



PSYCHOLOGY of Diversity

Kimberly J. McClure Brenchley



UNDERSTANDING THE PSYCHOLOGY OF DIVERSITY

Fourth Edition

To Patti and Kate, with love.

—BB

This is for my husband, James, my son, Jackson, my daughter, Evie, and my parents, Pat and Wayne, whose immeasurable love and support have been vital to me. This is also for all those who have taught me the true meaning of Isaiah 1:17: “Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed.”

—KMB

UNDERSTANDING THE PSYCHOLOGY OF DIVERSITY

Fourth Edition

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PREFACE

THIS BOOK'S PURPOSE

The academic study of diversity has become a mainstay of undergraduate curricula. “Diversity” courses can be found in humanities as well as social science departments, in general education programs offered to first-year students as well as disciplinary courses taken by majors. This type of college curricula seems to reflect a broader societal concern about teaching students how to understand the social and cultural differences in our communities. Indeed, liberally educated students *should* have some tools for thinking about diversity. That’s where this book comes in.

Students can study diversity from many perspectives—college courses on diversity often reflect historical and sociological, as well as artistic and literary, voices and perspectives. However, if the study of diversity includes the need to understand the presence of, as well as the problems and issues associated with, social and cultural difference in our society, then psychology has much to offer. This book attempts to draw together a basic psychology of diversity for students in diversity-related courses that are taught within and outside of psychology departments. This book expands and improves on *The Psychology of Diversity: Perceiving and Experiencing Social Difference* (Blaine, 2000) by being a primary rather than a supplementary textbook, by expanding on the range of social differences covered, and by incorporating diversity-related social issues into the text. The book’s level and language assumes no background in psychology among its readers so that it will be a serviceable text for diversity courses that are taken by students with majors other than psychology. This book was not written as a psychology of prejudice text; nevertheless, it covers enough of that material that the book could serve as a primary textbook in junior or senior level psychology courses on prejudice.

A note about striking a balance between the academic study of diversity and more personal responses to injustice and inequality is

in order. When we study diversity, we confront the fact that social injustices exist. Too much emphasis on social injustices (e.g., where they originate, how they can be addressed) adds a political element to the book, which may be intrusive. Avoiding social injustices altogether, however, intellectualizes problems and issues that students—particularly minority students—already face. It seems that a course on the psychology of diversity should provide a safe space for students to think about the moral implications of inequality. In writing this book, we avoid explicit (but probably, given our own social and political attitudes, not implicit) polemic regarding social injustice and leave to both the instructor and student to strike their own balance between academic learning and social advocacy. However, [Chapter 12](#) shows students that much has been learned about how to reduce inequality, intergroup conflict, and discrimination and provides instructors with a framework for advocacy/social action projects and discussions.

THIS BOOK'S ORGANIZATION

The book's 12 chapters could be divided, for the purposes of organizing a course, into three units. [Chapters 1](#) through [4](#) comprise a "Basic Concepts in a Psychological Study of Diversity" unit. These chapters cover concepts and processes for understanding social difference in general, including dimensions and definitions of diversity ([Chapter 1](#)); social categorization, stereotypes, and stereotyping ([Chapter 2](#)); social processes that shape diversity including the self-fulfilling prophecy ([Chapter 3](#)); and prejudice ([Chapter 4](#)). [Chapters 5](#) through [9](#) constitute an "isms" unit that might be termed "Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Discrimination Toward Specific Groups." This set of chapters applies and illustrates the concepts learned in prior chapters. This set of chapters covers racial stereotypes and racism ([Chapter 5](#)), gender stereotypes and sexism ([Chapter 6](#)), sexual stereotypes and heterosexism ([Chapter 7](#)), obesity stereotypes and weightism ([Chapter 8](#)), and age stereotypes and ageism ([Chapter 9](#)). The final three chapters address "Further Topics in a Psychological Study of Diversity," including social stigma and the consequences of and responses to stigma ([Chapters 10](#) and [11](#)) and methods for responding to inequality ([Chapter 12](#)).

