



part two

Social Influence

So far we have considered mostly “within-the-skin” phenomena—how we think about one another. Now we consider “between skins” happenings—how we influence and relate to one another. In Chapters 5 through 8 we therefore probe social psychology’s central concern: the powers of social influence.

What are these unseen social forces that push and pull us? How powerful are they? Research on social influence helps illuminate the invisible strings by which our social worlds move us about. This unit reveals these subtle powers, especially the cultural sources of attitudes and behavior (Chapter 5), the forces of social conformity (Chapter 6), the principles of persuasion (Chapter 7), the consequences of participation in groups (Chapter 8), and how all these influences operate together in everyday situations.

Seeing these influences, we may better understand why people feel and act as they do. And we may ourselves become less vulnerable to unwanted manipulation and more adept at pulling our own strings.





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Human nature and cultural diversity

- Evolution and behavior
- Culture and behavior
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Evolution and gender: Doing what comes naturally?

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Personal Postscript: Should we view ourselves as products or architects of our social worlds?

chapter 5

Genes, Culture, and Gender

Approaching earth from light-years away, alien scientists assigned to study the species *Homo sapiens* feel their excitement rising. Their plan: to observe two randomly sampled humans. Their first subject, Peter, is a verbally combative Los Angeles trial lawyer who grew up in Nashville but moved west seeking the “California lifestyle.” After an affair and a divorce, Peter is enjoying a second marriage, and he wishes he had more time to spend with his two children. Friends describe him as an independent thinker who is self-confident, competitive, and somewhat domineering.

Their second subject, Tomoko, lives with her husband and daughter in a rural Japanese village, a walk from the homes of both their parents. Tomoko prides herself on being a good daughter, loyal wife, and protective mother. Friends describe her as kind, gentle, respectful, sensitive, and supportive of her extended family.

From their small sample of two people of differing genders and cultures, what might our alien scientists conclude about human nature? Would they wonder whether both are actually of the same species? Or would they be struck by deeper similarities beneath the surface differences?

The questions faced by our alien scientists are those faced by today's earth-bound scientists: How do we humans differ? How are we alike? These questions are central to a world where social diversity has become, as historian Arthur Schlesinger (1991) said, "the explosive problem of our times." In a world ripped apart by ethnic, cultural, and gender differences, can we learn to accept our diversity, value our cultural identities, *and* recognize the extent of our human kinship? I believe we can. To see why, let's consider the evolutionary and cultural roots of our humanity and note how each might help us understand gender similarities and differences.

Human nature and cultural diversity

In viewing human similarities and differences, two perspectives dominate current thinking: an evolutionary perspective, emphasizing human kinship, and a cultural perspective, emphasizing human diversity. Nearly everyone agrees that we need both: Our genes design an adaptive human brain—a hard drive that receives the culture's software.

In many important ways, Peter and Tomoko are more alike than different. As members of one great family with common ancestors, they share not only a common biology but common behavior tendencies. Each perceives the world, feels thirst, and develops language through identical mechanisms. Peter and Tomoko both prefer sweet tastes to sour and divide the visual spectrum into similar colors. They and their kin across the globe all know how to read one another's frowns and smiles.

Peter and Tomoko—and humans everywhere—are intensely social creatures. They join groups, conform, and recognize distinctions of social status. They return favors, punish offenses, and grieve a child's death. As children, beginning at about 8 months of age, they displayed fear of strangers, and as adults they favor members of their own groups. Confronted by those with dissimilar attitudes or attributes, they react warily or negatively. Our alien scientists could drop in anywhere and find humans feasting and dancing, laughing and crying, singing and worshiping. Everywhere, humans prefer living with others—in families and communal groups—to living alone.

Such commonalities define our shared human nature. We're indeed all kin beneath the skin.

EVOLUTION AND BEHAVIOR

The universal behaviors that define human nature arise from our biological similarity. Some 100,000 to 200,000 years ago, most anthropologists believe, we humans were all Africans. Feeling the urge to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth," many of our ancestors moved out of Africa, displacing cousins such as Europe's Neanderthals. In adapting to their new environments, these early humans developed differences that, measured on anthropological scales, are relatively recent and superficial. Those who went far north of the equator, for example, evolved lighter skins capable of synthesizing vitamin D in less direct sunlight. Still, historically, we all are Africans.

To explain the traits of our species, and all species, the British naturalist Charles Darwin (1859) proposed an evolutionary process. As organisms vary, nature selects those best equipped to survive and reproduce in particular environments. Genes that produced traits which increased the odds of leaving descendants became more abundant. In the snowy Arctic environment, for example, polar bear genes programming a thick coat of camouflaging white fur have won the genetic competition and now predominate. This process of **natural selection**, long an organizing principle of biology, recently has become an important principle for psychology as well.

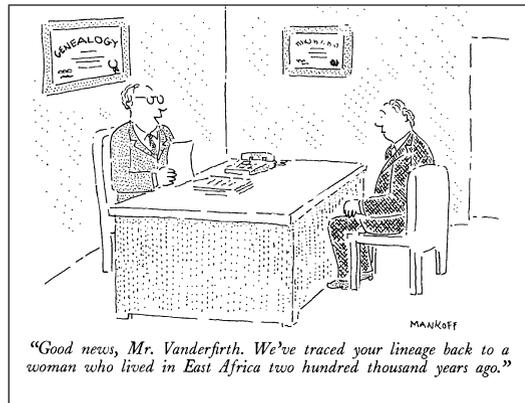
Evolutionary psychology studies how natural selection predisposes not just physical traits suited to particular contexts—polar bear coats, bats' sonar, human's color vision—but psychological traits and social behaviors that enhance the preservation and spread of one's genes. We humans are the way we are, say evolutionary psychologists, because among our ancestors' descendants, nature selected those who preferred nutritious, energy-providing foods rich in protein, sugar, and fat (and who disliked bitter, sour, often toxic tastes). Those who lacked such preferences were less likely to survive to contribute their genes to posterity. As mobile gene machines, we carry the legacy of our ancestors' adaptive preferences. We long for whatever helped them survive, reproduce, and nurture their offspring to survive and reproduce. Biologically speaking, one major purpose of life is to leave grandchildren.

The evolutionary perspective highlights our universal human nature. We not only maintain certain food preferences, we also share answers to social questions such as: Whom should I trust, and fear? Whom should I help? When, and with whom, should I mate? To whom should I defer, and whom may I control? Our emotional and behavioral answers to such questions are those that worked for our ancestors.

Because these social tasks are common to people everywhere, humans everywhere tend to agree on the answers. For example, all humans rank others by authority and status. And all have ideas about economic justice (Fiske, 1992). Evolutionary psychologists highlight these universal characteristics that have evolved through natural selection. Cultures, however, provide the specific rules for working out these elements of social life.

CULTURE AND BEHAVIOR

Perhaps our most important similarity, the hallmark of our species, is our capacity to learn and adapt. Evolution has prepared us to live creatively in a changing world and to adapt to environments from equatorial jungles to arctic



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natural selection

the evolutionary process by which nature selects traits that best enable organisms to survive and reproduce in particular environmental niches.

evolutionary psychology

the study of the evolution of behavior using principles of natural selection.

"Psychology will be based on a new foundation."

Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 1859

culture

the enduring behaviors, ideas, attitudes, and traditions shared by a large group of people and transmitted from one generation to the next.

icefields. Compared to bees, birds, and bulldogs, nature has us on a looser genetic leash. Ironically, therefore, our shared human biology enables our cultural diversity. It enables those in one **culture** to value promptness, welcome frankness, or accept premarital sex, while those in another culture do not (Figure 5–1). Whether we equate beauty with slimness or shapeliness depends on when and where we live. Whether we define social justice as equality (all receive the same) or as equity (those who produce more receive more) depends on whether Marxism or capitalism shapes our ideology. Whether we tend to be expressive or reserved, casual or formal, hinges partly on whether we have spent our lives in an African, a European, or an Asian culture.

Evolutionary psychology incorporates environmental influences. We humans have been selected not only for big brains and biceps but also for social competence. We come prepared to learn language and to bond and cooperate with others in securing food, caring for young, and protecting ourselves. Nature therefore predisposes us to learn, whatever culture we are born into (Fiske & others, 1998). The cultural perspective, while acknowledging that all behavior requires our evolved genes, highlights human adaptability.

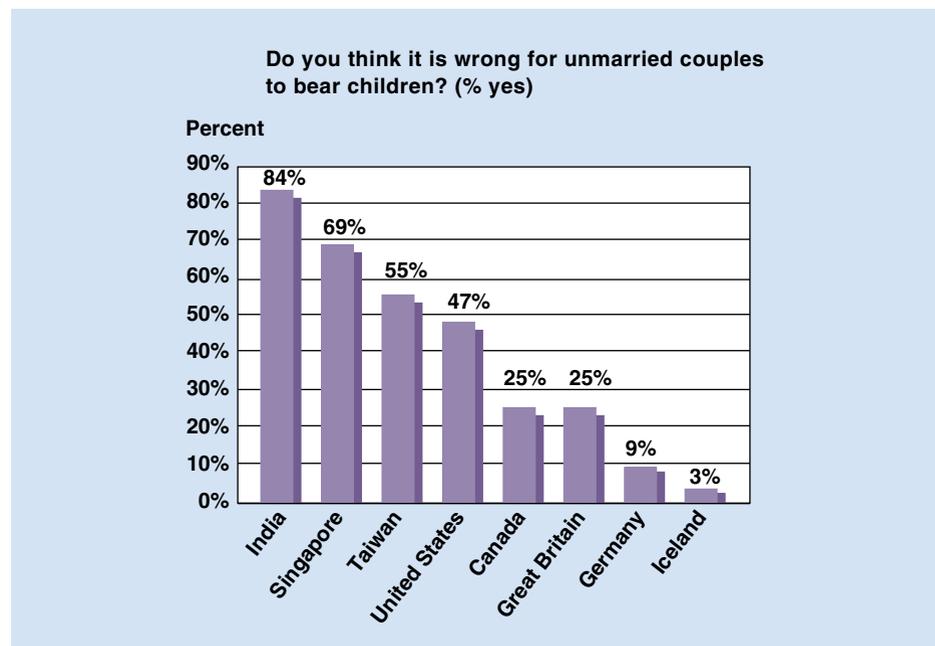
Cultural diversity

The diversity of our languages, customs, and expressive behaviors suggests that much of our behavior is socially programmed, not hardwired. The genetic leash is indeed long. As sociologist Ian Robertson (1987) has noted:

Americans eat oysters but not snails. The French eat snails but not locusts. The Zulus eat locusts but not fish. The Jews eat fish but not pork. The Hindus eat pork but not beef. The Russians eat beef but not snakes. The Chinese eat snakes but not people. The Jalé of New Guinea find people delicious. (p. 67)

figure 5–1**Culture matters.**

These responses to a 1997 World Gallup survey illustrate our cultural diversity.



Source: Gallup & Lindsay, 1999.

If we all lived as homogeneous ethnic groups in separate regions of the world, as some people still do, cultural diversity would be less relevant to our daily living. In Japan, where there are 126 million people, of whom 125 million are Japanese, internal cultural differences are minimal compared with those found in Los Angeles, where the public schools have coped with 82 different languages (Iyer, 1993).

