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The Psychology of Women & GENDER

Margaret W. Matlin
with Rebecca D. Foushée

Eighth Edition

The Psychology of Women and Gender

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SUNY Geneseo

With Rebecca D. Foushée
LINDENWOOD University

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To the students in our Psychology of Women and Gender classes

About the Authors

Margaret W. Matlin earned her bachelor's degree from Stanford University and her PhD from the University of Michigan. She currently holds the title of Distinguished Teaching Professor of Psychology, Emerita at SUNY Geneseo, where she taught courses in the Psychology of Women for 39 years.

Dr. Matlin received the State University of New York Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching in 1977. She has also won three national teaching awards: the American Psychological Association Teaching Award for 4-year institution in 1985, the American Psychological Foundation's Distinguished Teaching Award in 1995, and the Society for the Psychology of Women's Heritage Award in 2001, for lifetime contributions to the teaching of the psychology of women.

Rebecca D. Foushée earned her PhD from Virginia Tech. For the past 24 years, she has taught courses in Developmental Psychology and the Psychology of Women and Gender at The University of Alabama in Huntsville, Fontbonne University, Washington University in St. Louis, and Lindenwood University, where she currently holds the title of Professor of Psychology.

Dr. Foushée has received several research and teaching awards throughout her career, including the APA Division 6 Frank A. Beach Award in 1997 and an APA Dissertation Award in 1998, the Joan Goostree Stevens Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2006, the Emerson Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2006, the Lindenwood University Professor of the Year Award in 2018, and the NCAA Roars Excellence in Teaching Award in 2020.

Four General Themes About the Psychology of Women and Gender

Theme 1 Psychological gender differences are typically small and inconsistent.

Theme 2 People react differently to men and women.

Theme 3 Women are less visible than men in many important areas.

Theme 4 Women vary widely from one another.

Pages 28 through 30 discuss the four themes in greater detail.

Brief Contents

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Preface

Dr. Margaret W. Matlin began writing the first edition of *Psychology of Women and Gender* in 1983. By this point, she had taught courses on the psychology of women for 9 years. Every year, she tried a different textbook. One book was too brief. Another was too psychodynamic. The third book was a collection of research articles that didn't capture women's voices.

One of her goals in writing the first edition of *Psychology of Women and Gender* was to demonstrate how the empirical research about women and gender often contradicts popular opinion. A second goal was to include women's descriptions of their experiences and thoughts, because her own students were especially responsive when they heard women's own words. Her third goal was to create pedagogical features that would help students learn and remember the material more effectively.

These three goals are even more important now than they were in the 1980s. The amount of research about women and gender has increased dramatically. For instance, *PsycINFO* shows that about 11,300 journal articles were published—listing "women" or "gender" as a keyword—during the period from 1980 through 1985. In contrast, *PsycINFO* shows 122,577 journal articles from 2015 through 2020 that list these same two keywords. Students therefore need a textbook that captures the research in a clear, well-organized fashion.

In addition to those three goals, this text emphasizes a fourth goal—social justice. During the 1970s and 1980s, Dr. Matlin's personal emphasis on social justice became clarified. The Vietnam War forced her to become an activist: Why should people in the United States, devalue the lives of people in Southeast Asia and assume the *obligation* to decide what is best for them? With the rise of feminism during the 1970s, it was easy to translate those same concerns to the issue of gender. Why should people—throughout the world—devalue the lives of women and gender minorities and also assume that these people have the *obligation* to make decisions about women's lives? She felt compelled to write about this problem and to encourage students to think about this inequality. Social justice is therefore an overarching feature of this textbook.

For the eighth edition, Dr. Rebecca Foushée joined as a coauthor. She is a developmental psychologist, a member of APA Divisions 2 and 35, and an award-winning professor who has taught psychology of women and gender courses for more than two decades. She shares a passion for intersectional and interdisciplinary perspectives, as well as a dedication to critically analyzing how social and economic inequalities in societies around the world affect the lives of women and gender minorities. Together, they share a goal of advocating for social justice through the transformative processes of education and research.

Organization of This Book

Another important feature of this textbook is its organization. The various topics in the women and gender course does not align themselves in a linear fashion. It was impossible to place the chapters in either a clearly topical order or a clearly lifespan-developmental order. Therefore, there are two approaches when writing the eight editions of *Psychology of Women and Gender.*

For example, the introductory chapter of this eighth edition presents general concepts and several important cautions about research methods and biases. Chapter 2 explores how stereotypes help to shape gender-related expectations and behavior. Chapters 3 and 4 examines sex and gender development throughout infancy, childhood, and adolescence.

The following nine chapters (Chapters 5–13) considers important components of women's lives prior to late adulthood. These include cognitive and social gender comparisons (Chapters 5 and 6), work experiences (Chapter 7), love relationships (Chapter 8), sexuality (Chapter 9), childbirth (Chapter 10), physical health and psychological health (Chapters 11 and 12), and gender and victimization (Chapter 13).

Some of the material in Chapters 5 through 13 also foreshadows the descriptions of older women, whose lives are examined in Chapter 14. Chapter 8 considers the long-term romantic relationships of older women, Chapter 9 sexuality and aging, and Chapter 11 relevant health issues. Following those nine topical chapters, Chapter 14 returns to the lifespan-developmental framework to focus specifically on gender during middle age and late adulthood. Chapter 15, the concluding chapter of this textbook, assesses the current status of the psychology of women and gender, women of color, the men's movement, and recent trends in feminism.

The combination of lifespan and topical approaches provides a cohesive framework that students appreciate. In addition, each chapter is self-contained, because each section within a chapter has its own section summary. Therefore, instructors who prefer a different organizational framework can easily rearrange the sequence of topics within the course. For example, an instructor could move the section on menopause from Chapter 14 to the earlier section on menstruation in Chapter 4.

A second organizational feature is the four general themes about the psychology of women and gender (refer to pages 28–30). These themes can be traced through many aspects of women's lives. In addition, the four themes help to provide continuity for a course that might otherwise seem overwhelming to both instructors and students.

Pedagogical Features of This Book

Professors and students have provided positive feedback about the variety of special features that facilitate learning about the psychology of women and gender. This book is intended for students from a variety of backgrounds. It includes extensive learning aids to make it readable for students who have taken only an introductory course in psychology. However, *Psychology of Women and Gender* should also be appropriate for advanced-level students, because the coverage of topics is complete and the references are extensive. To help all students, *Psychology of Women and Gender* (8th ed.) continues to include the following pedagogical features:

- **Topical outlines** provide students with an overall structure at the beginning of each chapter.
- The **writing style** is clear and interesting and includes many examples and quotations in which girls and women describe their own experiences.

- All of the **key terms** appear in boldface type, and they are defined within the same sentence and in the glossary section. Some professors choose to assign chapters in a nonlinear order. To accommodate this preference, a key term is defined in each chapter where it appears. For example, the term *social constructionism* is defined in Chapter 1, as well as in several subsequent chapters. Students can also consult the pronunciation guide for terms that have potentially ambiguous pronunciations.
- Informal **demonstrations** encourage active involvement and clarify the procedures used in important research studies.
- **Section summaries** help students review the major concepts in one section of a chapter before they begin the next section. This feature increases an instructor's flexibility, as noted on page XVIII. Section summaries are also helpful to those students who do not read an entire chapter in one sitting. They can read one or two sections and then take a break. When they return to read the remaining sections, they can refresh their memory by reviewing the previous section summaries.
- The **end-of-chapter review questions** encourage students to clarify and synthesize concepts. Some instructors also use these questions as writing assignments or as topics for class discussion.
- A **list of key terms** at the end of each chapter invites students to test themselves on important concepts. The page number on which the term is defined is listed, if students want to check their accuracy.
- The **recommended readings** suggest extra resources for students who want to explore the topics in each chapter in greater detail. Each reference is annotated to clarify its scope. Most of these readings are books, but a few chapters in books and comprehensive journal articles are included.
- Finally, the **subject index** is very comprehensive. The detailed index in this textbook will be especially helpful to students who want background information when writing a paper, who are curious about a particular topic, or who want to share some information with a friend.

New Material in This Book

Instructors and students who have read previous editions of this textbook continue to be enthusiastic about a variety of features, including the pedagogical features, the writing style, the scholarly information, and the sequence of topics. Accordingly, this eighth edition retains the same topic sequence as in the seven earlier editions. However, this new edition includes more extensive coverage about women of color who live in the United States and Canada, consistent with the increasing information available in books and journal articles. Similarly, this edition includes more cross-cultural and intersectional perspectives, as well as updated examples and terminology throughout the text to emphasize gender diversity, inclusion, and equity among people of all genders and sexualities. Also included are more recent quotations for the eighth edition; the older quotes were retained only if there was no appropriate replacement.

This eighth edition of *The Psychology of Women and Gender* is thoroughly revised. It now features a total of 3,270 references, and about 538 of these references are new to this edition. A few references to classic studies remain, but a majority of citations throughout the text were published in 2005 or later. This new edition therefore reflects changes in women's lives, changes in their perspectives about themselves, and changes in society's attitudes toward women and gender and sexual minorities.

In addition to updated references, *Psychology of Women and Gender* (8th ed.) includes the following new pedagogical features:

- New chapter learning objectives that define learning outcomes for instructors and help students organize their learning.
- New "Did You Know?" sections at the beginning of each chapter, to pique students' interest in the material and foreshadow many of the key issues examined in each chapter.
- A new glossary section that outlines the definitions of key terms used throughout the text.

For professors familiar with *Psychology of Women* (7th ed.), the following brief guide outlines some of the major changes in this new edition:

- **Chapter 1** features updated information about intersectionality, White privilege, biracial individuals, Asian American women, and Native American women.
- **Chapter 2** includes updated discussion of women in the media, recent research about the changes in stereotypes, additional research on benevolent sexism, an expanded discussion of heterosexism, and a new demonstration.
- **Chapter 3** includes additional information about the biological bases of sex and gender, places greater emphasis on the role of parents' encouragement of gender stereotypes in their children, and discusses new information regarding girls' education in nonindustrialized countries.
- **Chapter 4** has less emphasis on menstruation, so that more research can be included about cultural identity among Latina and Muslim American adolescents, as well as current research about lesbian relationships among Asian American and Latina adolescents.
- **Chapter 5** includes new research on neurological bases of cognitive abilities, examines several new studies about gender similarities and differences in a variety of cognitive areas, including mathematics performance, as well as gender comparisons in students' definitions of success.
- **Chapter 6** includes recent research on gender comparisons in the content of language samples, attitudes about social justice, and leadership, as well as an expanded of the role of congruity theory.
- **Chapter 7** includes an expanded discussion of immigrant women's employment experiences, emphasizes the impact of systemic racism and socioeconomic inequalities on women's financial stability, and includes recent studies on employment in traditionally female occupations as well as information about nonmaternal child care.
- **Chapter 8** includes updated research about ideal partners, arranged marriages, same-sex marriages, and Diamond's (2009) dynamical systems approach to sexual orientation.
- **Chapter 9** has been updated to include research on bisexuality and transgender women's sexuality, as well as media influences on sexuality.
- **Chapter 10** includes updated information about ethnicity and smoking during pregnancy, the cesarean-section problem, and research about lesbian mothers.
- **Chapter 11** provides updated information about social status and women's health in the United States, women's health in developing countries, and LGBTQ+ experiences with health-care systems.