The book also includes Diversity Issues—short (one to two-page) content set-asides that address practical issues and problems associated with diversity and responses to diversity. Collectively, the Diversity Issues provide a "social issues" flavor to the text, and questions posed to the student–readers encourage them to make connections between academic principles and applied issues and problems. Some of the Diversity Issues topics include Hate Speech, Using the N-Word, The Glass Ceiling and the Maternal Wall, The Gender Pay Gap, and the *Sesame Street* Effect.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Three pedagogical features are woven into this book, each coded with a symbol, that will assist you in planning class discussions, assignments, and student projects. Here are some ideas for how to use each in your course.

Making Connections

This symbol means that student–readers are being asked questions whose goal is to get them to think more deeply about the concepts they have just read about and to make connections between concepts and applications. The Making Connections questions also help students pause and review concepts just read before reading further. You can use these questions to stimulate discussion in class, develop short writing assignments, or as a focus for small-group discussions. They can also be appropriated as essay questions on exams.

Finally, there are **For Further Reading** resources at the end of each chapter, following the **Key Terms**. Here classic or provocative readings are provided with a description of why it is good reading and what contribution the reading makes to the larger chapter-learning objective. Some of these readings will be more accessible to the psychology major than to the nonmajor, but you can choose which to recommend—or add your own favorite extra readings—based on the background of your class.

Diversity Issues

Diversity Issues are extensions to the main chapter story that cover social issues and problems that relate to or illustrate chapter concepts. Minimally, each diversity issue can be the focus of a class discussion; you can use them to draw out students' experiences and views on that issue. They can also be expanded to lecture topics, if you are interested in pursuing them yourself or in following students' interest, by adding supportive readings, videos, guest lecturers, or other resources. Diversity Issues can also be the basis for writing assignments, such as an assignment in which students find and summarize a research article on the issue or another in which students clip a newspaper or Internet news item related to the issue and present it in class. Finally, a diversity issue can be the starting point for student research projects. For example, students might make some controlled observations about when they hear the N-word used in conversations as a means of finding out about the situational or social variables that influence its use.

WHAT'S NEW FOR THE 4TH EDITION?

Responding to the Credibility Crisis in Psychological Research

The 4th edition of this book confronts the credibility crisis that surfaced in the academic psychological research community around the time the 3rd edition was being produced. The past several years have seen the overturning of several “textbook” psychological effects (Doyen, Klein, Pichon, & Cleeremans, 2012; Carter, Kofler, Forster, & McCullough, 2015; Wagenmakers, Beek, Dijkhoff, & Gronau, 2016), large-scale replication projects of prominent published research findings that returned disappointing results (Open Science Collaboration, 2015; Klein et al., 2019), confirmation that most psychological studies have very low statistical power (Stanley, Carter, Doucouliagos, 2018), and substantial evidence of p -hacking, reporting bias and other questionable scientific practices (John, Loewenstein, Prelec, 2012). In 2005, John Ioannidis concluded that up to 50% of published research claims are untrue due to the presence of one or more of the following factors: low power, p -hacking and other forms of bias driven by the goal of achieving statistically significant results, the number of other studies that exist on the same research question, and the base rate of true relationships-to-total relationships in a given field of research (Ioannidis, 2005). The emergence of serious replicability and credibility issues in psychological research in recent years only strengthen his sobering conclusion.

In light of this new research environment, we (BEB, KMB) set and followed some parameters for what research we included in and excluded from the 4th edition of *Understanding the Psychology of Diversity*. First, affirming that good science begins with reproducibility (Bollen, Cacioppo, Kaplan, Krosnick, & Olds, 2015), we eliminated from the text coverage of any study that failed to replicate in one of the large-scale reproducibility studies cited above. This included findings that were called into question with new rigorous meta-analytic evidence (e.g., Carter et al., 2015). Second,

our review of the literature published since the 3rd edition prioritized findings from rigorous systematic reviews or meta-analyses that included unpublished studies or corrected its estimates for publication bias. Third, primary research study findings were considered if they were from a randomized experiment that was replicated with a follow-up study, a large-sample quasi-experimental study that included an adequate set of control variables, or a large-sample longitudinal causal modeling study with adequate control variables. For all primary research, efforts toward research transparency (e.g., pre-registration, making data public) strengthened our confidence in its reproducibility and claims. We occasionally included research that didn't meet these criteria when the topic was timely and there was very little research in that particular area.

