinctive regional cultures manifested in differing folk customs, food, dress, and architecture. These differences are reinforced by ethnic differences among the people of each region, religious contrasts between the Arab groups and the Kurds, and religious divisions between the Shiites and Sunnis. These differences resulted in normative formation of identity among each group that is dissimilar from the other groups and often in conflict with them in the culture (Al-Musawi, 2006).

Subcultures

Also found within primary or dominant cultures are **subcultures**, which conform to the primary culture in some respects but express themselves in somewhat different (and sometimes diametrically opposed) ways. For example, individuals who are Amish, deaf, gay, or intense online gamers might be considered part of a subculture. As these examples illustrate, the term has a broad range of meaning. The term *subculture* was not widely employed in the social sciences until after World War II (Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1967). Today, however, the concept of subculture is routinely used in contemporary writing and sociology research.

The definition of the term is controversial, however, and often has political and philosophical overtones. That is, when researchers define a group as being *sub* (below) another group, it suggests levels of superiority or of size among those groups. The term *majority* is typically used to refer to the larger group. However, in some locations in the United States, there is a minority majority. The population of minority groups in a particular region (as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, for example) may be larger in number than the group in the national majority, and yet the minority groups in those regions are often still referred to as subcultures. This raises political and philosophical questions about the use of terminology.

Subcultures may be considered as cultural variants displayed by certain segments of the population. From this perspective, subcultures are not distinguished by one or two isolated traits; they constitute relatively cohesive social systems; they are worlds within the larger galaxy of the national culture (Komarovskiy & Sargent, 1949). A subculture may form when a social group expresses values, attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors that are at variance with those of the dominant culture.



Jupiterimages/Photolibary/Getty Images

Regional cultures have social norms or customs that differ from the dominant culture. For example, foods and feasts (such as this seafood boil, popular in the American South) often vary among regional cultures.

Countercultures

With subculture defined as a social group that expresses cultural variants, a **counterculture** can be defined as a subgroup that has beliefs or practices that are not only considered variants, but also considered deviant or illicit by the wider society. Some researchers believe it is untenable to draw a distinction between the terms *subculture* and *counterculture* and that using negative terminology such as *deviant* or *illicit* may unwittingly promote ethnocentrism. Other researchers, however, believe the distinction between the two terms is useful for purposes of study.

Additionally, as we discussed in Chapter 1 relative to culture in general, when we compare two groups of people and use terms like *deviant* or *illicit*, we are introducing value judgments. It is difficult to find objective ways to compare two *subcultures* that have different behavioral norms or standards.

A New Working Definition of Subculture

Because of the implications and complexity of the word *subculture*, we propose a working definition of the term that we will refine as we continue our discussion. A subculture is a cohesive group that is part of the primary culture but has important differences in language, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, behavior, religion, geographic location, social class, socioeconomic status, or physical attributes.

Some characteristics of subcultures—such as race or ethnicity—are **ascribed characteristics**—results of birth or biological heredity over which we have no control. Other characteristics, such as behavior and geographic location, can involve choice. Thus, a person may belong to the primary culture and be a member of several subcultures at the same time. Primary and regional cultures and subcultures are not mutually exclusive; we can belong to or have characteristics of all or many simultaneously.

Application to Business

Subcultures are often cited in business and organizational management literature as elements of organizational culture. First coined by Edgar Schein (1985) in relationship to organizations, the term *culture* began being applied to the collective attitudes and behaviors in corporations during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Schein described the organization's structure using the metaphor of culture, including culture's artifacts, assumptions, and values. Trompenaars (1993) and others further suggested that we can identify distinct corporate or organizational cultures and, within those, discuss the culture of a particular internal function, such as marketing, training and development, or finance. Thus, we can safely say we have tens of thousands of cultures in the United States alone.

2.3 Assimilation Versus Acculturation

Now that we have recognized the various levels of culture to which one person can simultaneously belong, it is not surprising that challenges arise when we interact with others who have their own complex cultural backgrounds. In contemporary society, people often visit other cultures and create part- or full-time homes in new locations. Migration patterns create complex webs of cultures and subcultures among people who live and work together. People may colonize certain areas and settle in for months, years, or lifetimes. The concept of settling in one place has shifted, however, and people increasingly relocate to different regions in a country and throughout the world, thus impacting the local regions through their migration.

Zhang (2008) stated that immigrants have two major challenges: “first, whether they should maintain their language of origin, the so-called heritage language, or shift to the host language; second, whether they should keep their culture of origin or adopt the host culture” (p. 1). These considerations present the dilemma of whether to become *assimilated* into the new culture or *acculturated* to the new culture.

While some scholars (Gordon, 1964; Alba & Nee, 1997) use the terms **assimilation** and **acculturation** synonymously to mean the acquisition or modification of a culture, others (Gibson, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Schnittker, 2002); Ying, 1995) make distinctions between these two terms. In these latter sources, and others, *assimilation* (or *absorption*, as it is sometimes called) refers to becoming like others, or the process whereby a minority group gradually adopts the customs and attitudes of the primary culture. *Acculturation*, then, is used to describe the incorporation of customs and attitudes that Zhang (2008) explains “may be an additive process that need not result in rejection or replacement of old cultural traits or loss of identification with one’s former group” (p. 4). Using these distinctions, we might think of *assimilation* in terms of a melting pot, while *acculturation* might be explained using the analogy of a salad bowl.

Gradual Processes

Both assimilation and acculturation are gradual processes that take place, to varying degrees, over time. Neither requires a conscious shift on the part of the immigrant. For example, when moving from region to region within the United States, one’s accent may slowly change. This is not usually an intentional act; it just happens over time. As Zhang (2008) suggests, language maintenance is “neither an isolated process nor exists in absolute terms. Rather it influences and is influenced by the various factors that immigrant families encounter” (p. 12). The existence of other people in the region who speak the heritage language, for instance, may be one factor that affects the degree of assimilation; another may be the new society’s willingness to accommodate newcomers by publishing materials in their native languages.

Contemporary researchers generally agree that immigrants and members of subcultures initially resist (or are prevented from) assimilating into the wider, primary culture, but that assimilation often occurs gradually with the passage of time and generations (Dowd & Dowd, 2003). There are two significant issues that typically prevent assimilation. First, many people have not studied the dimensions of culture and do not recognize the nuances outside their own culture or subculture. In other words, they may recognize a culture’s material aspects but not its nonmaterial aspects, or they may conform to the explicit and miss the implicit.

A second reason the degree of assimilation varies over time is because ethnocentrism often binds people to their own culture, making them more likely to prefer their cultural or subcultural traditions to new ones. We may try the food of the new culture and like it, for example, but we do not make it our regular diet. We may learn the new language and use it in public when necessary, but we prefer to speak in our native tongue at home because it is more comfortable. Thus, as many first-generation immigrants become acculturated to the new society, they may retain their heritage language and culture while shifting to the language and culture of the new society only in selected circumstances.

Bellah (2000) suggested that most immigrant groups are able to retain their cultural distinctiveness for a generation or so, but that cultural assimilation usually occurs in the second or third generation, often due to

intermarriage with individuals outside the subculture. Groups such as Blacks, Native Americans, Hispanics, and Orthodox Jews have been cited in the literature as examples of such subcultures. As intermarriage increases, the visible signs that regulate group membership, such as physical features like skin color, become increasingly ambiguous.

The Challenge to Assimilate or Become Acculturated

Some subcultures, particularly those based on values or behaviors that significantly differ from the primary culture, might have trouble assimilating or becoming acculturated. The group members themselves may be unwilling to assimilate, they may fear discrimination if they demonstrate values or behaviors that are nonconforming, or they might be prevented from assimilating by law or regulation.

