The Individual and Society

Part I: Culture

Humans are social creatures. Since the dawn of Homo sapiens nearly 250,000 years ago, people have grouped together into communities in order to survive. Almost every human behavior, from shopping to marriage to expressions of feelings, is learned. For example, in the United States, people tend to view marriage as a choice between two people, based on mutual feelings of love. In other nations and in other times, marriages have been arranged through a complex process of interviews and negotiations between entire families, or in other cases, through a direct system, such as a "mail order bride." These examples are all aspects of **culture**, which are shared beliefs, values, and practices that participants must learn.

Image A: People adhere to various rules and standards that are created and maintained in culture, such as shaking hands with someone.

A. *Are there different ways to shake someone's hand? How does the circumstance affect how someone would shake someone else's hand?*

Image B: Canadian and British Prime Ministers Justin Trudeau and Boris Johnson performing an elbow bump at the 47th G7 summit in 2021.

B. *How did Covid 19 affect the way we meet and greet each other?*

Within cultures, there are **subcultures.** Subcultures are a smaller cultural group within a larger culture. People of a subculture are part of the larger culture but also share a specific identity within a smaller group. Thousands of subcultures exist within the United States which have loose and informal participation, and can be observed in almost every aspect of our culture.

EXAMPLES OF MAJOR SUBCULTURAL CATEGORIES

CATEGORIES	EXAMPLES
NATIONALITY(BIRTH PLACE)	GREEK,ITALIAN,RUSSIAN
RELIGION	CATHOLIC, HINDU,SIKH
GEOGRAPHIC REGION	EASTERN, SOUTHERN SOUTHWESTERN
RACE	AFRICAN AMERICAN, ASIAN
AGE	TEENAGER, ELDERLY
GENDER	FEMALE, MALE
OCCUPATION	BUS DRIVER, COOK, SCIENTIST
SOCIAL CLASS	LOWER, MIDDLE , UPPER

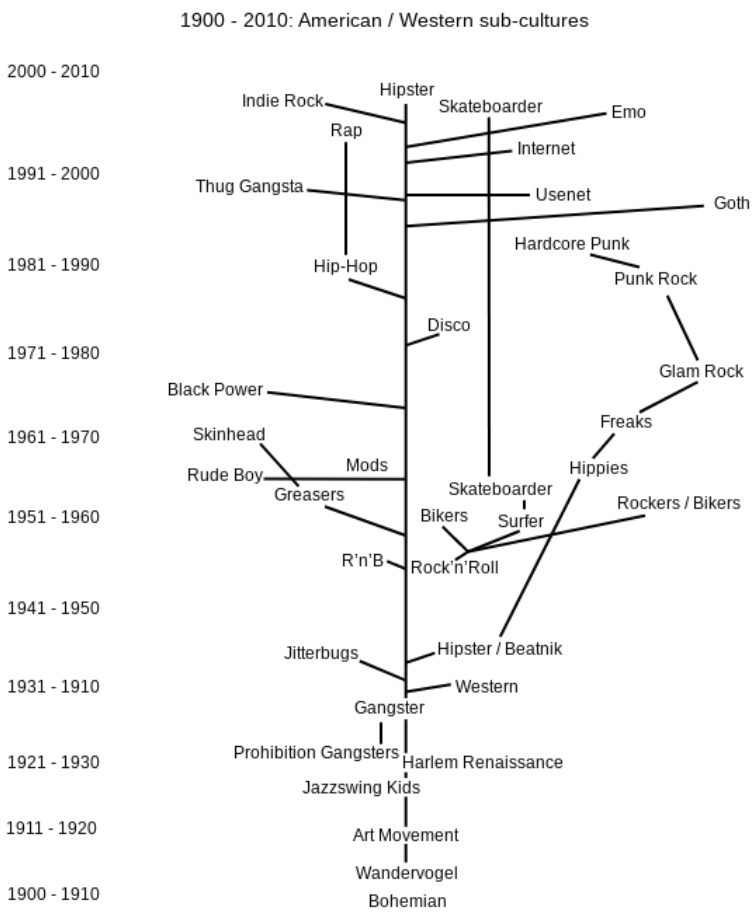
"Potterheads" are a subculture of devoted fans of the Harry Potter series.

Top left image: A group of Harry Potter fans at a movie event.

Lower left image: Co-ed college students playing quidditch – a once fictional sport – which first appeared in J.K. Rowling's debut novel "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone."

Quiddich has become a popular mixed-gender sport on college campuses all over the country.

C. *Why would Harry Potter fandom be considered a subculture? Can you think of any other subcultures that deal with popular media?*

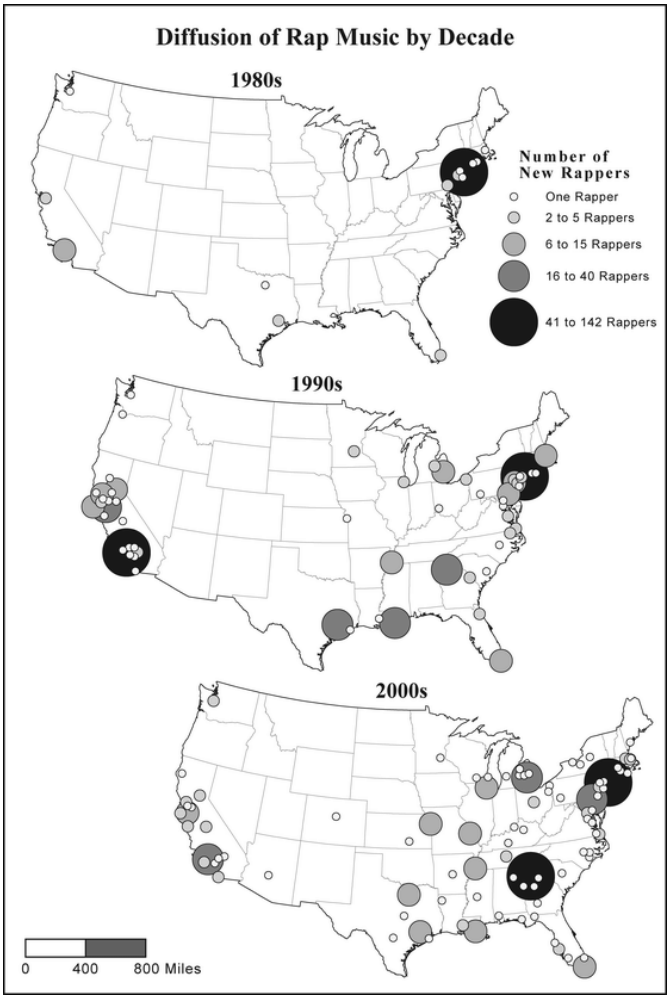


D. *How do subcultures change over time? Do these 21st century subcultures still exist?*

E. *Why would understanding these subcultures be useful to a company trying to sell its products?*

Culture is always evolving. Cultures change when something new (say, railroads or smartphones) opens up new ways of living and when new ideas enter a culture. This happens through **cultural diffusion**, the movement of customs or ideas from one place to another.

Soccer dates back to ancient times, however, the soccer that we know today has its origins in 1800s England. Cricket and rugby are also British games.



Left image: Rap music grew from the isolated Bronx borough in New York City in the 1970s and has become a mainstay in popular culture today.

Above image: Hip Hop artist Cherrie was born in Norway to Somali parents and raised in Sweden. She is an example of how a once male dominated music form from Bronx, NY has diffused all over the world.

F. Can you think of a non-American art form that has become popular in the United States?

In everyday conversation, people rarely distinguish between the terms culture and **society**, but the terms have slightly different meanings. A society describes a group of people who share a community and a culture. This leads to another question: What is a community? The answer is neither simple nor quickly defined. We cannot see a whole community, we cannot touch it, and we cannot directly experience it. Like the words "hill" or "snowflake," a community may come in one of many shapes, sizes, colors and locations, no two of which are alike. A "community" in some sense may not even have a physical location; it could be a group of people with a common interest.

Review Questions Part One:

1. Define and/or explain the following terms:

- Culture
- Subculture
- Cultural Diffusion
- Society

2. Go back and review the images. Answer question letters A - F in complete, well-developed sentences.

Part II: Identity

"Who am I?" is a question we all ask at some time in our lives. Identity is an extremely complex and debated concept. Put simply, **identity** refers to our sense of 'self', or 'who we are'. It is about how we define who we are and how we think of ourselves in our world - and that world often changes. For example, Simon Biles is unquestionably the greatest female gymnast the world has ever seen. The seven time Olympic medalist's gymnastics career is coming to an end and in an interview in June of 2022, Biles said, "At the end of the day, I'm such a huge athlete, but who am I? If you take off that mask, you know, who will I be? I'm still trying to find that out." Like Biles, as we search for answers we begin to define and redefine ourselves.

