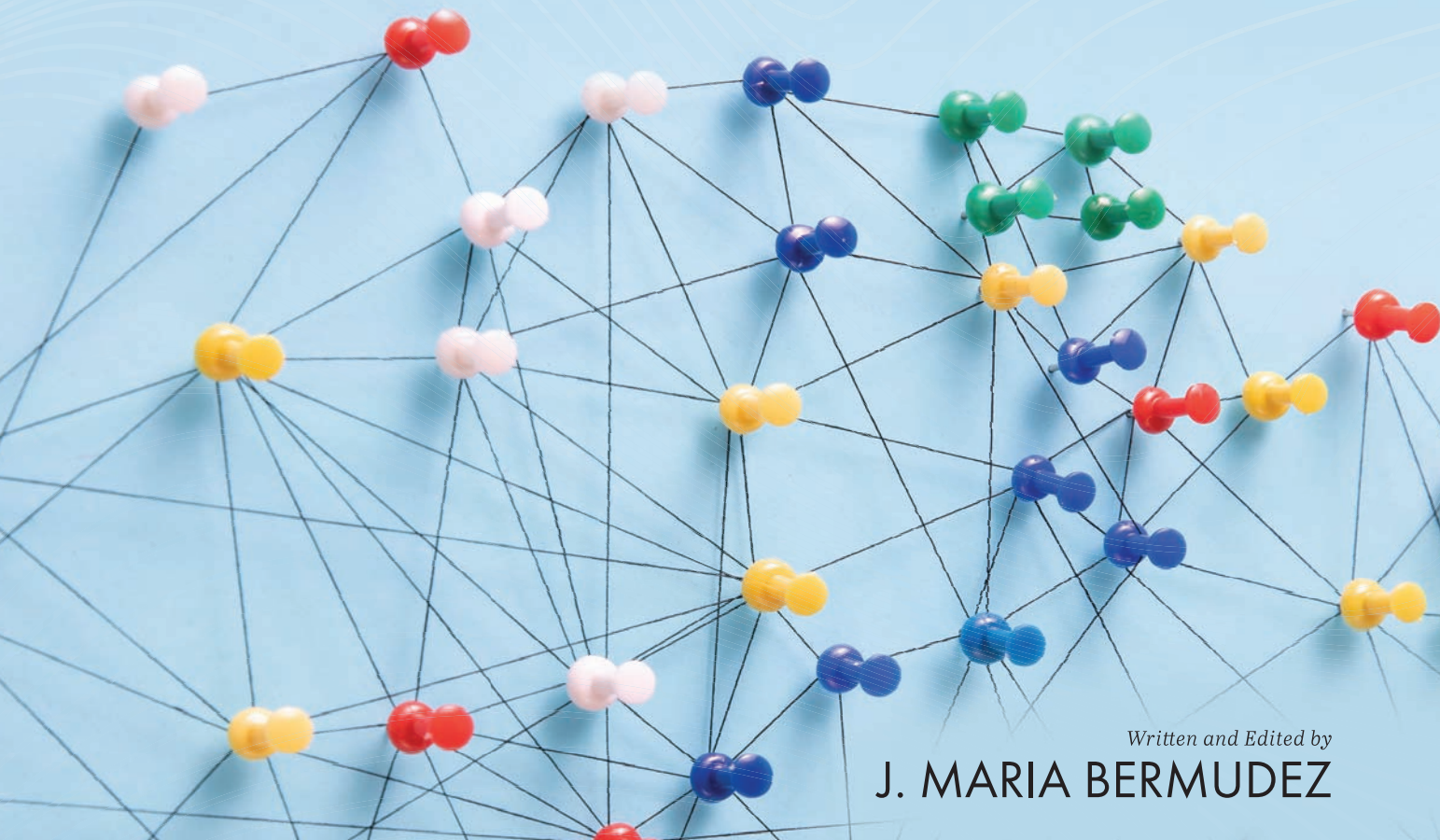


FIRST EDITION

INTERSECTIONALITY & CONTEXT ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

Readings for Human Development



Written and Edited by

J. MARIA BERMUDEZ



cognella® | Series on Families and Social Justice

COGNELLA SERIES ON FAMILIES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Intersectionality and Context Across the Lifespan

