

Diversity in the United States: Questions and Concepts

Who am I? ... Where do I fit into American society? ... For most of my 47 years, I have struggled to find answers to these questions. I am an American of multiracial descent and culture [Native American, African American, Italian American, and Puerto Rican]. In this aspect, I am not very different from many Americans [but] I have always felt an urge to feel and live the intermingling of blood that runs through my veins. American society has a way of forcing multiracial and biracial people to choose one race over the other. I personally feel this pressure every time I have to complete an application form with instructions to check just one box for race category.

—Butch, a 47-year-old man¹

Actually, I don't feel comfortable being around Asians except for my family. ... I couldn't relate to ... other Asians [because] they grew up in [wealthier neighborhoods]. I couldn't relate to the whole "I live in a mansion" [attitude]. This summer, I worked in a media company and it was kind of hard to relate to them [other Asians] because we all grew up in a different place ... the look I would get when I say "Yeah, I'm from [a less affluent neighborhood]" they're like, "Oh, Oh" like, "That's unfortunate for your parents, I'm sorry they didn't make it."

—Rebecca, a 19-year-old Macanese-Chinese-Portuguese woman²

Yeah, my people came from all over—Italy, Ireland, Poland, and others too. I don't really know when they got here or why they came and, really, it doesn't matter much to me. I mean, I'm just an American. ... I'm from everywhere ... I'm from here!

—Jennifer, a 25-year-old white American woman³

What do these people have in common? How do they differ? They think about their place in U.S. society in very different ways. All are connected to a multitude of groups and traditions but not all find this fact interesting or important. One feels alienated from the more affluent members of her group, one seeks to embrace his multiple memberships, and one dismisses the issue of ancestry as irrelevant and is comfortable and at ease being "just an American."

Today, the United States is growing more diverse in culture, race, religion, and language. The number of people who can connect themselves to different cultural traditions is increasing, as is the number of Americans of mixed race. Where will this lead us? Will increasing diversity lead to greater tolerance and respect for one another? Can we overcome the legacies of racism and inequality that stretch back to colonial days? Will we fragment along these lines of difference and dissolve into warring ethnic enclaves (the fate of more than one modern, apparently unified nation)?

This text raises a multitude of questions about the past, present, and future of group relationships in U.S. society. What historical, social, political, and economic forces shaped those relationships in the past? How do racial and ethnic groups relate to each other today? What issues and problems can we expect in the years to come? Why do some people struggle with their identity? What is an American?

The United States is a nation of immigrants and groups; we have been arguing, often passionately, about what this means, about inclusion and exclusion, and about unity and diversity, since the infancy of this society. Every member of our society is in some sense an immigrant or the descendant of immigrants. Even American Indians migrated to this continent, albeit thousands of years ago. We are all from some place else, with roots in another part of the globe. Some came here in chains; others came on ocean liners, on jet planes, or on foot. Some arrived last week and others have had family here for centuries. Each wave of newcomers has altered the social landscape of the United States. As many have observed, our society is continually becoming permanently unfinished.

Today, the United States is remaking itself yet again. Large numbers of immigrants are arriving from all over the world, and their presence has raised questions about who belongs, what it means to be a U.S. citizen, and how much diversity we can tolerate. Even as we debate the implications of immigration, other long-standing issues of belonging, fairness, and justice remain unresolved. American Indians and African Americans have been a part of this society since its inception, but they have existed largely as "others," slaves and outsiders, servants and laborers—groups outside the mainstream, not accepted as "true Americans" or full citizens. The legacies of racism and exclusion continue to affect these groups today and, as we shall see in chapters to come, they and other American minority groups continue to suffer from inequality, discrimination, and marginalization.

Today, the definition of "American" seems up for grabs. After all, we have twice elected a black man to the most powerful position in our society (and, arguably, the

world). To some, President Barack Obama's victories prove that the United States has finally become what it so often claimed to be: a truly open society and the last, best hope for all humanity.

Yet, even a casual glance at our schools, courts, neighborhoods, churches, corporate board rooms—indeed, at any nook or cranny of our society—reveals pervasive patterns of inequality, different opportunities, injustice, and unfairness. Which is the real America: the land of tolerance and opportunity, or the one of narrow-mindedness and inequity?

We may be at a crossroads in this era of growing diversity. We have an opportunity to reexamine the fundamental questions of citizenship and inclusion in this society: What is an American? How can we incorporate all groups while avoiding fragmentation and disunity? Should we celebrate our diversity or stress the need for similarity? What can hold us together?

The groups to which we belong affect our understanding of these issues and our answers to these questions. Some of us feel intensely connected to people with similar backgrounds and identify closely with our heritage(s). Others are uncertain about who they are exactly, where they fit in the social landscape. Others feel no particular connection with any tradition, group, or homeland. Still, these elements of our identity influence our lives and perceptions. They help to shape who we are and how we relate to the larger society. They affect the ways others perceive us, the opportunities available to us, the way we think about ourselves, and our view of U.S. society and what it means to be American. Finally, they impact our view of the world.

Minority Groups: Trends and Questions

The group memberships discussed in the previous section can shape the choices we make in the voting booth and in other areas of social life. Also, we need to be aware that members of different groups will evaluate these decisions in different ways. The issues will be filtered through the screens of our divergent experiences, group histories, and present situations. The debates over which direction our society should take are unlikely to be meaningful or even mutually understandable without some comprehension of the variety of ways of being American.

Increasing Diversity

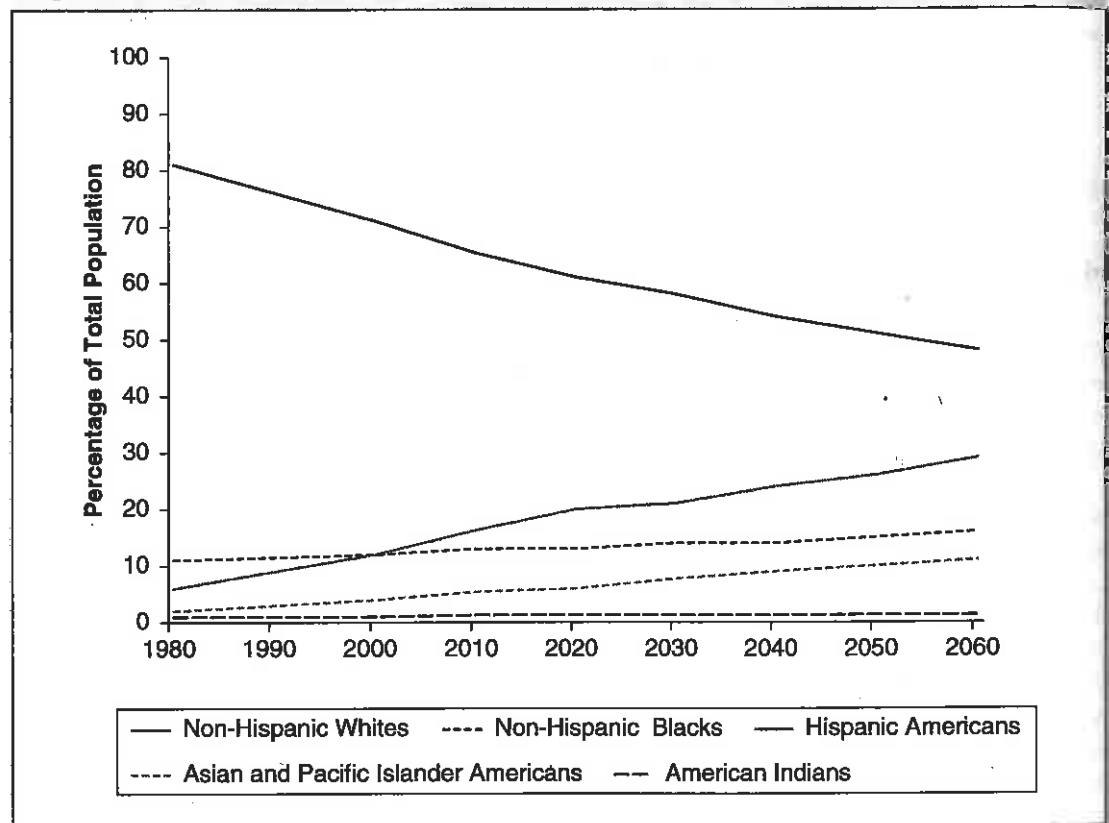
The choices about the future of our society are especially urgent because the diversity of U.S. society is increasing dramatically, largely due to high rates of immigration. Since the 1960s, the number of immigrants arriving in the United States each year has tripled and includes groups, literally, from all over the globe (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2013b). Can our society deal successfully with this diversity of cultures, languages, and races? Concerns about increasing diversity are compounded by other long-standing minority issues and grievances that remain unresolved. For example, charts and graphs in Part 3 of this text document continuing gaps in income, poverty rates, and other measures of affluence and equality between minority groups

and national norms. In fact, in many ways the problems of African Americans, American Indians, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans today are just as formidable as they were a generation ago.

As one way of gauging the dimensions of diversity in our nation, consider the changing makeup of U.S. society. Figure 1.1 presents the percentage of the total U.S. population in each of five groups. First, we will consider this information “on its face” and analyze some of its implications. Then, we will consider (and question) the framing of this information.

The figure reports the actual relative sizes of the groups for 1980 through 2010 and the projected relative sizes through 2060. Note how the increasing diversity of U.S. society is reflected in the declining numerical predominance of non-Hispanic whites. As recently as 1980, more than 8 out of 10 Americans were members of this group but, by the middle of this century, non-Hispanic whites will become a numerical minority.

Figure 1.1 The U.S. Population by Race and Ethnicity, 1980–2060 (Projected)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2012b).

Note: “Hispanics” may be of any race.

Several states (Texas, California, Hawaii, and New Mexico) are already "majority-minority," and for the first time in history, most of the babies in the United States (50.4%) are members of minority groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012a).

African Americans and American Indians will grow in absolute numbers but are projected to remain stable in their relative size. Hispanic American, Asian American, and Pacific Islander populations, on the other hand, will grow dramatically. Asian American and Pacific Islander groups together constituted only 2% of the population in 1980, but that figure will grow to 10% by midcentury. The most dramatic growth, however, will be among Hispanic Americans. This group became the largest minority group in 2002, surpassing blacks, and will grow to about 30% of the population by 2060.

The projections into the future are just educated guesses, of course, but they forecast profound change for the United States. As this century unfolds, our society will grow more diverse racially, culturally, and linguistically. The United States will become less white, less European, and more like the world as a whole. Some people see these changes as threats to "traditional" white middle-class American values and lifestyles. Others see them as an opportunity for other equally legitimate value systems and lifestyles to emerge.

What's in a Name?

Let's take a moment to reflect on the categories in Figure 1.1. The group names we used are arbitrary, and none of these groups has clear or definite boundaries. We use these terms because they are convenient, familiar, and consistent with the labels found in census reports, much of the sociological research literature, and other sources of information. This does not mean that the labels are "real" in any absolute sense or equally useful in all circumstances. In fact, these group names have some serious shortcomings, several of which we note here. These names are social conventions whose meanings change from time to time and place to place. To underscore the social construction of racial and ethnic groups, we use group names interchangeably (e.g., blacks and African Americans; Hispanic Americans and Latinos).

First, the people within these groups may have very little in common with each other. Any two people in one of these categories might be as different from each other as any two people selected from different categories. They may share some general, superficial physical or cultural traits, but they will also vary by social class, religion, and gender, and in thousands of other ways. People in the "Asian American and Pacific Islander" group, for example, represent scores of different national and linguistic backgrounds (Japanese, Pakistanis, Samoans, Vietnamese, and so forth), and the category "American Indian or Alaska Native" includes people from hundreds of different tribal groups.

Second, people do not necessarily use these labels when they think about their identity or who they are. In this sense, the labels are not "real" or important for all of the people in these categories. For example, many whites in the United States (like Jennifer, quoted in the opening of this chapter) think of themselves as "just an American." A Hispanic American may think of herself more in national terms, as

a Mexican or a Cuban, or, even more specifically, she may identify with a particular region or village in her homeland. Gay or lesbian members of any of these five groups may identify themselves more in terms of their sexual orientation than their race or ethnicity. Still others identify most with their class. Thus, the labels do not always reflect the ways people think about themselves, their families, or where they come from. The categories are statistical classifications created by researchers and census takers to help them organize information and clarify their analyses. They do not grow out of or always reflect the everyday realities of the people who happen to be in them.