Finally, we have observed an expectation, in publishers and potential adopters alike, that textbook revisions “update” or “refresh” their research references. Indeed, including some acceptable proportion of recent research (i.e., last 3 years) in a revision has become a heuristic for assessing the quality of the book and its value for students. Given the well-documented bias in the psychological research publication system for novel, provocative, and statistically significant findings and against replication studies, “new” research findings may be overrepresented with Type I error or *p*-hacked findings. New findings, especially those that purport to challenge established findings, should be viewed with caution until research accumulates to corroborate the claims. We sought to include in the 4th edition the most credible findings to emerge in the literature since the 3rd edition. If no high quality research was available in a particular area, we did not include any new references.

The 4th edition features the following:

- Many new and/or substantially revised topics, including the self-fulfilling prophecy, media stereotypes, ideological prejudice and worldview conflict, stereotype content, racism in healthcare,

gender nonbinary, benevolent sexism, LGBTQIA categories and concepts, weight bias internalization, structural stigma versus individual- and interpersonal-level stigma, social support among stigmatized individuals via the Internet and social media, old age stereotypes, and the contact hypothesis.

- Language has been revised in several chapters to reflect accepted conventions and more respectful language in referring to people in reference to their weight, gender identity, and sexual identity.
- New diversity issue pieces have been added on profiling, the R-word, Black Lives Matter, ableism, stigma and help-seeking for suicidality, and diversity in STEM fields. Many Diversity Issues were substantially revised with new research, terms, and concepts. These incorporate such topics as anti-immigrant prejudice, Brexit, White privilege, as well as new research on the gender pay gap, Title IX, gaydar and related concepts, elder abuse, and subjective age.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE PSYCHOLOGY OF DIVERSITY

Topics Covered In This Chapter

- The guiding concepts in a psychological study of diversity
- Dimensions of diversity studied by psychologists
- A statistical snapshot of American diversity
- The meanings and usages of the term *diversity*
- Diversity as a social construction and social influence

Each of us lives in a diverse social world. Although we are frequently unaware of it, our lives unfold within social contexts that are populated by people who are different—both from us and each other. The people who populate the situations in our day-to-day lives may differ in many ways, including but not limited to their ethnic identity, sex, cultural background, economic status, political affiliation, and/or religious belief. The specific dimensions of difference do not matter nearly as much as the fact that we think, feel, and behave within diverse social contexts. Two important ideas follow from the fact that we, as individuals, are perpetually embedded in diversity.

First, because individuals are literally part of the social contexts in which they behave, those *situations cannot be understood independently of the people in them*. Have you ever been amazed that you perceived a situation, such as a job interview, much differently than a friend? Perhaps you approached the interview with optimism and confidence, regarding it a potentially positive step in your career goals. Your friend, however, may have viewed the same scenario as threatening, bemoaning how it would never work out.

This illustrates how social situations are, in vital part, constructed and maintained by people. We project our own attitudes, feelings, expectations, and fears onto the situations we encounter. Applied to our social contexts, this principle says that the differentness we perceive between ourselves and other people or among other people may be inaccurate. As we will learn in subsequent chapters in this book, there are times when we project too much social difference onto our contexts and the people in them. At other times, however, we underestimate the diversity around us. So the diversity of our lives is partly a function of us—our individual ways of thinking and emotional needs.

Second, because people live and behave in diverse social contexts, then *individuals cannot be understood independently of the situations in which they act and interact*. Are you sometimes a different person, or do you show a different side of yourself, as your social setting changes? For example, do you display different table manners when eating with your friends at the café than during a holiday meal with the family? Do you think of yourself differently in those situations? If so, then you realize how we are, in vital part, social beings. Our behavior and identity are constructed and maintained by the situations in which we act and live. Likewise, our thoughts and actions flex with the situational norms we encounter. If we are interested in explaining who we are and why we behave the way we do, we must look to the social context for insight. The diversity of our social contexts is laden with informative clues to help us demystify our own behavior and confront our attitudes and beliefs.