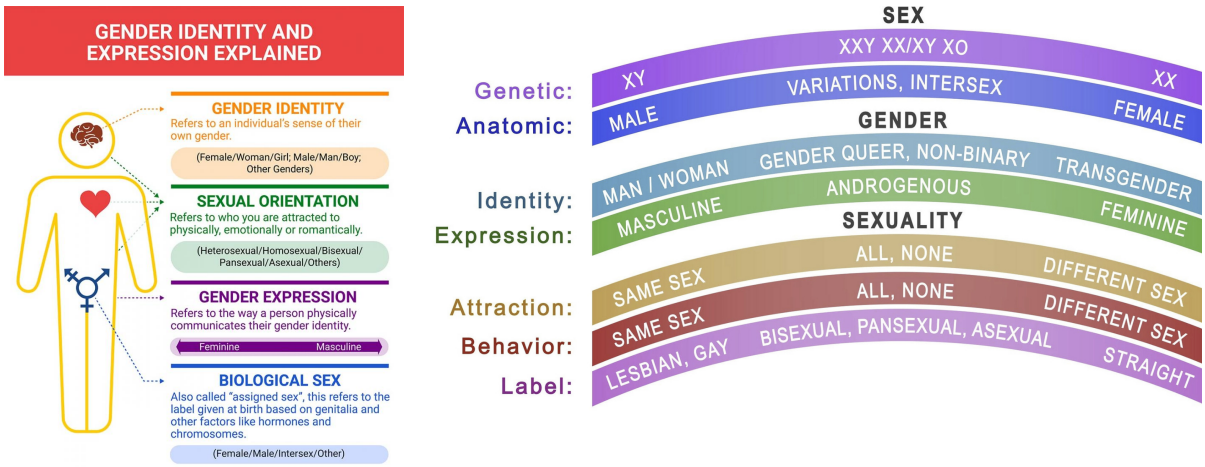
How is our identity formed? To what extent are we defined by our talents and interests? By our social and economic class? By our religion, by the nation in which we live? How do we label ourselves and how are we labeled by others? How are our identities influenced by how we think others see us? How do we manage multiple identities? Answers to these questions help us understand history, ourselves, and each other.

What shapes our identity? Our identities are always changing and take many different forms. Academics have explained three narrative-defined identities—first-person identity as told by the person themselves; second-person identity as told to another person; and third-person identity told by a third party to a third party. For example, **individual identity** is the unique sense of personhood held by each person in their own right. **Social identity** is a collective sense of belonging to a group, identifying themselves as having something in common with other group members. **Gender identity** refers to one's sense of being male or female. Generally, our gender identities correspond to biological sex, but this is not always the case. And **cultural identity** is a sense of belonging to a distinct ethnic, cultural or subcultural group.

Like all of us, Simon Biles is redefining her identity as her life moves into a new phase.

An increasing number of Americans have become more accepting of people who identify as ***LGBTQ+****. The acronym LGBTQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), and others. According to Pew Research, in 2020, 72% of Americans believed that society should accept people who are LGBTQ+, which is up 21% from 2002. But despite these changing attitudes, many people and organizations continue to reject, condemn, and oppress the LGBTQ+ community. In addition, many people refrain from talking about sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression because they're afraid of saying the wrong thing or being judged.*

Using the correct terms is important because historically people with power have used terms to belittle those with less power. When groups are able to name themselves, it empowers their group and individual identities.



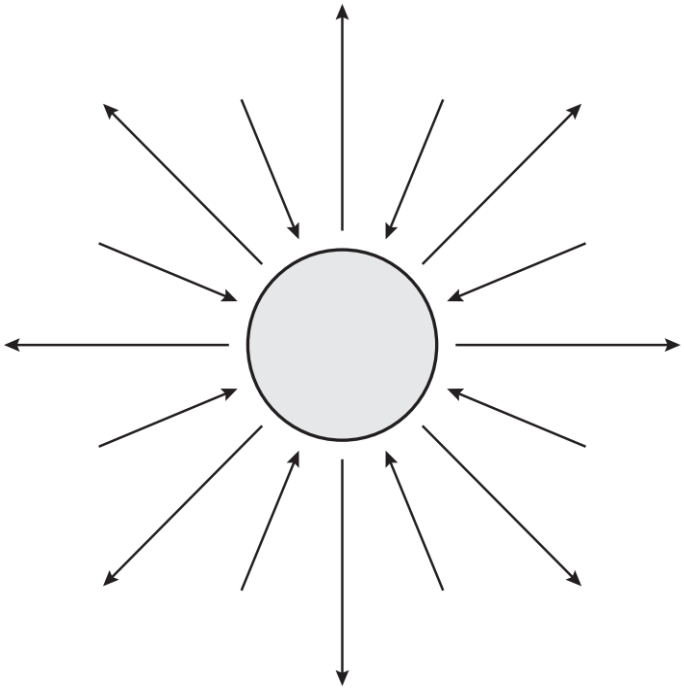
Flags represent belonging to a community and that community's ideals, movements, and aspirations. In the LGBTQ+ communities, flags are a symbol of unity, inclusion and acceptance.

Review Questions Part One:

1. Define and/or explain the following terms:

- Individual identity
- Social identity
- Gender identity
- Cultural identity

2. Activity: On a separate sheet of paper, write your name in the circle. At the ends of the arrows pointing outward, write words or phrases that describe what you consider to be key aspects of your identity. At the ends of the arrows pointing inward, write labels others might use to describe you. Add more arrows as needed.



3. Primary Source: The following poem appears in the Midrash, a centuries-old collection of commentaries on Jewish scripture:

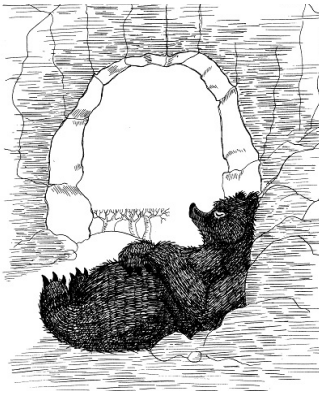
A person has three names:
one that he is called by his father and mother;
one that people know him by;
and one that he acquires for himself.

A. What is this poem suggesting about the ways we come to understand our identities?

4. Explain why it has and continues to be so important for the LGBTQ+ community to identify themselves and have others identify them with the proper terms and to recognize their valued symbols.

Supplemental Reading: *The Bear That Wasn't*

No two people are exactly alike. Each of us is an individual with unique talents, interests, and values. Often, others do not recognize what is so distinct about us and instead attach labels to us that may differ from those we would choose for ourselves. Sometimes the labels others attach to us influence the way we think about our own identity. In the book *The Bear That Wasn't*, author Frank Tashlin uses words and pictures to describe that process.



Once upon a time, in fact it was on a Tuesday, the Bear stood at the edge of a great forest and gazed up at the sky. Away up high, he saw a flock of geese flying south...

He knew when the geese flew south and the leaves fell from the trees, that winter would soon be here and snow would cover the forest. It was time to go into a cave and hibernate.

And that was just what he did.

Not long afterward, in fact it was on a Wednesday, men came . . . lots of men with steamshovels and saws and tractors and axes . . .

They worked, and worked, and worked, and finally they built a great, big, huge, factory, right OVER the TOP of the sleeping Bear's cave.

The factory operated all through the cold winter.

And then it was SPRING again.

Deep down under one of the factory buildings the Bear awoke. He blinked his eyes and yawned . . .

He walked up the stairs to the entrance and stepped out into the bright spring sunshine. His eyes were only half opened, as he was still very sleepy.

His eyes didn't stay half opened long. They suddenly POPPED wide apart. He looked straight ahead. *Where was the forest? Where was the grass? Where were the trees? Where were the flowers?*

WHAT HAD HAPPENED?

Where was he? Things looked so strange. He didn't know where he was . . .

Just then a man came out of a door.

"Hey, you get back to work," the man said. "I'm the *Foreman* and I'll report you for not working."

The Bear said, "I don't work here. I'm a Bear."

The Foreman laughed very loud. "That's a fine excuse for a man to keep from doing any work. Saying he's a bear."

The Bear said, "But, I am a Bear."

The Foreman stopped laughing. He was very mad.

"Don't try to fool me," he said. "You're not a Bear. You're a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat. I'm going to take you to the *General Manager.*"

The General Manager was mad, too. He said, "You're not a Bear. You're a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat. I'm going to take you to the *Third* Vice President."

The Bear said, "I'm sorry to hear you say that . . . You see, I am a Bear."

The Third Vice President was even madder . . .

The Second Vice President was more than mad or madder.

He was furious . . .

The First Vice President yelled in rage. He said, "You're not a Bear. You're a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat. I'm going to take you to the *President.*"

The Bear pleaded, "This is a dreadful error, you know, because ever since I can remember, I've always been a Bear."

"Listen," the Bear told the President. "I don't work here. I'm a Bear, and please don't say I'm a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat, because the First Vice President and the Second Vice President and the Third Vice President and the General Manager and the Foreman have told me that already."

"Thank you for telling me," the President said. "I won't say it, but that's just what I think you are."

The Bear said, "I'm a Bear."

"Thank you for telling me," the President said. "I won't say it, but that's just what I think you are."

The Bear said, "I'm a Bear."