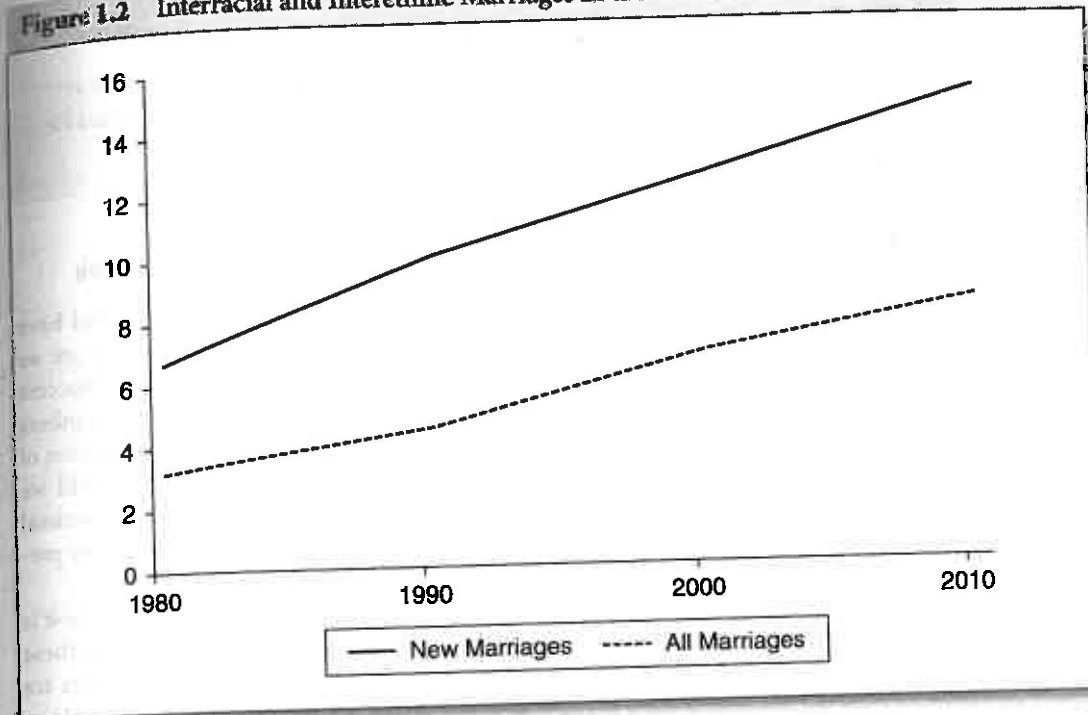
Third, even though the categories in Figure 1.1 are broad, they provide no place for a number of groups. For example, where should we place Arab Americans and recent immigrants from Africa? These groups are relatively small in size (about 1 million people each), but there is no clear place for them in these categories. Should Arab Americans be classified as "Asian"? Should recent immigrants from Africa be placed in the same category as African Americans? Of course, we don't need to have a category for every person, but we should recognize that classification schemes like the one used in Figure 1.1 (and in many other contexts) have boundaries that can be fuzzy and ambiguous.

A related problem with this classification scheme will become increasingly apparent in the years to come: there is no category for the growing number of people who (like Butch, quoted in the opening of this chapter) are members of more than one racial or ethnic group. The number of "mixed-group" Americans is relatively small today, slightly less than 3% of the total population. However, the number of people who chose more than one racial or ethnic category to describe themselves increased by 32% (from 2.4% to 2.9% of the total population) between 2000 and 2010 (Jones & Bullock, 2012) and is likely to continue to increase rapidly because of the growing number of marriages across group lines.

To illustrate, Figure 1.2 shows dramatic increases in the percentage of "new" marriages (couples that got married in the year prior to the survey date) and all marriages that unite members of different racial or ethnic groups (Wang, 2012, p. 5). Obviously, the greater the number of mixed (racial or ethnic) marriages, the greater the number of mixed Americans. One study estimates that 21% of the population will claim membership in this category by 2050 (Smith & Edmonston, 1997, p. 119).

Finally, we should note that these categories and group names are **social constructions**, created in particular historical circumstances and reflective of particular power relationships.⁴ For example, the group we call "American Indians" today didn't exist prior to the European exploration and colonization of North America. Before the arrival of Europeans, hundreds of separate societies spread across the North American continent, each with its own language and culture. American Indians thought of themselves primarily in terms of their tribe and had no sense of a common identity with the other peoples that inhabited North America. However, European conquerors stressed similarities among tribes and constructed them as one group: the enemy. The fact that American Indians are often defined as a single group today reflects their historical defeat and subordination and their status as a minority group: They became the "others" in contrast to white European colonists.

Figure 1.2 Interracial and Interethnic Marriages in the United States 1980–2011



Source: Wang, Wendy. February 16, 2012. "The Rise of Intermarriage: Rates, Characteristics Vary by Race and Gender." Reprinted with permission of Pew Research Center.

In the same way (although through different processes), African, Hispanic, and Asian Americans came to be seen as separate groups not by their own choices, but as one outcome of an unequal interaction with white Americans. These groups have become "real," and much of this text is organized around a consideration of each of them (e.g., see the chapter titles in Part 3). Nonetheless, we use the terms and labels to facilitate our discussion of complex topics, not as a reflection of some unchangeable reality. These groups are real because they are seen as real from a particular perspective—that of the dominant group in this society: white Americans.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. If you were asked for your group membership, which of the groups listed in Figure 1.1 (if any) would you select? Do you feel that you belong to one and only one group? Are these groups part of your self-image, or are they just statistical categories? Do you think they affect your view of the world or shape your circle of friends? How?

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2. Over the past 5 to 10 years, what signs of increasing diversity have you seen in your home community or high school? How has increasing diversity enriched everyday life in these areas? What problems or issues have arisen from rising diversity?

Questions About the Future, Sociology, and the Plan of This Book

Even though the labels used in Figure 1.1 are arbitrary, the trends displayed have important implications for the future of the United States. What kind of society are we becoming? What should it mean to be American? In the past, opportunity and success have been far more available to white Anglo-Saxon Protestant men than to members of other groups. Most of us, even the most favored, would agree that this definition of American is far too narrow, but how inclusive should the definition be? Should we stress unity or celebrate diversity? How wide can the limits be stretched before societal cohesion is threatened? How narrowly can they be defined before the desire to preserve cultural and linguistic diversity is unjustly and unnecessarily stifled?

We've raised a lot of question in these first few pages. The purpose of this book is to help you develop some answers and some thoughtful, informed positions on these issues. You should be aware that these questions are complex and that the answers are not obvious or easy. Indeed, there is no guarantee that we, as a society, will be able or willing to resolve all the problems of intergroup relations in the United States. However, we will never make progress unless we confront the issues honestly and with an accurate base of knowledge and understanding. Certainly, these issues will not resolve themselves or disappear if they are ignored.

In the course of our inquiry, we will rely on sociology and other social sciences for concepts, theory, and information that will help us gain a greater understanding of the issues. The first two chapters introduce and define many of the ideas that will guide our investigation. Part 2 explores how relations between the dominant group and minority groups have evolved in American society. Part 3 analyzes the current situation of U.S. racial and ethnic minority groups. In Part 4, the final section of the book, we explore many of the challenges and issues facing our society (and the world) and see what conclusions we can glean from our investigations and how they might shape the future.

What Is a Minority Group?

Before we can begin to sort out the issues, we need common definitions and a common vocabulary for discussion. We begin with the term **minority group**. Taken literally, the mathematical connotation of this term is a bit misleading because it implies that minority groups are small. In reality, a minority group can be quite large and can even be a numerical majority of the population. Women, for example, are sometimes

considered to be a separate minority group, even though they are a numerical majority of the U.S. population. In South Africa, as in many nations created by European colonization, whites are a numerical minority (less than 10% of the population), but they have been the most powerful and affluent group by far and, despite recent changes, they retain their advantages in many ways.

Minority status has more to do with the distribution of resources and power than with simple numbers. We use the definition of minority group based on Wagley and Harris (1958). According to this definition, a minority group has five characteristics:

1. The members of the group experience a pattern of *disadvantage or inequality*.
2. The members of the group share a *visible trait or characteristic* that differentiates them from other groups.
3. Minority groups are *self-conscious social units*.
4. Membership in the group is usually *determined at birth*.
5. Members tend to *form intimate relationships* (close friendships, dating partnerships, and marriages) *within the group*.

We will examine each of these defining characteristics and, a bit later, we will examine the first two—inequality and visibility—in greater detail because they are the most important characteristics of minority groups.

1. Inequality. The first and most important defining characteristic of a minority group is *inequality*—that is, some pattern of disability and disadvantage. The nature of the disability and the degree of disadvantage are variable and can range from exploitation, slavery, and **genocide** to slight irritants such as a lack of desks for left-handed students or a policy of racial or religious exclusion at an expensive country club. (Note, however, that you might not agree that the irritant is slight if you are a left-handed student awkwardly taking notes at a right-handed desk or if you are a golf aficionado who happens to be African American or Jewish American.)

Whatever its scope or severity, whether it extends to wealth, jobs, housing, political power, police protection, or health care, the pattern of disadvantage is the key characteristic of a minority group. Because the group has less of what is valued by society, the term *subordinate group* is sometimes used instead of *minority group*.

The pattern of disadvantage is the result of the actions of another group, often in the distant past, that benefits from and tries to sustain the unequal arrangement. This group can be called the core group or the **dominant group**. The latter term is used most frequently in this book because it reflects the patterns of inequality and the power realities of minority group status.

2. Visibility. The second defining characteristic of a minority group is some *visible trait* or characteristic that sets members of the group apart and that the dominant group holds in low esteem. The trait can be cultural (language, religion, speech patterns, or dress styles), physical (skin color, stature, or facial features), or both. Groups

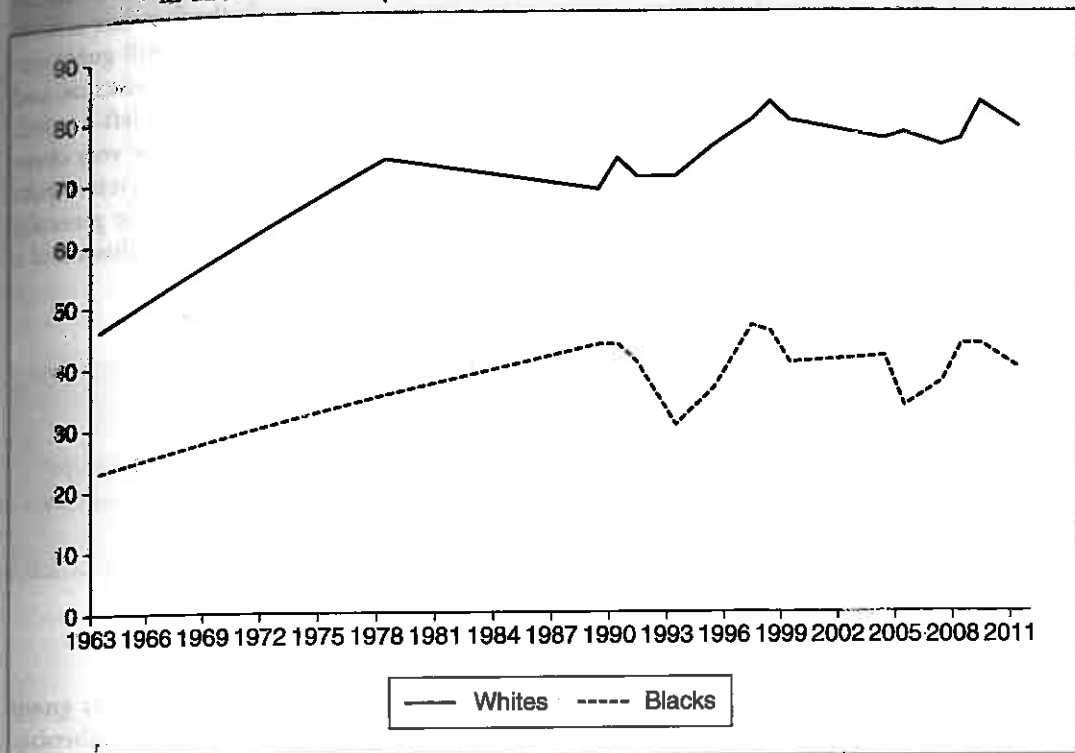
that are defined primarily by their cultural characteristics are called **ethnic minority groups**. Examples of such groups are Irish Americans and Jewish Americans. Groups defined primarily by their physical characteristics are **racial minority groups**, such as African Americans or American Indians, for example. Note that these categories overlap. So-called ethnic groups may have (or may be thought to have) distinguishing physical characteristics (for example, the stereotypical Irish red hair or "Jewish nose") and racial groups commonly have (or are thought to have) cultural traits that differ from those of the dominant group (e.g., differences in dialect, religious values, or cuisine).

These distinguishing traits set boundaries and separate people into distinct groups. The traits are outward signs that identify minority group members and help to maintain the patterns of disadvantage. That is, the dominant group has (or at one time had) sufficient power to create the distinction between groups and thus solidify a higher position for itself. These markers of group membership are crucial. Without visible signs, it would be difficult or impossible to identify who was in which group, and the system of minority group oppression would soon collapse. (We discuss a partial exception to this generalization, the Burakumin of Japan, in Chapter 8.)

It is important to realize that the characteristics that mark the boundaries between groups usually are not significant in and of themselves. They are selected for their visibility and convenience, and, objectively, they may be quite trivial and unimportant. For example, scientists have concluded that skin color and other so-called racial traits have little scientific, evolutionary, medical, or biological importance. As we shall see, skin color is an important marker of group membership in our society because it was selected during a complex and lengthy historical process, not because it has any inherent significance. These markers are social constructions that become important because we attribute significance to them.

