

# 5

## Geographies of Identity and Difference

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### CHAPTER OVERVIEW

- In recent years, human geography has undergone a “cultural turn.”
- Critical perspectives are highly relevant to discussions of difference, power, and inequality.
- Variables that affect identity include language, religion, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality.
- From discussions of difference, the concept of “other” is of particular importance.
- Tourism is another area of study for human geographers where the concepts of “otherness” come into play.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

- define and differentiate between species and race, and define and describe how racism became prevalent throughout the world;
- understand the three myths of human evolution;
- understand the significance of the cultural turn in geography and the importance of understanding the influence of culture and identity;
- define and differentiate between assimilation and acculturation, and how places become multi-cultural;
- define gender and sexuality and understand how they are expressions of identity;
- describe how tourism is felt differently between more and less developed countries, as well as between local residents and tourists, and;
- demonstrate knowledge of the type of real-world issues such as genocide, multiculturalism, identity, well-being, gender relations, tourism, and health to which critical geography can be applied.

### KEY TERMS

**Acculturation** The process by which an ethnic group is absorbed into a larger society while retaining aspect of distinct identity. (p. 180)

**Apartheid** The South African policy by which groups of people, as defined by the authorities, were spatially separated between 1948 and 1994. (p. 175)

**Assimilation** The process by which an ethnic group is absorbed into a larger society and loses its own identity. (p. 180)

**Chain migration** A process of movement from one location to another through time sustained by social links of kinship or friendship; often results in distinct areas of ethnic settlement in rural or urban areas. (p. 179)

**Critical geography** A collection of ideas and practices concerned with challenging inequalities as these are evident in landscape. (p. 170)

**Ecotourism** Tourism that is generally more environmentally sustainable and often focuses on providing tourists with experiences that are within distinctive, and often threatened, natural environments; sometimes efforts are made to help support ecosystem conservation. (p. 200)

**Ethnic group** A group whose members perceive themselves as different from others because of a common ancestry and shared culture. (p. 178)

**Ethnicity** A socially constructed system of affiliation, or identity, with a group of people arising from a common ancestry, culture, or both; contributes to social belonging and exclusion. (p. 178)

**Feminism** The movement for and advocacy of equal rights for women and men, and a commitment to improve the relative position of women in society. (p.181)

**Folk culture** The practices, attitudes, beliefs, traits, and preferences held by a small but cohesive group of people; often viewed as traditional, homogenous, and on the margins of society. (p. 197)

**Gender** The socially constructed differences between men and women, as contrasted to the biological and anatomical differences between the sexes; gendered differences, such as masculinity and femininity, vary greatly over time and space. (p. 180)

**Genocide** The organized and systematic effort of destroying a racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic, or other minority group, through violence (killing), persecution (cultural genocide), or both. (p. 175)

**Ghetto** A residential district in an urban area with a concentration of a particular ethnic group. (p. 175)

**Hegemony** A social condition in which members of a society interpret their interests in terms of the world view of a dominant group. (p. 171)

**Iconography** The description and interpretation of visual images, including landscape, in order to uncover their symbolic meanings; the identity of a region as expressed through symbols. (p. 170)

**Locale** The setting or context for social interaction; a term that has become popular in human geography as an alternative to *place*. (p. 199)

**Multiculturalism** A policy that endorses the right of ethnic groups to remain distinct rather than to be assimilated into a dominant society. (p. 180)

**Nativism** An intense favouring of the rights of native-born inhabitants over those who are foreign born (immigrants). (p. 178)

**Patriarchy** A social system in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women. (p. 183)

**Popular culture** The practices, attitudes, beliefs, traits, and preferences held in common by large numbers of people who are otherwise heterogeneous, and considered to be the mainstream of society; includes aspects of fashion, food, music, recreation, use of technology, and so on. (p. 197)

**Power** The capacity to affect outcomes; more specifically, the ability to dominate others by means of violence, force, manipulation, or authority. (p. 171)

**Race** A subspecies; a physically distinguishable population within a species; in the context of humans, an entirely socially constructed concept as there are no genetically distinct sub-species of humans. (p. 172)

**Racism** A particular form of prejudice that attributes characteristics of superiority or inferiority to a group of people who share some physically inherited characteristics. (p. 174)

**Representation** A depiction of the world; all such depictions are subjective in the sense that they are affected by the identity of the person making them. (p. 170)

**Sexism** Attitudes or beliefs that serve to justify sexual inequalities by incorrectly attributing or denying certain capacities either to women or to men. (p. 183)