The President smiled and said, "You can't be a Bear. Bears are only in a zoo or a circus. They're never inside a factory and that's where you are; inside a factory. So how can you be a Bear?"

The Bear said, "But I am a Bear."

The President said, "Not only are you a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat, but you are also very stubborn. So I'm going to prove it to you, once and for all, that you are *not* a Bear."

The Bear said, "But I *am* a Bear."

AND SO THEY ALL GOT INTO THE PRESIDENT'S CAR AND DROVE TO THE ZOO.

"Is he a *Bear*?" the President asked the zoo Bears. The zoo Bears said, "No, he isn't a Bear, because if he were a Bear, he wouldn't be outside the cage with you. He would be inside the cage with us."

The Bear said, "But I am a Bear."

. . . AND SO THEY ALL LEFT THE ZOO AND DROVE SIX HUNDRED MILES AWAY TO THE NEAREST CIRCUS.

"Is he a *Bear*?" the President asked the circus Bears. The circus Bears said, "No, he isn't a Bear, because if he were a Bear, he wouldn't be sitting in a grandstand seat with you. He would be wearing a little hat with a striped ribbon on it, holding on to a balloon and riding a bicycle with us."

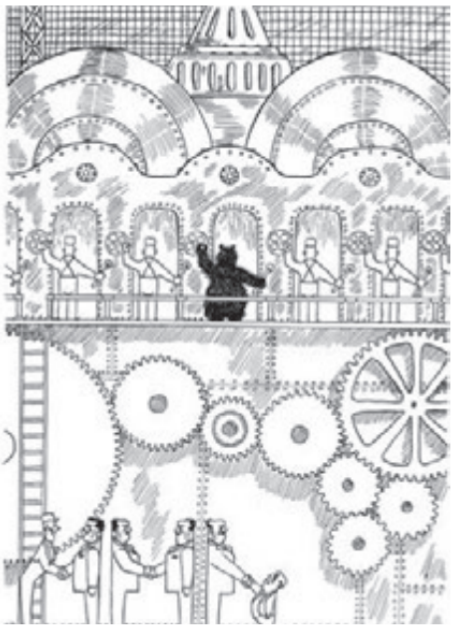
The Bear said, "But I'm a Bear."

. . . They left the circus and drove back to the factory.

And so they put the Bear to work on a big machine with a lot of other men. The Bear worked on the big machine for many, many months.

One day a long time afterward, the factory closed down and all the workers left and went home. The Bear walked along far behind them. He was all alone, and had no place to go.

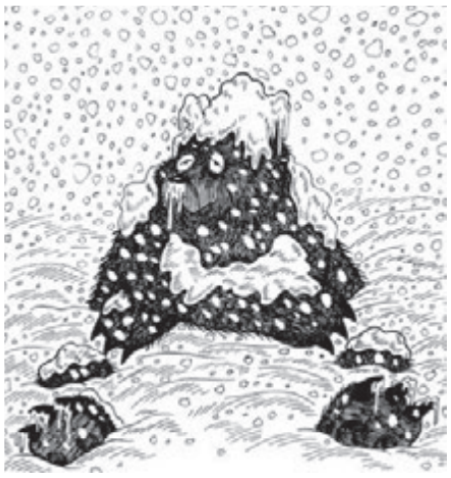
As he walked along, he happened to gaze up at the sky. Away up high, he saw a flock of geese flying south . . .



The Bear knew when the geese flew south and the leaves fell from the trees, that wi would soon be there and snow would cover the forest. It was time to go into a c and hibernate.

So he walked over to a huge tree that had a cave hollowed out beneath its roots. was just about to go into it, when he stopped and said, "But I CAN'T go into a cave hibernate. I'm NOT a Bear. I'm a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat.

So winter came. The snow fell. It covered the forest and it covered him. He sat there, shivering with cold and he said, "But I sure wish I was a Bear."



The longer he sat there the colder he became. His toes were freezing, his ears were freezing and his teeth were chattering. Icicles covered his nose and chin. He had been told so often, that he was a silly man who needed a shave and wore a fur coat, that he felt it must be true.

So he just sat there, because he didn't know what a silly man who needed a shave and wore a fur coat would do, if he were freezing to death in the snow. The poor Bear was very lonely and very sad. He didn't know what to think.

Then suddenly he got up and walked through the deep snow toward the cave. Inside, it was cosy and snug. The icy wind and cold, cold snow couldn't reach him here. He felt warm all over.

He sank down on a bed of pine boughs and soon he was happily asleep and dreaming sweet dreams, just like all bears do, when they hibernate.

So even though the FOREMAN and the GENERAL MANAGER and the THIRD VICE PRESIDENT and the SECOND VICE PRESIDENT and the FIRST VICE PRESIDENT and the PRESIDENT and the ZOO BEARS and the CIRCUS BEARS had said, he was a silly man who needed a shave and wore a fur coat, I don't think he really believed it, do you? No, indeed, he knew he wasn't a silly man, and he wasn't a silly Bear either.[1]

Reading Questions:

1. Why do you think Frank Tashlin titled this story *The Bear That Wasn't*?
2. Why didn't the factory officials recognize the Bear for what he was?
3. Why did it become harder and harder for the Bear to maintain his identity as he moved through the bureaucracy of the factory?
4. What were the consequences for the Bear of the way others defined his identity?
5. Whose opinions and beliefs have the greatest effect on how you think about your own identity?
6. How does our need to be part of a group affect our actions? Why is it so difficult for a person to go against the group?

Part III: Race

In America, non-whites often identify race as a dominant part of their identities. **Race** is usually associated with biology and linked with physical differences that a particular society considers significant, such as skin color or hair texture. Race is different from **ethnicity**. Ethnicity describes shared culture—the practices, values, and beliefs of a group. This culture might include shared language, religion, and traditions, etc.

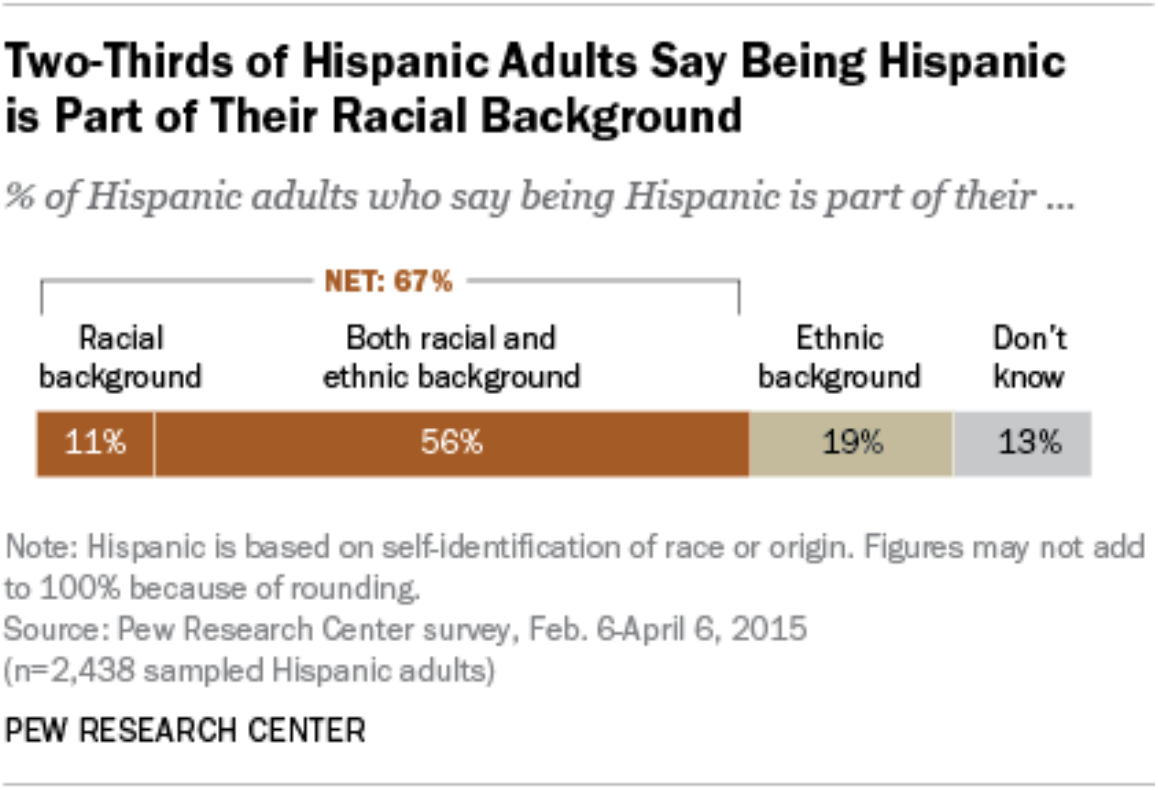
Race is not biological. There is no gene or cluster of genes common to all Blacks or all whites. The American Society of Human Genetics, the largest professional organization of scientists in the field of human genetics wrote: "The science of genetics demonstrates that humans cannot be divided into biologically distinct subcategories"; and it "challenges the traditional concept of different races of humans as biologically separate and distinct. This is validated by many decades of research." In other words, "race itself is a social construct." A **social construction** is something that a group of people create and maintain. Social constructions like "men," "women," "black," "white"—are concepts created, changed, and reproduced.

