

The Architecture of Inequality

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Race and Ethnicity: More Than Just Biology

Histories of Oppression and Inequality

Racial and Ethnic Relations

Global Perspectives on Racism

Just like millions of other Americans, I sat transfixed in front of my television on the night of November 4, 2008, watching the presidential election results trickle in. At about 11:00 P.M. Eastern time, the networks made the astounding projection: Barack Obama—a man with a black Kenyan father and a white American mother—would be the 44th president of the United States. I sat in semi-disbelief. Had this country, one with such a difficult, painful, and deadly racial history, really just elected a black man to the highest office in the land? A development that would have been unthinkable 50, 25, or even 10 years earlier had just happened. People of all colors and classes here and abroad danced in the streets. Jesse Jackson, Oprah Winfrey, Colin Powell, and countless other less famous people wept with joy. Parents named their newborns “Barack.” One African American columnist wrote a letter to her 4-month-old son that night:

What does Barack Obama’s election mean to you? When you are older we will talk about how African American children, like their parents and grandparents, have struggled to overcome the feeling that no matter how hard they study and work and try, there are barriers—some visible, others hidden but still there—that block their way. The feeling that we can rise, but only so far. I did not want you to grow up believing that bitter remnants of the past could hold power over your future. I wanted to be able to tell you that it wasn’t true—that you could be anything you wanted to be. But I couldn’t quite believe it myself. Now I do. (Kelley, 2008, p. 29)

Sociologists, columnists, and political analysts tried to find the most memorable and most articulate way to capture the historical significance of the moment. Some speculated that it might mark the end of racial inequality and exclusion in this country; others wondered if we’d become a “postracial” society, where traditional racial categories no longer matter. A political pundit at MSNBC even said that he forgot, for a moment, that Obama was black (A. Holmes, 2015). In a national poll the day before Obama’s first inauguration, more than two thirds of African Americans said they believed that Martin Luther King’s famous 1963 dream (of a country where race and ethnicity are losing their status

as major criteria for judging the content of a person's character) had been fulfilled (CNN.com, 2009). And surveys the first few years after the election consistently showed that college-age Blacks were as optimistic and upbeat about their economic futures as Whites (Cose, 2011).

As I tried to absorb the magnitude of what took place that night, I began to think about the other important but less dramatic educational, economic, political, and cultural gains that people of color have made over the past few years:

- Close to half of all Latino/as and Blacks between 18 and 24 are now enrolled in college (Pérez-Peña, 2012a). The percentage of African American and Latino/a college graduates has also risen steadily over the past 15 years, as has the proportion of ethnoracial minority families that could be considered middle or upper class.
- African Americans born in 2011 can expect to live between 7 and 10 years longer than those born in 1975. Although a life expectancy gap still exists between Whites and Blacks, over the past four decades, it has decreased from 6 to 3 years for women and from 7 to 4 years for men (Population Reference Bureau 2014a).
- African American artists like Jay-Z, Beyoncé, Drake, and Nicki Minaj have achieved remarkable crossover success. In recent years, several of the most successful athletes in what were once exclusively white sports—tennis and golf—are black: Serena Williams and Tiger Woods. Three out of every 10 major league baseball players today is Latino; a little more than half are white. In the NBA, 43% of head coaches and 47% of assistant coaches are people of color (Lapchick, 2015).

Yet as I think of the significant strides ethnoracial minorities have made, I can't get past a very different reality. Despite the progress they've attained, African Americans, Latino/as, and Native Americans still remain, on average, the poorest and most disadvantaged of all groups in the United States. Their average annual income is still substantially lower than that of Whites and Asian Americans. The poverty rate for Blacks and Latinos is still more than double what it is for Whites (DeNavas-Walt & Procter, 2014). The unemployment rate of Blacks is twice as high as that of Whites and Asians. And the rate of home ownership among Native Americans, Blacks, and Latino/as is well below 50%, compared to 71% among Whites (ProQuest Statistical Abstract, 2015). Of all ethnoracial groups in this society, African Americans have the highest rate of infant mortality; highest rates of most cancers, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and HIV/AIDS; and highest rates of death from treatable illnesses, and drug- or alcohol-induced causes (American Sociological Association, 2005; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011a; ProQuest Statistical Abstract, 2015). Even though Blacks and Whites use marijuana at similar rates, Blacks are four times as likely to be arrested for possession (American Civil Liberties Union, 2013). Indeed, it's estimated that there are 1.5 million fewer black men between the ages of 25 and 54 in everyday society than there should be because of high rates of imprisonment, homicide, and other forms of early death (Wolfers, Quealy, & Leonhardt, 2015).

I also think of specific malicious or violent events in the recent past that further belie the image of racial progress and harmony:

- In 2012, four East Haven, Connecticut, police officers were accused of systematically mistreating Latino/as in the community by conducting unreasonable searches of residents; slapping, hitting, and kicking suspects when in custody; and regularly harassing customers as they emerged from Latino/a-owned businesses (Barron, 2012).

- In 2015, two white Mississippi men pled guilty to violations of federal hate crime laws for a string of attacks in which they threw beer bottles and shot metal ball bearings at random black pedestrians from moving vehicles. In one incident, they beat up a 47-year old black factory worker and then fatally struck him with their pickup truck (Fausset, 2015).
- Dozens of police officers in Miami, San Francisco, Seattle, Baton Rouge, Fort Lauderdale, and other cities have been fired or disciplined in the past year over racist texts and e-mails. One meme posted by a Miami officer showed a “Black Monopoly” board game on which each square had a police officer directing the player to “go to jail” (Robles, 2015).
- Moments after President Obama sent his first Twitter post from the Oval Office in 2015, profanity-laced racial slurs and hate-filled posts poured into his account. One had an image of the president with a noose around his neck; another called him a black monkey (Hirschfeld Davis, 2015).
- In the summer of 2015, a 21-year-old avowed white supremacist opened fire in an African Methodist Episcopal church in Charleston, South Carolina, killing nine people who were there for a bible study meeting. Witnesses said that before he began shooting, he shouted out a series of racial epithets. In the weeks following the massacre, fires destroyed six black churches in five southern states.

So how far have we really come? Which is the real United States? Is it the one that overcame centuries of racial conflict and elected a black president? Or is it the one perpetually plagued by economic inequality, prejudice, and hatred?

In the previous chapter, I examined the class stratification system. But social class doesn’t create unequal life chances on its own. This chapter focuses on another important determinant of social inequality: race and ethnicity.

RACE AND ETHNICITY: MORE THAN JUST BIOLOGY

To most people, **race** is a category of individuals labeled and treated as similar because of common inborn biological traits, such as skin color, color and texture of hair, and shape of eyes, nose, or head. It is widely assumed that people who are placed in the same racial category share behavioral, psychological, and personality traits that are linked to their physical similarities. But sociologists typically use the term **ethnicity** to refer to the nonbiological traits—such as shared culture, history, language, patterns of behavior, and beliefs—that provide members of a group with a sense of common identity. Whereas ethnicity is thought to be something that we learn from other people, race is commonly portrayed as an inherited and permanent biological characteristic that can be used to divide people into mutually exclusive groups.

But the concept of race isn’t nearly so straightforward. For instance, people who consider themselves “white” may actually have darker skin and curlier hair than some people who consider themselves “black.” In addition, some groups have features that do not neatly place them in one race or another. Australian Aborigines have black skin and “Negroid” facial features but also have blond, wavy hair. The black-skinned !Kung, who live in the Kalahari Desert of southern Africa, have epicanthic eye folds, a characteristic typical of East Asian peoples.

Not surprisingly, there are no universal racial categories. Brazilians have three primary races—*branco* (white), *prêto* (black), and *pardo* (mulatto)—but use dozens of more precise terms to categorize

people based on minute differences in skin color, hair texture and length, and facial features. South Africa has four legally defined races—black, white, colored, and Indian—but in England and Ireland the term *black* is used to refer to all people who are not white. In one small Irish town that experienced an unprecedented influx of refugees in the late 1990s, anyone who wasn't Irish was considered black. As one resident put it, "Either Romanians or Nigerians, we don't know the difference. They're all the same. They're all black" (quoted in Lyall, 2000, p. A6). Conversely, some African Americans visiting Ghana are shocked when people there refer to them as *obruni*, or "white foreigner" (Polgreen, 2005).

In some places, race concepts and racial identification are fluid, reflecting changes in economic standing, not skin color:

- Brazilians who climb the class ladder through educational and economic achievement may find themselves in a different racial category, as illustrated by popular Brazilian expressions such as "Money whitens" or "A rich Negro is a white man, and a poor white man is a Negro" (Marger, 1994, p. 441). Educated nonwhite parents in Brazil are significantly more likely to classify their children as White than are less-educated nonwhite parents (Schwartzman, 2007).
- In Ecuador, infertile women pursuing in-vitro fertilization assistance frequently seek white egg donors as a means of improving the racial identity (and social status) of their baby (E. F. S. Roberts, 2012).
- In Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory, conceptions of race are markedly more fluid than they are in the United States. Race is seen as a continuum of categories with different shades of color as the norm and classifications that can change as one's socioeconomic circumstances change (C. E. Rodriguez & Cordero-Guzman, 2004).
- In the United States, over a third of African Americans in a nationwide survey indicated that because of a widening gap between middle-class and poor Blacks, "black" can no longer be thought of as a single race (cited in Gates, 2007).

The complex issue of defining race points to a complicated biological reality. Since the earliest humans appeared, they have consistently tended to migrate and interbreed. For instance, a recent genetic study of 160,000 Americans found that, on average, European genes account for almost one quarter of the DNA of those who identify as African American; Latino/as were, on average, 65% European. The researchers also estimate that over 6 million European Americans have some African ancestry (Bryc, Durand, Macpherson, Reich, & Mountain, 2015). Indeed, there is no gene that is 100% of one form in one race and 100% of a different form in another race (P. Brown, 1998).

That is not to say that race has absolutely *no* connection to biology. Geneticists and public health officials have known for quite a while that some diseases are not evenly distributed across racial groups. The overwhelming majority of cases of sickle cell anemia, for instance, are among people of African descent; it is rare among non-Hispanic whites (Blackhealthcare.com, 2003). Hemochromatosis, a digestive disorder that causes the body to absorb too much iron, affects Whites of Northern European descent much more frequently than people of color. Among African Americans, Asian Americans, Latino/as, and American Indians, the disease is virtually nonexistent. Among Whites, about 5 people out of 1,000—0.5%—carry two copies of the hemochromatosis gene and are susceptible to developing the disease. One out of every 8 to 12 Whites is a carrier of one abnormal gene (National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse, 2011). However, no disease is found *exclusively* in one racial group. Furthermore, it's unclear whether these differences are solely due to some inherited biological trait or to the life experiences and historical, geographical, and/or environmental location of certain groups.

For most sociologists, then, race is more meaningful as a social category than as a biological one (Gans, 2005). That is, the characteristics a society selects to distinguish one ethnoracial group from another shape social rankings and determine access to important resources. But they have less to do with innate physical differences or genetic predispositions than with what the prevailing culture defines as socially significant (American Sociological Association, 2002). For instance, Jews, the Irish, Italians, and even some Germans were once defined as members of inferior races. They came to be seen as “white” only when they entered the mainstream culture and gained economic and political power (Bronner, 1998a). Sociologists have noted that more and more U.S. adults feel comfortable simply shedding the ethnic identities they were born into and taking on new ones (Hitt, 2005).