Readings for Human Development

FIRST EDITION

Written and Edited by J. Maria Bermudez

Series Edited by Katherine R. Allen



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“

This book is dedicated to my daughters, Lucia, Aida, and Giana, who give me hope for a better future

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Foreword

Katherine R. Allen, Virginia Tech

In this timely and relevant book, *Intersectionality and Context across the Lifespan: Readings for Human Development*, Maria Bermudez has created an educational resource that is intellectually challenging, globally informed, and personally engaging. Scrolling down the table of contents, the teacher in me is immediately excited by the diverse and comprehensive approach to lifespan human development within the context of family and society. The student in me is equally delighted to find that I am offered such compelling and wide-ranging readings with which to approach the diversity of human experience in all of its complexity. Finally! A lifespan human development book that upsets the “one size fits all” approach to how individuals live, love, parent, partner, and die in the family context—an arena that has private, public, and political dimensions. Each chapter presents critical readings about a variety of individual and family developmental issues across the lifespan, from infancy to old age. In each of the 12 chapters, Maria guides and inspires the reader by offering definitions and interpretations of the theoretical concepts that infuse this book as well as summaries of each of the readings. Given her commitment to helping students make life-changing connections with the ideas that inform their lives and spur them to action for justice in personal and social relations, Maria also provides challenging reflexive questions that ask students to think deeply about their own lived experiences with identity, intersectionality, privilege, and oppression. The materials are all here for a comprehensive resource that students and teachers will want to read and engage.

This book reveals the heart, mind, and soul of the teacher who is truly invested in transformative educational practice. From my earliest acquaintance with Maria when she was a graduate teaching assistant and I was her teaching supervisor in the late 1990s at Virginia Tech to her current position as a professor at the University of Georgia, I have witnessed in Maria a champion for global, feminist, and intersectional scholarship. Maria’s approach to research and teaching resonates with those of us who have experienced marginalization. When interacting with Maria, we feel seen, listened to, and heard. The reflexive practice that Maria so effectively utilizes in this book is intimately tied to her expertise as a therapist and scholar. In this book, Maria raises the hard questions that wise teachers know students have grappled with and experienced. She provides us a book that is a gift to education as the practice of transformation, demonstrating how passionate scholarship is powerful, productive, and healing.



Preface

Upon over a decade of teaching a course on human development across the lifespan, I began to see the growing need to understand development beyond what was being presented in standard texts. While most texts on human development offer perspectives on diversity, it is often not possible for those texts to offer intersectional and contextual perspectives in greater depth. *Intersectionality and Context Across the Lifespan: Readings for Human Development* was created to supplement readings that are often missing from texts focusing on biopsychosocial perspectives. For me, this process was as challenging as it was meaningful.

Given the endless amount of research studies focused on diversity issues, it is indeed overwhelming to create a text focused on diversity. My challenge was to offer critical multiple perspectives, knowing that it is impossible for any given text to be exhaustive in its scope. In the end, my hope is that this anthology would help students and faculty in various ways. First, I hope that the reader will gain the ability to acknowledge and appreciate the complexity of diversity across and within cultures. Second, I hope the reader will critique and evaluate mainstream human development texts and challenge norms and assumptions that are presented as universal. Third, it is my aim that this book will help the reader examine the ways in which systems of privilege, power, and oppression shape developmental trajectories, specifically attending to nuances of those who are marginalized in society and those who are granted various unearned privileges. Lastly, I hope each person reading this text will be more attuned to the ways in which their own identities will remain constant and/or change across varying social contexts, places, and stages of life.

Theoretical Framework

Although I am influenced by many theories, the ones that guide this body of work mostly fall under critical social theories. These critical theories (e.g., social constructionism, intersectional and transnational feminism, standpoint theory, queer theory, critical race theory, decolonizing frameworks, and critical geography) serve as lenses to interpret and construct the meaning of theories related to human development across the lifespan. Critical theories serve to politicize social problems (e.g., poverty, sexism, heterosexism, etc.) by situating them in a historical context with the goal of liberating people from dehumanizing circumstances. The primary means of achieving this goal is through critiquing and changing dominant and oppressive societal structures. For example, early activists worked to politically mobilize women, racial, ethnic, and sexual minorities to gain the right to vote, own land, obtain formal education, gain access to reproductive health, and to legally marry. Such movements have ushered in changes in family and societal systems, shaping developmental trajectories (e.g., women working outside of the home, educational achievement, interracial and same-sex marriage, etc.).