The acculturation of gays and lesbians into American society, for example, has historically been slowed by their fears of discrimination, alienation, or negative consequences for participating in certain elements of society, such as serving as a public figure. Their unwillingness to share their sexual orientation with others (being “in the closet”) created a heterosexual primary culture and a gay and lesbian subculture. Over time, however, the primary heterosexual culture has become more accepting of differing values and behaviors with regard to sexual orientation, and gays and lesbians now participate more freely, openly, and fully in the wider society. By 2014 many members of the gay and lesbian community had openly shared their sexual orientation and merged into the national community.

The Role of Public Policy and Social Pressure

Two additional factors that influence assimilation or acculturation are public policy and social pressure. France, for example, has laws prohibiting people from wearing veils or face coverings in public, thus compelling people from some Arabic cultures to consider if assimilation or acculturation in that country is possible or desirable. In the United States, policies that prohibit prayer in public schools, encourage affirmative action, allow marriage between same-sex partners, and hinder or promote immigration may conflict with deeply held personal views and may have impacted decisions to migrate and the degree of immigrant assimilation.

Language has also been a long-standing topic of debate in the United States. Currently, the country has no policy on whether English should be the country’s official language, and Americans seem divided on the issue. Some factions push for English-only legislation because they think establishing English as the official language will preserve national unity. They also believe that the inability to speak English proficiently disadvantages immigrants and impedes their success. Others insist that public signs, documents, and oral instructions be presented in multiple languages to meet the needs of and provide equal access to minority populations. Thus, immigrants are sent mixed messages concerning language usage in their new culture.

Among Chinese immigrant populations in the United States, Zhang (2008) observed that the bilingual ability of first-generation parents varied greatly from individual to individual, ranging from minimal English ability to a very high level of English proficiency. However, even if the parents spoke fluent English, they still preferred to speak Chinese when possible. Their second-generation children, on the other hand, preferred English to Chinese and regarded English as their dominant language from an early age, although many of them possessed a high level of heritage language proficiency.

Zhang argued that the widespread and swift language shift in the second generation was influenced by social pressure for language assimilation, particularly in the schools, and negative social attitudes toward the children’s heritage language. In many cases the second-generation children often became language and cultural brokers between their parents’ culture and the mainstream culture (2008).

2.4 Assimilation and Retention of Cultural Uniqueness

The retention of cultural uniqueness is a key element when considering a social group as a subculture. Even though some immigrant groups are highly assimilated into the primary culture, when factions of that group retain their cultural uniqueness, they may be considered a subculture.

Subcultures Among Assimilated Groups

Chinese immigrants to the United States were considered a subculture for many years. Over time many of them assimilated into the primary culture and abandoned their cultural uniqueness. However, in some parts of the country, communities of their descendants still exist in original settlement areas, such as San Francisco's Chinatown. Members of these communities live and work in a distinct cultural milieu, have retained the Mandarin Chinese language and customs, and would still be considered part of a subculture. So, too, would the Amish, whose reclusiveness, clothing, and religious and cultural practices set them apart from the primary culture.

It is important to remember, however, that not all subcultures are immigrant, racial, ethnic, or religious in nature. The military, for example, is a subculture whose members understand specific rules, roles, language, and norms. Around the world, members of the U.S. military and their families who live on enclosed military bases often do not attempt to assimilate into the larger surrounding culture. They use their native language and have their own community activities. Even within the United States, military families often form a unique subculture, whether they live on base or off.

Native American Assimilation

Assimilation is decried by some who argue that groups should retain their cultural uniqueness. This argument has been prevalent among members of Native American tribes, who worry that their cultural heritage will be lost through assimilation (Owings, 2011). In a recent book, researcher Alison Owings (2011) discusses the Tonawanda Seneca Nation, which was formed in New York by the Tonawanda Band of Seneca, an Iroquois tribe—or as its citizens call it, the Haudenosaunee (haw-dehna-SHAU-nee) Confederacy.

Members of the confederacy consider themselves, by treaties, to be sovereign, independent nations. They do not pay taxes to the U.S. government; their members generally do not participate in U.S. elections; nor do they participate in the U.S. Census. Darwin Hill, a Tonawanda Seneca subchief, stated:

We're not actually part of that whole system they say is to count you, so you can see what your representation is. We say they don't represent us in Congress, and all these other things they say go along with that census. (as cited in Owings, 2011, p. 68)

Although the Haudenosaunee spurn virtually all U.S. organizations, as an independent nation the confederacy is a member of the United Nations (UN). In September 2007, after more than 20 years of negotiations between nation-states and indigenous people, the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It reads in part, "Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subject to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture" (as cited in Owings, 2011, pp. 74–75). The declaration was adopted with 143 votes in favor and only 4 negative votes cast. However, the dissenting votes were the four



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The Haudenosaunee Confederacy is an independent nation that was formed in New York by the Tonawanda Band of Seneca.

countries with the largest number of indigenous populations: New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States (Owings, 2011).

Assimilation as a Continuum or a Social World

Individuals belong to many groups. Even those in the dominant culture belong to subgroups of sex, religion, regional location, and family origin. Further, individuals can be grouped by hair color, height, weight, eye color, skin pigmentation, and more. We all walk between cultures. We have our family subculture, our work subculture, and so on.

It is advantageous to view assimilation along a continuum. That is, groups and individuals can be regarded as somewhere along the assimilation process, rather than in discrete categories such as assimilated, acculturated, or unassimilated. It is also useful to conceptualize subgroups as having certain characteristics to a greater or lesser degree, rather than as firmly divided from “regular” groups. Because assimilation is a dynamic process that occurs over time, such a perspective allows for changes in the degree of assimilation.

The term *social world* has been suggested by Dowd & Dowd (2003) as an alternate term for subculture or to refer to other subgroups within a society. They define *social world* as “distinctive ways of life shared by societal members who also participate, for the most part, in the common culture of the society” (Dowd & Dowd, 2003, Textbooks and the Definition of Subcultures section, para. 9). The usefulness of this term is its ability to describe not only groups with inherited characteristics and voluntary associations with others (such as motorcycle clubs, birdwatchers, and religious cults) but also groups that form around vocations and avocations (such as business associations, professional organizations, and academic societies).

2.5 Dimensions of Culture: Examining Cultural Differences

Researchers have long been interested in identifying specific functions within societies and determining how societies deal with the issues that confront them. To this end, Talcott Parsons, an American sociologist who taught at Harvard University from 1927 to 1973, attempted to develop and perfect an analytic model to evaluate all types of societies. He explored why societies are stable and what functions a social system must perform in order to persist (Rollag, 1998).

Later scholars carried on this task. Over a period of about 50 years, beginning in about 1960, numerous models were developed by theorists such as Klukhohn and Strodbeck (1961); Hofstede and Bond (1988); Triandis (1989); Hofstede (1991); Trompenaars (1993); and House, Hanges, Agar, and Quintanilla (1995) to analyze the various dimensions of culture. These models overlap in many respects, but one of the clearest and most useful is that of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012).

The Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner model addresses cultural differences in multiple dimensions. In 1993, using Parsons's principles as a basis, Trompenaars developed an initial model that identified seven fundamental dimensions of culture. He believed that every culture distinguishes itself from others by the way it chooses to resolve certain fundamental and universal problems or dilemmas. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner refined these dimensions in 2012 based on their research into culture and diversity in global business organizations. Some of the cultural dilemmas they discovered arise from our relationships with other people; some come from the passage of time; and some relate to the external environment. These seven dimensions are shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's seven dimensions of culture model

Issue	Dimension	Explanation
Relationships with people	Universalism versus particularism	Universalist cultures believe that what is good and right can be defined and always applies; cultures that take a particularist approach believe that relationships involve certain obligations, and unique circumstances may apply to a situation.
	Individualism versus communitarianism	Cultures that are more individualistic consider personal satisfaction, personal gain, and acquisition above the group. Individualists also believe in individual freedom and taking care of individual needs first. Communitarian cultures focus more on group or team achievement or development and often find the focus on individual achievement embarrassing and inappropriate.
	Neutral versus affective	In neutral cultures it is believed that people can detach from their emotions; whereas in the affective cultures emotions are accepted and expected.
	Specific versus diffuse	People from specific cultures focus more on business and less on relationships. People from diffuse cultures cannot reframe a work relationship without the personal connection. Those from diffuse cultural backgrounds must first build a relationship in order to conduct business.