Historical changes in the categories used by the U.S. government in its decennial population censuses further illustrate shifting conceptions of race (S. M. Lee, 1993):

- In 1790, the first U.S. census used the following classifications: Free White Males, Free White Females, All Other Free Persons, and Slaves.
- In 1870, there were five races: White, Colored (Black), Mulatto (people with some black blood), Chinese, and Indian.
- Race categories in the 1890 census reflected white people’s concern about race mixing and racial purity. Eight races were listed, half of them applying to black or partly black populations: White, Colored (Black), Mulatto (people with three-eighths to five-eighths black blood), Quadroon (people with one-fourth black blood), Octoroon (people with one-eighth black blood), Chinese, Japanese, and Indian.
- In 1900, Mulatto, Quadroon, and Octoroon were dropped, so that any amount of “black blood” meant a person had to be classified as “black.”
- In 1910 and 1920, Mulatto returned to the census form, only to disappear for good in 1930.
- Between 1930 and 2000, some racial classifications (such as Hindu, Eskimo, part Hawaiian, and Mexican) appeared and disappeared. Others (Filipino, Korean, Hawaiian) made an appearance and have remained since.
- Individuals filling out the 2010 census form had a wide array of racial categories from which to choose: White, Black, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, or Samoan.

You may have noticed that Latino/a or Hispanic is not included in the list of races on the latest census form. With the exception of the inclusion of “Mexican” in 1930, Spanish-speaking people have routinely been classified as “white.” But because Latino/as can be members of any race, “Hispanic origin” appears on the census form, not as a race but as an ethnicity. In fact, the 2010 form explicitly states that “Hispanic origins are not races.”

This way of thinking has not been received well by all Latino/as. Recent census data show that 87% of Americans born in Cuba and 53% born in Mexico identify themselves as white; but a majority of those born in the Dominican Republic and El Salvador refused to identify themselves by any of the racial categories on the census form (cited in S. Roberts, 2010). In the 2010 census, many Latino/as chose to use “American Indian” to identify their race. Consequently, the number of “Hispanic American Indians” tripled between 2000 and 2010 (cited in Decker, 2011). The U.S. Census Bureau is currently considering a combined “race or origin” question for the 2020 census

that would include “Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin” as a category along with “White,” “Black, African American, or Negro,” “American Indian or Alaskan Native,” “Asian,” and “Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander” (Haub, 2012a).

In short, racial categories are not natural, biological groupings. They are created, inhabited, transformed, applied, and destroyed by people and by social institutions (Omi & Winant, 1992; Saperstein, Penner, & Light, 2013). What ties individuals together in a particular racial group is not a set of shared physical characteristics—because there aren’t any physical characteristics shared by all members of a particular racial group—but the shared experience of identifying, and being identified by others, as members of that group (Piper, 1992).

In the end, of course, race and ethnicity are matters of self-definition. But are there limits to what we can call ourselves? In theory, we live in a society built on the premise that we can be what we want as long as we don’t hurt others or infringe on their rights. Such a cultural value implies that perhaps how we racially identify is solely a matter of individual determination. But you’re probably well aware that for some aspects of our identity, those choices are limited. You may recall the firestorm that erupted in 2015 when it was revealed that Rachel Dolezal—a self-identified black woman who was president of the Spokane, Washington chapter of the NAACP and an instructor of African American Studies at Eastern Washington University—was actually white. She professed deep empathy and sympathy with black people from the time, as a teenager, her parents adopted four black children. She attended a historically black college, Howard University. She married a black man. Her art reflected the black experience. She curled her hair and even darkened her skin. She constructed a reputation as a powerful advocate for civil rights. One acquaintance she knew when she was younger said she seemed like “a black girl in a white body...but she was snow white, white-white, lily white” (quoted in K. Johnson, Pérez-Peña, & Eligon, 2015, p. A13). But she wasn’t just immersed in black political issues, appearance, and lifestyle, she said she *was* black, even though her biological parents are both white. This was an identity many simply couldn’t accept. Critics accused her of “playing black,” choosing to adopt an African American heritage and look and to cast off her white racial advantage when it suited her, something actual people of color cannot do (Pérez-Peña, 2015). Blacks have always had a harder time claiming whiteness. Said one black author, “Unlike Rachel Dolezal, I don’t have the option of choosing my race” (T. W. Harris, 2015, p. A25).

MICRO-MACRO CONNECTION

WHY ISN'T BARACK OBAMA WHITE?

Definitions of race and the way those definitions are incorporated into people’s individual identities are particularly difficult for people whose biological parents are of different races. President Obama, as you well know, is biracial. Although he sometimes jokingly refers to himself as a “mutt,” he, like so many biracial individuals before him, is typically identified as black. He will forever be known as the first black or African American president, not the first biracial president or the first half-white president. Why?

Since the era of slavery, the United States has adhered to the “one-drop rule” regarding racial identity (F. J. Davis, 1991). The term dates back to a common law in the South that a “single drop of black blood” makes a person black. Sociologists call this a hypodescent rule, meaning that racially mixed people are always assigned the status of the subordinate group (F. J. Davis, 1991). Conversely, mixed-race people in other groups must meet a hereditary threshold in order to claim a particular ethnoracial identity. For instance, some Native Americans carry a document, known as the CDIB (Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood), that indicates whether they have enough Indian blood to be considered Indian (Hitt, 2005).

Most people in the United States still tend to see race in mutually exclusive pigmentation categories: black, white, red, yellow, brown. Even when faced with ambiguities, people still try to put others into single-color racial groups (A. Holmes, 2015). But the dramatic growth in multiracial children—the proportion of multiracial babies grew from 1% in 1970 to 10% in 2013—has upset traditional views of racial identity and has led more and more people of mixed racial heritage to fight against the traditional “one drop” thinking and embrace their identity. A recent survey found that 60% of multiracial adults are proud of their mixed race background and feel it makes them more tolerant of other cultures. Only 4% felt it has been a disadvantage (Pew Research Center, 2015c). Interestingly, however, when asked how they identify themselves, only 40% of people with a mixed race background used the term “multiracial.” The rest identified with one race either because they look like one race or were raised as one race. And one in five said they felt pressure from others to identify as a single race.

In the mid to late 1990s, these individuals lobbied Congress and the Bureau of the Census to add a multiracial category to the 2000 census. They argued that such a change would add visibility and legitimacy to a racial identity that had heretofore been ignored. Even before this debate emerged, some scholars had been arguing that a multiracial category might soften the racial lines that divide the country (Stephan & Stephan, 1989). When people blend two or more races and ethnicities within their own bodies, race becomes a less potent social divider, thereby presenting a biological solution to the problem of racial injustice (J. E. White, 1997). Such a sentiment is echoed by this columnist (a black woman married to a white man):

[My son] is the exact shade you'd get if you mixed his father and me up in a paint can—a color I call golden. . . . Perhaps as the number of multiracial Americans continues to grow, there will be a plurality of golden people who are impossible to positively identify as one race or the other. And the rest of us who can be easily categorized will be forced to accept that color does not contribute to the content of one's character because we won't know which set of stereotypes to apply to whom. (Kelley, 2009, p. 41)

Not everyone thought such a change to the census form would be a good idea. Many civil rights organizations objected to the inclusion of a multiracial category (R. Farley, 2002). They worried that it would reduce the number of U.S. citizens claiming to belong to long-recognized ethnoracial minority groups, dilute the culture

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and political power of those groups, and make it more difficult to enforce civil rights laws (Mathews, 1996). Job discrimination lawsuits, affirmative action policies, and federal programs that assist minority businesses or that protect minority communities from environmental hazards all depend on official racial population data from the census. Even today there is concern with those who self-identify as multiracial. As one author recently put it, “mixed-race blacks have an ethical obligation to identify as black—and interracial couples share a similar moral imperative to inculcate certain ideas of black heritage and racial identity in their mixed-race children, regardless of how they look” (T. C. Williams, 2012, p. 5).

In the end, the civil rights organizations won. For the 2000 census, the government decided not to add a multiracial category to official forms. Instead, it adopted a policy allowing people, for the first time, to identify themselves on the census form as members of more than one race. According to the 2010 census, nine million people—or about 3% of the population—identify themselves as belonging to more than one race (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2010).

Some sociologists caution, however, that the Census Bureau’s method of measuring multiracial identity—checking two or more race categories—does not adequately reflect the way people personally experience race. As one journalist recently put it:

As the daughter of an African American father and a white mother, born with olive skin, light eyes and thick, curly hair, I have been aware of a tension between the way the outside world sees me, the way the government sees me. . . , and the way I see myself. (A. Holmes, 2015, p. 14)

Sociologists David Harris and Jeremiah Sim (2002) examined data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, a survey containing information on the racial identity of a nationwide sample of more than 11,000 adolescents. They found that the way people racially classify themselves can change from context to context. Almost twice as many adolescents identify themselves as multiracial when they’re interviewed at school as when they’re interviewed at home. Furthermore, only 87.6% expressed the same racial identities across different settings. This research is important because it shows that census data on multiracial identity don’t necessarily account for people who self-identify as multiracial in everyday situations. Sizable numbers of multiracial adolescents change their racial identity—to that of a single race—as they enter adulthood (Doyle & Kao, 2007). About 3 in 10 adults with a multiracial background say that they have changed the way they describe their race over the years. Some say they once thought of themselves as only one race and now think of themselves as more than one race; others say just the opposite (Pew Research Center, 2015c).

So whether Barack Obama is white, black, or biracial ultimately depends on how he defines himself. When he filled out his 2010 census form, Obama checked the category “Black, African American or Negro” only, even though others may define him differently. In one poll, 55% of black respondents said President Obama is black and only 34% said he was mixed. Among white respondents, 53% said he was mixed, while 24% identified him as black (P. Taylor, 2014b).

VISUAL ESSAY— PICK A COLOR . . . ANY COLOR?



Fred W. McDarrah/Getty Images



AP Photo/File

Seemingly every day, we're reminded that race is a topic that just won't go away. For hundreds of years, we've struggled with how to live in a racially diverse society. But as you've already seen chapter, even before we can address the vexing issue of racial inequality, we have to ask a more fundamental question: what is race? To most sociologists, race is less an objective bio-genetic trait than it is a social construction. I've presented plenty of evidence in this chapter to support that notion. But can race also be a *personal* construction? Here we see three people (one you probably remember; two you've likely never heard of) who claimed a personal racial identity that didn't conform to their heredity or physical traits. In 2015, Rachel Dolezal made national headlines because she said she was black, even though both her parents and all her grandparents are white. Effa Manley was a blond haired, hazel-eyed white woman who married a black man in the 1930s and lived her life as a black woman. Because of her work in the Negro Baseball Leagues, she became

the first woman elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame. And Anatole Broyard was a mixed-race Creole born writer in Louisiana who lived his life as a white man so his books would be more acceptable to a wider reading audience.

In each of these cases, an individual constructed a racial identity that contradicted the hereditary evidence. Should people have the right to claim any race they want or does there need to be some kind of physical "proof" or at least community approval? Do cases like these three support or challenge the notion that race is socially constructed?



Colin Mulvany/The Spokesman-Review via AP, File

HISTORIES OF OPPRESSION AND INEQUALITY

A quick glance at the history of the United States reveals a record of not just freedom, justice, and equality but also of conquest, discrimination, and exclusion. Racial and ethnic inequalities have manifested themselves in phenomena such as slavery and fraud; widespread economic, educational, and political deprivation; the violent and nonviolent protests of the civil rights movement; and racially motivated hate crimes. Along the way, such injustices have constricted people's access to basic necessities, including housing, health care, a stable family life, and a means of making a decent living.