Additionally, I am also informed by decades of research on resilience and cumulative disadvantage theory to help examine factors leading to social positions of privilege and oppression. For example, factors such as our social and cultural capital, race, skin tone, religion, nationality, political affiliation, immigration status, ability status, gender, age, culture, and sexual orientation all affect our lived experience at every age and life stage. Together, these factors work together to lead to cumulative access to advantages and opportunities; however, they can also lead to disadvantages and adversity over time. In essence, it is imperative that we continuously strive to examine how our theoretical frameworks, scientific knowledge, and contextual lives intersect to inform our understanding of the human experience.

Positionality Statement

Consistent with feminist-informed scholarship, I offer my positionality statement to situate myself as a scholar and writer in terms of my own intersectionality, context, and life stage. I believe that ignoring systemic oppression adversely affects individuals, families, and societies. Central to this framework is the notion that developmental milestones, interpersonal relationships, and notions of healthy and functional family forms cannot be conceptualized apart from historical and sociocultural contexts.

I am a middle-aged, able-bodied, heterosexual Latina woman who is a practicing Catholic. I am a professor of human development and family science and marriage and family therapy. For over twenty-five years I have taught undergraduate courses on human development across the lifespan, diversity and social justice, human sexuality, family dynamics, and women's studies, among other graduate-level courses. I am passionate about helping students gain an advanced appreciation of diversity, while also valuing their own cultures. I strive to help them examine and appreciate their own complexities as individuals who are also embedded in families and social systems. Additionally, because we also evolve as scholars, researchers, and teachers, it is important that I situate myself within the context of my life and this book. This is how I would describe myself at this point in time.

I have many brothers and sisters, thanks to my father, but I am the youngest of six children from both parents. My ancestors immigrated to Honduras from Austria/Hungary and the US and Spain and we were there for three generations before immigrating to the United States. I was only two years old, so by all accounts, I do not “look nor sound like an immigrant.” I always appreciated being bicultural and I am proud of my *Latinidad* (my Latina culture and identity). At the same time, I was always reminded that I was a *gringa* (an American) who had blue eyes and White privilege. Like those who identify as biracial, bisexual, and bicultural, I too, experienced what it was like to live my life from multiple cultural lenses. Growing up, my mother and I traveled to Honduras to see my extended family and I developed an appreciation of culture, a deeper perspective on poverty, social class, and gender formation. My mother, Judith Perez, was born in 1930 who was an accountant by day and sewed clothing for her children by night. She was a feminist, the primary provider for her six children, and took care of many others she considered hers too.

She was married to my father, Rene Perez, who was born in 1916 and a skilled auto mechanic. He was a kind man, but maintained many of the *machista* roles prescribed by Honduran society. My mother was a competent and independent woman who anchored my family in this foreign land. I am the first in my family to graduate college and the only one to have an advanced degree. I owe much of my success to my amazing and loving family who have given me a solid foundation in my life and continuous support in all that I do. I am also a proud mother of three and a wife to a loving husband who is an incredible and devoted father to his three children.

Given the influence of my family and many others who served as teachers, mentors, colleagues, and friends, I have always been a collectivistic and systemic thinker and collaborative person. My research and writing focus on feminist-informed teaching, research and clinical practice, specifically in studying the risk and resilience among immigrant Latinx families. I acknowledge that due to many aspects of my identity that I hold contradictions that may be irreconcilable (e.g., being feminist and Catholic); however, despite these challenges, my aim is to be a lifelong learner and never fully arrive at “knowing” or being an expert. Cultural humility is especially necessary for understanding everything pertaining to diversity, the practice of couple and family therapy, and social science. My hope is that anyone who reads this text will maintain an open reflexive stance and envision what is possible in a compassionate and socially just society.



Acknowledgments

I would like to share my sincere appreciation and gratitude for my former undergraduate research assistants, Lauren Lauterbach, Ashton Quattlebaum, and Alexandra (Alex) Sausa, who delved into the Cognella University Readers library and reviewed hundreds of diversity-related readings to help select which readings to include in this text. Alex Sausa was especially instrumental in the development of this book. I sincerely appreciate her focused commitment to the project. She offered invaluable feedback regarding the reading choices. Alex read and summarized each one, edited the writing, and offered invaluable insights for engaging college students with this body of work. All three research assistants conducted a critically informed content analysis of the readings and examined them from intersectional and contextual perspectives across the lifespan. I would like to thank and acknowledge the University of Georgia's Center for Undergraduate Research Opportunities (CURO) for generously supporting these students in their participation in this project.