3. Awareness. A third characteristic of minority groups is that they are *self-conscious social units*, aware of their differentiation from the dominant group, their shared disabilities, and their common fate. This shared social status can provide the basis for strong intragroup bonds and a sense of solidarity, and can lead to views of the world that are markedly different from those of the dominant group and other minority groups. Minority and dominant groups can live in different cultural worlds. For example, public opinion polls frequently show sizeable differences between dominant and minority groups in their views of the seriousness and extent of discrimination in American society. Figure 1.3 shows persistent and sizeable gaps in the percentage of nationally representative samples of whites and blacks who agree that blacks and whites have equal job opportunities. As would be expected, given their different histories, experiences, and locations in the social structure, blacks have much more negative views of racial equality, even though both groups have become somewhat more optimistic over the years. Even after the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, the percentage of black Americans who perceived that racial opportunity was equal was about half the corresponding percentage of white Americans.

Figure 1.3 Percentage of Whites and Blacks Who Believe That There Is Equal Opportunity in Their Community, 1963–2011



Source: Gallup Polls (2013).

4. Ascription. A fourth characteristic of minority groups is that, in general, membership is an **ascribed status**, or one determined at birth. The traits that identify minority group membership are typically not easy to change, and minority group status is usually involuntary and for life.

5. Intimate Relationships. Finally, group members tend to *form emotionally close bonds with people like themselves*. That is, members tend to choose each other as close friends, dating partners, and spouses (legal and cohabitational). (Members of the dominant group do this, too.)

This pattern is often shaped by the pervasive racial and ethnic segregation of U.S. neighborhoods, schools, and other areas of social life that influence who one meets or spends time with on a regular basis. It can be voluntary, but it can also be dictated by the dominant group. For example, interracial marriages were illegal in many states, and laws against **miscegenation** were declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court less than 50 years ago, in the late 1960s (Bell, 1992).

This inclusive, multipart definition of minority groups encompasses “traditional” minority groups such as African Americans and American Indians, but it could be applied to other groups, also. For instance, women as a group fit the first four criteria and can be analyzed with many of the same concepts and ideas that will guide our analysis of other minority groups. Also, Americans who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender; Americans who are differently abled; Americans who are left-handed; Americans who are aged; and Americans who are very short, very tall, or very obese could fit the definition of minority group without much difficulty. In short, it is important to note that the analyses developed in this book can be applied more generally than you might realize at first. We hope that leads you to some fresh insights about a wide variety of groups and people.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

3. Do gay and lesbian Americans fit all five parts of this definition of minority groups? From some perspectives, gays and lesbians are seen as sinners, deviants, or mentally ill. Are all these views valid? Why or why not?

Patterns of Inequality

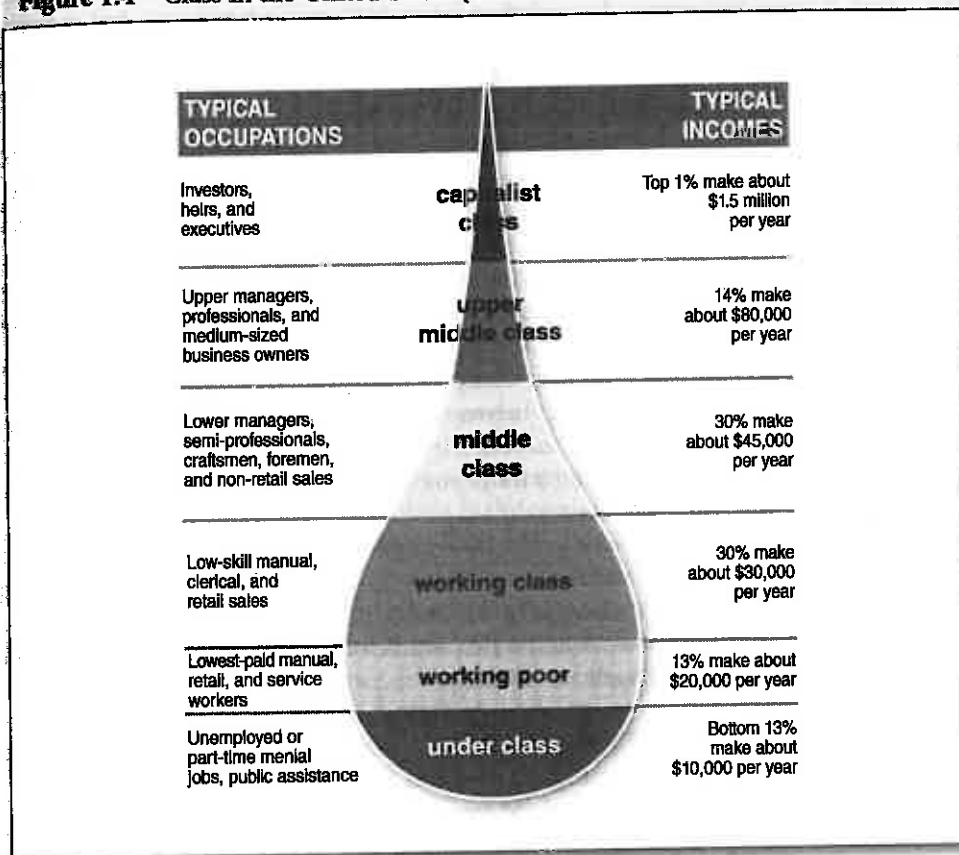
As mentioned earlier, the most important defining characteristic of minority group status is inequality. As is documented in later chapters, minority group membership can affect access to jobs, education, wealth, health care, and housing. It is associated with a lower (often much lower) proportional share of goods and services and more limited (often much more limited) opportunities for upward mobility.

Stratification, or the unequal distribution of valued goods and services, is a feature of U.S. society. Every human society, except perhaps the simplest hunter-gatherer societies, is stratified to some degree. That is, the resources of the society are distributed so that some people get more while others get less of whatever is valued. Societies are divided into horizontal layers (or strata), often called **social classes**, that differ from one another by the amount of resources they command. Figure 1.4 shows one view of the American social class system. Many criteria (such as education, age, gender, and talent) may affect a person’s social class position and his or her access to goods and services. Minority group membership is one of these criteria, and it has a powerful impact on the distribution of resources in the United States and in many other societies.

The next section considers different theories about the nature and dimensions of stratification. Then, it focuses on how minority group status relates to stratification.

Theoretical Perspectives

Sociology and the other social sciences have been concerned with stratification and human inequality since the formation of the discipline in the 19th century; we highlight

Figure 1.4 Class in the United States (Gilbert-Kahn Model)

Source: Gilbert, D.L. (2011). *The American Class Structure in an Age of Growing Inequality*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

the work of four significant thinkers in this section. An early and important contributor to our understanding of the nature and significance of social inequality was Karl Marx, the noted social philosopher and revolutionary. Half a century later, a sociologist named Max Weber, a central figure in the development of sociology, critiqued and elaborated on Marx's view of inequality. Gerhard Lenski is a contemporary sociologist whose ideas about the influence of economic and technological development on social stratification have considerable relevance for comparing societies and understanding the evolution of intergroup relations. We close with a consideration of the views of another contemporary sociologist, Patricia Hill-Collins, who argues that we need to view class, racial, gender, and other inequalities holistically and as a single, interlocking pattern.

Karl Marx. Although best known as the father of modern Communism, Karl Marx was also the primary architect of a political, economic, and social philosophy that has

played a major role in world affairs for more than 150 years. Marxism is a complex theory of history and social change in which inequality is a central concern.

Marx argued that the most important source of inequality in society was the system of economic production. More specifically, he focused on the **means of production**, or the materials, tools, resources, and social relationships by which the society produces and distributes goods and services. In an agricultural society, the means of production include land, draft animals, and plows. In an industrial society, the means of production include factories, commercial enterprises, banks, and transportation systems, such as railroads.

In Marx's view, all societies include two main social classes that struggle over the means of production. One class, the **bourgeoisie** or capitalist class, owns or controls the means of production. The other, the **proletariat** or working class, is exploited and oppressed by the dominant class, whose members benefit from that arrangement. Marx believed that conflict between these classes was inevitable and that, ultimately, the working class would successfully revolt against the bourgeoisie and create a utopian society without exploitation, coercion, or inequality. In other words, they would create a classless society.

Marxism has been extensively critiqued and modified over the past century and a half. Still, modern social science owes a great deal to Marx's views on inequality and his insights on class struggle and social conflict. As you will see, Marxism remains an important body of work and a rich source of insight into group relations in industrial society (Marx & Engels, 1848/1967).

Max Weber. One of Marx's major critics was Max Weber, a German sociologist who did most of his work around the turn of the 20th century. Weber thought that Marx's view of inequality was too narrow. Marx saw social class as a matter of economic position or relationship to the means of production, but Weber argued that inequality was more complex and included dimensions other than just the economic. Individuals could be members of the elite in some ways but not in others. For example, an aristocratic family that has fallen on hard financial times might belong to the elite in terms of family lineage but not in terms of wealth. To use a more contemporary example, a major figure in the illegal drug trade could enjoy substantial wealth but be held in low esteem.

Weber expanded on Marx's view of inequality by identifying three separate stratification systems. First, economic inequality is based on ownership or control of property, wealth, and income. This is similar to Marx's concept of class, and Weber used the term *class* to identify this form of inequality.

A second system of stratification revolves around differences in **prestige**, or the amount of honor, esteem, or respect given to us by others. Class position is one factor that affects the amount of prestige a person enjoys. Other factors might include family lineage, athletic ability, and physical appearance. In the United States and other societies, the groups to which people belong affect prestige. Members of minority groups typically have less prestige than members of the dominant group. Thus, a wealthy minority group member might be ranked high on class or control of property, wealth, and income, but low on status or prestige.

Weber's third stratification system is **power**, or the ability to influence others, impact the decision-making process of society, and pursue and protect one's self-interest and achieve one's goals. One source of power is a person's standing in politically active organizations, such as labor unions or pressure groups, that lobby state and federal legislatures. Some politically active groups have access to great wealth and can use their riches to promote their causes. Other groups may rely more on their size and their ability to mobilize large demonstrations to achieve their goals. Political groups and the people they represent vary in their abilities to affect the political process and control decision making. That is, they vary in the amount of power they can mobilize.

Typically, these three dimensions of stratification go together: wealthy, prestigious groups will be more powerful (more likely to achieve their goals or protect their self-interest) than low-income groups or groups with little prestige. However, power is a separate dimension: even very impoverished groups have sometimes found ways to express their concerns and pursue their goals.

Gerhard Lenski. Gerhard Lenski is a contemporary sociologist who expands on Weber's ideas by analyzing stratification in the context of societal evolution or the **level of development** of a society (Nolan & Lenski, 2004). He argues that the nature of inequality (the degree of inequality or the specific criteria affecting a group's position) is closely related to **subsistence technology**, the means by which the society satisfies basic needs such as hunger and thirst. A preindustrial agricultural society relies on human and animal labor to generate the calories necessary to sustain life. Inequality in this type of society centers on control of land and labor because they are the most important means of production at that level of development.

In a modern industrial society, however, land ownership is not as crucial as control of financial, manufacturing, and commercial enterprises. At the industrial level of development, control of capital is more important than control of land, and the nature of inequality will change accordingly.

The United States and other societies have entered another stage of development, often referred to as **postindustrial society**. In this type of society, economic growth is powered by developments in new technology, computer-related fields, information processing, and scientific research. In the postindustrial era, economic success will be closely related to specialized knowledge, familiarity with new technologies, and education in general (Chirot, 1994, p. 88; see also Bell, 1973).

These changes in subsistence technology, from agriculture to industrialization to the "information society," alter the stratification system. As the sources of wealth, success, and power change, so do the relationships between minority and dominant groups. For example, the shift to an information-based, "hi-tech," postindustrial society means that the advantages conferred by higher levels of education will be magnified and that groups that have less access to schooling are likely to rank low on all dimensions of stratification.

Patricia Hill Collins. Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (2000) calls for an approach to the study of inequality and group relations that recognizes the multiplicity of systems

of inequality and privilege that operate in society. Some systems are based on social class, while others divide people by gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, disability, and multiple other criteria. Almost everyone holds a mixed set of statuses, some more privileged and some less. For example, consider a college-educated man who holds a professional job. All of these statuses rank high in the United States. But, what if this individual is also Mexican American and gay? These statuses put him at a disadvantage in a society where whiteness and heterosexuality are more valued.

Collins stresses **intersectionality**, a view that acknowledges that everyone has multiple group memberships and that these crisscross and create very different realities for people with varying combinations of statuses. The realities faced by gay, white-collar, Mexican American men are different from those faced by heterosexual, blue-collar Puerto Rican women, even though both would be counted as "Hispanic" in Figure 1.1. There is no singular or uniform Hispanic American (or African American or Asian American) experience, and we need to recognize how gender, class, sexual orientation, and other factors intersect with and reinforce one another.

In part, Collins and other intersectionality theorists are reacting against the tendency to see inequality in terms of separate dichotomous systems, based on class (blue collar vs. white collar), race (black vs. white), gender (women vs. men), or some other criterion. An intersectional approach analyzes how these statuses link together and form a "matrix of domination." For example, white Americans are not simply the "dominant group," undifferentiated and homogenous. Some segments of this group, such as women or poor whites, may occupy a privileged status in terms of their race but be subordinate in other ways, as defined by their gender or economic status. In the same way, minority groups are internally differentiated along lines of class and gender, and members of some segments are more privileged than others. Who is the oppressed and who is the oppressor changes across social contexts, and people can occupy both statuses simultaneously.