- **Chapter 12** features a discussion of therapists' diagnostic biases, additional information about gendered racism, an expanded section on eating disorders, information about cultural attitudes of psychological disorders, as well as updated guidance about psychotherapy with people of color.
- **Chapter 13** examines sexual harassment and sexual assault of women in the military, updated research about police responses to rape reports, and new information about the abuse of women in Asia, Latin America, and Africa.
- **Chapter 14** features new information on gender differences in post-retirement income, reorganized sections on family relationships and older women of color, and current research about successful aging.
- **Chapter 15** provides updated information about women of color and the feminist movement, new examples about the men's movement, and new options for becoming an activist.

Instructor Resources

Additional instructor resources for this product are available online. Instructor assets include an Instructor's Manual, PowerPoint® slides, and a test bank powered by Cognero®. Sign up or sign in at www.cengage.com to search for and access this product and its online resources.

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1 Introduction

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will be able to …

1-1 Describe the central concepts in the psychology of women and gender.

1-2 Summarize the history of the psychology of women as a discipline.

1-3 Explain intersectionality, gender, and ethnicity.

1-4 Outline potential problems and biases in research on the psychology of women and gender.

1-5 Summarize the primary themes of the textbook.

Did You Know?

- If a corporation refuses to consider hiring a man for a receptionist position, then this corporation is practicing sexism (p. 4).
- If you believe that women should be highly regarded as human beings, then you are a feminist (p. 6).
- In the 2020s, Asian American women are much more likely than White women to graduate from college (p. 17).
- An important problem in research on gender is that researchers' expectations can influence the results of the study (p. 21).
- In general, popular media sources emphasize gender differences rather than gender similarities (p. 28).
- Gender differences are larger when researchers observe people in real-life situations rather than in a laboratory setting (p. 29).

In the modern world, although we can find many examples of women's success in the news, other reports are often grim. Sometimes we read about good news and bad news in the same week. For example, as we were updating this chapter, various news organizations were celebrating the inauguration of Kamala Harris as the first woman, and the first woman of color, to serve as vice president of the United States. Although this historic achievement reflected significant progress, this news was juxtaposed with economic reports that women, and especially women of color, lost significantly more jobs than men throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, jeopardizing their families' financial stability and economic well-being (Boesch & Phadke, 2021).

Another article was featured in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, a newspaper that focuses on colleges and universities. Researchers from the Eos Foundation found that women earn more degrees than men, and 60% of women working in colleges and universities occupy professional jobs. However, only 24% of the highest paid core employees are women. On medical campuses the disparity is even worse, with only 12% of women occupying the highest paid positions of power. Women of color have even less representation and comprise only 2.5% of these high-status positions (Silbert & Dubé, 2021).

In many ways, women's lives are improving. However, even in the twenty-first century, women are frequently treated in a biased fashion. This biased treatment is often relatively subtle, but it can also be life threatening.

Furthermore, the popular media and the academic community frequently neglect women and issues important to them. For example, we searched for topics related to women in the index of a current introductory psychology textbook. Pregnancy isn't mentioned, even though pregnancy is an important part of most women's lives. The topic of rape is also missing from the index. However, the listings under the letter *R* do include receptor sensitivity curves, as well as multiple references to reflexes and to rapid eye movements.

This book explores a variety of psychological issues that specifically concern women. For example, women are more likely than men to experience life events such as menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and menopause. Other experiences such as rape, domestic violence, and sexual harassment are also more likely for women than for men. In addition, when we study the psychology of women, we can focus on women's experiences in areas that usually emphasize the male point of view. These areas include achievement, work, sexuality, and retirement.

Still other important topics compare females and males. Are boys and girls *treated* differently? Do women and men differ substantially in their intellectual abilities or their social interactions? These topics, which are neglected in most psychology courses, will be an important focus throughout this book.

In this chapter, our exploration of the psychology of women and gender begins with some key concepts in the discipline. Next, we'll briefly consider the history of the psychology of women. The third section of this chapter provides background about women of color to give context for the discussion of ethnicity, gender, and intersectionality in later chapters. Then we'll explore some of the problems and biases that researchers often face when they study the psychology of women and gender. In the final section, we'll describe the themes of this book, as well as several features that can help you learn more effectively.

1-1 Central Concepts in the Psychology of Women and Gender

Learning Objectives

To describe the central concepts in the psychology of women and gender, you can …

1-1-1 Differentiate between the concepts of sex and gender.

1-1-2 Explain how the concepts of sexism, racism, classism, ableism, and heterosexism impact people's lives.

1-1-3 Differentiate among liberal feminism, cultural feminism, radical feminism, and women-of-color feminisms.

1-1-4 Explain how the similarities perspective and social constructionism account for gender differences.

1-1-5 Explain how the differences perspective and essentialism arguments account for gender differences.

Let's first consider two related terms, *sex* and *gender,* that are crucial to the psychology of women. Other central concepts that we'll examine include several forms of bias, various approaches to feminism, and two psychological viewpoints on gender similarities and differences.

Sex and Gender

The terms *sex* and *gender* have provoked considerable controversy (e.g., Caplan & Caplan, 2009; Kimball, 2003; LaFrance et al., 2004). **Sex** is a relatively narrow term that typically refers to physical and biological characteristics relating to reproductive anatomy, such as *sex chromosomes* or *sex organs* (Kimball, 2003). Sex is typically assigned at birth based on the appearance of external genitalia and refers to the condition of being male, female, or intersex (APA, 2015). In cases of ambiguous genitalia, the goal is to assign a sex that will likely be congruent with the child's gender identity (MacLaughlin & Donahoe, 2004). In contrast, *gender* is a broader term. **Gender** refers to the psychological characteristics and social categories that human culture creates (APA, 2015; Golden, 2008) and implies the psychological, behavioral, social, and cultural traits associated with being male, female, or nonbinary. For example, a friend showed a photo of her 7-month-old son, who the photographer had posed with a football. This photographer was providing gender messages for the infant, his mother, and everyone who sees the photo. These gender messages tell us that this small infant needs to learn know how to run fast, knock down other people, and become a hero. In contrast, imagine an infant girl you know. It's probably challenging to create a mental image of her accompanied by a football.

Cisgender refers to individuals who have a match between the sex they were assigned at birth, their reproductive anatomy or biological sex, and their gender identity (APA, 2015; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). **Transgender** is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity, expression, or behavior does not conform to the sex they were assigned at birth. This textbook focuses on psychology rather than on biology. As a result, you'll read the word *gender* more often than the word *sex*. For example, you'll read about gender comparisons, gender roles, and gender stereotypes.

Unfortunately, psychology articles and books often fail to maintain the distinction between sex and gender (Kimball, 2003). In fact, a highly regarded scholarly journal is called *Sex Roles,* although a more appropriate title might be *Gender Roles*.

A useful related phrase is *doing gender* (Golden, 2008; Lorber, 2005b; Shilt & Westbrook, 2009; C. West & Zimmerman, 1998a). According to the concept of **doing gender**, you express your gender when you interact with other people; you also perceive gender in these other people, such as an infant posed with a football. For example, you provide gender messages to other people by your appearance, your tone of voice, and your conversational style. At the same time, you perceive the gender of your conversational partner, and you probably respond differently to a male than to a female.

The phrase *doing gender* emphasizes that gender is an active, dynamic process rather than something that is stable and rigid. In addition, it's virtually impossible to stop doing gender because it's part of our actual identity (Lorber, 2005b). In fact, the next time you are speaking with another person, think about whether you can stop expressing your own gender and perceiving the gender of this other person.

The Extent of Social Biases

An important term throughout this book is *sexism* (which probably could be reconceptualized as *genderism*). **Sexism** is bias against people on the basis of their gender. A person who believes that women cannot be competent lawyers is sexist. A person who believes that men cannot be competent preschool teachers is also sexist. Sexism can reveal itself in many forms, such as social behavior, media representations of women and men, and job discrimination.

Sexism can be blatant. For example, a student in one of our psychology of women courses was attending a recruitment session for prospective high school teachers. She was dressed in a suit that was similar to the suit of a male student standing behind her in line. The interviewer greeted her by saying, "Hi, kid, how are you doin'?" The same interviewer greeted the young man by saying, "Hi, good to meet you," and then he extended his arm for a handshake. However, sexism can also be more subtle: Some people use the word *girl* when talking about a 40-year-old woman. Would they use the word *boy* when talking about a 40-year-old man?

In this book, we will emphasize sexism. However, numerous other biases permeate our social relationships. In each case, one social category is considered normative or standard, whereas the other categories are considered deficient (Canetto et al., 2003). For example, **racism** is bias against people on the basis of racial or ethnic groups. Research suggests that White preschoolers tend to choose other White children as their friends, even when the classroom includes many Black children (Katz, 2003).

As we'll learn throughout this book, sexism and racism combine in complex ways. For instance, the experiences of women of color may be quite different from the experiences of White men (Brabeck & Ting, 2000; Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2001; Zigerell, 2018).

Let's consider another social bias in which a person's category membership can influence their social position. **Classism** is bias that is based on social class. Social class is defined by such factors as income, occupation, and education. As with sexism and racism, classism provides special privileges to some people based on their social category. In contrast, U.S. residents who live below the poverty level do not have enough money to pay for their basic needs, such as food, housing, transportation, and medical care.

Surprisingly, psychologists have paid little attention to social class, even though this factor has a major impact on people's psychological experiences (Fine & Burns, 2003; Lott & Bullock, 2010; Ocampo et al., 2003). In the United States, for instance, the chief executive officers of corporations earn approximately 431 times as much as their lowest-paid employees (Belle, 2008), and since 1978, the average compensation for CEOs has grown 940%, while the average worker's compensation has grown only 12% (Mishel & Wolfe, 2019). Executives and entry-level employees certainly have different experiences, as we will learn in Chapter 7. Unfortunately, psychologists typically assume that they can leave social class to sociologists (Ostrove & Cole, 2003). However, Chapter 11 shows that social class clearly affects people's physical health, and Chapter 12 shows that social class clearly affects people's psychological well-being (Belle, 2008).

An additional problem is called **ableism,** or bias against people with disabilities (Olkin, 2008; Weinstock, 2003). Just as psychologists ignore social class, they also ignore disability issues—even though disabilities have a major impact on people's lives (Asch & McCarthy, 2003). In Chapter 11, we'll learn how ableism can create inequalities for people with disabilities, both in the workplace and in personal relationships (Olkin, 2008).

Another important problem is **heterosexism** (also called **sexual prejudice**), which refers to bias against anyone who does not identify as exclusively heterosexual. Heterosexism therefore harms people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or another sexual minority. Heterosexism appears in the behaviors of individuals and in the policies of institutions, such as the legal system (Garnets, 2008; Herek, 2009).

Heterosexism encourages many people to believe that male–female romantic relationships should be considered normative, and therefore people in same-gender relationships do not have the same rights and privileges (Lorber, 2005b; Garnets, 2008). In Chapters 2 and 8,

we will explore heterosexism in detail, and in Chapters 4, 8, 9, 10, and 12, we will also discuss the life experiences of lesbians, bisexual women, and women who identify as sexual minorities.