**Sexuality** A component of personal and social identity, connected to one's sexual orientation, preferences, and practices. (p. 186)

**Society** A structured systems of human organization in which members of a cultural group live; provides protection, continuity, security, and identity for its members. (p. 170)

**Species** A group of organisms able to produce fertile offspring among themselves but not with any other group. (p. 172)

**Spectacle** Places and events that are carefully constructed for the purposes of mass leisure and consumption. (p. 202)

**Welfare geography** An approach to human geography that documents and explains social and spatial variations; issues of injustice and inequality are often of paramount importance. (p. 190)

**Well-being** The individual or collective state of health, happiness, and prosperity; synonymous with *welfare*. (p. 190)

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Drawing from examples, discuss the history of the concept of “genocide.” Discuss which international bodies are concerned with it and why it is difficult to define and identify its occurrence.
2. Drawing from examples, describe the factors that facilitated the rise of mass tourism. Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of this form of economic development in locales.
3. Discuss how feminist geographers study gender and landscape and, drawing from examples, describe the importance of this type of study.
4. Is the world closer to the eradication of racism? Why or why not?
5. Drawing from examples, discuss the difference between assimilation and acculturation.

## LINKS OF INTEREST

- United Nations Human Rights Council  
<http://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/pages/hrcindex.aspx>
- Sacred Destinations  
<http://www.sacred-destinations.com/>
- United Nations Agreements on Human Rights  
<http://www.hrweb.org/legal/undocs.html>
- Ethnologue Language Index  
[http://www.ethnologue.com/country\\_index.asp](http://www.ethnologue.com/country_index.asp)
- UNESCO's Linguistic Diversity and Multilingualism on Internet  
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/access-to-knowledge/linguistic-diversity-and-multilingualism-on-internet/>
- Religion and Place  
<http://www.religionandplace.org.uk/>
- The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life  
<http://religions.pewforum.org/>

## SUGGESTED READINGS

**Blunt, A., et al., eds. 2003. *Cultural Geography in Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press.**

Undergraduate text emphasizing how to do cultural geographic research; practical instruction in key methodologies and discussion of research that puts the methodology into practice.

**Hall, R. E., ed. 2008. *Racism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: An Empirical Analysis of Skin Color*. New York: Springer.**

Important text focusing on both the flawed concept of race and the reality of racism.

**Johnston, L., and R. Longhurst. 2010. *Space, Place, and Sex: Geographies of Sexualities*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.**

Drawing on a diverse array of examples from the past and present, this text is a critical geography of sex and sexuality and examines their intimate connection to space and place.

**Nelson, L., and J. Seager, eds. 2005. *A Companion to Feminist Geography*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.**

Valuable overview of feminist practices and approaches.

Teixerira, C., W. Li, and A. Kobayashi. 2012. *Immigrant Geographies of North American Cities*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Examines immigration, migration and settlement patterns in North American cities through a geographical perspective using a variety of case studies.

## YOUTUBE VIDEOS

TEDx Talks. 2015. “Multiculturalism as a threat and multiculturalism as an asset | Rebar Jaff | TEDxErbil.” YouTube video, 13:19. Posted February 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSHKircIoA>

1. How is acculturation discussed in relation to becoming a Canadian?
  - The speaker spends a lot of time discussing “becoming Canadian.” He mentions in several parts how he didn’t know where he fit in—there were all different kinds of people. He talks about “what are your grandparents” and it turns out, according to him, that the more diverse your background is the more Canadian you are. He discusses how there are many different cultures existing within Canada and Canadians are a group of people from different places.
2. What is the roll of negative versus positive energy in development?
  - The speaker talks about being able to go back to his home country (Iraq) and bring the positive energy he had gained from travelling abroad, living in Canada, France, and learning the languages. He indicates that multiculturalism takes work, acceptance takes work, and positive energy is required.

TEDx Talks. 2013. “New life for old towns through sustainable tourism: Alex Kerr at TEDxKyoto.” YouTube video, 14:53. Posted October 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLRanIhp2jg>

1. What has Japan traditionally been doing to try to stop the depopulation of the small villages?
  - Traditionally the Japanese government responded with engineering works. Large highways were built, large museums, art installations, streams were covered in cement. They took a very physical response or a technologically driven response with the hopes that modernization would bring people back to the small villages. It did not work.
2. What is the “appeal of nothing special”?
  - It is the true appeal of a place. The idea that a sustainable, eco-friendly tourist business is able to bring people to a place. It allows people to understand the historical culture of a place.