In sum, if we are to fully understand the diversity of our classroom, community, or nation, we must appreciate that it is more than statistics about race and gender. Diversity and the individual are inextricably linked; therefore, the study of one must include the other. This book examines how we can better understand diversity by studying how the individual constructs it and how we can better understand the individual by learning how they are defined and influenced by social diversity. These two principles of the psychology of diversity will be revisited and elaborated at the end of this chapter.

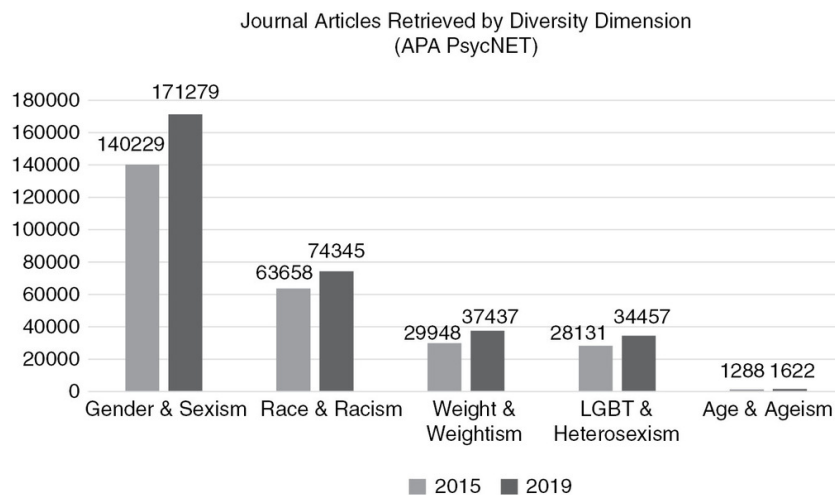
First, we must consider what diversity is and examine some of the common ways the term is used.

DIVERSITY IS SOCIAL DIFFERENCE

What is diversity? According to the dictionary, **diversity** is the presence of difference. However, the most common usages of diversity refer to *social* difference, or differences among people. People can differ in so many ways; to appreciate the range and types of diversity in the United States, and to introduce the dimensions of diversity that are addressed in this book, let's develop a statistical snapshot of the social differences of Americans from the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau statistics and other recent national surveys. [Figure 1.1](#) displays the research activity in the psychological research literature on the five dimensions of diversity that we address in this book, and how that activity has changed since the previous edition of this book was published.

Sex and Gender Identity

The study of sex and gender, including related topics like sex roles and sex differences, is by far the most researched aspect of diversity. Sex is a good case study for understanding that majority-group status is conferred by status and control over resources and not mere statistical majority. Figures from the *2018 American Community Survey*, which provides annual updates to the U.S. Census, show that females and males make up 51% and 49% of the U.S. population, respectively. Put another way, there are about 97 males in America for every 100 females and, because women tend to live longer than men, women become more of a statistical majority as they age. Although, statistically speaking, women are a majority group, women have historically endured second-class status relative to men in many life domains. For example, even with legal protections against discrimination of women in the workplace, a gender wage gap still exists such that women earn about 81 cents for every dollar earned by men (Hegewisch & Hartmann, 2019). We will take up gender diversity, including gender stereotypes and sexism, and further discussion of the gender wage gap, in [Chapter 6](#).