In the 1700s and early 1800s, scientists in Europe and the Americas studied "race science"— the idea that humankind is divided into separate and unequal races. They tried to explain the contradiction between the belief in human equality expressed during the American and French Revolutions and the emergence of slavery in the United States and several European countries. For example, in the US Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson wrote, "We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

This created a dilemma: if all men are created equal, why are some men and women still slaves? Ten years after the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson wrote, "I advance it . . . as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind."

Even though the beliefs of this time period have been disproven through science, this does not mean that the concept of race isn't hugely important in our lives. Although race isn't real, racism certainly is. The racial categories to which we're assigned, based on how we look to others or how we identify ourselves, can determine real-life experiences, inspire hate, affect the makeup of government and the legal system, and make the difference between life and death.

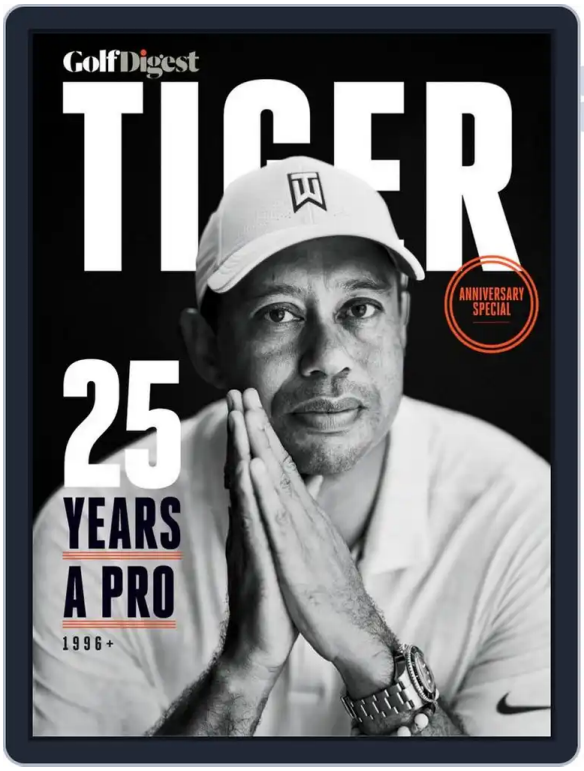
Data Point:



When it comes to reporting their racial identity, Latinos stand out from other Americans. Federal policy defines "Hispanic" not as a race, but as an ethnicity. Hispanics can in fact be of any race. This is because a Hispanic can be as a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.

But these census findings suggest that standard U.S. racial categories might either be confusing or not provide relevant options for Hispanics to describe their racial identity. Two-thirds of Hispanics say that their Hispanic background is a part of their racial background – not something separate. This suggests that many Hispanics have a unique view of race that doesn't necessarily fit within the official U.S. definitions.

Case Study:



Golf legend Tiger Woods (above left) and former NFL star and political activist Colin Kaepernick (above right) are both mixed-race.

Tiger Woods calls himself "Cablasian" because he is one-fourth Black, one-fourth Thai, one-fourth Chinese, one-eighth white and one-eighth American Indian. In addition, Woods has made it a point to not get involved in political and racial issues.

Colin Kaepernick, a biracial Wisconsin native born to a white mother and a Black father before being adopted by a white family, and the former quarterback for the San Francisco Forty-Niners, caused a national conversation about standing for the national anthem after declining to do so before several football games. He explained that he refused to stand to salute a country "that oppresses Black people and people of color." He has been out of the NFL for several years even though many football analysts say he has the skills to still play and no team will hire him because of his political statement. Kaepernick has never run away from his biracial identity and, in fact, produced a mini-series that dealt with his racial struggles.

1. *Both men are mixed-race and have chosen to address their racial identities in very different ways. What do you think that says about the role race plays in their overall identities?*

The case study of Woods & Kaepernick raises another interesting question: Why do many capitalize the "B" in Black and not the "w" in white. The Associated Press, one of the largest news organizations in the world, explained:

> "AP's style is now to capitalize Black in a racial, ethnic or cultural sense, conveying an essential and shared sense of history, identity and community among people who identify as Black….These decisions align with long-standing capitalization of distinct racial and ethnic identifiers such as Latino, Asian American and Native American."

Many other news organizations have followed AP's lead. However, capitalizing white has been more controversial. The AP explained:

> "After a review and period of consultation, we found, at this time, less support for capitalizing white. White people generally do not share the same history and culture, or the experience of being discriminated against because of skin color….capitalizing the term white, as is done by white supremacists, risks subtly conveying legitimacy to such beliefs."

In addition to capitalizing Black, the "I" in **Indigenous peoples** should be capitalized. Indigenous is used to refer to, or relating to, the people who originally lived in a place, rather than people who moved there from somewhere else. Capitalizing Indigenous terms is a sign of respect for the identities, governments, institutions and collective rights that have been historically considered illegitimate. In the United States, the terms American Indian, Indian, Native American, or Native are mostly used, are acceptable, and often used interchangeably.

Indigenous peoples around the world have been historically **marginalized**, that is, to treat someone or something as if they are not important. It is estimated that there are more than 370 million Indigenous people spread across 70 countries worldwide. These peoples are the descendants - according to a common definition - of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived. The new arrivals later became dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means.

Despite Indigenous peoples being marginalized, there are some common characteristics that Indigenous people all over the world share. They practice unique traditions and they retain social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live.

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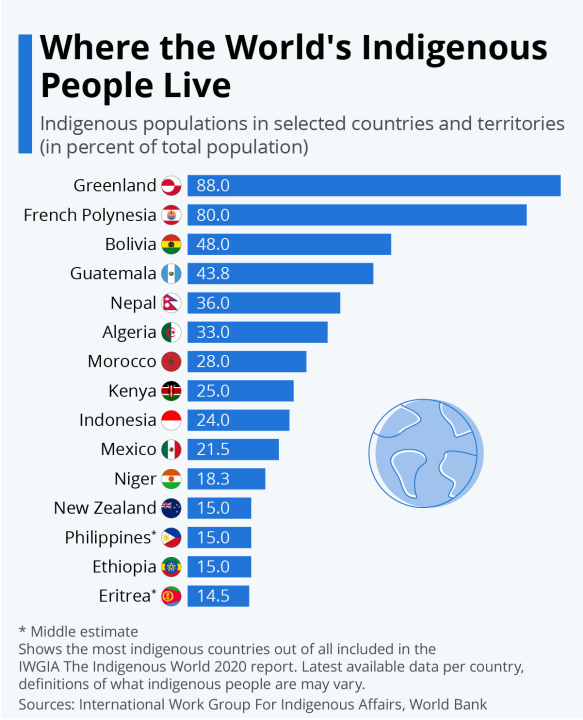
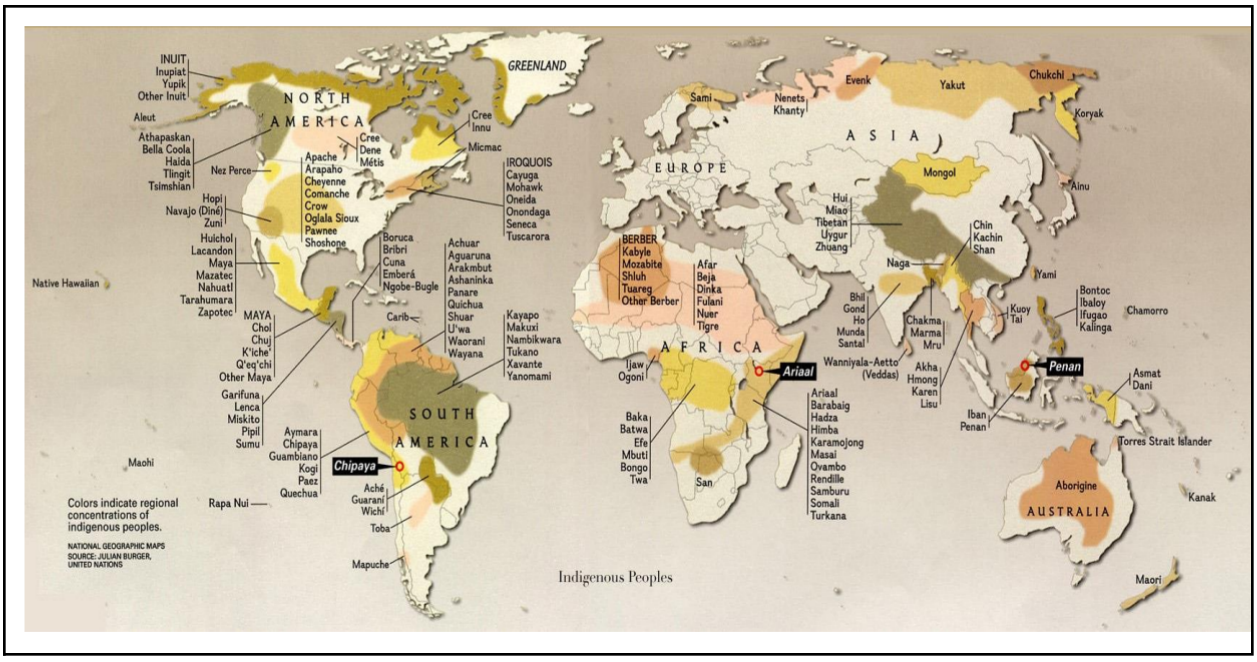




Indigenous peoples often have much in common with other neglected segments of societies, e.g., lack of political representation and participation, poverty, lack of access to social services like education, and discrimination. Despite their cultural differences, the diverse Indigenous peoples share common problems also related to the protection of their rights. They strive for recognition of their identities, their ways of life and their right to traditional lands, territories and natural resources.

