1

Introduction

The Multicultural Person

Both the nature of what we take to be a self and its expression are inherently cultural (Bhatia & Stam, 2005, p. 419).

Each individual's many aspects are not fragmented and distanced from one another or hierarchically ordered on behalf of a ruling center but remain in full interconnectedness and communication (Sampson, 1985, p. 1209).

There are a great variety of categories to which we simultaneously belong … Belonging to each one of the membership groups can be quite important, depending on the particular context … the importance of one identity need not obliterate the importance of others (Sen, 2006, p. 19).

Each of us is a multicultural human being. This simple and basic proposition, most descriptive of those of us who live in contemporary heterogeneous societies, constitutes the basic (though complex) theme of this book. Within its pages the reader will find attempts to explain, illustrate and argue for the value of this assertion. A major stimulus for pursuit of this is the belief that the study and understanding of behavior, when guided by the premise of individual multiculturalism, will increase the authenticity of our knowledge and the reliability of our predictions. This, in turn, should enhance the relevance and efficacy of the applications of our work to significant life situations – in the interest of advancing human welfare.

Multicultural Psychology and Cross-Cultural Psychology

This book needs to be distinguished from those that are in the tradition of cross-cultural psychology or mainstream multicultural psychology. The latter, as defined by Mio, Barker-Hackett, and Tumambing (2006, p. 32) "is the systematic study of all aspects of human behavior as it occurs in settings where people of different backgrounds encounter one another." Multicultural psychologists prefer a salad bowl rather than a melting pot as metaphorical image, viewing the United States, for example, as a society in which groups maintain their distinctiveness (Moodley & Curling, 2006). They stress and argue for the necessary development of multicultural competence by psychologists and others. Such competence includes understanding of your own culture, respect for other cultures, and acquiring appropriate culturally sensitive interpersonal skills. To this end, professional guidelines have been proposed (and adopted) for education, training, and practice. Such guidelines are approved by the American Psychological Association (APA) for practice with persons of color (APA, 2003), practice with sexual minorities (APA, 2000), and practice with girls and women (APA, 2007).

The emphases in cross-cultural psychology are two-fold: first, to understand and appreciate the relationships among cultural factors and human functioning (Wallace, 2006); and second, to compare world cultures as well as subcultures within a single society. Cultures are compared on values, world-views, dominant practices, beliefs, and structures in order to recognize and acknowledge significant differences and similarities. The acknowledged ultimate aim is to uncover (or propose) "truly universal models of psychological processes and human behavior that can be applied to all people of all cultural backgrounds" (Matsumoto, 2001, p. 5). The focus is on cultural variability on such polarized dimensions as individualistic or collectivist perspectives, field dependence or independence, and on value orientations, ways of communicating, and so on, but the clearly articulated objective is to discover general laws of human behavior, or a truly universal psychology (Pedersen, 1999; Wallace, 2006). To accomplish this requires, as Matsumoto proposes, research with persons from a wide range of backgrounds, in appropriate settings, and the use of multiple methods of inquiry and analysis.

Both multicultural psychology and cross-cultural psychology have been of tremendous value in sensitizing us to the importance of culture in understanding human behavior and in promoting the necessity of cultural knowledge. The present thesis, elaborated in this book, is indebted to this work and to cultural anthropology but takes a different position and moves forward. As noted by Hong, Morris, Chiu and Benet-Martinez (2000, p. 709), "the methods and assumptions of cross-cultural psychology have not fostered the analysis of how individuals incorporate more than one culture."

Interpretive Lenses

I interpret issues of multiculturalism and diversity, as I do all other issues in psychology, through the lens of a learning theory oriented social psychology (Lott & Lott, 1985; Lott, 1994). Such a perspective emphasizes what people do in particular situations and assumes that all human behavior (beyond molecular physiological responses and innate reflex mechanisms) is learned. Behavior is broadly interpreted to include what persons do and what they say about their goals, feelings, perceptions, and memories; and explanation involves relating social behavior to its antecedents and consequences. Explanations must take into account the setting in which the behavior occurs. People and environments are viewed as mutually dependent and interactive, with situations serving to maximize certain possible outcomes while minimizing others (Reid, 2008). And, it is assumed that persons never stop learning the behaviors most relevant to their cultural memberships, and that these remain with differential strength in one's behavioral repertoire.

The approach to the particular questions to be dealt with in this work is further situated within the general framework of "critical theory." Such a framework can be described as a critical approach to the study of culture and personal identity that is informed by historical and social factors and an appreciation of their interaction (Boyarin & Boyarin, 1997). Fundamental to critical theory analyses are inquiries about the role of social structures and processes in maintaining inequities, as well as a commitment to studying strategies for change (McDowell & Fang, 2007). The related perspective of "critical psychology" (Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997; Prilleltensky & Fox, 1997) focuses specifically on issues of social justice, human welfare, context,

and diversity. Such a focus demands that our research and inquiries cross disciplines, as will be the case in the material presented in this volume.

The intent of critical psychology is to challenge accepted propositions and interpretations of behavioral phenomena, and to examine the political and social implications of psychological research, theories, and practice. Critical psychology examines psychological phenomena and behavior in contexts that include references to power and societal inequalities, with the understanding that "power and interests affect our human experience" (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002, p. 5). This is a departure from much that is found in mainstream psychology where individuals tend to be examined as separate from their socio-political contexts (Bhatia & Stam, 2005), or as "cut off from the concrete materiality of everyday life" (Hook & Howarth, 2005, p. 509). In contrast, critical psychology accepts as a fundamental premise the intertwined relationship between persons and society (Nightingale & Neilands, 1997).

Within critical psychology there are some who perceive traditional empirical methods to be in opposition to its objectives (just as some in mainstream psychology see critical psychology as outside the bounds of good science). I agree with Jost and Jost (2007) that this approach is neither necessary nor helpful. They argue that "the goal to which contemporary critical psychologists *should aspire* ... [is to work] towards an accurate, empirically grounded scientific understanding" of the human situation (p. 299). In fact, it can be argued further that the best means of achieving a just society and social change is through the investigation and communication of empirically sound and verifiable relationships. There is no necessary incompatibility in social science between values and empiricism. All that is required of scientific objectivity is verifiability – that methods, data, and conclusions be repeatable and open to further investigation.

Persons and Communities

A major objective of this book is to examine the dimensions and politics of culture and how these shape individual lives. My arguments will be seen to have a special kinship with the position of Sampson (1989) who posited that the identity of individuals comes from the communities of which they are a part. Others, too, have appreciated the significance of

these communities for understanding persons and their interactions with one another in multilayered social contexts (e.g., Shweder, 1990; Schachter, 2005; Vaughan, 2002). My approach to the communities of which persons are a part is to identify them as *cultures*, and my definition of culture, to which the next chapter is devoted, will be seen to be inclusive and to pertain to many human groups, large and small.