Increasingly, cultural diversity surrounds us. More and more we live in a global village, connected to our fellow villagers by e-mail, jumbo jets, and international trade. Cultural diversity exists within nations, too. As Middle Easterners, Northern Irishers, and Kosovars know well, conflicts stemming from cultural differences are longstanding. Cultural conflicts have been described as “the AIDS of international politics lying dormant for years, then flaring up to destroy countries” (*Economist*, 1991).

Migration and refugee evacuations are mixing cultures more than ever. “East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,” wrote the nineteenth-century British author Rudyard Kipling. But today, East and West, and North and South, meet all the time. Italy is home to many Albanians, Germany to Turks, England to Pakistanis and West Indians, and the result is both friendship and hate crimes. For North Americans and Australians, too, one’s country is more and more a mingling of cultures. One in six Canadians is an immigrant. As we work, play, and live with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, it helps to understand how our cultures influence us and to appreciate important ways in which cultures differ. In a world divided by conflicts, genuine peace requires respect for differences and understanding of our deep similarities.

To realize the impact of our own culture, we need only confront another one. American males may feel uncomfortable when Middle Eastern heads of state greet the U.S. president with a kiss on the cheek. A German student, accustomed to speaking rarely to “Herr Professor,” considers it strange that at my institution most faculty office doors are open and students stop by freely. An Iranian student on her first visit to an American McDonald’s restaurant fumbles around in her paper bag looking for the eating utensils until she sees the other customers eating their french fries with, of all things, their hands. In many areas of the globe, your best manners and mine are serious breaches of etiquette. Foreigners visiting Japan often struggle to master the rules of the social game—when to take their shoes off, how to pour the tea, when to give and open gifts, how to act toward someone higher or lower in the social hierarchy.

As etiquette rules illustrate, all cultures have their accepted ideas about appropriate behavior. We often view



Cultures mixing. As these London schoolmates illustrate (one of Muslim heritage, the other Anglo Saxon), immigration and globalization are bringing once-distant cultures together.

norms

rules for accepted and expected behavior. Norms *prescribe* “proper” behavior. (In a different sense of the word, norms also *describe* what most others do—what is *normal*.)

these social expectations, or **norms**, as a negative force that imprisons people in a blind effort to perpetuate tradition. Norms do restrain and control us—so successfully and so subtly that we hardly sense their existence. Like fish in the ocean, each of us is so immersed in our cultures that we must leap out of them to understand their influence. “When we see other Dutch people behaving in what foreigners would call a Dutch way,” note Dutch psychologists Willem Koomen and Anton Dijker (1997), “we often do not realize that the behavior is typically Dutch.”

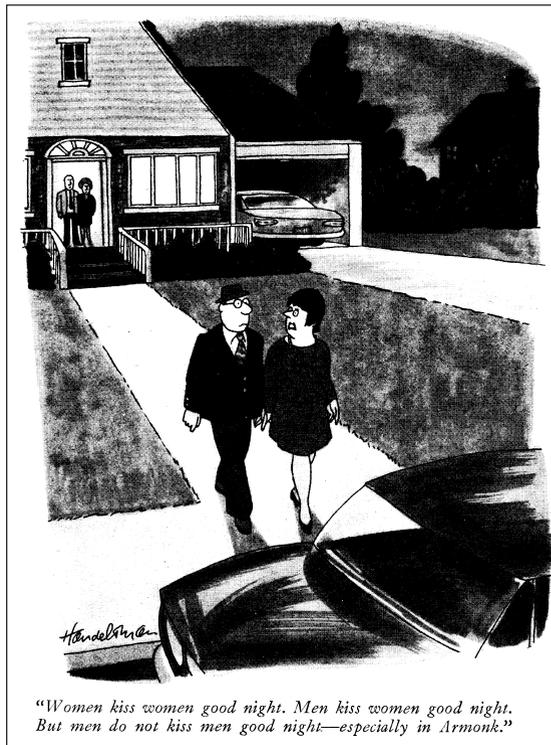
There is no better way to learn the norms of our culture than to visit another culture and see that its members do things *that* way, whereas we do them *this* way. When living in Scotland, I acknowledged to my children that, yes, Europeans eat meat with the fork facing down in the left hand. “But we Americans consider it good manners to cut the meat and then transfer the fork to the right hand. I admit it’s inefficient. But it’s the way *we* do it.”

Such norms may seem arbitrary and confining. Is it right that mothers are criticized more often than fathers for too little involvement at home and too much on the job (Deutsch & Saxon, 1998)? Just as a play moves smoothly when the actors know their lines, however, so social behavior occurs smoothly when people know what to expect. Norms grease the social machinery. In unfamiliar situations, when the norms may be unclear, we monitor others’ behavior and adjust our own accordingly. An individualist visiting a collectivist culture, or vice versa, may at first feel anxious and self-conscious (see Chapter 2). In familiar situations, our words and acts come effortlessly.

Cultures also vary in their norms for expressiveness and personal space. To someone from a relatively formal northern European culture, a person whose

roots are in an expressive Mediterranean culture may seem “warm, charming, inefficient, and time-wasting.” To the Mediterranean person, the northern European may seem “efficient, cold, and overconcerned with time” (Triandis, 1981). Latin American business executives who arrive late for a dinner engagement may be mystified by how obsessed their North American counterparts are with punctuality.

Personal space is a sort of portable bubble or buffer zone that we like to maintain between ourselves and others. As the situation changes, the bubble varies in size. With strangers we maintain a fairly large personal space, keeping a distance of 4 feet or more between us. On



Although some norms are universal, every culture has its own norms—rules for accepted and expected social behavior.

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uncrowded buses, or in restrooms or libraries, we protect our space and respect others' space. We let friends come closer, often within 2 or 3 feet.

Individuals differ: Some people prefer more personal space than others (Smith, 1981; Sommer, 1969; Stockdale, 1978). Groups differ, too: Adults maintain more distance than children. Men keep more distance from one another than do women. For reasons unknown, cultures near the equator prefer less space and more touching and hugging. Thus the British and Scandinavians prefer more distance than the French and Arabs; North Americans prefer more space than Latin Americans.

To see the effect of encroaching on another's personal space, play space invader. Stand or sit a foot or so from a friend and strike up a conversation. Does the person fidget, look away, back off, show other signs of discomfort? These are the signs of arousal noted by space-invading researchers (Altman & Vinsel, 1978).

Cultural similarity

Thanks to human adaptability, cultures differ. Yet beneath the veneer of cultural differences, cross-cultural psychologists see "an essential universality" (Lonner, 1980). As members of one species, the processes that underlie our differing behaviors are much the same everywhere.

Although norms vary by culture, humans do hold some norms in common. Best known is the taboo against incest: Parents are not to have sexual relations with their children, nor siblings with one another. Although the taboo apparently is violated more often than psychologists once believed, the norm is still universal. Every society disapproves of incest. Given the biological penalties for inbreeding, evolutionary psychologists can easily understand why people everywhere are predisposed against incest.

People everywhere also have some common norms for friendship. From studies conducted in Britain, Italy, Hong Kong, and Japan, Michael Argyle and Monika Henderson (1985) noted several cultural variations in the norms that define the role of friend (in Japan it's especially important not to embarrass a friend with public criticism). But there are also some apparently universal norms: Respect the friend's privacy; make eye contact while talking; don't divulge things said in confidence. These are among the rules of the friendship game. Break them and the game is over.

Roger Brown (1965, 1987; Kroger & Wood, 1992) noticed another universal norm. Everywhere—in 27 languages studied—people not only form status hierarchies, they also talk to higher-status people in the respectful way they often talk to strangers. And they talk to lower-status people in the more familiar, first-name way they speak to friends. Patients call their physician "Dr. So and So"; the physician often replies using the patients' first names. Students and professors typically address one another in a similarly nonmutual way.

Most languages have two forms of the English pronoun



personal space

the buffer zone we like to maintain around our bodies. Its size depends on our familiarity with whoever is near us.

"Some 30 inches from my nose, the frontier of my person goes."
W. H. Auden, 1907–1973

"I am confident that [if] modern psychology had developed in, let us say, India, the psychologists there would have discovered most of the principles discovered by the Westerners."

Cross-cultural psychologist John E. Williams (1993)

Norms—rules for accepted and expected behavior—vary by culture.

“you”: a respectful form and a familiar form (for example, *Sie* and *du* in German, *vous* and *tu* in French, *usted* and *tu* in Spanish). People typically use the familiar form with intimates and subordinates (not only with close friends and family members but also in speaking to children and dogs). A German child receives a boost when strangers begin addressing the child as “*Sie*” instead of “*du*.”

Nouns, too, can express assumed social inequalities. Among faculty studied by Rebecca Rubin (1981), young female professors were far more likely than young male professors to experience students calling them by their first name. Women tennis players will empathize: Sportscasters have referred to them using only their first names 53 percent of the time, while they refer to men players this way only 8 percent of the time (*Harper’s Index*, 1991).

This first aspect of Brown’s universal norm—that *forms of address communicate not only social distance but also social status*—correlates with a second aspect: *Advances in intimacy are usually suggested by the higher-status person*. In Europe, where most twosomes begin a relationship with the polite, formal “you” and may eventually progress to the more intimate “you,” someone obviously has to initiate the increased intimacy. Whom do you suppose does so? On some congenial occasion, the elder or richer or more distinguished of the two may say, “Why don’t we say *du* to one another?”

This norm extends beyond language to every type of advance in intimacy. It is more acceptable to borrow a pen from or put a hand on the shoulder of one’s intimates and subordinates than to behave in such a casual way with strangers or superiors. Similarly, the president of my college invites faculty to his home before they invite him to theirs. In general, then, the higher-status person is the pacesetter in the progression toward intimacy.

Although some norms are universal, the force of culture appears in varying norms, and also in the roles that people play. Cultures everywhere influence people by assigning them to play certain roles. Chapter 4 illustrated a powerful

In The Female Eunuch, Germaine Greer notes how the language of affection reduces women to foods and baby animals—honey, lamb, sugar, sweetie-pie, kitten, chick.

Despite the enormous cultural variation in norms, we humans do hold some norms in common.

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phenomenon: Playing a role often leads people to internalize their behavior. Acting becomes believing. So let's consider how roles vary within and across cultures.

SOCIAL ROLES

*All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts.*

William Shakespeare

Role theorists assume, as did William Shakespeare, that social life is like acting on a theatrical stage, with all its scenes, masks, and scripts. Like the role of Jaques, who speaks these lines in *As You Like It*, social roles outlast those who play them. The roles of parent, student, and friend will continue after we cease to play them. And, as Jaques says, these roles allow some freedom of interpretation to those who act them out; great performances are defined by the way the role is played. Some aspects of any role *must* be performed, however. A student must at least show up for exams, turn in papers, and maintain some minimum grade point average.

When only a few norms are associated with a social category (for example, sidewalk pedestrians should keep to the right and not jaywalk), we do not regard the position as a social role. It takes a whole cluster of norms to define a role. I could readily generate a long list of norms prescribing my activities as a professor or as a father. Although I may acquire my particular image by violating the least important norms (valuing efficiency, I rarely arrive early for anything), violating my role's most important norms (failing to meet classes, abusing my children) could lead to my being fired or having my children removed from my care.