Using this explanation, the AP does not recognize white as a **dominant group**. A dominant group is that which holds the most power in a given society, while subordinate groups are those who lack power compared to the dominant group. A **minority group or a subordinate group** is any group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society. This can get confusing because women make up more than half of the population in the United States, and yet at the same time, are clearly underrepresented in most desired professions and have suffered from discrimination for centuries.

Minority groups often feel the pressure to assimilate. **Assimilation** describes the process by which a minority individual or group gives up its own identity by taking on the characteristics of the dominant culture. In the United States, which has a mixed history of welcoming and absorbing immigrants from different lands, assimilation has been a function of immigration. Some groups may keep only symbolic gestures of their original ethnicity. For instance, many Irish Americans may celebrate Saint Patrick's Day, many Hindu Americans enjoy a Diwali festival, and many Mexican Americans may celebrate Cinco de Mayo.

This helps us understand a critical question: why do so many non-whites consider race an important part of their identities while many whites do not even consider their whiteness? This is because of something in America called **white privilege**. White privilege is the benefits white people receive simply by being part of the dominant group. This is a complicated topic that is not fully agreed upon. While most white

people are willing to admit that nonwhite people live with a set of disadvantages due to the color of their skin, very few are willing to acknowledge the benefits they receive. One of the primary privileges is that of having greater access to power and resources than people of color do. In other words, purely on the basis of skin color, doors are open to white people that are not open to others. For example, white people in the United States are more likely to get a housing loan than people of color − access to resources. Those who are white can count on the fact that a United States' history book will primarily reflect the white experience. American Indian parents, on the other hand, know that their children will often not learn in school about the contributions of their people.

The extent to which whites have privilege varies depending on gender, sexual orientation, levels of wealth, education level, age, physical ability, size and weight, and so on. In addition, there are many different types of privilege, not just skin-color privilege, that impact the way people can move through the world or are discriminated against.

- Being born into a financially stable family can help guarantee your health, happiness, safety, education, and future opportunities.
- If you were born able-bodied, you probably don't have to plan your life around handicap access, braille, or other special needs.
- If you were born straight, every state in this country affords you privileges that LGBTQ+ folks have to fight the Supreme Court for.
- If you were born cisgender (that is, your gender identity matches the sex you were assigned at birth), you don't have to worry that using the restroom or locker room will invoke public outrage.

An important question that many ask is whether one should feel guilt because of one's privilege? Journalist Gina Crosley-Corcoran explained, "Privilege doesn't mean suffering guilt or shame for your lot in life. Nobody's saying that Straight White Middle Class Able-Bodied Males don't work hard for what they have. Recognizing privilege simply means being aware that some people have to work much harder just to experience the things you take for granted (if they ever can experience them at all.)"

Review Questions Part Two:

1. Define and/or explain the following terms:

- Race
- Indigenous Peoples
- Minority Group
- White Privilege
- Ethnicity
- Marginalized
- Subordinate Group
- Social Construction
- Dominant Group
- Assimilation

2. Explain why race is not accepted as scientific fact.

3. Explain why the concept of race was first created. What purpose did it serve?

4. Why do some news agencies capitalize the "B" in Black and not the "w" in white when referring to groups?

5. What are some of the characteristics the Indigenous peoples from all over the world share?

6. In her book *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,* scholar Peggy McIntosh explained white privilege: "As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

Case Study: Susie Phipps

Imagine that you apply for a copy of your birth certificate, and when you receive it you discover that it lists your "race" as something other than what you and everyone else have always considered it to be. You are white and it says you are Black, or you are Black and it says you are white. That is exactly what happened to Susie Guillory Phipps, a woman who had always considered herself white, as did almost everyone she met. Sociologist Allan G. Johnson explains:

> *She had twice married white men, and her family album was filled with pictures of blue-eyed, white ancestors. The state of Louisiana, however, defined her as "colored."*
>
> *When she protested to state authorities, they carefully traced her ancestry back 222 years, and found that although her great-great-great-great grandfather was white, her great-great-great-great grandmother was Black. Under Louisiana law, anyone whose ancestry was at least 3 percent Black was considered Black. Thus, even with an ancestry 97 percent white, the state defined her as Black.*
>
> *Susie Phipps spent $20,000 to force Louisiana to change her birth certificate, and in 1983 Louisiana repealed the law. Why did she go to such expense? Beyond the obvious shock to her identity, there are larger issues. Why does the state have a formula for officially deciding what each person's race is? Why would a tiny percentage of Black ancestry cause her to be considered Black, while an overwhelmingly white ancestry could not mean she is white?*
>
> *The key lies in the word "mean" in the previous sentence, for . . . what things objectively are is often less significant to human beings than what things mean in cultural frameworks of beliefs, values, and attitudes."*

Susie Phipps's dilemma had little to do with biology or genetics and everything to do with the meaning the state of Louisiana attached to the word race.

Part III: The Other

Humans so often create "in" groups and "out" groups, which sometimes can have profound consequences. Important ideas about human similarities and differences—such as race, religion, and nationality—have greatly influenced the way many societies have defined their membership in the past several centuries. This is called **othering**. Othering occurs when a dominant group outcasts another group who they see as inferior.

Psychologist Deborah Tannen writes: "We all know we are unique individuals, but we tend to see others as representatives of groups. It's a natural tendency, since we must see the world in patterns in order to make sense of it; we wouldn't be able to deal with the daily onslaught of people and objects if we couldn't predict a lot about them and feel that we know who and what they are. But this natural and useful ability to see patterns of similarity has unfortunate consequences. It is offensive to reduce an individual to a category, and it is also misleading."

One of the most basic ways humans evaluate themselves and other groups is by generalizing. A **generalization** is just that: a statement of a tendency, rather than a hard-and-fast law. A generalization is a statement that applies to a group of people or things, based on some examples. Someone looks at the evidence or examples and comes up with a conclusion about what they mean. We generalize about

people so that we know how to interact with them. If we see someone in a mail carrier's clothing, we assume they work for the post office, just like seeing an individual in a police uniform would inform us about their profession. Generalizations are flexible and allow for individual differences and aren't applied to every person within a group. However, making generalizations can lead to stereotypes and prejudice.

Stereotypes are beliefs about an individual based on the real or imagined characteristics of a group to which that individual belongs. Stereotypes can be based on race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation—almost any characteristic. Stereotypes can lead us to judge an individual or group negatively. Even stereotypes that seem to portray a group positively reduce individuals to categories and tell an inaccurate "single story." In short, a stereotype is a generalization that doesn't take individual differences into account.

Prejudice refers to the beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes someone holds about a group. Bias is very similar to prejudice, however it is generally considered to be less severe. Prejudice occurs when we form an opinion about an individual or a group based on a negative stereotype. The word prejudice comes from the word pre-judge. When a prejudice leads us to treat an individual or group negatively, discrimination occurs. A 1970 documentary called *Eye of the Storm* illustrates the way in which prejudice develops, by showing how defining one category of people as superior (children with blue eyes) results in prejudice against people who are not part of the favored category.

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

When learning about how stereotypes and prejudice can affect an individual's behavior, psychologists often distinguish between blatant and unconscious bigotry. Blatant bigotry is out in the open. According to social psychologist Susan Fiske, "We can identify the bare-faced bigots." Unconscious biases, meaning prejudice that we do not consciously or knowingly acknowledge, is different. These are often expressed as **microaggressions.** Microaggressions are the everyday slights, indignities, put-downs and insults that people of color, women, LGBTQ+ populations and other marginalized people experience in their day-to-day interactions. Microaggressions can appear to be compliments but often contain a hidden insult to the target group. Microaggressions are often outside the level of conscious awareness of the people who say them, which means they can be unintentional.
Common examples of microaggressions shared by students who experienced them:

Case Study: *Little Things Are Big*

As writer Jesús Colón discovered on a subway ride in New York City in the 1950s, perceptions about one's own identity and the identities of others can affect the decisions people make about one another.

It was very late at night on the eve of Memorial Day. She came into the subway at the 34th Street Pennsylvania Station. I am still trying to remember how she managed to push herself in with a baby on her right arm, a valise [suitcase] in her left hand and two children, a boy and girl about three and five years old, trailing after her. She was a nice-looking white lady in her early twenties.