Issue	Dimension	Explanation
	Achievement versus ascription	In achievement cultures people are judged on what they have accomplished or what they have achieved. Even if a person has a title of influence (president, CEO, general manager), in achievement cultures the respect is given based on the person's demonstrated capabilities and talent. People must earn respect. In ascription societies status is ascribed to people by birth, kinship, gender, age, title, or connections with others. People need not prove themselves to be respected.
Attitudes regarding time	Importance of the past versus the present and future	In some cultures present performance and future plans are most important. Other cultures have a greater reliance on the past and less focus on the present and future. Additionally, some cultures see time as passing in a straight line, whereas others think of it as moving in a circle, the past and present together with future possibilities.
Attitudes regarding the environment	Importance of individual motivations and values versus outside forces	In some cultures people's motivations and values are derived from within each individual, whereas in other cultures the outside environment is a more powerful motivator than the individuals.

Source: Adapted from Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner, C. (2012). *Riding the waves of culture: Understanding diversity in global business*. New York: McGraw-Hill, pp. 10-14.

These seven dimensions have important consequences for individuals when they interact with people from other cultures. For instance, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) warn that it is a major mistake to neglect the differing cultural views in the seven dimensions when engaging in relationships with people from different countries, especially when issues of health or business are involved.

As an example, consider the following two companies that do business together. The first company deems itself to be an economic system designed to perform functions and tasks effectively and efficiently, and considers its employees as assets who are paid for their work. The second company, which might be a vendor or customer of the first, views itself as a group consisting of people who have social relationships with one another; they work together cooperatively, and the company's ability to function effectively and efficiently depends on the strength of those interpersonal relationships.

On the surface, these two companies may appear to be similar in structure and to have comparable goals, objectives, and methods. However, the different ways in which the companies regard their employees can lead to serious problems when the two companies do business with each other. For instance, the first company might exclude employees from decision making, while the second company may view employee input as essential.

Not all of us work in a global marketplace or in a business environment. However, regardless of our profession, the diverse national culture in which we live, and the importance of interactions with others within a globalized society make it imperative that we understand the complexity of how people view the world. The perspectives of the primary culture and the dimensions through which the culture operates will have strong influences on the attitudes, beliefs, and behavior of societal members. They provide a lens through which members of that culture see the world around them, and they can explain many organizational and interpersonal problems that arise when people from different cultures interact with one another.

Let us look in more detail at the dimensions of culture outlined in Table 2.1 and their implications when dealing with problems and dilemmas. The dimensions discussed in this model represent opposite approaches, but rarely are two cultures truly opposite. Rather, the dimensions should be viewed along a continuum, and cultures should be considered as closer to one dimension than another.

Relationships With People

First, we will examine the dimensions of culture related to relationships with people. These dimensions concern the following issues and involve the degrees to which a culture values universalism versus particularism; individualism versus communitarianism; being neutral versus being affective; being specific versus being diffuse; and achievement versus ascription.

Universalist Versus Particularist

The **universalist approach** might be described as “playing by the rules” or “not playing favorites.” People of this mindset believe that it is possible to determine what is good and right and that this always applies. One example of such thinking comes from how government contracts are awarded in the United States. Competitive bidding is often used to help ensure “fairness” in how contracts are awarded and to give all bidders an equal opportunity to obtain the work.

On the other hand, cultures that take a **particularist approach** pay less attention to abstract societal codes and place more emphasis on relationships. They may believe, for example, that friendship has special obligations and thus deserves extra consideration when awarding contracts.

Management consultants, researchers, and social psychologists who utilize a universalist approach allege there is one right way to manage, coach, and behave. They often leverage psychological assessment tools to determine personality and behavior types and then adopt a preferred method of dealing with specific types. Many such consultants affirm that their research shows leading methods in certain instances. In fact, many of the American emotional intelligence indexes are scored on a scale that implies that a higher score is better. So, while it is useful for individuals to better understand themselves and to receive tools and suggestions for improving interpersonal skills, the single perspective of the universalist approach can limit one’s ability to maneuver, or multiplex, in a complex global system.

Individualism Versus Communitarianism

This dimension of culture relates to the degree to which a society prizes the individual or the group. U.S. culture, for example, strongly values **individualism**. Americans generally have a strong sense of personal identity and promote individual goals, rights, choices, and freedoms. They are generally stimulated by individual competition and they celebrate personal achievement. Americans praise in public and reprimand in private. Hundreds of self-help books tell Americans to take care of themselves first; place personal happiness above that of others; and make decisions based on personal satisfaction, goals, and safety.

Contrary to this individualistic view, Triandis (1989) found that nearly three fourths of the world’s cultures can be described as valuing **communitarianism** or as having a collectivistic orientation. *Communitarianism* and *collectivism* place value on group identity and group goals and values. Many Asian cultures are considered to be communitarian. In China, for example, people tend to value cooperation and harmony, conforming to the group, and relying on others for support. They consider the rights of the group, family, or the common good to be more important than the rights of an individual. In Japanese business situations, decisions are made within the group, with little or no regard for individuals (Morrison & Conaway 2006).

Neutral Versus Affective

Should interactions with other people be objective and detached, or is it acceptable to express emotion? This dimension of culture relates to the degree to which feelings are expressed in our interactions with others. Do we believe it is best to control our emotions, remain objective, and deal with the facts, or is expressing emotion acceptable or even encouraged? North Americans and northwestern Europeans will often focus more on achieving objectives and goals than on the emotions that might influence them. Emotions are thought to confuse issues and must often be “checked at the door.”

However, in other European cultures and in some Central and South American cultures, it is considered appropriate to involve the whole gamut of emotions in all types of interpersonal interactions. Loud laughter, boisterous conversations, banging one's fist on the table, or leaving a room in anger are all acceptable and customary behaviors.

Specific Versus Diffuse

Is a relationship specified by contract, or should it involve real and personal contact with others? While many cultures believe that it takes time to build trust, in some cultures, trust can be established quickly through a written agreement. Personal and business relationships are impacted by this concept. In *specific* cultures the professional relationship is "all business"; people can conduct business with strangers if the stranger has earned trust through reputation. American businesses generally fall on the specific side of the spectrum.

In *diffuse* cultures, however, it is not only preferable to have a personal relationship with others involved in a project, but such a relationship is often required before business can take place. People who are part of a diffuse culture require a period of time to become acquainted and build trust.

To illustrate this dichotomy, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) cite the example of an American company trying to win a contract with an Argentinean customer. The Americans give an impressive presentation that focuses on the firm's superior product and low price. Their Swedish competitor, on the other hand, takes a week to get to know the customer before presenting its product. Although its product is somewhat less attractive and slightly higher priced, the Swedes win the business because they understood the premium that Argentineans place on establishing a relationship prior to doing business. Argentinean business culture, in other words, was more *diffuse* in this context.

Another way to understand the specific-diffuse dimension is to consider that in specific-oriented cultures, personal and professional relationships can be separated. Individuals in highly specific-oriented cultures insulate professional relationships from other interactions. For example, suppose a manager happens to be on the same after-work softball team as a subordinate. None of the manager's authority would carry over to the softball team relationship. In fact, if the subordinate was a better player, the manager might defer to the subordinate and ask for help improving his or her fielding or hitting ability. Each encounter is considered a specific interaction that is separate from all other interactions.

Achievement Versus Ascription

This dimension of culture identifies how status is accorded to individuals. All societies give some of their members higher status than others, though how status is determined may differ. In *achievement*-oriented cultures, some members have higher status by virtue of their accomplishments or what they have done in the past (such as having 15 years of experience as a dancer). In other cultures, members have status according to "who they are" based on characteristics such as age (such as being the oldest child or a tribal elder), gender (in the case of male preference), familial or social connections (such as being the boss's nephew), education (such as where the person went to school), or social class (such as belonging to the aristocracy).