Everyone experiences some relative degree of advantage and disadvantage, and the separate systems of domination and subordination crosscut and overlap one another. Opportunity and individual experience are shaped by this matrix of domination. For example, as we shall see in later chapters, race and gender interact with each other and create especially disadvantaged positions for people who rank lower on both dimensions simultaneously (e.g., see Figure 5.5, which shows that black women consistently fall below black men and white men and women in terms of income).

Likewise, stereotypes and other elements of prejudice are gendered. That is, they are attached to men or women, not to the entire group. For example, some stereotypical traits might be applied to all African Americans (such as laziness), but others are reserved for women (e.g., the "welfare queen" or "mammy") or men (e.g., the "thug" or "buffoon").

An intersectionality approach stresses the multiplicity of the systems of inequality and probes the links among them. Groups are seen as differentiated and complex, not uniform. In this text, one of our main concerns will be to explore how minority-group experience is mediated by class and gender using an intersectional lens. However, you can apply this approach to other dimensions of power and inequality, including disability, sexual orientation, and religion.

Minority Group Status and Stratification

The theoretical perspectives we have just reviewed raise three important points about the connections between minority group status and stratification. First, as already noted, minority group status affects access to wealth and income, prestige, and power. A society in which minority groups systematically receive less of these valued goods is stratified, at least partly, by race and ethnicity. In the United States, minority group status has been and continues to be one of the most important and powerful determinants of one's life chances, or opportunities for health, wealth, and success (e.g., education). We explore these complex patterns of inequality in Part 3, but even observation of U.S. society will reveal that minority groups control proportionately fewer resources and that minority group status and stratification are intimately and complexly intertwined.

Second, although social classes and minority groups are correlated, they are separate social realities. The degree to which one is dependent on the other varies from group to group. Some groups, such as Irish or Italian Americans, enjoy considerable **social mobility**, or easy access to opportunity even though they faced considerable discrimination in the past. Furthermore, as stressed by the intersectional approach, degrees of domination and subordination are variable and all groups are subdivided by crosscutting lines of differentiation.

Social class and minority group status are different dimensions of inequality and they vary independently. Some members of a minority group can be successful economically, wield great political power, or enjoy high prestige even though the vast majority of their group languishes in poverty and powerlessness. Each minority group is internally divided by systems of inequality based on class, status, or power, and in the same way, members of the same social class may be separated by ethnic or racial differences.

The third point concerning the connections between stratification and minority groups brings us back to group conflict. Dominant-minority group relationships are created by struggle over the control of valued goods and services. Minority group structures (such as slavery) emerge so that the dominant group can control commodities such as land or labor, maintain its position in the stratification system, or eliminate a perceived threat to its well-being. Struggles over property, wealth, prestige, and power lie at the heart of every dominant-minority relationship. Karl Marx believed that all aspects of society and culture were shaped to benefit the elite or ruling class and sustain the economic system that underlies its privileged position. The treatment of minority groups throughout American history provides a good deal of evidence to support Marx's point.

Visible Distinguishing Traits: Race and Gender

In this section, we focus on the second defining characteristic of minority groups: the visible traits that represent membership. The boundaries between dominant and minority groups have been established along a wide variety of lines, including religion,

language, and occupation. Specifically, we consider race and gender, two of the most physical and stable—and thus more socially visible—markers of group membership.

Race

In the past, race has been widely misunderstood, but the false ideas and exaggerated importance attached to race have not just been errors of logic, subject to debate. In various times and places, they have been associated with some of the greatest tragedies in human history: massive exploitation and mistreatment, slavery, and genocide. Myths about race continue in the present though in diluted form. It is important to cultivate accurate understandings about race to decrease the likelihood of further tragedies.

Thanks to advances in the sciences of genetics, biology, and physical anthropology, we know more about what race is and, more importantly, what race it is not. We cannot address all of the confusion in these few pages, but we can establish a basic framework and use the latest scientific research to dispel some of the myths.

Race and Human Evolution. Our species first appeared in East Africa about 100,000 years ago. Our ancient ancestors were hunters and gatherers who gradually wandered away from their ancestral region in search of food and other resources. Over the millennia, our ancestors traveled across the entire globe, first to what is now the Middle East and then to Asia, Europe, Australia, and North and South America.

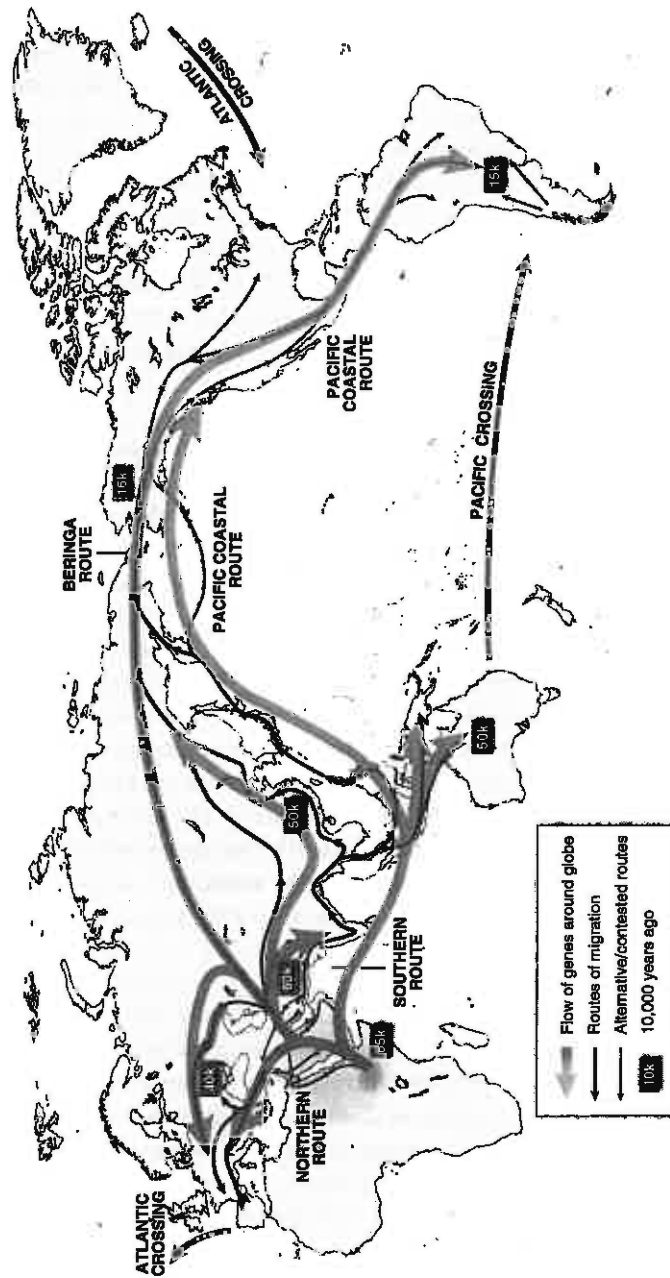
Human “racial” differences evolved during this period of dispersion, as our ancestors adapted, physically as well as culturally, to different environments and ecological conditions. For example, consider skin color, the most visible “racial” characteristic. Skin color is derived from a pigment called melanin. In areas with intense sunlight, at or near the equator, melanin screens out the ultraviolet rays of the sun that cause sunburn and, more significantly, protects against skin cancer. Higher levels of melanin and, thus, darker skin colors are found in peoples who are adapted to equatorial locations.

In peoples adapted to areas with less intense sunlight, the amount of melanin is lower, and, thus, their skin color is lighter. The lower concentration of melanin may also be an adaptation to a particular ecology, because it maximizes the synthesis of vitamin D, which is important for the absorption of calcium and protection against disorders such as rickets. In other words, the skin color of any group reflects the melanin in their skin that helps them balance the need for vitamin D against the need to protect their skin from ultraviolet rays.

Peoples with darker skin are generally found closer to the equator, whereas peoples with lighter skin are found primarily in the northern hemisphere, in locales distant from tropical sunlight. Our oldest ancestors were adapted to the equatorial sun of Africa. This almost certainly means that they were dark skinned (had a high concentration of melanin) and that lighter skin colors are the more recent adaptation.

The period of dispersion and differentiation, depicted in Figure 1.5, began to end about 10,000 years ago, when some of our hunting and gathering ancestors developed a new subsistence technology and settled down in permanent agricultural villages.

Figure 1.5 The Migration of Anatomically Modern Humans



Over the centuries, some of these settlements grew into larger societies, kingdoms, and empires that conquered and absorbed neighboring societies, some of which differed culturally, linguistically, and racially from each other. The great agricultural empires of the past—Roman, Egyptian, Chinese, Aztec—united different peoples, reversed the process of dispersion and differentiation, and began a phase of consolidation and merging of human cultures and genetics. Over the 10,000 years following the first settlements, human genes were intermixed and spread around the globe, eliminating any “pure” races (if such ever existed).

The differentiation created during the period of global dispersion was swamped by the consolidation that continues in the present. In our society, consolidation manifests itself in the increasing numbers of people of mixed-race descent, and similar patterns are common across the globe and throughout more recent human history. The consolidation phase accelerated beginning about 500 years ago with the expansion of European power that resulted in the exploration and conquest of much of the rest of the world.

Race and Western Traditions. Aided by breakthroughs in navigation and ship design, the people of Western Europe began to travel to Africa, Asia, and eventually North and South America in the 1400s. Europeans had been long aware of racial variation, but their concern with race increased as they came into continuous contact with the peoples of these continents and became more aware of and curious about the physical differences they saw.

Europeans also conquered, colonized, and sometimes destroyed the peoples and cultures they encountered. From the beginning, the European awareness of the differences between the races was linked to notions of inferior and superior (conquered versus conquering) peoples. For centuries, the European tradition has been to see race in this political and military context and to intermix biological and physical variation with judgments about the relative merits of the various races. Racist thinking has been used to justify military conquest, genocide, exploitation, and slavery. The toxic form of racism that bloomed during the expansion of European power continues to haunt the world today and was the basis for the concept of race that took root in the United States.

Race and Biology. While Europeans generally used race primarily to denigrate, reject, and exclude non-whites, some attempted to apply the principles of scientific research to the concept. These investigations focused on the construction of typologies or taxonomies, systems of classification that were intended to provide a category for every race and every person. Some of these typologies were quite elaborate and included scores of races and subraces. For example, the Caucasian race was often subdivided into Nordics (blond, fair-skinned Northern Europeans), Mediterraneans (dark-haired Southern Europeans), and Alpines (people falling between the first two categories).

One major limitation of these systems of classification was that the dividing lines between the so-called racial groups are arbitrary and blurred. There is no clear or

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definite point where, for example, "black" skin color stops and "white" skin color begins. The characteristics used to define race blend imperceptibly into each other, and one racial trait (skin color) can be blended with others (e.g., hair texture) in an infinite variety of ways. A given individual might have a skin color that is associated with one race, the hair texture of a second, the nasal shape of a third, and so forth.

Even the most elaborate racial typologies could not handle the fact that many individuals fit into more than one category or none at all. Although people undeniably vary in their physical appearance, these differences do not sort themselves out in a way that permits us to divide people up as we do species of animals. The differences between the so-called human races are not at all like the differences between elephants and butterflies. The ambiguous and continuous nature of racial characteristics makes it impossible to establish categories that have clear, nonarbitrary boundaries.

Over the past several decades, rapid advances in genetics have provided additional information and new insights into race that continue to refute many racial myths and further undermine the validity of racial typologies. Perhaps the most important single finding of modern research is that genetic variation *within* the "traditional" racial groups is greater than the variation *among* those groups (American Sociological Association, 2003). In other words, any two randomly selected members of, say, the "black" race are likely to vary genetically from each other at least as much as they do from a randomly selected member of the "white" race. No single finding could be more destructive of traditional racial categories that are, after all, intended to group people into homogenous categories. Just as certainly, the traditional American perception of race based primarily on skin color has no scientific validity.

The Social Construction of Race. Despite its limited scientific usefulness, race continues to animate intergroup relations in the United States and around the world. It continues to be socially important and a significant way of differentiating among people. Race, along with gender, is one of the first things people notice about one another. In the United States, we still tend to see race as a simple, unambiguous matter of skin color alone and to judge everyone as belonging to one and only one group, ignoring the realities of multiple ancestry and ambiguous classification.

How can the concept retain its relevance? Because of the way they developed, Western concepts of race have a social as well as a biological or scientific dimension. To sociologists, race is a social construction, and its meaning has been created and sustained not by science but by historical, social, economic, and political processes (see Omi & Winant, 1986; Smedley, 2007). For example, in Chapter 3 we will analyze the role of race in the creation of American slavery and will see that the physical differences between blacks and whites became important *as a result* of the creation of that system of inequality. The elites of colonial society needed to justify their unequal treatment of Africans and seized on the obvious differences in skin color, elevated it to a matter of supreme importance, and used it to justify the enslavement of blacks. In other words, the importance of race was socially constructed as the result of a particular historical conflict, and it remains important not because of objective realities, but because of the widespread, shared social perception that it is important.

Gender

You have already seen that minority groups can be internally divided by social class and other factors. An additional source of differentiation is gender. Like race, gender has both a biological and a social component and can be a highly visible and convenient way of judging and sorting people. From birth, the biological differences between the sexes form the basis for different **gender roles**, or societal expectations about proper behavior, attitudes, and personality traits. In the contemporary United States, nurturance, interpersonal skills, and "emotion work" (Hochschild, 1979) tend to be stressed for girls, while boys are expected to learn to be assertive and independent.