In Chapter 14, we will emphasize **ageism**, or bias based on chronological age. Ageism is typically directed toward older people (Schneider, 2004; Whitbourne, 2005). Individuals can reveal ageism in terms of biased beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. For example, a teenager may avoid sitting next to an older person. Institutions can also exhibit ageism, for instance, when an older adult applies for a job.

Feminist Approaches

A central term throughout this book is **feminism**, the principle that values women's experiences and ideas; feminism also emphasizes that women and men should be socially, economically, and legally equal (Anderson, 2010; Pollitt, 2004). As Rozee and her colleagues (2008) point out, "Feminism is a life philosophy, a worldview, a blueprint for justice" (p. ix).

We need to emphasize several additional points about feminists. First, reread the definition of feminism, and notice that it does *not* exclude men. In fact, men as well as women can be feminists. Many books and articles discuss men who are feminists (e.g., Jensen, 2017; Kilmartin, 2007; Lorber, 2005b; A. J. Lott, 2003). Think about this: You probably know some men who advocate feminist principles more than some of the women you know. We'll discuss male feminists and the growing discipline of men's studies in the final chapter of this book.

Second, many of your friends would qualify as feminists, even though they may be reluctant to call themselves feminists (Cohen, 2008; Dube, 2004; Pollitt, 2004). You have probably noticed someone say, "I'm not a feminist, but I think men and women should be treated the same." This person may mistakenly assume that a feminist must be a person who hates men. However, remember that the defining feature of feminism is a high regard for women, not antagonism toward men.

Third, feminism encompasses a variety of ideas and perspectives, not just one feminist viewpoint (Dube, 2004; Rozee et al., 2008). Let's consider four different theoretical approaches to feminism: liberal feminism, cultural feminism, radical feminism, and women-of-color feminisms.

1. **Liberal feminism** emphasizes the goal of gender equality, giving women and men the same rights and opportunities. Liberal feminists argue that people can achieve this goal by passing laws that guarantee equal rights for women and men (Chrisler & Smith, 2004; Enns & Sinacore, 2001).

   Liberal feminists emphasize that biological factors have relatively little effect on gender differences. In addition, these gender differences are relatively small, and they would be even smaller if women had the same opportunities as men (Enns, 2004a; Lorber, 2005b). Women and men who are liberal feminists believe that everyone benefits if culture's rigid gender roles can be transformed (Goldrick-Jones, 2002).
2. **Cultural feminism** emphasizes the positive qualities that are presumed to be stronger in women than in men—qualities such as nurturing and care-taking. Cultural feminism therefore focuses on gender differences that value women rather than on the gender similarities of liberal feminism (Chrisler & Smith, 2004; Enns, 2004a; Lorber, 2005b). In addition, cultural feminists often argue that society should be restructured to emphasize cooperation rather than aggression (Enns & Sinacore, 2001; Kimball, 1995).

3. **Radical feminism** argues that the basic cause of women's oppression lies deep in the entire sex and gender system rather than in some superficial laws and policies. Radical feminists emphasize that sexism permeates societies, from the personal level in male-female relationships to the national and international levels (Chrisler & Smith, 2004). Radical feminists often argue that societies need to dramatically change their policies on sexuality and on violence against women (Enns, 2004a; Goldrick-Jones, 2002).
4. **Women-of-color feminisms** point out that the other three types of feminism overemphasize gender. Women-of-color feminists emphasize that feminism must pay attention to other human dimensions such as historical forms of oppression, ethnicity, and social class (Baca Zinn et al., 2001; Chrisler & Smith, 2004; Lorber, 2005b; Smith, 2011). For example, Gearon (2021) explains that Indigenous feminism is intersectional, with a focus on decolonization, sovereignty of Indigenous peoples, and human rights for Indigenous women and their families. Transnational feminism similarly focuses on systematic forms of oppression rooted in the historical forces of colonization and globalism (Grabe & Else-Quest, 2012). Womanism, or Black feminism (Boisnier, 2003; Walker, 1983), and the Mujerista feminism movements highlight the intersectionality of ethnicity, race, and gender in shaping the lives of women of color (Bryant-Davis & Comas-Díaz, 2016).

   According to these perspectives, we cannot achieve a genuinely feminist approach by making a few minor adjustments to liberal feminism, cultural feminism, or radical feminism (Enns, 2004a). For example, the life of a Black lesbian woman is substantially different from the life of a White lesbian woman (Lorde, 2001). If we want to understand the experiences of a Black lesbian woman, we must begin with her perspective, rather than initially focusing on White lesbian women and then "adding difference and stirring" (Baca Zinn et al., 2001).

In Chapter 15, we'll further explore perspectives on feminism and women's studies. A central point, however, is that feminism isn't simply one unified point of view. Instead, feminists have created a variety of perspectives on gender relationships and on the ideal pathways for achieving better lives for women. To clarify the four feminist approaches discussed in this section, try Demonstration 1.1.

Demonstration 1.1

Differentiating Among the Four Approaches to Feminism

Imagine that, in a discussion group, each of these eight individuals makes a statement about feminism. Read each statement and note whether the approach represents liberal feminism, cultural feminism, radical feminism, or women-of-color feminisms. The answers are on page 34.

1. Cora: "The way marriage is currently designed, women are basically servants who spend most of their energy improving the lives of other people."___
2. Marta: "Too many feminists think that White women are at the center of feminism, and the rest of us are out at the edges of the feminist circle."___

(continues)

Demonstration 1.1 *(continued)*

3. Nereyda: "Laws must be made to guarantee women the right to be educated the same as men; women need to reach their full potential, just like men do."___
4. Sylvia: "My goal as a feminist is to value the kind of strengths that have traditionally been assigned to women, so that women can help society learn to be more cooperative."___
5. Maria: "Society needs to change in a major way so that we can get rid of the oppression of women."___
6. Michelle: "I consider myself a feminist. However, I think that many feminists just don't pay enough attention to factors such as social class and ethnicity."___
7. Stuart: "I think women should be given exactly the same opportunities as men with respect to promotion in the workplace."____
8. Terry: "Because women are naturally more peaceful than men, I think women need to organize and work together to build a peaceful society."___

Source: Based on Enns (2004a).

Psychological Approaches to Gender Similarity and Difference

When psychologists examine gender issues, they usually favor either a similarities perspective or a differences perspective. Let's explore these two approaches. Before you read further, however, be sure to try Demonstration 1.2.

Demonstration 1.2

Reading a Paragraph

Chris was really angry today! Enough was enough. Chris put on the gray suit, marched into work, and went into the main boss's office and yelled, "I've brought in more money for this company than anybody else and everybody gets promoted but me!" The boss saw Chris's fist slam down on the desk. There was an angry look on Chris's face. They tried to talk, but it was useless. Chris just stormed out of the office in anger.

Source: Based on Beall 1993, p. 127.

The Similarities Perspective

Psychologists who emphasize the **similarities perspective** believe that men and women are generally similar in their intellectual and social skills (Hyde, 2005a). These psychologists argue that social forces may create some temporary differences. For example, women may

act more submissive than men in the workplace because women typically hold less power in that setting (Kimball, 1995; B. Lott, 1996). Supporters of the similarities perspective also tend to favor liberal feminism. By deemphasizing gender roles and strengthening equal rights laws, they say, gender similarities will increase still further.

If the similarities perspective is correct, then why do women and men often *seem* so different? Take a moment to consider how you interpreted Demonstration 1.2. Most people conclude that Chris is a man, although this paragraph does not mention Chris's gender. Instead, readers construct someone's gender based on their cultural knowledge about gender. Read that paragraph again. What phrases influenced your conclusions?

Social constructionism provides a useful perspective for understanding gender. According to **social constructionism**, individuals and cultures construct or invent their own versions of reality based on prior experiences, social interactions, and beliefs (Gergen & Gergen, 2004; Lorber, 2005b; Marecek et al., 2004). A young woman develops a female identity, for example, by learning about gender through her social interactions in her culture. As we discussed on page 4, she is continually "doing gender."

Social constructionists argue that we can never objectively discover reality because our belief system always influences our observations (Marecek et al., 2004; Yoder & Kahn, 2003). In the United States, cultural norms and perspectives still consider women to be different from men. As a result, people in the United States tend to perceive, remember, and think about gender in a way that exaggerates the differences between women and men. The views in this textbook (and most other psychology of women textbooks) support both the similarities perspective and the social constructionist view.

The Differences Perspective

In contrast to the similarities perspective, other psychologists interested in women's studies emphasize the differences perspective. The **differences perspective** argues that men and women are generally different in their intellectual and social abilities. Feminist psychologists who support the differences perspective usually emphasize women's positive characteristics that have been undervalued, primarily because they are associated with women (Lorber, 2005b). These psychologists might emphasize that women are more likely than men to be concerned with human relationships and caregiving. As you might guess, those who favor the differences perspective also tend to be cultural feminists. Critics of this perspective point out a potential problem: If we emphasize gender differences, we will simply strengthen people's stereotypes about gender (Clinchy & Norem, 1998).

People who endorse the differences perspective typically believe that essentialism can explain gender differences. **Essentialism** argues that gender is a basic, unchangeable characteristic that resides *within* an individual. The essentialists emphasize that women are more concerned than men with caregiving because of their own inborn nature, not because society currently assigns women the task of taking care of children (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1994; Kimball, 1995).

According to the essentialist perspective, all women share the same psychological characteristics, which are very different from the psychological characteristics that all men share. Essentialism also emphasizes that women's psychological characteristics are universal and occur in every culture. This proposal is not consistent with women-of-color feminisms. This proposal is also not consistent with the findings from cross-cultural research (Chrisler & Smith, 2004; Lonner, 2003; Wade & Tavris, 1999). We'll explore the similarities and differences perspectives in more detail in Chapter 6.

Section Summary

Central Concepts in the Psychology of Women

1. *Sex* refers only to biological characteristics related to reproduction (e.g., sex chromosomes, anatomy); in contrast, *gender* refers to psychological characteristics (e.g., gender roles). The term *doing gender* means that we display gender in our social interactions and we perceive gender in other people during those interactions.
2. This book explores several kinds of social biases, such as sexism, racism, classism, ableism, heterosexism, and ageism.
3. Feminism emphasizes that women and men should be socially, economically, and legally equal. Women and men who hold these beliefs are feminists; however, many people believe in feminist principles, even if they do not identify themselves as feminists.
4. Four feminist perspectives discussed in this section are liberal feminism, cultural feminism, radical feminism, and women-of-color feminisms.
5. Psychologists typically favor either a gender similarities perspective (often combined with social constructionism) or a gender differences perspective (often combined with essentialism).

1-2 A Brief History of the Psychology of Women

Learning Objectives

To summarize the history of the psychology of women as a discipline, you can …

1-2-1 Describe how early theories of gender in the history of psychology discriminated against women.

1-2-2 Explain how Helen Thompson Wooley and Leta Stetter Hollingworth helped counteract gender bias in psychology.

1-2-3 Summarize the factors leading to the emergence of psychology of women as a discipline.

1-2-4 Describe the current status of the field of the psychology of women and gender.