In more *achievement*-oriented cultures such as the United States, symbols of achievement are often necessary to make status claims credible. These symbols include academic titles; a corner office; the right to follow one's name with an abbreviation such as JD, MD, or PhD; and the proverbial "key to the executive washroom" in the business world. When one is introduced to others in achievement-oriented cultures, more emphasis is placed on what one *does* or on what one has achieved than on who one *is*.

In *ascription*-oriented cultures, privileges are not earned; they are a function of who the person is. Thus, if anyone in the circle of influence does something to reduce his or her status, the people around that individual are downgraded as a consequence.

To illustrate this concept, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) use an example of a British general manager (GM) who was assigned to an office in Thailand. The GM refused to take his predecessor's car, so a subordinate offered him a Mercedes. The GM replied that he did not want a Mercedes but would prefer a small car such as a Suzuki to maneuver through Bangkok's congested traffic.

The subordinate gave all sorts of reasons why he could not order a Suzuki for the GM. Eventually the subordinate revealed that if the GM had a Suzuki, his employees would have to come to work on bicycles to maintain their differences in status.

Attitudes Regarding Time

Cultural differences with respect to time are often obvious when we interact with people from cultures other than our own, and they are often some of the most difficult and maddening cross-cultural situations to encounter.

Some cultures, such as that of the United States, place an emphasis on clock time, punctuality, meeting agreed-upon deadlines, and doing what you say you will do when you say you will do it. Wilson, Hoppe, and Sayles (1996) say that these cultures treat time like a valuable but limited resource that must be used efficiently. Every minute counts, and individuals prefer to go about their tasks sequentially, working from the present toward the future.

Other cultures view time as infinitely available. Timelines and deadlines are seen as expressions of intent rather than commitment. There is always tomorrow, it is believed. Wilson, Hoppe, and Sayles (1996) state this view of time is common in cultures with agrarian traditions, while Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) say these cultures view time as moving in a circle, with the past, present, and future intertwined.

Attitudes Regarding the Environment

How we relate to nature is the last dimension outlined by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner in their seven dimensions model. Natural forces such as hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, and fires have always besieged humans. This dimension captures two opposite views regarding how the external environment influences people: *individual motivations and values versus outside forces*. At one extreme on this continuum is the belief that motivations and values are derived from within each person and that humans can and should attempt to control nature. At the other extreme is the belief that the environment is more powerful than individuals. Humans must respect the world outside themselves; they should strive to not disturb the natural world and respect its laws, directions, and forces.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) illustrate these attitudes using the example of the chair of Sony Corporation, a Japanese company. The chair confided that he got the idea to develop the Sony Walkman, one of the first mobile devices to use earbuds, because he loved classical music and did not want to bother others with his music—an example of respecting the outside world. Interestingly, when Westerners adopted the Walkman, their thoughts were the opposite of the chair's. Their primary reason for using the device was to listen to music without being disturbed *by* others and to control the environment in which they walked.

Another way to interpret these opposing views is to consider whether individuals in a particular culture have what psychologist J. B. Rotter termed an **external locus of control** (belief that nature is outside of personal control) or an **internal locus of control** (belief that nature is subject to personal control).

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) used the ideas Rotter developed to assess the relationship leaders and managers from 48 different cultures had with natural events. They presented pairs of alternative statements and asked the individuals to select the alternative they believed most reflected reality. The first of these pairs was as follows:

1. It is worthwhile to try to control important natural forces such as the weather.
2. Nature should take its course, and we just have to accept it the way it comes and do the best we can.

They then recorded the responses they received on a continuum, scoring them from 0, which indicated a belief in no control over nature, to 100, which indicated a belief in complete human control over nature. Selected responses are shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Locus of control for selected countries, first set of alternatives

Country	Score
Bahrain	9
Egypt	9
Oman	11
Kuwait	18
Japan	19
Singapore	20
China	22
Nigeria	47
Spain	50
Cuba	56
Romania	68

Source: Based on Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner, C. (2012). *Riding the waves of culture: Understanding diversity in global business*. New York: McGraw-Hill, p.175.

No culture was at the absolute extreme of these two viewpoints. However, some significant differences were noted based on geographical areas. With some notable exceptions, individuals in African and Asian countries were more likely to respond that nature should be allowed to take its course. Though not shown in the table, the United States was near the middle of this range of scores.

When the alternatives were presented in a more personally relatable manner, however, the responses were quite different. The second set of alternatives was phrased in this way:

1. What happens to me is my own doing.
2. Sometimes I feel that I do not have enough control over the directions my life is taking.

Selected responses are shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Locus of control for selected countries, second set of alternatives

Country	Score
China	33
Singapore	57
Japan	63
France	76
United Kingdom	77

Country	Score
United States	82

Source: Based on Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner, C. (2012). Riding the waves of culture: Understanding diversity in global business. New York: McGraw-Hill, p.175.

On the basis of the second set of alternatives, a number of countries appear to have an almost completely internalized locus of control. Most North American and European countries had high scores indicating an internal locus of control, while China demonstrated a relatively low internal locus of control when compared to other Asian countries.

3.3 Demographic Characteristics of Diversity

One approach to studying diversity is to examine demographic information. Gender, race, ethnic origins, age, income, religion, education, and spoken language are examples of demographic data. Gender, race, ethnicity, and age have been four particularly contentious areas in the study of diversity that we will address in this section of the text.

Sex, Gender, and Culture

In colloquial language the terms *sex* and *gender* are often used interchangeably. However, in academic literature they have distinctly different meanings. The term **sex** refers to biological characteristics of male or female. **Intersex**, or intersexuality, refers to the anatomical presence of both male and female sexual features in one individual. These terms are controversial, however. In 2006, the American and European endocrinological societies adopted the new term *disorders of sexual development (DSD)* as a replacement for the term *intersexuality* and an even older term, *hermaphroditism*.

Those who prefer the term *intersexuality* often criticize the use of *DSD* because it labels intersexuality as a disorder. They counter that such a label will subject intersexed persons—particularly infants and children—to unwanted and perhaps harmful medical interventions. They assert that many medical interventions to “normalize” intersex bodies are not medically necessary at all but are, in fact, conducted because these bodies violate social or cultural rules. Additionally, they argue that the term *intersexuality* is preferable because it recognizes that sexuality is not an either/or issue—that the concept of sex is flexible and bodies can be arranged on a continuum from clearly male to clearly female (Cooley & Harrison, 2012).

The term **gender**, however, is a socially constructed term that refers to an individual’s identity in relation to a society or culture. In the academic literature the term *gender* refers not to biological male or female characteristics, but to masculine or feminine qualities, behaviors, tasks, roles, and responsibilities that a society considers appropriate for men, women, boys, and girls. In its publication *Definition of Terms: Sex, Gender, Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation* (2011), the American Psychological Association defines gender as “the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person’s biological sex” (para. 2). If that behavior is compatible with cultural norms and expectations, it is considered gender normative. Behaviors that are incompatible with the culture’s norms and expectations are considered gender nonconformist.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) believes that gender issues are important in rural development and affect the progress in agriculture around the world. The FAO argues that understanding gender terminology and perceptions of gender are critical to resolving these issues. In 2014 the FAO wrote:

People are born female or male, but learn to be women and men. Perceptions of gender are deeply rooted, vary widely both within and between cultures, and change over time. But in all cultures, gender determines power and resources for females and males. (para. 2)

In other words, the meaning of the terms *masculine* and *feminine* are culturally determined. So, too, are the roles women and men assume; their styles of dress; and the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors toward those who act, look, and think differently. As cultures change over time, as subcultures develop, or as people from different cultural backgrounds interact with each other, the intersection of gender roles and behaviors and issues regarding gender expression inevitably occur. **Gender expression** refers to the way in which we present ourselves; it also is how we communicate gender within a given culture. As the Gill Foundation (n.d.), a Colorado organization that advocates for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues, puts it, “Our appearance, speech, behavior, movement, and other factors signal that we feel—and wish to be understood—as masculine or feminine, or as a man or a woman” (para. 1), which, for some people, may not match their biological sex.

