chapter 8

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WHEN WE THINK ABOUT RACE, we typically think of the most primordial and basic attributes of a person, fixed and permanent, a foundation of identity. We assume that race is carefully bounded, with no overlap—as my grade school social studies textbook taught me. The chapter on "race" discussed only three: "Negroid, Mongoloid, and Caucasoid." Nobody could be a member of any other race, and nobody could belong to more than one race.

To me, the most interesting part of the book chapter was the illustrations. There were three: a black guy in a loincloth, holding a spear, standing in front of a grass hut; an Asian guy in a silk kimono, holding some sort of scroll, standing in front of a pagoda; and a white guy in a business suit, holding a briefcase, standing in front of a skyscraper. All were men. We were supposed to classify the three races, from least to the most civilized, technologically sophisticated, inventive, and intelligent. It doesn't take a genius to figure out which of the three "races" the illustrator belonged to.

How do sociologists think about race?

Race and Ethnicity

Sociologists tend not to see fixed, immutable biologically based characteristics but the ways in which we have come to see those characteristics as timeless and universal. Race is less fixed than fluid, less eternal and more historical. In fact, race is relatively recent, an invention of Europeans in the eighteenth century. Rather than immutable, it is among the parts of our identity that is in greatest flux at the present, as individuals are increasingly biracial or even multiracial. With race, as with other features of social life, believing is seeing: When we believe that there are only a certain number of races, then we will "see" those, and only those, races.

Race is more than a system . . . that categorizes people [according to physical characteristics]. . . . [It] is a foundation of identity and a basis for social inequality.

To a sociologist, race is more than a system of classification, a system that categorizes people. Race is also one of the bases on which our society perceives, rewards, and punishes

people. Being from different races is often a primary marker of structured social inequality and a justification for discrimination. Race is among the foremost predictors of your experience in society.

As with class, gender, age, and ethnicity, race is a foundation of identity and a basis for social inequality.

Distinguishing between Race and Ethnicity

Race and *ethnicity* are sometimes used interchangeably, but actually they are based on two different assumptions. **Race** depends on an assumption of biological distinction. You can be Black or White and live in any country in the world, have any religion, and speak any language. All that matters is your skin color and whatever other physical trait counts. However, **ethnicity** depends on an assumption of cultural distinction. You can belong to any race and have a Swedish ethnicity—if you speak Swedish at home, attend the Swedish Lutheran Church, eat lutefisk (cod soaked in lye and served with bacon fat), and celebrate St. Lucia's Day on December 13 by dancing with lit candles on your head, as many do in Sweden.

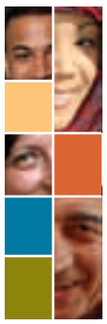
Or if you do none of those things at all. Few Swedish American students at undergraduate colleges today eat lutefisk or wear crowns of candles! There are likely few, if any, cultural differences between Swedish students and everyone else on campus. In fact, you'd probably never know they are Swedish, except for last names like "Swenson" and a few Swedish flags on dorm room walls. Their Swedish ethnicity resided entirely in how their ancestors might have lived.

Like race, ethnicity has no basis in any empirical fact.

Yet race and ethnicity are the single most predictive factors in determining a person's eventual social position. Race and ethnicity can be used to predict how you vote, whom you will marry, and what sort of job you will have when you graduate from college. Race and ethnicity can predict your attitudes on birth control, your musical tastes, and whether or not you go to church. They can even be used to predict what church you go to! In spite of repeated, extensive attempts at racial integration, Americans tend to live in segregated neighborhoods, go to segregated churches, make friends almost entirely within their own race or ethnic group, and date almost entirely within their own race or ethnic group. (There's an old joke among Protestant clergy that the most segregated time in American history is 10 a.m. every Sunday.)

Students often say they are amazed at how race and ethnicity are experienced in class. Students may sit anywhere they wish, but by the third day of the semester the African American, White, and Hispanic groups are as strictly segregated as if they had been assigned that way. If forced to integrate, they will separate again as soon as they are divided into small discussion groups. Why?

How can a category be nothing and so obviously something, at the same time?



Sociology and our World

Why Do All the Black Kids Sit Together in the Cafeteria?

Psychologist Beverly Daniel Tatum (1997) noticed black and white kids separating in classes, in clubs, and in tables in the cafeteria, even when there seemed to be little bad feeling between the groups, even when the teachers encouraged them to "not notice" race at all. In *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*, she argues that this separation is not always a bad thing. White privilege so pervades our society that the Black kids tend to grow up with internalized oppression, a negatively stereotyped "ethnic self." Even if few of the White people around are actively trying to be racist, being the "only one" invariably leads to feelings of isolation and lower self-worth. Minorities must find ways to be in the majority, to be the "norm" some of the time, in order to establish and affirm a positive identity. So they seek each other out in the classroom and the cafeteria.

What Is Race?

To this day, we still do not have a good definition of race. Some textbooks say, "a set of obvious physical traits singled out by members of a community or society as socially significant." Others say "a set of social relationships that allows attributes or competencies to be assigned on the basis of biologically grounded features." But what's "obvious," and what features are "biologically grounded"? Head shape? Eye color? Earwax? There are only two major types of earwax, and according to the experts who study such things, about 90 percent of Asians and Native Americans but less than 20 percent of other racial groups have the type known as *gray-grainy*. No other "biologically grounded feature" appears nearly as often, although no one has ever suggested that earwax is an indicator of cultural superiority!

What about skin color? In the United States we assign people to "white," "black," and "yellow" categories, but in Central and South America, there are a dozen or more shades (in Brazil, over 40), and we can perceive thousands of color gradients. Even within a single individual, skin color can change daily, darkening or lightening due to such factors as diet, exposure to the sun, or age. Trying to pinpoint a race based on skin color is absurd.

Differences within racial categories are often greater than differences between them—even among beauty queens. ▼

This is why sociologists have come to understand that race as a biological distinction has no basis in any empirical fact. To sociologists, race is more of a social construction than a biological fact.

Most cultures divide people into good and bad types on the basis of their cultural traits, usually "us," the real people, against "them," the cannibals (who eat the wrong food), barbarians (who speak the wrong language), or infidels (who worship the wrong God). But physical appearance rarely enters the equation. Historically, the word *race* meant the same thing as *culture:* the French "race" lived in France and spoke French, and the Russian "race" lived in Russia and spoke Russian.

Not until the eighteenth century did physical attributes become determining factors in "race." In the United States, debates about the morality of "Negro slavery" indicated a concern for skin color that was more important than the very different cultures from which those Negro slaves came. By the nineteenth century, "race science" tried to give the real people/barbarian

division a scientific-sounding gloss arguing that some "races" of people were more highly evolved than others, just as mammals are more highly evolved than reptiles and fish. And, just as mammals are physiologically different from reptiles and fish, the more highly evolved races differed from the less highly evolved, not only culturally, but physiologically.

It turns out that the race scientists got it wrong. People are actually far more physiologically similar than different to suggest we are from different races. Genetic makeup, blood type, facial type, skin color, and every other physical attribute vary more within the groups we call races than between them. You can get distinct races only if a group is isolated for many generations, which prevents any forms of cross-breeding. No human group has ever been isolated long enough (the Australian aboriginals come closest, cut off from the mainland of Asia for 40,000 years, but they're still 100,000 or more years short).

Sociologically, then, race isn't "real"—that is, there are no distinct races that are pure and clearly demarcated from others. And there haven't been such things in millennia. However, it is a sociological maxim (first offered by sociologists W. I. Thomas and D. S. Thomas in 1928) that "things that are perceived as real are real in their consequences." Most people believe there are distinct races, with distinct characteristics, and therefore social life is often arranged as if there were. It's less that we believe it when we see it and more that we see it when we believe it.

Biraciality and Multiraciality

There is no such thing as a "pure" race. Every human group has mixed ancestry. An estimated 30 to 70 percent of North American Blacks have some White European ancestors (Herskovits, 1930; Roberts, 1975), and 30 to 50 percent of North American Whites have some Native American ancestors (Table 8.1). Even so, interracial romantic relationships have often been considered deviant and forbidden. Such relationships were labeled *miscegenation* and punishable by prison sentences in all but nine states until 1967 (Sollors, 2000). Lawmakers argued that they were against nature and against God's law, that they were an insult to the institution of marriage and a threat to the social fabric. Children of mixed-race unions were called half-breeds, or to be more precise, mulattos (Black–White) or mestizos (White–Indian), and considered morally and intellectually inferior to members of both races. Novelists and

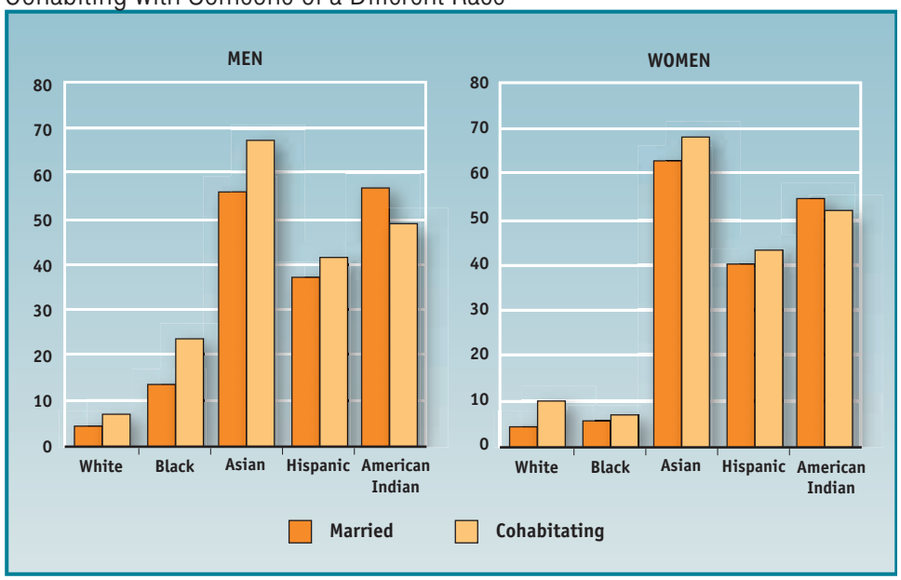
TABLE 8.1

Multiracial Identification by Race: People Recorded as One Race Who Are Also Recorded as One or More Other Races

	RACIAL IDENTIFICATION (MILLIONS)	MULTIRACIAL IDENTIFICATION (MILLIONS)	PERCENT MULTIRACIAL
White	216.5	5.1	2.3
Black	36.2	1.5	4.2
Asian	11.7	1.4	12.4
Other	18.4	3.0	16.4
American Indian and Alaska Native	3.9	1.4	36.4
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.7	0.3	44.8

Source: U.S. Census, 2000.

FIGURE 8.1 Percentage of Americans in Couples Married to or Cohabiting with Someone of a Different Race



Source: U.S. Census, 2000.

screenwriters often made their villains "half-breeds" as a shorthand way of denoting that they were morally depraved and not to be trusted.

The legal restrictions against intermarriage have been gone for nearly 40 years, and popular support has shifted considerably: In 1958, 96 percent of Whites disapproved of Black–White intermarriage, but in 1997, 77 percent *approved* (Kristof, 2004) (Figure 8.1). Although they have increased in recent years, intermarriage and interracial romantic relationships are still stigmatized. It is interesting that just as magazine articles and dire warnings were given to White Americans at the turn of the last century about "race suicide," now some popular magazine articles and films suggest that a Black person who dates or marries a White person is betraying his or her race. On MTV's *The Real World: Philadelphia*, Karamo, who is Black, is outraged when a White guy and a Black girl start dating; he even threatens, "jokingly," to cut the White guy's throat. But then he dates a Latino with impunity, perhaps thinking that it is acceptable because they are gay and will not produce children.

In the 2000 census, there were at least 7 million of those children: Of the population, 2 percent were identified as biracial and multiracial. Half were under the age of 18, so it is evident that the population will grow. Perhaps *biracial* will become a new ethnicity. In the past, people of mixed races usually just "picked one."