I am also indebted to my former doctoral student, Dr. Joshua Boe, recent graduate of the Department of Human Development and Family Science and the Marriage and Family Therapy Program at UGA. I sincerely appreciate their thoughtful contributions to this body of work.

I would also like to thank Dr. Katherine Allen, for writing such a beautiful foreword. Dr. Allen embodies what it means to live life as a passionate, feminist informed teacher, mentor, researcher, scholar, and activist. I continue to seek her guidance!

Thank you also to my beautiful family and lifelong friends for continuously being a source of love and support and for helping me live each stage of my life to the fullest. I love each one of you deeply and with all my heart! To my husband Romulo “Ronnie” Rama, thank you for your love and unwavering support in all that I do. It is a gift being your life partner and being on this journey together. To our amazing children Lucia, Aida, Giana, Meg, Nico, Eric, Leah, and Mandy—we cannot love you more than we do and we are so grateful for what your presence means in our lives.

Last but not least, I would like to thank and acknowledge my students and colleagues at the University of Georgia for continuing to walk alongside me on this long hard road toward social justice ... lifting as we climb.

Introduction

Overview of Intersectionality, Context, and Lifespan

Human development is complex, and even with over a century of sociobiological science, there are still many unanswered questions. For example, what factors contribute to positive or negative outcomes for individuals, families, and communities? What is “optimal development,” and how do people achieve it? Are the assumptions we make about gender, race, sexuality, and class the same worldwide? These questions require us to carefully examine how context and culture inform, guide, and shape development. For decades, we have studied how scholars like Bronfenbrenner and Vygotsky examined the importance of context and culture. Although family scholars consider the influence of context and culture, most textbooks on human development focus predominantly on biopsychosocial perspectives and less on issues related to culture and diversity. By contextualizing human development, we gain alternative standpoints through which we can understand, teach, and research development. It is my hope that by reading this book, students studying human development across the lifespan can gain a greater awareness and appreciation of the complexity of development as we age. Further, I hope students can resist relying on ethnocentric values, beliefs, and assumptions to guide their ideas about what is normative human development.

Throughout this text, my aim is to present diverse perspectives across each life stage. Although it is not possible to represent all cultures, groups of people, voices, worldviews, or definitions, the selected readings offer a small window into global and contextual perspectives from pregnancy to old age. I intentionally chose readings that focus on populations that are often underrepresented in lifespan textbooks. The text offers a glimpse of how issues related to gender, ability status, social class, race, culture, sexual orientation, nationality, and others are central to broadening our lens and lessening our impulse to primarily focus on cultures represented in the United States of America.

The Structure of this Anthology

There are a total of twelve chapters and 33 readings in this anthology. Within these chapters, I focus on the following developmental stages: 1) pregnancy and childbirth, 2) infancy and toddler years, 3) early childhood, 4) middle childhood, 5) adolescence, 6) emerging and young adulthood, 7) middle adulthood, 8) late adulthood, and 9) end of life and bereavement. The readings are

from scholarly sources in peer-reviewed scientific journals, books, and magazines across many disciplines found in the Cognella library. Each chapter offers a brief overview of the life stage from intersectional and contextual perspectives, an introduction to the readings, and reflexive questions. These questions serve as prompts for reflection/process papers and class discussion to encourage students to examine their own beliefs, values, norms, and aspects of their identities across the various stages and contexts of their lives.

Situating Context and Intersectionality across the Lifespan

Before delving into the readings for each chapter, I present a brief introduction of context, intersectionality, and human development across the lifespan. I situate this writing in social constructionist and intersectional and transnational feminist ideas and practices that encourage family scholars, students, and practitioners to question and challenge ethnocentric and androcentric norms and representations of family and development across the lifespan (Lloyd, Few, & Allen, 2009).