[Description](#)

Figure 1.1 Research Activity on Dimensions of Diversity From 1887 to 2015 and to the Present

Race

The second most researched aspect of diversity involves race and other related topics, such as racial identity and racism. Racial distinctions are based on physical and facial characteristics, skin color, and hair type and color that developed in response to particular geographic and climatic forces. The most common race labels are limited in that they combine color-based racial notions (e.g., white, Black) with ethnic and linguistic (e.g., Asian, Hispanic) elements. Moreover, about 3% of the population identify themselves on government surveys as biracial or multiethnic (e.g., having parents from different racial or ethnic groups). To deal with this complexity, the U.S. Census Bureau treats ethnic background and race as different concepts so that, for example, Hispanic people can identify themselves as white only, Black only, some other race, or even biracial. Measures of race and ethnic background (appropriately) defy simple snapshots of racial and ethnic diversity of Americans. Still, a general picture of who we are as Americans in racial-ethnic terms would be helpful.

In 2018, again based on *American Community Survey* census updates, white people constituted about 70% of the American population, with Black (12.7%), Asian (5.4%), and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander (.2%) completing the other prominent racial categories. Those figures don't add up to 100%, but they omit three categories of people—those who identify as Hispanic/Latino of any race (17.6%), those who identify with two or more races (3.1%), and those who identify their race as “other” (4.8%). These figures indicate that Hispanic/Latino individuals are the largest minority group in the United States, with the large majority of that group being of Mexican ethnicity or heritage. Indeed, the total U.S. population grew by 27 million people in the last decade (2010 to 2020), and growth in the Hispanic population accounted for over half of that growth. In terms of race, Hispanic/Latino people can identify as white, Black, more than one race, or other race. Indeed, white non-

Hispanic/Latino (or white alone) people make up 61.5% of the population, whereas Black or African American alone people comprise 12.3% of the U.S. population. This shows that in terms of racial identity, most Hispanic/Latino people identify as white. The U.S. Census allowed respondents to choose more than one racial category to describe themselves in 2000. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of white and Black biracial Americans more than doubled, and the number of white and Asian biracial Americans nearly doubled (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Although the absolute numbers of biracial Americans is small, this is a rapidly growing racial category, with estimates that biracial Americans could comprise 20% of the population by 2050 (Farley, 2001). We will learn more about issues surrounding multiracial identity in [Chapters 2 and 4](#) (see also Diversity Issue 1.1 in this chapter).

About 22% of Americans speaks a language at home other than English (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Spanish is by far the most common language spoken in homes where English is not or is rarely spoken. About 13% of the population speaks Spanish in the home, with over half of that group also reporting speaking English very well. Chinese (1% of the population) is the second most common non-English language spoken in the home, followed by Tagalog (Filipino), Vietnamese, Arabic, and Korean (each less than 1%). Look around your class: The changing nature of the American population is reflected in the makeup of your college or university student body. In 2000, about 29% of college students were non-white (12% Black, 10% Hispanic, 7% Asian). In 2017, just 17 years later, minority college students (14% Black, 19% Hispanic, 7% Asian) constituted 44% of the college population (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018). Biracial college students, who were not even counted in 2000, were about 4% of the college student population in 2017. These statistics reflect three changes in the larger population: Minority or non-white students are a greater proportion of the student population, Hispanic/Latino students have become the largest minority student group, and biracial students are a small but growing student group. We will take up racial diversity, including racial and

multiracial identity, racial stereotypes, and the implications of racial minority status for college achievement, in [Chapter 6](#).

Weight

Body shape and size is a visible aspect of diversity. Research on the consequences of overweight and obesity for health, social opportunity, and well-being has exploded in the past several years. In the first edition of this book (published in 2007), the number of journal articles retrieved from APA PsycNET on some aspect of obesity or weight-based stereotyping or discrimination was about 11,000. By 2019, just 12 years later, the research literature on weight and weightism had more than tripled in size. Currently, about 2 out of every 3 American adults are overweight, defined as having a body mass index, or BMI, over 25 (World Health Organization, 2018). As of 2017, 39.8% of Americans were obese, which is defined as having a BMI of 30 or more (Hales, Carroll, Fryar, & Ogden, 2017). Although obesity rates are about the same among all genders, obesity increases with age across the board. Obesity rates vary across racial groups, with Hispanic/Latino (47%) and non-Hispanic Black (47%) having higher rates than non-Hispanic whites (38%) or Asians (13%). Obesity is an important issue in a study of diversity for several reasons. First, body size informs self-image and self-esteem. Second, prejudice and discrimination against people because of their weight is widespread and, unlike most other forms of discrimination, legal. Third, overweight and obesity are associated with tremendous loss of social status and opportunity. In [Chapter 8](#), we will discuss stereotypes associated with being overweight and the widespread weight-based discrimination that exists in many areas of society.