The Sociology of Race and Ethnicity

Sociologists see race and ethnicity as two of the ways that many societies organize the allocation of goods and resources. Some people are set apart for unequal treatment, receiving more or less political power, economic resources, and social prestige. Assumed physical or cultural characteristics called "race" or "ethnicity" are arbitrary markers that serve to legitimate social inequality.

Yet race and ethnicity are not all about inequality. They also give us a profound sense of identity. If you are African American, you have access to an enormous infrastructure of political, social, and economic organizations, churches, colleges, fine arts, and mass media that you might not want to give up even if your race became irrelevant. People lacking recognizable ethnic heritages often envy those whose grandparents told stories about the old country, or who can plan a visit overseas to connect with their roots, or who can point to a famous novel and say "it's about us." The story of being a racial or ethnic minority in America is as often a story of pride as it is of prejudice.

Minority Groups

A racial or ethnic minority group is not defined strictly by being a numerical minority. In fact, there are more "minorities" in the United States than the "majority" population. Blacks constitute 71 percent of the population of Allendale County, South Carolina, and 0.3 percent of the population of Blaine County, Montana, but no one would say they are a minority group in only one of those places. And not all groups that are few in numbers are necessarily minorities. There are only 2.8 million people of Swedish ethnicity in the United States, a relatively small number, but according to the 2000 Census, 27 percent have graduated from college, 33 percent are in managerial/professional jobs, and their median household income is $42,500, all higher than the national average. Clearly, they are not subjected to significant amounts of discrimination.

For a race or ethnic group to be classified as a **minority group**, it needs to have four characteristics:

1. *Differential power.* There must be significant differences in access to economic, social, and political resources. Group members may hold fewer professional jobs and have a higher poverty rate, a lower household income, greater incidence of disease, or a lower life expectancy, all factors that point to lifelong patterns of discrimination and social inequality.
2. *Identifiability.* Minority group members share (or are assumed to share) physical or cultural traits that distinguish them from the dominant group.
3. *Ascribed status.* Membership is something you are born with. Membership is not voluntary. You are born into it, and you cannot change it. Affiliation in many ethnic groups is a matter of choice—you can decide how much of your French heritage, if any, you want to embrace—but you can't wake up one morning and decide to be Japanese.
4. *Solidarity and group awareness.* There must be awareness of membership in a definable category of people, so that there are clearly defined "us" and "them." The minority becomes an **in-group** (Sumner, [1906] 2002), and its members tend to distrust or dislike members of the dominant **out-group.** When a group is the object of long-term prejudice and discrimination, feelings of "us versus them" can become intense.

Majority Groups

Minority groups and **majority groups** are often constructed in the United States not so much through race as through skin color: dark people versus light people, people "of color" versus people who are "White." In an interesting linguistic experiment called the Implicit Association Test, students were given word association tests, and all of them, regardless of their own race, tended to associate "White" with purity,

goodness, and happiness, and "Black" with corruption, evil, and sadness (Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz, 1998; Hofmann et al., 2005). Within racial groups, people who are lighter are privileged over people who are darker (Greenwald and Farnham, 2000; Greenwald, 1998). When the African American sports legend O. J. Simpson was arrested on suspicion of murdering his estranged wife and her companion, he appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine. The photograph was manipulated to make him look considerably darker than he did in real life.

Whiteness becomes the standard, the "norm," like being male and heterosexual. It is invisible, at least to those who are White (or male or heterosexual). A number of years ago, in a seminar, we were discussing whether all women were, by definition, "sisters," in spite of race and ethnicity, because they all had essentially the same life experiences and because all women faced a common oppression by men. A White woman asserted that simply being women created bonds that transcended racial differences. A Black woman disagreed.

"When you wake up in the morning and look in a mirror, what do you see?" she asked the White woman.

"I see a woman," replied the White woman.

"That's precisely the problem," responded the Black woman. "I see a *Black* woman."

The White woman saw only *woman*, not *White*, because she enjoyed privilege—such as never having to think about the implications of being White or the impact race had on her everyday interactions. "Whiteness" was invisible to her, just as "maleness" is invisible to men, and "heterosexuality" invisible to heterosexuals. The Black woman saw race because race was how she was *not* privileged; it was there in every interaction every day, in every glimpse in the mirror (Kimmel, 1996).

How We Got White People. The privilege of Whiteness does not depend on your skin color. It has a history and is the result of political positioning. During the nineteenth century, ethnologists, anthropologists, and sociologists traveled around the world, dividing people into races, ordering them from the most to least intelligent, moral, interesting, and evolved. They found hundreds of races, divided into ten broad categories (Table 8.2).

Teutonic people (from England, Germany, and Scandinavia) were defined as White, but people from other parts of Europe were not. The U.S. Census separated them on forms. Magazine illustrations, popular songs, and sociology textbooks characterized these "others" as savage, lazy, sexually promiscuous, born criminals, and responsible for the "social disintegration" of the slums. They were denied jobs and places to live. In the South, many were lynched along with Blacks.

The furor of racial classification in the late nineteenth century and the "discovery" that Europe had inferior and superior races was directly related to a fear of immigration. Established groups from northern Europe were afraid of being overrun by immigrants from southern Europe.

Before 1880, most European immigrants were German, French, English, or Scots-Irish. They were mostly middle class and Protestant, and they settled in small towns, where they assimilated quickly into the middle-class, Protestant

TABLE 8.2

Discredited Pseudo-Scientific Racial Categories

FAMILY	LOCATION	MEAN CRANIAL CAPACITY
Teutonic family	Northern Europe	92
Semitic family	Middle East	89
Celtic family	Northern Europe	87
Pelasgic family	Southern Europe	84
Chinese family	East Asia	82
Polynesian family	Polynesia	86
Native African family	West Africa	83
Nilotic family	East Africa	80
Toltecan family	Central America	79
Australian (aboriginal) family	Australia	75

Source: Gould, 1995: 55.

population. But between 1880 and 1920, 23 million immigrants came to the United States, too fast to disperse and blend. Instead they piled up in cities; in 1900, immigrants and their children made up more than 70 percent of populations of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago. They were primarily working class and poor; they spoke Italian, Polish, or Yiddish; and they were more often Catholic or Jewish (Van Vugt, 1999; Walch, 1994).

The U.S.–born English-German, Protestant, small-town elite feared these new "primitive" groups (Roediger, 1991). By 1924 the door to immigration from most of Europe (not England) slammed shut (Saxton, 1971, 1990). Because the immigrants tended to have larger families than the native elites, President Theodore Roosevelt raised the alarm of "race suicide" and urged Anglo-Saxon women to have more children, just as poor and immigrant families were advised to limit the number of children they had. By the 1920s and 1930s, scientists developed theories of *eugenics,* the science of "breeding," and encouraged laws that would help the country breed a superior race (Mowry, 1958; Selden, 1999).

By the 1920s, racialist "science" was being taught as fact in American universities. Some early sociologists and anthropologists attempted to demonstrate that these immigrants from "primitive" societies were inferior to native-born Americans (Schwendinger and Schwendinger, 1974).

But gradually the Irish, the Italians, the European Jews, and other European ethnic groups became categorized as "White." The 1930 census distinguishes ten races (White, Negro, American Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Hindu, Mexican, and Other) and further classifies White people into only three types: native White with native White parents; native White with immigrant parents; and immigrant White. The 1940 census distinguishes only native White and immigrant White. How did that happen? Was it because many had become middle class? Or did expanded versions of Whiteness mean that employers and apartment owners took the "No Irish Need Apply" or "No Bohunks Allowed" placards from their windows, allowing the middle class to enter? (A "Bohunk" is an immigrant from central Europe, a combination of "Bohemian" and "Hungarian.")

Both, and neither. Historian Noel Ignatiev maintains that the Irish deliberately positioned themselves in opposition to Blacks, visibly participating in the massive anti-Black violence in the northeastern United States in the 1840s, to posture for a place at the table of "Whiteness." Anthropologist Karen Brodkin (1998) similarly maintains that Jews began to "speak of a mythic whiteness" that both they and the Anglo-Saxons participated in, transcending the separate categories that scientific racism put them in. The Irish and the Jews "chose" to be White and then set about trying to convince native-born Protestant Whites that they were White.

We also can't discount the 1930s rise of Nazi Germany, where race science was taken to its logical conclusion: the Aryan "master race" protecting its "stock" with military aggression and death camps. By the time Ashley Montagu published *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race* in 1942, a book that declared "race science" to threaten the foundations of modern society itself, race science had the taint of Nazi tyranny, and using ethnography to analyze culture was gaining ground over measuring skull capacity to prove biological distinction. Instead of dirty and dangerous "races" that must be kept separate, immigrants became "ethnic groups" who could easily assimilate into the mainstream. Instead of a nation of Northern European Protestants worried about race mixing or "mongrelization," the United States became a *melting pot,* with immigrant economic and social success praised as a triumph of democracy over the superstition of race science.

However, the melting pot seemed to work only with Europeans and with some drawbacks: Assimilation meant abandoning cultural traditions. Immigrant parents

punished their children for speaking the language from back home, and in a generation or two an entire cultural heritage was nearly forgotten. That was the price they paid for becoming White.

Prejudice

Prejudice is a set of beliefs and attitudes that cause us to negatively "prejudge" people based on their social location. In the classic work on the subject, psychologist Gordon Allport defined prejudice as "a pattern of hostility in interpersonal relations which is directed against an entire group, or against its individual members; it fulfills a specific irrational function for its bearer" (Allport, 1954, p. 12). For example, you may decide not to sell your car to an Asian American because you believe they are bad drivers, or you may decline to rent an apartment from a Hispanic owner because you believe the building would be sloppily maintained.

Stereotypes

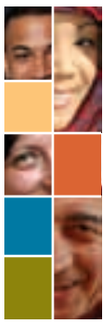
Often prejudices are based on **stereotypes,** generalizations about a group that are oversimplified and exaggerated, and fail to acknowledge individual differences in the group. For instance, if you believe the stereotype that Asians are gifted in science, you will believe that it is true of all Asians, without exception. You will believe that any Asian selected at random will be able to answer scientific questions, and will score better on science exams, than any person randomly selected from another race. Most likely, however, you will not reason it out in any systematic way: You will just ask an Asian when you have a scientific question or be surprised when you meet an Asian who is an art history major.

Recently I saw a scene in a movie in which a Black guy invited a White guy to his house for dinner and announced that they were having chicken. "Oh, I love fried chicken!" the White guy responded, associating "Black" with "fried chicken" as a stereotype even though he knew, logically, that enjoying fried foods is not a racially specific characteristic. In this case, they were actually having chicken curry.

Most stereotypes, like the association of "Asian" and "science" or "Black" and "fried food," refer to traits that only a small percentage of group members actually possess or that are no more common to group members than to anyone else, so they are simply inaccurate and unfair. However, some stereotypes are downright wrong: No one (or almost no one) in the group possesses the trait.

In the early 1960s, Bull Connor, a sheriff in Alabama, commented that "Blacks are intellectually inferior" and that therefore integration would fail. In the 1980s, Al Campanis, an official with the Los Angeles Dodgers, commented that "Blacks are better athletes." One occasionally hears that Blacks are more "naturally" gifted basketball players but that White players are "smarter" or "have a better work ethic." And for years, football quarterbacks were White, on the assumption that you had to be a brilliant tactician, not a powerful athlete, to play the position. There have also been several celebrated cases in which public speakers spoke about these stereotypes, indicating that they believe them to be true, that races and ethnic groups *are* significantly different in their strength, physical power, intelligence, musical ability, or other characteristics. Sometimes these public pronouncements cost them their jobs.

Talk radio star Don Imus lost his job in April 2007 after calling the Rutgers women's basketball team "nappy-headed hos." He apologized and got a new job in December. ▼



Sociology and our World

What's in a Name? The Sociology of Racial Terminology

Names have power. They define us and show others how we define them. There are often conflicts between what we want to call ourselves and what other people want to call us. Names can change from good to bad quickly, sometimes overnight. Or they can be good in some situations, bad in others; good when members of our group use it, bad when outsiders use it. *Queer* is fine when you're giving an academic lecture on queer theory, but not when you are yelling it out of a passing car. Who figured that one out? Who gets to make the decisions?