Context

Societal context can be described as a dynamic interaction of social systems in which we situate our experiences (McDowell, Knudson-Martin, & Bermudez, 2018). Our context is the space and place in which we live our lives. Some spaces and contexts will pave the road for privilege and well-being, while others will set a course of disadvantage, creating barriers to optimal growth and well-being. It is important to note that many children and adults may occupy similar spatial settings, such as in homes, schools, hospitals, workplaces, courtrooms, and neighborhoods, but will receive differential treatment and have different experiences and outcomes based on how their multiple identities intersect to create their realities. For example, in the United States, we aspire to treat children of all genders and races fairly, to provide them with the same education, and to grant them equal access to safe environments and experiences that enable positive identity development and interpersonal relationships. The reality is that many children in the United States and many parts of the world experience gross inequities and barriers due to their social location: race, gender, social class, and physical abilities and differences. The myth of meritocracy would have us believe that we all have equal access to opportunities and resources (McNamee & Miller, 2004), but examples such as the school-to-prison pipeline in the United States and forbidding girls to attend school in Pakistan reminds us otherwise.

Additionally, I adopt McDowell, Knudson-Martin, and Bermudez's (2018) definition of culture as situated in context. Culture refers to "beliefs, values and traditions, ways of being and doing, collective meaning-making, shared knowledge and attitudes, and conceptual frameworks for understanding the universe including spirituality and religion" (p. 14). From this perspective, culture is a shared, socially constructed system of meaning-making and knowledge. Culture is fluid and shifts to adjust to changing circumstances. For example, lesbian and gay people were barred from marriage in many places in the United States until 2015, when the US Supreme Court ruled it a constitutional right. This shift occurred in large part due to political activism and cultural changes in the visibility and acceptance of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people.

The very act of legalizing same-sex marriage is changing our culture in the United States as well as changing the culture of marriage and family. This change is beginning to loosen the grip of the mythical norm (Lorde, 2007) and dominant ideology of the standard North American family (SNAF) (Smith, 1993). Despite these gains toward marriage equality, many LGB and other queer-identified individuals continue to experience stigma, discrimination, fear, and relentless targeting for abuse and violence worldwide. Homophobia and transphobia persists, especially among LGBTQ+ people of color.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is an important analytical tool from which to understand human development. Long before its coining, intersectionality was used by Black feminist scholars as a tool for analyzing the ways in which identity and systems of oppression are inextricably linked (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Our identities are complex, and no one has a singular way of describing or experiencing their identity. Although there are some aspects of our identity that may be more punctuated than others (i.e., woman, African American, hearing impaired), they are most salient when those aspects of our identities are “othered,” subordinated, or targeted with the intent to dehumanize or oppress (Tatum, 1997). The issues of gender, social class, race, culture, sexual orientation, and nationality, among others, co-exist and co-influence one another to create unique matrices that benefit and harm us uniquely depending on varying contexts (Collins & Bilge, 2018; Creswell, 1989). According to Collins and Bilge (2016), intersectionality is situated in the following essential core elements: 1) social inequality, 2) power, 3) relationality, 4) social context, 5) complexity, and 6) social justice. They contend that power, for example, is mutually constructed by social identities that intersect. Given that there are no pure “isms,” social identities gain meaning when they are in relation to one another. This interlocking system relates to the idea of relationality. Relationality rejects a binary understanding of either/or (i.e., female and male) and examines the both/and of social identities. Complexity arises from the interconnection among social inequality, power, relationality, and social context. To help illustrate this point, Crenshaw (1989) used the metaphor of a traffic intersection to highlight the complexities of identities that intersect to form our sense of self, challenging our assumptions of holding separate identities. In essence, no single part of our identity stands alone. For example, a transgender immigrant Latina’s experience is the culmination of the unique intersection of her identities and cannot be *truly* understood by parsing out those identities and representing self in a fragmented way (Lorde, 2007). Additionally, her identity will also continue to evolve as she engages in multiple contexts and spaces as she ages.

Although intersectionality as a concept seems intuitive, it is complex from a theoretical and research perspective. Currently, a debate exists on whether intersectionality is a theory, paradigm, or method (Few-Demo, 2014). Collins and Bilge (2016) state that intersectionality has two organizing features: critical inquiry (research) and critical praxis (consciousness into action). As a framework and analytical tool, intersectionality helps us understand the complexity of human experience. Intersectionality as a theory explains identity in these ways: 1) they are not discrete but complex, which may cause conflict among identities (Crenshaw, 1993; Yuval-Davis, 2006);

2) they are grounded in ideologies (Crenshaw, 1993); 3) they are historically and contextually grounded (Crenshaw, 1993); and 4) although identities are embodied by individuals, they operate in complex intersecting power structures (Greenwood, 2008). In this vein, Few-Demo (2014) urges researchers to consider how people are situated by their social locations and how they negotiate systems of privilege and oppression and change across the lifespan.