Gender has important legal, social, political, and personal ramifications. For the past 150 years or so, issues pertaining to gender and gender roles have been very controversial in American society and scholarly research.

Historical Perspectives on Sex and Gender Issues

American sexual mores and behaviors were brought to the forefront of social consciousness in 1948 and 1953 by two extensive surveys, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, popularly known as the Kinsey Reports. These surveys, compiled by Indiana University zoologist Alfred Kinsey and his research team, were the results of interviews with thousands of American men and women about their first sexual intercourse, number of partners, premarital and extramarital sexual history, incidence of homosexuality and lesbianism, and other sexual statistics.

The findings of the Kinsey Reports shocked both experts and the public and spurred widespread discussion of national sexual practices and ideologies. They were praised by some experts for their breadth and dispassionate approach to human sexuality and virulently criticized and condemned as immoral by others (Reumann, 2005). The reports also initiated heated debates regarding the increasing depiction of sexual themes in popular media and the future of the nuclear family and sparked campaigns that cast suspected homosexuals as threats to American security who should be removed from military and government service (Reumann, 2005). As one researcher noted, "Literally, sexuality was surveyed, mapped, and theorized as never before. Metaphorically, sexual behavior was framed as a matter of politics, cultural change, and public policy" (Reumann, 2005, p. 6).

The Kinsey Reports made quite an impact in post-World War II America, where the vast majority of people chose wedlock over single life and marriage was central to national ideology. Despite the prevailing view of marriage, however, experts noted that the divorce rate was climbing and single-parent households and alternative family living arrangements were replacing the traditional nuclear family (Reumann, 2005). By the 1960s the slogans "The times they are a-changing" and "Make love, not war" signaled the beginnings of a sexual revolution that was marked by "free love" and communal living.

While some decried the breakdown of the traditional family in the 1960s and 1970s, others saw it as a positive factor. Marriage had previously been based on economic need, convenience, and reproductive imperatives, and some regarded the significant changes to it as evidence that American society was embracing a more **egalitarian** viewpoint of gender. Sociologist David Riesman, for example, noted the emergence of a

total Gestalt [a synthesis where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts] in which marriage itself is of a new sort: shared, communicative, emancipated, in which the husband takes an active part as more than a mere breadwinner, and the wife an active part as more than "the little woman" of traditional culture. (as cited in Reumann, 2005, p. 143)

The rise of contemporary feminism in Western society from the 1960s onward, plus the enormous changes in women's roles regarding work and home, inspired tremendous academic inquiry into issues of gender. These events have also spurred changes to the way femininity and masculinity are defined and to how these relate to societal functions in the family, political institutions, work roles, and economic activities (Stearns, 2000).

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual/Transgender, and Questioning Subculture (LGBTQ)

Other aspects of the relationship between sex, gender, and culture can be seen in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual/transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) subculture. We use these terms in this text because they are common in the LGBTQ community and in the academic literature. However, it is necessary to clarify how these terms are generally used and to state that they are not the only terms used to describe this subculture.

The terms *lesbian*, *gay*, and *bisexual* (LGB) refer to **sexual orientation**—the direction of one's sexual interest. The terms *transsexual/transgender* and *questioning* (TQ—the Q also sometimes stands for *queer*) instead refer to

a person's **gender identity**—or “one’s sense of oneself as male, female, or transgender” (American Psychological Association, 2011, para. 3). The abbreviation LGBTQ is sometimes rendered as *LGBTI* by some advocates who believe that intersexuality should be included in discussions about sex and gender issues.

Like other demographic characteristics, gender issues are social constructs that form an important aspect of culture. In his 2010 book *The Right to Be Out: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in America’s Public Schools*, UCLA professor Stuart Biegel acknowledges that he felt tremendous pressure throughout his years as an educator not to reveal his sexual orientation. He wrote, “I came of age in an era when the legal terrain was so daunting and the stigma attached to being openly gay so pervasive that being out was not even an option for most of us” (Biegel, 2010, p. vii). He shares that when he “came out” in 2003, he became aware of the extent to which LGBTQ issues were under-recognized in education policy.

Biegel (2010) explains “coming out” as a communicative process that begins by recognizing one’s sexual identity and then sharing this recognition with others. He asserts that the purpose of this communication, however, may vary significantly from person to person and from situation to situation: “For some people, it may have a developmental component, a social-responsibility component, a political component, and even a religious component” (Biegel, 2010, p. xiv). According to Biegel, “the process of identity development . . . called ‘coming out’ has been found to be strongly related to psychological adjustment—the more positive the gay, lesbian, or bisexual identity, the better one’s mental health and the higher one’s self-esteem” (p. xiv).

At its most basic level, “being out” is a condition or state of genuine openness, and all persons have a right to be open regarding fundamental aspects of their identity, personhood, and group affiliations. From a legal perspective, Biegel (2010) argues it is a classic combination of 1st Amendment and 14th Amendment principles. As a 1st Amendment right, Biegel argues that all persons have the freedom to express an identity, and as a 14th Amendment right, they have the right to be treated equally as a result of expressing that identity.

Among sociologists, psychologists, and legal experts who study LGBTQ issues, ongoing debates ensue concerning terminology and definitions, tactics for ensuring equal protection and freedom from discrimination, theories of identity formation, and whether and to what extent there should be any identity categories at all.

Race as a Socially Constructed Category

Many people mistakenly assume that humanity is divided into biologically separate races, descended from groups that evolved on different continents, with Black people originating in Africa and Whites originating in Europe. They may also think of race in terms of skin color or appearance and believe that races can be distinguished, genetically, by physical traits. Similar to other terms discussed in this text, the differences between the term’s colloquial and academic meanings can often confuse students and scholars.

Race is recognized among scholars to be a socially constructed category that describes human beings who share an arbitrary set of hereditary traits (Zack, 2012). This is in contrast to its use in colloquial language, where race assigns a biological basis to groups. However, contemporary scientific researchers no longer believe that human beings are divided into a small number of biological groups with shared and inherited traits.

DNA analysis of genetic material indicates that conventional geographic “racial” groupings differ from one another only in about 6% of their genes. Most physical variation—about 94%—actually lies *within* so-called racial groups. This means that greater variation is found within “racial” groups than between them. Moreover, skin color, hair texture, eye shape, facial features, and limb proportion vary considerably, even among members of the same family (American Anthropological Association, 1998).

Contemporary scientists attribute differences in physical appearance to the migratory and reproductive patterns of people who bred mainly within their own groups. In other words, such distinctions resulted from the places where



Robert Churchill/iStock/Thinkstock

DNA analyses indicate that more variations occur within groups rather than between groups.

as short, stout people (Zack, 2012).

different populations traveled and with whom they mated. Some anthropologists have speculated that various traits, including skin color, hair texture, tooth size, nose length, and body size, reflect the adaptations of populations to different environments over long periods of time. For example, small, elongated body shapes dissipate heat better, whereas large, round bodies conserve heat better.

This theory would account for observations that a small, thin stature is seen more frequently in people who have lived for many generations near the equator, while a short, stout stature is more common in people who have evolved over thousands of years in colder, northern climates. Such differences are not uniform and systematic enough, however, to support separate categories of human race. All populations invariably have some small, thin people as well

U.S. Census Bureau Racial Categories

The U.S. Census Bureau collects racial data on individuals in the United States via questionnaires. These data are based on self-identification, in accordance with guidelines provided by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The OMB guidelines require five minimum racial categories: (a) White, (b) Black or African American, (c) American Indian or Alaska Native, (d) Asian, and (e) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. These categories, according to the Census Bureau (2011),

generally reflect a social definition of race recognized in this country and not an attempt to define race biologically, anthropologically, or genetically. In addition, it is recognized that the categories of the race item include racial and national origin or sociocultural groups. (p. 2)

The racial categories on these surveys have undergone numerous changes over the years to reflect changes in American society. In the 2000 census, for example, respondents could, for the first time, check more than one box for race to reflect their identities. According to Census Bureau authorities, that census yielded 63 possible racial combinations (Zack, 2012).