Sexual Orientation

Estimates vary of the percentage of LGBTQ+ (a term including lesbian, gay male, bisexual, transgender, queer, etc.) individuals in the population due to two factors: the reluctance of some people to disclose their sexual orientation on a survey and the error inherent in small sample surveys. The best estimates of the percentages of LGBTQ+ Americans may come from the *National Health Interview Survey* (NHIS), an annual survey of about 35,000 randomly-chosen American households containing about 87,000 individuals (Centers for Disease Control, 2019). Statistics from the 2015 NHIS found that 1.4% of women and 1.8% of men are lesbian and gay, respectively, and 1.1% of women and .5% of men describe themselves as bisexual. Other estimates of the prevalence of sexual orientation come from the National Survey of Family Growth, an interview survey of about 10,000 American adults, aged 15 to 49, focusing on family life, reproductive health, and related topics (Centers for Disease Control, 2019). Statistics from the 2016 survey showed that 1.3% of women and 1.9% of men said they were homosexual, gay, or lesbian, 5.5% of women and 2.0% of men said they were bisexual, and 0.9% of women and 1.0% of men said either they didn't know or refused to answer (Copen, Chandra, & Febo-Vazquez, 2016). Sexual diversity is noteworthy because, relative to gender and race, it is an invisible status and this greatly affects whether one is a target of gay-related prejudice and how one copes with prejudice. We take up concepts of sexual orientation and identity and the stereotyping and discrimination of LGBTQ+ individuals in [Chapter 7](#).

Age

Compared with other dimensions of diversity, age diversity receives relatively little research attention (see [Figure 1.1](#)). That may change in response to the large Baby Boomer generation reaching retirement and old age thresholds. According to *American Community Survey* census updates for 2017 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018), the median (or 50th percentile) age for the U.S. population is 37.8 years, which is over a year older than the median age in 2010. The average life expectancy at birth for the U.S. population is 78.6 years (Xu, Murphy, Kochanek, Bastian, & Arias, 2018). Substantial race differences exist in life expectancy, ranging from non-Hispanic Black males (71.5 years) to Hispanic females (82.4 years). On average, women live about 5 years longer than men, which means that women increasingly outnumber men as they age: Women are 56% of the 65-and-older population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, people who are age 65 and older now represent 15% of the population, and the percentage is predicted to reach 20% by 2040 when the last wave of Baby Boomers reaches retirement age (Ortman, Velkoff, & Hog, 2014). The growth of the senior citizen population has implications for eldercare, health care, and other issues. We will consider age-related stereotypes and ageism in [Chapter 9](#).

MAKING SENSE OF DIVERSITY

These statistics offer a glimpse of the extent of social differences around us. But how do we make sense of this diversity? When we talk about diversity, *how* do we talk about it? Do we regard diversity as a good thing or a bad thing, as something to be preserved and celebrated, or something to be overcome? Is diversity more of a political or a social word? Diversity can be approached from several intellectual perspectives, each imparting a different meaning to the concept. Before introducing a psychological perspective on diversity, let's clarify what is meant by diversity from demographic, political, ideological, and social justice perspectives.

Diversity as a Demographic Concern

A common use of diversity involves the range or proportion of social differences that are represented in a group of people, an organization, or a situation. When used in this way—often in concert with social statistics—the term reflects demographic concerns. To understand the nature of social differences and how they differ from individual differences, try this exercise. The next time you attend the class for which you are reading this, look around and consider the many ways that the people in that class differ. Physically, they have different dimensions, such as weight and height, and characteristics, such as hair color and style. Psychologically, they have varying levels of self-confidence and anxiety. Intellectually, they differ in their verbal ability and intelligence. Finally, the students in your class probably differ in the social categories or groupings of which they represent, such as sex, ethnicity, cultural background, and religion. Notice how the first three (physical, psychological, and intellectual) are examples of *individual* differences—each student probably differs from every other student on that dimension. Social differences, however, refer to groupings or categories of individuals such as male and female; Catholic, Jewish, or Protestant; or single, divorced, or married. People are *socially* different when they associate with or are members of different social categories. Demographers, as scientists of vital and social statistics, study diversity using social categories.