Psychology's early views about women were generally negative (Kimball, 2003). Consider the perspective of G. Stanley Hall, who founded the American Psychological Association and pioneered the field of adolescent psychology. Unfortunately, however, he opposed college education for young women because he believed that academic work would "be developed at the expense of reproductive power" (G. S. Hall, 1906, p. 592; Minton, 2000). As you might imagine, views like Hall's helped to encourage biased research about sex and gender. Let's briefly examine some of this early work, then trace the emergence of the psychology of women, and finally outline the discipline's current status.

Early Studies of Gender Comparisons

During the late 1800s and the early 1900s, most of the early researchers in psychology were men. The early research on gender typically focused on gender comparisons, and it was often influenced by sexist biases (Bem, 2008; Caplan & Caplan, 2009; Milar, 2000). It's important to remember that women could not vote in the United States until 1920. The justification for this position was that women had inferior intelligence and reasoning skills (Benjamin, 2007).

During that early era, a few women made valiant attempts to contribute to the discipline of psychology (Furumoto, 2003; Pyke, 1998; Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987). For instance, psychologist Helen Thompson Woolley (1910) claimed that this early research on gender was permeated with "flagrant personal bias, … unfounded assertions, and even sentimental rot and drivel" (p. 340). Her own research demonstrated that men and women had similar intellectual abilities. Furthermore, women actually earned higher scores on some memory and thinking tasks (Benjamin, 2007; H. B. Thompson, 1903).

Leta Stetter Hollingworth (1914) also studied gender bias. For example, she demonstrated that women's menstrual cycles had little effect on their intellectual abilities, a conclusion that contradicted a popular belief (Benjamin, 2007; Klein, 2002). This first generation of female psychologists used their research findings to argue that women and men should have equal access to college education (LaFrance et al., 2004; Milar, 2000).

The Emergence of the Psychology of Women as a Discipline

Research on the psychology of women did not advance significantly until the 1970s (Rutherford & Granek, 2010; Walsh, 1987). By that point, the number of women in psychology had increased. Feminism and the women's movement gained recognition on college campuses, and colleges added numerous courses in women's studies (Howe, 2001a; Marecek et al., 2003; Rosen, 2000). This rapidly growing interest in women had an impact on the field of psychology. For example, the Association for Women in Psychology was founded in 1969. In 1973, a group of American psychologists established an organization that is now called the Society for the Psychology of Women; it is one of the largest divisions within the American Psychological Association (Chrisler & Smith, 2004; Denmark et al., 2008).

In 1972, a group of Canadian psychologists submitted a proposal for a symposium—called "On Women, By Women"—to the Canadian Psychological Association. When this organization rejected their proposal, they cleverly decided to hold this symposium at a nearby hotel. Shortly afterward, these feminist leaders formed the Canadian Psychological Association Task Force on the Status of Women in Canadian Psychology (Pyke, 2001). In both the United States and Canada, the psychology of women or the psychology of gender has become a standard course on many college campuses (Marecek et al., 2003).

Beginning in the 1970s, the research on the psychology of women also expanded dramatically. Researchers began to explore topics such as women's achievement motivation, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and other topics that had previously been ignored (Kimball, 2003; LaFrance et al., 2004).

However, the work done in the 1970s typically had two problems. First, feminist scholars did not realize that the issue of gender was extremely complicated. For example, most scholars optimistically thought that just a handful of factors could explain why so few women held top management positions. As you'll learn in Chapter 7, the explanation encompasses numerous factors.

A second problem with the 1970s framework was that people sometimes blamed women for their own low status. For instance, in trying to determine why women were scarce in management positions, researchers from this era typically constructed two answers: (1) Women were not assertive enough, and (2) they were afraid of success. Researchers ignored an alternative idea: The *situation* might be faulty because of biased institutional policies and stereotypes (LaFrance et al., 2004; Marecek et al., 2003). Gradually, however, many researchers became less interested in gender differences. Instead, they began to examine gender discrimination and sexism (Unger, 1997).

The Current Status of the Psychology of Women and Gender

In the modern psychology era, we emphasize that questions about the psychology of women are likely to require complex answers. Furthermore, research in this area continues to increase rapidly. For example, we conducted an Internet search of the online psychology database in ProQuest for January 2015 to March 2021. This search revealed that 178,573 scholarly articles mention the topics of women, gender, or feminism. Four journals that are especially likely to publish relevant articles are *Psychology of Women Quarterly, Sex Roles, Feminism & Psychology,* and *Canadian Woman Studies/Les cahiers de la femme.*

A related development is that psychologists are increasingly aware of how factors such as ethnicity, social class, age, and sexual orientation interact in complex ways with gender. As you'll read throughout this book, we typically cannot make statements that apply to *all* women. Contrary to the essentialist approach, women are definitely not a homogeneous group!

The current field of the psychology of women is also interdisciplinary. In preparing all eight editions of this book, we have consulted resources in areas as varied as biology, medicine, sociology, anthropology, history, philosophy, religion, media studies, political science, economics, business, education, and linguistics. In the 2020s, research in the psychology of women is especially lively because women now earn the majority of psychology Ph.D. degrees—for example, 79% in 2019 in the United States and 67% in Canada in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2016; American Psychological Association, 2020).

Still, research on the psychology of women is relatively young, and many important issues are not yet clear. At several points throughout this textbook, you will read a sentence such as, "We don't have enough information to draw conclusions." Our students tell us that these disclaimers irritate them: "Why can't you just tell us what the answer is?" In reality, however, the conflicting research findings often cannot be summarized in a clear-cut statement.

Another issue is that our knowledge base continues to change rapidly. New research often requires us to revise a previous generalization. As a result, this current edition of the textbook is substantially different from the seven earlier editions. For example, the coverage of gender comparisons in cognitive abilities bears little resemblance to the material on that topic in the first edition. Other topics that have changed dramatically include women and work, women's physical health, and older women.

The field of psychology of women and gender is especially challenging because women, men, and nonbinary individuals continue to change as we move further into the twenty-first century. You'll learn, for example, that the number of women working outside the home has changed dramatically. On many different dimensions, women in the 2020s are psychologically different from women in earlier decades. It is fascinating to contemplate the future of the psychology of women toward the end of the twenty-first century.

Section Summary

A Brief History of the Psychology of Women

1. Most early research on gender examined gender differences and emphasized female inferiority; however, Helen Thompson Woolley and Leta Stetter Hollingsworth conducted research that was not biased against women.
2. Gender research was largely ignored until the 1970s, when the psychology of women became an emerging field in both the United States and Canada. However, researchers in that era underestimated the complexity of the issues; in addition, women were often blamed for their own low status.
3. Modern research on gender is widespread and interdisciplinary; the knowledge base continues to change as a result of this research.

1-3 Women and Ethnicity

Learning Objectives

To explain intersectionality, gender, and ethnicity, you can …

1-3-1 Describe the concepts of White privilege and White-as-normative in relation to gender and ethnicity.

1-3-2 Identify key experiences that have shaped the lives of Latina women in the United States.

1-3-3 Identify how historical factors have shaped Black women's experiences in the United States.

1-3-4 Describe how Asian American women's experiences have been shaped by historical events and discrimination.

1-3-5 Analyze which historical factors have impacted the lives of Native American women.

1-3-6 Explain the concept of intersectionality.

1-3-7 Analyze how U.S.-centered nationalism contributes to unequal treatment of women and minorities.

Earlier in this chapter, we introduced the term *racism*, or bias against certain ethnic groups. In this section, we'll specifically focus on ethnicity to provide a framework for future discussions. When we consider the psychology of women, it is important to examine ethnic diversity so that we can establish an accurate picture of all women's lives rather than simply the lives of White women.[1] It is also important to appreciate how women construct or make sense of their own ethnic identity (Madden & Hyde, 1998).

[1]At present, our terminology for this dominant ethnic group is in flux. We will use the terms White or European American to refer to people who do not consider themselves to be Black or African American, Latina/Latino, Asian American, or Native American.

Let's begin by exploring a concept called "White privilege" and then consider some information about ethnic groups. Our final topic is U.S.-centered nationalism, a kind of bias in which U.S. residents believe that the United States holds a special status that is superior to other countries.

The White-Privilege Concept

According to Peggy McIntosh (2001), cultures and cultural norms in the United States and Canada are based on a hidden assumption that White individuals have a special status. According to the **White-privilege concept**, White people are given certain privileges based on their skin color (Chisholm & Greene, 2008; Kendall, 2012). Furthermore, White people often take these privileges for granted. In contrast, people from other ethnic groups often lack this special status. For example, if a White woman is late for a meeting, people do not conclude, "She is late because she's White." In contrast, if a Latina woman is late, White people often assume that her behavior is typical of Latina individuals. Similarly, a White woman can use a credit card and not arouse suspicions. In contrast, when a Black woman uses a credit card, some White people may wonder if she stole the card (McIntosh, 2001; Wise, 2008).

However, psychologists point out that White people seldom realize the advantages of having white skin (Corcoran & Thompson, 2004; Ostenson, 2008; Rose, 2008). They may protest that they have never been treated better than people of color. Some White people may insist that they are "color blind." However, White people who ignore someone's ethnicity are neglecting an important part of that person's identity (Blais, 2006; Rose, 2008).

A concept related to White privilege can be called the **White-as-normative concept**, which points out that being White is the normal standard in U.S. culture (Lorber, 2005b). In observing a sociology class in which students from different ethnic groups were discussing their ethnic identity, a White woman said, "I don't have an ethnic identity; I'm just normal."

White individuals often think that Black people, Latinas/os, Asian Americans, and Native Americans belong to ethnic groups—but that White people do not (Peplau, Veniegas et al., 1999; Weedon, 1999). In fact, each of us has an ethnic heritage.

Let's return to the central concept of White privilege. McIntosh (2001) reports that, as a White woman, she knows that her children will be taught material that focuses on their ethnic group. In contrast, a child from any other ethnic background has no such guarantee. For instance, Aurora Orozco (1999) was born in Mexico and came to California as a child. She recalls a song the students sang in her new U.S. school:

> The Pilgrims came from overseas
> To make a home for you and me.
> Thanksgiving Day, Thanksgiving Day
> We clap our hands, we are so glad. (Orozco 1999, p. 110)

Orozco felt as though her own ethnic heritage was invisible in a classroom where children were supposed to clap their hands in celebration of their Pilgrim ancestors. Keep in mind the White-privilege concept and the White-as-normative concept as we consider women who are Latina, Black, Asian American, and Native American.

Women of Color

Figure 1.1 displays the estimated number of U.S. residents in the major ethnic groups as of 2019. Figure 1.2 indicates the ethnic origins of people who live in Canada. Let's briefly consider each of the groups so that you have a context for future discussions about ethnicity.