Such a position of broad inclusiveness has been judged by some to render the term multicultural "almost meaningless" (Lee & Richardson, 1991, p. 6), diluted and useless (Sue, Carter, Casaa, Fouad, Ivey, Jensen, et al. 1998). However, others (e.g., Pedersen, 1999), like myself, maintain that such an approach provides a more authentic understanding of how significant group memberships affect individual self-definition, experience, behavior, and social interaction. There are indications that the concept of multicultural is being redefined and widened in an effort to reduce "confusion and conflict within the multicultural movement" (Moodley & Curling, p. 324). Thus, for example, S. Sue (1994, p. 4) suggests that "Our notions of diversity should be broadened beyond ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and social class...Cultural diversity is part of the nature of human beings." Sue and Sue (2003) express support for an inclusive definition of multiculturalism and for the need to think in terms of diversity across multiple categories. Wide definitions of culture are being supported. Markus (2008, p. 653), for example, agrees that culture "refers to patterns of ideas and practices associated with any significant grouping, including gender, religion, social class, nation of origin, region of birth, birth cohort, or occupation."

Despite the perception of some (e.g., Flowers & Davidow, 2006) that multiculturalism has been a strong influence on contemporary psychology, there is still less than full agreement on its meaning. It was first launched as a theoretical, political, and educational perspective by the civil rights movement (Biale, Galchinsky, & Heschel, 1988). When introduced into psychology, it was clearly focused on cultures of race or ethnicity and emphasis was placed on the significance of this one aspect of human diversity. Part of the problem in dealing with the meaning of multicultural is a failure to clearly explicate what is understood by culture, a concept that has often been ignored or avoided within our discipline (Lonner, 1994; Reid, 1994). Another part of the problem is a reluctance to ascribe culture to a wide spectrum of groups, and a reluctance to equate multiculturalism with diversity.

My thesis, that each of us is a multicultural human being, includes recognition at the outset of the vital fact that not all groups or communities that constitute one's unique multicultural self are equal in their position in a given society. They may differ dramatically in power (i.e., access to resources), in their size and history, and in the magnitude of their contribution to a person's experiences. It is essential, as well, to recognize that in the U.S. there is an overriding national context in which Euro-Whiteness, maleness, heterosexuality, and middle-class status are presumed normative and culturally imperative. That there is a serious disconnect between such presumptions and the reality of life in the U.S. is illustrated by census data. With respect to ethnicity, for example, non-Whites now constitute a majority in almost one-third of the largest counties in the country (cf. Roberts, 2007), are 33 percent of the total U.S. population, and 43 percent of those under 20 (cf. Roberts, 2008b). But the presumption of Whiteness remains dominant, in support of status-quo power relationships.

This presumption is found across all geographic areas and all major institutions in U.S. society. It is reflected in university curricula in all fields including psychology (Flowers & Richardson, 1996). Gillborn (2006) asserts that unless a student is specifically enrolled in a course in ethnic or gender studies, higher education is still primarily directed by White people for the benefit of White people. Rewards are most likely to go to those who accept this state of affairs. Asante (1996, p. 22) cites historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. as maintaining that "anyone wanting to be an American must willingly conform." Asante likens this to being "clarencised (a word now used by some African American college students to refer to the process by which Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas is said to have abandoned his own history)" (p. 22). Others have written about the construction of normativity in which maleness and heterosexuality are taken for granted as points of departure for assessing "difference" (Hegarty & Pratto, 2004). This context of pressured conformity to the perceived norms for "American" provides the powerful "background" for recognition of the (multicultural) person as "figure."

Against this background, each of us is situated in a multicultural fabric that is unique. The groups or communities of which we are part and with which we identify, that contribute to our cultural selves, are not equal in power. Nor are they equal in terms of their salience and importance to individuals, or to the same individual over time or across

situations. Acknowledging such complexity provides "multiple angles of vision" (Weber, 1998, p. 16). Such multiple angles/perspectives should encourage us, as individuals and as behavior scientists, to make more visible the experiences that pertain to our multiple group locations and their consequences.

This book is focused on contemporary life in the United States. It is likely that the multicultural nature of persons has been steadily increasing as a function of increases in the heterogeneous nature of our society, its institutions, roles, options, power inequities, inter-group contacts, and so on. Greater diversity in personal identity has also been attributed to the growth in globalization (e.g., Arnett, 2002), a phenomenon with widespread significance and consequences not just for national economies. Regardless of the nature of the precipitating historical and sociological changes and the number and variety of cultures that influence us, *behavior is best understood as a complex product of the cultures of which we are a part.* Our experiences and actions are thoroughly imbedded in a multicultural context.

A Proposed Social Psychological Perspective

That cultures differ is well recognized. What must also be acknowledged is that individuals in the same complex society, such as the one in the United States, are embodiments of such differences by virtue of their own unique multicultural selves. There are many intersecting cultures that define each of us as individual persons. Some are large – such as cultures of ethnicity, gender, social class, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, and geographical location. Some are smaller – occupation, political affiliation, special talent, educational institution, unions, or clubs. Cultures differ in size and also in how they are related to (or constructed from) hierarchies of power, domination, and access to resources. Cultures differ significantly in their degree of *salience* and in the *intensity* of their influence, depending upon personal histories. *And for the same person, salience and intensity of a given cultural identity will vary with the situation, the time and the place, the historical moment, social demands, anticipated consequences, personal needs, and unknown other variables.* We will turn our attention to these issues in the chapters that follow.

As portions of this text were being written, presidential primary elections were being held across the United States. Writ large and

possibly larger than ever before in the public arena was the multicultural personas of the two final Democratic hopefuls for the presidency. Senator Hillary Clinton is a White woman, with a politically powerful background and sets of experiences, who has always been economically privileged, and whose early years were spent growing up in a very White Chicago suburb. Senator Barack Obama is the son of a largely absent African father and a White mother from Kansas. He did not grow up in a middle-class household although he is now an affluent professional. He spent his teenage years in Hawaii. Both are heterosexual and Christian, both share the general values and aspirations of the same political party, both graduated from ivy-league law schools, but they have had different personal and career paths and different spheres of interaction. The diverse aspects of their multicultural selves will have different meaning and importance for them and also for those who heard and saw them and considered their merits for the job to which they were aspiring. It should not be surprising that there were White women who publicly supported the candidacy of Senator Obama (e.g., Maria Shriver, Caroline Kennedy), nor that some Black men initially supported Senator Clinton (e.g., Mayor Nutter of Philadelphia, and Mayor Dellums of Oakland, CA). Gender and ethnicity define powerful cultural influences but to neglect the importance of other cultural ties leads us to not understand (and be unable to predict) significant social behavior in multiple arenas.