When Richard Wright wrote a book entitled *Black Boy* in 1945, he was trying to shock people with derogatory slang. No one would dream of calling him- or herself "Black" in 1945. The proper name was "colored person" or "Negro." We still have the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the United Negro College Fund.

During the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, social activists tried to rehabilitate the once-derogatory term *Black,* capitalizing it and insisting that *Black Is Beautiful*. And it worked: In 1965 the word *Negro* appeared in dozens of titles of books and magazine articles, but by 1967 those titles almost always referred to "Black."

Today, though, many people disapprove of the name "Black," pointing out that it is inaccurate: Skin comes in many shades of brown. But equally inaccurate is "Negro" (which means "black" in Latin), "colored person," and "person of color" (since everyone has color). Afro-American, later African American, appeared about the same time as "Black" to denote ethnicity, someone whose ancestors came from sub-Saharan Africa. But not everyone. If your parents were White South Africans who immigrated to the United States in 1960, you do not get to call yourself African American (well, you can try). When White people use the term *European American* they often do so in defensive reaction against "African Americans."

But surely some names are undeniably offensive, right? Harvard Law professor Randall Kennedy isn't sure. He wrote a book called *Nigger* (2002), pointing out that it is sometimes used to identify and fight racism rather than to promote racism; and, within some Black subcultures, it is used commonly "with undertones of warmth and good will." (Often when the subordinate appropriates a term used by the dominant group to demean them, it can take much of the sting away from the word.) Should it really be eradicated from our language, or should it remain, Kennedy asks, as a "reminder of the ironies and dilemmas, the tragedies and glories, of the American experience" (Kennedy, 2002: 2)?

In a recent survey, members of these groups were asked what they preferred to be called. (Asian Americans typically prefer their specific nationality, that is, Chinese American or Japanese American.)

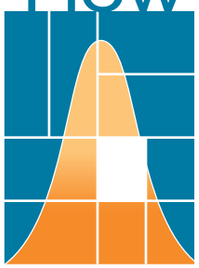
- *Hispanic:* Hispanic 57.88 percent, Spanish 12.34 percent, Latino 11.74 percent, other 7.85 percent, none 10.18 percent
- *White:* White 61.66 percent, Caucasian 16.53 percent, European American 2.35 percent, other 1.97 percent, Anglo 0.96 percent, none 16.53 percent
- *Black:* Black 44.15 percent, African American 28.07 percent, Afro-American 12.12 percent, Negro 3.28 percent, other 2.19 percent, colored 1.09 percent, none 9.11 percent
- *American Indian:* American Indian 49.76 percent, Native American 37.35 percent, other 3.66 percent, Alaska Native 3.51 percent, none 5.72 percent

In this book, we have used the terms *Black, White,* and *Hispanic,* although we have also used "African American" and *Latino* in their more specific usages.

Source: Information compiled by www.infoplease.com under the keyword: "Society and Race/Ethnicity."

Today, such arguments have become more subtle and sophisticated, but no less stereotypic, with "culture" merely substituted for "biology" as an explanation of the differences. For instance, they argue that because of social discrimination, Blacks have less stimulating intellectual environments than Whites during their formative years, so they end up with lower intelligence. Or their parents reward playing basketball instead of cracking books, while the parents of White children reward academic skills, so the Black children grow up better athletes. This is still stereotyping. No study has demonstrated that Black parents regularly discourage their children from getting good grades or that White parents are never obsessed with their children's sports accomplishments.

How do we know what we know?



Race and Intelligence

In 1994, Harvard psychologist Richard Herrnstein and public policy analyst Charles Murray stirred up a cloud of controversy with their book *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*. They argued that intelligence—measured by the speed with which you learn new skills and adapt to new situations—is the key to social success and that low intelligence is an important root cause of crime, poverty, unemployment, bad parenting, and many other social problems. In other words, intelligent people succeed more often than stupid people.

But the controversy came when Herrnstein and Murray presented the results of their research to demonstrate that this essential intelligence is correlated with race: African Americans on the average scored significantly lower than White Americans on standard intelligence tests. Scientists have known about racial differences on intelligence tests for many years and explain that they are due to cultural bias in the testing instrument or social inequality during the crucial period of primary socialization, rather than to differences in the way brains actually process information. But Herrnstein and Murray argue that intelligence is 40 to 80 percent inherited, based in genetics.

Now people got angry. Murray was labeled "America's most dangerous conservative" by the *New York Times Magazine* (Herrnstein died in 1994). When conservative columnist Andrew Sullivan published an excerpt in the magazine *The New Republic*, the entire editorial board vehemently protested. When *The Bell Curve* was assigned to a class, some students refused to read it, and some complained of racism to the dean.

But the most important objection to *The Bell Curve* is that it is just bad science. In *Inequality by Design: Cracking the Bell Curve Myth*, sociologists Claude Fischer and Mike Hout and their colleagues show the methodological flaws in the bell curve research: Neither "intelligence" nor "race" is a purely biological phenomenon, so their correlation cannot be purely biological either. Plus, as we saw in the methodology chapter, demonstrating correlation between two variables cannot tell you the direction or cause of the relationship.

And how can we account for the impact of institutional racism, the structures of discrimination that have nothing to do with individual abilities? Social structures set "the rule of the game" whereby individual differences matter. If you have high intelligence but no access to the elite education necessary for social prestige, you might learn the skills of drug dealing or adapt to the new situation of a federal penitentiary rather than going for a Berkeley Ph.D. On the other hand, if you have low intelligence but the right social connections, you just might inherit the family fortune.

Sociologists are fascinated by the phenomenon of stereotypes: People seem to believe them regardless of the utter lack of supporting evidence and in spite of evidence to the contrary. When one explanation of a stereotype fails, they look for another, trying anything they can think of to support and legitimate their prior beliefs. In a classic illustration of this, Gordon Allport reports the following conversation with an anti-Semite:

> Mr. X: The trouble with the Jews is that they only take care of their own group.
> Mr. Y: But the record of the Community Chest campaign shows that they give more generously, in proportion to their numbers, to the general charities of the community, than do non-Jews.
> Mr. X: That shows they are always trying to buy favor and intrude into Christian affairs. They think of nothing but money; that is why there are so many Jewish bankers.
> Mr. Y: But a recent study shows that the percentage of Jews in the banking business is negligible, far smaller than the percentage of non-Jews.
> Mr. X: That's just it; they don't go in for respectable business; they are only in the movie business or run night clubs (Allport, 1954: 13–14).

Did *you* know?

Ghetto has become a term that defines the urban enclave in which poor minorities, usually Black people, tend to live, confined there by class and race. The term has its origins in 1516, when Venice passed a law that required that all Jews live only in a specified area in the city, since "no God-fearing inhabitant of the city desired that they should spread out all over it, living in the same houses as Christians and going wherever they pleased day and night, allegedly committing many detestable things" (Benjamin, 1992).

Racism

Racism describes a set of attitudes; racism is prejudice that is systematically applied to members of a group. It can be **overt racism,** in speech, manifest in behaviors such as discrimination or a refusal to associate with members of that group; it can also be **subtle racism** and even unconscious, simply a set of mental categories that we possess about the "other" based on stereotypes.

Racism is a particularly powerful form of prejudice, not only a belief in general stereotypes but a belief that one race (usually White) is inherently superior to the others. It is not necessary to belong to the "superior" race to buy into racism. Race science, with its "evidence" of the superiority of White people, was quite common 50 or 60 years ago and still pops up from time to time in academic or popular discussions (along with its opposite, "evidence" of the superiority of Black people).

We still hear racist sentiments from time to time. A few years ago in an introductory sociology class, I mentioned that by 2050, White people will be a numerical minority in the United States. A student gasped. "That's terrible! Doesn't that scare you?" It didn't scare me at all, so I said, "What's the problem? America will still be here." She responded, "Yeah, but it won't be our America!" I doubt that she had ever heard of race science, but she was expressing the same fear of losing "our" country to the incursion of minorities that prompted the immigration quotas 70 years ago, or that politician Pat Buchanan expresses in *The Death of the West* (2002), about the decline of "our America" due to immigration and low birth rates among White people.

Discrimination

Discrimination is a set of actions based on prejudice and stereotypes. They often, but need not, negatively affect the group in question. For instance, if I believe that Asians are academically gifted, I may ask Asian students more questions in class, assign them more difficult projects, or grade their papers more leniently, giving them the "benefit of the doubt." But I may also be especially aware of an Asian student who is disruptive in class.

Some acts of discrimination are responses to specific stereotypes, but more often discrimination occurs as general negative treatment. A waiter or waitress may exercise discrimination against minority customers by waiting on nonminority customers first, rushing them out when they have finished eating, or behaving in an unfriendly or hostile manner. Of course, the victims never know for sure if they are facing discrimination or just bad service. Minority students who get low grades on tests might suspect that the professor is discriminating, but they will never know for sure unless they do some detective work and uncover a pattern of low grades for minority students.

Prejudice and discrimination are not always causally connected. I can be prejudiced but not discriminate, if none of my friends is discriminating and I don't want to appear different or do something socially unacceptable. Or I can discriminate without being prejudiced, if all of my friends are discriminating, if I believe that it is "the thing to do." Studies show that many of the perpetrators of hate crimes are no more prejudiced than those who do not commit hate crimes: They are just "going along for the ride" (Boyd, Berk, and Hamner, 1996; Craig and Waldo, 1996;

Morsch, 1991). Sociologist Robert Merton divided prejudice and discrimination into four categories:

1. *All-weather bigots* are prejudiced against some minority groups, and they discriminate against group members. If they do not discriminate in certain social situations, it is because they do not care to, not because they are worried about losing face. They may even take pride in their prejudice. They might tell a racist joke, for instance, even if they know that the people around them will disapprove, to demonstrate their "heroic" refusal to be swayed by politically correct tolerance.
2. *Fair-weather bigots* are prejudiced against some minority groups, but they do not discriminate when there may be negative consequences. This category includes most prejudiced people: They may dislike minorities, but they will not show it when they have something to lose. They will tell a racist joke only when they are sure they will receive a positive reaction.
3. *Fair-weather liberals* are not prejudiced, but they do discriminate when it is profitable for them to do so. They will not tell a racist joke, but they may laugh at one to avoid being embarrassed or starting an argument.
4. *All-weather liberals* are not prejudiced and do not discriminate. They adhere to the American ideal of equal opportunity for all, regardless of the situation. They will not tell a racist joke or respond favorably to one. (Merton, [1949] 1976)

This typology assumes that prejudice is a quality that you have—you are either prejudiced or not—and that discrimination consists of specific, deliberate acts. However, there is a great degree of variation in prejudice and discrimination. Many people who would never dream of telling or laughing at a racist joke, and who fully support equal rights for minorities, still harbor prejudices—they believe, perhaps subconsciously, that being White is just better than being something else. Similarly, many acts of discrimination are so subtle, almost unconscious, that we are barely aware of them. Even in a social climate where open acts of discrimination are frowned upon, members of minority groups suffer many acts of personal discrimination every day, ranging from hostile or frightened stares to unconscious stereotyping to insults and jokes and sometimes to violence. When discrimination comes from someone with power, the power to give you a job, an apartment, a good grade, or a speeding ticket, it is especially damaging.

A recent case on the TV program *The People's Court* involved the owner of an apartment house who contracted a realtor to provide potential renters. The realtor was asked to "screen the applicants," so she did, ensuring that they had good jobs, good credit histories, and references from previous landlords. But when she brought the first applicant around to view the apartment, she discovered that the owner meant something else entirely. He said: "That applicant is Black! You were supposed to screen applicants!" The realtor quit (and was sued for breach of contract). One wonders how many other realtors do not quit, how often unwritten and unspoken agreements allow discrimination to continue.

Institutional Discrimination

Screening out Black applicants for an apartment or house is illegal in the United States. I may be free to behave in a hostile or impolite fashion toward anyone I choose, but I may not deny members of certain minority groups equal access to housing, jobs, public services, and selected social rewards. Nevertheless, unequal access continues to be common.