Every ethnoracial minority has its own story of persecution. European immigrants—Germans, Irish people, Italians, Poles, Jews, Greeks—were objects of hatred, suspicion, and discrimination when they first arrived in significant numbers in the United States. For instance, Benjamin Franklin once expressed fear that white Pennsylvanians would be “overwhelmed by swarms of swarthy Germans, who ‘will soon so out number us, that all the advantages we have will not . . . be able to preserve our language, and even our government will become precarious’” (quoted in S. Roberts, 2008, p. 6). Nineteenth-century newspaper job ads routinely noted, “No Irish need apply.” Jews were refused admission to many U.S. universities until the mid 20th century. The National Origins Act of 1924 restricted immigration from southern Europe (mainly Greece and Italy) until the 1960s. Because these groups had the same skin color as the dominant white Protestants, however, they eventually overcame most of these obstacles and gained entry into mainstream society. Most recently, immigrants from Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East have become popular targets of hostility. For people of color in this country, racial equality has always been elusive.

Native Americans

The story of Native Americans includes racially inspired massacres, takeover of ancestral lands, confinement on reservations, and unending governmental exploitation. Successive waves of white settlers seeking westward expansion in the 18th and 19th centuries pushed Native Americans off any land the settlers considered desirable (U.S. Commission on Human Rights, 1992). A common European belief that Native Americans were “savages” who should be displaced to make way for civilized Whites provided the ideological justification for conquering them.

According to the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, “All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside.” But despite the broad wording of this amendment, Native Americans were excluded from citizenship. In 1884, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Native Americans owed their primary allegiance to their tribe and so did not automatically acquire citizenship at birth. Not until 1940 were all Native Americans born in the United States considered U.S. citizens (Haney López, 1996).

Despite their history of severe oppression and continuing disadvantaged economic status compared with other groups, some Native Americans have shown a remarkable ability to endure and in a few cases to shrewdly promote their own financial interests. In the Pacific Northwest, for instance, some Indian tribes have successfully protected their rights to lucrative fishing waters (F. G. Cohen, 1986). Casinos and resorts have made some tribes wealthy. The Connecticut Sun, a professional women's basketball franchise, plays its home games on

the grounds of a casino owned by the Mohegan nation. Elsewhere, organizations have been formed to advance the financial concerns of Native Americans in industries such as gas, oil, and coal, where substantial reserves exist on Indian land (Snipp, 1986). However, intense struggles between large multinational corporations and Native American tribes continue today over control of these reserves.

Latino/as

The history of Latino/as in this country has been diverse. Some groups have had a relatively positive experience. For instance, Cuban immigrants who streamed into this country in the late 1950s, fleeing Fidel Castro's communist political regime, received an enthusiastic welcome (Suarez, 1998). Many early Cuban immigrants were wealthy business owners who set up lucrative companies, particularly in South Florida. Today, Cuban American families are the most economically and educationally successful of any Latino/a group.

But other groups have experienced extreme resentment and oppression. For instance, when the United States expanded into the Southwest, white Americans moved into areas already inhabited by Mexicans. After a war that lasted from 1846 to 1848, Mexico relinquished half its national territory to the United States, including what are now the states of Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Nevada, and Utah, as well as parts of Kansas, Oklahoma, and Wyoming.

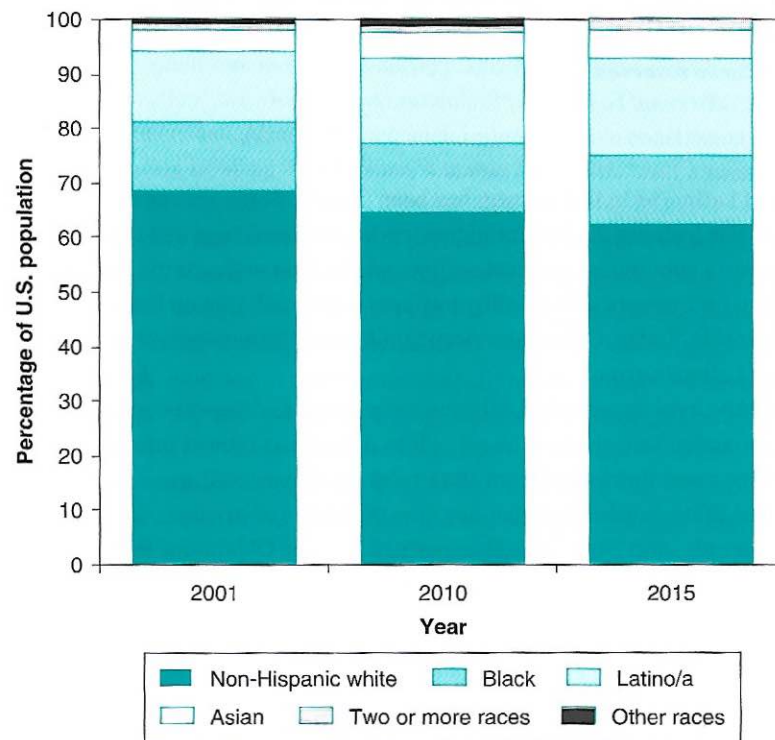
In theory, Mexicans living on the U.S. side of the new border were to be given all the rights of U.S. citizens. In practice, however, their property rights were frequently violated, and they lost control of their mining, ranching, and farming industries. The exploitation of Mexican workers coincided with a developing economic system built around mining and large-scale agriculture, activities that demanded a large pool of cheap labor (J. Farley, 1982). Workers often had to house their families in primitive shacks with no electricity or plumbing for months on end while they performed seasonal labor.

Today, the status of Latino/as is mixed. They account for more than 40% of the 81 million people added to the U.S. population over the last 30 years and now represent a bigger proportion of the U.S. population than Blacks (see Exhibit 11.1). By 2060, 3 out of every 10 persons in the United States will be Latino/a (P. Taylor, 2014b). Larger numbers mean not only greater influence on the culture but more political clout. In 2012, Latino/as voted for Barack Obama over his Republican opponent, Mitt Romney, by a margin of nearly 3 to 1. In states with heavy Latino/a populations, like California, Florida, and Colorado, their vote was key to Obama's victory.

Economically and educationally, however, the situation is less rosy. The average annual income for Latino/a individuals and families is still substantially lower than that of other groups (ProQuest Statistical Abstract, 2015). In addition, Latino/as are significantly more likely to drop out of school and less likely to go to college than are white, Asian American, or African American children. Their low levels of education, coupled with geographic concentration in economically distressed areas of the country, has made Latino/as, particularly men, especially vulnerable to downsizing and unemployment (Mather & Jacobsen, 2010).

African Americans

The experience of African Americans has been unique among ethnoracial groups in this country because of the direct and indirect influences of slavery. From 1619, when the first black slaves were sold in Jamestown, Virginia, to 1865, when the Thirteenth Amendment outlawed slavery,

EXHIBIT 11.1 Changes in Ethnoracial Composition of the United States

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002, Table 14; ProQuest Statistical Abstract, 2012, Table 12; ProQuest Statistical Abstract, 2015, Table 12.

several million Blacks in this country endured the brutal reality of forced servitude. Slave owners controlled every aspect of a slave's life. They determined which slaves could marry and which marriages could be dissolved. Wedding vows among slave couples often substituted the phrase "until distance do us part" for "until death"—or "the white man"—"do us part" (Hunter, 2011). The economic value of children (i.e., future slaves) meant that slave owners had a financial interest in keeping slave marriages intact. But even the possibility of stable family life was an illusion. When economic troubles forced the sale of slaves to raise money, slave owners didn't hesitate to separate the very slave families they had once advocated. The daily threat of separation hung over every slave family.

Following emancipation, racial mistreatment remained pervasive. Freed Blacks in the South found themselves arrested on trumped-up charges like selling produce after dark or talking loudly to white women in public. Vagrancy was criminalized so that Blacks who couldn't show proof of employment were fined and thrown in jail. When they couldn't pay their fines, thousands were "leased" to county officials or private companies (such as U.S. Steel) and forced to work—sometimes in shackles—under conditions that were actually worse than what they had experienced during slavery (Blackmon, 2009; Kristof, 2014).

Later on, "Jim Crow" laws established rigid lines between the races. In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in public facilities was constitutional. Unequal access to

public transportation, schools, hotels, theaters, restaurants, campgrounds, community swimming pools, drinking fountains, the military, and practically every other aspect of social life continued until the middle of the 20th century. Conditions were so bad that Blacks often had to take extra precautions simply to engage in everyday activities. For instance, from the 1930s to the 1960s, many Blacks wouldn't embark on a long-distance automobile trip without a guidebook called *The Negro Motorist Green Book*. This book provided Blacks with city-by-city information about where they could drive, sleep, eat, buy gas, or shop without being harassed, humiliated, or attacked (McGee, 2010).

Despite advances, the quality of life for most African Americans remains below that of Whites. In some ways, the effects of slavery have lasted to this day. For instance, the U.S. counties that had a higher proportion of slaves in 1860 still have higher levels of inequality today than other counties, amounting to what one group of researchers call "the persistent effect of slavery" (Bertocchi & Dimico, 2010).

The median annual income for black households is \$34,598, compared with \$55,257 for white households (ProQuest Statistical Abstract, 2015). The median net worth of white households is 13 times higher than that of black households, a gap that has widened since 2010 (Kochhar & Fry, 2014). Black unemployment is twice as high as that of Whites. As one author put it, "The era that ushered in the first black president has also introduced the highest levels of unemployment and poverty for African Americans in 20 years" (Samuels, 2011, p. 46).

Nevertheless, blatant discrimination has declined in the past four decades, and some economic, educational, and political advances have been made. For instance, black-owned businesses generate nearly \$136 billion in annual sales (ProQuest Statistical Abstract, 2015). The average annual household income of \$34,598 represents a significant increase over the average income of black households in 1980 (\$28,972).

Asian Americans

When large numbers of Chinese men came to this country in the second half of the 19th century to work in the mines and on the expanding railroad system, they were treated with hostility. The image of the "yellow peril" was fostered by rampant fears that hordes of Chinese workers would take away scarce jobs and eventually overrun native-born Whites. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, several laws, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Scott Act, and the Geary Act, barred Chinese immigrants from entering the country and stripped those already here of many of their legal rights. For instance, Chinese laborers were legally prevented from becoming permanent citizens, from bringing their wives with them, and from marrying Whites when they got here.

Early Japanese Americans faced similar circumstances. Like the Chinese, Japanese families created tight-knit, insulated communities where they were able to pool money and resources and achieve relative success. But their perceived success motivated lawmakers to enact legislation that barred all further Japanese immigration. Hostility toward the Japanese reached a peak in 1941, following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. President Franklin Roosevelt signed an executive order authorizing the relocation and internment of Japanese immigrants and U.S. citizens of Japanese descent in camps surrounded by barbed wire, watchtowers, and armed guards.

The irony of race for Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, Indians, and other Asian groups is that they are often perceived as "model minorities" or "America's greatest

success story.” For instance, the average total SAT scores for Asian American high school seniors is 1656, compared with 1576 for Whites and 1486 for the general population (National Center for Fair & Open Testing, 2014). Fifty-three percent of Asian Americans complete college, compared to 32% of Whites and their median household income is actually higher than that of the population as a whole. They are also more likely than other groups to be married and to raise their children in a two-parent household (ProQuest Statistical Abstract, 2015).

But the expectations and resentment associated with being the “model minority” can be as confining and oppressive as those created by more negative labels. Here’s how one Asian American author describes it:

I am Asian American, but I am not good with computers. I cannot balance my checkbook, much less perform calculus in my head. I would like to fail in school, for no reason other than to cast off my freakish alter ego of geek and nerd. . . . I yearn to be an artist, an athlete, a rebel, and, above all, an ordinary person. (Wu, 2002, pp. 39–40)

By overemphasizing Asian American success, the label downplays the problems Asian Americans continue to face from racial discrimination in all areas of public and private life. Furthermore, it portrays Asian American success as proof that the United States provides equal opportunities for those who conform and work hard, even though many ethnoracial groups continue to suffer.