Situating each individual in a unique and complex multicultural framework has significant positive consequences. As Pedersen (1997) noted, it helps us appreciate and emphasize that "all behavior is learned and displayed in a cultural context" and to be aware "of the thousands of 'culture teachers' accumulated in each of our lifetimes" (p. 221). In the next chapter, the concept of culture will be carefully examined. As noted by Matsumoto (2001, p. 3) "No topic is more compelling in contemporary psychology today than culture, and no other topic has the potential to revise in fundamental and profound ways almost everything we think we know about people." But we need to go beyond simply recognizing the contribution of culture to human behavior. We need to highlight and appreciate our individual multicultural nature. Doing so may help us to move beyond current tensions that pit "diversity" and "multiculturalism" against one another.

New perspectives more and more frequently include recognition of the significance of multiple individual identities (e.g., McDowell & Fang,

2007), the interdependence between individuals and their cultural contexts (e.g., Markus, 2008; Schachter, 2005), and the variations in cultural group salience across persons and situations (e.g, Sue & Sue, 2003). As noted by Pedersen (1999, p. xxi) "Each of us belongs to many different cultures at different times, in different environments, and in different roles." What I propose, however, is that we take this recognition several steps further. We need to fully appreciate the reality that *each of us belongs to many different cultures at the same time* – and recognize the consequences of this phenomenon for individual behavior and social life.

2

Culture

[I]ndividuals feel, think, and see things from the viewpoints of the groups in which they participate (Smith, 1991, p. 182).

[W]e cannot understand human diversity without understanding how culture contributes to the substantial variations we observe every day (Lonner, 1994, p. 241).

Culture is to human behavior as operating systems are to software, often invisible and unnoticed, yet playing an extremely important role in development and operation (Matsumoto, 2001, p. 3).

In the early years of psychology's development as a discipline separate from philosophy, during the last part of the 19th century, there was interest in what was called "folk culture." But this interest waned as issues related to the concept were seen as too speculative and not readily amenable to empirical inquiry (Pepitone, 2000). Culture has re-emerged as a significant construct in the past few decades. In current psychological discourse, our definitions and conceptualizations of culture come primarily from cultural anthropology where culture is generally understood to refer to that part of our environment that is constructed by human beings to embody shared learning.

Definitions and Common Themes

An early definition, in 1891, presents culture as the incorporation of all socially acquired habits and knowledge (see Mio, Trimble, Arredondo, Cheatham & Sue, 1999). More than a century later, the core of this definition remains the same, despite multiple variations on the basic theme. Baldwin, Faulkner, Hecht, and Lindsley (2006) refer to the definition of culture as a "moving target" and devote an entire book to its discussion, providing an appendix of 300 variations. Nevertheless, for the purpose of the present text, I focus on what seems to be the essence of common agreement.

In this common agreement within social science, culture is understood to represent "socially transmitted beliefs, values, and practices … [and] shared ideas and habits" (Latane, 1996, p. 13). Pepitone (2000) adds that the distinct patterns defining a culture are identified with by those who behave in accordance with them. Different aspects of culture are emphasized by others. Thus, Ray (2001, p. 3) notes that culture may designate what cannot be verbalized easily, "the unconscious cognitive and social reflexes which members of a community share." Lehman, Chiu & Schaller (2004) summarize the basic elements contained in just about every definition of culture – shared distinctive behavioral norms that are omnipresent and may appear natural, and are transmitted to new members of the culture. These norms provide interpretive perspectives that assist in the perception and cognition of events.

While some events are complex and some involve social interactions, an event can be as simple as "the smell of herbs and spices or distinctive foods cooking in restaurants and neighborhoods" (Forman & Giles, 2006, p. 98). Interpretation of what is smelled will vary with background, experience, and expectation. Culture refers to what we learn from others in the form of familiar associations or interpretations, beliefs, attitudes, and values. It prepares us to attend to some events and not to others, to ascribe particular meanings to what we experience, observe, and learn about from others.

In addition, a culture's interpretative perspectives may be communicated to those outside the culture in the form of artifacts or art or performances (West, 1993). Kitayama (2002) calls attention to the presence of cultural artifacts that may include tools, verbal and

nonverbal symbols, and particular daily practices or routines. These are what outside observers use to learn about cultures not their own. When the new Museum of the American Indian first opened in Washington, DC, it gave space to a sample of tribes of varying size from all parts of the United States in which each could present to visitors what was considered to be the most representative of their history, practices, art, symbols, narratives, including the voices of tribe members.

Bond (2004) suggests that culture describes not just what persons within the group can or should do – "affordances" or prescriptions – but also what they should not do – "constraints" or proscriptions; and that it includes "a shared system of beliefs (what is true), values (what is important), expectations,... and behavior meanings ... developed by a group over time" (p. 62). To these can be added shared possibilities or encouragements, and shared adaptations to the particular circumstances of the group members (Lonner, 1994). Observed from the outside, a culture may be described in terms of distinctive food, dress, speech, music, rituals, texts, and so on. From the perspective of the individual within the culture, however, the affordances, constraints, expectations, possibilities, and patterns may not be overtly apparent or easily verbalized, since culture is lived, and only sometimes scrutinized or described by those who live it.

Culture is Part of Human Biology

It is culture that sets us apart from other animals and from our closest primate relatives. Culture is part of human biology (or human "nature") in that it is *made possible by our biological equipment*. It is the structure and function of particular parts of our biological equipment that provides us with the neural, skeletal, and physiological capacities to learn, practice, and adapt to changing conditions on a level not reached by other animals. As noted by Rogoff (2003, p. 63), humans are "biologically cultural." This essential and empirically accurate understanding is missed and obfuscated in discussions of culture that pit nature against nurture with arguments that rest on the false premise of separation between the two.

Contributing most especially to culture is our biological (neurological and anatomical) capacity for oral and written language that sets us apart from the most highly developed of other animals. A vital aspect of

culture, therefore, is that it incorporates what is *both learned and shared* (Swartz, 2001). There can be no culture without transmission or teachability. Values, beliefs, normative behavior, and interpretations of experience are transmitted both explicitly and implicitly (or more indirectly) through the socialization process and through shared everyday life experiences and challenges (Lonner, 1994; Reid, 2002). Transmission is an essential feature of culture. What we attend to within a community, how we behave, what we believe, and what we anticipate must be communicated from one generation to another. This communication depends upon a common language or mode of expression.