The 2010 census offered respondents a new category, "some other race." When those census data were compiled, respondents who selected the some other race category alone were assigned to one of the five OMB-mandated racial categories. However, for respondents who selected the some other race category and one or more of the other race categories, the some other race selection was ignored. These changes and tabulating decisions make it impossible to compare census racial figures over time.

Historical Perspectives on Race

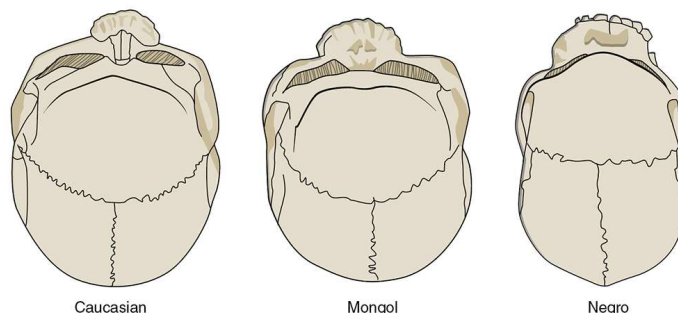
Contemporary views of race are in stark contrast to those of the 19th century. One method used to document race and justify racial inequities during that period was to examine people's physical differences. Doing so categorized people into three primary racial groups: Caucasian, Mongol, and Negro. At the time, scholars believed that physical differences accounted for mental differences, so intellectual differences between the races were studied simply by documenting anatomical differences. The findings of such studies greatly influenced how 19th-century Americans viewed the issue of race (Eberhardt, 2005).

Prominent physician and scientist Samuel George Morton played a significant role in these studies. Morton amassed more than 1,000 human skulls and used them to identify distinct characteristics of various racial

groups (as cited in Eberhardt, 2005). Morton calculated skull size by filling the skulls with mustard seeds and, later, lead shot. Whatever the index of measurement, he consistently found the skulls of White people to be significantly larger than those of Black people. This finding was taken to legitimize the then commonplace view that Whites were superior to Blacks. Although these findings have been thoroughly discredited, the scientific community applauded Morton's work at the time (as cited in Eberhardt, 2005).

Figure 3.1: Comparison of Caucasian, Mongol, and Negro skulls, 1854

Josiah Nott and George Gliddon used this illustration as scientific evidence supporting the idea of differences between the races.



Source: Nott, J. C., Gliddon, G. R., Agassiz, L., Usher, W., & Patterson, H. S. (1854). *Types of mankind: Or, ethnological researches, based upon the ancient monuments, paintings, sculptures, and crania of races, and upon their natural, geographical, philological and biblical history.* Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, Grambo.

Josiah Nott and George Gliddon published their book, *Types of Mankind*, in 1854. It became the dominant book on race in American society at the time. In graphic form (as shown in Figure 3.1), they displayed their scientific evidence of racial differences. The following note on their interpretation of their findings accompanied the illustration in the text:

The "Caucasian," Mongol, and Negro, constitute three of the most prominent groups of mankind; and the vertical views of the following crania . . . (display, at a glance, how widely separated they are in conformation. . . . Such types speak for themselves; and the anatomist has no more need of protracted comparisons to seize their diversities, than the school-boy to distinguish turkeys from peacocks, or pecaries from Guinea-pigs. (as cited in Eberhardt, 2005, para. 4)

In his 1996 book *The Mismeasure of Man*, S. J. Gould noted that Nott, Gliddon, and other scientists from a variety of disciplines used brain measurements to rank racial groups along a continuum of worth, which indicated the innate inferiority of Black people and the superiority of White people. Ultimately, the skull images (see Figure 3.2) were used to dehumanize Black people and support the view that Blacks fell somewhere between humans and apes on the animal spectrum.

Figure 3.2: Comparison of Greek, Creole Negro, and young chimpanzee head shapes, 1854

Josiah Nott and George Gliddon used this illustration to support the belief in a hierarchy among groups.

Contemporary Views of Race

Much has changed since the days of Morton, Nott, and Gliddon. On June 26, 2000, in a speech related to the Human Genome Project,

U.S. president Bill Clinton stated, "I believe one of the great truths to emerge from this triumphant expedition inside the human genome is that in genetic terms, all human beings, regardless of race, are more than 99.9 percent the same" (as cited in Bliss, 2012, p. 1). Some of the most powerful scientists of the day joined Clinton in stating that scientific investigation into race would go no further; **genomics**, the discipline within the field of genetics that studies the structure of genes in human chromosomes, had once and for all closed the door on the idea of race as a biological characteristic of humans.

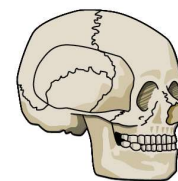
It has therefore surprised many that since that time racial research has reemerged and proliferated, although with a decidedly different tone than it had in the 19th century. Less than a year after Clinton's speech, newspapers began to note a surge of race-based medical research. Since that time, one researcher writes,

a discursive explosion, along with a mushrooming of technologies developed in the service of testing, manipulating, or capitalizing on race, has made this decade of science [2010–2020] one of the most race-obsessed ever. Scientists have scrambled to rewrite the book on race. (Bliss, 2012, p. 2)

One reason for the haste to apply emerging technologies to questions regarding race is that science and politics have long intersected. Social policies and political systems based on racial inequality have often been historically justified based on the findings of science—such as slavery debates in 19th-century Europe and linkages between evolutionary theory and Darwinism. What is particularly fascinating about contemporary racial science is that it comes after three quarters of a century of U.S. policy designed to prevent research into biological differences in race.

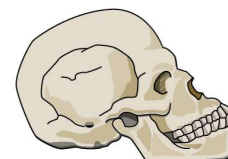
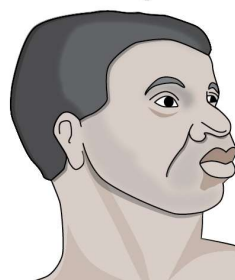
The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) statements on race in the 1950s ushered in a series of collaborations between biological and social scientists who worked to dispel notions of innate racial behavior or inferiority. To this end, evolutionary biologists authored popular science books that abandoned the notion of biological racial differences. Powerful organizations such as the American Association of Physical Anthropologists, the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, the American Sociological Association, and the American Anthropological Association have issued or updated their own statements on race, disavowing biological explanations of race and arguments for racial inequality (Bliss, 2012).

Apollo Belvidere



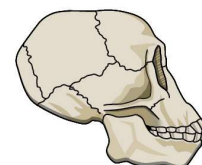
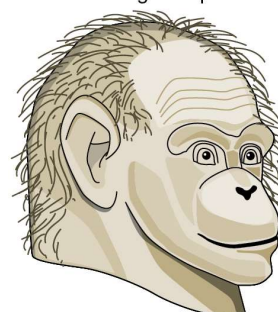
Greek

Negro



Creole Negro

Young Chimpanzee



Young Chimpanzee

Source: Nott, J. C., Gliddon, G. R., Agassiz, L., Usher, W., & Patterson, H. S. (1854). *Types of mankind: Or, ethnological researchers, based upon the ancient monuments, paintings, sculptures, and crania of races, and upon their natural, geographical, philological and biblical history.* Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, Grambo.