The “model minority” image can also turn ugly when equated with perceptions that Asians are overstudious loners who can’t be trusted. These stereotypes bubbled to the surface in the immediate aftermath of the 2007 massacre at Virginia Tech University, in which a Korean American student went on a rampage and killed 32 people. Although it turned out that the gunman suffered from serious mental problems and the feared anti-Korean backlash never materialized, media portrayals continued to highlight both his ethnicity and his lack of social skills, perpetuating the idea that shy, bookish Asian American college students might be ticking time bombs.

Muslim Americans

Although their numbers are small compared with those of other ethnoracial minority groups and their arrival has been more recent, few groups have evoked stronger negative feelings or are as misunderstood as Muslim Americans. People in the U.S. view Muslims more negatively than any other religious group, including atheists, even though about one in three non-Muslims know someone who is Muslim (Pew Research Center, 2014b). And attitudes are growing more negative. A recent poll found that favorability toward Muslim-Americans declined from 36% to 27% between 2010 and 2014 (cited in Siddiqui, 2014).

While the tendency is to see Muslims as a monolithic, homogeneous group, they are actually quite culturally and racially diverse. Sixty-five percent of Muslim Americans are first-generation immigrants. About a third come from the Arabic-speaking countries of the Middle East and North Africa and another 27% from South Asia. Despite the heavy presence of immigrants, more than three quarters of Muslims in this country are U.S. citizens (Pew Research Center, 2007).

In terms of educational attainment and income level, Muslim Americans mirror the rest of U.S. society. The proportion of Muslims who have earned college degrees is the same as it is for the general population. In addition, 41% of Muslim American adults report annual household incomes of more than \$50,000, compared with 44% of all U.S. adults. In fact, Muslims in the United States are in far better shape economically than those in France, Spain, Germany, or Great Britain (Pew Research Center, 2007) and are more likely to have non-Muslim friends than their counterparts in other countries (Thomson-DeVeaux, 2013).

Overall, Muslim Americans are quite assimilated into mainstream U.S. society. The vast majority believe that their communities are good places to live in and that hard work will pay off. Most are happy to be in the United States and condemn Islamic extremism. Fewer than 1 in 10 U.S. Muslims feel that violence against civilians is ever justified to defend Islam (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2013). One poll found that most Muslim Americans say they are loyal to the United States and optimistic about the future, despite reporting high levels of discrimination (Younis, 2011).

Nevertheless, the equation of Muslims with violent terrorism has been a common attitude for decades, dating back to the murder of 11 Israeli athletes during the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich. The September 11, 2001, attacks bolstered anti-Muslim prejudice and continue to make their lives significantly more difficult. Most Muslims believe that the government and law enforcement agencies single them out for increased surveillance and monitoring (Pew Research Center, 2007). This belief is not unwarranted. Nationwide, 762 Muslims were rounded up in the aftermath of 9/11, kept in jail, sometimes for months at a time. More often than not, they were arrested as a result of a neighbor or acquaintance calling law enforcement. One landlord reported several of her tenants, who were “Middle Eastern,” to the FBI simply because she “would feel awful if [they] were involved in terrorism and she didn’t call” (quoted in Neumeister, 2015, p. A5). Just a few years ago, the New York Police Department used a film, titled *The Third Jihad*, as part of its training program of new police recruits. The film depicted Muslim terrorists shooting Christians in the head and exploding car bombs; images of “executed” American children covered by sheets; and a doctored photograph showing an Islamic flag flying over the White House (M. Powell, 2012).

Despite knowing more about Islam than ever before, almost half of U.S. adults believe it encourages violence more than other religions (Jost, 2006). People are equally divided over whether Islamic values are consistent with the American way of life (Thomson-DeVeaux, 2013). During the primary campaign leading up to the 2016 presidential campaign, one Republican candidate said that he could never support a Muslim running for President. In 2012, another Republican candidate insinuated that a Muslim woman who served as the Chief of Staff for then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was a secret agent of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood (Beinart, 2012).

A few years ago, proposals to build mosques in places like Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Sheboygan, Wisconsin, Temecula, California, and most notably near the site of the World Trade Center in New York were met by angry protests. One Islamic studies professor, describing the bitter tone of the opposition, stated,

It’s one thing to oppose a mosque because traffic might increase, but it’s different when you say these mosques are going to be nurturing terrorist bombers, that Islam is invading, that civilization is being undermined by Muslims. (quoted in Goodstein, 2010, pp. 1, 17)

Indeed, the mere suggestion that someone is a Muslim can sometimes be enough to disparage that person. Twitter lit up with angry tweets in 2013 when Nina Davulri (who is actually of Indian descent and is not Muslim) was crowned Miss America (Broderick, 2013):

“[The anniversary of] 9/11 was four days ago and *she* gets Miss America?”

“Miss America or Miss al Qaeda?”

“More like Miss Terrorist”

Likewise, false rumors that Barack Obama is a Muslim dogged him throughout the 2008 election and continued during the 2012 election. A 2012 poll found that less than half of Americans accurately

identify Obama as Christian (Bingham, 2012). The fact that he and his representatives felt this allegation had to be denied reinforced its negative status in the culture.

The expression of anti-Muslim sentiment is more open than such sentiments applied to other ethnoracial groups. Legislatures in 10 states have introduced bills that would prohibit the use of Sharia law—the body of law based on the Qur'an—in state courts. Given such fear and distrust, it's not surprising that Muslim Americans are one of the most openly despised ethnoracial groups in the country today.

RACIAL AND ETHNIC RELATIONS

U.S. society's long history of racial tension is unlikely to fade away anytime soon. Increasing numbers of ethnoracial minorities and an influx of non-English-speaking immigrants are heightening competition and conflict over society's resources, including various forms of wealth, prestige, and power. The unequal distribution of resources is often motivated by **racism**, the belief that humans are subdivided into distinct groups so different in their social behavior and mental and physical capacities that they can be ranked as superior or inferior (Marger, 1994). Racism can be expressed at the personal level through individual attitudes and behavior, at the cultural level in language and collective ideologies, and at the macrostructural level in the everyday workings of social institutions.

Personal Racism

Personal racism is the expression of racist attitudes or behaviors by individual people. This type of racism takes many obvious forms, such as individuals who use derogatory names when they refer to other ethnoracial groups or those who show clear disdain for and hostility toward members of other groups during face-to-face contact. However, subtle forms of personal racism, such as the high school guidance counselor who steers minority students away from "hard" subjects and toward those that do not prepare them for higher-paying jobs, are much more common. Whether blatant or subtle, personal racism rests on two important psychological constructs—stereotypes and prejudice.

Stereotypes The word **stereotype** was first used by the political commentator Walter Lippmann in 1922. He defined it as an oversimplified picture of the world, one that satisfies our need to see our social environment as a more understandable and manageable place than it really is (Lippmann, 1922). When applied to race, it is the overgeneralized belief that a certain trait, behavior, or attitude characterizes all members of some identifiable group.

Casual observations easily refute the accuracy of common racial or ethnic stereotypes. Most African Americans aren't on welfare, most Jews aren't greedy, few Italians are involved in organized crime, not all Asian Americans excel in math, and so on. Overgeneralizations are never true for every member of a group. Yet despite their obvious inaccuracy, stereotypes remain a common part of our everyday thinking. We all know what the stereotypes are, even if most of us choose not to express them or act on them.

The contemporary view is that stereotyping is a universal aspect of human thought (D. L. Hamilton, 1981). Our brains tend to divide the world into distinct categories: good and bad, strong and weak, them and us (Rothenberg, 1992). By allowing us to group information into easily identifiable categories, stereotypes make the processing of information and the formation of impressions more efficient. As you saw in Chapter 6, our lives would be utterly chaotic if we weren't able to quickly categorize and form expectations about people in terms of gender, race, age, ethnicity, and so on. What's important to remember, though, is that the actual content of stereotypes is by no means natural; it must be learned.

The media provide large audiences with both real and fantasized images of racial, religious, and ethnic groups: the savage American Indian; the sassy, confrontational, overweight black woman; the spoiled, pampered, shopping-obsessed Jewish woman; the fanatical Arab terrorist; and so on. Asians are frequently depicted as camera-wielding tourists, scholastic overachievers, or sinister warlords. Latinos/as have historically been cast as “Latin lovers,” “banditos,” “greasers,” or “lazy good-for-nothings” (Reyes & Rubie, 1994). Contemporary TV characters like Han Lee on *Broke Girls*, Rajesh Koothrappali on *The Big Bang Theory*, and Gloria Delgado-Pritchett on *Modern Family* continue to present Chinese, Indian, and Latina characters in a stereotypical manner.

An analysis of a random sample of television news shows aired in Los Angeles and Orange counties in California revealed that Whites were more likely than African Americans and Latino/as to be portrayed on television news as victims of crime. Conversely, African Americans and Latino/as were more likely to be portrayed on news shows as lawbreakers than as crime victims (Dixon & Linz, 2000). Another study found that although people of color appear regularly in prime-time TV commercials, they usually appear as secondary characters. Furthermore, Whites are more likely to appear in ads for upscale products, beauty products, and home products. People of color, in contrast, are more likely to appear in ads for low-cost, low-nutrition products (like fast foods and soft drinks) and in athletic or sports equipment ads (Henderson & Baldasty, 2003).

Prejudice and Discrimination When stereotypes form the basis of a set of rigidly held, unfavorable attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about members of a racial or ethnic group, they constitute **prejudice** (Allport, 1954). A good example of how prejudice affects social interaction is a study in which a group of whites was shown a photograph of a White person holding a razor blade while arguing with a black person on a New York subway. Subjects were shown the picture for a split second and then asked to write down what they saw. More than half said they saw the black man holding the razor against the white man’s throat (cited in Helmreich, 1992). The stereotypical belief that all Blacks are violent was so powerful that it distorted people’s perceptions.

As we saw in Chapter 8, law enforcement officers are especially likely to rely on such perceptions in highly charged public confrontations with citizens. Even fellow officers are not immune to the effects of such prejudices. In New York City, for example, undercover black police officers have, on occasion, been shot and wounded or killed by white officers who mistook them for dangerous criminals. As one black officer put it, “If you speak with nine out of 10 [undercover] officers of color they would tell you that when they hear sirens, in their head they are thinking: ‘I hope these cops know that I’m one of the good guys’” (quoted in M. Powell, 2009, p. 18). Over the years, there have been calls for the department to appoint panels to examine the underlying racial assumptions of white officers and to provide cadets with extra training.

The highly-publicized incidents—and many more like them that have received less media attention—of unarmed people of color being shot by police officers (see Chapter 8) have had a substantial impact on overall perceptions of race relations. Nearly half of the respondents in a 2015 *New York Times* poll thought that race relations in the U.S. were getting worse, up from about a third 6 months earlier (Sussman, 2015). But when it comes to such attitudes, people of different racial groups see two very different realities. When asked how confident they were that police treat Whites and Blacks equally, 63% of white respondents said they were confident; only 40% of Latino/as and 21% of Blacks said they were confident (cited in Blow, 2015). Fifty-two percent of Blacks but only 34% of Whites think that relations between police and minorities will get worse over the next year (Pew Research Center, 2014e).

As you can see, prejudiced beliefs would be of little significance if they didn’t lead sometimes to discrimination. **Discrimination** is the unfair treatment of people based on some social characteristic.

The 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination or segregation on the grounds of race, color, religion, or national origin. This act has produced tremendous progress in U.S. race relations. Nevertheless, discrimination still exists.