Social categories are also useful and informative tools for a psychological study of diversity. They help us organize and remember other information about people, operating something like computer files in which social information is arranged and stored. As a result, when an individual's social category is brought to mind, that related information—such as our attitudes, beliefs, and expectations about people in that category—becomes very accessible. Try this free association task. What images or thoughts come to mind when you think of the social category *poor*? If you imagine a person who

was lacking in the intelligence or motivation to make something of himself, dressed in shabby clothes, and living in the bad section of town, you begin to see how social categories are rich with information about a person's characteristics and behavior and how the concept of diversity is influenced by the kind of information we associate with dimensions of social difference.

Social categories are also useful for describing people: We commonly identify others by their social characteristics. In describing a person to a friend you might say, "You know, she's Hispanic, an engineering major, and a Sigma Tau." How many social categories are employed in that description? Compared to descriptions of others that cite individual differences, such as their height, optimism, and grade point average, descriptions that involve *social* differences are more available and informative. Social identification is not limited to our thinking about other people; we also identify ourselves in social terms. If asked to describe yourself, you would likely use many social terms, such as Asian American, female, Catholic, or Republican. Because we identify ourselves in social terms, we are conscious of the beliefs and assumptions that other people typically associate with those categories.

Psychologists and demographers, therefore, share a common interest in social categories. But whereas demographers analyze social statistics, psychologists are interested in how social differences relate to individual behavior. Clearly, dimensions of social difference are important to our thinking about ourselves and other people. The significance of social differences, however, goes beyond the mere fact that we think of people in terms of their social groups. Social categories are laden with a great deal of information that influences how we perceive and experience our social world.

Diversity as a Political Concern

Sometimes the term diversity refers to specific dimensions of social difference that typically include sex, race, ethnicity, and to a lesser extent, physical disability. This meaning may stem from the 1978 Supreme Court *Bakke* decision in which diversity was viewed as a goal that could justify admitting students to a university based on their race. If so, diversity in a political perspective refers to particular social groups who have experienced disadvantage and discrimination (i.e., women, Black people, Hispanic people, and other ethnic minority groups). To have a diverse corporation or university, for example, is to include (or not exclude) members of historically disadvantaged social groups. This definition, however, fails to acknowledge that many social groups other than women and racial minorities have experienced injustice in our society, including LGBTQ+ people, poor people, released convicts, Muslims and Jews, and fat people.

This conceptualization—that diversity is the presence of people from historically disadvantaged social groups or categories—has political overtones and is limiting to a psychological study of diversity in two ways. First, recall that one of the principles of this book is that we construct diversity through our perceptions, beliefs, expectations, and behavior toward people based on social dimensions. But if diversity is linked predominantly to women and ethnic minorities, then the range of social difference (or *important* social difference) is preset for us by a particular legal definition of diversity. Although the motives for including members of historically disadvantaged groups in our schools and businesses are noble, this political meaning of diversity restricts the actual diversity of our social environment.

Second, the political usage of diversity focuses too much attention on social differences that are visible. Although some social differences are visible, others are not so obvious. For example, can you tell which of your classmates is learning disabled, Jewish, or

gay? Perhaps you *think* you can based on their behavior or appearance, but in fact, those judgments are probably not very accurate. From a psychological standpoint, diversity need not be limited to visible dimensions of social difference. Indeed, whether our social differences are visible or hidden from others is an important factor in understanding their influence on our psychological and social adjustment.

In sum, a psychological approach to diversity includes obvious dimensions of social difference as well as those which are less apparent or even unobservable. Psychological and political approaches to diversity, however, share an important feature—the recognition that there is a greater psychological burden associated with being a member of some social categories than others and some of this burden *is* attributable to past oppression and injustice.