American Anthropological Association Statement on Race

On May 17, 1998, the American Anthropological Association adopted a statement on "race" that is excerpted below. The AAA said it did not believe that its statement reflected a consensus of all its members but that it represented generally the contemporary thinking and scholarly positions of a majority of anthropologists at the time:

Today scholars in many fields argue that “race” as it is understood in the United States of America was a social mechanism invented during the 18th century to refer to those populations brought together in colonial America: the English and other European settlers, the conquered Indian peoples, and those peoples of Africa brought in to provide slave labor. . . . Ultimately “race” as an ideology about human differences was subsequently spread to other areas of the world. . . . “Race” thus evolved as a worldview, a body of prejudgments that distorts our ideas about human differences and group behavior. Racial beliefs constitute myths about the diversity in the human species and about the abilities and behavior of people homogenized into “racial” categories. . . . The “racial” worldview was invented to assign some groups to perpetual low status, while others were permitted access to privilege, power, and wealth. The tragedy in the United States has been that the policies and practices stemming from this worldview succeeded all too well in constructing unequal populations among Europeans, Native Americans, and peoples of African descent. Given what we know about the capacity of normal humans to achieve and function within any culture, we conclude that present-day inequalities between so-called “racial” groups are not consequences of their biological inheritance but products of historical and contemporary social, economic, educational, and political circumstances. (American Anthropological Association, 1998, paras. 4, 8, 9, & 12)

Source: © American Anthropological Association. <http://www.aaanet.org> (<http://www.aaanet.org>).

Catherine Bliss (2012) of the University of California–San Francisco writes that *genomics* has become today’s new science of race. She asserts that people from distinct realms of science and politics are now working together to establish a new research framework regarding what it means to be human. The result, she claims, is a widely accepted system of shared values and practices and a consensus that race is socially and biologically meaningful.

In her 2012 book *Race Decoded: The Genomic Fight for Social Justice*, Bliss argues that “conceptions of race are never a closed case of self-evident truths” (p. 19). Race, she states, now has relational meanings—it is constantly being redefined to mean something different in different cultures and at different moments of time. Bliss believes that there is now global interest in recreating social bonds based on new biological evidence. For example, some diseases such as sickle-cell anemia are more prevalent among Black people than other racial groups, and race-based medicine has now emerged as a way to achieve more personalized medical health care.

Evidence of this shift comes from 1998, when the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) ruled that all new drug applications must “present effectiveness and safety data for important demographic subgroups, specifically gender, age, and racial subgroups” (as cited in Bliss, 2012, p. 22). The FDA was motivated to make such a ruling because different subgroups may respond differently to a particular drug, and differences in effectiveness and potentially adverse reactions might occur among subgroups. Thus, biological conclusions are now being drawn from socially defined U.S. Census Bureau racial classifications. The challenge, says Bliss (2012), is “for scientists to create a biology of race that follows egalitarian and pro-diversity goals, as opposed to colorblind or race-neutral goals, when that science is part of a larger economy of identity-based goods and services” (p. 20).

Exploring Racial Preferences

Studies about racial preferences have been conducted for decades. In 1940 psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark conducted what become known as the “doll study” to examine the psychological effects of segregation on Black children (“*Brown v. Board at Fifty*,” n.d.). Their study consisted of showing Black children aged 3 to 7 Black dolls and White dolls. The children were asked questions to determine whether they had a preference for one race or the other. The majority of the children selected the White dolls, to whom they attributed positive characteristics. This study was referenced by the Supreme Court in its 1954 decision in *Oliver Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, in which the court ruled that school segregation was a violation of the Equal Protection and Due Process clauses of the 14th Amendment (“*Brown v. Board at Fifty*,” n.d.).

Another influential study was conducted in 1968 by Jane Elliot, a teacher. She divided her third-grade class into groups of blue-eyed and brown-eyed children. Each group was treated differently—one day the brown-eyed children were told they were inferior to the blue-eyed group. The results showed that doing so caused the blue-eyed children to outperform those with brown eyes. When the experiment was reversed, the same results were found: When the brown-eyed children were told they were superior, they did better than their blue-eyed peers. The experiment can be seen at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/divided> (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/divided>).

Both of these historic experiments showed that individuals have built-in racist beliefs; but how exactly are these learned? In 2010 the cable news channel CNN replicated these studies, asking Black and White children a series of questions to determine whether they preferred white or black colors and also White or Black children. The results also indicated White bias.

In 2003 California Newsreel, a nonprofit, social-issue documentary film center, produced and distributed a video series that was televised on the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) titled *Race—the Power of an Illusion*. The purpose of the series was to highlight the underlying social, economic, and political conditions that disproportionately channel advantages and opportunities to White people and to shift the conversation from discussing diversity and respecting cultural differences to building a more just and equitable society.

The series’ website includes an activity that explores traits such as skin color and illustrates concepts regarding views of race and self-identification. The activity allows you to try your hand at “sorting” individuals based on appearance and comparing your answers to how the individuals identify themselves.

Critical Thinking Question

1. Explore these traits and do the sorting activity at http://www.pbs.org/race/002_SortingPeople/002_00-home.htm (http://www.pbs.org/race/002_SortingPeople/002_00-home.htm). After completing the activity, think to yourself: Where did I learn that?

Sources: ©1995-2014 WGBH Educational Foundation; © 2003 California Newsreel.

Ethnicity as a Demographic Characteristic

While views of race as a biological construct are undergoing change today, scholars generally regard ethnic groups and ethnicities as valid societal demographic categories. Still, the language used to frame ethnic groups is often contentious. While one person might embrace a term for his or her group, another may dislike that term. People seem to embrace different terms in different regions.

Defining Ethnicity

The word *ethnicity* has Greek origins and was originally used to describe pagans, or non-Hellenic peoples. In sociology, however, the term was coined in 1953 by sociologist David Riesman, who used it to describe cultural differences. Over time the word acquired different meanings (Malesevic, 2004).

For example, in Europe, the word *ethnic* came to be associated with people who were viewed as a separate group based on ancestry and geographic region and who constituted a separate nation or were defined by descent or territory and retained a distinct cultural identity in a larger nation. The Welsh in Great Britain and the Basques in southwestern France would be examples of such ethnic groups. In the United States and Canada, however, the word came to be commonly substituted for *minority*, and the terms *minority group* or *ethnic group*, particularly when applied to an immigrant population, often led to categorizations of “us” and “them” and served as a rationale for oppression or discrimination (Malesevic, 2004).

Using a broad definition, **ethnicity** can generally be defined as the beliefs and practices of a social group whose members share a national cultural or historical tradition. However, determining what constitutes an ethnic group and which cultural or historical traditions qualify is difficult and controversial.

Hundreds of thousands of ethnic groups exist throughout the world. An ethnicity’s cultural tradition shapes its language, religion, diet, clothing, habits, and values. Historically, members of ethnic groups also often tend to share certain physical traits because they traditionally married within their own groups. For example, blond hair and blue eyes predominate among Swedish people, and brown hair and brown eyes predominate among Italians (Zack, 2012). People who claim no particular ethnicity generally have a mixture of cultural traits that constitute their family traditions.

Ethnic groups can be defined by certain traits, though not always. For example, consider language: Speaking a common language defines some ethnic groups. Hispanics are often defined as people who come from Spanish-speaking countries, though many second- and third-generation Hispanics or Latinos do not speak Spanish. An ethnic group might also be defined as sharing a national origin (such as Italian). However, many Italians who immigrated to the United States did not identify with the nation they chose to leave but with specific regions in Italy. In other words, they identified themselves as Tuscanos/Tuscans or Napolitani, for example, rather than as Italians.

The 1980 *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* identified more than 100 ethnic groups in the United States (see Table 3.3.). However, to emphasize how difficult it is to define ethnicity, the *Harvard Encyclopedia* lists Africans as an ethnic group separate from African Americans, or Afro Americans, because of their distinct cultural histories. The former individuals or their ancestors voluntarily moved to the United States from Africa rather than arriving against their will as slaves (Zack, 2012).