When we think of discrimination, we usually think of its most blatant forms—racial epithets, racially inspired hate crimes, excessive use of force by police, barriers to employment, and so on. In 2004, two economists at the University of Chicago sent fictitious résumés in response to help wanted ads in Chicago and Boston newspapers. To some résumés they assigned a very African American-sounding name (like Lakisha or Jamal); to others, they put a very white-sounding name (like Emily or Greg). Résumés with white names received 50% more callbacks than those with African American names (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004).

Most of the time, though, discrimination is much more subtle, expressed as suspicion or avoidance; in fact, the person engaging in it may not even realize she or he is doing so. We are generally so unaware of our own nonverbal behavior that if we unwittingly give off signs of our dislike, we don't interpret others' subsequent behavior as a reaction to our nonverbal cues. Rather, we attribute it to some inherent trait in them. We may unknowingly prompt the very actions that we then use as evidence of some flaw or deficiency in that group.

Such *quiet discrimination* is often harder to fight than overt bigotry. If you are excluded from a job because you're Asian or denied membership in a club because you're Jewish, you can fight to open those doors. But once inside, they still have many interpersonal barriers to overcome. In a 2014 speech, former attorney general Eric Holder highlighted the need to focus on subtle discrimination:

Outbursts of bigotry, while deplorable, are not the true markers of the struggle that still must be waged, or the work that still needs to be done—because the greatest threats do not announce themselves in screaming headlines. They are more subtle. They cut deeper. (quoted in Reuters, 2014, p. 1)

When such subtle behavior becomes common among large numbers of people, prejudice and discrimination become mutually reinforcing. Defining one group as inferior and thus denying its members access to a decent education and jobs becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, producing the very inferiority that the group was believed to possess in the first place.

Quiet discrimination is linked to the traditional forms of personal racism by negative feelings toward certain groups. However, the feelings that motivate it are not necessarily hate or hostility but discomfort, uneasiness, and sometimes fear, which tend to motivate avoidance and passivity rather than outright confrontation (Trepagnier, 2013). Quiet racists are people who maintain that discrimination against a person because of his or her race or ethnicity is unfair but who nonetheless cannot entirely escape the cultural forces that give rise to racist beliefs in the first place. What complicates the situation is that this type of racism is often expressed by people who consider themselves unbiased and nonprejudiced.

When discrimination remains quiet, people are tempted to assume that it has disappeared and thus to forget about helping groups that have traditionally been its victims (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). Recent efforts to eliminate programs designed to help ethnoracial minorities exemplify this trend. Many Whites now believe that the only reason so many Blacks are unsuccessful is that they lack motivation and aren't committed to the "white" values of hard work, individualism, delayed gratification, and so on (Schuman & Krysan, 1999). Although these beliefs are more subtle than overt acts of bigotry, they have the same effect: On the basis of stereotypes, they promote prejudice toward individuals.

JOE FEAGIN AND EILEEN O'BRIEN

Wealthy White Men on Race

The quiet and not-so-quiet prejudices and discriminatory practices of wealthy white men have received virtually no academic attention even though their attitudes have the potential to influence many people's lives. To overcome this deficit, sociologists Joe Feagin and Eileen O'Brien (2003) interviewed about 100 wealthy white male executives, managers, administrators, and professionals about a range of racial issues. Understanding the perceptions of these men is important because many of them have the power to shape policies, laws, and actions involving ethnoracial minorities and majorities.

Because of their socioeconomic status, these men have lived most of their lives in segregated, well-to-do neighborhoods. As children and teenagers, they tended to go to schools that had few, if any, people of color. Only a handful of the interviewees reported long-term friendships with people of other races.

So their first and sometimes most significant encounters with ethnoracial minorities were often with domestic and other service workers, usually female maids or male servants:

Although I don't remember my first experience of meeting a black person, I would assume it was . . . my grandfather's chauffeur when I was five years old. So to me, Blacks at that point were people that waited on you.

My very first contact with a black person was with a black maid who essentially raised my sister and [me].

Honestly, the first black person I ever met was probably a household employee at my parents' house a long time ago. (all quoted in Feagin & O'Brien, 2003, pp. 34–35)

Memories of these initial contacts are usually quite fond. Many men spoke lovingly of household servants because they were people who played an important role in raising them (some respondents even referred to their black maids and nannies as "second mothers").

However, they also were taught, early on, that the social distance between their families and "the help" had to be maintained. Furthermore, it's clear that the men didn't see these individuals as real people with real lives. Most of them were unaware that their maids and chauffeurs had spouses and children of their own or that their jobs made it difficult to sustain those relationships.

Feagin and O'Brien also found that in many ways wealthy white executives are not that different from "ordinary" white Americans when it comes to their stereotypes and prejudices. Some harbor deeply negative attitudes toward Americans of color that seem reminiscent of a bygone age:

Well, let's look at the statistics. The Negro is about ten percent of the population and eighty percent of the crimes are committed by Negroes, so what does that tell you? . . . What does that tell us? Absolutely, of course, much more crime is committed by them. And anywhere they are, they're criminals. They're criminals here, they're criminals in Africa. (quoted in Feagin & O'Brien, 2003, p. 100)

Furthermore, they often see the advancement of people of color as a threat to the racial privileges they've come to take for granted and to their control over major social institutions. But since they are generally highly educated, most of them are well aware that they should not be too obviously negative in expressing their racial attitudes. Hence, some couch their prejudices in sympathetic-sounding language:

(Continued)

(Continued)

There are many, many fine black families around. . . . Unfortunately, a large part of the black population has this family problem. . . . It's very, very difficult to generalize why some blacks work out fine while others don't, and the fact that some could work out exactly the same as anyone else leads me to believe that it's not because of the color; it's because of the environment they're brought up in. (quoted in Feagin & O'Brien, 2003, p. 104)

This is a classic example of quiet discrimination. Notice how this individual distances himself from the prejudices of the past while at the same time embracing the reality of racial inequality.

Not all the men interviewed by Feagin and O'Brien expressed prejudice. A minority of them held very positive attitudes about race relations. These individuals often voiced dismay over racial and class inequality and spoke of the need for a significant shift in the balance of economic and political power in the United States. The factor that seemed to separate these men from the others who held more traditional (and negative) attitudes toward race was the nature of the relationships they'd had with people of color. Those who had long-term friendships or extended contact with members of other races showed a willingness to consider dismantling the structures that perpetuate prejudice and racial inequality. Such a finding supports the idea that regular interpersonal interactions that cross ethnoracial boundaries can diminish stereotypes and prejudice.

Colorism Prejudice and discrimination based on skin color may also occur *within* a particular ethnoracial group. Some see this phenomenon, known as *colorism*, as just as bad a problem as racial hatred expressed toward the group by outsiders. For instance, skin tone has been associated with social advantage among Blacks since the days of slavery, when light-skinned slaves were often allowed to work in the main house but dark-skinned slaves were relegated to the fields (Graham, 1999). During the early to mid 20th century, many African American churches, social clubs, fraternities, and other organizations still used skin color to determine the suitability of candidates for membership. The so-called brown bag test restricted membership to those whose skin was lighter than the color of a brown paper bag (Graham, 1999).

Not surprisingly, evidence suggests that African American men find lighter-skinned women more sexually desirable and marriageable (D. Hamilton, Goldsmith, & Darity, 2008). And African American celebrities who are considered "sex symbols" (Halle Berry, Beyoncé, Vanessa Williams, Alicia Keys, Kerry Washington) typically approximate white beauty standards. Using data from the National Survey of Black Americans, sociologist Mark Hill (2000) found a strong preference for women with lighter skin. Interestingly, female respondents were just as likely as male respondents to express a preference for lighter-skinned women.

Studies have also found that lighter-skinned Blacks have higher educational attainment, more prestigious occupations, greater likelihood of holding elected office, less contact with the criminal justice system, and higher annual incomes than darker-skinned Blacks, regardless of their parents' socioeconomic status, sex, region of residence, age, or marital status (Hill, 2000; Hochschild & Weaver, 2007; Keith & Herring, 1991). Recent data show that dark-skinned black girls in elementary and secondary public schools are three times more likely to be suspended than lighter-skinned black girls (cited in Vega, 2014). As a result, darker-skinned Blacks sometimes resent light-skinned Blacks, accusing them of "selling out" in an attempt to conform to white standards of beauty as well as behavior (F. J. Davis, 1991).

Colorism is not limited to African Americans. The equation of light skin with beauty (and status) is well known in India. For decades the cosmetics industry there has made millions of dollars selling skin-lightening products to Indian women. The desire for a "fair" skin complexion is intertwined with

long-standing Indian hierarchy where light skin is associated with higher status. As one writer put it, light skin “indicates to someone who’s meeting you for the first time that you are born into a family where you haven’t had to do any outdoor work, and that your status is higher as you haven’t had to be in the fields” (quoted in National Public Radio, 2009, p. 2).

Among Latino/as, the degree of “Indianness,” or the darkness of one’s skin, has long determined a person’s status. After controlling for all other relevant factors, researchers have found that dark-skinned Mexican Americans who have a Native American physical appearance have fewer years of education than light-skinned Mexican Americans (Murguía & Telles, 1996) and they consistently earn lower wages (Telles & Murguía, 1990).

The Privilege of Colorlessness People who are members of a racial majority sometimes have trouble appreciating the humiliating effects of everyday encounters with prejudice and discrimination. They don’t have to experience the petty indignities of racism, such as repeatedly being watched with suspicion in stores and on streets. Consequently, many Whites in the United States pay little attention to their own race, think people of color are obsessed with race and ethnicity, and find it difficult to understand the emotional and intellectual energy people of color devote to the subject (Haney López, 1996).

In a society in which they dominate statistically and culturally, U.S. Whites rarely define their identity in terms of race. Whiteness is so obvious and normative that white people’s racial identity is, for all intents and purposes, invisible. Whites enjoy the luxury of *racial transparency*, or “having no color” (Haney López, 1996). They can choose whether or not to include their specific ethnic ancestry in descriptions of their identity (Waters, 2008). In this sense, ethnicity is optional, voluntary, and perhaps even recreational—as when white people embrace their Irishness on St. Patrick’s Day. In short, Whites for the most part enjoy the privilege of not having to constantly think about race or identify their ethnicity:

Each thing with which “they” have to contend as they navigate the waters of American life is one less thing Whites have to sweat: and that makes everything easier, from finding jobs, to getting loans, to attending college. . . . The virtual invisibility that whiteness affords those of us who have it is like psychological money in the bank, the proceeds of which we cash in every day while others are in a perpetual state of overdraft. (Wise, 2002, pp. 107–108)

Such a luxury provides benefits to Whites whether or not they approve of the way social advantage has been conferred on them. One white author (McIntosh, 2001) catalogued all the everyday privileges she enjoyed (and often didn’t notice) simply because she was white. These included the ability to shop alone in a department store without being followed by suspicious salespeople, to buy greeting cards or children’s picture books featuring people of her race, and to find bandages that match her skin color. In other words, Whites need not be bigots or feel racially superior or more deserving than others to enjoy the privileges that their skin color brings.

Class, Race, and Discrimination Some sociologists have argued that discriminatory treatment, as well as the unequal social and political status of some racial groups, is more a function of social class than of race. If this belief were completely accurate, the lives of middle- and upper-class people of color would be relatively free of discrimination. The election and reelection of Barack Obama clearly show that well-educated, highly qualified members of ethnoracial minorities are no longer barred from the highest positions in society. However, some civil rights advocates believe Obama’s victories are isolated successes and fear many people will mistakenly conclude that racial discrimination is over (Swarns, 2008b). As the former chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights put it, “It’s like saying that because some poor white person made it, there’s no poverty” (quoted in Cose, 2009, p. 43).