As a methodology, intersectionality is currently underdeveloped (Hancock, 2007; Nash, 2008). This challenge of developing it as a methodology is in part due to the complexity of including multiple dimensions and categories of analysis (McCall, 2005). Hillsburg (2013) contends that while it is important to account for categories, they should not be relied upon too heavily to guide research. An intersectional methodology requires researchers to attend cautiously and critically to categories (i.e., race, class, gender) while resisting the idea that they are “natural” and hierarchical. An over-reliance on categories within the social sciences is problematic in that it essentializes people without taking into account oppression or power that cannot be easily understood at the individual level (Few-Demo, 2014; Hillsburg, 2013). Such a perspective requires us to study families and human development more comprehensively and to intervene at multiple levels of systems (i.e., individual/family, local, state, and federal) (Allen, Lloyd, & A. L. Few, 2009; Walker, 2009). It also requires us to understand that systems of power are never neutral, nor do they remain stagnant.

Lastly, scholars such as Collins and Bilge (2016) urge us to identify ways to use intersectionality as a form of critical praxis (consciousness in action). They contend that “for practitioners and activists, intersectionality is not simply a heuristic for intellectual inquiry, but it is also an important analytical strategy for doing social justice work ... and that both scholarship and practice are intimately linked and mutually inform each other” (p. 42). Additionally, removing intersectionality from its social justice roots and neglecting to give credit to Black feminist scholars for their development of this work negates important foundational tenets and serves to culturally appropriate this term and its use.

Human Development across the Lifespan

Consistent with most human development texts, the scholarly work presented here is informed by biopsychosocial perspectives. Aspects of human development, such as biological processes, genetics, epigenetics, cognitive and psychological processes, and interpersonal and social contexts, all inform and shape the science examining who we are and how we develop over time. Life-stage theories were important to the scientific inquiry of human development over time. Researchers such as Freud, Piaget, Kohlberg, Erikson, Bowlby, and Vygotsky continue to be influential today; however, the concept of universal life stages is controversial. Although these theories are still important to the study of human development, toward the end of the 20th century, theorists began questioning the validity of stage theories. Arnett (2016) contends that there should be a new approach focused on indigenous life-stage concepts, which he defines as stemming from local knowledge that comes from the course of cultural life. He offers a diverse range of life concepts that spans history and cultures while still using a biological framework for growth, maturity,

and aging. Arnett contends that it is better to think of master narratives instead of life stages so as to better understand cultural nuances in how people understand development across the lifespan. It is also important to study the ways in which these master narratives function for individual identity development and across cultures.

In sum, it is necessary to study people within their sociocultural contexts. An understanding of context is crucial for deepening our awareness of how our lived experiences, overall health and well-being, and opportunities are shaped by factors such as our gender, race, abilities, financial resources, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and geography, among many others. These factors, alone and as they intersect, have a profound effect on how our identities are shaped, valued, and diminish over our lifetime. Consequently, given that there are major differences in the ways we are shaped by our social location, it is vital to have an international global perspective when studying human development across the lifespan. Not having a broader sociocultural perspective puts us at risk of reifying ethnocentric biases and colonizing agendas.

Terms Related to Identity, Privilege, and Oppression

Diversity-related concepts and terms are constantly changing, evolving, and shifting. Given how quickly these terms are changing, it is important for the readers of this text to consider the timing and context in which it is being written. These terms and concepts are highly contested, currently evolving, and will likely develop new meanings over time. Despite the risk of these terms and ideas being quickly outdated, for the goal of having common ground, I offer a table with a list of terms used to describe identity (i.e., age, gender, race, sexual orientation, etc.), specific forms of oppression (i.e., racism, sexism, classism, etc.) and social forces that can negatively affect a person's sense of self (i.e., heteronormativity, transgender oppression, white supremacy, etc.). Although this is not an exhaustive list, I hope that it invites you to add what is missing and critique what is there.