Roles have powerful effects. In Chapter 4, we noted that we tend to absorb our roles. On a first date or on a new job, you may act the role self-consciously. As you internalize the role, self-consciousness subsides. What felt awkward now feels genuine.

This is the experience of many refugees, immigrants, missionaries, Peace Corps workers, and international students and executives. After arriving in a new country, it takes time to learn how to talk and act appropriately in the new context. Once adapted, the almost universal experience of those who repatriate back to their home country is reentry distress (Sussman, 2000). Home sweet home is no longer quite so sweet. In ways one may not have been aware, one's behavior, values, and identity will have shifted to accommodate the role of citizen in a different place. One must reacclurate before being back in sync.

"Nowhere is social psychology further apart from public consciousness," noted Philip Brickman (1978), "than in its understanding of how things become real for people." Take the case of kidnapped newspaper heiress Patricia Hearst. In 1974, while held by some young revolutionaries who called themselves the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA), Hearst renounced her former life, her wealthy parents, and her fiancé. Announcing that she had joined her captors, she asked that people "try to understand the changes I've gone through." Twelve days later, a bank camera recorded her participation in an SLA armed holdup.



Heiress Patricia Hearst as “Tanya” the revolutionary and as a suburban socialite.



Nineteen months later, Hearst was apprehended and, after two years’ incarceration and “deprogramming,” she resumed her role as an heiress. Then she became a suburban Connecticut mother and author who devotes much of her time to charitable causes (Johnson, 1988; Schiffman, 1999). If Patricia Hearst had really been a dedicated revolutionary all along, or had she only pretended to cooperate with her captors, people could have understood her actions. What they could not understand (and what therefore helped make this one of the biggest news stories of the 1970s) was, as Brickman wrote, “that she could really be an heiress, really a revolutionary, and then perhaps really an heiress again.” It’s mind-blowing. Surely, this could not happen to you or me—or could it?

Yes and no. As we’ll see in the last section of this chapter, our actions depend not only on the social situation but also on our dispositions. Not everyone responds in the same way to pressure. In Patricia Hearst’s predicament, you and I might respond differently. Nevertheless, some social situations can move most “normal” people to behave in “abnormal” ways. This is clear from experiments that put well-intentioned people in bad situations to see whether good or evil prevails. To a dismaying extent, evil wins. Nice guys often don’t finish nice.

High- and low-status roles. In George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, the livestock overthrow their human masters and form an egalitarian society in which “all animals are equal.” As the story unfolds, the pigs—who assume the managerial role—soon evade chores and accept comforts they consider appropriate to their status. “All animals are equal,” they affirm, “but some animals are more equal than others.”

Lawrence Messé, Norbert Kerr, and David Sattler (1992) note that the effects of status on self-perceptions aren’t limited to Orwell’s pigs. In many everyday and laboratory situations, people who are assigned a superior status come to see themselves as meriting favorable treatment or as capable of superior performance. Ronald Humphrey (1985) showed this when he set up a simulated business office. By lottery, some people became managers, others clerks. As in real offices, the managers gave orders to the clerks and did higher-level work.

Afterward, both clerks and managers perceived the equally able (randomly assigned) managers as *more* intelligent, assertive, and supportive—as really being more like leaders.

Likewise, playing a *subservient* role can have demeaning effects. Ellen Langer and Ann Benevento (1978) discovered this when they had pairs of New York City women solve arithmetic problems. After solving the problems individually, the women solved more problems together, with one of the women designated “boss” and the other “assistant.” When they then went back to working individually, the “bosses” now solved more problems than they had in the first round, and the “assistants” solved fewer. Similar effects of assigned status on performance have been found in experiments with elementary schoolchildren (Jemmott & Gonzalez, 1989; Musser & Graziano, 1991): Demeaning roles undermine self-efficacy.

Role reversal. Role playing can also be a positive force. By intentionally playing a new role, people sometimes change themselves or empathize with people whose roles differ from their own. Psychodrama, a form of psychotherapy, uses role playing for just this purpose. In George Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion*, Eliza Doolittle, the Cockney flower vendor, discovers that if she plays the role of a lady and is viewed by others as a lady, then she in fact is a lady. What wasn’t real now is.

Roles often come in pairs defined by relationships—parent and child, husband and wife, teacher and student, doctor and patient, employer and employee, police and citizen. Role reversals can help each understand the other. The problem with much human conversation and argument, observed La Rochefoucauld, is that people pay more attention to their own utterances than to giving exact answers to questions. “Even the most charming and clever do little more than appear attentive . . . so anxious are they to return to their own ideas” (1665, No. 139). A negotiator or group leader can therefore create better communication by having the two sides reverse roles, with each arguing the other’s position. Or each side can be asked to restate the other party’s point (to the other’s satisfaction) before replying. The next time you get into a difficult argument with a friend or parent, try to stop it in the middle. If each of you will restate the other’s perceptions and feelings before going on with your own, your mutual understanding will increase.

So far in this chapter we have affirmed our biological kinship as members of one human family, we have acknowledged our cultural diversity, and we have noted how norms and roles vary within and across cultures. Remember that our primary quest in social psychology is not to catalog differences but to identify universal principles of behavior. Our aim is what cross-cultural psychologist Walter Lonner (1989) calls “a universalistic psychology—a psychology that is as valid and meaningful in Omaha and Osaka as it is in Rome and Botswana.”

Attitudes and behaviors will always vary with culture, but the processes by which attitudes influence behavior vary much less. People in Nigeria and Japan define teen roles differently than do those in Europe and North America, but in all cultures role expectations guide social relations. G. K. Chesterton had the idea nearly a century ago: When someone “has discovered why men in Bond Street wear black hats he will at the same moment have discovered why men in Timbuctoo wear red feathers.”

“It is the peculiar triumph of society—and its loss—that it is able to convince those people to whom it has given inferior status of the reality of this decree.”

James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*, 1955

“Great Spirit, grant that I may not criticize my neighbor until I have walked for a moon in his moccasins.”

Native American prayer

Summing up

How are we humans alike, how do we differ—and why? Evolutionary psychologists study how natural selection favors traits that promote the perpetuation of one's genes. Although part of evolution's legacy is our human capacity to learn and adapt (and therefore to differ from one another), the *evolutionary perspective* highlights the kinship that results from our shared human nature.

The *cultural perspective* highlights human diversity—the behaviors, ideas, and traditions that help define a group and that are transmitted across generations. The remarkable diversity of attitudes and behaviors

from one culture to another indicates the extent to which we are the products of cultural norms and roles.

Yet cross-cultural psychologists also seek to identify the “essential universality” of all people. For example, despite their differences, cultures share some norms in common. One apparently universal norm concerns how people of unequal status relate to one another.

All cultures assign people to social roles. Playing cultural roles often leads people to internalize their behavior. Switching roles can therefore change our perspective.

Gender similarities and differences

Both evolutionary psychologists and psychologists working from a cultural perspective have sought to explain gender variations. Before considering their views, let's see what there is to explain: As males and females, how are we alike? How do we differ? And why?

There are many obvious dimensions of human diversity—height, weight, hair color, to name just a few. But for people's self-concepts and social relationships, the two dimensions that matter most, and that people first attune to, are race and, especially, sex (Stangor & others, 1992). Height and hair may influence our self-concepts and identities, our selecting of friends and mates, and how others regard and treat us. But ethnicity and sex matter much more. When you were born, the first thing people wanted to know about you was, “Is it a boy or a girl?” When your sex was ambiguous—say, when not cued by a pink or blue outfit—people were unsure how to react. When a hermaphrodite child is born with a combination of male and female sex organs, physicians and family feel compelled to assign the child a sex and to diminish the ambiguity surgically. The simple message: Everyone *must* be assigned a sex. Between day and night there is dusk. But between male and female there is, socially speaking, essentially nothing.

In Chapter 9, we will consider how race and sex affect the way others regard and treat us. For now, let's consider **gender**—the characteristics people associate with male and female. What behaviors *are* universally characteristic and expected of males? Of females?

“Of the 46 chromosomes in the human genome, 45 are unisex,” notes Judith Rich Harris (1998). Females and males are therefore similar in many physical traits, such as age of sitting, teething, and walking. They also are alike in many psychological traits, such as overall vocabulary, creativity, intelligence, self-esteem, and happiness. So shall we conclude that men and women are

gender
in psychology, the characteristics, whether biological or socially influenced, by which people define male and female.

essentially the same, except for a few anatomical oddities that hardly matter apart from special occasions?

Actually, there are some differences, and it is these differences, not the many similarities, that capture attention and make news. In both science and everyday life, differences excite interest. Compared to the average man, the average woman has 70 percent more fat, possesses 40 percent less muscle, and is 5 inches shorter. Men enter puberty two years later, are twenty times more likely to have color-deficient vision, and die five years sooner. Women are twice as vulnerable to anxiety disorders and depression. Women have a slightly better sense of smell. They more easily become re-aroused immediately after orgasm. Men are three times more likely to commit suicide, and five times more likely to become alcoholic. Men also are much more likely to suffer hyperactivity or speech disorders as children, to display antisocial personalities as adults, and to be able to wiggle their ears.

During the 1970s, many scholars worried that studies of such gender differences might reinforce stereotypes. Would gender differences be construed as women's deficits? Focusing attention on gender differences will provide "battle weapons against women" warned sociologist Jesse Bernard (1976, p. 13). Explanations for differences usually do focus on the group that's seen as different. In discussing the "gender gap" in national elections, for example, commentators more often wonder why women so often vote liberal than why men so often vote conservative. People more often wonder what causes homosexuality than what causes heterosexuality (or what determines sexual orientation). People ask why Asian Americans so often excel in math and science, not why other groups less often excel. In each case, people define the standard by one group and wonder why the other is "different." From "different" it sometimes is but a short leap to "deviant" or "substandard."

Since the 1980s, scholars have felt freer to explore gender diversity. Initially, gender difference research supported gender equality by reducing overblown stereotypes. Then, during the 1980s and 1990s, reports Alice Eagly (1995), many studies revealed gender differences—differences as large as "important" behavior differences in other areas of psychology. Although the findings confirm some stereotypes of women—as less aggressive, more nurturant, and more sensitive—those are traits that many feminists celebrate and most people prefer (Swim, 1994). Small wonder, then, that most people rate their feelings regarding "women" as more *favorable* than their feelings regarding "men" (Eagly, 1994; Haddock & Zanna, 1994).

Let's compare men's and women's social connections, dominance, aggressiveness, and sexuality. Having described these differences, we can then consider how the evolutionary and cultural perspectives might explain them. Do gender differences reflect tendencies predisposed by natural selection? Or are they culturally constructed—a reflection of the roles that men and women often play and the situations in which they act?

INDEPENDENCE VERSUS CONNECTEDNESS

Individual men display outlooks and behavior that vary from fierce competitiveness to caring nurturance. So do individual women. Without denying that, psychologists Nancy Chodorow (1978, 1989), Jean Baker Miller (1986), and Carol Gilligan and her colleagues (1982, 1990) have contended that women more than men give priority to close, intimate relationships.

Even in physical traits, individual differences among men and among women far exceed the average differences between the sexes. Don Schollander's world-record-setting 4 minutes, 12 seconds in the 400-meter freestyle swim at the 1964 Olympics would have placed him seventh against the women racing in the 2000 Olympics and 7 seconds behind winner Brooke Bennett.