Indeed, even for many financially successful people of color, lack of respect, faint praise, low expectations, and outright harassment and exclusion continue to be common features of their lives (Feagin & McKinney, 2003). Minority professionals often bemoan the tendency of others to assume they bring to every interaction the perspective of their entire group. A successful law professor, who happens to be Chinese American, once said, "I suspect . . . that at every appearance . . . my audience continues to see and hear me as a spokesperson on behalf of Asian Americans" (Wu, 2002, p. 37).

Sociologists Joe Feagin and Karyn McKinney (2003) analyzed data from focus group and individual interviews with several hundred middle-class U.S. Blacks to determine the consequences of the discrimination they experienced at work. These individuals, all of whom were college educated and held professional or managerial jobs, agreed that the work-related stresses they felt did not come from the demands of the jobs themselves but from racially hostile workplace environments that often included the mistrust of colleagues, unfair promotion practices, or outright mistreatment through the use of racial epithets and derogatory names.

Everyday life can be trying as well. Wealthy black residents of affluent neighborhoods all over the country sometimes complain that they are watched closely when shopping in upscale stores or that the police view them with suspicion simply because their skin color doesn't match the neighborhood. Situations like these are disturbing and frustrating not only because of the racist attitudes that lie behind them but also because the people who experience them had come to believe that their upward social mobility protected them from such treatment. A respondent in Feagin and McKinney's (2003) study put it this way:

I'm always in the process of trying to develop a better and healthier way of working through the inevitable anger about this situation. There's a price you pay in being sensitive and conscious. . . . Have you ever seen a dog really being angry about his condition? If you really were a beast, it wouldn't bother you. The problem is that . . . this treatment bothers you most, because you definitely and clearly aren't what the world thinks you are. (p. 45)

In sum, racial discrimination is still very prevalent in the lives of members of ethnoracial minorities, including those who are affluent. In fact, such discrimination is more apparent than that experienced by low-income people because the affluent individuals have entered previously inaccessible social spaces (Bonilla-Silva, 2008). One study even found that Blacks with college degrees experience more discrimination than those without degrees (Forman, Williams, & Jackson, 1997).

The days of NO NEGROES and NO INDIANS signs on public facilities may be gone, but less blatant contemporary expressions of personal racism serve as a constant reminder that in the 21st century, members of ethnoracial minorities—no matter what their class standing—are still stereotyped, prejudged, and discriminated against every day.

The Cultural Ideology of Racism

If I stopped here in my discussion of racism, you might be inclined to consider it an individual-level phenomenon that could best be stopped by changing the way people think or by personal acts of kindness and respect. But the sociologically important thing about racism is that it exists not just in the minds and actions of individuals but in a cultural belief system that both justifies the domination of some groups over others and provides a set of social norms that encourages differential treatment for these groups (O'Sullivan-See & Wilson, 1988). From a conflict perspective, the ideology of racism that exists in our language and in our prevailing cultural beliefs contributes to racial and ethnic inequality.

Racism in Language Certainly, derogatory racial slurs reflect underlying racism. But racism in language is often less obvious. Consider the use of **panethnic labels**—general terms applied to

diverse subgroups that are assumed to have something in common (D. Newman, 2012). Today, we use the general terms *Native American* or *American Indian* to refer to all 560 or so native nations living in the United States, despite their different languages and cultures. *Asian American* refers to a variety of peoples from dozens of countries whose ethnic heritages and lifestyles are quite different from one another. Similarly, *Hispanic* or *Latino* refers to people whose backgrounds include culturally diverse areas such as Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. To some, even the term *African American*, which is widely considered to be a positive racial label, glosses over the thousands of ethnic groups, class interests, and indigenous religions that exist on the continent of Africa. Reliance on panethnic labels allows users to overlook and ignore variations within a particular labeled group, thereby reinforcing stereotypes. In response to these concerns, the University of California expanded the number of Asian American categories on its application forms from 8 to 23, allowing prospective students to claim a more specific ethnic identity.

Racial identifiers often become equated with negative meanings. Consider, for instance, connotations of the words *black* and *white*. Among the definitions of *black* in *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* are "soiled and dirty," "thoroughly evil," "wicked," "gloomy," "marked by disaster," "hostile," and "disgraceful." The definition of *white*, in contrast, includes "fairness of complexion," "innocent," "favorable," "fortunate," "pure," and "spotless." The pervasive "goodness" of white and "badness" of black affects children at a very young age and provides white children with a false sense of superiority (R. B. Moore, 1992). Young children know the difference between a black lie, which is harmful and inexcusable, and a white lie, which is small, insignificant, and harmless.

Also important are the political implications of racially tinged terminology. Terms such as *economically disadvantaged*, *underclass*, *inner city*, and *underdeveloped* sound unprejudiced, but they are often used as code for racial terms (Krugman, 2014). For instance, a study of the 1995 Louisiana gubernatorial election revealed that the white candidate's stated opposition to affirmative action and his discussion of the crime problems in "inner-city" neighborhoods (which everyone knew were black and Latino/a neighborhoods) subtly symbolized his racial attitudes, appealed to many white voters, and thereby contributed to his victory over a black candidate (Knuckey & Orey, 2000).

Language is just a small part of the overall problem of racist ideology in U.S. society. It seemingly pales in comparison with more visible issues such as racial violence and economic discrimination. But remember that language filters our perceptions. It affects the way people think from the time they first learn to speak. Fortunately, efforts are being made today to address the issue of language and its crucial role in maintaining racism and oppression. People are becoming more aware of the capacity of words to both glorify and degrade (R. B. Moore, 1992).

The Myth of Innate Racial Inferiority Scientific-sounding theories of the innate inferiority of certain ethnoracial groups have long been used to explain why some groups lag behind others in areas such as educational achievement and financial success. These theories combine with the belief in competitive individualism (see Chapter 10) to justify all forms of prejudice and discrimination.

Appeals to biology and nature have been used throughout history to define the existing stratification system as proper and inevitable (Gould, 1981). What would you think of a person who harbored the following beliefs about Blacks?

[Blacks] have less hair on the face and body. They secrete less by the kidneys [sic], and more by the glands of the skin, which gives them a very strong and disagreeable odour [sic]. . . . They are at least as brave, and more adventuresome. But this may perhaps proceed from a want of forethought, which prevents their seeing a danger till it be present. . . . In imagination, they are dull, tasteless, and anomalous. . . . The improvement of the blacks in body and mind, in the first

instance of their mixture with the whites, has been observed by everyone, and proves that their inferiority is not the effect merely of their condition of life. . . . I advance it therefore . . . that the blacks . . . are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind.

A white supremacist? A raving bigot? An ignorant fanatic? How would your assessment of this person change if you found out that this passage was written by none other than Thomas Jefferson (1781/1955, pp. 138–143)? In the 18th and 19th centuries, no white person—not even one apparently committed to protecting people’s right to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”—doubted the validity of natural racial rankings: Indians below Whites, and Blacks below everyone else. Other idols of Western culture—George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Charles Darwin—held similar beliefs about the “natural inferiority” of some races, beliefs that were commonly accepted knowledge at the time but would at the very least be considered racially insensitive today.

The approval given by white scientists to conventional racial rankings arose not from objective data and careful research but from a cultural belief in the “goodness” and inevitability of racial stratification. Such beliefs were then twisted into independent, “scientific” support. Scientists, like everybody else, have attitudes and values that shape what they see. Such thinking is not the result of outright dishonesty or hypocrisy; rather, it is the combination of the way human minds work and the generally accepted knowledge of the day.

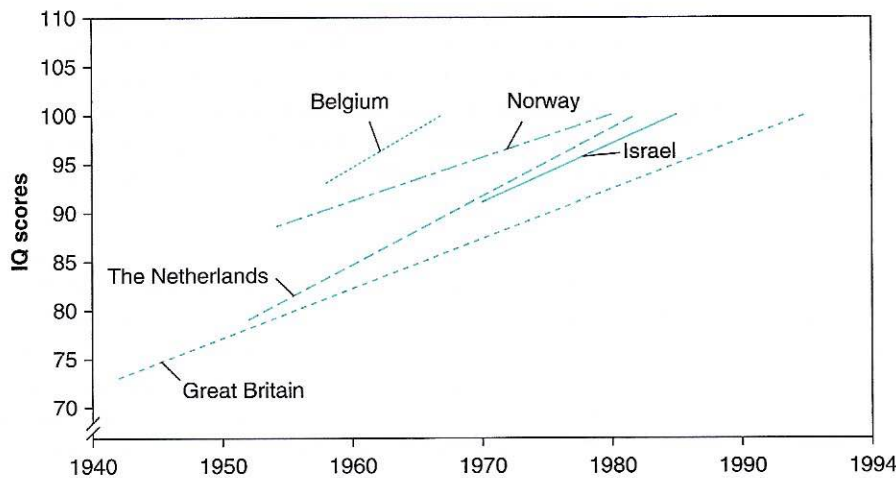
The belief in innate racial inferiority is not just a historical curiosity. Two decades ago, the idea reemerged in a book called *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). The authors argued that racial and ethnic differences in intelligence—as measured by IQ scores—must be due, at least in part, to heredity. The book set off a firestorm of debate that continues to this day (Pethokoukis, 2014).

From a conflict perspective, beliefs about racial inferiority provide advantages for the dominant group. These beliefs discourage subordinate groups from questioning their disadvantaged status. In addition, they provide moral justification for maintaining a society in which some groups are routinely deprived of their rights and privileges. Nineteenth-century Whites could justify the enslavement of Blacks, and 20th-century Nazis could justify the extermination of Jews and other “undesirables,” by promoting the belief that those groups were biologically subhuman.

Despite energetic searches over the centuries, a link between “inferior” race-based genes and certain traits and abilities has not been found (Hacker, 1992). For one thing, comparing racial groups on, say, intelligence overlooks the range of differences within and between groups. Many African Americans are more intelligent than the average white person; many Whites are less intelligent than the average Native American.

Variations such as these are difficult to explain in terms of the genetic superiority of one race. Moreover, treating the more than 250 million “white” people in the United States as a single (and intellectually superior) group is problematic at best and misleading at worst. It can’t account for the wide variation in academic achievement among whites of different national backgrounds. For instance, at the time *The Bell Curve* was written, 21% of white Americans of Irish descent completed college, whereas 22% of Italian Americans, 33% of Scottish Americans, and 51% of Russian Americans did so (Hacker, 1994).

Moreover, genetic predispositions cannot account for variations in IQ in a particular ethnoracial group over a generation or two. Psychologist James Flynn (1999) examined IQ scores in various populations over 60 years. He found that scores had increased in all countries for which data existed—a phenomenon known as the “Flynn effect” (see Exhibit 11.2). In some countries, average scores had improved by 25 points or more. Increases of such magnitude simply cannot be explained by genetics. Instead, they reflect better education and improvement in things like abstract problem solving across generations.

EXHIBIT 11.2 Improved IQ Scores Over Time

SOURCE: Flynn, 1999, Figure 1.

Finally, such comparisons also ignore a problem I described earlier in this chapter: that race itself is a meaningless biological category. How can we attribute racial differences in intelligence to genes when race itself is not traceable to a single gene?

Nevertheless, the idea that racial inferiority is innate remains appealing. If observable, physical differences among races are inherited, the argument goes, then why not differences in social behavior, intelligence, and leadership ability? Like the belief in competitive individualism we examined in the previous chapter, the belief in innate racial inferiority places the blame for suffering and economic failure on the individual rather than on the society in which that individual exists.

MICRO-MACRO CONNECTION

RACIAL SUPERIORITY AND THE DOMINANT BLACK ATHLETE

The flip side of the belief in innate racial inferiority is the notion that some racial groups have a biologically rooted superiority in some areas of life. Take, for instance, the widely held belief that some racial groups are biologically predisposed to be more athletically successful than others. All but one male Boston Marathon winner since 1990 has been either a black Kenyan or Ethiopian, and every male world record holder at every standard track distance is an athlete of African descent (Muscat, 2013). Today,

(Continued)

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society. Hence, they are more likely to be encouraged to hone their physical skills and to spend more time perfecting this resource. A high school basketball coach put it this way: "Suburban [white] kids tend to play for the fun of it. Inner-city [black] kids look at basketball as a matter of life or death" (quoted in Price, 1997, p. 35).