Lonner and Hayes (2004) emphasize the pervasiveness of culture and the range of activities, events, and experiences that are shaped by it in every day life from birth through the rituals of death. The shared ways of behaving and believing are "created daily through interactions between individuals and their surroundings" (Segall, Lonner & Berry, 1998, p. 104). It is through social interactions that culture is maintained and persons are assisted in behaving in accord with prescribed and shared standards, values, ideas, and beliefs (Cohen, 1998; Swartz, 2001).

The most contemporary approaches to culture emphasize the active role of individuals as interpreters and modifiers as they interact with others and with their environments (Berry & Poortinga, 2006). Culture does not connote a static model of adherence to norms. There is always within-culture variation and change (Caulkins, 2001; Foley, 1997). A culture is dynamic, or a "work in progress" (Ray, 2001, p. 185), always in the process of developing and changing (Mullings, 1997). Contradictions and challenges exist and there are differences among those in the same shared culture. An important corollary is that no one learns everything that can be learned and people do not all learn the same things (Gatewood, 2001). Each person experiences different aspects of the same culture in a unique and individual way within predictable limits.

Diversity of Cultures

Some prefer to limit the concept of culture to what is learned, shared, and transmitted within large groups such as nationalities or ethnicities. This view was the dominant one within the earlier multicultural discourse in psychology but there are signs of change (e.g., Sue & Sue, 2003). The position I present in this work, like the one advocated by

Pedersen (1999, p. 3), is that culture be broadly defined "to include any and all potentially salient ethnographic, demographic, status, or affiliation identities." It follows that each cultural context in which we participate or behave will contribute to who we are, our beliefs about ourselves and others, how we interpret events, how we relate to and interact with others, and what we accomplish in promoting change in our lives and communities. Each of us will bring our complex and unique multicultural selves into our social interactions with others and into our interpretation of events.

When members of a group share a common history, or common locus in society, or common experiences, the fact of this sharing can shape a common identity. The view that culture reflects adaptations to "historical, political, economic, and social realities" (Mio et al., 1999, p. 83) is common to all definitions. Yet, within psychology some discussions of culture have been narrow and mostly limited to ethnic minorities. Others, however, have a broader perspective. As noted by Essed (1996, p. 57), for example, "The experiences of motherhood or a profession can appeal to a specific identity. We all have multiple identities.... We are defined by where we come from, but also by what we do." We are defined by the particular adaptations people in our group have made to their environments, as these adaptations and experiences have been shared and communicated across generations. The shared environments may be geographic or physical, economic or political, occupational or ideological.

It is meaningful and authentic, accurate and empirically demonstrable, to speak of "inner city culture" or Southern White culture, of military culture, ivy-league culture, women's culture, gay culture, Native American, or African American culture. Culture may be observed in a "religious enclave, an urban scene, an immigrant community, or a neighborhood" (Caulkins, 2001). By focusing only on what is distinctive or common among large cultural groups we neglect the vital recognition that "individuals incorporate more than one culture" (Hong, Morris, Chiu & Benet-Martinez, 2000).

The next chapter will focus on ethnicity and the factors that relate to past and present geography and nationality. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural significance of being part of a U.S. White majority or to a minority group. But culture is not the property only of groups that originate from the same part of the globe, or people who experience oppression or privilege, or who are socially marginal, or who may

share physical characteristics like skin color. Learned prescriptions and constraints, and their transmission, also characterize those who share a political philosophy, an ideology, a religion, a profession or occupation or social status, a gender or social class.

Framing the discussions within this book is the proposition that behavior at a particular time and in a particular place is the outcome of the intersections of the cultures most salient to the person and most relevant to the situation. Consider, for example, what classroom behaviors might be similar and different between a working-class 30-year-old Italian American heterosexual male graduate student and an affluent 30-year-old gay African American graduate student studying psychology at the same elite university? What behaviors will be similar and different between a heterosexual Native American 40-year-old woman clinical psychologist and a 60-year-old bisexual Jewish American woman clinician in conversation with the same patient? And how differently or similarly will they respond to a 20-year-old and an elder within the same tribe, each of whom presents the same symptoms of depression?

Hong and her colleagues (2000, 2003) have introduced the concept of "frame switching" to refer to shifts an individual may make in interpreting events or issues from within the frames of different, multiple cultural identities. Their "dynamic constructivist" approach suggests that an individual can ascribe different meanings, even contradictory ones, to the same event, but that only one meaning will be dominant at a particular time and place, depending upon the other stimuli within a specific situation or upon immediately preceding events that have had a "priming" effect. I suggest that it may also be possible for several meanings of relatively equal strength to be evoked, reflecting the influence of more than one cultural background that may be relevant to the situation.

A culture is not the same as a "reference group." The latter can be defined as a group in which one chooses to participate or would like to participate; a group whose opinions or goals one values (Smith, 1991). We may use groups to which we belong or aspire to belong as reference points for behavior or beliefs, but cultural influence goes far beyond that. It shapes "who we are in spite of ourselves, effortlessly and inexorably as we ... internalize our community's habits of thought, values and forms of behavior" (Ray, 2001, p. 3). It is within our (various) cultures that we have practiced and learned how to behave, and what to believe and feel, in accord with prescriptions and

proscriptions that were transmitted to us across time from significant others. Cultural influences continue to mold the specifics of development, beginning before birth, influencing subtle and also clear and obvious ways of doing things. Influences from non-familial cultural communities powerfully affect variations in adult behavior. Rogoff (2003) views cultures as "communities" or "groups of people who have some common and continuing organization, values, understanding, history, and practices" (p. 80). Such communities may vary in the extent to which the members are in continuing face-to-face contact or physical proximity and in the extent to which their influence is dependent on proximal contact among their members.

Empiricism and Social Constructions

Our cultural communities define us and provide contexts for behavior in particular situations. The relationships among these communities and the behavior of persons identified with them can be studied with multiple methods, and conclusions from such studies can be replicated and verified. The consequences of cultural membership for behavior can be direct or they can influence the relationships among other variables (Adamopoulos & Lonner, 2001). Thus, cultures can be viewed as both antecedent and dependent variables (Matsumoto, 2001; Forman & Giles, 2006). A review of relevant literature by Lehman et al. (2004) illustrates the conclusion that culture and psychological processes influence each other: "cultural paradigms influence the ... thoughts and actions of individuals, which then influence the persistence and change of culture over time" (p. 703). And, as similarly noted by Rogoff (2003, p. 51), "people contribute to the creation of cultural processes and cultural processes contribute to the creation of people. Thus, individual and cultural processes are mutually constituting rather than defined separately from each other."