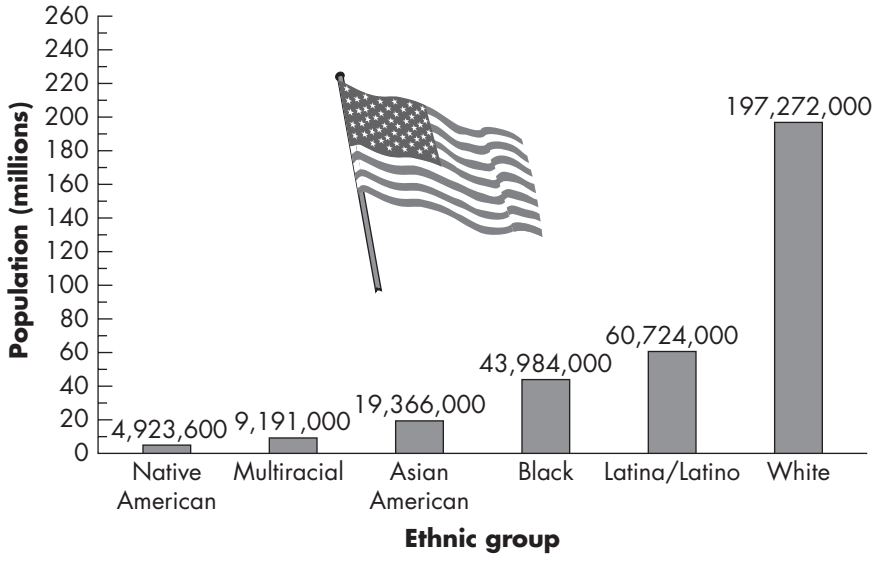

FIGURE **1.1** Estimated U.S. population in 2019, by ethnic group.

Note: Some individuals listed two or more races, and so they are tallied for each applicable category.

Source: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US

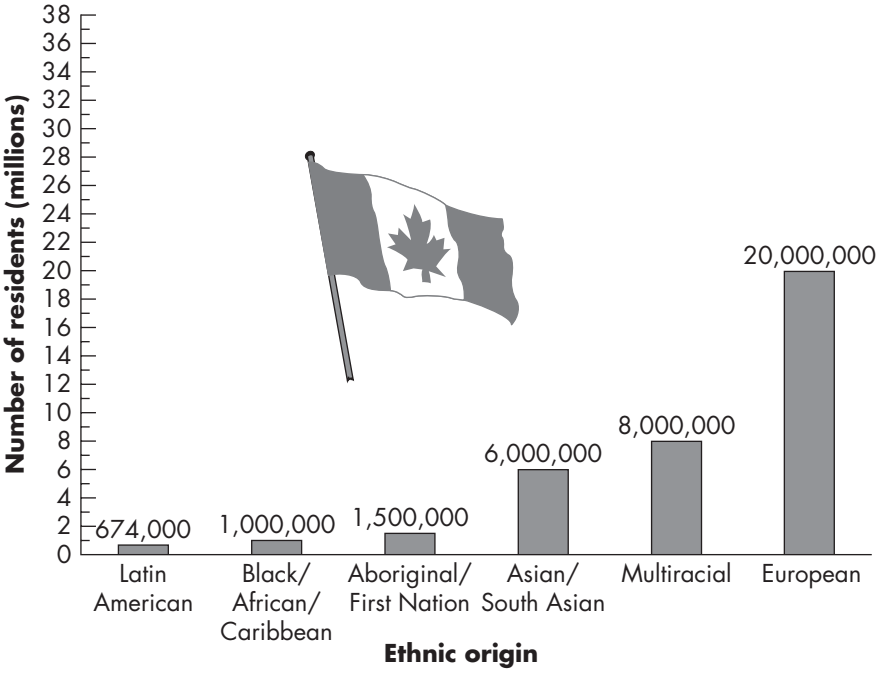

FIGURE **1.2** Estimated self-reported ethnic origins of Canadian residents, based on 2016 data.

Source: https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016016/98-200-x2016016-eng.cfm

Latina Women

As Figure 1.1 reveals, Latinas/Latinos are currently the second-largest ethnic group in the United States. At present, most individuals in this ethnic group prefer these terms rather than *Hispanic,* the term often used by governmental agencies (Castañeda, 2008; Fears, 2003), and more than half of individuals who would be classified as *Hispanic* by the U.S. Census actually prefer labels that reference their country of origin, such as Cuban, Colombian, or Mexican (Taylor, Lopez, Martinez, & Velasco, 2012) One problem is that *Hispanic* focuses on Spanish origins rather than on Latin American identity. Unfortunately, though, the term *Latinos* has an *-os* (masculine) ending that renders women invisible when speaking about both males and females. We will follow the current policy of using *Latinas* to refer to women of Latin American origin and *Latinas/os* to refer to both genders (Castañeda, 2008). Incidentally, Latin American feminists have created a nonsexist alternative that incorporates both the *-as* and the *-os* endings; it is written *Latin@s*. Others have proposed *Latinx* or *Latine* as neutral alternatives (Carbajal, 2020).

Mexican Americans constitute about 62% of the Latina/o population in the United States (Noe-Bustamante, Flores, & Shah, 2017). Incidentally, Mexican Americans often refer to themselves as *Chicanas* or *Chicanos,* especially if they feel a strong political commitment to their Mexican heritage (Castañeda, 2008).

Any exploration of ethnicity must emphasize the wide diversity of characteristics and experiences within every ethnic group (Castañeda, 2008; Sy & Romero, 2008). For example, Latinas/os share a language and many similar values and customs. However, a Chicana girl growing up in a farming community in central California has different experiences from a Puerto Rican girl growing up in New York City. Furthermore, a Latina woman whose family has lived in Iowa for three generations has different experiences from a Latina woman who recently left her Central American birthplace (Martin, 2004).

Donna Castañeda (2008) described how she and other Latinas need to navigate two cultures, frequently crossing borders between their Latina heritage and the cultures in which they now live. As she writes:

> The notion of border crossing has a deep resonance for me each time I go home to visit my family. In a family of seven children, I have been the only person to go to college, and on top of that I went on to get a Ph.D. Each homecoming is like moving from one world into another, from one self to another. The transitions are now much smoother for me than in earlier years, but only after a process of coming to understand that at any point in time I am more than one person, one dimension. (Castaneda 2008, p. 264)

Black Women

If you re-examine the U.S. data in Figure 1.1, you'll notice that Black Americans constitute the third-largest ethnic group in the United States. Some Black people may have arrived recently from African nations or the Caribbean, whereas the families of others may have lived in North America since the 1700s. In Canada, Black individuals are likely to have emigrated from the Caribbean, African nations, or Great Britain. However, about half of Black residents were born in Canada (Knight, 2004).

Every non-White ethnic group has encountered racism, and this book will provide many examples of racial bias. In the United States, however, Black people's experiences

with racism have been especially well documented (Rose, 2008; Schneider, 2004). Breonna Taylor and Sandra Bland are two examples of Black women who died in police custody (Klein, 2020) and are among countless other Black women, Indigenous women, and people of color who have been targeted due to racial bias (Ritchie, 2017). For example, Amanda Gorman (2021a) is a Harvard University graduate, the first ever National Youth Poet Laureate, and at 22, made history as the youngest inaugural poet in U.S. history when she read her poem *The Hill We Climb* at the inauguration of President Joseph Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris in January 2021. A few weeks later, however, she was racially profiled by a local security guard as she attempted to enter her apartment because she looked "suspicious." As she posted on Twitter, "This is the reality of black girls: One day you're called an icon, the next day, a threat" (Gorman, 2021b).

People often use the terms *Black* and *African American* interchangeably. In general, we'll use the term *Black* because it is more inclusive (Boot, 1999). *African American* seems to ignore many U.S. residents who feel a strong connection to their Caribbean roots (e.g., Jamaica, Trinidad, or Haiti), as well as Black people who live in Canada. As the Black poet Gwendolyn Brooks, former U.S. poet laureate, said in an interview, she likes to think of Black people as family who happen to live in countries throughout the world. She feels that *Black* is a welcoming term, like an open umbrella (B. D. Hawkins, 1994).

Asian American Women

As with Latinas/os, Asian Americans come from many different countries. Asian Americans include Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, Vietnamese, Koreans, South Asians (e.g., people from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh), and more than 30 other ethnic-cultural groups (Chan, 2008). Consider a Laotian woman who is one of the 10,000 Hmong refugees who now live in Minnesota (Vang, 2008). She may have little in common with a Taiwanese woman living in Toronto's Chinatown or a South Asian woman who is a physician in New Jersey. Many Asian American women have professional careers. However, women who are Filipino, Korean, and Chinese garment workers often experience some of the most stressful labor conditions in the United States and Canada (Võ & Scichitano, 2004).

Asian Americans are often stereotyped as the ideal or model minority group, and in fact they are often academically successful (Nance, 2007; Schneider, 2004). For example, 71% of college-age Asian American women in the United States have earned at least a bachelor's degree, in contrast to 45% of White women EducationData.org, 2019). However, some colleges report that a significant number of their Asian American students have low grade-point averages (Nance, 2007). Others have argued that the model minority myth can lead to misperceptions of Asian Americans and neglect of their mental health and social support needs (Cheng, Chang, O'Brien, Budgazad, & Tsai, 2017).

Throughout this book, we'll learn that women from an Asian background sometimes face discrimination (Chan, 2008; Lorber, 2005b). For instance, Dr. Madhulika Khandelwal describes her experiences as a professor at the University of Massachusetts, Boston: "Stereotypically [Asians] are presumed to have had limited access to English before arriving in America. They are considered followers rather than leaders. And the women are portrayed as either downtrodden or sexual 'exotics'" (Khandelwal, Collision, 2000, p. 21). Dr. Khandelwal also reported that people often praise her for her excellent mastery of English, even though English is her first language.

Native American and First Nations Women

Native Americans and First Nations people[2] may share a common geographic origin and a common history of being invaded, dispossessed, and regulated by White colonizers. However, their languages, values, and current lifestyles may have little in common (Hall & Barongan, 2002; James, 2006; McLeod, 2003). In the United States, for example, Native American people have more than 250 different tribal languages and about 560 separate native backgrounds (Smithsonian Institute, 2007; Trimble, 2003).

Many Native American women struggle as they try to integrate their personal aspirations with the values of their culture. For example, a Native American teenager explained this conflict: "As a young woman, I should have been starting a family. When Grandma told them I was going to college, they'd look away. But in my eyes, going to college wasn't going to make me less Indian or forget where I came from" (Garrod et al., 1992, p. 86).

Further Perspectives on Ethnicity

We have learned that each ethnic group consists of many different subgroups. Even if we focus on one specific subgroup—perhaps Chinese Americans—the variability *within* that one subgroup is always large (American Psychological Association, 2003; Chan, 2008). Whenever we examine whether ethnic groups differ from one another, keep in mind the substantial diversity within each group.

The within-group diversity is increased still further because millions of people in the United States and Canada are biracial or multiracial. Unfortunately, however, psychologists have not conducted much systematic research about biracial or multiracial individuals (Gillem, 2008). Furthermore, some of the research shows that multiracial individuals may experience challenges such as experiencing conflict from having to "choose" between multiple ethnic or racial identities (Gaither, 2015). However, research also shows that multiracial individuals often experience benefits, because they have access to a greater number of cultural communities (Gaither, 2015; Shih & Sanchez, 2005).

Let's return to a very important point about racism: It is important to continually examine the perspective that routinely considers White people to be normative. In the United States and Canada, most White students have learned a perspective in which the "normal human" is male, White, middle class, able-bodied, heterosexual, and young (Cushner, 2003). When students enroll in a course about the psychology of women and gender, they often report that they needed to rethink their assumptions about social categories.