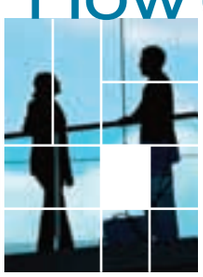
Institutional discrimination is the most subtle and pervasive type of discrimination, deeply embedded in such institutions as the educational system, the business world, health care, criminal justice, and the mass media. These social institutions promote discriminatory practices and traditions that have such a long history they just "seem to make sense," and minority groups become the victims of systematic oppression, even when only a few people, or none at all, are deliberately trying to discriminate. If unchecked, institutional discrimination undermines the very idea of a society based on individual achievement, merit, and hard work. Democracies must institute laws that prevent it and provide remedies when it happens.

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 banned discrimination in housing, but institutional discrimination persists. African Americans and Latinos are turned down for home loans twice as often as Whites with the same qualifications. The HUD Housing Discrimination Study of 2000 found that adverse treatment against Black applicants occurred in 22 percent of cases and against Hispanic applicants in 26 percent of cases: They were less likely to be told that a unit was available, were less likely to be offered a unit for inspection, and were quoted higher rents. The discrimination rate varied from city to city, from 14 percent in Chicago to 30 percent in Atlanta for Black renters, and from 15 percent in Denver to 32 percent in Chicago for Hispanic renters.

Segregation and Integration

For many years in the United States, physical separation between the White majority and the minority groups (especially African Americans), or **segregation,** was law.

How do we know what we know?



Changing Racial Attitudes

One way to find out whether our society has made racial progress is to track racial attitudes over time. In the 1920s, sociologist Emory Bogardus devised a *social distance scale* to measure the extent to which we use racial and ethnic categories in the choices we make about our social life (Bogardus, 1925, 1933). He asked a national sample of college students, aged 18 to 35 (about 10 percent of his respondents were Black) a set of questions designed to measure their distance from other groups. These included whether you would make personal friends with them, accept them as neighbors on your street, work in the same office, and date or marry someone from that group. Bogardus predicted that the social distance among groups would decline.

Every 10 years, these questions have been asked of a national sample, and the students ranked their preferences among 30 different groups—mostly Europeans, but also Black Americans, Canadians, Japanese Americans, and various Asian groups. There was some fluctuation over this half-century of surveys. Blacks, for example, moved up from the bottom to the middle of the group. But generally the rankings listed White Americans, Canadians, Northern and Western Europeans in the top third, South and Central and Eastern Europeans in the middle third, and racial minorities in the bottom third. (Italians were the only Southern European group to make the top 10 eventually.) Americans were surprisingly consistent.

In 2001, sociologists Vincent Parillo and Christopher Donoghue updated these categories and administered the survey again to a large national sample of college students. It was administered in the 6 weeks following September 11. Italians had jumped to second place, even ahead of Canadians and the British, and Blacks had cracked the top 10. The last two categories now were filled by Muslims and Arabs (Parillo, 2006; Parillo and Donoghue, 2005).

Discrimination means unequal treatment, and in the 1896 *Plessy vs. Ferguson* decision, the Supreme Court ruled that "separate but equal" accommodations for Blacks and Whites were not discriminatory. In fact, they were necessary to cater to the different needs of the races and ensure racial harmony. There were separate neighborhoods, separate businesses, separate sections on buses and in restaurants, separate schools and colleges, even separate washrooms and drinking fountains. In mainstream (that is, White) movies, Blacks appeared only as servants and entertainers, but in their own "separate but equal" movies, they played rugged action heroes, mystery sleuths, romantic leads, every imaginable role.

Usually, however, the "separate" meant "inferior." Black schools received only a fraction of the resources of White schools. The Black section of the bus was at the back. The Black section of the restaurant was in the kitchen.

In the case of the system of apartheid, that inferiority was institutionalized and legal. **Apartheid** means "separation" (think: apart-ness), and it was a system that mandated segregation of different racial groups. In South Africa, apartheid was a political system institutionalized by the White minority in 1948, and all social life was determined by whether you were one of four races: White, black, "coloured" (mixed race), or Indian (South Asian). There were separate schools, restaurants, hospitals, churches, drinking fountains—and even separate buses and bus stops. Apartheid remained in effect until 1990, when Nelson Mandela, the leader of the African National Congress, was freed from prison and soon elected president of South Africa.

In 1954, the Supreme Court heard the *Brown vs. the Board of Education* case and reversed its decision, concluding that "separate but equal" was never equal. So segregation was replaced by legal **integration,** physical intermingling of the races, which presumably would lead to cultural intermingling and racial equality. Fifty years later, integration has not been entirely achieved. We have integrated washrooms and drinking fountains in the United States, but most people, especially poor Blacks and rich Whites, continue to live in same-race neighborhoods and attend same-race schools. Segregation continues to separate poor people of color from education and job opportunities and isolate them from successful role models, helping to create a permanent minority underclass (Massey and Denton, 1993).

Affirmative Action or "Reverse Discrimination"?

In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson asked employers to "take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated . . . without regard to their race, color, creed, or national origin." He established the Equal Opportunity Commission, which administers many **affirmative action** programs to ensure that minorities get fair treatment in employment applications.

Affirmative action programs are controversial. Opponents complain that minority applicants are "stealing jobs" from more qualified White applicants, a sort of "reverse discrimination." Recently I appeared on a television talk show opposite three "angry White males" who felt they had been the victims of workplace discrimination. The show's title, no doubt created to entice a large potential audience, was "A Black Woman Stole My Job." In my comments to these men, I invited them to consider what the word "my" meant in that title. Why did they believe the job was "theirs" to begin with? Why did they feel entitled to it? When a Black female applicant was hired instead, was she really stealing it from them? Why wasn't the title of the show "A Black Woman Got *the* Job" or "A Black Woman Got *a* Job"?

One might even say that White males have been the beneficiaries of a 2,000-year "affirmative action" policy that favored them. In an article in *The Nation* a few years

ago, the eminent historian Eric Foner ruminated on his own college experience as a beneficiary of that version of affirmative action:

> Thirty-two years ago, I graduated from Columbia College [the undergraduate college at Columbia University]. My class of 700 was all-male and virtually all white. Most of us were young men of ability; yet had we been forced to compete for admission with women and racial minorities, fewer than half of us would have been at Columbia. None of us, to my knowledge, suffered debilitating self-doubt because we were the beneficiaries of affirmative action—that is, favored treatment on the basis of our race and gender . . . . [In fact], I have yet to meet a white male in whom favoritism (getting a job, for example, through relatives or an old boys' network, or because of racial discrimination by a union or an employer) fostered doubt about his own abilities. . . .

"Despite our rhetoric," Foner concludes, "equal opportunity has never been the American way. For nearly all our history, affirmative action has been a prerogative of white men" (Foner, 1995).

In 1978, the Supreme Court heard the case of Allan Bakke, a white premed student who was twice denied admission to the University of California-Davis Medical School, even though his test scores were superior to many Black students who were admitted. A 5–4 split decision acknowledged that race was a legitimate determining factor in medical school admission but held that strict racial quotas were unconstitutional. That is, admissions departments can take race into account as a factor in admission but cannot reserve a set number of places for any particular group.

Today, around 2 percent of the 91,000 cases of job discrimination pending before the Equal Opportunity Commission are for reverse discrimination, and state affirmative action measures have been abolished in California, Washington, and Florida (for college admissions only). In 2003, the Supreme Court ruled in a 6–3 decision that the University of Michigan's affirmative action policy in undergraduate admissions, which awarded 20 extra points to Black, Hispanic, and Native American applicants, was unconstitutional (though it was allowed to remain in place in the Law School).

Although racial discrimination is illegal, research experiments have shown that minorities continue to face subtle discrimination in housing, employment, and other areas.

Sometimes affirmative action programs can lead to **tokenism,** in which a single member of a minority group is present in the office, workshop, or the classroom. When you are a *token,* you occupy a curious position. You are simultaneously invisible and hypervisible. You are a representative of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual identity—not a person. Nobody sees you, everybody sees your characteristics, and they are using those characteristics to form new stereotypes of your group. Your individual quirks and shortcomings will become stereotypes of the entire group. This is a huge responsibility. You have to be on your best behavior and be very careful to not do anything that might support a stereotype. This can lead to social paralysis: You are afraid to speak or act because everyone is watching and making conclusions about your group.

Hate Groups

People join hate groups to promote discrimination against ethnic and other minorities, usually because they feel that the main society is not doing a very good job of it. The Know-Nothing Party was formed in 1849 to promote anti-Catholic and

anti-immigrant legislation. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK), formed shortly after the end of slavery in 1863, tried to prevent newly freed blacks from acquiring social equality with both political legislation and the more immediate tactics of violence and intimidation. When open discrimination is commonplace in the main society, these groups can acquire a great deal of political power. The Know-Nothings managed to dominate several state legislatures, including Massachusetts, and promoted the sitting president, Millard Fillmore, in the 1852 presidential election (he lost, but not due to an anti-immigrant agenda). At its height in the 1920s, the second Ku Klux Klan had over 4,000,000 members and was praised by many public figures, including President Warren Harding.

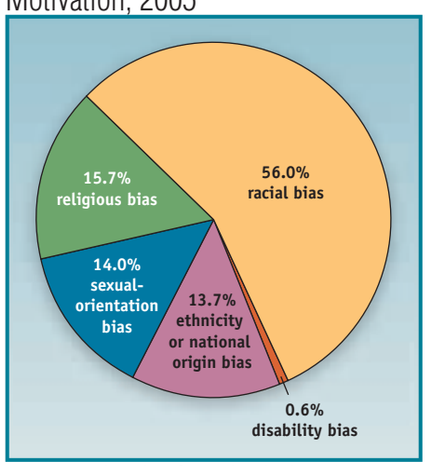
When open discrimination is frowned upon in the main society, it becomes more difficult for hate groups to get laws passed or sponsor successful political candidates. Former KKK Grand Wizard David Duke rose highest, when he captured 55 percent of the White vote in the 1989 Louisiana gubernatorial election, although he had to explain that his KKK membership was a "youthful mistake." Hate groups today usually do not hope to legislate discriminatory policies. Instead, they want to make their presence known, win supporters, and promote individual acts of discrimination, especially violence.

In the twenty-first century, many hate groups have moved beyond marching in strange costumes or starting fistfights on talk shows to using up-to-date tools of mass media and marketing: attractive, professionally produced books, music, and Web pages that hide their racist beliefs under a veneer of respectability. In public presentations, they never use racist slurs. They say that they are interested in science, Christianity, or patriotism rather than racism. A student once wrote on a paper that Blacks are 730 percent more likely to murder Whites than the other way around. When I questioned him about this curious statistic (and weird way of expressing it), he said that he got it from keying "statistics," "Black," and "crime" into an Internet search engine. The first website that appeared was bankrolled by a hate group, and sadly, an intelligent college student believed it because it looked so scientific and official. It is hard to imagine how many other young, inexperienced, non–media-savvy people key into hate group websites and acquire new prejudices or find their old ones validated.

There are only perhaps 50,000 hard-core members of hate groups and no more than 500,000 "fellow travelers," people who read the literature, browse the websites, and agree with racist ideologies (Potok, 2006). A more subtle threat of hate groups is to draw attention away from everyday forms of prejudice and discrimination. After listening to the outrageous statements of a hate group, or seeing their ultraviolent behavior, people may believe that their own prejudice is harmless and inconsequential. After all, they do not believe that non-White people are children of Satan, and they would never dream of bombing a Black church, so what does it matter if they feel uncomfortable in a Black neighborhood?

Although membership in organized hate groups is relatively low, there is an alarming increase in violent crimes in which the victim was chosen because of his or her membership in some minority group (Figure 8.2). In 2005, the FBI documented 7,163 hate crimes. The most (2,630) were against Blacks, and 828 were against Whites. The second highest group, however, was anti-Jewish (848). There are more anti-Semitic crimes than against all other religious groups combined. The 128 anti-Islamic crimes, however, are by far the fastest growing type of bias crime (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005c).

FIGURE 8.2 Offenses by Bias Motivation, 2005



Source: Based on data from Crime in the United States, U.S. Department of Justice, 2005.