Culture, like all of our major social psychological concepts, is a social construction. This status, however, is not an impediment to empirical inquiry. I share Pepitone's (2000, p. 244) conviction that what is socially constructed can "be objectively real in the sense of having significant effects." We can identify cultures and investigate their antecedents, consequences, and role as mediators between variables. And it is imperative that we do so, since they help us to define and understand persons and make sense of human behavior.

The Cultural Mosaic

The self [may be] ... conceptualized as a multidimensional struc-
ture that mirrors the multiple positions of one's unique interaction
network (Piliavin, Grube, & Callero, 2002, p. 472).

Every person is a member of multiple social groups, and thus every-
one has multiple social identities (Murphy, Steele & Gross, 2007,
p. 879).

[I]dentities change in meaning and significance in response
to changing social circumstances (Clayton & Opotow, 2003,
p. 308).

Each of us, as a unique multicultural individual, has multiple social
identities as a consequence of our multiple cultural memberships.
These groups of which we are a part vary in size and location, and their
salience and influence vary with time and place. If we use as criteria for
culture groups of people who share history, current problems, common
experiences, language, values, similar adaptations or behaviors, beliefs,
and attitudes as well as the passing on of these similarities to future
generations, then we must recognize that culture is not limited by
physical proximity or by size. We can identify cultures as large as
"Western civilization" and those as small as a neighborhood gang or a
college. As a faculty member in a public university with a sizable com-
muter student body, I frequently asked my students to think about
how the culture of their school compared with that of a private

ivy-league university in the same state just 40 miles away. No one ever had any difficulty making cultural distinctions between the two.

In one study (Haslam, Rothschild & Ernst, 2000), a sample of U.S. undergraduate students were able to identify special characteristics of 20 social categories that included (beyond those of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and social class): age, dietary groups (e.g. vegetarians), disability groups, political groups, and regional/geographical groups. In scholarly journals as well as in fictional and non-fictional literature, and the media, one finds accounts of youth culture, sport fan culture, occupational cultures, and so on. Brewer and Pierce (2005) reported on a mail survey of households in Ohio in which respondents listed their important group memberships. Sports fans viewed other fans as people similar to themselves.

These smaller cultures may or may not matter as much as those discussed earlier in this book. According to Frable (1997, p. 140), "the cultural categories that matter … [are] the ones that we all pay attention to in our daily lives." What these are is an important empirical question. The cultures that *matter* are likely not to be the same for all of us and to vary across persons. The value or consequences of membership in different cultural communities will differ among us, even for those cultures that are most often studied and recognized as important in daily life. West and Fenstermaker (1996) discuss "situated conduct" and suggest that we ask which behaviors or reactions in situation X by person A is a reflection of which of A's cultural identities.

Not all "older" people identify themselves as part of a senior culture, but many are similarly offended by a physician who talks past them to the daughter or son accompanying them about their health, or by a store clerk who assumes that they don't know how to work a computer, or by being ignored in a restaurant, or by "elderspeak" – being called "sweetie" or "dear" or by their first names (Leland, 2008). Older persons share such incidents with one another. When shared with younger friends or colleagues they are likely to be presented in the context of "preparation" for those who will be moving into a new culture of age.

Diverse Cultural Communities

It is not possible within the pages of this book to do more than select a few of these less studied cultures for some brief discussion. For

someone who is a member of an "other culture," however, membership in it may be of fundamental and primary significance with the extent of its importance varying with time, context, and immediate situation, from looming large and dominant to inconsequential.

Cultures of Place

There are cultures of "place" that have shifting consequences for individual behavior. Beginning with Newcomb's early classic study of political norm development among students at Bennington College (Newcomb, Koenig, Flacks & Warwick, 1967), research has documented the growing similarity of attitudes and beliefs among people living in close proximity to one another. In a recent study (Cullum & Harton, 2007), increasing similarity over time in attitudes on a wide range of issues, and particularly on issues judged to be important, was found among housemates in residence halls in a Midwestern university.

Residents of New York City can talk knowledgeably about the cultures of Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant or Williamsburg, Flushing in Queens, the Upper West Side, the Upper East Side, Harlem, and the South Bronx (to name just a few). These are neighborhood cultures that are heavily intertwined with social class and ethnicity. With the advent of Governor Sarah Palin into the national political scene, we have all learned a good deal about her state of Alaska, and its unique culture. It has been described as "its own world," colonial and frontier, big, wild, and cold with a special history, economy, inhabitants, and set of values ("Alaska's uniqueness," 2008). Cultural status is also attributed to other geographical locations in the United States, e.g., the Midwest, far west, New England. Those of us who are Rhode Islanders by birth or adoption can speak at some length about our unique words, pronunciations, foods, and foibles, celebrated and shared in stories and cartoons (e.g., Bousquet, 1997).

The culture of the American South has been richly and often portrayed in plays and novels. A recent example of a segment of this culture can be drawn from newspaper reports of how symbols of the old pre-Civil War South remain extraordinarily important to some. In the mid-1990s, in several Southern states, there were efforts to remove Confederate flags from courthouses, to remove Confederate statues,

to change lyrics of official state songs or to replace them with others, and to discontinue waving Confederate flags at sports events or putting them on state license plates (Sack, 1997). Such efforts were met with strong opposition by supporters of the Southern heritage with which they identify. Groups like the Southern Heritage Association and Sons of Confederate Veterans defended the continued public presence of the symbols of their culture.

Disability Cultures

There were strong public protests within the past two decades by students and staff at Gallaudet University, a liberal arts university for the deaf, over the selection of a new president (Leigh & Brice, 2003; Schemo, 2006). In 1988, when the Board of Trustees selected a hearing candidate, passing over candidates who were deaf, the protest was led by a group calling itself the Deaf President Now movement. A more recent protest raised significant questions about deaf culture, including whether deafness should be viewed as a disability or an identity. Should American Sign Language be the exclusive means to communicate among the deaf, with professors required to be fluent signers? The use of technology to enhance hearing, such as cochlear implants, and the use of spoken language, present challenges to deaf culture and are subjects of heated debate.

Beckenroth-Ohsako (1999) argues for the legitimacy of a deaf minority culture in which individuals share a language, an identity, common problems and frustrations. In addition, deaf people share personal history, customs, stories, and jokes, and some define themselves as a "minority group within a multicultural society" (p. 114). Moradi and Rottenstein (2007) also regard deaf persons as members of a unique culture with shared experience, history, and language. Among those who are most vocal in the deaf community are voices calling for a perception of themselves not as part of a larger disability culture, but rather as a distinctive linguistic minority culture.