We also need consider another issue related to ethnicity, called *intersectionality*. The concept of **intersectionality** emphasizes that each person belongs to multiple social groups based on categories such as ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and social class (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989). For instance, a White lesbian woman may experience a disadvantage because she differs from the heterosexual "standard." However, compared to lesbian women who are not White, she experiences a racial privilege (Shields, 2008).

Intersectionality points out that we cannot simply add a person's social categories together and come up with a clear-cut social identity. For instance, a Black woman may

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[2]In referring to people whose ancestors lived in Canada before the arrival of European Americans, most Canadians use either of two terms, *First Nations* or *Aboriginal* (James, 2006; Smithsonian Institute, 2007). The two terms are used somewhat interchangeably, although some people limit the term *First Nations* to descendents of the original inhabitants of Saskatchewan and Manitoba (McLeod, 2003).

sometimes emphasize her ethnicity, and she may sometimes emphasize her gender (Bowleg, 2008). Furthermore, a person who experiences discrimination in one dimension may experience privilege in another dimension, as in the case of a White woman (Cole, 2009). Page 3 of this chapter emphasizes that the psychology of women is an extremely complex topic. The concept of intersectionality certainly increases the complexity of the important issues. You'll read more about intersectionality throughout this book.

U.S.-Centered Nationalism

So far, we have applied the "normative" concept to gender and several other social categories. Now let's focus on a related bias, in which residents of the United States consider their country to be normative.

According to the principle of **U.S.-centered nationalism**, the United States is dominant over all other countries in the world, which are believed to have lower status. U.S.-centered nationalism reveals itself in many ways that may be invisible to U.S. residents (Hase, 2001). For example, my colleagues in Canada have e-mail addresses that end in "ca." The e-mail address for Japanese residents ends in "jp," and those in Greece end in "gr." This pattern is standard in most countries. However, residents of the United States do not need to add any extra letters to their e-mail addresses, because the United States occupies a position of privilege.

In other words, U.S. residents are considered "normal," whereas the other countries have "second-class status." If you are a U.S. resident, and this point doesn't seem accurate, how would you feel if Japan were the normative country, and every U.S. e-mail address required the "us" ending?

To illustrate U.S.-centered nationalism, suppose that you read an article tomorrow and discovered that soldiers in another country (say, Italy or France) had been torturing political prisoners who are citizens of the United States. Some of these prisoners have been held for more than a year in solitary confinement without any trial. Others have been stripped naked and forced to sodomize one another. Still others have been beaten and had their heads forced down a toilet. All of these tortures have been forbidden by the international laws specified by the Geneva Conventions. How would you respond? Would you be outraged that anyone would treat U.S. citizens so cruelly?

Now, switch countries, so that U.S. soldiers are the torturers, and the people from the other nation are being tortured. Does the torture seem more justified, because of U.S.-centered nationalism? During the summer of 2004, the world learned that U.S. soldiers had in fact been using these specific kinds of torture on citizens from Iraq and from several European countries who were being held in prisons in Iraq and Cuba.

U.S.-centered nationalism is a challenging topic to discuss in the United States (Hase, 2001). It's difficult for students to hear their own country criticized. This attitude is often strengthened by students' educational experiences. If you grew up in the United States, for example, students at your high school were probably encouraged to respect and value people from ethnic groups other than their own. However, were you taught to value other countries equally—or did everyone simply assume that the United States had a special, privileged status compared with the rest of the world? Try searching for examples of U.S.-centered nationalism in the news, in academic settings, and in people's conversations.

Throughout this book, we will explore biases such as sexism, racism, and ageism—situations in which one group has a more powerful position than other groups. We need to keep in mind that U.S.-centered nationalism creates similar problems of inequality on an international level rather than on the interpersonal or intergroup level.

Section Summary

Women and Ethnicity

1. Social and cultural norms in the United States and Canada suggest that being White is normative; as a result, White individuals may mistakenly believe that they do not belong to any ethnic group.
2. Latinas/os share a language with one another as well as many values and customs. However, their other characteristics vary tremendously. Latinas often comment that they must frequently cross boundaries between Latina culture and other cultures.
3. Black Americans constitute the third-largest ethnic group in the United States. Black people in the United States and Canada differ from one another with respect to their family's history.
4. Asian Americans also come from diverse backgrounds. Although they are considered the ideal minority, they often experience discrimination and stressful work conditions.
5. Native Americans and Canadian Aboriginal peoples share a common geographic origin and history. However, they represent numerous different native backgrounds.
6. The variability within any ethnic group—or subgroup—is always large.
7. The limited research about multiracial individuals does not show consistent disadvantages or advantages.
8. An important concept called *intersectionality* emphasizes that each person belongs to many social groups, based on categories such as ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and social class. This complexity makes it difficult to study individual differences in psychology.
9. Another form of bias that is related to ethnic bias is U.S.-centered nationalism, in which U.S. residents believe that their nation has higher status than other countries.

1-4 Potential Problems and Biases in Current Research

Learning Objectives

To outline potential problems and biases in research on the psychology of women and gender, you can …

1-4-1 Describe the five main stages in which bias can negatively impact the research process.

1-4-2 Identify the three main problems that can occur with hypothesis development in scientific research.

1-4-3 Describe the four main sources of bias in designing research studies in psychology.

1-4-4 Explain how research expectancies can influence the outcomes of psychological research.

1-4-5 Differentiate between practical and statistical significance in research results.

1-4-6 Describe how mistakes in data interpretation can skew research results.

1-4-7 Explain how bias in communicating research results contributes to bias in our understanding of gender differences.

1-4-8 Identify the main characteristics of critical thinking.

Earlier in this chapter, we noted the biased research that characterized the early history of the psychology of women. Let's now explore the kinds of problems that sometimes arise when contemporary researchers conduct studies on the psychology of women and gender.

Researchers in all areas of psychology face the problem of potential biases. However, take a moment to consider why biases could raise even more problems in research on the psychology of women. After all, researchers are likely to have strong pre-existing emotions, values, and opinions about the topics being investigated (Caplan & Caplan, 2009; LaFrance et al., 2004). In contrast, consider people who conduct research in visual shape perception. As they were growing up, they probably did not acquire strong emotional reactions to topics such as the retina and the visual cortex. Gender is certainly more controversial! Pre-existing emotions about gender issues seem to be especially strong in connection with research on women who do not conform to the traditional feminine stereotypes, such as unmarried women or lesbian mothers.

Figure 1.3 shows how biases and inappropriate procedures can influence each step of research. Psychologists are trained to carefully consider each phase of research to eliminate these problems. Fortunately, most current studies avoid obvious flaws, but students must still learn how to evaluate psychological research. However, this psychology course can raise your awareness about biases in research. Let's examine each phase of this research in more detail, and then we'll consider the more general issue of critical thinking in psychology.

Formulating the Hypothesis

Researchers are often strongly committed to a certain psychological theory. If this theory is biased against women, then the researchers may expect to find biased results before they even begin to conduct their study (Caplan & Caplan, 2009; McHugh & Cosgrove, 1998). For example, Sigmund Freud argued that women actually enjoy suffering. Notice that psychologists who endorse that perspective would be biased if they conduct research about women who have been emotionally or physically abused.

A second problem is that psychologists may formulate a hypothesis based on previous research that is unrelated to the topic they want to study. Several decades ago, for example, researchers wanted to determine whether children were psychologically harmed when their mothers worked outside the home. Psychologists' own biases against employed mothers led them to locate studies showing that children raised in low-quality orphanages often developed psychological problems. A child whose mother works outside the home for 40 hours a week has a different life compared to a child raised in an institution without a mother or father. Still, those early researchers argued that the children of employed mothers would develop similar psychological disorders.

The final way that biases can influence hypothesis formulation concerns the nature of researchers' questions. For example, researchers studying Native American women typically examine issues such as alcoholism or suicide (Hall & Barongan, 2002). If researchers have a biased attitude that these women are somehow deficient, they will not ask questions that

I. Formulating the hypothesis

A. Using a biased theory
B. Formulating a hypothesis on the basis of unrelated research
C. Asking questions only from certain content areas

II. Designing the study

A. Selecting the operational definitions
B. Choosing the participants
C. Choosing the researcher
D. Including confounding variables

III. Performing the study

A. Influencing the outcome through researcher expectancy
B. Influencing the outcome through participants' expectancies

IV. Interpreting the data

A. Emphasizing statistical significance rather than practical significance
B. Ignoring alternate explanations
C. Misinterpreting correlational data
D. Making inappropriate generalizations

V. Communicating the findings

A. Leaving out analyses that show gender similarities
B. Choosing a title that focuses on gender differences
C. Journal editors rejecting studies that show gender similarities
D. Secondary sources emphasizing gender differences instead of gender similarities

FIGURE **1.3** How bias can influence research during five different stages.

can reveal the strengths of these women. For example, do women with extensive tribal experience have more positive attitudes about growing old?

So far, we have reviewed several ways in which biases can operate in the early stages of hypothesis formulation. Specifically, biases can influence the psychologists' theoretical orientation, the previous research they consider relevant, and the topics they investigate.

Designing the Study

An important early step in designing a research study is selecting the operational definitions. An **operational definition** describes exactly how researchers will measure a **variable** (or characteristic) in a study. Consider a study investigating gender comparisons in empathy. **Empathy** is your ability to experience the same emotion that someone else is feeling. For our operational definition, we might decide to use people's answers to a question such as "When your best friend is feeling sad, do you also feel sad?" In other words, we will measure empathy in terms of self-report.

This operational definition of empathy may look perfectly innocent until we realize that it contains a potential bias. Women and men may really be similar in their personal thoughts about empathy. However, men may be more hesitant to *report* that they feel empathic. After all, gender stereotypes emphasize that men should not be overly sensitive.

Imagine, instead, that we measure empathy by observing people's facial expression while they watch a sad movie. Then we might have reached a different conclusion about gender comparisons in empathy. Ideally, researchers should test a hypothesis with several different operational definitions to provide a richer perspective on the research question.

The second source of bias in research design is the choice of participants. Psychologists typically conduct research with participants who are college students, who are primarily rom middle-class homes and historically of White ethnicity. As a result, we know relatively little about people of color and people who are economically disadvantaged (B. Lott, 2002; Saris & Johnston-Robledo, 2000). The selection of research topics can also influence the choice of participants. Studies about mothers with low incomes and about female criminal behavior have disproportionately focused on Black and Latina women. In contrast, studies on body image or salary equity have usually been limited to White women.

A third source of bias in designing a study is the choice of the person who will actually conduct the study. For example, think how the gender of the researcher may make a difference (e.g., F. Levine & Le De Simone, 1991; Sechzer & Rabinowitz, 2008). Let's imagine that a researcher wants to compare women's and men's interest in babies by interviewing the participants. If the researcher is a man, some male participants may be embarrassed to demonstrate a strong interest in babies; gender differences may be large. The same study conducted by a female researcher could produce minimal gender differences.

In research design, a final source of bias is the problem of confounding variables. A **confounding variable** is any characteristic, other than the central variable being studied, that is not equivalent under all conditions; this confounding variable has the potential to influence the study's results. In studies that compare women and men, a confounding variable is some variable—other than gender—that is different for the two groups of participants.