At Nevins Street, Brooklyn, we saw her preparing to get off at the next station — Atlantic Avenue — which happened to be the place where I too had to get off. Just as it was a problem for her to get on, it was going to be a problem for her to get off the subway with two small children to be taken care of, a baby on her right arm, and a medium-sized valise in her left hand.

And there I was, also preparing to get off at Atlantic Avenue, with no bundles to take care of — not even the customary book under my arm, without which I feel that I am not completely dressed.

As the train was entering the Atlantic Avenue station, some white man stood up from his seat and helped her out, placing the children on the long, deserted platform. There were only two adult persons on the long platform some time after midnight on the eve of last Memorial Day.

I could perceive the steep, long concrete stairs going down to the Long Island Railroad and up into the street. Should I offer my help as the American white man did at the subway door, placing the two children outside the subway car? Should I take care of the girl and the boy, take them by their hands until they reached the end of the steep, long concrete stairs of the Atlantic Avenue station?

Courtesy is a characteristic of the Puerto Rican. And here I was — a Puerto Rican hours past midnight, a valise, two white children and a white lady with a baby on her arm [badly] needing somebody to help her, at least until she descended the long concrete stairs.

But how could I, a Negro and a Puerto Rican, approach this white lady, who very likely might have preconceived prejudices about Negroes and everybody with foreign accents, in a deserted subway station very late at night?*

What would she say? What would be the first reaction of this white American woman perhaps coming from a small town with a valise, two children and a baby on her right arm? Would she say: yes, of course, you may help me. Or would she think that I was just trying to get too familiar? Or would she think worse than that perhaps? What would I do if she let out a scream as I went forward to offer my help?

Was I misjudging her? So many slanders are written every day in the daily press against the Negroes and Puerto Ricans. I hesitated for a long, long minute. The ancestral manners that the most illiterate Puerto Rican passes on from father to son were struggling inside me. Here was I, way past midnight, face to face with a situation that could very well explode into an outburst of prejudices and chauvinistic conditioning of the "divide and rule" policy of present-day society.

** The word Negro was commonly used in the early and middle years of the twentieth century to refer to an African American. Its use reflects the time period. During the 1960s, the term black replaced Negro in common American usage, and today African American is often used instead of black.*

It was a long minute.

I passed on by her as if I saw nothing. As if I was insensitive to her need. Like a rude animal walking on two legs, I just moved on, half running by the long subway platform, leaving the children and the valise and her with the baby on her arm. I took the steps of the long concrete stairs in twos until I reached the street above and the cold air slapped my warm face.

This is what racism and prejudice and chauvinism and official artificial divisions can do to people and to a nation!

Perhaps the lady was not prejudiced after all. Or not prejudiced enough to scream at the coming of a Negro toward her in a solitary subway station a few hours past midnight.

If you were not that prejudiced, I failed you, dear lady. I know that there is a chance in a million that you will read these lines. I am willing to take the millionth chance. If you were not that prejudiced, I failed you, lady. I failed you, children. I failed myself to myself.

I buried my courtesy early on Memorial Day morning. But here is a promise that I make to myself here and now; if I am ever faced with an occasion like that again, I am going to offer my help regardless of how the offer is going to be received.

Then I will have my courtesy with me again.

Prejudice, discrimation, and microaggressions are not necessarily specific to race. **Racism** is a stronger type of prejudice used to justify the belief that one racial category is somehow superior or inferior to others. It is also a set of practices used mostly by a racial majority to disadvantage a racial minority. The Ku Klux Klan is an example of a racist organization; its members' belief in white supremacy has encouraged over a century of hate crime and hate speech. However, in South Africa, the white racial minority which made up approximately 10% of the population claimed superiority over the other 90% of the population.

Institutional racism refers to the way in which racism is embedded in the fabric of society. For example, the disproportionate number of Black men arrested, charged, and convicted of crimes may reflect racial profiling, a form of institutional racism. Like white privilege, there is debate as to whether institutional racism exists in the United States.

	Individual	Cultural	Institutional
Racism	A student uses a racial slur against another student	Black and Latino students are perceived to be more aggressive by teachers and administrators	Black and Latino students are suspended at higher rates than their white peers

Review Questions Part Three:

1. Define and/or explain the following terms:

- Othering
- Prejudice
- Racism
- Generalization
- Discrimination
- Institutional Racism
- Stereotype
- Microaggressions

2. Legal scholar Martha Minow writes, "When we simplify and sort, we focus on some traits rather than others, and we assign consequences to the presence and absence of the traits we make significant." What are some of the "traits we make significant" in our society? Do you think some traits and differences matter more than others, and if so, why? Who decides which traits matter most?

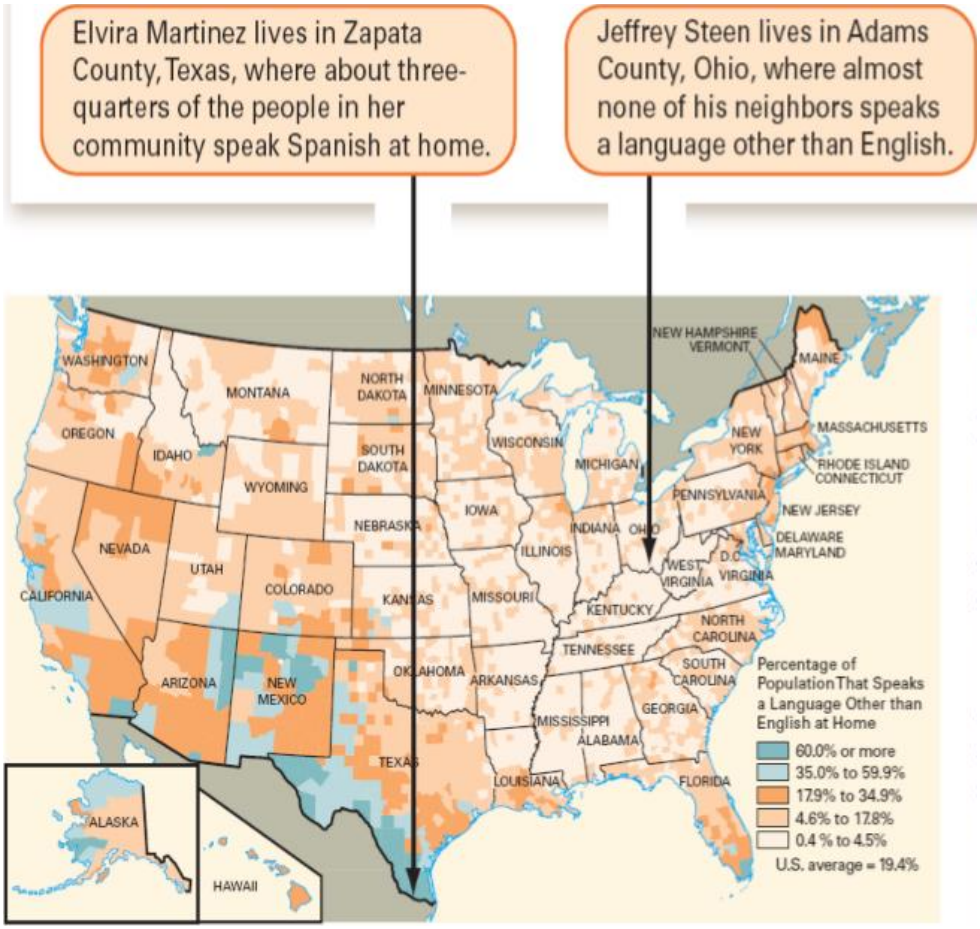
Part IV: We vs. They

Collecting ourselves into groups is a natural behavior; everywhere on Earth, to be human means to live with others. In groups we meet our most basic needs, we share culture, values, and beliefs, and we satisfy our yearning to belong. Like individuals, groups too have identities, and how a group defines itself determines who is entitled to its benefits and who is not. Sometimes the consequences of being excluded from a group are quite small. Someone who does not enjoy running is unlikely to be hurt by not being a member of a track club. But sometimes the consequences can be extremely serious. If someone is denied citizenship by a country, his or her freedom, livelihood, or safety may be at risk.

Our society—through its particular culture, customs, institutions, and more—provides us with the labels we use to categorize the people we encounter. These labels are based on beliefs about race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, economic class, and more. Sometimes our beliefs about these categories are so strong that they prevent us from seeing the unique identities of others. Sometimes these beliefs also make us feel suspicion, fear, or hatred toward some members of our society. Other times, especially when we are able to get to know a person, we are able to see past labels and, perhaps, find common ground. Who are "we"? Who are "they"? The answers to these questions can have profound consequences, because they define who belongs and who does not.

One of these consequences is **xenophobia**, an illogical fear and even hatred of foreigners and foreign goods. While xenophobia and racism often cut across each other, xenophobia doesn't automatically focus on the physical characteristics, behavior, or abilities of a specific group of people. Instead, xenophobic thinking separates people into two groups: "insiders" and "outsiders."