That there is a disability culture is a view increasingly voiced and strongly promoted by activists who have successfully raised consciousness about disability issues and access to public places, employment, and housing. There are close to 50 million people with disabilities in the United States, that is, people with some impairment that limits at

least one major life activity (cf. Quinlan, Bowleg & Ritz, 2008). Those who view disabilities as a form of diversity highlight the existence of common experiences among the disabled (e.g., Leigh & Brice, 2003). As is true for many other minority cultures in the United States, members experience stigma, marginality, and discrimination, and are devalued as vulnerable. Scheer (1994, p. 251) proposes that a "sociopolitical definition of disability connects people with the broadest range of disabilities to each other by locating disability in the interaction of the person within her or his environment, rather than solely within the individual."

Political Cultures

Members of a political culture may be diverse in many respects but are held together by a special set of values, beliefs, attitudes, language, and behaviors. For example, Napier and Jost (2008) found important differences between conservatives and liberals in a large nationally representative sample in their beliefs about (or rationalizations of) inequality. Political cultures, broadly understood, might be said to include, in addition to liberalism and conservatism, pacifism, socialism, and feminism (Huddy, 2001). Numerous studies have found that feminists, for example, are bound together by common attitudes, beliefs, and self-identification (e.g., Eisele & Stake, 2008). As with other cultural identities, those based on politically similar views will vary in importance depending on the situation, context, time, and place.

Wellman (1999, p. 79) writes of his parents, that they did not see "themselves as ethnic nor ... as religious. ... Their identity was political. They were Communists. ... The powerful categories in our lives were not ethnicity, religion, or race. The category that defined us was politics." Some children brought up by left-wing parents have referred to themselves as "red-diaper babies." Persons who consider themselves politically progressive or left-of-center are spread across geographical areas in the U.S. but share a culture that is maintained and transmitted by membership in formal groups, Internet connections, periodicals, and newsletters. Members of this culture may get their news, commentaries, and analyses from *In These Times*, *Mother Jones*, or *The Nation* while those imbedded in a right-wing culture keep their TVs tuned to *Fox News* and follow the political guidance of commentators like Rush

Limbaugh. A small conservative political community connected primarily by the Internet was the subject of a *New York Times* article (Eligon, 2008). Described is a group of young Black Republicans calling themselves *HipHop Republicans* who maintain a blog of the same name. Another source of connection and information in the African American "conservative blogosphere" is *Booker Rising*. Political cultures, like others, can be described by distinctive beliefs, symbols, sometimes music, actions and attitudes, and efforts to transmit these to new generations.

The Culture of Singleness

The particular concerns and challenges faced by people who remain unmarried by choice (in a society in which this is considered to be a minority lifestyle) have prompted some to view single status in cultural terms. DePaulo (2006) has studied both bachelorhood for men and singleness for women. She found that "People who do not have a serious coupled relationship ... are stereotyped, discriminated against, and treated dismissively" (p. 2). A typical response to a single person, she notes, is to assume that she or he is lonely, envious of couples, afraid of commitment, or too picky, perhaps even selfish and immature, or homosexual, and missing out on the emotional and physical intimacy that comes with being part of a couple. Studies confirm that a single woman, especially, is often marginalized, stigmatized, and seen as being outside of normal family life (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003; Reynolds, Wetherell & Taylor, 2007), with the dominant message in Western society being that "emotional satisfaction, sexual fulfillment, companionship, security, and spiritual meaning" can only be found as part of an intimate couple (Trimberger, 2005, p. x).

Despite the dominant prejudice, Trimberger found, from her 2005 study of the narratives of a sample of single women, that they reported leading satisfying lives. Not being coupled has become a more and more viable life option, as indicated by U.S. Census data. In 2003, there were about 52 million adults in the United States who had been single all their lives. Counting other singles through divorce or widowhood, and not counting cohabiting couples, DePaulo (2006) estimated 76 million single people. Yet, the advantages and normativeness of being part of a couple continue to be assumed in the market place, in

the law, in the media, in our institutions, and our social relationships. Persons who are single are often excluded by their coupled friends from outings, vacations, parties; there may be an assumption that a person who is still single is jealous of a married or coupled one, that "couples are special and singles are second-class" (DePaulo, 2006, p. 69). It is assumed that single persons are dedicated to exploring ways to find a partner and that, if they fail, they will grow old and die alone. Internet sites for meeting other singles abound.

But do the assumptions about singleness and common experiences provide a cultural connection with other singles? Some research suggests that ever-singles (women especially) tend to have stable, long-lasting friendships, to interact with others who share their interests, and to view friendships as important sources of intimacy and support. Ever-singles have also learned skills associated with performing everyday tasks by themselves. DePaulo (2006, p. 259) writes:

> My guess is that single people, compared with coupled people, are more likely to be linked to the members of their social networks by bonds of affection. ... The networks of single people ... are more likely to be intentional communities rather than collections of matched sets of couples.

This conclusion is supported by Trimberger (2005) who sees the family networks among single women, that include childhood, work, political, and recreational friends, as connections akin to communities.

Cultural Identities: How Do I Describe Myself?

Shelton and Sellers (2000, p. 27) note that "If you were asked to describe who you are ... you might respond in different ways, depending on the situation." At any given moment one's membership in multiple cultures will be relevant to the performance of any social behavior. But while "people are all simultaneously gendered, raced, classed, and sexually 'oriented'" (Rappaport & Stewart, 1997, p. 316), the relevance of each of these identities to behavior will depend upon the issue addressed by the behavior, its immediate context, those with whom interaction is anticipated, and the circumstances of the interaction (Phan, 2005). As I write this, I think of how I see

myself when I am at my gym in an aerobics or stretch class; what is most salient to me there are my cultures of gender, age, and social class. But during a Passover holiday, spent at the home of my son and his family, what was most salient and prominent for me was my ethnicity. This became less significant during discussions of current social issues when it was my political identity that was most salient and relevant and strong. The cultures of which we are a part are not likely to have independent consequences but to interact or intersect as they influence what we say and do.

Cultural identity is based on group memberships that are accepted or claimed (Deaux, 2006). Some, like ethnicity, are primarily assigned. But whether a cultural community is one we are born into or adopt, it is clear that not all of our cultural ties are equally important, equally salient, or equally influential across situations and across time. What the literature suggests, according to Frable (1997, p. 155), is that "the personal meanings of social group memberships change over time, and the meanings are best understood in the context of socio-historical events."

Thus, gender may trump ethnicity or sexual identity, or the latter may trump the former, at different times and in different places. In addition, for a particular person, a particular social identity may be relatively insignificant most of the time, since not all group memberships are equally valued and the same group membership will have varied meanings to different people. Over and above these considerations, for a particular person, a change in situation may evoke a particular cultural identity, or enhance or reduce its salience. One 1990 study by Luborsky and Rubenstein (cited in Tsai, Chentsova-Dutton & Wong, 2002) found, among a sample of Irish, Italian, and Jewish widowers, that their ethnic identity became more salient after the death of their wives. This enhanced their ability to retain connections with their earlier experiences and to assume their roles as cultural transmitters. Shelton and Sellers (2000) report data gathered with a sample of African American college students that indicated the increased importance of ethnicity in race-salient situations. They also found that the likelihood of interpreting an ambiguous event in terms of ethnicity increased with the importance or centrality of ethnic identification.