Suppose, for example, that we want to compare the spatial ability of college men and women. A potential confounding variable might be the amount of time they have spent on video games and other activities that emphasize spatial ability. College men are more likely than women to have experience with these activities. Therefore, any gender difference in spatial ability might be traceable to the discrepancy in the amount of spatial *experience* rather than to a true difference in the actual spatial *ability* of college women and men.

The reason we must be concerned about confounding variables is that we need to compare two groups that are as similar as possible in all relevant characteristics except the central variable we are studying. Careless researchers may fail to take appropriate precautions to rule out confounds.

For example, suppose that a group of researchers want to study whether sexual orientation influences psychological adjustment, and they decide to compare married heterosexual women with women who are lesbians. The two groups would not be a fair comparison. For example, some of the lesbian women may not currently be in a committed relationship. Depending on the goals of the researchers, a more appropriate study might compare heterosexual women in a committed relationship and lesbian women in a committed relationship.

Each of these problems in designing a study may lead us to draw the wrong conclusions. The choice of participants in some research—for example, college students are a common choice for researchers—means that we know much more about them than about other groups of people. Furthermore, the operational definitions, the gender of the researcher, and confounding variables may all influence the nature of the conclusions (Caplan & Caplan, 2009).

Performing the Study

Psychologists may run into further problems when they actually perform the study. One potential bias at this point is called researcher expectancy (Caplan & Caplan, 2009; Rosenthal, 1993). According to the concept of **researcher expectancy**, the biases that researchers bring to the study can influence the outcome. If researchers expect males to perform better than females on a test of mathematics ability, they may somehow treat the two groups differently. As a result, males and females may respond differently (Halpern, 2000). Any researcher—male or female—who has different expectations for males and females can produce these expectancy effects.

Researchers in other areas of psychology also have expectations about the outcome of their research, but those expectations may be subtle. In gender research, however, the investigators may be aware of which participants are female and which are male. Suppose that researchers are rating female and male adolescents on their degree of independence in working on a difficult task. The researchers' ratings may reflect their expectations and stereotypes about female and male behavior. These researchers may rate male adolescents higher than female adolescents on a scale of independence, even though they might not find gender differences if they objectively tallied the adolescents' actual behavior. As we noted on page 27, it is important for researchers to choose their operational definitions carefully to minimize the impact of potential biases.

Furthermore, the participants—as well as the researchers—have typically absorbed expectations and stereotypes about their own behavior (Jaffee et al., 1999). For example, popular culture says that women are expected to be moody and irritable just before their menstrual periods. Suppose that a woman is told that she is participating in a study on how the menstrual cycle affects mood. Wouldn't you predict that she would supply more negative ratings during the premenstrual phase of the cycle? In contrast, if she had been unaware of the purpose of the study, she might have responded differently. When you read about a study that uses self-report, keep this potential problem in mind.

In summary, the expectations of both the researchers and the participants may bias the results and distort the conclusions. As a result, the conclusions will not be accurate.

Interpreting the Data

When researchers study the psychology of women and gender, they can misinterpret the data in many ways. For example, some researchers confuse statistical significance and practical significance. As we'll discuss in Chapter 5, a difference between male and female performance on a math test may be *statistically* significant. **Statistical significance** means that the

results are not likely to occur by chance alone. In the mathematical formulas used in calculating statistical significance, the sample size has a major influence on statistical significance.

Imagine that a standardized geometry test was given to 10,000 males and 10,000 females. A statistical analysis of the data reveals that the males scored significantly higher than the females. However, suppose that a close inspection reveals that the males received an average score of 40.5, in contrast to the females' average score of 40.0. Even though the difference might be statistically significant, this difference has little *practical* significance. **Practical significance**, as the name implies, means that the results have some meaningful and useful implications for the real world (Halpern, 2000). A half-point difference in these hypothetical geometry scores would have no imaginable implications for how males and females should be treated with respect to teaching geometry. Unfortunately, researchers often discuss only statistical significance, when they should also discuss whether a gender difference has practical significance.

When researchers interpret the data they have gathered, a second potential problem is that they may ignore alternative explanations. Suppose that females score higher than males on a test that measures anxiety. This difference might really be caused by males' reluctance to *report* any anxiety that they might feel rather than by any gender differences in true anxiety. In interpreting this study, researchers must consider alternative explanations.

A third problem when researchers try to interpret the findings is that they may misinterpret correlational data. Consider this hypothetical study: Suppose that some researchers find that there is a positive correlation between the number of years of education that a woman has completed and her score on a test of feminist attitudes. That is, a woman with many years of education is likely to have a high score on on this test of feminist attitudes.

Let's explore this third problem in more detail. Suppose that the researchers conclude that the years of education *cause* women to become more feminist. As you may know, the problem with this conclusion is that correlation is not necessarily causation. Yes, an advanced education may provide information that encourages women to adopt feminist beliefs. However, it may also be likely that women who are feminists are more eager to pursue additional years of education. Yet another explanation could be that it is some third variable (such as the feminist beliefs of a woman's parents) that encourages her to pursue an advanced education and also to hold feminist beliefs. In summary, the third problem with misinterpreting the research results is that researchers may reach an incorrect interpretation of correlational data.

A fourth and final problem in data interpretation occurs when researchers make inappropriate generalizations (Caplan & Caplan, 2009). For example, researchers may sample unusual populations and draw conclusions from them about the psychological characteristics of more typical populations. Suppose that you are investigating infants who had been exposed to abnormally high levels of male hormones before they were born. Unfortunately, researchers may overgeneralize and draw conclusions about the way that male hormones influence *normal* infants (Halpern, 2000). Other researchers might examine a sample of White female and male college students and then assume that their findings apply to all people, including people of color and people who have not attended college.

In summary, the interpretation phase of research contains several additional possibilities for distorting reality. Researchers have been known to ignore practical significance, bypass alternative explanations, misinterpret correlations, and overgeneralize their findings.

Communicating the Findings

After researchers conduct their studies and perform the related analyses, they usually want to report their findings in writing. Other sources of bias may now enter. Psychologists

continue to be preoccupied with gender differences, and a gender similarity is seldom considered startling psychological news (Bohan, 2002; Caplan & Caplan, 2009; LaFrance et al., 2004). Therefore, when researchers summarize the results of a study, they may leave out a particular analysis showing that females and males had similar scores. However, they are likely to report any gender *difference* that was discovered. As you can imagine, this kind of selective reporting will underrepresent the gender similarities found in research, and it will overrepresent the gender differences.

Biases are even likely to influence the choice of a title for a research report. For instance, a study examining aggression might be titled "Gender Differences in Aggression," even if it reported one statistically significant gender difference and five comparisons that showed gender similarities! The term *gender differences* focuses on dissimilarities, and it suggests that we need to search for differences. A more neutral term is *gender comparisons*.

After researchers have written a report of their findings, they send their report to journal editors, who must decide whether it deserves publication. Journal editors, along with the researchers themselves, may be more excited about gender differences than about gender similarities (Halpern, 2000). This selective-publication bias can therefore overrepresent gender differences still further so that gender similarities receive relatively little attention.

Even further distortion occurs when the published journal articles are discussed by secondary sources, such as textbooks, newspapers, and magazines. For example, an introductory psychology textbook might discuss one study in which men are found to be more aggressive than women and ignore several other studies that report gender similarities in aggression.

The popular press is especially likely to distort the research. For instance, a local newspaper featured an article titled, "He thinks, she thinks." The article included a sketch of the brain, with one hemisphere in pink and the other in blue.

In an attempt to entice their audience, the media may even misrepresent the species population. For example, a magazine article on stress during pregnancy emphasized the research conducted with rats (Dingfelder, 2004). However, the article included a large photo of a distressed-looking pregnant woman. Many readers might conclude from the misleading article that a mother's prenatal stress clearly causes disorders in human babies. When you have the opportunity, try Demonstration 1.3 to discover whether you find similar media biases.

Demonstration 1.3

Analyzing Media Reports About Gender Comparisons

Locate a magazine, website, or news source that you normally read. Identify any reports on gender comparisons or the psychology of women. Check Figure 1.3 as you read each article. Can you discover any potential biases?

In addition, can you find any areas in which the summary does not include enough information to make a judgment (e.g., the operational definition for the relevant variables)?

Critical Thinking and the Psychology of Women and Gender

As we have discussed, it helps to be cautious when you encounter information about gender and to carefully inspect published material for a variety of potential biases. This vigilance is part of a more general approach called critical thinking. **Critical thinking** consists of the following four components:

1. Ask thoughtful questions about what you read.
2. Look for potential biases at each step of the research process, as outlined in Figure 1.3 (page 22).
3. Determine whether the conclusions are supported by the evidence that has been presented.
4. Suggest alternative interpretations of the evidence.

One of the most important skills you can acquire in a course on the psychology of women and gender is the ability to think critically about the issues. As Elizabeth Loftus (2004) emphasizes, "Science is not just a giant bowl of facts to remember, but rather a way of thinking. … An idea may *seem* to be true, but this has nothing to do with whether it actually is true" (p. 8).

Unfortunately, popular culture does not encourage critical thinking (Halpern, 2004b). We are often asked to believe the messages that are presented without asking thoughtful questions, determining whether the evidence supports the conclusions, or suggesting other interpretations. As a result, people may consider emotional-sounding evidence to be more important than research-based statements (Scarr, 1997).

Because accuracy is an important aim of research, it is important to identify and eliminate the sources of bias that can distort accuracy and misrepresent women. It is also helpful to use critical-thinking skills to examine the research evidence (Halpern, 2004b). Only then can we have a clear understanding about women and gender.

Section Summary

Potential Problems and Biases in Current Research

1. When researchers formulate their hypotheses, biases can influence their theoretical orientation, the research they consider relevant, and the topics they choose to investigate.
2. When researchers design their studies, biases can influence how they choose their operational definitions, participants, and the people who conduct the research; another bias is the inclusion of confounding variables.
3. When researchers perform their studies, biases may include researcher expectancy as well as the participants' expectations.
4. When researchers interpret their results, biases may include ignoring practical significance, overlooking alternative explanations, misinterpreting correlational data, and overgeneralizing the findings.
5. When researchers communicate their findings, gender differences may be overreported; the title of the paper may emphasize gender differences; journal editors may prefer articles that demonstrate gender differences; and the popular media may distort the research.
6. An important part of critical thinking is being alert for potential biases; critical thinking requires you to ask thoughtful questions, determine whether the evidence supports the conclusions, and propose alternative interpretations for the evidence.

1-5 About This Textbook

Learning Objectives

To summarize the primary themes of the textbook, you can …

1-5-1 Identify four main themes in the text that provide a framework for the study of the psychology of women and gender.

1-5-2 Differentiate between gender as a *subject variable* and as a *stimulus variable*.

1-5-3 Analyze which experiences of women have traditionally been invisible to researchers.

1-5-4 Explain the differences between within-subject and between-subject differences.

The psychology of women and gender is an extremely important topic. Our scientific understanding of the ways in which gender shapes almost every aspect of our lives from cradle to grave is constantly evolving. Therefore, we've made every effort to create a textbook that can help you understand and remember concepts about the psychology of women and gender. Let's first consider the four themes of the book, and then we'll examine some features that can help you learn more effectively.