Theories of Prejudice and Discrimination

Social scientists and philosophers have wondered about prejudice for centuries. Why does prejudice exist? Why are we prejudiced against some groups and not others? Why do we believe certain stereotypes and not others? And most importantly, what can we do about it?

The primordial theory suggests that a conflict exists between in-groups and out-groups, but doesn't explain how some groups come to be classified as out-groups. Is there any evidence that we have an "innate preference for people like us"? Often we prefer people who are not at all like us. In fact, many times, "opposites attract." These "innate" theories disregard the political, social, and economic processes behind individual prejudices. People can and do become racist through deliberate choice and socialization, not through any innate preferences.

According to *frustration-aggression theory,* people are goal directed, and when they can't reach their goals, they become angry and frustrated. If they cannot find the source of their frustration, or if the source is too powerful to challenge, they will direct their aggression toward a **scapegoat,** a weak, convenient, and socially approved target. Considerable evidence shows racial and ethnic hostility increases during periods of economic instability (Blackwell, 1982). Sometimes people may become convinced that the scapegoat is actually the cause of their frustration—for instance, that they are unemployed because illegal immigrants have stolen their job—but often they are just lashing out at someone convenient. This theory does not explain why some groups become scapegoats and others do not or why we are prejudiced against groups who are not immediately visible.

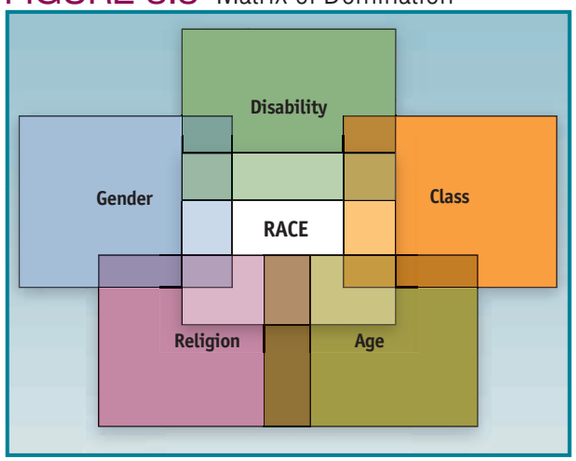
Conflict theory suggests that prejudice is a tool used by the elites, people at the top of the social hierarchy, to "divide and conquer" those at the bottom, making them easier to control and manipulate (Pettigrew, 1998). Racial and ethnic stereotypes are used to legitimate systemic inequality. For instance, if blacks are really lazy, we can explain why there are so few working in high-power corporate jobs without having to deal with institutional discrimination. This theory is supported by research suggesting that prejudice decreases when racism is not institutionally supported (Pettigrew, 1998), but it ignores the role of race in the lives of those at the bottom of the hierarchy.

In the United States and worldwide, members of minority groups are often prejudiced against other minority groups, and they can harbor their own stereotypes about the elites (Kinloch, 1999; Phinney, Gerguson, and Tate, 1997; Tsukashima, 1983). For example, Puerto Rican shopkeepers who own small neighborhood bodegas are deeply suspicious that the Asian greengrocers have been supported by the city's wealthy to drive the Puerto Ricans out of business. Cross-cultural historical studies show that racial and ethnic minorities often promote prejudice against other minorities to try to increase their own wealth, power, and privilege (see, for example, Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom, 2005).

Feminist theory considers how the category of race overlaps with other social categories, especially gender but also sexual orientation, social class, religion, age, and ability status. Stereotypes about stigmatized groups in all of these categories are remarkably similar: They are almost always illogical, emotional, primitive, potentially violent, and sexually suspect. Consequently, they often combine, and the effects of racism are compounded by the effects of classism, sexism, heterosexism, and the other "isms." Together, these are what Patricia Hill Collins (1990) calls a **matrix of**

domination—an interlocking system of control in which each type of inequality reinforces the others so that the impact of one cannot be fully understood without also considering the others (Figure 8.3).

FIGURE 8.3 Matrix of Domination



Doing Something about It

Finding out what causes prejudice is not as important as finding out how to combat it. Early social scientists argued that prejudice could be changed by exposure to members of minority groups (Allport, 1954). We might believe that Italians are passionate, Blacks are lazy, or Jews are greedy because we haven't met enough members of these groups who don't fit the stereotypes. A few handshakes, therefore, will end the prejudice.

During the 1960s and 1970s, a huge amount of time and money was invested in busing students from segregated schools, not only to equalize instruction but to introduce Black and White students to each other. It didn't work: Contact alone does not diminish prejudice. People who have never met even one member of another particular group may not be prejudiced, while people who are surrounded by members of the minority group may still be prejudiced. In *Searching for Aboriginal Languages* (1983), linguist John Dixon finds that many of the White residents of Queensland, Australia, are prejudiced against the aboriginals and believe they are more sexually promiscuous. Dixon found that aboriginals actually select romantic partners on the basis of a very complex system of clans, kinship roles, and informal alliances dating back hundreds of years. The White residents saw aboriginals every day, talked to them, and worked with them, but were completely oblivious to anything except "jumping into bed."

Social psychologist Mark Snyder (1987) found that even awareness of prejudice and desire to change were insufficient. You can realize that prejudice is wrong, and you can try to stop, but you might still believe stereotypes: They are beyond the reach of reason and goodwill. You will tend to notice and remember the ways in which a person from a minority group seems to fit a stereotype, whether you want to or not.

One of the problems in combating prejudice is that it is not merely a matter of individual perceptions. Gordon Allport (1954) called prejudice "a self-fulfilling prophecy." We see what we expect to see and don't see what we don't expect to see. Thus, what we see "fulfills" our expectations, and the stereotypes are confirmed.

The same expectation effect can happen on the job, among friends, in families, and among strangers—even within the group that has been negatively stereotyped. We tend to modify our beliefs and behaviors to correspond to a social role, even if that role is a negative stereotype. In 1997, John Ogbu, an anthropologist at the University of California, Berkeley, wondered why middle-class African American students in affluent Shaker Heights, Ohio, got lower grades than their White classmates (an average of C instead of B). Usually such disparities are explained by economic and social inequalities, but in this case, both groups of students were attending well-funded middle-class schools. He concluded that the Black students were afraid of being labeled as "acting White" if they studied too hard or got good grades (see Ogbu and Davis, 2003). Sociologist Pedro Noguera (2004) found that young Black men are so disconnected from school that they are the only group for whom there is no positive correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement.

More recent research in inner-city schools suggests an even more compelling picture. It turns out that Black *girls* who do well in school are indeed accused of "acting White," but Black boys who do well are accused of "acting like girls" (Ferguson, 2001; Fordham, 1999). Collins's "matrix of domination" suggests a correlation between gender and racial oppression: For these boys, being seen as a girl is even worse than being seen as White.

Overcoming Prejudice

In spite of institutional discrimination and patterns of racism and White privilege that go far beyond any individual's actions, there is hope. People can and do decrease their prejudice. Mere contact is not enough, but when people of different groups must work together toward a common goal (Miller, Brewer, and Edwards, 1985), most measures of prejudice decrease. Other important factors are strong role models that contradict the stereotypes and a decrease in institutional forms of discrimination that make inequality seem normal and natural.

Unfortunately, some evidence suggests that many people are just learning what answers look best on surveys, regardless of how they really feel or react. Discrimination, especially of the backhanded "have a nice day" sort, seems to be on the rise. In a 1997 Gallup poll, 79 percent of Whites believed that Blacks and Whites were always treated equally, but only 49 percent of Blacks agreed. Thirty percent of Black respondents said that they had encountered discrimination during the past month, while shopping, at work, while dining out, while using public transportation, or with the police. The percentage increased to 70 percent for young Black men, who were especially likely to experience discrimination while shopping (45 percent) and in interactions with the police (35 percent). A 1995 survey of the racial climate at Indiana State University (Terre Haute, Indiana) found that 64 percent of Black students had heard racial jokes or seen racial graffiti, 55 percent felt they had been left out of social activities, 48 percent had been insulted intellectually, and 47 percent had been called names or racial slurs. Most surprisingly, 40 percent had been insulted in class by a teacher.

Ethnic Groups in the United States

Every group has some distinctive norms, values, beliefs, practices, outlooks, and cultural artifacts, but when they emerge historically and tend to set the group apart from other groups, physically and culturally, they can be called an ethnicity. In some ways, ethnicity is like race in that you belong to it whether you want to or not. If you have a Pakistani ethnicity, you will never acquire a Swedish ethnicity, even if you become a citizen of Sweden, learn to speak fluent Swedish, join the Swedish Lutheran Church, write 12 books on Swedish culture, and claim to love lutefisk. But in other ways, ethnicity and race are different. Because ethnicity is not based on biological difference (or the myth of biological difference), it can change from generation to generation, as culture becomes more or less significant. People "decide" just how "ethnic" they want to be. Immigrant groups find their ethnicities fading away, as children and grandchildren grow in the new country with fewer and fewer ties to home.

Ethnic groups share a common ancestry, history, or culture. They share similar geographic origins, language, cultural traditions, religion, and general values. When

asked, "What ethnicity are you?" people whose families have lived in the United States for more than a few generations usually cannot answer. If they are White, they assume that their ancestors came from "somewhere in Europe," but English, French, Swiss, Prussian, Belgian, and Dutch immigrants intermingled so freely that they simply forgot about the homeland and its customs.

The United States is called a "nation of immigrants." Ever since the founding of the East Coast colonies by immigrants who had been thrown out of England for being too religious and "puritanical," different ethnic groups have not only "enriched" American life but make that life possible in the first place. President John F. Kennedy characterized the country's greatness as based on this fact, that America is "a society of immigrants, each of whom had begun life anew, on an equal footing." This was, he continued, the "secret" of America: "a nation of people with the fresh memory of old traditions who dared to explore new frontiers."

What are the origins of this nation of ethnic immigrants?

People from Europe

In the 2000 census, 75 percent of the U.S. population was identified as White, most of European ancestry. The largest ethnic groups were German (23.3 percent), Irish (15.6 percent), Italian (4.9 percent), French (4.1 percent), and Polish (3.8 percent). We may now call them "European Americans" as a matter of convenience, but really we are saying "White people," referring to race rather than ethnicity. The differences today among many of these groups are far smaller than they once were. The White European population will experience only a 7 percent increase during the next 50 years, increasing from 195.7 million in 2000 to 210.3 million in 2050.

People from North America

Native Americans (once called "Indians") were the original inhabitants of North America, present from at least 40,000 BCE. When the first Europeans and Africans arrived, there were between 2,000,000 and 10,000,000 people living north of the Rio Grande, divided into around 800 linguistic and cultural groups. Some were the nomadic hunter-gatherers of Hollywood-movie myth, but many were settled and agrarian, living in villages as large and prosperous as any villages among the European settlers. Still, the early European settlers usually approached the Native Americans through stereotypes: They were "noble savages," living without sin in a sort of Garden of Eden, or they were "wild savages," uncivilized and bestial. They were systematically deprived of their land and herded onto reservations, if not hunted and killed outright. William Henry Harrison and Andrew Jackson were both elected to the presidency primarily on their prestige as "Indian fighters." Political slogans and illustrations of the day showed them as noble, heroic White men "saving" America from the savage Indian threat. This threat was contrived as the excuse to appropriate Native American land and natural resources, and especially to clear a path for the transcontinental railroad. The stereotype of the Native American as uncivilized is still intact today, though it has changed from "violent" to "intuitive." Now movies have Native American sages teaching the White characters about listening to their hearts and staying close to nature.