Roccas and Brewer (2002) present the example of a woman attorney. In some groups we expect her professional identity to be primary; in others, her gender. One of my daughters is an attorney and I have

no doubt that when she appears to plead a case in court, it is the culture of the lawyer that is overwhelmingly (if not totally) influential in affecting her language and behavior. But, as Roccas and Brewer, note, "both gender and occupation may be equally salient in a work context" (p. 90), as was certainly the case when my daughter faced the difficult choice of staying home with a sick child when her daughter was younger or reporting for work and traveling to her office. Worchel (1999) notes that the salience of a particular identity may well change in response to a personal crisis. It may also be affected by a crisis for the cultural community. A racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, or heterosexist event, or series of events, in one's neighborhood or workplace or city may turn a relatively dormant or low-strength identity into one with far greater salience.

Situational cues play an essential role in making a particular social identity salient but cultural memberships are not all of equal strength. Tsai et al. (2000, p. 57) note that the degree to which "one feels oriented to Chinese culture may depend on whether one is speaking Chinese or English ..., or whether one is in the presence of an authority figure or peer." Ethier and Deaux (1994, p. 243) report having found, in a one-year longitudinal study of Latino/a students at a primarily Anglo college, that the strength of a studenrt's ethnic identity varied with "the language spoken in the home, the ethnic composition of the neighborhood, and the percentage of a student's friends who were in the same ethnic group." At the college, students with a stronger ethnic identity were more likely to get involved with other Latino/a students in cultural activities.

Even though socioeconomic status is powerfully linked to so many areas of life (health, education, opportunities, privilege, material advantages), the meaningfulness of one's social class will vary greatly across persons and across situations (Liu, 2001). It is particularly difficult in the United States, where the myth of classlessness is still strong, for working-class or low-income persons to claim this identity despite awareness of economic and sociopolitical inequities. Fine and Burns (2003, p. 855) point out that

[T]here is little pride in being poor or working class ... it is just assumed that it is 'better' to be middle- or upper-middle-class.... The desire to exit or be in the closet about poverty or the working class is understood.

Upward mobility is part of the American Dream (Ostrove & Cole, 2003), and being low-income is not a status to which anyone aspires. Positive stories about dignified and decent lives in working-class culture are infrequent in any of the mass media. Exceptions – films like *Norma Rae* (about textile mill workers) or *North Country* (about coal miners) – are notable by their small numbers. Depictions are more likely to be of dysfunctional, problematic families although, as hooks (2000, p. 72) notes, "On television the working class are allowed to be funny now and then." Most often, it is affluence that is pictured as better, superior, and to be admired and strived for. Wealth is deserved and earned. Frable (1997) concluded, from a review of the empirical literature, that social class tends to become salient when an individual is in a clearly other-class context or situation – a working class student in an ivy-league school, a newly divorced middle-class woman experiencing a serious economic downturn, and so on.

There was a time in U.S. history when pride in union membership and working-class status was greater than it is now. I am old enough to remember the image of Rosie the Riveter who represented the army of proud working-class women who made enormous contributions to ending World War II by welding, hammering, and painting in factories and shipyards across the United States. These working women came from all over the U.S. "including...from states where blacks and whites wouldn't be sharing drinking fountains for another 20 years" (Locke, 2007, p. A2). I am also old enough to remember exuberant May Day marches down Fifth Avenue in New York City, equivalent in spirit to Gay Pride parades and to the Black is Beautiful movement. Union culture contained music, stories, and shared experiences that were passed down from one generation to another. But that culture now continues strong only in some regions of the U.S. and is a dominant identity for a small minority.

> Today ... the American union movement is a shadow of its former self, except among government workers [and some others]. In 1973, almost a quarter of private sector employees were union members ... [compared with today's] mere 7.4 percent (Krugman (2007, para. 2).

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the total current union membership figure, including both government and private sector workers, is 12.1 percent of the workforce (cf. Zipperer & Schmitt,

2007). What has happened to the U.S. labor movement is largely the result of a concerted and powerful effort by corporate business to undermine and seriously injure it through both legal and illegal strategies. Anti-union campaigns against organizing efforts are run by law firms and consulting groups hired by 75 percent of employers; and a quarter of such employers illegally fire workers for union advocacy (Eiding & Slack, 2007). This determined corporate effort is in sharp contrast with the results of polls of non-managerial workers, half of whom express a desire for union membership (Zipperer & Schmitt, 2007); "close to 60 million workers say that they would join a union right now if given the opportunity to do so in a fair environment" (Eiding & Slack, 2007). Some note the success of the Service Employees International Union in reversing the decline of organized labor, and attribute this to its aggressive recruitment of minorities of color, and of the lowest paid service workers like home health workers and janitors (Keen, 2007). Recent gains in union membership generally are attributed to women and Black men (Zipperer & Schmitt, 2007).

Conflicting Identities

Special problems arise for persons in cultures with conflicting beliefs and values, and opposing behavioral prescriptions and proscriptions. Much has been written of clashes between ethnic identities and sexual minority identity (e.g., Greene, 2007; Harper, 2007). Allman (1996) notes that Asian Americans who are gay or lesbian may be chastised within their ethnic communities because homosexuality is considered to be a White problem/issue. At the same time, as a lesbian, she has experienced pressures to behave in accord with an unspoken lesbian norm of whiteness. Individual conflict resolution may involve attempts to integrate differences or to shift between cultures as the salience of each becomes more relevant in one situation or another. An African American gay man may be strongly connected to both Black and gay cultures. He may choose to be not "very public with his gay identity with his family or within his church" and yet not be closeted; at other times, he may associate "with predominantly White gay friends" and yet not be denying his African American culture (Reynolds & Pope, 1991, p. 178).

Anita Hill's testimony before the Senate committee reviewing the suitability of Clarence Thomas for membership on the U.S. Supreme

Court is a well-known example. Jordan (1995, p. 40) has discussed this event in the context of a clash of cultures – gender and ethnicity. "[O]ne of the ironclad conventions of black cultural life," she notes, is that you "Don't 'air our dirty laundry' in public" (p. 40). Hill's decision to speak out publicly as a Black woman who had experienced harassment from a Black man broke the "dirty linen" taboo. This made her vulnerable to criticism from within the African American community while being praised and receiving positive recognition from feminists. Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach (2008) provide an insightful discussion of the negative reception among some African Americans to Anita Hill's decision to make public her harassment charges against Thomas and the questions raised about why she waited so long to do so. Hill's hesitation is explained by the "norms within the black community which impose a 'code of silence' on black women" (p. 387), as evidenced by criticism in some of the Black media leveled against Hill for violating the taboo.