Themes of the Book

The subject of the psychology of women is impressively complex. Furthermore, the discipline is relatively young, and we cannot yet identify a large number of general principles that summarize this diverse field. Nevertheless, you'll find several important themes woven throughout this textbook. The themes are also listed inside the front cover so that you can easily learn them. Let's discuss the themes now to provide a framework for a variety of topics you will encounter in your textbook.

Theme 1: Psychological Gender Differences Are Typically Small and Inconsistent.

The earlier section on research biases noted that published studies may exaggerate the gender differences as being relatively large. However, even the *published* literature in psychology shows that gender similarities are usually more impressive than gender differences. In terms of permanent, internal psychological characteristics, women and men simply are not that different (Basow, 2001; Bem, 2008; Hyde, 2005a). In gender research, one study may demonstrate a gender difference, but a second study—apparently similar to the first—may demonstrate a gender similarity (Unger, 1998; Yoder & Kahn, 2003). Many traditional studies of gender differences have relied on the notion that gender is a binary construct. This perspective assumes that people can be divided into two separate categories—women and men. It also assumes that people who fit into those two categories are either similar to or different from each other in reliable and measurable ways. In reality, people's scores on a wide variety of psychological variables do not neatly fall into one gender category or the other. Gender is not a binary construct and instead exists on a continuum that includes female, male, nonbinary, and transgender individuals.

You'll recognize that Theme 1 is consistent with the similarities perspective that we discussed on page 8. Theme 1 also specifically rejects the notion of essentialism. As we noted

earlier, essentialism argues that gender is a basic, stable characteristic that resides within an individual.

Let's clarify two points, however. First, we are emphasizing that men and women are *psychologically* similar; obviously, their sex organs make them anatomically different. Second, men and women acquire some different skills and characteristics in various cultures because they occupy different social roles in those cultures (Eagly, 2001; Yoder & Kahn, 2003). Men are more likely than women to be chief executives, and women are more likely than men to be receptionists. However, if men and women could have similar social roles in a culture, then those gender differences might be almost nonexistent.

Throughout this book, we will learn that gender differences may appear in some social contexts but not in others. Gender differences are most likely to occur in the following three contexts (Basow, 2001; Unger, 1998; Yoder & Kahn, 2003):

1. When people evaluate themselves rather than when a researcher records behavior objectively.
2. When people are observed in real-life situations (where men typically have more power) rather than in a laboratory setting (where men and women are fairly similar in power).
3. When people are aware that other people are evaluating them.

In these three kinds of situations, people drift toward stereotypical behavior. Women tend to respond the way they think women are supposed to respond; men tend to respond the way they think men are supposed to respond.

Theme 1 focuses on **gender as a subject variable**, or a characteristic within a person that influences the way they act. This book will present evidence that the gender of the participant or the subject (i.e., the person who is being studied) typically has little impact on behavior.

Theme 2: People React Differently to Men and Women.

We just pointed out that gender as a subject variable is usually not important. In contrast, gender as a *stimulus variable* is important (Bem, 2004). When we refer to **gender as a stimulus variable**, we mean a characteristic of a person to which other people react. When psychologists study gender as a stimulus variable, they might ask, "Do people react differently to individuals who are nonbinary or female than to individuals who are male?" Gender is an extremely important social category. To illustrate this point, try ignoring the gender of the next person you meet!

Throughout the book, we will emphasize that gender is an important stimulus variable. In general, we will learn that males are often more valued than females (Lorber, 2005a). For example, many parents prefer a boy rather than a girl for their firstborn child. In Chapter 2, we will also discuss how males are represented more positively in religion and mythology, as well as in current language and the media. In addition, men are typically more valued in the workplace.

When people react differently to men and women, they are demonstrating that they believe in gender differences. We could call this phenomenon "the illusion of gender differences." As you will discover, both men and women tend to exaggerate these gender differences.

Theme 3: Women Are Less Visible Than Men in Many Important Areas.

Men are typically featured more prominently than women in areas that our culture considers important. A quick skim through the daily headlines will convince you that males and "masculine" topics receive more emphasis (Berkman, 2004).

In Chapter 2, we will discuss the research on all forms of media, confirming that men are represented more than women are. Another example is that girls and women are relatively invisible in the classroom, because teachers tend to pay more attention to males than to females (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Women may also be relatively invisible in the English language. In many respects, this language has traditionally demonstrated **androcentrism:** The male experience is treated as the norm (Basow, 2001; Bem, 2008, Rozee et al., 2008). Instead of *humans* and *humankind,* many people still use words such as *man* and *mankind* to refer to women and men.

Psychologists have helped to keep some important topics invisible. For example, psychology researchers seldom study major biological events in women's lives, such as menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and breast feeding. Women *are* visible in areas such as women's magazines, the costume committee for the school play, and low-paying jobs. However, these are all areas that many cultures do not consider important or prestigious.

As we noted in a previous section, women of color are even less visible than White women. Until recently, women of color were also relatively invisible in psychology research (Guthrie, 1998; Holliday & Holmes, 2003; Winston, 2003). In Chapter 2, we will emphasize how women of color are often absent in the media. Although some Black women have now achieved visibility in the media, women of color are still largely absent in primary roles. This lack of representation extends to economically disadvantaged women as well.

Theme 4: Women Differ Widely from One Another.

In this textbook, we will explore how women differ from one another in their psychological characteristics, their life choices, and their responses to biological events. In fact, individual women show so much variability that we often cannot draw any conclusions about women in general (Kimball, 2003). Notice that Theme 4 contradicts the essentialism perspective, which argues that all women share the same psychological characteristics and that these are very different from men's psychological characteristics.

Think about the variability among women you know. They probably differ dramatically in their aggressiveness or in their sensitivity to other people's emotions. Women also vary widely in their choices in terms of careers, marital status, sexual orientation, desire to have children, and so forth. Furthermore, women differ in their responses to biological events. Some women have problems with menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and menopause; others find these experiences neutral, somewhat positive, or even wonderful!

In the previous section, we discussed ethnicity, and we noted that the diversity within each ethnic group is remarkable. Throughout this book, when we examine the lives of women in countries outside the United States, we will gather further evidence that women vary widely from one another.

We have emphasized that women show wide variation. As you might imagine, men show a similarly wide variation among themselves. These within-gender variabilities bring us full circle to Theme 1 of this book. Whenever variability *within* each of two groups is large, we probably will not find a statistically significant difference *between* those two groups. In the case of gender, we seldom find a large difference between the average score for females and the average score for males. In Chapter 5, we will discuss this statistical issue in more detail. The important point to remember now is that women show wide within-group variability, and men also show wide within-group variability.

How to Use This Book Effectively

We have designed several features of this textbook to help you learn the material more effectively. Read this section carefully to make the best use of these features.

Each chapter in this book begins with an outline. When you start a new chapter, be sure to read through the outline to acquaint yourself with the scope of the chapter. Learning objectives at the beginning of each chapter and major reading sections focus your attention on the key concepts and let you know what you can do to show mastery of the chapter content.

The third feature in each chapter is a Did You Know? feature. You will find references to the page number where each item is discussed. These items will encourage you to think about some of the controversial and surprising findings you'll encounter in the chapter.

The chapters contain a number of demonstrations, such as Demonstrations 1.1 (page 7) and 1.2 (page 8). Try them yourself, or invite your friends to try them.[3] Each demonstration is simple and requires little or no equipment. The purpose of the demonstrations is to make the material more concrete and personal. According to research about human memory, material is easier to remember if it is concrete and is related to personal experience (Matlin, 2009; T. B. Rogers et al., 1977).

In the text, key terms appear in boldface type (e.g., **gender**) and they are defined in the same sentence. We have also included some phonetic pronunciations, with the accented syllable in italics. (Our students say they feel more comfortable about using a word in discussion if they know that their pronunciation is correct.) Concentrate on these definitions, because an important part of any discipline is its terminology.

Many textbooks include summaries at the end of each chapter, but this book contains summaries at the end of each major section. For example, Chapter 1 contains five section summaries. This feature can help you review the material more frequently, so that you can feel confident about mastering small, manageable portions of the textbook before you move on to new material. At the end of each section, you can test yourself to determine whether you can recall the important points. Then check the section summary to determine whether you were accurate. Incidentally, some students have mentioned that they learn the material more effectively if they read one section at a time, then take a break, and review that section summary before reading the next portion.

A set of 10 chapter review questions appears at the end of each chapter. Some questions test your specific recall, some ask you to draw on information from several parts of the chapter, and some ask you to apply your knowledge to everyday situations.

At the end of each chapter is a list of the key (boldface) terms, in the order in which they appear in the chapter. Try testing yourself to check whether you can define each term. This list of terms also includes page numbers so that you can check on the terms you find difficult. Furthermore, each term appears in the subject index at the end of the book.

A final feature, also at the end of each chapter, is a list of several recommended readings. These are important articles, books, or special issues of journals that are particularly relevant to that chapter. These readings should be useful if you are writing a paper on one of the relevant topics or if you find an area that is personally interesting to you. We hope you'll want to go beyond the information in the textbook and learn on your own about the psychology of women and gender.

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[3]Some colleges and universities have a policy that students—as well as faculty members—cannot ask other people to complete a survey unless their Institutional Review Board has approved the project. Your course instructor can tell you whether your institution requires this procedure.

Section Summary

About This Textbook

1. Theme 1 states that psychological gender differences are typically small and inconsistent; gender differences are more likely (a) when people evaluate themselves, (b) in real-life situations, and (c) when people are aware that others are evaluating them.
2. Theme 2 states that people react differently to men and women; for example, males are typically considered more valuable than females.
3. Theme 3 states that women are less visible than men in many important areas; for instance, many languages are androcentric.
4. Theme 4 states that women vary widely from one another; for example, they vary in their psychological characteristics, life choices, and responses to biological processes.
5. Features of this book that can help you learn more effectively include chapter outlines, learning objectives, Did You Know? statements, demonstrations, boldfaced key terms, section summaries, chapter review questions, lists of key terms, and recommended readings.

Chapter Review Questions

1. Define the terms *sex* and *gender.* Then decide which of the two terms you should use in discussing each of the following topics: (a) how boys learn "masculine" body postures and girls learn "feminine" body postures; (b) how hormones influence female and male fetuses prior to birth; (c) a comparison of self-confidence in older men and women; (d) the development during puberty of body characteristics such as pubic hair and breasts in women.
2. Apply the two terms *feminism* and *sexism* to your own experience. Do you consider yourself a feminist? Can you identify examples of sexism you have observed during the past week? How do the terms *feminism* and *sexism*—as used in this chapter—differ from their popular use in the media?
3. Define each of the following terms, and then give an example: *racism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, ageism, White privilege,* the *White-as-normative concept*, and *U.S.-centered nationalism*.
4. Describe the four kinds of feminism discussed in this chapter. How are the similarities perspective and the differences perspective (with respect to gender comparisons) related to those four kinds of feminism? How are social constructionism and essentialism related to these two perspectives?
5. Describe the early research related to gender and the psychology of women. In the section on problems in research, we discuss biases that arise in formulating hypotheses. How might these problems be relevant in explaining some of this early research?
6. Turn back to Figures 1.1 and 1.2. Does the information about the diversity of racial and ethnic groups match the diversity at your own college or university? If not,