My hope is that the list of terms will help the reader reflect on how social forces affect our sense of identity within positions of privilege and oppression. For example, it is well known that children and teens are more vulnerable to the social forces that maintain forms of prejudice and oppression (Tatum, 1997). A child or teenager might have gained a strong, positive ethnic and racial identity at home, which is central to mental health and academic success (Wakefield & Hudley, 2007), but larger social forces of institutional racism and white privilege work together to create and maintain internalized racism. This process is similar to being a girl and receiving affirming and encouraging experiences at home, only to get older and experience the effects of external and internalized sexism and/ misogyny in education, work, politics, and society at large. As always, it is imperative that one understands how these aspects of identity intersect to inform our lived experiences (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Lorde, 2007; 1984) and that one is cognizant of sensitive periods of development in which identity is shaped by multiple forces (Tatum, 1997).

TABLE 1.1 Identity-Based Oppression and the Social Forces That Maintain Them

Identity	Type of Oppression	Social Forces
Gender	sexism, misogyny, transphobia	patriarchy, male privilege, cisgender privilege
Sexual Orientation	homophobia	heteronormativity, religion, cultural values, patriarchy
Race	structural, systemic, and individualized racism, colorism	White supremacy, White privilege, forced assimilation, segregation, Anglo-Eurocentrism, White flight, colonization, color blindness, legacy of slavery
Ethnicity	Eurocentrism, racism	White supremacy, White privilege, color blindness
Socioeconomic Class (SES)	classism	myth of meritocracy, capitalism, poverty, class segregation, materialism, cumulative advantage and disadvantage
Ability	ableism	capitalism, normativity, perfectionism, intolerance and pathologizing of difference
Age	ageism, adultism	youth-oriented society, adult-centered norms, anti-aging norms, anti-aging messages and industries
Appearance	lookism, sizeism	pretty privilege, performances of toxic and hyper-masculinity and femininity, fat phobia, perfectionism, medical and beauty industry
Nationality	xenophobia, White nationalism, ethnocentrism	colonization, structural racism, imperialism, institutional and systemic racism, White nationalism, Eurocentrism, immigration policies
Religion	Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-atheist, anti-indigenous	Christian-centric, colonialism, theocratic beliefs, White nationalism
Sex/Intersex	cisgender bias, transphobia, cissexism, cisgenderism	patriarchy, misogyny, sexual dualism, cishnormativity, heteronormativity, male privilege, medical industry (“corrective” surgeries)

Conclusion

Overall, my aim for this book is to curate a body of work that expands students’ abilities to examine human development from intersectional and cross-cultural perspectives, as well as to gain a greater appreciation of the complexities of how we develop across the lifespan. As you read the introduction and selected readings for each chapter, I invite you to engage in a self-reflexive

stance and think about your own social location, intersectionality identity, and worldviews, and consider the factors that shaped them and will continue to affect them throughout each stage of your life.

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Defining Self Across Time and Place

Introduction

Simply stated, identity encompasses beliefs, values, memories, relationships, and experiences that shape and define who we are as individuals. Although many scholars contend that our temperaments and personalities remain relatively constant across our lifetimes (Harris, Brett, Johnson, & Deary, 2016), identity may be more fluid (Onorato & Turner, 2004), often being shaped by, and adapting to, endless multiple contexts throughout our lifetime. For example, a woman at midlife might identify with certain roles such as mother, partner, aunt, professional, etc., but may not have had those aspects of her identity in her younger years. Those aspects of her identity developed over time. Not only do experiences shape who we are, but our contexts clearly have an effect in shaping our sense of self, other's perceptions of us, and how we continue to evolve over time. Identity often can be carefully examined by the use of "I am" statements. For example, I am an immigrant Latina woman, a U.S. citizen, highly educated with White privilege, Catholic, heterosexual, cisgender, able-bodied, middle-class, professor, family therapist, middle-aged, mother, who has divorced and remarried. Some aspects of my identity have evolved; others have remained constant. Some aspects I was born with (e.g., sex, skin color), while others were shaped by my context and life stage (e.g., professor, family therapist, mother, immigrant status, social class, age).