*"There should be no qualms about the forthright study of racial and gender differences; science is in desperate need of good studies that . . . inform us of what we need to do to help underrepresented people to succeed in this society. Unlike the ostrich, we cannot afford to hide our heads for fear of socially uncomfortable discoveries."
Developmental psychologist Sandra Scarr (1988)*



Girls' play is often in small groups and imitates relationships. Boy's play is more often competitive or aggressive.



The difference surfaces in childhood. Boys strive for independence; they define their identities in separation from the caregiver, usually their mother. Girls welcome *interdependence*; they define their identities through their social connections. Boys' play often involves group activity. Girls' play occurs in smaller groups, with less aggression, more sharing, more imitation of relationships, and more intimate discussion (Lever, 1978).

Adult relationships extend this gender difference. Women describe themselves in more relational terms, experience more relationships-linked emotions, and are more attuned to others' relationships (Gabriel & Gardner, 1999). In conversation, men more often focus on tasks and on connections with large groups, women on personal relationships (Tannen, 1990). In groups, men talk more to give information; women talk more to share lives, give help, or show support (Dindia & Allen, 1992; Eagly, 1987). Among first-year college students, 5 in 10 males and 2 in 3 females say it is *very* important to "help others who are in difficulty" (Sax & others, 1999).

In general, report Felicia Pratto and her colleagues (1997), men gravitate disproportionately to jobs that enhance inequalities (prosecuting attorney, corporate advertising); women gravitate to jobs that reduce inequalities (public defender, advertising work for a charity). Studies of 640,000 people's job preferences reveal some tendency for men more than women to value earnings, promotion, challenge, and power, and for women more than men to value good hours, personal relationships, and opportunities to help others (Konrad & others, 2000). Indeed, in most of the North American caregiving professions, such as social worker, teacher, and nurse, women outnumber men. Women also seem more charitable: Among individuals leaving estates worth more than \$5 million, 48 percent of women and 35 percent of men make a charitable bequest, and women's colleges have unusually supportive alumni (National Council for Research on Women, 1994).

Women's connections as mothers, daughters, sisters, and grandmothers bind families (Rossi & Rossi, 1990). Women spend more time caring for both preschoolers and aging parents (Eagly & Crowley, 1986). Compared to men, they buy three times as many gifts and greeting cards, write two to four times as many personal letters, and make 10 to 20 percent more long distance calls to

"In the different voice of women lies the truth of an ethic of care."

Carol Gilligan, 1982, p. 173

"Contrary to what many women believe, it's fairly easy to develop a long-term, stable, intimate, and mutually fulfilling relationship with a guy. Of course this guy has to be a Labrador retriever."

Dave Barry, *Dave Barry's Complete Guide to Guys*, 1995

Sally Forth



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friends and family (Putnam, 2000). Asked to provide photos that portray who they are, women include more photos of parents and of themselves with others (Clancy & Dollinger, 1993). For women, especially, a sense of mutual support is crucial to marital satisfaction (Acitelli & Antonucci, 1994).

When surveyed, women are far more likely to describe themselves as having **empathy**, or being able to feel what another feels—to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Although to a lesser extent, the empathy difference extends to laboratory studies. Shown slides or told stories, girls react with more empathy (Hunt, 1990). Given upsetting experiences in the laboratory or in real life, women more than men gain empathy for others enduring similar experiences (Batson & others, 1996). Women are more likely to cry or report feeling distressed at another's distress (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983). This helps explain why, compared to friendships with men, both men and women report friendships with women to be more intimate, enjoyable, and nurturing (Rubin, 1985; Sapadin, 1988). When they want empathy and understanding, someone to whom they can disclose their joys and hurts, both men and women usually turn to women.

Women's greater connectedness in personal relationships also gets expressed in their smiling (Hecht & others, 1993). When Marianne LaFrance (1985) analyzed 9,000 college yearbook photos and when Amy Halberstadt and Martha Saitta (1987) studied 1,100 magazine and newspaper photos and 1,300 people in shopping malls, parks, and streets, they consistently found that females were more likely to smile.

One explanation for this male-female empathy difference is that women tend to outperform men at reading others' emotions. In her analysis of 125 studies of men's and women's sensitivity to nonverbal cues, Judith Hall (1984) discerned that women are generally superior at decoding others' emotional messages. For example, shown a two-second silent film clip of the face of an upset woman, women guess more accurately whether she is criticizing someone or discussing her divorce. Women's sensitivity to nonverbal cues helps explain their greater emotional responsiveness in both depressing and joyful situations (Grossman & Wood, 1993; Sprecher & Sedikides, 1993; Stoppard & Gruchy, 1993). Women also

empathy
the vicarious experience of another's feelings; putting oneself in another's shoes.

Empathy is feeling what another feels, as 7-year-old Lamar Pugh seemingly does.





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foresee more complex and nuanced emotions when given possible scenarios (if a friend in your line of work received a work-related prize, how would your friend feel and how would you feel?—Barrett & others, 2000).

Women also are more skilled at *expressing* emotions nonverbally, reports Hall. This is especially so for positive emotion, report Erick Coats and Robert Feldman (1996). They had people talk about times they had been happy, sad, and angry. When shown 5-second silent video clips of these reports, observers could much more accurately discern women's than men's emotions when recalling happiness. Men, however, were slightly more successful in conveying anger.

Whether considered feminine or human, traits such as gentleness, sensitivity, and warmth are a boon to close relationships. In a study of married couples in Sydney, Australia, John Antill (1983) found that when either the husband or wife had these traditionally feminine qualities—or better, when *both* did—marital satisfaction was higher. People find marriage rewarding when their spouses are nurturant and emotionally supportive.

SOCIAL DOMINANCE

Imagine two people: One is “adventurous, autocratic, coarse, dominant, forceful, independent, and strong.” The other is “affectionate, dependent, dreamy, emotional, submissive, and weak.” If the first person sounds more to you like a man and the second like a woman, you are not alone, report John Williams and Deborah Best (1990a, p. 15). The world around, from Asia to Africa and Europe to Australia, people rate men as more dominant, driven, and aggressive.

These perceptions and expectations correlate with reality. In essentially every society, men *are* socially dominant. In no known societies do women dominate men (Pratto, 1996). Women are 14 percent of the world's legislators (IPU, 2000). Men more than women are concerned with social dominance and are more likely to favor conservative political candidates and programs that preserve group inequality (Pratto & others, 1997). Men are half of all jurors but 90 percent of elected jury leaders and most of the leaders of ad hoc laboratory groups (Davis & Gilbert, 1989; Kerr & others, 1982). As is typical of those in higher—status positions, men still initiate most of the inviting for first dates, do most of the driving, and pick up most of the tabs (Laner & Ventrone, 1998, 2000).

What do you think: Should Western women become more self-reliant and more attuned to their culture's individualism? Or might women's relational approach to life help transform power-oriented Western societies (marked by high levels of child neglect, loneliness, and depression) into more caring communities?

When women achieve equal status with men, will they, should they, feel as free as men to initiate formal dates?

Men's style of communicating undergirds their social power. As leaders in situations where roles aren't rigidly scripted, men tend to be directive, women to be democratic (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Men tend to excel as directive, task-focused leaders, women as social leaders who build team spirit (Eagly & Karau, 1991; Eagly & others, 1995; Wood & Rhodes, 1991). Men more than women place priority on winning, getting ahead, and dominating others (Sidanius & others, 1994). They also take more risks (Byrnes & others, 1999). When they lead democratically, women leaders are evaluated as favorably as men. When they lead autocratically, women are evaluated less favorably than men (Eagly & others, 1992). People will accept a man's "strong, assertive" leadership more readily than a woman's "pushy, aggressive" leadership.

Men's conversational style reflects their concern for independence, women's for connectedness. Men are more likely to act as powerful people often do—talking assertively, interrupting intrusively, touching with the hand, staring more, smiling less (Anderson & Leaper, 1998; Carli, 1991; Ellyson & others, 1991). Stating the results from a female perspective, women's influence style tends to be more indirect—less interruptive, more sensitive, more polite, less cocky.

So is it right to declare (in the title words of one 1990s bestseller), *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*? Actually, note Kay Deaux and Marianne LaFrance (1998), men's and women's conversational styles vary with the social context. Much of the style we attribute to men is typical of people (men or women) in positions of status and power. Moreover, individuals vary; some men are characteristically hesitant and deferential, some women direct and



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assertive. Clearly, it oversimplifies to suggest that women and men are from different emotional planets.

Aware of the varying yet oft-reported gender communication difference, Nancy Henley (1977) has argued that women should stop feigning smiles, averting their eyes, and tolerating interruptions and should instead look people in the eye and speak assertively. Judith Hall (1984), however, values women's less autocratic communication style, noting, "Whenever it is assumed that women's nonverbal behavior is undesirable, yet another myth is perpetuated: that male behavior is normal and that it is women's behavior that is deviant and in need of explanation" (pp. 152–153).

AGGRESSION

aggression

physical or verbal behavior intended to hurt someone. In laboratory experiments, this might mean delivering electric shocks or saying something likely to hurt another's feelings.

By **aggression**, psychologists mean behavior intended to hurt. Throughout the world, hunting, fighting, and warring are primarily male activities. In surveys, men admit to more aggression than do women. In laboratory experiments, men indeed exhibit more physical aggression, for example, by administering what they believe are hurtful electric shocks (Knight & others, 1996). In Canada, the male-to-female arrest rate is 7 to 1 for murder and 6 to 1 for assault (Statistics Canada, 2000). In the United States, it is 9 to 1 for murder and 4 to 1 for assault (United States Department of Justice, 2000). Across the world, murder rates vary. Yet in all regions, men are roughly 20 times more likely to murder men than women are to murder women (Daly & Wilson, 1989).

But as with communication styles, the gender difference fluctuates with the context. When there is provocation, the gender gap shrinks (Bettencourt & Miller, 1996). And, within less assaultive forms of aggression—say, slapping a

family member, throwing something, or verbally attacking someone—women are no less aggressive than men (Björkqvist, 1994; White & Kowalski, 1994). Indeed, says John Archer (2000) from a statistical digest of 82 studies, women may be slightly more likely to commit an aggressive act. But men are more likely to inflict an injury; 62 percent of those injured by a partner are women.



SEXUALITY

There is also a gender gap in sexual attitudes and assertiveness. It's true that, in their physiological and subjective responses to sexual stimuli, women and men are "more similar than different" (Griffitt, 1987). Yet consider:

- “I can imagine myself being comfortable and enjoying ‘casual’ sex with different partners,” agreed 48 percent of men and 12 percent of women in a recent Australian survey (Bailey & others, 2000).
- The American Council on Education’s recent survey of a quarter million first-year college students offers a similar finding. “If two people really like each other, it’s all right for them to have sex even if they’ve known each other for only a very short time,” agreed 53 percent of men but only 30 percent of women (Sax & others, 1999).
- In a survey of 3,400 randomly selected 18- to 59-year-old Americans, half as many men (25 percent) as women (48 percent) cited affection for the partner as a reason for first intercourse. How often do they think about sex? “Every day” or “several times a day,” said 19 percent of women and 54 percent of men (Laumann & others, 1994).
- Data gleaned from 177 other studies of 130,000 people confirm that men are much more accepting of casual sex (Oliver & Hyde, 1993).

