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## Gender, Ethnicity, and Cultural Issues in Research

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## Conceptual Limitations of Demographic Labels

### Race

- Traditionally used to denote inherent (i.e., biological) differences
- However, racial groups in the US are not biologically distinct
- Rather, racial groupings have social and political implications

### Ethnicity

- Define how you conceptualize ethnicity
- Broad groupings are often inaccurate and refer to heterogeneous groups
- Collect additional information such as country of origin of participant or parents, and geographic residence

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## Conceptual Limitations of Demographic Labels

### Sex

- Traditionally used to denote biological differences

### Gender

- Includes a sociocultural component
- Implies psychosocial traits

### Sexual Orientation

- Refers to "long-term pattern of attractions, behaviors, and identity"

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### Pathways leading from ethnicity to outcomes

- Develop and test apriori hypotheses about the roles of culture through
  - Literature review
  - Consultation with knowledgeable colleagues
  - Focus Groups
- Consider the effects of discrimination and marginalization due to minority status as a possible explanation for ethnic differences
  - Measure perceived discrimination

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### Pathways leading from ethnicity to outcomes

- Minority groups may have lower SES
  - May affect outcome
  - Measure individual, family, community SES
  - Stratify by SES
- Ethnic differences may reflect degree of acculturation, or psychosocial change generated from contact with another culture.
- Ethnic differences could reflect experiences related to migration.

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### Assessment in Ethnic Minorities

*Guidelines for Research in Ethnic Minority Communities*  
(Download at <http://www.apa.org/pi/oema/onlinebr.html>)

- Ensure equivalence of measures used across cultures, in terms of:
  1. Translation Equivalence
    - When a measure can be translated accurately across languages
  2. Conceptual equivalence
    - When the functional aspect of the construct serves the same purpose in different cultures even though the specific behaviors, or thoughts may be different
  3. Metric equivalence
    - When the score on a measure means the same thing across cultures

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## More Assessment

1. Use measures that were normed and standardized on the group of interest
2. Otherwise, interpret with caution
3. Use multiple measures and methods to determine whether tests converge
4. Use knowledge of the culture to interpret the test within context
5. Consult with researchers who are familiar with the ethnic/cultural group
6. Use tests that are meaningful, linguistically, to the participants

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## Research Design

- Use cultural factors, background, and experiences of the ethnic group as a context through which to conceptualize and understand research
- Understand that ethnic groups are generally quite heterogeneous
  - Consider differences among subgroups.
- Know whether the research question is culturally relevant, sensitive, and appropriate
- Consider the impact the research and findings for the ethnic/cultural

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## Procedures

- In recruiting, make an effort to form collaborations with individuals involved in the ethnic/cultural community of interest
- Note limitations due to sampling strategy
- Describe the sample as carefully and specifically as possible

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## Procedures

- Convey tasks and instructions using understandable language
- Ensure that all personnel are trained in issues of language and culture
- Be aware of ethnic response sets or cultural factors that can influence performance or test responses
- Do not assume that all members of a group will have the same mastery of the English or non-English language

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## Interpretation and Dissemination of Findings

- Consider possible role of differences in background, opportunities, and cultural factors
- Consider alternative explanations
- Consider how your own experiences, background, and biases may have affected the research and its interpretations

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## Interpretation and Dissemination of Findings

- Request reviews from ethnic/cultural minority and non-minority colleagues
- Do not adopt the deficit model interpretation
  - Differences reflect undesirable characteristics of the ethnic/cultural minority group
- Disseminate research findings in the scientific literature and within the appropriate communities

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