Sport has always served as a source of tremendous pride in black and Latino/a communities. Victory is especially sweet because it represents something larger than the athlete herself or himself; it symbolizes the values and aspirations of an entire people (Rhoden, 2006). But highlighting the rags-to-riches stories of a tiny number of successful athletes is a double-edged sword. These high-profile athletes disguise the reality of how little social mobility actually results from sports participation. Only three in one thousand high school basketball players are ever *drafted* by an NBA team, let alone become a high-paid star (NCAA, 2013). As one sociologist once remarked, "You have a better chance of getting hit with a meteorite in the next 10 years than getting work as a professional athlete" (quoted in Sage, 2001, p. 283).

An overemphasis on athletic accomplishments can also discourage academic and occupational achievement in favor of physical self-expression, thereby harming ethnoracial minority communities in the long run. Only about half of black male Division I athletes graduate from college within 6 years, compared to 73% of undergraduate students overall (Harper, Williams, & Blackman, 2013). It might be more useful in the long run to focus on the fact that there are 12 times more black lawyers and 15 times more black physicians than there are black professional athletes (Sage, 2001).

Whether or not the emphasis on sports is a good thing and whether or not black athletes do have some anatomical advantage, we must always remember that so-called black athletic superiority is as much a social product as a biological one. Innate talent is never sufficient in itself to explain athletic excellence (D. F. Chambliss, 1989). If we rely simply on innate superiority to explain black success in sports, we overlook the broader social structural context in which everyday life is embedded.

Institutional Racism: Injustice Built Into the System

If you think about it, anyone can be personally racist, whether overtly or quietly. Members of any ethnoracial group can develop a set of beliefs or a vocabulary that denigrates outsiders. But one form of racism, less obvious and perhaps more dangerous, can work only to the advantage of those who wield power in society: institutional racism. **Institutional racism** consists of established laws, customs, and practices that systematically reflect and produce racial inequalities in society, whether or not the individuals maintaining these practices have racist intentions (J. M. Jones, 1986). Thus, a society can be racist even if only a small proportion of its members harbor personally racist beliefs. Because African Americans, Latino/as, Asian Americans, Muslim Americans, Native Americans, and other groups have historically been excluded from key positions of authority in social institutions, they often find themselves victimized by the routine workings of such structures.

Sometimes institutional discrimination is obvious and codified into the law. Until the early 1990s, for example, South Africa operated under an official system of *apartheid*: Nonwhite groups were legally

segregated and subjected to sanctioned forms of political and economic discrimination. In the United States, the forceful relocation of Native Americans in the 19th century, the repressive Jim Crow laws in the 20th-century South, and the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II are all examples of legislated policies that purposely worked to the disadvantage of already disadvantaged groups.

Understanding less obvious forms of institutional racism, however, is a better test of the sociological imagination. Because it is a built-in feature of social arrangements, institutional racism is often much more difficult to detect than acts of personal racism. At times it is camouflaged behind claims that may on the surface seem quite reasonable. For instance, the U.S. Army has a grooming policy, known as AR670-1, that describes, among many other things, acceptable hairstyles for military personnel. The policy makes no mention of race or ethnicity, but it specifically forbids cornrows, braids, twists, and dreadlocks (Byrd & Tharps, 2014). Since these hairstyles are most likely to be worn by African Americans, the *consequence* of the policy is that it systematically imposes appearance limitations on one racial group and not others and therefore may be institutionally discriminatory.

Consider also New York City's controversial "stop and frisk" policy, which gave police the power to stop and detain someone based on "reasonable suspicion" of involvement in criminal activity. Although the policy was motivated by the need to keep the streets safe and not specifically defined in racial terms, many civil rights groups alleged that it was applied overwhelmingly to young black and Latino men (Harris-Perry, 2012). Between 2004 and 2012, 83% of those stopped and interrogated were black or Latino/a (Bergner, 2014). In 2013, a federal judge ruled that these tactics violated the constitutional rights of people of color.

Institutional racism exists in many corners of civilian life as well. In many large cities, the pharmacy chain CVS uses undercover teams of "market investigators" (MIs) to track and arrest shoplifters. In 2015, four former MIs sued the company, charging that its managers directed these teams to intentionally target black and Latino/a shoppers, even when there was no evidence of them stealing. Although there is some evidence that the managers used hate-filled language (e.g., "I'm going to get this black b—h," and "That Spanish guy is a worthless piece of s—t"), this sort of profiling occurred in several stores in the New York City area, indicating that it was not just a case of personal racism; instead it came from instructions from the company (J. Saul, 2015).

Home delivery businesses, such as pizza parlors, sometimes refuse to deliver to certain neighborhoods. Several years ago, Domino's Pizza was criticized in the media when it was revealed that the company distributed software to its outlets to let them mark addresses on computers as green (deliver), yellow (curbside only), or red (no delivery). The company defended such policies as a rational response to the threat of sending easy-to-spot, cash-carrying delivery personnel into unsafe areas ("Pizza Must Go," 1996).

Consider one well-established practice for granting home mortgage or home improvement loans. Many banks use zip codes to mark off the neighborhoods they consider high risk—that is, where property values are low and liable to drop even further. These practices, which began 80 years ago as a Federal Housing Administration policy, make it virtually impossible for individuals in such areas to borrow money to buy or improve a home. Unfortunately, these are precisely the areas where minorities, with lower-than-average incomes, are most likely to find an affordable home to purchase (Coates, 2014). Thus, although individual bank officers can claim they are not denying loans to people because of their race—they are merely following their employers' policy—the resulting discrimination is the same.

Although these practices may be considered "good" business policy and might not be *intentionally* racist, their consequences are clearly discriminatory because the people who end up suffering as a result of the policies tend to be people of color. Institutional racism is difficult to address in these cases because there may not be an individual "bad guy" or identifiable bigot who is the source of the discrimination.

of the population, accounted for 8% of conventional loans in 2001, but only 4.5% in 2012 (National Fair Housing Alliance, 2015).

When they *do* receive home loans, African Americans and Latino/as are significantly more likely than Whites to have to pay substantially higher “subprime” interest rates (cited in Bajaj & Fessenden, 2007; Mui, 2012). Some argue that the discrepancy in rates is justified because borrowers who have poor credit histories are higher risks or because Blacks and Latino/as have fewer assets and therefore have less money for down payments than white borrowers (Blanton, 2007). But the discrepancy is even found between minority and white borrowers with similar credit scores (Bocian, Ernst, & Li, 2006). In 2012, the U.S. Justice Department reached a multimillion-dollar settlement with SunTrust and Bank of America over allegations that these institutions imposed loan fees—what some called a “racial surtax”—on black borrowers; white borrowers with similar credit histories and qualifications were not charged these fees (Mui, 2012).

Racial Inequality in the Economic System

Institutional racism is readily apparent throughout the U.S. economy. Consider participation in the labor force. With the exception of Asian Americans, workers of color have always been concentrated in lower-paying jobs (see Exhibit 11.3). African Americans make up 11.2% of the entire civilian U.S. workforce but only 4.2% of lawyers, 6.4% of physicians, and 5.5% of architects and engineers. Similarly, Latino/as make up 15.6% of the labor force but are underrepresented in the fields of law (5.1%), medicine (3.8%), and architecture/engineering (7.5%; ProQuest Statistical Abstract, 2015). This underrepresentation becomes more acute in the higher echelons of certain professions. For instance, while 17% of attorneys in U.S. law firms are members of ethnoracial minorities, only 5% ever become partners in those firms (cited in Glater, 2006).

EXHIBIT 11.3 Occupational Concentration by Race and Ethnicity

Blacks:	Latino/as:	Asians:
Home Health Aide	Drywall installer	Personal appearance worker
Barber	Cement mason	Software developer
Postal Service Mail Sorter	Roofer	Medical scientist
Bus Driver	Grounds maintenance worker	Computer hardware engineer
Telemarketer	Maid	Pharmacist
Licensed Vocational Nurse	Laundry worker	Physician
Chauffeur	Sewing machine operator	Tailor/dressmaker

SOURCE: ProQuest Statistical Abstract, 2015, Table 634.

NOTE: The U.S. Bureau of the Census does not provide data on the proportion of whites in specific occupations.

Because ethnoracial minorities are occupationally concentrated in low-paying jobs, they are particularly vulnerable to economic downturns. The recent economic recession, for instance, has not hit all races equally. The rate of unemployment for Blacks and Latino/as is consistently higher than that of other groups. In the summer of 2015, the unemployment rate for Blacks was 9.6%, compared with 6.9% for Latino/as, 4.7% for Whites, and 4.4% for Asians (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015b).

Members of ethnoracial minorities can sometimes find their employment opportunities limited or blocked by the institutional practices and beliefs common in certain industries. Take, for instance, the restaurant business. Researchers in one study (Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York, 2009) hired white, black, Asian, and Latino/a people to act as job applicants for advertised server positions in 181 upscale New York City restaurants. The applicants were paired up—one white and one nonwhite—and matched for age, appearance, gender, and work experience. They were also trained to have similar mannerisms and answer questions in similar ways. So theoretically, the only thing distinctive about the two people in a pair was their race. Their arrival at restaurants was staggered so that they showed up about 30 minutes apart. This way the restaurant managers had no way of knowing the “applicants” were part of a study. Overall, white applicants were significantly more likely than applicants of color to have their work experience accepted without probing, to be granted an interview, and to be offered a position. The researchers concluded that this differential treatment was not a result of “a few bad apples” with racist intent. Instead, they identified industry-wide trends and practices as the culprit. For instance, a pervasive “culture of informality” exists in the restaurant business. Although such informality creates a casual, “familylike” work environment, it also creates subjective recruitment and hiring practices that rely on word-of-mouth and friendship networks rather than the formal procedures and explicit hiring criteria that could protect against conscious and unconscious biases and stereotypes.

People of color also remain marginal participants in the economy as owners of their own small businesses. Loan companies usually demand a credit history, some form of collateral, and evidence of potential success before they will lend money to prospective businesses. These are standard practices—and not in and of themselves racist—but they perpetuate racial inequalities because members of groups that have been exploited in the past tend to be poorer and thus have poor credit ratings and no collateral. Admittedly, poor people are greater credit risks than those with economic resources, and businesses in poorer communities must pay more for insurance because of the greater likelihood of theft or property damage. But the higher costs of doing business in a poor community usually make small business loans to minority members even more necessary.