The gender difference in sexual attitudes carries over to behavior. “With few exceptions anywhere in the world,” report cross-cultural psychologist Marshall Segall and his colleagues (1990, p. 244), “males are more likely than females to initiate sexual activity.” Moreover, among people of both sexual orientations, “men without women have sex more often, with more different partners, than women without men” (Baumeister, 1991, p. 151; Bailey & others, 1994). Compared to lesbians, gay men also report more interest in uncommitted sex, more responsiveness to visual stimuli, and more concern with partner attractiveness (Bailey & others, 1994). “It’s not that gay men are oversexed,” observes Steven Pinker (1997). “They are simply men whose male desires bounce off other male desires rather than off female desires.”

Casual hit-and-run sex is most common among males with traditional masculine attitudes or who approve social inequalities (Pleck & others, 1993; Pratto & Hegarty, 2000). Not only in sexual relations but also in courtship and touching, males tend to take more initiative (Hendrick, 1988; Lawrence & others, 1996). Like their human counterparts, the males of most other animal species are more sexually assertive and less selective about their partners (Hinde, 1984).

Sexual fantasies express the gender difference (Ellis & Symons, 1990). In male-oriented erotica, women are unattached and lust driven. In romance

Which would you prefer: finding a great bargain on clothes or having great sex?

	Women	Men
Bargain	46%	14%
Sex	41%	76%

Source: Yankelovich poll in Time (1994).

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novels, whose primary market is women, a tender male is emotionally consumed by his devoted passion for the heroine. Social scientists aren't the only ones to have noticed. "Women can be fascinated by a four-hour movie with subtitles wherein the entire plot consists of a man and a woman yearning to have, but never actually having a relationship," observes humorist Dave Barry (1995). "Men HATE that. Men can take maybe 45 seconds of yearning, and they want everybody to get naked. Followed by a car chase. A movie called 'Naked People in Car Chases' would do really well among men."

Summing up

Boys and girls, and men and women, are in many ways alike. Yet their differences attract more attention. Although individual differences among women and among men exceed their gender differences, social psychologists have explored gender differences in *independence* versus *connectedness*. Women typically do more caring, express more empathy and emotion, and define themselves more in terms of relationships. Men and women also tend to exhibit differing social dominance, aggression, and sexuality.

As detectives are more intrigued by crime than virtue, so psychological detectives are more intrigued by differences than similarities. Let us therefore remind ourselves: *Individual* differences far exceed gender differences. Females and males are hardly opposite (altogether different) sexes. Rather, they differ like two folded hands—similar but not the same, fitting together yet differing as they grasp each other.

Evolution and gender: Doing what comes naturally?

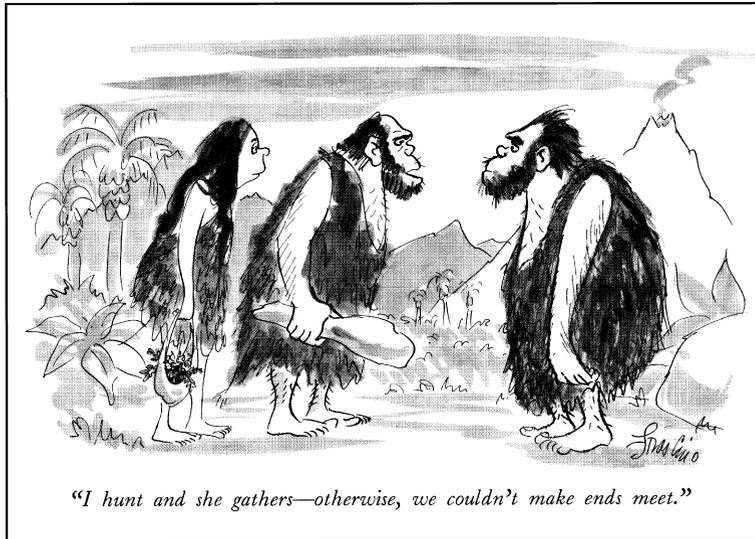
In explaining gender differences, inquiry has focused on two culprits: evolution and culture.

"What do you think is the main reason men and women have different personalities, interests, and abilities?" asked the Gallup Organization (1990) in a national survey. "Is it mainly because of the way men and women are raised, or are the differences part of their biological makeup?" Among the 99 percent who answered the question (apparently without questioning its assumptions), nearly equal numbers answered "upbringing" and "biology."

There are, of course, those salient biological sex differences. Men have the muscle mass to hunt game; women can breast-feed. Are biological sex differences limited to such obvious distinctions in reproduction and physique? Or do men's and women's genes, hormones, and brains differ in ways that also contribute to behavioral differences?

GENDER AND MATING PREFERENCES

Noting the worldwide persistence of gender differences in aggressiveness, dominance, and sexuality, evolutionary psychologist Douglas Kenrick (1987) suggested, as have many others since, that "we cannot change the evolutionary history of our species, and some of the differences between us are undoubtedly a function of that history." Evolutionary psychology predicts no sex differences



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in all those domains in which the sexes faced similar adaptive challenges (Buss, 1995b). Both sexes regulate heat with sweat, have similar taste preferences to nourish their bodies, and grow callouses where the skin meets friction. But evolutionary psychology does predict sex differences in behaviors relevant to dating, mating, and reproduction.

Consider, for example, the male's greater sexual initiative. The average male produces many trillions of sperm in his lifetime, making sperm cheap compared to eggs. Moreover, while a female brings one fetus to term and then nurses it, a male can spread his genes by fertilizing many females. Thus, say evolutionary psychologists, females invest their reproductive opportunities carefully, by looking for signs of health and resources. Males compete with other males for chances to win the genetic sweepstakes by sending their genes into the future. Men seek to reproduce widely, women wisely. Men seek fertile soil in which to plant their seed, women seek men who will help them tend the garden—resourceful and monogamous dads rather than wandering cads.

Moreover, evolutionary psychology suggests, physically dominant males gained more access to females, which over generations enhanced male aggression and dominance. Whatever genetically influenced traits enabled Montezuma II to become Aztec king were also perpetuated through offspring from some of his 4,000 women (Wright, 1998). If our ancestral mothers benefitted from being able to read their infants' and suitors' emotions, then natural selection may have similarly favored emotion-detecting ability in females. Underlying all these presumptions is the principle that *nature selects traits that help send one's genes into the future.*

Little of this process is conscious. No one stops to calculate, "How can I maximize the number of genes I leave to posterity?" Rather, say evolutionary psychologists, our natural yearnings are our genes' way of making more genes. Emotions execute evolution's dispositions. Lewis Thomas (1971) captured the idea of hidden evolutionary predispositions in his fanciful description of a male moth responding to a female's release of bombykol, a single molecule of which will tremble the hairs of any male within miles and send him driving upwind in

Secretariat, the greatest racehorse of modern times, sired 400 foals.

“A hen is only an egg’s way of making another egg.”

Samuel Butler, 1835–1901

In 1999, American men spent \$4 billion for gym memberships and home exercise equipment (Cloud, 2000).



What are some predictions for gender and mating preferences?

a confusion of ardor. But it is doubtful if the moth has an awareness of being caught in an aerosol of chemical attractant. On the contrary, he probably finds suddenly that it has become an excellent day, the weather remarkably bracing, the time appropriate for a bit of exercise of the old wings, a brisk turn upwind.

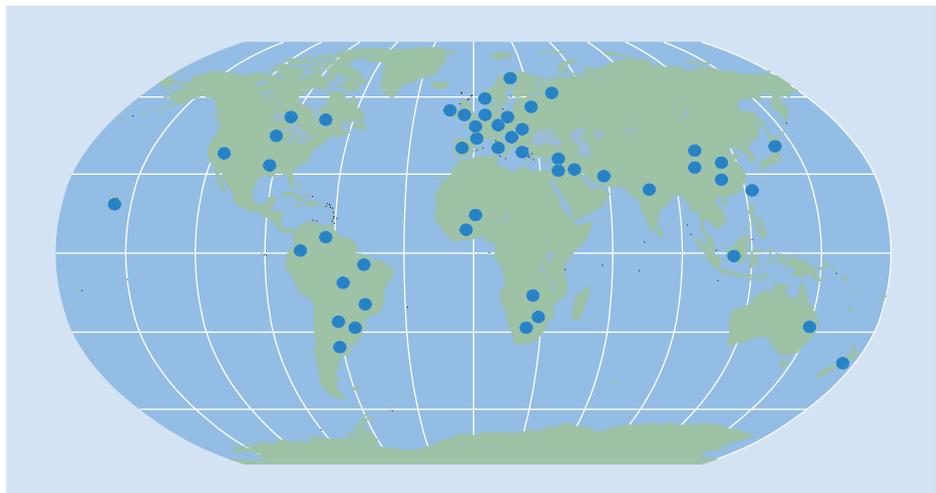
“Humans are living fossils—collections of mechanisms produced by prior selections pressures,” says David Buss (1995a). And that, evolutionary psychologists believe, helps explain not only male aggression but also the differing sexual attitudes and behaviors of females and males. Although a man’s interpretation of a woman’s smile as sexual interest usually proves wrong, occasionally being right can have reproductive payoff.

Evolutionary psychology also predicts that men will strive to offer what women will desire—external resources and physical protection. Male peacocks strut their feathers, and male humans their abs, Audis, and assets. “Male achievement is ultimately a courtship display,” says Glenn Wilson (1994). Women, sometimes assisted by cosmetic surgery, strive to offer men the youthful, healthy appearance (connoting fertility) that men desire. Sure enough, note Buss (1994a) and Alan Feingold (1992), women’s and men’s mate preferences confirm these predictions. Consider:

- Studies in 37 cultures, from Australia to Zambia, reveal that men everywhere feel attracted to women whose physical features, such as youthful faces and forms, suggest fertility. Women everywhere feel attracted to men whose wealth, power, and ambition promise resources for protecting and nurturing offspring (Figure 5–2). Men’s greater interest in physical form also makes them the consumers of most of the world’s visual pornography. But there are gender similarities, too: Whether residing on an Indonesian island or in urban San Paulo, both women and men desire kindness, love, and mutual attraction.
- Men feel most jealous over their mate’s having sex with someone else. Women tend to feel greater jealousy over their mate’s becoming emotionally attached to someone else. Evolutionary psychologists say this gender difference reflects men’s natural concern with their

figure 5–2 Human mating preferences.

David Buss and 50 collaborators surveyed more than 10,000 people from all races, religions, and political systems on six continents and five islands. Everywhere, men preferred attractive physical features suggesting youth and health—and reproductive fitness. Everywhere, women preferred men with resources and status.



Source: From Buss, 1994b.

offspring's paternity (a man doesn't want to raise another man's offspring) and women's natural concern with their mate's provision of resources (Buss, 2000).

- Men everywhere tend to marry younger women. Moreover, the older the man, the greater the age difference he prefers when selecting a mate. In their twenties, men prefer, and marry, women only slightly younger. In their sixties, men prefer, and marry, women averaging about ten years younger (Kenrick & Keefe, 1992). Women of all ages prefer men just slightly older than themselves. Once again, say the evolutionary psychologists, we see that natural selection predisposes men to feel attracted to female features associated with fertility.