According to social identity theory and identity theory, the concept of self is a reflexive process in which one can see self as an object and can categorize, classify, or name one's self in certain ways, especially as we relate to self in relation to other social categories or classifications (Stets & Burke, 2000). This process is called *self-categorization* in social identity theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, and Wetherell, 1987) and *identification* in identity theory (McCall, George, & Simmons, 1978). It is believed that one's identity is formed through the process of reflexivity, self-categorization and/or identification. Nevertheless, the concept of identity has been challenged (Hall & du Gay, 1996). Hall and du Gay contend that identities, which have had a stabilizing force, no longer have the same stronghold, and new identities are altering our understanding of a "unified subject." What can be perceived as an identity crisis by some can be thought of as a broader process of change that is disrupting the central structures and processes. As certain parts of our identities are subjugated and marginalized by society (e.g., gay, African American, low socioeconomic status/SES), others reflect the values and privileges of the dominant group

(e.g., male, Christian, U.S.-born citizen, able-bodied, financially secure). It is the power ascribed to our intersectionality that most often shapes and defines who we are (Collins & Bilge, 2019). In this spirit, the following readings were selected to showcase scholarship that introduces topics related to identity, gender, place, race, and social class.

Summary of Readings

It was indeed a challenge to select readings fitting for this chapter. There are countless readings that could help guide our understanding of what shapes our identities and development over time. The following readings were chosen with the hopes that they would help situate you, the reader, in ways to better engage in self-reflexivity.

In Beverly Tatum's classic essay "**The Complexity of Identity: 'Who Am I?'**" (1997), she asks us to examine the ways in which aspects of our identity align with dominant groups and ideologies in our society (those that hold the most power, privilege, and prestige) and subordinate groups within our society (those that are the most subjugated, disempowered, ignored, targeted, and marginalized). She invites us to examine which aspects of our identities hold the most or least amount of influence and how they intersect to shape who we are across time and diverse contexts. This framework has been central to my work as a professor and diversity scholar.

In the reading "**Ideology, Myth, and Magic: Femininity, Masculinity, and 'Gender Roles'**" (2014), Allan Johnson explores how gender roles perpetuate—even normalize—patriarchal oppression and male privilege. Johnson stresses the patriarchal obsession with gender, sex, and rigid ideas of "masculine" and "feminine" is not biologically ingrained, but rather societally conditioned, especially by the language we use. Stereotypes about masculinity and femininity are inherently male-centric and place girls and women in subordinate social positions. Worldwide, patriarchal concepts of gender make men the standard and cast women in the role of "other," perpetuating the idea that women are inherently less than men. Moreover, by rigidly contrasting what traits are "feminine" and "masculine" and defining women and men as polar opposites, we deny both women and men the opportunity to be well-rounded, capable, strong, and empathetic human beings.

In the reading "**Place Matters Even More than We Thought: New Insights on the Persistence of Racial Inequality**" (2014), Margery Austin Turner helps us understand the ways in which our different experiences of place affect our opportunities in life. Where we live greatly affects the advantages and disadvantages we experience, receive, and will be affected by throughout our lives. She contends that at the core, it is racial and economic segregation that engenders racial inequality. The effects of structural disadvantages strongly shape access to resources and opportunities. In the United States, race and place are conflated, meaning that it is hard to separate the two. This conflation is primarily due to the effects of structural and systemic racism (Tourse, Hamilton-Mason, & Wewiorski, 2018). In the societal context of racism, both race and place matter and cannot be disentangled from the other. However, in terms of educational and work opportunities, perhaps place (where we were raised and lived) is a stronger indicator of access to resources, which has lifelong consequences for our health and our relational and material lives.

In the final reading, “**The American Dream of Meritocracy**” (2008), Heather Beth Johnson dissects the fundamental facets of the American Dream and how it influences American perceptions and psychology. The American Dream is ultimately defined as the way Americans understand upward mobility. It is a concept that rests on the idea that America is a meritocracy that grants equal opportunity—with liberty and justice for all. Following this logic, any American can achieve their aspirations with hard work and determination. Consequently, status is something that is earned by the individual, as evidenced by the phrase “self-made man.” By asserting that the individual earns status due to hard work and effort, the American Dream justifies the inequality of social positions. However, despite the American belief in meritocracy, in actuality, inherited wealth is a significant critical advantage passed on from generation to generation. Furthermore, this advantage is often unearned by the parents and their children. This is why scholars such as McNamee and Miller (2004) have referred to the *myth of meritocracy*, especially noting how race, gender, and social class intersect to create disparity and uneven playing fields from the start. Despite the reality of unequally distributed privilege, studies illustrate that the idea of the American Dream is deeply entrenched in the American psyche.

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