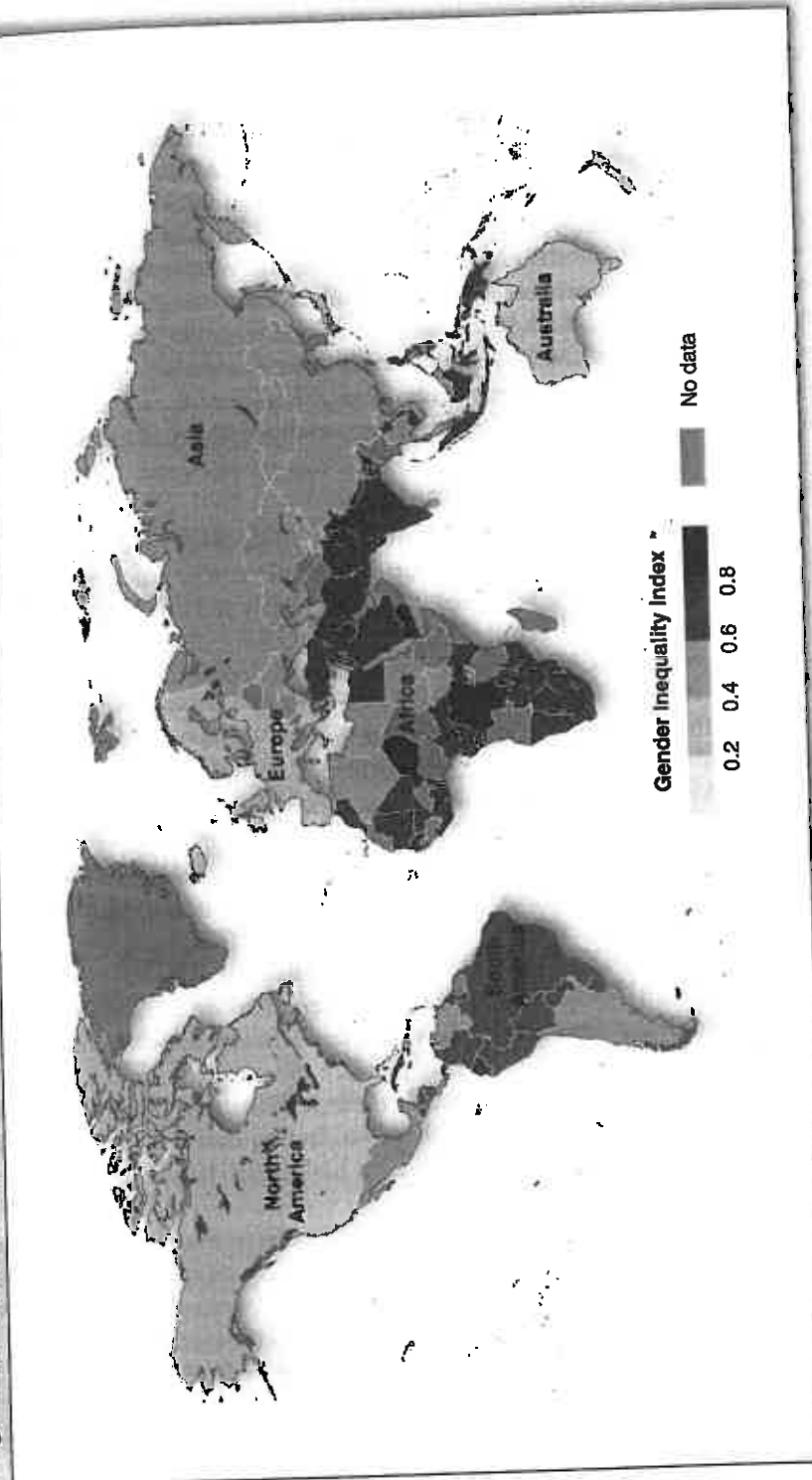
Gender roles and relationships vary across time and from one society to another, but gender and inequality have usually been closely related. Typically, men possess more property, prestige, and power. Figure 1.6 provides some perspective on the variation in gender inequality across the globe. The map shows the distribution of a statistic called the Gender Inequality Index, which measures the amount of inequality between men and women across a range of variables including education, health, and political representation. As you can see, gender equality is generally highest in the more developed, industrialized nations of North America and Western Europe and lowest in the less developed, more agricultural nations of sub-Saharan Africa.

Part of the problem is that all societies, including Western Europe and North America, have strong traditions of **patriarchy**, or men's dominance. Parallel to the various forms of racism that sought to justify and continue racial inequality, women have been subjected to **sexism**, or belief systems that "explained" inequality based on gender. Women, for example, were sometimes seen in traditional cultures as "delicate flowers," too emotional and physically weak for the harsh demands of "manly" occupations outside the home. (Note that, in the American tradition, this view has a racial component and has been applied to white women only. The same men who placed white women on a pedestal did not hesitate to send women of color into the fields to perform the most difficult, physically demanding, "unfeminine" tasks.)

Even in the most progressive societies, women continue to possess many characteristics of a minority group (namely, a pattern of disadvantage based on group membership marked by a physical characteristic). Thus, women could be, and in many ways should be, treated as a separate minority group, but throughout the text, we will address the divergent experiences of men and women within each minority group. We will consider how the interests and experiences of women of different groups and classes coincide with and diverge from one another and from those of the men in their groups. For example, on some issues African American women might have interests identical to those of white women and opposed to those of African American men, and on other issues the constellations of interests might be reversed. As stressed in the intersectionality approach, the experience of minority group membership varies by gender (along with other criteria), and the way gender is experienced is not the same for every group.

History generally has been and is written from the standpoint of the "winners"—that is, those in power. The voices of minority groups have generally been repressed, ignored, forgotten, or trivialized. Much of the history of slavery in America, for

Figure 1.6 Gender Inequality Worldwide (2012)



Source: Florida (2012). From "The Geography of Women's Economic Opportunities" by Richard Florida. The Atlantic Cities, January 11, 2012. Map by Zara Matheson of the Martin Prosperity Institute. Reprinted with permission.

instance, has been told from the viewpoint of the slave owners. Slaves were kept illiterate by law and had few mechanisms for recording their thoughts or experiences. A more balanced and accurate picture of slavery began to emerge only in the past few decades, when scholars began to dig beneath the written records and memoirs of the slave owners and reconstruct the experiences of African Americans from nonwritten materials such as oral traditions and the physical artifacts left by the slaves.

However, our understanding of the experiences of minority groups is often based almost entirely on the experiences of minority group men. The experiences of women minorities are much less well known and documented. If the voices of minority groups have been hushed, those of woman minority group members have been virtually silenced. One of the important trends in contemporary scholarship is to adjust this skewed focus and systematically incorporate gender as a factor that is vital to our understanding of minority group experiences (Baca Zinn & Thornton Dill, 1994; Espiritu, 1996).

The Social Construction of Gender. Social scientists see race as a social construction formulated in certain historical circumstances (such as the era of European colonialism) when it was needed to help justify the unequal treatment of non-white groups. What about gender? Is it also merely a social creation designed to rationalize the higher status of men and their easier access to power, prestige, and property? Figure 1.6 shows that all contemporary nations have some degree of gender inequality. Is this because—as many people believe—boys and men are “naturally” more aggressive and independent, and girls and women are more emotional and expressive? What is the basis of these distinctions? What connection, if any, do they have with biology and genetics?

First, the traits commonly seen as “typical” of men or women—aggressiveness or emotional expressiveness, for example—are not disconnected, separate categories. Every person has these qualities to some degree. To the extent that gender differences exist at all, they are manifested not in absolutes but in averages, tendencies, and probabilities. Many people consider aggressiveness to be a masculine characteristic, but many women are more aggressive than many men. Likewise, emotionality tends to be associated with women but many men are more expressive and emotional than many women. As with racial differences, research shows that there is more variation *within* gender categories than among them—a finding that seriously undermines the view that gender differences are genetic or biological (Basow, as cited in Rosenblum & Travis, 2002).

Second, that gender is a social construction is illustrated by the fact that what is thought to be “appropriate” gender behavior varies from time to time and from society to society. The behavior expected of a woman in Victorian England would be thoroughly out of place in 21st century America, and the typical behavior of a contemporary man would be regarded as outrageously scandalous in Puritan America. This variability makes it difficult to argue that the differences between the genders are “hardwired” in the genetic code; if they were, the variations over time and place would be nonexistent.

Third, the essentially social nature of gender roles is further illustrated by the relationship between subsistence technology and gender inequality. As we noted previously, our species evolved in East Africa and relied on hunting and gathering to satisfy their need for food. Our distant ancestors lived in small, nomadic bands that relied on cooperation and sharing for survival. Societies at this level of development typically divide adult labor roles by gender (with men hunting and women gathering) and, although they may tend toward patriarchy, women and women's work are highly valued and gender inequality is minimal. The subordination of women is more closely associated with settled agricultural communities, the first of which appeared about 10,000 years ago in what is now the Middle East. Survival in preindustrial farming societies requires the combined efforts of many people; thus, large families are valued as a cheap labor force. Women are consigned to household and domestic duties, with a strong emphasis on producing and raising children. Since the infant mortality rate in these societies is high (approximately 50% or more), women spend much of their lives confined and secluded, pregnant or nursing young children, far removed from the possibility of contending for leadership roles in their communities.

Industrialization and urbanization, linked processes that began in the mid-1700s in Great Britain, changed the cost-benefit ratios for childbearing. The expenses associated with having children rose in the city, and the nature of industrial work increasingly required education and literacy—qualities and abilities available to both genders. Thus, gender inequality probably reached its peak in preindustrial agrarian societies and has tended to decline as societies industrialized. It is no accident of timing that the push for gender equality and the women's liberation movement is associated with industrial societies and that gender equality is highest today in industrial and postindustrial societies (see Figure 1.6).

Biology may shape one's personality to some degree, and researchers continue to explore the links between genetics and gender roles (e.g., see Hopcroft, 2009; Huber, 2007; Udry, 2000) as well as the interaction between them. However, at its core, gender is social and experiential, not biological (Booth, Granger, Mazur, & Kivligham, 2006, pp. 167–191; see also Ridgeway, 2011, pp. 18–23). Gender, like race, is a social construction, especially when the supposed differences between men and women are treated as categorical, “natural,” and fixed, and then used to deny opportunity and equality to women.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- 4 Are both gender and race *merely* social constructions? Aren't they *real* in some ways? In what ways do they exist apart from people's perception of them? Are they both social constructions in the same way? Are they *equally* matters of perception?

Key Concepts in Dominant-Minority Relations

Whenever sensitive issues such as dominant-minority group relations are raised, the discussion often turns to matters of prejudice and discrimination. We need to clarify what we mean by these terms. This section introduces and defines four concepts that will help you understand dominant-minority relations in the United States.

This book addresses how individuals from different groups interact, as well as how groups interact with each other. Thus, we need to distinguish between what is true for individuals (the more psychological level of analysis) and what is true for groups or society as a whole (the more sociological level of analysis). Beyond that, we must attempt to trace the connections between these two levels of analysis.

At the individual level, what people think and feel about other groups may differ from how they actually behave toward members of another group. A person might express negative feelings about other groups in private but deal fairly with members of the group in face-to-face interactions. Groups and entire societies may display this same kind of inconsistency. A society may express support for equality in its official documents or formal codes of law and simultaneously treat minority groups in unfair and destructive ways. An example of this kind of inconsistency is the contrast between the commitment to equality stated in the Declaration of Independence ("All men are created equal") and the actual treatment of black slaves, Anglo American women, and American Indians at that time.

At the individual level, social scientists refer to the "thinking/feeling" part of this dichotomy as prejudice and the "doing" part as discrimination. At the group level, the term **ideological racism** describes the "thinking/feeling" dimension and **institutional discrimination** describes the "doing" dimension. Table 1.1 depicts the differences among these four concepts.

Prejudice

Prejudice is the tendency of an individual to think about other groups in negative ways, to attach negative emotions to those groups, and to prejudge individuals on the basis of their group memberships. Individual prejudice has two aspects: **cognitive prejudice**, or the thinking aspect, and **affective prejudice**, or the feeling part. A prejudiced person thinks about other groups in terms of **stereotypes** (cognitive prejudice), generalizations that he or she thinks apply to group members. Examples of familiar stereotypes include notions such as "women are emotional," "Jews are stingy," "blacks

Table 1.1 Four Concepts in Dominant-Minority Relations

Dimension	Level of Analysis	
	Individual	Group or Societal
Thinking/feeling	Prejudice	Ideological racism
Doing	Discrimination	Institutional discrimination

are lazy," "the Irish are drunks," and "Germans are authoritarian." A prejudiced person also experiences negative emotional responses to other groups (affective prejudice), including contempt, disgust, arrogance, and hatred.

People vary in their levels of prejudice, and levels of prejudice vary in the same person from one time to another and from one group to another. We can say that people are prejudiced to the extent that they use stereotypes in their thinking about other groups or have negative emotional reactions to other groups.

