

4.9 Contexts that shape how evidence is viewed

Historical, social and cultural contexts can shape how evidence is viewed by, for example, racialized communities (the R in PROGRESS-Plus, which we introduced in **section 1.7**) and by women (the G in PROGRESS-Plus), among others. Some contexts relate directly to past efforts to generate evidence, while others relate to past efforts to portray specific groups as ‘different,’ which may then manifest as these groups being skeptical about any evidence purporting to be for or about them. These contexts need to be understood if we are going to produce and communicate evidence in ways that will be acted upon.(10; 11)

As we return to in **section 4.10**, contexts, as well as their distinct rights and ways of knowing, can also shape how evidence is viewed by Indigenous peoples. Context can also shape whether and how misinformation flourishes, which is the focus of **section 4.11**.

Examples of contexts	Potential implications for how evidence is produced and communicated
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Directly related to past efforts to generate evidence in the US

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Effective treatment was withheld from Black men with syphilis so that the progression of untreated syphilis could be monitored (bit.ly/3DeaH9x)
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Trials of treatment for heart disease did not include women yet the findings were assumed to apply to them (bit.ly/3olxgTH)
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Standardized testing of students has been done in ways that disadvantaged students of colour, particularly those from low-income families (bit.ly/3wDICGk)

Give greater attention to what is (and is not) examined, by whom it is examined (e.g., research teams comprised of people drawn from different contexts), how it is examined (e.g., more participatory approaches that are ethically grounded and equity oriented), and why it is examined (e.g., to identify strengths to be built upon)

Related to past efforts to portray specific groups as ‘different’ in their newly adopted countries

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False depictions of Chinese immigrants as dirty and diseased were used to justify the particularly strict enforcement of sanitary regulations in their San Francisco community (bit.ly/3qzeJFV)
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Implicit messages about Black people in Thatcher-era Britain being an ‘external’ source of the country’s problems appeared in books and films and were accepted as true by some audiences (bit.ly/3naBa2n)
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Media coverage framed certain populations such as Muslim immigrants to Europe and Iraqi detainees after the US invasion of Iraq as already ‘lost’ (to unemployment, starvation and prison) and not worthy of societal protection (bit.ly/3wGrKyE)

Give greater attention to how evidence is portrayed in various media and draw on these insights in seeking to anticipate how groups will respond to evidence for or about them, or to understand why they are responding in the way they are