Native Americans have long been used as mascots for sports teams. Did you know that half of all high school, college, and professional teams that used Native American mascots in 1960 have changed their mascots? Despite claims that these mascots are signs of "respect" for the tenacity and ferocity of the Native American tribes—tribes upon whose appropriated land the colleges and universities may actually have

TABLE 8.3

Selected Colleges and Universities That Changed Their Mascots

COLLEGE	FORMER MASCOT	CURRENT MASCOT	DATE CHANGED
Dartmouth College, NH	Indians	Big Green	1969
Marquette University, WI	Warriors	Golden Eagles	1994
Northeastern State University, OK	Redmen	Riverhawks	2007
Seattle University, WA	Chieftains	Redhawks	1999
Shippensburg University, PA	Red Raiders	Raiders	2006
Simpson College, IA	Redmen	Storm	1992
Southeast Missouri State University	Indians	Redhawks	2004
Southern Nazarene University, OK	Redskins	Crimson Storm	1998
Southern Oregon University	Red Raiders	Raiders	1980
St. Bonaventure University, NY	Brown Indians	Bonnies	1979
Stanford University, CA	Indians	Cardinal	1972
Syracuse University, NY	Orangemen	Orange	1978
University of Massachusetts, Amherst	Redmen	Minutemen	1972
West Georgia University	Braves	Wolves	2006

been built—most Native Americans feel such mascots are insulting and perpetuate racial stereotypes (Table 8.3).

In the 2000 census, only about 1.5 percent of the population identified as Native American (alone or in combination with other races), but many more people have some Native American ancestry (most tribes require one-quarter ancestry to declare an official tribal affiliation). About half live in rural areas, mostly on reservations, and the rest are concentrated in big cities, especially Los Angeles, New York, Seattle, Chicago, and Houston. The largest Native American nation, the Navajo or Dine of Arizona and New Mexico, has 269,000 members and many distinctive cultural institutions, including its own newspaper, radio station, and college. Its language is thriving. But most of the other Native American cultures are slowly dying out. Before the Europeans arrived, California was home to some 300 languages, more than the whole of Europe. Today 50 remain, though they are spoken by only a few people, almost all of them elderly.

The history of contact between European immigrants and Native Americans left many tribes destroyed, decimated, or displaced onto "reservations" (which were ironically conceived as places to "protect" the Native Americans from further harm, by Whites who were stealing their land). As a result, today, Native Americans are worse off than other minorities in many measures of institutional discrimination:

- A 65 percent high school graduation rate and 9 percent college attendance rate, far below the national average
- A poverty rate of 25.9 percent, higher than any other ethnic group
- The highest rate of suicide in the 18- to 24-year-old age group
- A lower percentage of "current drinkers" than Whites and Hispanics, yet a higher rate of alcoholism
- A lower life expectancy than the nation as a whole (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005).

Reservation life has grown mean and difficult, and funds are scarce for needed services. Many Native American cultures have taken advantage of tax and legal opportunities to open casinos (because reservations are not legally restricted from gambling) as a way to raise money since federal and state funds have all but dried up. This presents Native tribes with a cynical "choice": Either open a casino and feed the

nation's gambling addiction or fail to provide needed services for their people.

Nonetheless, many Native Americans continue to embrace their cultural heritage. *Pan-Indianism* today emphasizes common elements that run through Native American cultures, creating an identity that goes beyond the individual nations.

People from Latin America

In the 2000 census, 12.5 percent of the U.S. population declared that they were Hispanic or Latino/Latina, with ancestry in Latin America (the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central and South America). They are now the largest ethnic minority group in the United States, and they are growing almost three times faster than the population as a whole (2.9 percent per year versus 1 percent per year in the general population), due both to immigration and higher birth rates (Figure 8.4). By 2050, the Hispanic population will nearly triple, from 35.6 million to 102.6 million.

Because these regions were originally settled by Native Americans, Europeans, Africans, and Asians, Hispanics may be of any race. Most speak Spanish at home, but they may speak Portuguese, French, Creole, Japanese, Italian, or an Indian language. Most are Roman Catholic, but they can be Protestant (usually Pentecostal), Jewish, Muslim, or followers of an Afro-Caribbean religion like Santería. Some do not approve of dozens of distinct cultures being lumped together into people from a continent, so they prefer to be called Mexican Americans (or Chicanos), Cuban Americans, and so on.

Latinos in the United States come from various countries of origin:

- *From Mexico: 34.3 million*. This is the most established of the Hispanic subgroups: Just 36 percent are foreign born, and many have had ancestors in California, Arizona, or Texas since those states were part of Mexico.
- *From Central America: 2.3 million, mainly from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua*. These people live mostly in California, Texas, Florida, and New York. They tend to be foreign born (71 percent), and 34 percent immigrated within the past decade. About 22 percent fall beneath the poverty line.
- *From South America: 1.7 million, mainly from Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru*. They tend to be foreign born (74 percent), and 33 percent immigrated within the past year. Many are well educated and belong to the middle class. About 35 percent of the foreign born have college degrees.
- *From Cuba: 1.2 million*. Of this group, 68 percent are foreign born, but most arrived more than a decade ago. Most settled in Florida. They tend to be more affluent than other Hispanic subgroups. About a third of the foreign-born adults have some college.
- *From the Dominican Republic: 912,000*. Over half live in New York. They are among the most impoverished of the Hispanic subgroups; 36 percent fall below the poverty line.

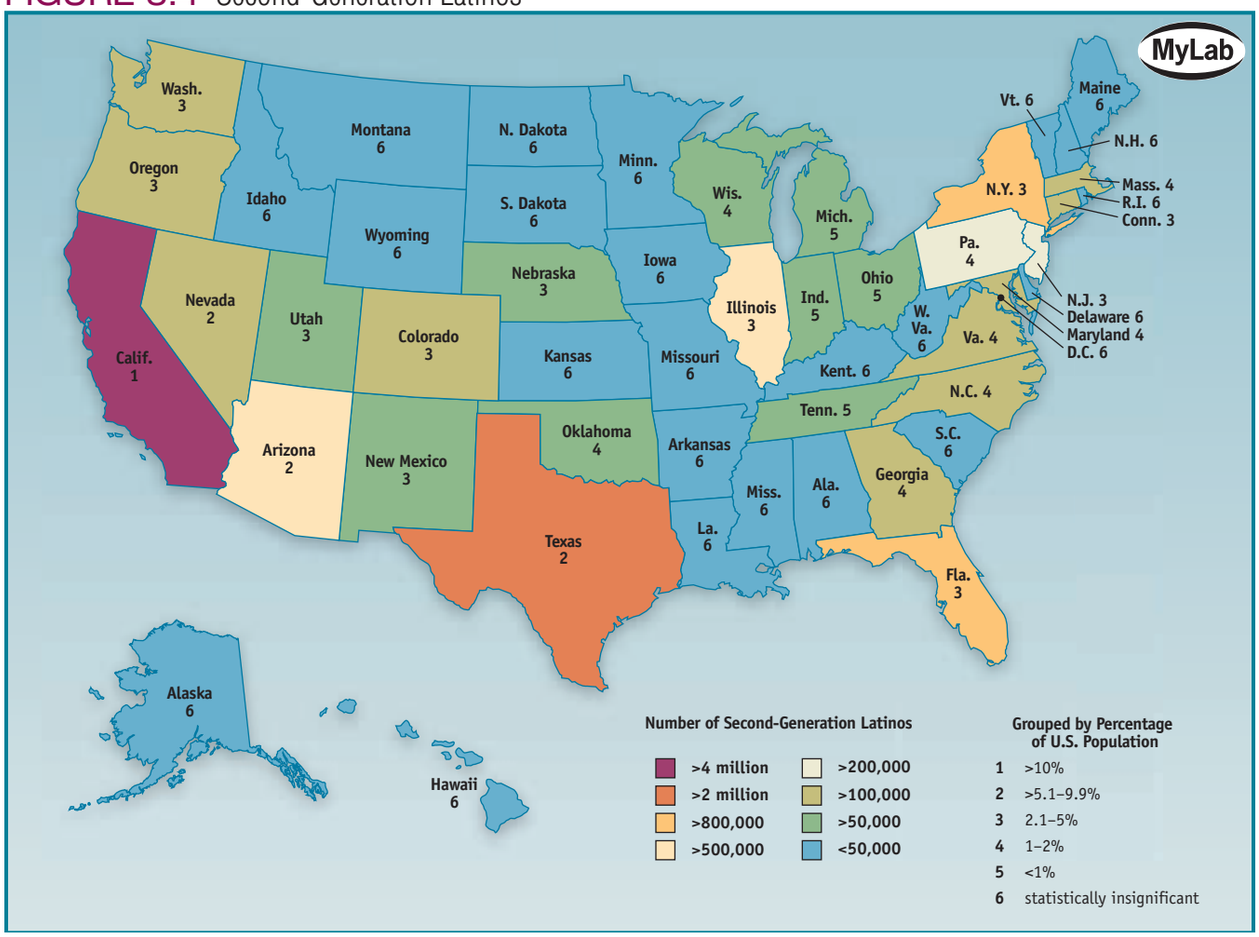
We are a nation of immigrants. President John F. Kennedy said this was the "secret" of America: "a nation of people with the fresh memory of old traditions who dared to explore new frontiers." Latinos represent the nation's largest ethnic minority. (Spanish Harlem, New York City.) ▼

- *From Puerto Rico: about 3.5 million (not counting the 3.8 million in Puerto Rico itself).* About a third live in New York. They are among most impoverished of the Hispanic subgroups: more than 30 percent are below the poverty line (Passel and Suro, 2005; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

Hispanic Americans are not only the fastest growing minority group in the United States: They also have the fastest growing affluence. Their disposable income is expected to top $1 trillion by 2010 (Humphreys, 2006), and marketing executives have noticed. Hispanic people appear regularly on television commercials as purveyors of "traditional American values." Ten years ago, when Mexican American actor Mario Lopez starred in the teen sitcom *Saved by the Bell,* his character had to be made Anglo: Executives feared that no one would watch a show "with a Mexican in it."

Today, Hispanic actors are still mostly assigned to play gangsters, thugs, and servants, or else asked to play Anglo, but some, such as Antonio Banderas and Jennifer Lopez, are "going mainstream": They not only refuse to hide their ethnicity, they celebrate it. In South Florida, cable TV offers three all-Spanish channels, but they are not marketing only to the Hispanic community. The most popular *telenovelas* (primetime soap operas) come with English-language subtitles so Anglos can watch too.

FIGURE 8.4 Second-Generation Latinos



Source: From "2nd Generation Latinos—Focus on an Untapped Market," *DiversityInc.*, September 2005, p. 34.

People from Sub-Saharan Africa

In the 2000 census, 12.5 percent of the U.S. population was identified as Black or African American, with ancestry in sub-Saharan Africa. The two terms are often used interchangeably, but technically *Black* is a race that includes Andaman Islanders, Australian aboriginals, and other people from outside sub-Saharan Africa and does not apply to the White, Asian, and Khoisan residents of Zimbabwe or Zaire. African American is an ethnicity, referring to the descendants of Black Africans who came to North America as slaves between 1500 and 1820 and after slavery were subject to "Jim Crow" laws that kept Blacks and Whites separate and unequal. They therefore do share a history and cultural traditions. African Americans are the only group to immigrate to the United States against their will, as they were forcibly abducted to serve as slaves in the South and in the Caribbean.

To reinforce that common cultural tradition, some have invented new holidays like Juneteenth and Kwaanza. Some have fashioned a distinctive dialect of English, called "Ebonics," with some terms and grammatical structures borrowed from West African languages. The creation of new, and distinctly African American, names is also an invented way to "preserve" traditions. (Historically, slaves were named by their masters and likely to bear Anglo names like Sally and Bill; the power to name your child a more African-sounding name, like, say, Shaniqua or Kadeem, illustrates the power to control the fate of that child.)

Thus, in the process, they transformed race into ethnicity in its own right. (These invented traditions are controversial in the African American community itself because they replace more Christian holidays like Christmas.) Contemporary immigrants from Nigeria or South Africa may be Black, White, or Asian, but they would not be African American.

The African American population is expected to experience modest growth by 2050, growing from 40.2 million to 61.4 million.

At the turn of the last century, the great African American sociologist W. E. B. DuBois said that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line." There are many racial and ethnic minority groups in the United States, and African Americans are not even the largest, yet they have always been the "standard" minority. Studies of prejudice and discrimination often concentrate on White and Black, ignoring everyone else, and indeed most of the racist legislation in the United States has been directed primarily if not exclusively against African Americans. The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s did not need to be more specific: Everyone realized that it was about the civil rights of African Americans.