Cultural Intersections

Recognition of one's personal multiculturality can enhance awareness and widen one's sphere of action. Duberman (2001) urges greater understanding of the intersections among sexuality, social class, ethnicity and gender. Issues associated with each need to be listened to carefully so that we will be better informed about the similarities in "hierarchies of privilege and power" and have a more accurate picture of "the complexities and sometimes overlapping identities of individual lives" (p. 21). Providing a personal example of a complex life, Kich (1996) describes how being biracial and bisexual helped him to better appreciate the wide array of experiences and knowledge associated with ethnic and sexual marginality. Such analyses can encourage intercultural competence and aid in bridging and reconciling differences.

An *intersectionality* perspective is entering more and more frequently into theoretical discussions. This perspective acknowledges simultaneous, intersecting memberships in multiple social groups (Brewer & Pierce, 2005), and recognizes and highlights "the mutually constitutive relations among social identities" (Warner, 2008, p. 454). What is emphasized is that these do not function independently but interact to influence self-view and behavior.

Overlapping identities can be brought to the center of experience by reactions from others. Cose (1993) interviewed a sample of affluent Black professionals who reported incident after incident in which the White people with whom they were interacting were responding to their ethnicity and not to their social class or occupational and educational status. They reported humiliating experiences in which they were treated with disrespect and lack of acknowledgement of their capabilities and accomplishments. Other middle-class people of color have frequently reported such experiences. Hooks (2000) notes that the only cultural identity that seems to matter to store clerks, for example, is ethnicity.

To date, most of the theoretical and empirical work on intersectionality has focused on "people with multiple subordinate identities" (Purdie-Vayghns & Eibach, 2008, p. 378) in an effort to understand the effects of cumulative disadvantage. Hurtado and Sinha (2008) note that this concept was proposed by feminist scholars in reaction to a focus on women's oppression without consideration of social class, ethnicity, sexual identity, and other subordinate categories. But, to be maximally useful as a theoretical construct, intersectionality should be extended beyond such categories to understand the intersections among all the communities of which an individual is a part. Diamond and Butterworth (2008, p. 366) articulate such a broader view, defining intersectionality "as a framework for analyzing the way in which multiple social locations and identities mutually inform and constitute one another." These locations may vary in power, providing different degrees of access to resources.

Multiethnic writers have begun to share their experiences, challenges, and resolutions in fiction and memoirs (cf. Cardwell, 1998; Obama, 1995). Within psychology, there is a growing focus on biracial or mixed-ethnicity experiences (e.g., Root, 1990) and how those with a mixed ethnic heritage understand and define their identity. Reynolds and Pope (1991) assert that a resolution is necessary to allow for the coexistence of diverse parts of one's heritage. One possible resolution is identification with each, accompanied by understanding each in the context of oppression. The experience of restricted access to resources needed for optimum human development may serve as a bridge connecting membership in one minority culture with membership in another. Petersen (2006) illustrates this in presenting the experiences of an African American adult woman with disabilities. Recognition of

her multiple identities encouraged a comprehensive and authentic understanding of her life.

Since there are "power relations associated with our multiple identities" (McDowell & Fang, 2007, p. 550), there will be significant variation across persons, times, and conditions in the degree to which identities are compatible or in opposition. Constructive recognition of them must be accompanied by an assessment of the differences that may exist among them in status and privilege and the extent to which each assists or obstructs our access to resources (Chisholm & Greeene, 2008). While one cultural community of which we are a part may put us in the majority and provide advantages (as with skin color, sexual orientation, gender, or religion), another may put us in a stigmatized or oppressed or disrespected minority. As yet, we seem to know little about the psychological consequences of such a state of affairs, about the situations or circumstances which result in disparate behavioral pulls or objectives coming from different cultural attachments, and about modes of reconciling them.

While a full understanding of individual experience requires seeing a whole person as more than the sum of discrete social identities or cultural memberships and recognizing their interdependence (Bowleg, 2008), it is very likely that different contexts can raise one membership to greater salience over others. The context can be seen to influence experience in a study of Caribbean American working-class persons (Mattis, Grayman, Cowie, Winston, Watson & Jackson, 2008). In a predominantly African American community, respondents felt their ethnicity to be most salient, but in a middle-class White community, what was most salient was social class.

Each cultural identity will be an influence on behavior to an extent that varies with context, situation, place, time, and expected consequences – sometimes presenting conflicting pressures and sometimes concordant ones, but always in interaction. And this interaction among multiple cultural memberships affects how people live, their vulnerabilities, and strengths and motivations. As noted by Shields (2008, p. 304), "Intersectionality first and foremost reflects the reality of lives." In giving full recognition to the intersectional consequences of multiple identities, we must also recognize at the same time that while "the salience, meanings, and functions of … identities can change," as they are affected by national, institutional, personal, and geographic settings, some may be more likely to "remain fixed across

time and across contexts" (Mattis, Grayman, Cowie, Winston & Watson, 2008, p. 426).

I finished writing this chapter soon after the election of Senator Barack Obama to the presidency of the United States. For some who worked hard for his election or just gave him their vote, it was the salience of ethnicity that mattered most; for many others, political culture values surpassed all others in importance. Personal behavior associated with the presidential candidacy of Obama illustrates the significance of ethnicity as a bond among African Americans. Black Americans differing in gender, sexual identity, and social class gave him an overwhelming level of support. At the same time, however, political values may trump ethnic bonds, and some influential Black voices were critical of Obama, even before he was inaugurated, for not being sufficiently focused on and not sharply articulating, problems stemming from racism and inequality (e.g., Muwakkil, 2008; Washington, 2008).

„Multiple and shifting identities"[*]

1) Think about a group or social category you belong to, and with which you identify. Describe what the group means to you, and list some examples that demonstrate your high level of identification.

2) Think about a group or social category you belong to, but with which you don't identify. Describe what the group means (or doesn't mean) to you, and list some examples that demonstrate your lack of identification.

3) Think about a group or social category you belong to, but with which you actively disidentify. Describe what the group means to you, and list some examples that demonstrate your disidentification.

4) What kinds of factors influence level of identification with a group? What kinds of factors make a category or group membership irrelevant?

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[*] from Michael Schmitt
http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/crow/socialidentityassignment.htm
Social Identity Participation Assignment