Table 3.3: Ethnic groups in United States

Groups, A–K	Acadians, Afghans, Africans, Afro Americans, Albanians, Aleuts, Alsatians, American Indians, Amish, Anglo Americans, Anglo Saxons, Appalachians, Arabs, Armenians, Aryans, Asians, Assyrians, Australians and New Zealanders, Austrians, Azerbaijanis, Bangladeshi, Basques, Belgians, Belorussians, Bosnian Muslims, British, Bulgarians, Burmese, Canadians, Carpatho-Rusyns, Central and South Americans, Chinese, Copts, Cornish, Creoles, Croats, Cubans, Czechs, Danes, Dominicans, Dutch, East Indians, Eastern Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, English, Eskimos, Estonians, Filipinos, Finns, French, French Canadians, Frisians, Georgians, Germans, Germans from Russia, Greeks, Gypsies, Haitians, Hawaiians, Hispanics, Hungarians, Hutterites, Icelanders, Indochinese, Indonesians, Iranians, Irish, Italians, Japanese, Jews, Kalmyks, Koreans, Kurds
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Groups, L–Z	Latvians, Lithuanians, Luxembourgers, Macedonians, Maltese, Manx, Mexicans, Mormons, Muslims, North Caucasians, Norwegians, Orientals, Oriental Orthodox, Pacific Islanders, Pakistanis, Pennsylvania Germans, Poles, Portuguese, Puerto Ricans, Romanians, Russians, Scots, Scots Irish, Serbs, Slovaks, Slovenes, South Africans, Southerners, Spaniards, Spanish, Spanish Surnamed, Swedes, Swiss, Tatars, Teutonic, Thai, Triracial Isolates, Turkestanis, Turks, Ukrainians, Welsh, Wends, West Indians, Yankees, Zoroastrians
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Source: Based on Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Group, as cited in Zack, N. (2012). *Race & ethnicity*. San Diego, CA: Bridgepoint Education.

The Amish, a group of traditionalist Christian church fellowships that form a subgroup of the Mennonite churches, qualify as an ethnic group based on a shared religion. However, other Christian religions such as Catholics and Protestants are generally not considered ethnic groups. Jews qualify as an ethnic group primarily because of heredity—because their parents were Jews. Judaism is considered a race, religion, and culture, so even though they may be born Jewish, some Jews may not necessarily have a shared religion, since many do not practice Judaism (Novak, 2000).

Racial groupings may often encompass several distinct ethnicities. For example, someone may identify their race as Asian (one of the U.S. Census Bureau racial categories), but their ethnicity as Japanese, Korean, or Chinese—separate ethnic groups that have significantly different ancestral national origins, cultural traditions and practices, and shared histories. To complicate the issue further, many people use the terms *race* and *ethnicity* interchangeably. They may, for example, call unjust treatment against themselves *racial* discrimination (Zack, 2012).

Historical Perspectives on Ethnicity

When the term *ethnicity* was first used, many scholars took care to differentiate it from the word *race*, due to how it was used by Germany's Nazi Party to systematically exterminate Jews, Roma, homosexuals, the disabled, and other groups of so-called undesirable peoples in the 1930s and 1940s. With the support of German scientists, the Nazis believed the human race could be improved by eliminating races they considered inferior and encouraging the development of a pure, superior German or Aryan "master race."

After Nazi leader Adolf Hitler took power, Nazi schoolteachers began to apply what the Germans called the "principles of racial science" (Nazi Racism, 2013, para. 3) in their classrooms. They measured students' skull size and nose length and recorded the color of their hair and eyes to determine whether they truly belonged to the Aryan race. The extermination of Jews and other "undesirable" groups began in 1933, as the Nazis viewed them as a "poisonous 'race,' which 'lived off' the other races and weakened them" (Nazi Racism, 2013, para. 3).

After the Nazis were defeated in World War II, interest in ethnicity, nationalism, and group identity grew, and it continues into the 21st century. The 1990s particularly saw a renewed interest in the study of ethnicity due to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and strong nationalist and separatist movements that resulted in the emergence of independent states (Barot, Bradley, & Fenton, 1999). Wars and other armed conflicts in the 1990s and 2000s have typically been internal conflicts, and many of them—from Sri Lanka to Rwanda, Bosnia, and Chechnya—can be described as ethnic conflicts (Eriksen, 2010).



Hanan Isachar/SuperStock

The Nazis believed that certain groups were inferior and classified individuals according to preferred physical characteristics. Such principles factored into the extermination of 6 million European Jews and other "undesirable" groups during the 1930s and 1940s.

Because U.S. Census data is self-reported, and individuals define *ethnicity* differently, it is difficult to precisely determine ethnicity among the U.S. population. The U.S. Census Bureau identifies individuals as Hispanic or Latino if they classify themselves as Mexican; Mexican American; Chicano; Puerto Rican; Cuban; or of other Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. Origin, however, may be viewed as heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or that person's ancestors before their arrival in the United States. Thus, as we discussed previously, ethnicity is a challenging concept.

Age, Cultural Values, and Diversity

Another demographic characteristic of diversity is age, which recent research has examined through the lens of culture. Through shared demographic characteristics and cultural symbols such as music and fashion, individuals form what are called **generational cohorts**, populations that pass through time together with shared habits, styles, and tastes, which gives them shared experiences, a collective memory, and a common culture. According to researchers (Mannheim, 1952; Pilcher, 1994; Corsten 1999), these cohorts forge generational bonds and craft a collective cultural milieu. However, timing is an important component in the formation of generational attachment. Mannheim (1952) argued that a generation represents a unique type of social relationship that is based on being born in a particular time and the sociopolitical events that occur throughout the life course of the birth cohort, particularly as that cohort comes of age. Thus, members of a generation have a shared historical experience, distinctive generational characteristics, and many common values (as cited in McMillin, 2011).

The generational bonds forged by these cohorts are usually created around events and exposures during a period of life between early adolescence to early 20s, when people are “coming of age” (McMillin, 2011). This period of life is crucial to the development of generational attachments because of its large degree of contact with like-aged individuals and identity formation (as cited in McMillin, 2011).

Although this generational bond, which Vincent (2005) dubbed “generational consciousness,” is not limited to adolescence and young adulthood, experiences and exposures during this point in a person's life are thought to influence his or her social interpretations and reactions for the rest of their lives (as cited in McMillin, 2011).

Although researchers disagree on the exact birthdates that define each generation, there is general consensus that Americans born before 1946 belong to the *traditionalists*; those born between 1946 and 1964 are *baby boomers*; persons born from about 1965 to the early 1980s are considered *generation X*; and those born from the mid-1980s to the year 2000 are *generation Y* or *millennials*. Table 3.4 shows the characteristics and values that researchers Nancy Sutton Bell and Marvin Narz (2007) have attributed to each of the generations.

Table 3.4: Generational characteristics, as identified by Bell and Narz

Generation	General characteristics
Traditionalists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hardworking conformists • respect for authority • put duty before pleasure • workers spent most of their careers with one or two employers • nonworking wives tended to family matters • husbands typically spent long hours as breadwinners

Generation	General characteristics
Baby boomers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raised by traditionalists • strong work ethics • valued personal growth, hard work, individuality, and equality of the sexes • had smaller families than traditionalists • many enjoyed affluent lifestyles • began a trend away from long-term relationships with multiple marriages • multiple employers over a lifetime
Generation X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raised by baby boomers • relatively small generation • family oriented • value education, independence, and parenting above work • seek balance in their lives
Generation Y, or the millennials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • also called the Internet generation • exposed to diverse lifestyles and cultures in school at early ages • tend to accept different races, ethnic groups, and sexual orientations • one third are members of minority groups • accustomed to technology, immediacy, and multitasking • have short attention spans • value professional development, creative challenges, and projects with deadlines • want flexible jobs, with the ability to work part time or to leave the workforce temporarily when they have children

Source: Based on Bell, N. S., & Narz, M. (2007). Meeting the challenges of age diversity in the workplace. CPA Journal, 77(2), 56–59.

Generational Subcultures



NEXT ➔