Generally, the two dimensions of prejudice are highly correlated with each other; however, they are distinct and separate aspects of prejudice that can vary independently. One person may think entirely in stereotypes but feel no particular negative emotional response to any group. Another person may feel a very strong aversion toward a group but be unable to articulate a clear or detailed stereotype of that group.

We should note here that individual prejudice, like all aspects of society, evolves and changes. In the past, American prejudice was strongly felt, baldly expressed, and laced with clear, detailed stereotypes. In modern societies in which there is a strong emphasis on mutual respect and tolerance, prejudice tends to be expressed in subtle, indirect ways. For example, it might be manifested in code words, as when people disparage "welfare cheats" or associate criminality with certain minority groups. We will explore the modern forms of prejudice further, but we need to be clear that the relative absence of blatant stereotyping or expressions of strong public emotions against minority groups in modern society does not mean that we have eliminated individual prejudice in the United States.

Causes of Prejudice

American social scientists have made prejudice a primary concern of their research and have produced thousands of articles and books on the topic, asking a wide array of different questions from a variety of theoretical perspectives. One firm conclusion is that prejudice is not a single, unitary phenomenon. It has a variety of possible causes (some more psychological and individual, others more sociological and cultural) and can present itself in a variety of forms (some blatant and vicious, others subtle and indirect). No single theory has emerged that can explain prejudice in all its complexity. In keeping with the macro sociological approach of this text, we will focus primarily on the theories related to culture, social structure, and group relationships.

Competition Between Groups and the Origins of Prejudice. Every form of prejudice—even the most ancient—started at some specific point in history. If we go back far enough in time, we can find a moment that predates anti-black prejudice, anti-Semitism, negative stereotypes about American Indians or Hispanic Americans, or antipathy against Asian Americans. What sorts of conditions create prejudice?

The most important single factor in the origin of prejudice is competition between groups: prejudice originates in the heat of that competition and is used to justify and rationalize the privileged status of the winning group. If we go back far enough, we can always find some instance in which one group successfully dominates, takes resources

from, or eliminates a perceived threat by another group. The successful group becomes the dominant group, and the other becomes the minority group.

Why is group competition associated with the emergence of prejudice? Typically, prejudice is more the result of the competition rather than a reason for it. Its role is to help mobilize emotional energy for the conflict, justify rejection and attack, and rationalize the structures of domination, like slavery or segregation, that result from the competition. Groups react to the competition and to the threat presented by other groups with antipathy and stereotypes about the "enemy" group. Prejudice emerges from the high levels of emotion but then can solidify and persist for years (even centuries) after the end of the conflict.

The relationship between prejudice and competition has been demonstrated in a variety of settings and situations ranging from labor strikes to international war to social psychology labs. In the chapters to come, we will examine the role of prejudice during the creation of slavery in North America, as a reaction to periods of high immigration, and as an accompaniment to myriad forms of group competition. Here, to illustrate our central point about group competition and prejudice, we will examine a classic experiment from the sociological literature. The experiment was conducted in the 1950s at a summer camp for 11- and 12-year-old boys known as Robber's Cave.

The camp director, social psychologist Muzafer Sherif, divided the campers into two groups, the Rattlers and the Eagles (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961). The groups lived in different cabins and were continually pitted against each other in a wide range of activities. Games, sports, and even housekeeping chores were set up on a competitive basis. The boys in each group developed and expressed negative feelings (prejudice) against the other group. Competition and prejudicial feelings grew quite intense and were manifested in episodes of name calling and raids on the "enemy" group.

Sherif attempted to reduce the harsh feelings he had created by bringing the campers together in various pleasant situations featuring food, movies, and other treats. But the rival groups only used these opportunities to express their hostility. Sherif then came up with some activities that required the members of the rival groups to work cooperatively with each other. For example, the researchers deliberately sabotaged some plumbing to create an emergency that required the efforts of everyone to resolve. As a result of these cooperative activities, intergroup "prejudice" was observed to decline, and, eventually, friendships formed across groups.

In the Robber's Cave experiment, as in many actual group relationships, prejudice (negative feelings and stereotypes about other campers) arose to help mobilize feelings and to justify rejection and attacks, both verbal and physical, against the out-group. When group competition was reduced, the levels of prejudice abated and eventually disappeared, again demonstrating that competition causes prejudice, and not the other way around.

Although the Robber's Cave experiment illustrates our central point, we must be cautious in generalizing from these results. The experiment was conducted in an artificial environment with young boys (all white) who had no previous acquaintance with each other and no history of grievances or animosity. Thus, these results may be only

partially generalizable to group conflicts in the “real world.” Nonetheless, Robber’s Cave illustrates a fundamental connection between group competition and prejudice that we will observe repeatedly in the chapters to come. Competition and the desire to protect resources and status and to defend against threats—perceived or real—from other groups are the primary motivations for the creation of prejudice and structures of inequality that benefit the dominant group.

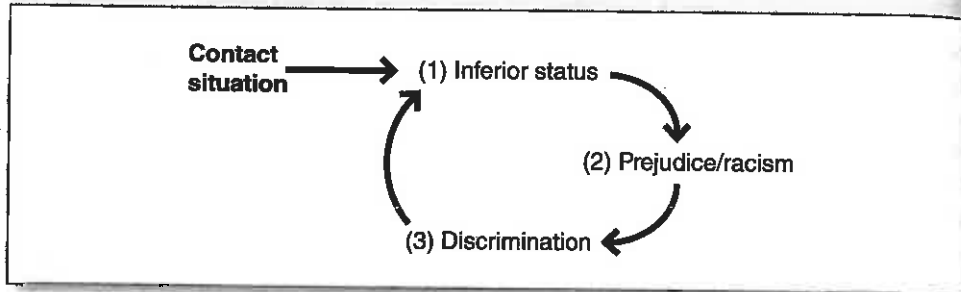
QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- 5 How are the ideas presented in this section sociological? How do they differ from more psychological theories of prejudice and discrimination?

Culture, Socialization, and the Persistence of Prejudice. Prejudice originates in group competition but often outlives the conditions of its creation. It can persist, full-blown and intense, long after the episode that sparked its creation has faded from memory. How does prejudice persist through time?

In his classic analysis of American race relations, *An American Dilemma* ([1944] 1962), Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal proposed the idea that prejudice is perpetuated through time by a self-fulfilling prophecy or a **vicious cycle of prejudice**, as illustrated in Figure 1.7. The dominant group uses its power to force the minority group into an inferior status, such as slavery, as shown in the diagram in Area 1. Partly to motivate the construction of a system of racial stratification and partly to justify its existence, individual prejudice and racist belief systems are invented and accepted by the dominant group, as shown in Area 2. Individual prejudices are reinforced by the everyday observation of the inferior status of the minority group. The fact that the minority group is in fact impoverished, enslaved, or otherwise exploited, confirms and strengthens the attribution of inferiority. The belief in inferiority motivates further discrimination and unequal treatment, as shown in Area 3 of the diagram, which reinforces the inferior status, which validates the prejudice and racism, which justifies further discrimination, and so on. Over a few generations, a stable, internally reinforced system of racial inferiority and an elaborate, widespread set of prejudiced beliefs and feelings can become an integral, unremarkable, and (at least for the dominant group) accepted part of everyday life.

Culture is slow to change, and, once created, prejudice will be sustained over time just like any set of attitudes, values, and beliefs. Future generations will learn prejudice in the same way and for the same reasons that they learn any other aspect of their culture. Thus, prejudice and racism come to us through our cultural heritage as a package of stereotypes, emotions, and ideas. We learn which groups are “good” and which are “bad” in the same way we learn table manners and religious beliefs (Pettigrew, 1958, 1971, p. 137; Simpson & Yinger, 1985, pp. 107, 108). When prejudice is part of the cultural heritage, individuals learn to think and feel negatively toward other groups

Figure 1.7 Myrdal's Vicious Cycle

Source: Myrdal (1944/1962).

as a routine part of socialization. Much of the prejudice expressed by Americans—and the people of many other societies—is the normal result of a typical socialization in families, communities, and societies that are, to some degree, racist. Given our long history of intense racial and ethnic exploitation, it is not surprising that Americans continue to manifest antipathy toward and stereotypical ideas about other groups.

The Development of Prejudice in Children. The idea that prejudice is learned during socialization is reinforced by studies of the development of prejudice in children. Research generally shows that children become aware of group differences (e.g., black vs. white) at a very early age, perhaps as early as six months (Katz, 2003, p. 898). By age three or younger, they recognize the significance and the permanence of racial groups and can accurately classify people on the basis of skin color and other cues (Brown, 1995, pp. 121–136; Katz, 1976, p. 126). Once the racial or group categories are mentally established, the child begins the process of learning the “proper” attitudes and stereotypes to associate with the various groups; both affective and cognitive prejudice begin to grow at an early age.

It is important to note that children can acquire prejudice even when parents and other caregivers do not teach it overtly or directly. Adults control the socialization process and valuable resources (food, shelter, praise), and children are motivated to seek their approval and conform to their expectations (at least in the early years). There are strong pressures on the child to learn and internalize the perceptions of the older generation, and even a casual comment or an overheard remark can establish or reinforce negative beliefs or feelings about members of other groups (Ashmore & DelBoca, 1976). Children need not be directly instructed about presumed minority group characteristics; it is often said that racial attitudes are “caught and not taught.”

Additionally, research shows that children are actively engaged in their learning and that their levels of prejudice reflect their changing intellectual capabilities. Children as young as five to six months old can make some simple distinctions (e.g., by gender or race) between categories of people. The fact that this capability emerges so early in life suggests that it is not simply a response to adult teaching. “Adults use

categories to simplify and make sense of their environment; apparently children do the same" (Brown, 1995, p. 126). Gross, simplistic distinctions between people may help very young children organize and understand the world around them. The need for such primitive categorizations may decline as the child becomes more experienced in life and more sophisticated in his or her thinking. Doyle and Aboud (1995), for example, found that prejudice was highest for younger children and actually decreased between kindergarten and the third grade. The decline was related to increased awareness of racial similarities (as well as differences) and diverse perspectives on race (see also Black-Gutman & Hickson, 1996; Bronson & Merryman, 2009; Brown, 1995, pp. 149–159; Cristol & Gimbert, 2008; Powlisha, Serbin, Doyle, & White, 1994; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). Thus, changing levels of prejudice in children may reflect an interaction between children's changing mental capacities and their environment rather than a simple or straightforward learning of racist cultural beliefs or values.

Social Distance Scales. Further evidence for the cultural nature of prejudice is provided by research on the concept of **social distance**, which is related to prejudice but is not quite the same thing. Social distance is the degree of intimacy that a person is willing to accept in his or her relations with members of other groups. On this scale, the most intimate relationship would be close kinship, and the most distant relationship would be exclusion from the country. The inventor of the social distance scale was Emory Bogardus (1933), who specified a total of seven degrees of social distance:

1. To close kinship by marriage
2. To my club as personal chums
3. To my street as neighbors
4. To employment in my occupation
5. To citizenship in my country
6. As visitors only to my country
7. Would exclude from my country

Research using social distance scales demonstrates that Americans rank other groups in similar ways across time and space. The consistency indicates a common frame of reference or set of perceptions, a continuity of vision possible only if perceptions have been standardized by socialization in a common culture.

Table 1.2 presents some results of seven administrations of the scale to samples of Americans from 1926 to 2011. The groups are listed by the rank order of their scores for 1926. In that year, the sample expressed the least social distance from the English and the most distance from Asian Indians. While the average social distance score for the English was 1.02, indicating virtually no sense of distance, the average score for Indians was 3.91, indicating a distance between "to my street as neighbors" to "to employment in my occupation."

APPLYING CONCEPTS

Do you have a sense of social distance from different groups? Has it changed over the past 10 years? Use the seven degrees of social distance to indicate the level of intimacy you would feel comfortable sharing with members of each of the groups listed. Also, estimate the degree of social distance you would have felt for each group 10 years ago.

How did you acquire your sense of social distance? Was it from your family or community, or is it based on actual experience with members of these groups? Do you think it was "caught and not taught"? Why has it changed over the past 10 years (if it has)?

<i>Group</i>	<i>Your Social Distance Score Today</i>	<i>Your Social Distance Score 10 Years Ago</i>
White Americans		
Irish		
Russians		
Italians		
American Indians		
Jews		
Mexicans		
African Americans		
Chinese		
Muslims		

TURN TO TABLE 1.2 ON THE NEXT PAGE TO SEE THE RANKINGS OF THESE GROUPS OVER THE YEARS

First, as you inspect Table 1.2, note the stability in the rankings. The actual *scores* (not shown) generally decrease from decade to decade, indicating less social distance and presumably a decline in prejudice over the years. The group rankings, however, tend to be the same year after year. Considering the changes that society has experienced between 1926 and 2011 (the Great Depression; World War II, the Korean War, and other wars; the Cold War with the former Soviet Union; the civil rights movement; the resumption of large-scale immigration, etc.), this overall continuity in group rankings is remarkable.