Larry King, age 63, with seventh wife, Shawn Southwick King, 38.

Reflecting on these findings, Buss (1999) reports feeling somewhat astonished "that men and women across the world differ in their mate preferences in precisely the ways predicted by the evolutionists. Just as our fears of snakes, heights, and spiders provide a window for viewing the survival hazards of our evolutionary ancestors, our mating desires provide a window for viewing the resources our ancestors needed for reproduction. We all carry with us today the desires of our successful forebearers."

GENDER AND HORMONES

If genes predispose gender-related traits, they must do so by their effects on our bodies. As the results of architectural blueprints appear in physical structures, so the effects of our genetic blueprints appear in the sex hormones. In male embryos, the genes direct the formation of testes, which begin to secrete *testosterone*, the male sex hormone that influences masculine appearance (Berenbaum & Hines, 1992; Hines & Green, 1991). Do hormone differences also predispose psychological gender differences?

The gender gap in aggression does seem influenced by testosterone. In various animals, administering testosterone heightens aggressiveness. In humans, violent male criminals have higher than normal testosterone levels; so do National Football League players and boisterous fraternity members (Dabbs, 2000). Moreover, for both humans and monkeys, the gender difference in aggression appears early in life (before culture has much effect) and wanes as testosterone levels decline during adulthood. No one of these lines of evidence is conclusive. Taken together, they convince most scholars that sex hormones matter. But so, as we will see, does culture.

As people mature to middle age and beyond, a curious thing happens. Women become more assertive and self-confident, men more empathic and less domineering (Lowenthal & others, 1975; Pratt & others, 1990). Hormone changes are one possible explanation for the shrinking gender differences. Role demands are another. Some speculate that during courtship and early parenthood, social expectations lead both sexes to emphasize traits that enhance their roles. While courting, providing, and protecting, men play up their macho sides and forgo their needs for interdependence and nurturance (Gutmann, 1977).

In life's mating game, men often desire women with beauty and youth and women desire men with wealth and power. For evolutionary psychologists, these couples illustrate men's desire for features that connote fertility and women's desire for features that connote protection and support for their offspring.

“The finest people marry the two sexes in their own person.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson,
Journals, 1843

While courting and rearing young children, young women restrain their impulses to assert and be independent. As men and women graduate from these early adult roles, they supposedly express more of their restrained tendencies. Each becomes more *androgynous*—capable of both assertiveness and nurturance.

REFLECTIONS ON EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY

Without disputing natural selection—nature’s process of selecting physical and behavioral traits that enhance gene survival—critics see two problems with evolutionary explanations. First, evolutionary psychologists sometimes start with an effect (such as the male-female difference in sexual initiative) and then work backward to construct an explanation for it. This approach is reminiscent of functionalism, a dominant theory in psychology during the 1920s. “Why does that behavior occur? Because it serves such and such a function.” The theorist can hardly lose at this hindsight explanation. It is, scorns paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould (1997), mere “speculation [and] guesswork in the cocktail-party mode.”

The way to prevent the hindsight bias is to imagine things turning out otherwise. Let’s try it. Imagine that women were stronger and more physically aggressive. “But of course!” someone might say, “all the better for protecting their young.” And if human males were never known to have extramarital affairs, might we not see the evolutionary wisdom behind their fidelity? After all, argues Dorothy Einon (1994), women will mate throughout the menstrual cycle and while pregnant or lactating—which means that a faithful married man is hardly less likely to fertilize a woman than is a similarly sexually active unfaithful man. Moreover, because there is more to bringing offspring to maturity than merely depositing sperm, men and women both gain by investing jointly in their children. Males who are loyal to their mates and offspring are more apt to ensure that their young will survive to perpetuate their genes. Monogamy also increases men’s certainty of paternity. (These are, in fact, evolutionary explanations for why humans, and certain other species whose young require a heavy parental investment, tend to pair off and be monogamous. Love between man and woman is universal because of its genetic payoffs: The offspring of devoted males were less vulnerable to predators.)

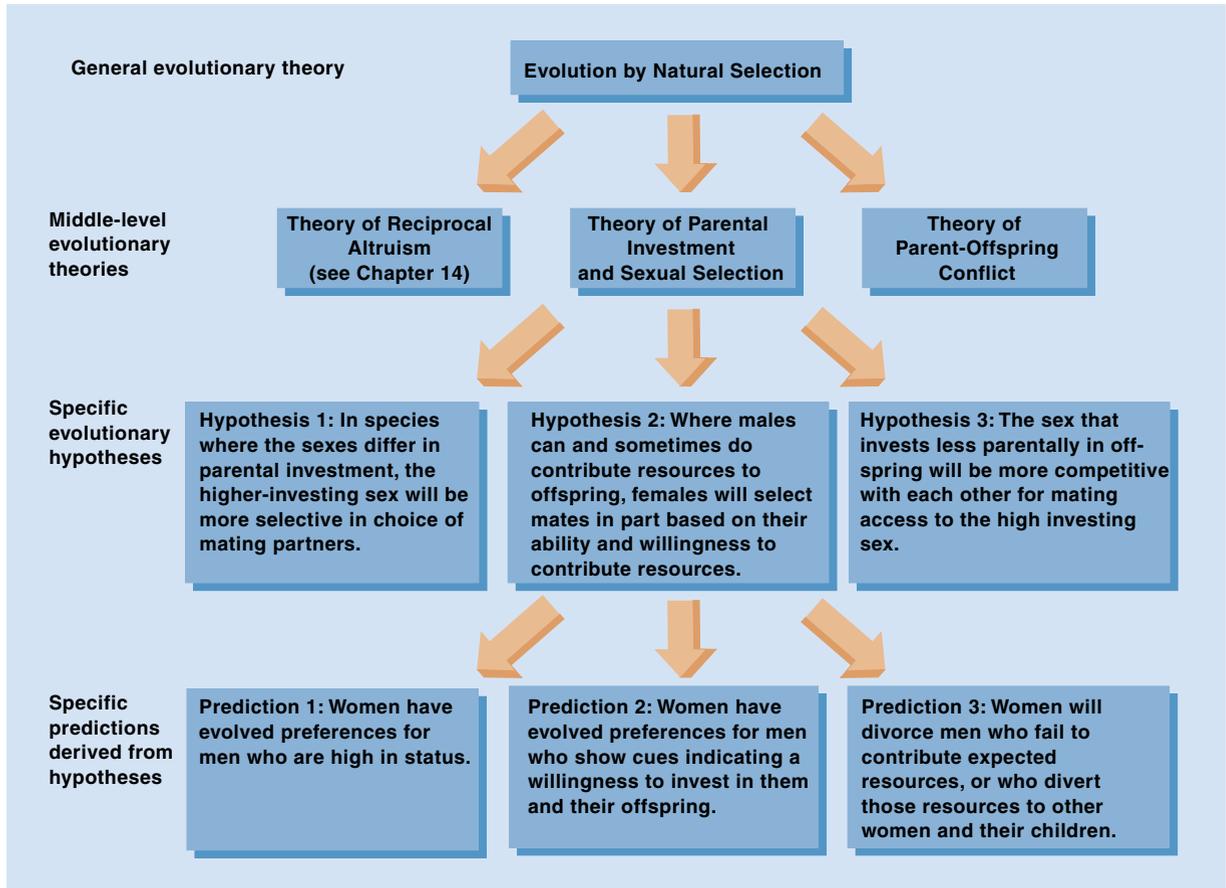
Evolutionary psychologists reply that such criticisms are “flat out wrong.” Hindsight, they say, plays no less a role in cultural explanations: Why do women and men differ? Because their culture *socializes* their behavior! When, as we will see, people’s roles vary across time and place, “culture” *describes* those roles better than it explains them. And far from being mere hindsight conjecture, say evolutionary psychologists, their field is an empirical science that tests evolutionary predictions with data from animal behavior, cross-cultural observations, and hormonal and genetic studies. As in many scientific fields, observations inspire a theory that generates new, testable predictions (Figure 5–3). The predictions alert us to unnoticed phenomena and allow us to confirm, refute, or revise the theory.

Critics also worry that evolutionary speculation about sex and gender “reinforces male-female stereotypes” (Small, 1999). Might evolutionary explanations for gang violence, homicidal jealousy, and rape reinforce and justify male aggression as natural? And if evolutionary psychologists persuade more and more people that it is natural, should we all buy home security systems? But remember, reply the evolutionary psychologists, evolutionary wisdom is *past* wisdom.

“Sex differences in behavior may have been relevant to our ancestors gathering roots and hunting squirrels on the plains of Northern Africa, but their

manifestations in modern society are less clearly ‘adaptive.’ Modern society is information oriented—big biceps and gushing testosterone have less direct relevance to the president of a computer firm.”

Douglas Kenrick (1987)

**figure 5–3**

Sample predictions derived from evolutionary psychology by David Buss (1995a).

It tells us what behaviors worked in the past. Whether such tendencies are still adaptive is a different question. For example, although people tend to be attracted to potential mates whose appearance and behavior fit typical masculine or feminine images, people actually report more satisfying relationships with those who are androgynous (Ickes, 1993).

Evolutionary psychology's critics acknowledge that evolution helps explain both our commonalities and our differences (a certain amount of diversity aids survival). But they contend our common evolutionary heritage does not, by itself, predict the enormous cultural variation in human marriage patterns (from one spouse to a succession of spouses to multiple wives to multiple husbands to spouse swapping). Nor does it explain cultural changes in behavior patterns over mere decades of time. The most significant trait that nature has endowed us with, it seems, is the capacity to adapt—to learn and to change. Therein lies what all agree is culture's shaping power.

Evolutionary psychologists theorize how evolution might have predisposed gender differences in behaviors such as aggression and sexual initiative. Nature's mating game, they sug-

gest, favors males who take sexual initiative toward females—especially those with physical features suggesting fertility—and who seek aggressive dominance in competing with

Summing up

other males. Females, who have a greater stake in not squandering their fewer reproductive chances, place a greater priority on selecting mates with the ability to commit resources to protecting and nurturing their young. Critics say that evolutionary explana-

tions are sometimes after-the-fact conjectures that fail to account for the reality of cultural diversity. What's agreed is that nature endows us with a remarkable capacity to adapt to differing contexts.

Culture and gender

Culture's influence is vividly illustrated by differing gender roles across place and time.

Culture, as we noted earlier, is what's shared by a large group and transmitted across generations—ideas, attitudes, behaviors, and traditions. We can see the shaping power of culture in ideas about how men and women should behave—and in the scorn that they endure when violating expectations (Kite, 2001). In countries everywhere, girls spend more time helping with housework and child care, while boys spend more time in unsupervised play (Edwards, 1991). Even in contemporary, dual-career, North American marriages, men do most of the household repairs and women arrange the child care (Bianchi & others, 2000; Biernat & Wortman, 1991).

Gender socialization, it has been said, gives girls “roots” and boys “wings.” In Caldecott Award children's books over the last half-century, girls have four times more often than boys been shown using household objects (such as broom, sewing needle, or pots and pans), and boys have five times more often than girls been shown using production objects (such as pitchfork, plow, or gun) (Crabb & Bielawski, 1994). The adult result: “Everywhere,” reports the United Nations (1991), “women do most household work.” And “everywhere, cooking and dishwashing are the least shared household chores.” Such behavior expectations for males and females define **gender roles**.