Today, African Americans have achieved some measure of political and economic success. There is a sizeable Black middle class, with educational background and earnings comparable to those of middle-class Whites. Overall, however, African Americans lag behind White non-Hispanic Americans in high school graduation rate by 15 percentage points (Mishel and Joydeep, 2006) and college graduation rate by 20 percentage points (*Journal of Blacks in Higher Education,* 2007a). Black men's median earnings are 75 percent of what White men earn (women are roughly equal) (*State of Black America,* 2007). Thirty percent of Black families and 9 percent of White families are below poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Young Black men are nine times more likely to be murdered than are White men, and Black women three times as likely as White women (*National Urban League,* 2007). In the mass media, Black actors continue to be segregated, playing streetwise, inner-city thugs, cops, and other raw or rebellious types, except in movies and television programs aimed at a Black audience (Hill and Hill, 1985; Marchioso, 2001).

Did *you* know?

The words *hip-hop, hippie,* and *hip* all come from the African American *hep,* "cool" or "up-to-date," which ultimately derives from the Yoruba *hipikat,* "one who is aware, finely tuned to his or her environment." Other words and phrases derived from West African languages include *guy* (gay, "people"), *dig* (dega, "understand"), *jamboree* ("gathering"), *bug* ("bother"), *bogus* (boku, "fraud"), and *kick the bucket* (*kikatavoo,* "die").

In recent years, there has been much debate about paying "reparations" to the descendants of former slaves because they worked for no payment and had their lives torn apart through slavery. (Jews have received reparations from the German and Swiss governments that profited from seizing their assets during World War II, and Black South Africans have received reparations for what was lost during apartheid.) Opponents claim that it would be too costly and would result in profiteering by minorities.

People from East and South Asia

About 3.6 percent of the U.S. population traces its ancestry to East, Southeast, or South Asia. These groups include China (22 percent), the Philippines (15 percent), India (15 percent), Korea (10 percent), Vietnam (10 percent), and Japan (9 percent). Harsh quotas limited immigration before the 1960s, so most are recent immigrants. They differ tremendously in language, religion, and culture, and often they have long-standing ethnic and national conflicts back home (Korea versus Japan, China versus Vietnam, and so on) that make the umbrella term *Asian American* problematic.

Even within a nationality, there are many ethnic differences. People from China may speak Mandarin, Cantonese, or any of a dozen other varieties of Chinese or a hundred local languages. People from India may be Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain, or atheist. People from Mindanao, the largest and most industrialized island of the Philippines, may look down on people from other islands as uncouth and uncivilized. So even *Chinese American, Indian American*, and *Filipino/a* become a problem. The Asian American population is expected to triple by 2050, rising from 10.7 million to 33.4 million, primarily due to immigration (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004).

Asian Americans are often depicted as "the model minority." Many measures of discrimination are significant only for Blacks and Hispanics (like school achievement, college enrollments, prison populations); Asian Americans score the same as Whites, or surpass them. They have the highest college graduation rate of any ethnic group. Though Asian Americans are only 5 percent of the total population, they comprise 15 percent of all U.S. physicians and surgeons, 15 percent of all computer and mathematical occupations, 10 percent of all engineers, and 16 percent of the student body at Ivy League colleges (Kim, 2006). They are less likely to become victims of racially motivated hate crimes than any ethnic group except Whites.

Athletes like 2007 All-Star Game MVP Ichiro Suzuki defy stereotypes of Asians as weaklings and submissive nerds. ▼

Even the stereotypes of Asian Americans are somewhat different. Prejudiced beliefs about Blacks and Hispanics mark them as barbaric, unpredictable, violent, and sexually dangerous. *The Bell Curve* and other works claimed that African Americans were genetically inferior to Whites, had a lower native intelligence—that is, the arguments were about "nature" and no amount of "nurture" could compensate for their natural inferiority (Hernnstein and Murray, 1996). Prejudiced ideas about Asian Americans mark them as weak, passive, and asexual. In the mass media, they commonly appear not as thugs and drug dealers but as mystical sages and science nerds—stereotypes that are equally unfair but not nearly as threatening (Hamamoto, 1994). The success of Asian Americans, though, is attributed to their incredible work ethic, discipline, and parental influence—that is, as the result of "nurture." Few would be so consistent as to posit that Asian Americans were genetically superior to other groups. Of course, all of these are broad and false stereotypes. The point is that racist arguments are inconsistent; people refer to whichever one suits their purposes.

Scholars wondering about the "success" of the Asian American population have come up with several explanations. First, most Asian immigrants belonged to the middle class in their home country, so they find it easier to enter the middle class in the United States. They are more likely to be fluent in English. Because there are relatively few of them, they are unlikely to live in segregated neighborhoods, and much more likely to marry someone of another racial/ethnic group (Asian American Cultural Center, 2005; Wong, 1986). Finally, if prejudice boils down to light versus dark, they may profit by being relatively light skinned.

People from the Middle East

The U.S. Census does not give them a separate category, but about 2 million people in the United States trace their ancestry to the Middle East or North Africa. About 1,500,000 are recent immigrants who have arrived since 1970. About one-third of these are Iranian, one-third Turkish, and the other one-third are Arabs, Israelis, Cypriots, and others. There have been two broad migrations of Middle Easterners to the United States:

- Between 1880 and 1920, refugees came here from the failing Ottoman Empire, especially Lebanon, Cyprus, Syria, and Armenia. They were mostly working class and poor, about 75 percent Christian and the rest Muslim or Jewish. They settled primarily in the industrial Northeast and Midwest.
- After 1970, many middle-class Israelis, Arabs, and Iranians immigrated to America. Of those, 73 percent were Muslim. They settled primarily in large cities, especially Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Houston, and Washington, D.C.

Did *you* know?

The first building in the United States designed for exclusive use as a mosque was constructed in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in 1934. It was sold in 1971, becoming a youth center and a church, and then abandoned. In 1990, the Islamic Council of Iowa acquired and restored the building, and the "Mother Mosque" is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places as an "essential piece of American religious history."

Members of the first wave of immigration were assimilationist; like most other immigrants of the period, they hid or minimized their Middle Eastern ancestry and sought to fit in. During the past 50 years, there has been an increase in efforts to retain separate identity as Muslims.

Like Asian Americans, Middle Eastern Americans tend to be a "model minority." They are the most well-educated ethnic group in the United States: Half have college degrees, as opposed to 30 percent of White non–Middle Easterners. The median salary of Middle Eastern men is slightly higher than the national mean. However, nearly 20 percent live below the poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005).

Stereotypes about Middle Easterners tend to be more extreme, and more commonly believed, than stereotypes about other minority groups. Many Americans unaware of the political, cultural, and religious differences in the Middle East tend to believe that all Middle Easterners are Arabs, Muslims, or even Bedouins, who live in tents and ride camels. The men are stereotyped as wide-eyed terrorists; the women as subservient chattel. Even the hero of Disney's *Aladdin* (1993), who was an Arab but evidently not "as Arab" as everyone else, complains of the barbarity of his country: "They'll cut off your nose to spite your face, but hey, it's home." The conventional movie villain was once German, then Russian, then "Euro-terrorist"; now he is a Middle Eastern Arab.

Prejudice and discrimination against Middle Easterners, Arabs, and Muslims have increased significantly in the past decade, and especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. According to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 38 percent of respondents would not vote for a well-qualified Muslim for president (a higher percentage than for any minority except gays) and half believe that half or more of all Muslims are anti-American (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2003). The

FBI documented an increase of 1,600 percent in hate crimes against Arabs in 2001, jumping from 28 reported crimes in 2000 to 481 in 2001. The number is second only to anti-Jewish crimes, which tower atop the list at 1,043 reported crimes (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005c). In most countries of the European Union, intolerance has also increased significantly, first following September 11 and then spiking in different countries in the aftermath of incidents there. Eighty percent of Muslims in the United Kingdom said they had experienced discrimination in 2001, a jump from 45 percent in 2000 and 35 percent in 1999; hostility increased in Spain and Germany after the Madrid train bombing and in the Netherlands after the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh, both in 2004 (International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 2006).

Ethnicity and Conflict

Ethnicity is fluid; sometimes ethnic identification is stronger than at other times. For some groups, for whom discrimination has largely disappeared, such as the Irish and the Italians, ethnic identity has become mostly a choice (Gans, 1962; Waters, 1990). Ethnicity becomes "situational"—to be asserted in times and situations when it will increase their prestige and downplayed or ignored when it may decrease their prestige. Or it becomes symbolic ethnicity, something to participate in on special occasions, like St. Patrick's Day or Passover, but ignored the rest of the time. Just as old ethnicities can fade away, new ethnicities can emerge. Members of the Yoruba, Ibo, Fulani, and other West African ethnic groups transported to the United States during the slavery era were forcibly stripped of their distinctive cultures, until only a few customs remained, but they banded together to form a new ethnic group, African American.

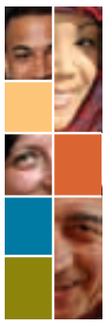
When several different ethnic groups are present in a single nation, they often compete for power and resources. Because there are around 5,000 ethnic groups in the world trying to share 190 nations, ethnic conflict is common, ranging from discrimination to violence and sometimes even civil war. Since 1945, 15 million people have died in conflicts involving ethnicity to some degree (Doyle, 1998).

At its most brutal, ethnic conflict can result in **genocide**, the planned, systematic destruction of a racial, political, or cultural group. The most infamous modern example of genocide is the Nazi massacre of 6 million Jews, Gypsies, gays, and other "undesirables" during World War II, but there have been a number of others. Between 1915 and 1923 the Turkish elite of the Ottoman Empire killed over 1 million ethnic Armenians. In the 1990s, the dominant Hutu ethnic group killed hundreds of thousands of minority Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi; and a new euphemism for genocide arose, "ethnic cleansing," when majority Serbs killed hundreds of thousands of minority Muslims in Bosnia. War in Kosovo in 1999 was prompted by the charges that Serbian forces were engaging in "ethnic cleansing" of the Kosovar Albanians.

Why do ethnic minorities live in relative harmony in some countries, while in others, they are at each other's throats? There are no easy answers, but one factor appears to be heterogeneity. If there are many ethnic groups in the country, it is less likely that any one will dominate and the others feel left out. However, if there are only two or three, it is easy for them to characterize each other as demonic. Another factor is

Did *you* know?

We tend to believe that increased immigration leads to increases in the crime rate, both because of the increased ethnic tension that increases hostility and potential violence and because the immigrants are often poorer and therefore turn to crime to enhance their class position. But if we thought that, we would be wrong (Figure 8.5). Research by Robert Sampson found that Mexican American immigrants in Chicago were 45 percent less likely to commit violence than third-generation Americans. He found that "immigrants appear in general to be less violent than people born in America, particularly when they live in neighborhoods with high numbers of other immigrants." Perhaps instead of moving from the multicultural city to the more homogeneous suburbs to avoid crime and violence, we should move to an immigrant neighborhood. They're safer (Sampson, 2006)!



Sociology and our World

"Choosing" One's Ethnicity

Although we often experience ethnicity as a "primordial" essential and biologically based category, sociologists are also aware that ethnicity can be more flexible than that. In her book, *Ethnic Options* (1990), Mary Waters describes the ways that different ethnic groups either exaggerate or downplay their ethnicity, depending on the situation.

Sometimes ethnicity can be rather confusing—to ourselves and to others. One of my colleagues, Pat Pugliani, had several children. Pat was from an Italian background and, at the time, a stay-at-home mom, and she spent a good deal of time preparing Italian food, celebrating traditional holidays, and the like. When Sara, her youngest, was in elementary school, the class was doing a unit on ethnicity, and the kids had to do a report on their ethnic background. One day, Pat got a concerned phone call from the teacher. "I think we have a problem with Sara," the teacher said.

Sara was doing a report about Italy, the teacher said. "Well, what's wrong with that?" Pat asked. "But, but . . ." the teacher stammered. "She's Asian!"

Sara was indeed of Korean origin, and Pat and her husband had adopted her. And though they spend some time learning about Korea, Sara also identified with the ethnicity of her family.

Sara's teacher informed Pat on the phone that Sara should do a report about Korea. So she did. That week, the children were all supposed to bring in a dish that was representative of their culture. Pat found a recipe for *bulgogi*, a Korean barbecue steak, and brought it to class.