Second, note the nature of the ranking: groups with origins in Northern and Western Europe are ranked highest, followed by groups from Southern and Eastern Europe, with racial minorities near the bottom. These preferences reflect the relative

Table 1.2 Social Distance Scores of Selected Groups (Ranks for Each Year)

Group	1926	1946	1977	2011
English (British)	1	3	2	4
Americans (white)	2	1	1	1
Canadians	3	2	3	3
Irish	5	4	7	5
Germans	7	10	11	8
Russians	13	13	29	20
Italians	14	16	5	2
Poles	15	14	18	14
American Indians	18	20	10	12
Jews	19	19	15	11
Mexicans	21	24	26	25
Japanese	22	30	25	22
Filipinos	23	23	24	16
African Americans	24	29	17	9
Turks	25	25	28	—
Chinese	26	21	23	17
Koreans	27	27	30	24
Asian Indians	28	28	27	26
Vietnamese	—	—	—	28
Muslims	—	—	—	29
Arabs	—	—	—	30
Mean (all scores)	2.14	2.12	1.93	1.68
Range	2.85	2.57	1.38	1.08

Sources: 1926 to 1977, Smith & Dempsey (1983, p. 588); 2011, Parrillo & Donoghue (2013).

Note: Values in the table are ranks for that year. To conserve space, some groups and ranks have been eliminated. Scores are the group's rank for the year in question. For example, the Irish were ranked fifth of 28 groups in 1926, rose to fourth of 30 in 1946, and so forth. To conserve space, some groups and ranks have been eliminated.

status of these groups in the U.S. hierarchy of racial and ethnic groups. The rankings also reflect the relative amount of exploitation and prejudice directed at each group over the course of U.S. history.

Although these patterns of social distance scores support the general point that prejudice is cultural, this body of research has some important limitations. The respondents were generally college students from a variety of campuses, not representative samples of the population, and the differences in scores from group to group are sometimes very small.

Still, the stability of the patterns cannot be ignored: the top two or three groups are always Northern European, Poles and Jews are always ranked in the middle third of the groups, and Koreans and Japanese always fall in the bottom third. African Americans and American Indians were ranked toward the bottom until the most recent rankings.

Finally, note how the relative positions of some groups change with international and domestic relations. For example, both Japanese and Germans fell in the rankings at the end of World War II (1946). Comparing 1966 with 1946, Russians fell and Japanese rose, reflecting changing patterns of alliance and enmity in the global system of societies. The dramatic rise of African Americans in 2011 may reflect declining levels of overt prejudice in American society, and the low ranking of Arabs reflects the negative feelings generated by the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

How do we explain the fact that group rankings generally remain stable from the 1920s to 2011? The stability strongly suggests that Americans view the various groups through the same culturally shaped lens. A sense of social distance, a perception of some groups as "higher" or "better" than others, is part of the cultural package of intergroup prejudices we acquire from socialization into American society. The social distance patterns illustrate the power of culture to shape individual perceptions and preferences and attest to the deep streak of prejudice and racism built into American culture.

Modern Racism: The New Face of Prejudice? A large and growing body of research demonstrates that prejudice evolves as group relations and cultural beliefs and information change. The harsh, blatant forms of prejudice that typified U.S. society in its first several centuries have become muted in recent decades, leading some people to conclude that individual prejudice is no longer a significant problem in American life. However, while some celebrate the decline in harsh, overt prejudice, many social scientists argue strongly that prejudice has *not* declined but, rather, has evolved into a more subtle, less obvious, but just as consequential form. This new form of prejudice has been called a number of things, including **modern racism**, symbolic racism, and color-blind racism, and there is considerable debate over its exact shape, extent, and—indeed—existence. However, even while the issues continue to be debated and researched, the evidence that prejudice, even in its more subtle and disguised forms, remains a potent force in American society continues to accumulate.

People who are prejudiced in these ways typically reject "old-fashioned" blatant prejudice and the traditional view that racial inferiority is innate or biological. They often proclaim their allegiance to the ideals of equality of opportunity and treatment for

all. Analysis of their thinking, however, reveals prejudice lurking just beneath the surface of these egalitarian sentiments, powerfully influencing their views of racial issues.

Sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2006, pg. 28), one of the leading researchers in this area, argues that the new form of prejudice is often expressed in seemingly neutral language or “objective” terms. For example, the modern racist might attribute the underrepresentation of people of color in high-status positions to cultural rather than biological factors (“they don’t emphasize education enough”) or explain continuing residential and school segregation by the “natural” choices people make (“they would rather be with their own kind”). This kind of thinking rationalizes the status quo and permits dominant group members to live in segregated neighborhoods and send their children to segregated schools without guilt or hesitation. It obscures the myriad, not-so-subtle social forces that created segregated schools, neighborhoods, and other manifestations of racial inequality in the first place and maintains them in the present (e.g., see Satter, 2009). The naturalization framework permits people to ignore the social, political, and economic realities that actually create and sustain racial inequality and, by this **selective perception**, to support a kind of racism without appearing to be a racist. We will return to the subject of modern racism frequently, and especially in Chapter 5.

The Sociology of Individual Prejudice. The sociological approach to prejudice in this text stresses several points. Prejudice is created as a result of competition between groups. It is created to help mobilize feelings and emotional energy for competition and to rationalize the creation of minority group status. Then it becomes a part of the cultural heritage passed on to later generations as part of their “taken-for-granted” world, where it helps to shape their perceptions and reinforce group inferiority that created it in the first place. Although it has evolved into a more subtle form, prejudice remains an important force in U.S. society and will continue as long as there are patterns of inequality and systems of group privilege and disadvantage that require justification by the dominant group.

Discrimination

Discrimination is the unequal treatment of a person or persons based on group membership. An example of discrimination is an employer who decides not to hire an individual because he or she is African American (or Puerto Rican, Jewish, Chinese, etc.). If the unequal treatment is based on the group membership of the individual, the act is discriminatory.

Just as the cognitive and affective aspects of prejudice can be independent, discrimination and prejudice do not necessarily occur together. Even highly prejudiced individuals may not act on their negative thoughts or feelings. In social settings regulated by strong egalitarian codes or laws (for example, restaurants and other public facilities), people who are highly bigoted in their private thoughts and feelings may follow the codes in their public roles.

On the other hand, social situations in which prejudice is strongly approved and supported might evoke discrimination in otherwise unprejudiced individuals. In the

southern United States during the height of segregation, and in South Africa during the period of state-sanctioned racial inequality called apartheid, it was usual and customary for whites to treat blacks in discriminatory ways. Regardless of individuals' actual levels of prejudice, they faced strong social pressure to conform to the official patterns of racial superiority and participate in acts of discrimination.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- 6 Like most Americans, you are probably familiar with the stereotypes commonly attached to various groups. Does this mean you are prejudiced against those groups? Does it mean you have negative emotions about those groups and are likely to discriminate against them? Explain.

Ideological Racism

Ideological racism, a belief system that asserts that a particular group is inferior, is the group or societal equivalent of individual prejudice. Members of the dominant group use these ideas and beliefs to legitimize or rationalize the inferior status of minority groups. These ideas become incorporated into the culture of a society and are passed on from generation to generation through the process of socialization.

Because it is a part of the cultural heritage, ideological racism exists apart from the individuals who inhabit the society at a specific time (Andersen, 1993, p. 75; See & Wilson, 1988, p. 227). An example of a racist ideology is the elaborate system of beliefs and ideas that attempted to justify slavery in the American South. The exploitation of slaves was "explained" in terms of the innate racial inferiority of blacks and the superiority of whites.

Distinguishing between individual prejudice and societal racist ideologies naturally leads to a consideration of the relationship between these two phenomena. We will explore this relationship in later chapters, but for now we can make what is probably an obvious point: people socialized into societies with strong racist ideologies are likely to absorb racist ideas and be highly prejudiced. It should not surprise us that a high level of personal prejudice existed among whites in the antebellum American South or in other highly racist societies, such as in South Africa. At the same time, we need to remember that ideological racism and individual prejudice are different phenomena with different causes and different locations in the society. Racism is not a prerequisite for prejudice; prejudice may exist even in the absence of an ideology of racism.

Institutional Discrimination

Institutional discrimination is the societal equivalent of individual discrimination and refers to a pattern of unequal treatment based on group membership that is built into the daily operations of society, whether or not it is consciously intended. Public

schools, the criminal justice system, and political and economic institutions can operate in ways that put members of some groups at a disadvantage.

Institutional discrimination can be obvious and overt. For many years following the Civil War, African Americans in the American South were prevented from voting by practices such as poll taxes and rigged literacy tests designed to ensure that they would fail. For nearly a century, well into the 1960s, elections and elected offices in the South were restricted to whites only. The purpose of this blatant pattern of institutional discrimination was widely understood by African American and white Southerners alike: it existed to disenfranchise the African American community and keep it politically powerless.

At other times, institutional discrimination may operate more subtly and without conscious intent. If public schools use aptitude tests that are biased in favor of the dominant group, decisions about who does and who does not take college preparatory courses may be made on racist grounds, even if everyone involved sincerely believes that they are merely applying objective criteria in a rational way. If a decision-making process has unequal consequences for dominant and minority groups, institutional discrimination may well be at work.

Note that although a particular discriminatory policy may be implemented and enforced by individuals, the policy is more appropriately thought of as an aspect of the operation of the institution as a whole. Election officials in the South during segregation did not and public school administrators today do not have to be personally prejudiced themselves to implement these discriminatory policies.

However, a major thesis of this book is that both racist ideologies and institutional discrimination are created to sustain the positions of dominant and minority groups in the stratification system. The relative advantage of the dominant group is maintained from day to day by widespread institutional discrimination. Members of the dominant group who are socialized into communities with strong racist ideologies and a great deal of institutional discrimination are likely to be personally prejudiced and to routinely engage in acts of individual discrimination. The respective positions of dominant and minority groups are preserved over time through the mutually reinforcing patterns of prejudice, racism, and discrimination on both the individual and the institutional levels. Institutional discrimination is but one way that members of a minority group can be denied access to valued goods and services, opportunities, and rights (such as voting). That is, institutional discrimination helps to sustain and reinforce the unequal positions of racial and ethnic groups in the stratification system.

A Global Perspective

In the chapters that follow, we will focus on developing a number of concepts and theories and applying those ideas to the minority groups of the United States. However, it is important to expand our perspective beyond the experiences of just a single nation and consider the experiences and histories of other peoples and places. Thus, we will take time throughout this text to apply our ideas to other societies and non-American minority groups. If the ideas and concepts developed in this text can help

us make sense of these situations, we will have some assurance that they have some general applicability and that the dynamics of intergroup relations in the United States are not unique.

On another level, we must also take account of the ways in which group relations in the United States are shaped by economic, social, and political forces beyond our borders. As we will see, the experiences of this society cannot be understood in isolation. The United States is part of the global system of societies and now, more than ever, we must systematically take account of the complex interconnections between the domestic and the international, particularly with respect to issues related to immigration. The world is indeed growing smaller, and we must see our society as one part of a larger system. The next section explores one connection between the global and the local.

FOCUS ON CONTEMPORARY ISSUES: Immigration and Globalization

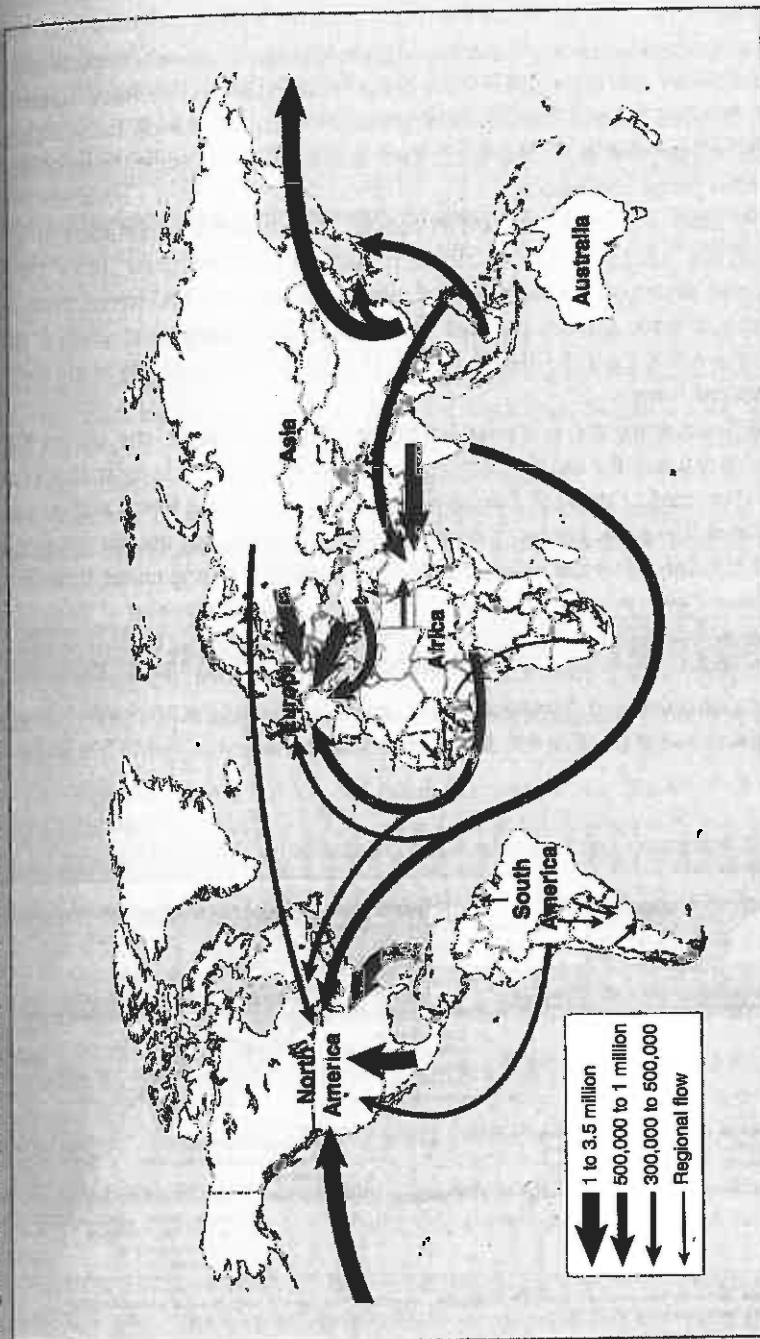
Immigration is a major concern in our society today, and we will address this issue in the pages to come. Here, we will point out that immigration is a global phenomenon that affects virtually every nation in the world. About 214 million people—a little more than 3% of the world's population—live outside their countries of birth, and the number of migrants has increased steadily over the past several decades (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2013). Figure 1.8 depicts the major population movements from 1990 to 2000 and clearly demonstrates the global nature of immigration. Note that Western Europe is a major destination for immigrants, as is the United States.