In an experiment with Princeton University undergraduate women, Mark Zanna and Susan Pack (1975) showed the impact of gender role expectations. The women answered questionnaires on which they described themselves to a tall, unattached, senior man they expected to meet. Those led to believe the man's ideal woman was home-oriented and deferential to her husband presented themselves as more traditionally feminine than did women expecting to meet a man who liked strong, ambitious women. Moreover, given a problem-solving test, those expecting to meet the nonsexist man behaved more intelligently: They solved 18 percent more problems than those expecting to meet the man with the traditional views. This adapting of themselves to fit the man's image was much less pronounced if the man was less desirable—a short, already attached freshman. In a companion experiment by Dean Morier and Cara Seroy (1994), men similarly adapted their self-presentations to meet desirable women's gender role expectations.

But does culture construct gender roles? Or do gender roles merely reflect behavior naturally appropriate for men and women? The variety of gender

gender role

a set of behavior expectations (norms) for males and females.

Do you ever present one self to members of your own sex and a different self to members of the other sex?



In Western countries, gender roles are becoming more flexible. No longer is housework necessarily women's work and mechanical work necessarily men's work.

roles across cultures and over time shows that culture indeed constructs our gender roles.

GENDER ROLES VARY WITH CULTURE

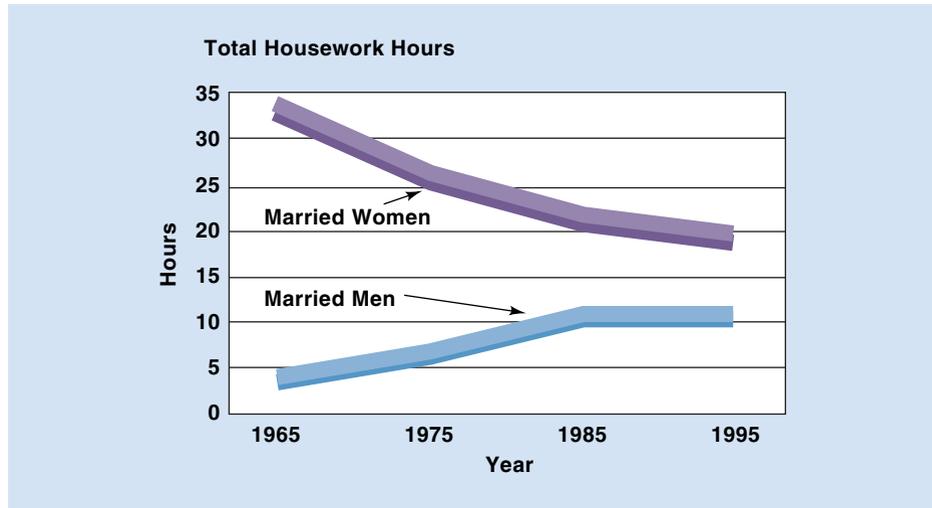
Should women do the housework? Should they be more concerned with promoting their husband's careers than with their own? John Williams, Debra Best, and their collaborators (1990b) asked such questions of university students in 14 cultures. In nearly every one, women students had slightly more egalitarian views than their male peers. But the differences among the countries were far greater. Nigerian and Pakistani students, for example, assumed more distinct roles for men and women than did Dutch and German students. Iftikhar Hassan (1980) of Pakistan's National Institute of Psychology explained the traditional status of Pakistani women:

She knows that parents are not happy at the birth of a girl and she should not complain about parents not sending her to school as she is not expected to take up a job. She is taught to be patient, sacrificing, obedient. . . . If something goes wrong with her marriage she is the one who is to be blamed. If any one of her children do not succeed in life, she is the main cause of their failure. And in the rare circumstance that she seeks a divorce or receives a divorce her chances of second marriage are very slim because Pakistani culture is very harsh on divorced women.

In nomadic, food-gathering societies, boys and girls receive much the same education, and men and women do much the same work. In agricultural

figure 5–4**Who is doing the housework?**

From 1965 to 1995, women were devoting fewer hours to housework tasks, and men more.



Source: From Bianchi & others, 2000.

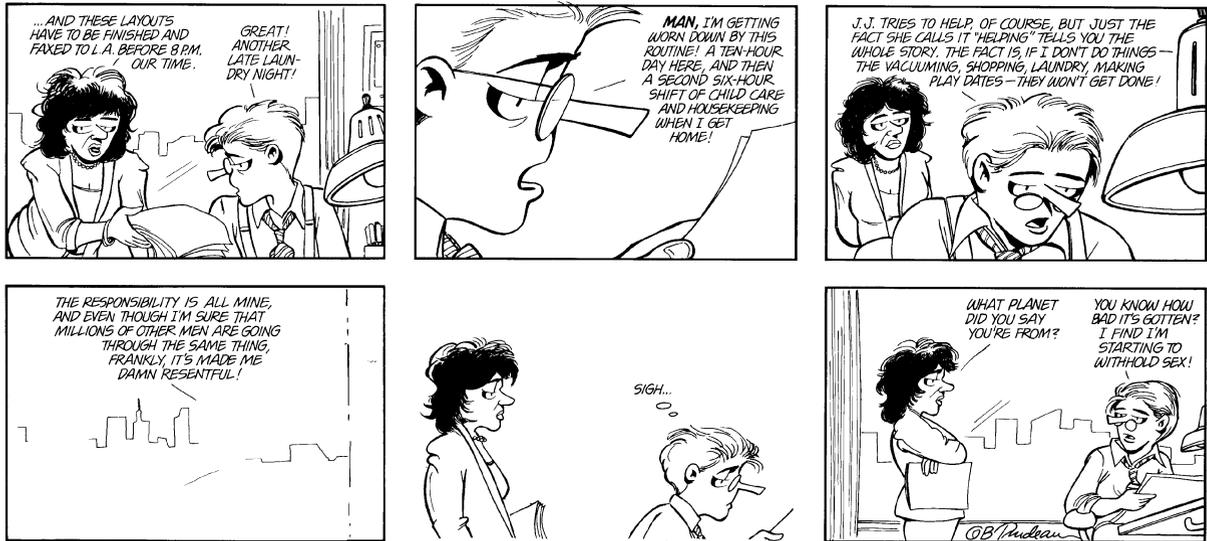
societies, gender roles are more distinct: Women work the fields and stay with the children, while men roam more freely (Segall & others, 1990; Van Leeuwen, 1978). In industrialized societies, roles vary enormously. Women fill 1 in 10 managerial positions in Japan and Germany and nearly 1 in 2 in Australia and the United States (ILO, 1997; Wallace, 2000). In North America, most doctors and dentists are men; in Russia most doctors are women, as are most dentists in Denmark.

GENDER ROLES VARY OVER TIME

In the last half-century—a thin slice of our long history—gender roles have changed dramatically. In 1938, 1 in 5 Americans approved “of a married woman earning money in business or industry if she has a husband capable of supporting her.” By 1996, 4 in 5 approved (Niemi & others, 1989; NORC, 1996). In 1967, 57 percent of first-year American collegians agreed that “the activities of married women are best confined to the home and family.” In 1999, only 28 percent agreed (Astin & others, 1987; Sax & others, 1999).

Behavioral changes have accompanied this attitude shift. Between 1960 and 1998, the proportion of 40-year-old married U.S. women in the workforce doubled—from 38 to 75 percent (Bureau of the Census, 1999). A similar influx of women in the workforce has occurred in Canada, Australia, and Britain.

In 1965, the Harvard Business School had never graduated a woman. In June of 2000, 30 percent of its graduates were women. From 1960 to the end of the century, women as a proportion of graduates rose from 6 to 43 percent in American medical schools and from 3 to 45 percent in law schools (Hunt, 2000). In the mid 1960s, American married women devoted *seven times* as many hours to housework as did their husbands; by the mid 1990s this was down to twice as many hours (Figure 5–4). This striking variation of roles across cultures and over time signals that evolution and biology do not fix gender roles: Culture also bends the genders.



In Western cultures, gender roles are changing, but not this much.

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PEER-TRANSMITTED CULTURE

Cultures, like ice cream, come in many flavors. On Wall Street men wear mostly suits and women wear mostly skirts and dresses; in Scotland many men wear pleated skirts (kilts) as formal dress; in some equatorial cultures (but not others) men and women wear virtually nothing at all. How are such traditions preserved across generations?

The prevailing assumption is what Judith Rich Harris (1998) calls *The Nurture Assumption*: nurture (the way parents bring their children up) governs who their children become. On that much Freudians and behaviorists—and the person in the car ahead of you—agree. Comparing the extremes of loved and abused children suggests that parenting *does* matter. Moreover, children do absorb many of their values, including their political affiliation and religious faith, at home. But if children's personalities are molded by parental example and nurture, then children who grow up in the same families should be noticeably alike, yes?

That presumption is refuted by the most astonishing, agreed-upon, and dramatic recent finding of developmental psychology. In the words of behavior geneticists Robert Plomin and Denise Daniels (1987), "Two children in the same family [are on average] as different from one another as are pairs of children selected randomly from the population."

The evidence from studies of twins and biological and adoptive siblings indicates that genetic influences explain roughly 50 percent of individual variations in personality traits. Shared environmental influences—including the shared home influence—account for only 0 to 10 percent of their personality differences. So what accounts for the other 40 to 50 percent? It's *peer influence*, Harris argues. What children and teens care most about is less what their parents think than what peers think. Children and youth learn their games, their musical tastes, their accents, even their dirty words mostly from peers. And why

not? It's their peers with whom they play and eventually will work and mate. Consider:

- Preschoolers will often refuse to try a certain food despite parents' urgings—until they are put at a table with a group of children who like it.
- Although children of smokers have an elevated smoking rate, the effect seems largely peer mediated. Such children more often have friends who model smoking, who suggest its pleasures, and who offer cigarettes.
- Nazi youth group members 60 years ago mostly came from emotionally supportive, middle-class homes, notes David Rowe (1994). What corrupted them was not bad parenting but the “heavier weight” of cultural change around them.
- Young immigrant children whose families are transplanted into foreign cultures usually grow up preferring the language and norms of their new peer culture. They may “code-switch” when they step back into their homes, but their hearts and minds are with their peer groups. Likewise, deaf children of hearing parents who attend schools for the deaf usually leave their parents' culture and assimilate into deaf culture.



This Scottish wedding photo illustrates a cultural dress tradition maintained across many generations.

Ergo, if we left a group of children with their same schools, neighborhoods, and peers but switched the parents around, says Harris (1996) in taking her argument to its limits, they “would develop into the same sort of adults.” As it happens, the sort of adults they develop into often resemble their parents. But the cultural transmission is less from individual parent to child, she contends, than from the parental group to the children's group. The parents help define their children's schools, neighborhoods, and peers, which in turn influence their children's odds of becoming delinquent, using drugs, or getting pregnant. Moreover, children often take their cues from slightly

older children, who get their cues from older youth, who take theirs from young adults in the parents' generation.

The links of influence from parental group to child group are loose enough that the cultural transmission is never perfect. And in both human and primate cultures, change comes from the young. When one monkey discovers a better way of washing food or when people develop a new idea about fashion, worship styles, or gender roles, the innovation usually comes from the young and is more readily embraced by younger adults. Thus, cultural traditions continue, yet cultures change.