Xenophobia has been described as a global phenomenon, closely associated with the process of **globalization**, a term used to describe how trade and technology have made the world into a more connected and interdependent place. In the United States, globalization has led to **multiculturalism**, ethnic diversity within our country. Multicultural societies exist when a variety of different cultures coexist and are maintained or supported.



In the United States, 21.5 % of the population speak a language other than English at home.

In New Jersey, 31.6% of the population speak a language other than English at home.

In Haddonfield, 4.9% of the population speak a language other than English at home.

What accounts for this pattern?

Source: US Census Bureau, 2020.

Case Study: Geno's Steaks

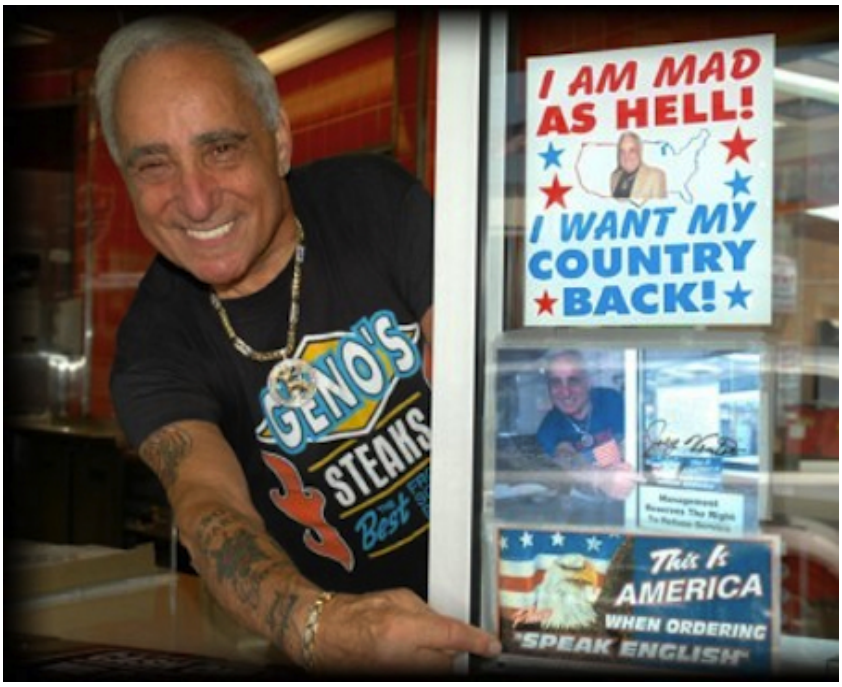
Geno's Steaks in south Philadelphia made headlines in 2006 over a small sign posted at the shop stating, "This is AMERICA: WHEN ORDERING 'SPEAK ENGLISH'." At the time, late owner Joey Vento said he posted it because of concerns over immigration reform and the increasing number of people who couldn't order in English. Vento said he "never refused service to anyone because they couldn't speak English," but the sign was still the cause of much controversy.

Geno's is located in a neighborhood that was once predominantly Italian-American, but has in recent years become home to many Hispanic and Asian immigrants. The city's famed Italian Market has seen a strong growth of Hispanic-owned businesses as immigrants from Mexico and Central America make the area their home.

Helen Ubiñas, a reporter for the Philadelphia Inquirer, said "Truth is, the controversy over that vile sign near the ordering window was never just about a sign." Ubiñas wrote, "It was about ignorance and racism and refusing to acknowledge and respect the growing diversity in this city. The diversity that has been responsible for most of the city's growth and that will be responsible for its survival."

Amid extensive publicity, the city's Commission on Human Relations began looking into whether Vento was violating Philadelphia's law banning discrimination in employment, public accommodation and housing on the basis of race, ethnicity or sexual orientation. The matter then went to the three-member panel, which ruled 2-1 in March 2008 that the signs did not violate the ordinance.

Vento passed away in 2011 with his dying wish apparently being that the sign remain in place. The controversial sign was quietly taken down around the time of the Democratic National Convention in July of 2016. A prepared statement by Geno's new management said that the shop has "decided to move on from the sign. It's not about a sign. It's about what you do and what your mark in life is, and Geno's wants to change that mark in life."



Joey Vento next to his sign.

The Joey Vento controversy gained national attention because of the increasing **scapegoating** of Hispanic undocumented workers in the United States. Scapegoating is when an individual or group attacks someone else for their own problems, which often results in feelings of prejudice toward the person or group that is being blamed. In the United States, recent immigrants have frequently been the scapegoat for the nation's—or an individual's—problems. Scapegoating serves as an opportunity to explain failure while maintaining one's positive self-image. For example, if a person who is poor or doesn't get a job that he or she applies for, he/she can blame an unfair system or the people who did get the job that he or she wanted.

In its most extreme forms, separating people into *we vs. them* can lead to **dehumanization**. Dehumanization involves redefining the targets of prejudice and violence by making them seem less human than other people. People often use dehumanization to justify greed, violence, and abuse. The classic strategy for this is to use terms like "animals." Referring to people as "illegals" is also dehumanizing. The main purpose is to get people to accept or even engage in behaviors that they know are wrong.

Case Study: Rwanda

In 1994, in the small African country of Rwanda, members of the Hutu ethnic majority, armed with machetes, spears, nail-studded clubs, and other weapons, moved house to house in villages, hunting for Tutsis. Tutsis are an ethnic minority in Rwanda and approximately one million of them were massacred in a period of 100 days by the Hutus, many of whom were their neighbors, co-workers, etc. The Tutsi were hunted down without mercy; they were killed in schools, churches, hospitals, and even prisons.

Dehumanization of Tutsis by the Hutu government and media played a massive role in the slaughter. Speeches by government officials, magazine editorials, and the popular radio station described Tutsis as inyenzi, or "cockroaches," and as inzoka, or "snakes."

The forces that encouraged the mass murder used other metaphors to turn people against their neighbors. Hutus, by reputation, are shorter than Tutsis so radio broadcasters also urged Hutus to "cut down the tall trees."

Scholar David Livingstone Smith argues that it's important to define and describe dehumanization, because it's what opens the door for cruelty and mass murder. Smith said, "We all know, despite what we see in the movies, that it's very difficult, psychologically, to kill another human being up close and in cold blood, or to inflict atrocities on them. So, when it does happen, it can be helpful to understand what it is that allows human beings to overcome the very deep and natural inhibitions they have against treating other people like game animals or vermin or dangerous predators."

Far left image: The office of the radio station RTLM which was broadcasting during the genocide against the Tutsi people.

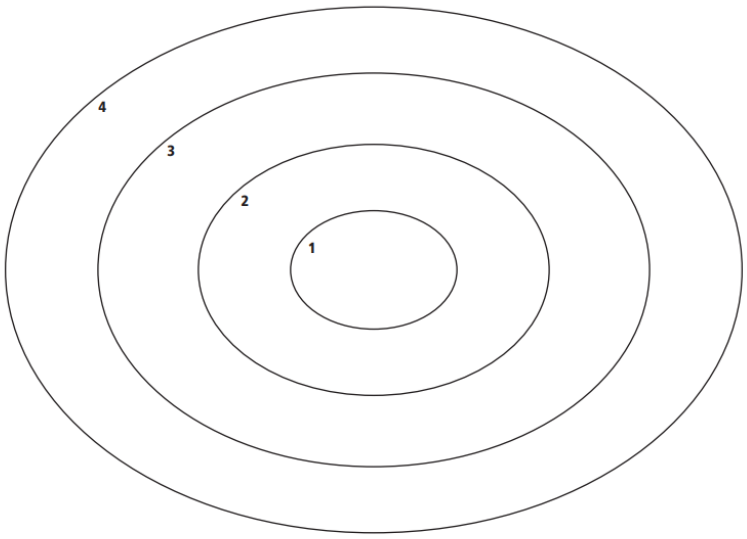
Middle image: One of several memorials to the one million victims of the mass murder.

As you have just read, dehumanization can bring out the most unimaginable behaviors. Dehumanization is not limited to political issues, however. Any time someone reduces a human being to a single characteristic, especially a negative one, they are dehumanizing. "Alcoholic," "addict," and "handicapped" all rob people of the full complexity of their lives and reduce them to a symptom or disorder. For example, people with intellectual disabilities should not be called intellectually disabled. Our individuality as people matters.

These ideas shape how we see ourselves, people we see as similar to us, and people or individuals we see as different. How the members of a group, a nation, or a community define who belongs and who does not has a lot to do with how they define their **universe of obligation**. Sociologist Helen Fein coined this phrase to describe the group of individuals within a society "toward whom obligations are owed, to whom rules apply, and whose injuries call for amends." In other words, a society's universe of obligation includes those people who that society believes deserve respect and whose rights it believes are worthy of protection. Scholar and social activist Chuck Collins gave the half-million dollars that he inherited from his family to charity. Collins defined his universe of obligation when he told a journalist Ian Parker: "Of course, we have to respond to our immediate family, but, once they're O.K., we need to expand the circle. A larger sense of family is a radical idea, but we get into trouble as a society when we don't see that we're in the same boat."