Now the teacher was again shocked—this time seeing a non-Asian parent! Ever the sociologist, Pat patiently explained to the teacher the difference between race and ethnicity, and that we can often choose our ethnicity from a range of options.

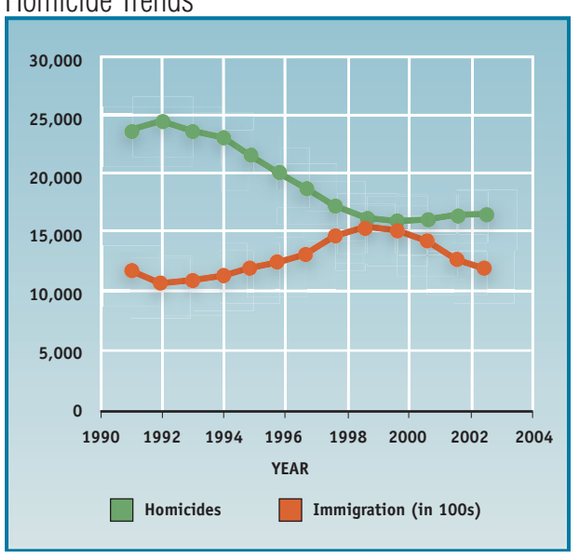
the rights and privileges given to minorities. In countries where ethnic minorities are accepted as ordinary parts of the political structure, they are less likely to compete for resources, real or imagined, and ethnic conflict is less common (Gurr, 2000; van Amersfoort, 1982).

Melting Pot (Assimilation) and Multiculturalism (Pluralism)

My grade school social studies textbook—that same one with the pictures illustrating the three races—glowingly described America as a *melting pot*. The United States was praised for its acceptance of difference, lack of prejudice, and our ability to melt down all cultural differences into a single, savory American soup.

Sociologically, this process seems unlikely because the dominant groups are rarely willing to let their characteristics melt away into the pot. Instead, the minority groups were subject to **assimiliation,** nearly abandoning their cultural traditions altogether and embracing the dominant culture. Only a few of their traditions entered the pot, mostly food (like pizza) and slang terms (like *pal* for friend, from the Romany word for "brother"); most traits and traditions were left behind. It was Italian Americans in the process of assimilating, not Italy, that gave us pizza—it was unknown in Palermo until a Pizza Hut franchise opened there. Besides, only White Europeans were invited to melt down. Asians, Native Americans, and Blacks weren't even given the option.

FIGURE 8.5 Immigration Flows and Homicide Trends



Source: From "Open Doors Don't Invite Criminals" by Robert J. Sampson, *New York Times,* March 11, 2006.

What do you think?

MyLab

The Melting Pot

Often referred to as a melting pot society, the United States boasts a rich variety of ethnic customs and traditions. Most citizens could trace their ancestry to immigrants from all over the world, yet they share remarkably similar lives with common values, norms, and experiences. As a society, we are trying to find a balance between assimilation and division. So, what do you think?

Some people say that it is better for a country if different racial and ethnic groups maintain their distinct customs and traditions. Others say that it is better if these groups adapt and blend into the larger society. Which of these views comes closer to your own?

- ❍ It is better for society if groups maintain their distinct customs and traditions.
- ❍ It is better for society if groups adapt and blend into the larger culture.

See the back of the chapter to compare your answers to national survey data.

Some immigrant groups felt that assimilation was not desirable. They didn't want to lose their distinctive customs, social norms, language, and religion. Why couldn't they continue to speak their native language, read newspapers from home, eat the same food they ate at home, and still be Americans? Maybe in the nineteenth century, when the journey from the homeland to the United States took months and there was little chance of ever returning, assimilation made sense, but now the homeland was only a short plane flight away, and friends and relatives back home as close as a telephone call or e-mail message.

During the 1980s and 1990s, many minority groups proposed pluralism as an alternative to the melting pot. **Pluralism** maintains that a stable society need not contain just one ethnic, cultural, or religious group. The different groups can treat each other with mutual respect instead of competing and trying to dominate each other. Thus, minority cultures can maintain their own distinctiveness and still participate in the greater society without discrimination.

At its most stable, pluralism becomes multiculturalism, in which cultural groups exist not only side by side but equally. Real multiculturalism seems to be rare—one language, religion, or culture will usually dominate, either by numbers or by prestige, and people will be drawn to it, even in the absence of institutional discrimination. India has 22 official languages, but official communication in the national arena must be conducted in Hindi or English, and for everyday communication, people tend to prefer English.

Advocates of multiculturalism like to point out the case of Switzerland, where four linguistic and cultural groups enjoy complete equality under the law. But are they really equal in everyday life? Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of the population speaks German, 18 percent French, 10 percent Italian, and 0.8 percent Romansch (descended from Latin). Street signs are usually in the local language and German. In Parliament, speeches may be given in any of the national languages, but most politicians choose

German, even if they speak something else at home. All schoolchildren must learn a second national language, but schools usually offer only German and French, so learning Italian or Romansch is not an option. People outside of the German-speaking cantons often pretend that they do not understand German at all, as a way of resisting what they feel is linguistic imperialism by the "dominant" linguistic group. Clearly, the other languages do not enjoy the same prestige.

Bilingualism

The assimilation model meant that English was preferred by society at large to the home language. The dominant culture expected that immigrants would enroll in English classes the moment they arrived; and, even if children were not punished for using their parents' birth language, they might grow up thinking that it was old-fashioned and outdated, a relic of their parents' generation. Today, however, many immigrants continue to speak their "native" language. Spanish is especially popular.

The Hispanic preference for speaking Spanish has led to some controversy that speakers of Bengali, Muong, and Byelorussian do not generate. In the United States, 29 million people use Spanish as their everyday language, more than any non-Spanish nation in the world, yet 23 states have laws declaring English their official language and permitting only English in official documents.

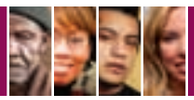
Race and Ethnicity in the 21st Century

Like class or gender, race and ethnicity are vital elements of our identity and also the basis for discrimination and inequality. Every one of us constructs our identities, at least in part, through race and ethnicity. It is one of the most important foundations of identity, an anchor that ties us to family, tradition, and culture. And yet virtually every one of us also wants to be treated as an individual, by our talents and achievements alone. We love it when race and ethnicity give us a sense of belonging and community; we hate it when our race and ethnicity are used against us, to deny us opportunities.

Maybe it is simply that we each want to be the ones who decide when race matters and when it doesn't: It should matter when we need to feel the connections among our roots, and it shouldn't matter when we want to be seen as individual trees.

But just as race and ethnicity seem to tie us to one common ancestry, a place of blood and birth, those categories are shifting dramatically in the contemporary world. These processes expose the *sociology* of race and ethnicity: The experiences of fixed and essential characteristics are the invention of different groups as they come into contact with each other. (After all, virtually every culture that had no contact with other people did not have an understanding of race; they simply called themselves "human beings.") Race, as an idea, requires interaction with others—that is, it requires not biology but society and culture.

And the changes in racial and ethnic identities are liable to be dramatic and lasting. In 2050, White Europeans will constitute 50 percent of the population (which will be 420 million), Latinos 24 percent, African Americans 15 percent, and Asian Americans 8 percent. We will be a multiracial nation, but will we be a multicultural one? As we have seen, an increase in numbers does not necessarily bring equality. Will White privilege still be intact? Will "White" still be invisible, the unmarked category? In a well-known essay, sociologist Norman Glazer (1998) states, "We are all multiculturalists now." Will we start acting like it?



Chapter Review

1. ***How do sociologists distinguish between race and ethnicity?*** The term *race* assumes that there is a biological distinction between different groups and that the distinction is based on attributes such as skin color and other physical characteristics. Ethnicity, on the other hand, is cultural. Neither concept, race nor ethnicity, is based on empirical evidence, and there is no clear consensus on the definition of *race*.

2. ***How do sociologists view race and ethnicity?*** Resources are often allocated by race or ethnicity, and this leads to unequal treatment, power, privilege, income, and prestige. On the positive side, race and ethnic group membership confers identity and access to specific groups and resources. A minority group must possess three characteristics: a distinct identity, an awareness of that group identity, and membership by birth into the group. In the United States, Whites are the majority group and thus are considered the norm and the standard. The privilege that Whites receive automatically is almost always invisible to them.

3. ***What is prejudice?*** Prejudice is a set of beliefs and attitudes that cause us to prejudge others based on their social location. Prejudice is based on stereotypes, which are broad generalizations about a group that are applied to all individuals in that group. Racism is systematic prejudice applied to groups. It is very powerful and can be overt or subtle, and even groups victimized by racially based attitudes often believe in the underlying stereotypes.

4. ***What is discrimination?*** Discrimination is a set of actions based on prejudice and stereotypes. Prejudice and discrimination are not always causally related. Deeply embedded in the institutions of society, discrimination often results in systematic oppression. Laws against institutional discrimination often have some effect but are not always useful.

5. ***How do sociologists explain prejudice and discrimination?*** Sociologists are interested in combating prejudice. Awareness of prejudice and a desire to stop it still require a suspension of belief in stereotypes to be effective. Discrimination is a form of socialization, as stereotypes can become self-fulfilling prophecies. The primordial theory holds that innate conflict exists between in- and out-groups. The frustration-aggression theory says that individuals direct frustration at their own personal lives toward a scapegoat. According to conflict theory, prejudice is a tool used by the elites to control those at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Feminist theory looks at the intersections of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and so on.

6. ***What ethnic groups exist in the United States?*** Ethnic groups are those who share a common ancestry, history, or culture. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 75 percent of the U.S. population is White, or of European ancestry. Native Americans comprise 1.5 percent of the population and are worse off than other minority groups with regard to poverty and other social ills. Of the population, 12.5 percent is Hispanic, or Latino, with roots in Latin America; 12.5 percent is Black, or African-American; and 3.6 percent is Asian. There are about 2 million individuals from the Middle East and North Africa in the United States.

7. ***How does ethnicity relate to conflict?*** Racial terminology defines us to ourselves and to others. There is conflict between and within groups over racial terminology, and the acceptability of racial terms changes over time and by group. Ethnic groups also compete over power and resources, and at their starkest they can result in genocide. The United States is often called a melting pot society, and there is disagreement over whether *assimilation* or *pluralism* best describes U.S. society. Assimilation occurs when the minority group fits into the majority group, pluralism is ethnic diversity with mutual respect among groups, and multiculturalism is marked by groups living side-by-side in equality.

Key Terms

Affirmative action (p. 237)
Apartheid (p. 237)
Assimilation (p. 251)
Discrimination (p. 234)
Ethnic group (p. 242)
Ethnicity (p. 224)
Genocide (p. 250)
In-group (p. 228)
Institutional discrimination (p. 236)
Integration (p. 237)
Majority group (p. 228)
Matrix of domination (p. 240)
Minority group (p. 228)
Out-group (p. 228)
Overt racism (p. 234)
Pluralism (p. 252)
Prejudice (p. 231)
Race (p. 224)
Racism (p. 234)
Scapegoat (p. 240)
Segregation (p. 236)
Stereotype (p. 231)
Subtle racism (p. 234)
Tokenism (p. 238)

What does America think?

The Melting Pot

These are based on actual survey data from the General Social Survey, 2004.

Some people say that it is better for a country if different racial and ethnic groups maintain their distinct customs and traditions. Others say that it is better if these groups adapt and blend into the larger society. Which of these views comes closer to your own? The responses to this question were split almost in half. Slightly more than 50 percent of respondents thought it was better if groups adapted and blended into the larger society. White respondents (55.4 percent) were more likely to think that than were Black respondents (52.8 percent), and those who identified as other race were least likely to feel groups should assimilate (45.7 percent).

CRITICAL THINKING | DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think there were only very small differences in responses by racial classification?
2. In many areas of the world, the question of assimilation and group difference leads to civil war and even genocide. Why do you think that does not happen in the contemporary United States?

▶ Go to this website to look further at the data. You can run your own statistics and crosstabs here: **http://sda.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/hsda?harcsda+gss04**

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