The most heavily researched of roles, gender roles, illustrate culture's impact. Gender roles vary sharply from culture to culture and from time to

time. Much of culture's influence is transmitted not directly by parents but via peers.

Summing up

Conclusions

Biology and culture do not exist in isolation, because culture works upon what is biologically given. How, then, do biology and culture interact? And how do our individual personalities interact with our situations?

BIOLOGY AND CULTURE

We needn't think of evolution and culture as competitors. Cultural norms subtly but powerfully affect our attitudes and behavior, but they don't do so independent of biology. Everything social and psychological is ultimately biological. If others' expectations influence us, that is part of our biological programming. Moreover, what our biological heritage initiates, culture may accentuate. If genes and hormones predispose males to be more physically aggressive than females, culture may amplify this difference through norms that expect males to be tough and females to be the kinder, gentler sex. Natural selection and cultural selection may cooperate similarly in producing genetically advantageous traits—a process evolutionary psychologists call *coevolution*. "The present-day contributions to once-adaptive ends are both genes and culture, and the two are closely interrelated," notes John Archer (1996).

Biology and culture may also **interact**. In humans, biological traits influence how the environment reacts. People respond differently to a Sylvester Stallone than to a Woody Allen. Men, being 8 percent taller and averaging almost double the proportion of muscle mass, may likewise have different experiences than women. Or consider this: A very strong cultural norm dictates that males should be taller than their female mates. In one study, only 1 in 720 married couples violated this norm (Gillis & Avis, 1980). With hindsight, we can speculate a psychological explanation: Perhaps being taller (and older) helps men perpetuate their social power over women. But we can also speculate evolutionary wisdom that might underlie the cultural norm: If people preferred partners of the same height, tall men and short women would often be without partners. As it is, evolution dictates that men tend to be taller than women, and

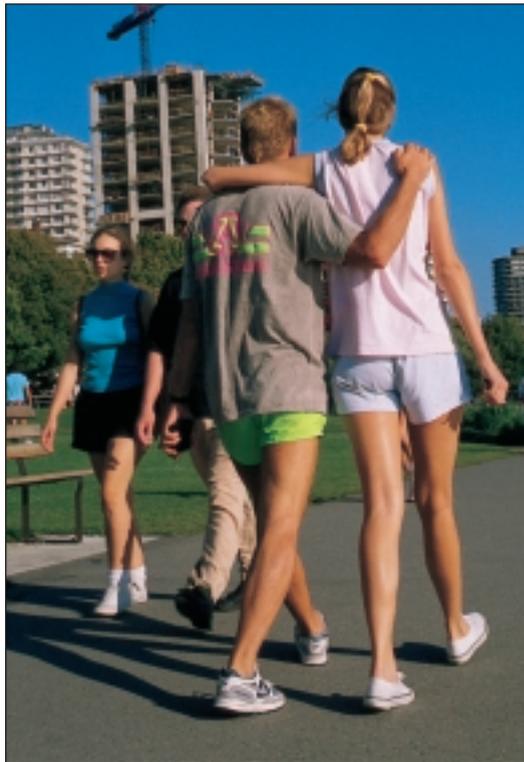
interaction

the effect of one factor (such as biology) depends on another factor (such as environment).



How do biology and culture shape our social roles?

Only very occasionally do couples violate the male-taller norm.



culture dictates the same for couples. So the height norm might well be a result of biology and culture.

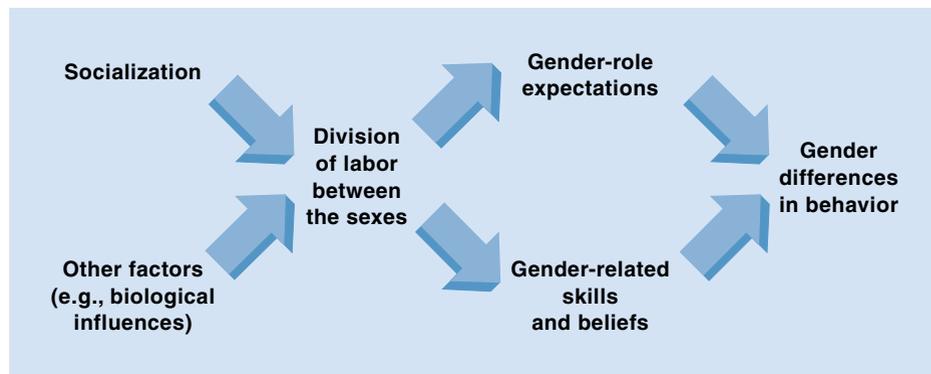
In *Sex Differences in Social Behavior*, Alice Eagly (1987, 1997) and Wendy Wood theorize how biology and culture interact (Figure 5–5). They believe that a variety of factors, including biological influences and childhood socialization, predispose a sexual division of labor. In adult life the immediate causes of gender differences in social behavior are the *roles* that reflect this sexual division of labor. Men, because of their strength and speed, tend to be found in roles demanding physical power. Women’s capacity for childbearing and nursing inclines them to more nurturant roles. Each sex then tends to exhibit the behaviors

expected of those who fill such roles and to have their skills and beliefs shaped accordingly. Analyses of who does what in 185 societies reveals that men alone hunt big game and harvest lumber, women do about 90 percent of the cooking and laundry, and the sexes are equally likely to plant and harvest crops and to milk cows. As role assignments become more equal, Eagly predicts that gender differences “will gradually lessen.” Indeed, note Eagly and Wendy Wood (1999), in cultures with greater equality of gender roles the gender difference in

figure 5–5

A social-role theory of gender differences in social behavior.

Various influences, including childhood experiences and factors, bend males and females toward differing roles. It is the expectations and the skills and beliefs associated with these differing roles that affect men’s and women’s behavior.



Source: Adapted from Eagly, 1987, and Eagly & Wood, 1991.

mate preferences (men seeking youth and domestic skill, women seeking status and earning potential) is less. Likewise, as women's employment in formerly male occupations has increased, the gender difference in self-reported masculinity/femininity has decreased (Twenge, 1997). As men and women enact more similar roles, their psychological differences shrink. Although biology predisposes men to strength tasks and women to infant care, Wood and Eagly (2000) conclude that "the behavior of women and men is sufficiently malleable that individuals of both sexes are fully capable of effectively carrying out organizational roles at all levels."

The effects of biology and socialization may be important insofar as they influence the social roles that people play, for the roles we play influence who we become. If men are more assertive and women more nurturing, this may be an *effect* of their playing powerful versus caregiving roles. When workers (men and women) shift from talking with their supervisors to talking with supervisees, they become more assertive (Moskowitz & others, 1994).

THE GREAT LESSON OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

"There are trivial truths and great truths," declared the physicist Niels Bohr. "The opposite of a trivial truth is plainly false. The opposite of a great truth is also true." Each chapter in this unit on social influence teaches a great truth: the power of the social situation. This great truth about the power of external pressures would sufficiently explain our behavior if we were passive, like tumbleweeds. But unlike tumbleweeds, we are not just blown here and there by the environment. We act; we react. We respond, and we get responses. We can resist the social situation and sometimes even change it. Thus each of these "social influence" chapters concludes by calling attention to the opposite of the great truth: the power of the person.

Perhaps stressing the power of culture leaves you somewhat uncomfortable. Most of us resent any suggestion that external forces determine our behavior; we see ourselves as free beings, as the originators of our actions (well, at least of our good actions). We sense that believing in social determinism can lead to what philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre called "bad faith"—evading responsibility by blaming something or someone for one's fate.

Actually, social control (the power of the situation) and personal control (the power of the person) no more compete with one another than do biological and cultural explanations. Social and personal explanations of our social behavior are both valid, for at any moment we are both the creatures and the creators of our social worlds. We may well be the products of our genes and environment. But it is also true that the future is coming, and it is our job to decide where it is going. Our choices today determine our environment tomorrow.

Social situations do profoundly influence individuals. But individuals also influence social situations. The two *interact*. Asking whether external situations or inner dispositions (or culture or evolution) determine behavior is like asking whether length or width determines the area of a field.

The interaction occurs in at least three ways (Snyder & Ickes, 1985). First, a given social situation often *affects different people differently*. Because our minds do not see reality identically, each of us responds to a situation as we construe it. And some people are more sensitive and responsive to social situations than

Food for thought: If Bohr's statement is a great truth, what is its opposite?

*"The words of truth are always paradoxical."
Lao-tzu, The Simple Way*

others (Snyder, 1983). The Japanese, for example, are more responsive to social expectations than the British (Argyle & others, 1978).

Second, interaction between persons and situations occurs because people often *choose their situations* (Ickes & others, 1997). Given a choice, sociable people elect situations that evoke social interaction. When you chose your college, you were also choosing to expose yourself to a specific set of social influences. Ardent political liberals are unlikely to settle in Orange County, California, and join the Chamber of Commerce. They are more likely to live in Toronto and join Greenpeace (or to read the *Times of London* rather than the *Manchester Guardian*)—in other words, to choose a social world that reinforces their inclinations.

Third, people often *create their situations*. Recall again that our preconceptions can be self-fulfilling: If we expect someone to be extraverted, hostile, feminine, or sexy, our actions toward the person may induce the very behavior we expect. What, after all, makes a social situation but the people in it? A liberal environment is created by liberals. What takes place in the sorority is created by the members. The social environment is not like the weather—something that just happens to us. It is more like our homes—something we make for ourselves.

Summing up

Biological and cultural explanations need not be contradictory. Indeed, they interact. Biological factors operate within a cultural context, and culture builds upon a biological foundation.

The great truth about the power of social influence is but half the truth if separated from its complementary truth: the power of the person. Per-

sons and situations interact in at least three ways. First, individuals vary in how they interpret and react to a given situation. Second, people choose many of the situations that influence them. Third, people help create their social situations. Thus power resides both in persons and in situations. We create and are created by our social worlds.

PS Personal Postscript: Should we view ourselves as products or architects of our social worlds?

The reciprocal causation between situations and persons allows us to see people as either *reacting to* or *acting upon* their environment. Each perspective is correct, for we are both the products and the architects of our social worlds. Is one perspective wiser, however? In one sense, it is wise to see ourselves as the creatures of our environments (lest we become too proud of our achievements and blame ourselves too much for our problems) and to see others as free actors (lest we become paternalistic and manipulative).

Perhaps we would do well more often to assume the reverse, however—to view ourselves as free agents and to view others as influenced by their environments. We would then assume self-efficacy as we view ourselves and seek understanding and social reform as we relate to others. (If we view others as influenced by their situations, we are more likely to understand and empathize than smugly to judge unpleasant behavior as freely chosen by “immoral,” “sadistic,” or “lazy” persons.) Most religions encourage us to take responsibility

“If we explain poverty, or emotional disorders, or crime and delinquency or alcoholism, or even unemployment, as resulting from personal, internal, individual defect . . . then there simply is not much we can do about prevention.”
George Albee, 1979

for ourselves but to refrain from judging others. Does religion teach this because our natural inclination is to excuse our own failures while blaming others for theirs?



Making the Social Connection

This chapter's discussion of gender and culture introduced Alice Eagly's theorizing about gender. Use the Social Connection CD-ROM to view Eagly's recounting how social movements in the 1970s led her to become involved in gender research.