What has caused this massive population movement? One very important underlying cause is globalization, or the increasing interconnectedness of people, groups, organizations, and nations. This process is complex and multidimensional, but perhaps the most powerful dimension of globalization—especially for understanding contemporary immigration—is economic, and the movement of jobs and opportunity from place to place. People flow from areas of lower opportunity to areas with greater opportunity.

To illustrate, consider the southern border of the United States. For the past several decades, there has been an influx of people into the United States from Mexico and Central America, and the presence of these newcomers has generated a great deal of emotional and political heat, especially since many of these migrants are undocumented.

Some Americans see these newcomers as threats to American culture and the English language, and others associate them with crime, violence, and drug smuggling. Others see them simply as people trying to survive as best they can, desperate to support themselves and their families. Few, however, see these immigrants as the human consequences of the economic globalization of the world.

Figure 1.8 Major Global Migration Flows, 1990-2000



Source: Adapted from *Stalker's Guide to Migration*, Peter Stalker, and *World Map: Global Migration*, La Documentation Française

(Continued)

(Continued)

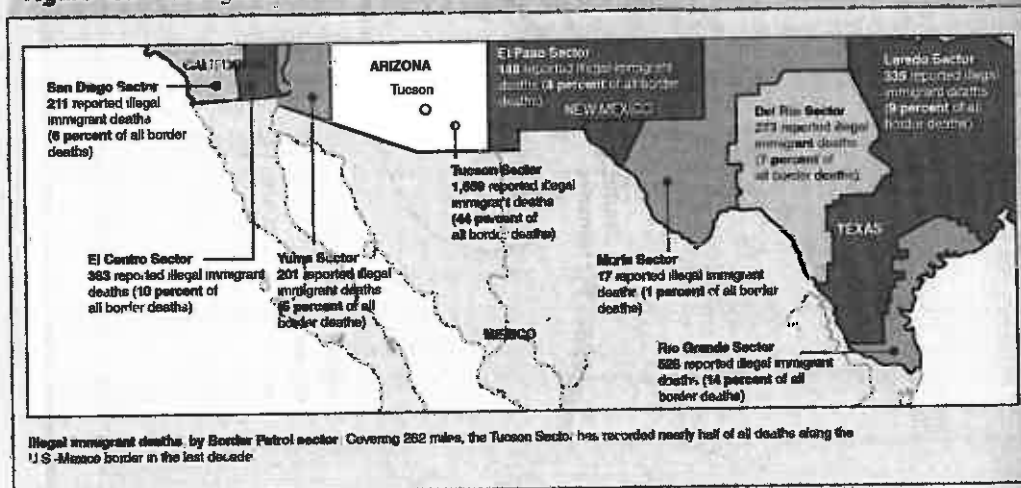
What is the connection between globalization and this immigrant stream? The population pressure on the U.S. southern border is in large part a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), implemented in 1994. NAFTA united the three North American nations into a single trading bloc—economically “globalizing” the region—and permitted goods and capital (but not people) to move freely between Canada, the United States, and Mexico.

Among many other consequences, NAFTA opened Mexico to the importation of food products produced at very low cost by the agribusinesses of Canada and the United States. This cheap food (corn, in particular) destroyed the livelihoods of many rural Mexicans and forced them to leave their villages in search of work. Millions pursued the only survival strategy that seemed even remotely sensible: migration north. Even the meanest job in the United States can pay many times more than the average Mexican wage.

Even as NAFTA changed the economic landscape of North America, the United States became increasingly concerned with the security of its borders (especially after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001) and attempted to stem the flow of people, partly by building fences and increasing the size of the Border Patrol. The easier border crossings were quickly sealed, but this did not stop the pressure from the south. Migrants moved to more difficult and dangerous crossing routes, including the deadly, forbidding Sonoran Desert in southern Arizona, resulting in an untold number of deaths on the border since the mid-1990s.

Figure 1.9 displays one estimate of recent deaths along the southern U.S. border, but these are only the bodies that were discovered. Some estimates put the true number at 10 deaths for every recovered corpse, suggesting thousands of deaths along the border between the mid-1990s and the present.

Figure 1.9 Immigrant Deaths on the Southern Border, 2000–2010



Source: Arizona Daily Star and U.S. Border Patrol, 8/22/2010

The relationship between NAFTA and immigration to the United States is just one aspect of a complex, global relationship. Around the globe, people are moving in huge numbers from less developed nations to more developed, more affluent economies. The wealthy nations of Western Europe, including Germany, Ireland, France, and the Netherlands, are also receiving large numbers of immigrants, and the citizens of these nations are concerned about their jobs, communities, housing, and language—as well as the integrity of their national cultures—in much the same ways as Americans. The world is changing, and contemporary immigration must be understood in terms of changes that affect many nations and, indeed, the entire global system of societies.

Conclusion

This chapter raises a lot of questions. Our intent is not so much to provide answers as to apply the sociological perspective. With the concepts, theories, and body of research developed over the years, we can illuminate and clarify the issues. In many cases, we can identify approaches and ideas that are simply wrong and others that hold promise. Sociology can't answer all questions, but it does supply research tools and ideas that can help us think more clearly and with greater depth and nuance about the issues facing our society.

Notes

1. Schwartzbaum, S. E., and A. J. Thomas. 2008. *Dimensions of Multicultural Counseling*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, p. 92.
2. O'Brien, E. 2008. *The Racial Middle: Latinos and Asian Americans Living Beyond the Racial Divide*. New York: New York University Press, p. 45.
3. Personal communication, June 2009.
4. Boldface terms in the text are defined in the glossary at the end of the book.

Main Points

- The United States faces enormous problems in dominant-minority relationships. Although many historic grievances of minority groups remain unresolved, our society is becoming increasingly diverse.
- The United States is a nation of immigrants, and many different groups and cultures are represented in its population.
- A minority group has five defining characteristics: a pattern of disadvantage, identification by some visible trait, awareness of its minority status, a membership determined at birth, and a tendency to marry within the group.
- A stratification system has three different dimensions (class, prestige, and power), and the nature of inequality in a society varies by its level of development. Minority groups and social class are correlated in complex ways.
- Race is a criterion widely used to identify minority group members. Scientists have largely discredited race as a biological concept. However, as a social category, race powerfully influences the way we think about one another as well as how we organize society.

- Minority groups are internally differentiated by social class, age, region of residence, and many other variables. Four crucial concepts for analyzing dominant-minority relations are prejudice, discrimination, ideological racism, and institutional discrimination.

Review Questions

1. What is the significance of Figure 1.1? What are some of the limitations and problems with the group names used in this graph? Are the group names "social constructions"? How? What kind of society should the United States strive to become? In your view, does the increasing diversity of American society represent a threat or an opportunity? Should we acknowledge and celebrate our differences, or should we strive for more similarity? What possible dangers and opportunities are inherent in increasing diversity? What are the advantages and disadvantages of stressing unity and conformity?
2. What groups should be considered "minorities"? The five-part definition presented in this chapter was developed with racial and ethnic minorities in mind. Does it apply to gay and lesbian Americans? How? How about people who are left-handed or people who are very overweight? Explain and justify your answers.
3. What does it mean to say that something is a social construction? As social constructions, how are race and gender the same and how do they differ? What does it mean to say, "Gender becomes a social construction—like race—when it is treated as an unchanging, fixed difference and then used to deny opportunity and equality to women"?
4. Define and explain each of the terms in Table 1.1. Cite an example of each from your own experiences. How does ideological racism differ from prejudice?

Internet Activities

1. In this chapter we discussed race—arguably the most consequential concept in the history of this nation (and the globe). To extend the discussion, we can use resources on the Internet, including a website created to accompany a fascinating documentary, "Race: The Power of an Illusion," at www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm. The single major point of the website parallels that of this text: specifically, that race is a social construction, a cultural and political perception invented during particular historical eras, largely to justify and rationalize the differential treatment of others. Once established and passed from generation to generation, race becomes hugely consequential in the lives of all U.S. citizens—it becomes its own reality, shaping and controlling peoples' lives. We encourage you to explore all six subsections of the website. Prepare answers to each of the questions below and use this information along with ideas from this chapter to discuss the concept of race with others.
 1. In what ways should race be considered a "modern" idea?
 2. In what ways is race *not* a biological concept?
 3. How have ideas about race evolved and changed since ancient times?
 4. What are some U.S. examples of how public policy has treated people differently based on race? What are some of the consequences?
 5. How have definitions of black and white changed over the years? How have U.S. Census Bureau definitions of race changed? Why?

6. Try the "Sorting People" exercise and record your number of "correct" classifications here: _____. What does this exercise make you think about race as a concept? Can you accurately tell someone's race by looking at her or him? If not, what does this say about the concept of race?
 7. Take the quiz under the "Human Diversity" tab and record the number of correct answers here: _____. Was your information accurate? Where did you get this information?
 8. Click on the "Explore Diversity" button under "Human Diversity" and explore the activities. Does this information support the idea that "race isn't biological"? How?
2. In this chapter, we treated prejudice as a set of attitudes, opinions, stereotypes, and emotions that people express in their everyday conversations and that can be measured by surveys like the social distance scale. A group of psychologists has developed a very different approach to the topic: They believe that people have a largely unconscious and unspoken set of attitudes toward other groups that affects their thinking, feelings, and actions (Greenwald et al., 2002; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). These implicit or hidden prejudices are acquired during socialization and shape our relationships with other groups, even when we are not aware of it. This form of prejudice can exist even in people who have no conscious prejudice and who behave in nondiscriminatory ways. Do you have an implicit negative reaction to other groups? You can find out by taking the Implicit Association Test (IAT) at the Project Implicit website. To complete this test, follow these instructions:
- a. Go to the IAT website at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>. Alternately, you can search for "Implicit Association Test" using your search engine.
 - b. Find the box on the left labeled "Project Implicit Social Attitudes." You may want to proceed as a guest user rather than registering, so click "GO!" in the lower panel of the box, next to the U.S. English window.
 - c. Read the information and disclaimer on the next window. Then, click "I wish to proceed." Take several of the tests, including the Race IAT.
 - d. Learn more about the IAT by clicking the "Education" button on the top of the window after you finish the tests and then clicking "About the IAT." Browse the rest of the site and, especially, read the "Frequently Asked Questions."
3. After taking the tests and gathering some perspective on the IAT, consider these questions:
 - a. What is an "implicit" attitude? How does implicit prejudice differ from affective prejudice, stereotypes, social distance, and modern racism?
 - b. If test shows you have a preference for one group over another, does this mean that you are prejudiced against the less preferred group? Do you feel that the test accurately reflects your feelings and ideas? Why or why not? (Remember that your implicit attitudes can be quite different from your explicit or conscious attitudes.)
 4. Research using the IAT reveals that many white Americans have a preference for whites over blacks. Why do you think this is so? What aspects of American culture might create and sustain this preference?
 5. Which of the situations listed below would be most and least affected by a person's implicit attitudes? Why?
 - a. Friendship choices in a multigroup elementary school classroom.
 - b. Friendship choices in a multigroup high school or university.
 - c. Reactions to hearing that a friend is dating a member of a different racial or ethnic group.
 - d. Reactions to a news story that a minority group man has raped and killed a dominant group woman.
 - e. Reactions to a news story that a dominant group man raped and killed a minority group woman.

- f. Choices between political candidates who are from different racial or ethnic groups.
 - g. Support for policies such as affirmative action that can be controversial.
 - h. Hiring decisions involving applicants from a variety of groups.
 - i. Choices about which neighborhoods to live in.
 - j. Choices in a "shoot / don't shoot" situation involving a white police officer and a *possibly* armed black man suspect. How about if the suspect were a white woman?
5. If the IAT shows that you have a group preference you would rather *not* have, what are some things you could do to change yourself?

Group Discussion

For Activity 1, select three questions to discuss. For Activity 2, select three of the questions from #4 above to discuss with classmates. To aid the discussion, bring a summary of what you learned about yourself to class. What was the most important thing you learned each of these activities?

Note: Individual students may prefer *not* to reveal their IAT scores during these discussions. Group members should respect that.

Learning Resources on the Web

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