Activity: Universe of Obligation

Complete on a separate sheet of paper.
*In **Circle 1**, write your name.*
*In **Circle 2**, write the name of people to whom you feel the greatest obligation – for example, people for whom you'd be willing to take a great risk or put yourself in peril for (you don't have to write actual names.)*
*In **Circle 3**, who are the people on the next level? That is people to whom you have some obligation, but not as great as in circle 2.*
*In **Circle 4**, who are the people on the next level? People to whom you have some obligation, but not as great as in circle 3.*
Review the completed diagram. Does anything surprise you about who was put in each circle? Do you need more circles? Why or why not?



What encourages people to act on behalf of others? There are a range of behaviors of which people are capable when confronted with extreme brutality toward their fellow human beings. A **perpetrato**r, one who commits an offense or crimes, could be and often are motivated by a number of reasons - far too many and too complex for us to dig into now. But what about everyone else who is aware that something wrong is happening? When an individual or a community is in crisis, individuals must make choices.

While perpetrators are responsible for a crime or harsh act, what about people who choose to do nothing? A **bystander** is someone who witnesses or knows of wrongdoing, particularly the mistreatment of others, but does not speak out or act against it. People tend to struggle with whether helping out is their responsibility, and one of the major obstacles to intervention is that if several people are present, an individual is much less likely to step up and help out because he/she believes someone else will. Have you ever passed an accident on the freeway and assumed that a victim or certainly another motorist has already reported the accident? In general, the greater the number of bystanders, the less likely any one person will help. Other major reasons that bystanders fail to intervene are that the bystander is worried about misjudging the situation and thus will be embarrassed by intervening, or that the bystander believes the victim is in some way responsible for the situation and is thus, getting what they deserve.

If the action and inaction of perpetrators and bystanders represents some of the worst of which human beings are capable, the courage of resistors, upstanders, and rescuers represents the best. **Resistance** is refusing to accept or comply with something perceived as unjust. Resistance occurs in many different ways, from Jews during the Holocaust arming themselves and fighting with the Nazis, to a female student challenging the school's administration because she believes that she has been unfairly dresscoded due to the shape of her body.

Victims are not the only ones who can attempt to prevent or stop an unjust act. An **upstander** is someone who recognizes an injustice and makes a choice to act against it. Like resistance, this occurs in many different ways from people hiding victims of a massacre from a perpetrator, to speaking out in a school locker room when someone is being bullied. Generally speaking, a rescuer is different from an upstander in that rescuing requires more active involvement.

Are there certain qualities that many upstanders and rescuers share? Do they have a broader sense of community and thus a larger universe of obligation? Are they more empathetic than bystanders? Are they braver? These are difficult questions to answer.

Quaden Bayles, an Aboriginal boy from Australia, was relentlessly bullied at school because of his condition, achondroplasia dwarfism. His mother posted a Facebook video of her son in tears as he told his mother he wanted to end his life.

As the video spread online, many celebrities reached out in support of Quaden including actor Hugh Jackman, who tweeted, "Quaden you are stronger than you know, mate. And no matter what, you've got a friend in me. So everyone, please be kind to each other. Bullying is not okay. Period. Life is hard enough. Let's just remember every person in front of us is facing some kind of battle. So let's just be kind."

Left image: Quaden was invited to lead the National Rugby League's Indigenous All Stars team onto the field ahead of a game against the Maori All Stars.

Review Questions Part Four:

1. Define and/or explain the following terms:

- Xenophobia
- Scapegoating
- Perpetrator
- Upstander
- Globalization
- Dehumanization
- Bystander
- Multiculturalism
- Universe of Obligation
- Resistance

2. After reviewing the Geno's Steaks case study, do you think the owner's sign was an example of xenophobia? Why or why not?

3. After reviewing the Rwanda case study, what role did the media play in getting ordinary Rwandans to commit acts of total brutality?

4. In the 1800s, sociologist William Graham Sumner wrote, "Every man and woman in society has one big duty. That is, to take care of his or her own self." Do you agree with Sumner? Why or why not? Is it wrong to prioritize caring for those closest to you over others? How does Sumner's suggestion about how we define our universe of obligation differ from Chuck Collins's view?

Part V: The Pyramid of Hate

History provides examples of the ways in which stereotyping, scapegoating, dehumanization, and discrimination can escalate to mass murder.

The Pyramid shows biased behaviors, growing in complexity from the bottom to the top. This is called a **hierarchy** - a system in which people or things are put at various levels or ranks according to their importance or severity. Although the behaviors at each level negatively impact individuals and groups, as one moves up the Pyramid, the behaviors have more life-threatening consequences. Like a pyramid, the upper levels are supported by the lower levels. If people or institutions treat behaviors on the lower levels as being acceptable or "normal," it results in the behaviors at the next level becoming more accepted.

Case Study: *Sticks and Stones*

In one school, a group of four boys began whispering and laughing about another boy in their school that they thought was gay. They began making comments when they walked by him in the hall. Soon, they started calling the boy insulting antigay slurs. By the end of the month, they had taken their harassment to another level, tripping him when he walked by and pushing him into a locker while they yelled slurs. Some time during the next month, they increased the seriousness of their conduct – they surrounded him and two boys held his arms while the others hit and kicked him. Eventually, one of the boys threatened to bring his father's gun into school the next day to kill the boy. At this point another student overheard the threat and the police were notified.

- *Description of a school incident from "Sticks and Stones" by Stephen L. Wessler.*

Unchecked bias can become "normalized" - to cause something previously considered abnormal or unacceptable to be treated as normal. In some cases, if left unchecked, some biases can lead to mass murder - **genocide**. While every biased attitude or act does not lead to genocide, genocide takes place within a system of oppression in which the attitudes and actions described at the lower levels of the pyramid are accepted.

The term genocide was defined by the Polish Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin. In 1941, during the Holocaust, he escaped from eastern Europe and the German occupation that killed most of his family, settled in the United States, and continued his lifelong effort to outlaw the killing of ethnic, religious, cultural, racial, or national groups. In his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, published in 1944, Lemkin chose a new term to describe what until then was "a crime without a name."

The term Lemkin coined comes from the Greek word genos, a group defined by kinship, and the Latin cide, to destroy or kill (as in pesticide or homicide). Genocide, then, signifies the destruction of a group of people as a collective with common culture and identity, not just the killing of a lot of people.

The **Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide** was adopted by the United Nations in 1948, just a few years after the horrors the Holocaust. Lemkin was firm in his belief that the term was not simply meant to apply to crimes of the past: it also offered a framework to help prevent future extreme acts of cruelty - atrocities. He sought a broad definition of genocide that included cultural and economic destruction, but those did not make it into the final draft that was subsequently adopted by the United Nations.

Article 2 of the Convention of 1948 defines genocide as "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such":

(a) Killing members of the group;
(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

For Raphael Lemkin, the cultural destruction of a group was as important as the physical annihilation of its members. According to Lemkin: "The world represents only so much culture and intellectual vigor as are created by its component national groups. Essentially the idea of a nation signifies constructive cooperation and original contributions, based upon genuine traditions, genuine culture, and well-developed national psychology. The destruction of a nation, therefore, results in the loss of its future contribution to the world. . . . Among the basic features which have marked progress in civilization are the respect for and appreciation of the national characteristics and qualities contributed to world culture by different nations—characteristics and qualities which . . . are not to be measured in terms of national power or wealth."

In 1946, when the newly founded United Nations began debating the creation of an international agreement for the prevention and punishment of genocide, it accepted Lemkin's view. The United Nations General Assembly, where these ideas were debated, then instructed one of its bodies to draw up a draft of this international agreement for its next session. A subsequent draft, written by the United Nations Secretariat, defined **cultural genocide** as "any deliberate act committed with the intention of destroying the language, religion or culture of a . . . group, such as, for example, prohibiting the use of the group's language or its schools or places of worship." But, as international law expert William A. Schabas observes, the final version of Article 2 ended up being "a much-reduced version of the text prepared by the Secretariat experts." To this day it does not mention cultural genocide. However, Schabas explains,

the final version we have today includes "an exception to this general rule, allowing 'forcible transfer of children from one group to another' as a punishable act." In that sense, the Genocide Convention "categorized forcible child transfers as cultural genocide."

Review Questions Part Five:

1. Define and/or explain the following terms:

- Hierarchy
- Cultural Genocide
- Genocide

2. As you reflect on the language in the Genocide Convention, what do you see as the differences between killing individuals, however many, and killing members of a group?
3. The Genocide Convention includes the word *intent* in the definition of genocide. What does that word mean in this context? How do you prove intent? What kinds of evidence would you need? How does the requirement to prove intent help distinguish genocide from other mass atrocities?
3. What might Lemkin mean when he says, "The world represents only so much culture and intellectual vigor as are created by its component national groups"? How is that statement relevant to the destruction of the Indigenous Peoples* as distinct groups?

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