Diversity as an Ideological Concern

Thus far we have considered that the concept of diversity is both a demographic and political concern. If social difference is a fact of life in our schools, communities, and nation, why is the concept of diversity such a controversial and divisive topic? The controversy that surrounds the term diversity is due to a third meaning that incorporates qualities that *should* be present in a diverse society. The qualities that should accompany social diversity are subjective and, as a result, open to debate and controversy. Not surprisingly, people take different positions on why diversity is valuable or desirable. Ideological perspectives on diversity tend to be one of three types: the melting pot, multiculturalism, and color-blindness.

The Melting Pot

For decades, the United States has taken great pride in the America-as-melting-pot idea and its prominent symbol, the Statue of Liberty. The section of Emma Lazarus's poem, "The New Colossus," that is mounted on the base of Lady Liberty, illustrates the melting pot:

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

Source: From "The New Colossus," Emma Lazarus, 1883

People who use the term diversity in this way tend to believe that a diverse society should be one where all people are welcome, where social differences are accepted and understood, and where people with social differences relate harmoniously. In the film *Manhattan Murder Mystery*, when a gentlemanly neighbor is suspected of murdering his wife, Larry (Woody Allen) retorts: “So? New York is a melting pot.” This parody is nevertheless instructive: The **melting pot** ideal involves the acceptance of others’ difference if they are (or perceived to be) otherwise devoted to the majority-group values and goals, such as working hard and being a responsible citizen. This melting pot view of diversity is reflected in an essay by Edgar Beckham, who coordinates Wesleyan University’s Campus Diversity Initiative: “How unfortunate, especially in a democracy, that we fail to note how insistently diversity also points to unity.” Beckham (1997) argues that diversity requires a unifying context in which social differences among people can work together for the benefit of everyone. So the melting pot embodies a vision of a school, community, or nation in which differences among people—especially those that relate to ethnicity and cultural heritage—are blended into a single social and cultural product. Critics of the idea that diversity evolves toward a blending of difference argue that the melting pot conveys assimilationist values and thus is little more than an offer of acceptance from the majority group on the majority group’s terms. Alternative metaphors that convey more egalitarian and inclusive attitudes toward nonmajority groups include the mosaic, kaleidoscope, or tossed salad. These metaphors offer a vision in which diverse social traditions and values are preserved, forming elements of a larger product whose identity is multiplex and changing rather than unitary and static. These metaphors reflect a multicultural approach to social difference.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is the name given to beliefs or ideals that promote the recognition, appreciation, celebration, and preservation of social

difference. People who espouse multiculturalism value the preservation of the separate voices, cultures, and traditions that comprise our communities and nation. A patchwork quilt rather than a melting pot provides a helpful metaphor for appreciating multiculturalism. In fact, quilts and quilting projects are used by educators to teach diversity concepts in elementary school-age children. A song written by Lauren Mayer and part of the *Second Grade Rocks!* educational curriculum, expresses this idea:

We are pieces of a quilt of many colors

See, how we blend together in harmony

And each piece is not complete without the others

Stitching a quilt made of you and me.

Source: Music & lyrics by Lauren Mayer © 2004

In multicultural approaches to diversity, patches of people, each with a distinct cultural or national heritage, become sewn into a large social quilt. The patches are connected to each other, perhaps by a common commitment to some overarching value such as democracy or freedom. In the spirit of the metaphor and the values surrounding multiculturalism, the quilt preserves the uniqueness of social and cultural groups while at the same time uniting them for a superordinate purpose. Critics argue that multiculturalism too easily becomes laden with identity politics, in which preserving the rights and privileges of minority groups takes priority in the “quilt-making” enterprise. Multiculturalism in this critique can include a priority of making reparations to minority groups for past discrimination or exclusion. So although the quilt metaphor is pleasant to imagine, it may be difficult to work out in policy. Limited resources and the democratic process often require that we prioritize and make distinctions among minority social groups’ rights and interests.