Racial Inequality in the Health Care System

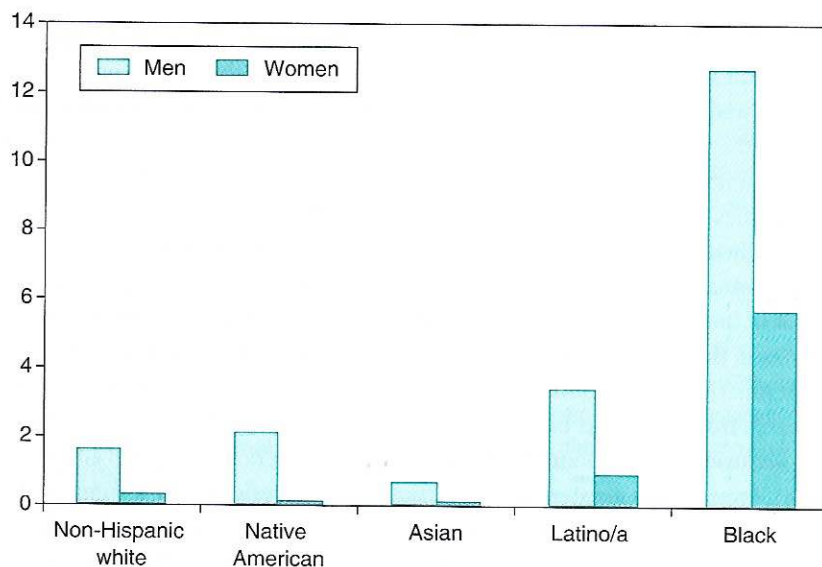
As I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the economic and educational advances of ethnoracial minority groups over the past decade or so have been tempered by continuing disparities—and in some cases, worsening disparities—in health and health care (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). For example, members of ethnoracial minorities are routinely underrepresented as subjects in research on medical and psychiatric drug treatments (Vedantam, 2005). Members of ethnoracial minorities are also less likely than Whites to have access to health insurance. Though their numbers have gone down since the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, 13.5% of Blacks and over 25% of Latino/as lack health insurance. By comparison, less than 10% of Whites are uninsured (R. A. Cohen & Martinez, 2015). As the president of the American Medical Association put it, “When people don’t have health insurance, they live sicker and they die younger” (quoted in D. Wilson, 2009a, p. 16).

Ethnoracial differences in health outcomes are most glaring when it comes to the most serious diseases:

- A study of heart failure among 5,000 black and white men and women over a 20-year period found that Blacks had a rate 20 times higher than Whites (Bibbins-Domingo, 2009).
- In a 2009 study of over 19,000 people with cancer, African American patients with breast, prostate, or ovarian cancer had significantly lower survival rates than white patients (Albain, Unger, Crowley, Coltman, & Hershman, 2009). White women with breast cancer live, on average, 3 years longer than black women with breast cancer (Silber, et al., 2013).
- Although rates of new HIV/AIDS cases have dropped among all groups over the past decade, they remain stubbornly high among some groups. African Americans constitute 41% of all people living with HIV/AIDS in the United States (ProQuest Statistical Abstract, 2015), and young gay black men now account for 45% of all new diagnoses among people under 25 (Doucleff, 2012). Furthermore, death rates from HIV/AIDS also vary widely between different ethnoracial groups (see Exhibit 11.4). It is now the leading cause of death among African Americans between the ages of 25 and 44—ahead of heart disease, cancer, accidents, and homicides (Andriote, 2005).

Sometimes personal racism is to blame for health outcomes. For instance, in one study, doctors described African American patients—no matter what their education and income levels—as less intelligent, less likely to follow medical advice, less likely to participate in rehabilitation, and more likely to abuse alcohol and drugs than white patients (Van Ryn & Burke, 2000). Another study found that doctors often stereotype Asian patients as compliant and “problem free” (cited in American

EXHIBIT 11.4 Ethnoracial Differences in Death Rates from HIV/AIDS



SOURCE: ProQuest Statistical Abstract, 2015, Table 138.

Sociological Association, 2005). When time and medical resources are limited, such beliefs can drive the treatment decisions doctors make.

But we can't simply blame ruthless and bigoted individuals for all racial imbalances in the health care system. Instead, the financial considerations that drive the health care system create a context ripe for institutional racism. Consider racial differences in organ transplants. According to the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (2015), the 2015 national kidney transplant waiting list consisted of 36.6% Whites and 34% African Americans. (This figure in and of itself is telling: African Americans make up only about 13% of the population yet account for over one third of people in need of kidney transplants.) However, that same year, Whites received 54.5% of all kidney transplants, while African Americans received only 22%. Such a discrepancy is likely linked to hospitals' determination of a candidate's ability to pay before approving an expensive procedure. These policies are sometimes referred to as "green screens" or "wallet biopsies." For example, the total cost of a kidney transplant—including preoperative and postoperative care—is about \$334,000. A liver transplant can run over \$739,000, and a heart transplant costs over \$1.2 million (Bentley, 2014). So it's not surprising that most hospitals would screen potential recipients for some kind of evidence up front that their insurance will cover the procedure. Because ethnoracial minorities are less likely than Whites to have medical insurance, they are less likely to receive a referral for transplant surgery (Stolberg, 1998). Financial concerns, not outright racial prejudice, lie at the heart of these policies.

Sometimes the institutional racism underlying threats to people's health is less obvious than ineffective and insufficient medical care or unethical research. For instance, people in neighborhoods where hazardous waste treatment plants, toxic vacant lots, landfills, fracking test sites, and petrochemical plants or other sources of industrial pollution exist are disproportionately exposed to the unhealthful effects of air pollution, water pollution, and pesticides. The decisions on where to place such facilities are usually based not on the ethnoracial makeup of an area but on factors such as the cost of land, population density, and geological conditions. However, because the less desirable residential areas (and hence more desirable industrial areas) are disproportionately inhabited by poor people of color, these decisions have the effect of discriminating against them (Velázquez, 2002). For instance, Native American reservations, which have less stringent environmental regulations than other areas, have been targeted by the U.S. military for stockpiles of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and by private companies for solid waste landfills, hazardous waste incinerators, and nuclear waste storage facilities (Hooks & Smith, 2004). When it comes to the federal government cleaning up polluted areas, predominantly white communities see faster action, better results, and stiffer penalties for polluters than do communities where ethnoracial minorities predominate (Bullard, 2001).

All over the country—from sparsely populated rural states to major urban cities—members of ethnoracial minorities are exposed to more pollution than Whites. This difference in exposure may account for approximately 7,000 deaths a year from heart disease (L. P. Clark, Millet, & Marshall, 2014). The predominantly Latino/a neighborhoods south of Tucson are exposed to 20 times the acceptable levels of the carcinogenic solvent trichloroethylene, and rates of cancer, birth defects, and genetic mutations in those neighborhoods far outpace national averages (Velázquez, 2002).

Poor African American communities often have the worst conditions. A 100-mile, overwhelmingly African American, stretch of towns between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, is known as "Cancer Alley" because it is the polluted home to over 150 petrochemical plants and 17 oil refineries (Flaherty, 2014). Overall, the greater the proportion of black residents in a community, the more likely it is that there will be industrial sources of air pollution within a two-mile radius of people's homes (Perlin, Sexton, & Wong, 1999). Indeed, Blacks are 79% more likely than Whites to live in areas where air pollution levels constitute serious health risks (cited in Little, 2007).

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Such cases of medical maltreatment in the name of research are not merely vestiges of the past. For instance, between 1988 and 2001, researchers at Columbia University Medical Center in New York tested potentially dangerous AIDS drugs on HIV-positive African American foster children living in an orphanage affiliated with the university. Because these children had no parents or had parents who were deemed unfit by the courts, these experiments took place without the consent of their legal guardians (Washington, 2006). A few years ago, the Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore was accused of intentionally exposing black children—some as young as a year old—to high levels of dangerous lead dust in their homes as part of a study exploring the hazards of lead paint. The Institute, which provided no medical treatment for lead poisoning, had assured families that the homes were “lead safe” (T. C. Williams, 2011).

Incidents like these create a pervasive distrust of the health care system among many people of color today, which puts them at even greater disadvantage. Many African Americans—as well as Latino/as and Native Americans—avoid participating in medical research (cited in Alvidrez & Areán, 2002). Furthermore, members of ethnoracial minorities are often skeptical that their participation in clinical studies would be a benefit either to them personally or to their communities. Overall mistrust of the medical field has been cited as one of the reasons African Americans have been slow to come for HIV testing and medical care (Dervarics, 2004), are less likely than Whites to donate organs (Srikameswaran, 2002), and are less likely than Whites to agree to surgery for early stages of lung cancer (Bach, Cramer, Warren, & Begg, 1999).

Racial Inequality in the Educational System

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* that racially segregated schools were unconstitutional because they were inherently unequal. School districts around the country were placed under court order to desegregate. But within the past decade, courts have lifted desegregation orders in at least three dozen school districts around the country. In 2007, the Supreme Court reversed itself and ruled that public school systems could not try to achieve or maintain integration through actions that take explicit account of students’ race. At the time of the ruling, such programs were in place in hundreds of school districts around the country (L. Greenhouse, 2007). Some districts have resorted to using integration plans based on children’s socioeconomic disadvantage, rather than race, to skirt these restrictions (Bazelon, 2008).

You might assume that the court took this action because desegregation plans based on students’ race were no longer needed. However, African American and Latino/a students are actually more isolated from white students today than they were 30 years ago (Orfield & Lee, 2007). The proportion of black and Latino/a students who attend schools that are more than 90% minority grew from 34% in 1991 to close to 40% in 2011 (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). The average black and Latino/a

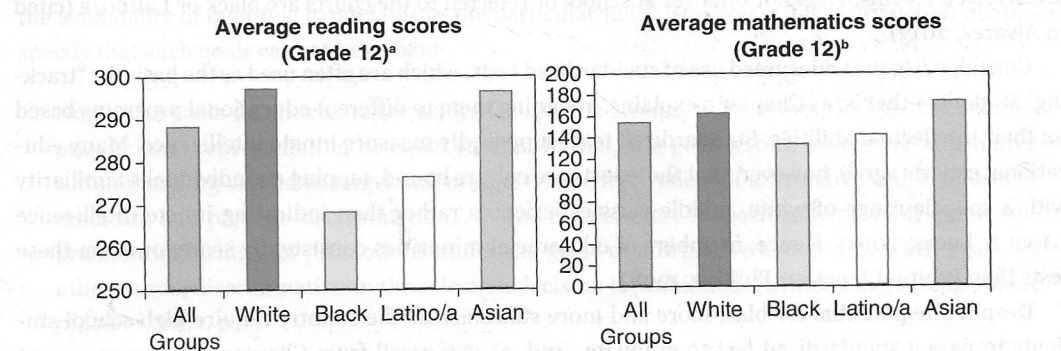
student attends a school in which at least 70% of the students are not white. In contrast, the average white student attends a school in which nearly three quarters of the students are white (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). In New York City, half of the public schools are over 90% black and Latino/a (Kleinfield, 2012).

And it's not just students who are segregated. According to government estimates, 82% of public school teachers and 88% of private school teachers nationwide are white (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013b). In general, white teachers have very little experience with racial diversity. They are likely to teach in schools where almost 90% of their faculty colleagues and over 70% of the students are also white (Frankenberg, 2006).

Schools where the majority of students are not white are likely to be schools where poverty is concentrated. Almost 91% of schools in which at least 9 out of 10 students are black and Latino/a are also schools in which more than half the students came from poor families. This is not the case with majority-white schools, which almost always enroll high proportions of middle-class students. Just 31% of schools where fewer than 1 in 10 students are black and Latino/a students are schools where at least half the students are poor (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014).

The racial mix of the classroom has important implications for the quality of the education students receive. Segregation has long been associated with lower academic performance and lack of preparation for the interracial world that awaits students of color after graduation (Kleinfield, 2012). Schools in poor communities lack the financial and therefore educational resources that schools in more affluent communities have (see Chapter 10). For instance, poor school districts are less likely than wealthier districts to offer Advanced Placement (AP) programs. And because poor schools tend to be in minority communities, fewer students of color have access to AP courses. So while African Americans make up 14.5% of high school graduates, they constitute only 9% of those taking AP exams and 4.6% of those with passing scores (College Board, 2014a). Furthermore, poor, predominantly minority, schools hire fewer teachers with credentials in the subjects they're teaching and have more unstable enrollments, higher dropout rates, and more students with untreated health problems. Despite attempts to rectify the problem, black and Latino/a students still lag behind white and Asian students at all levels of the educational system (see Exhibit 11.5).

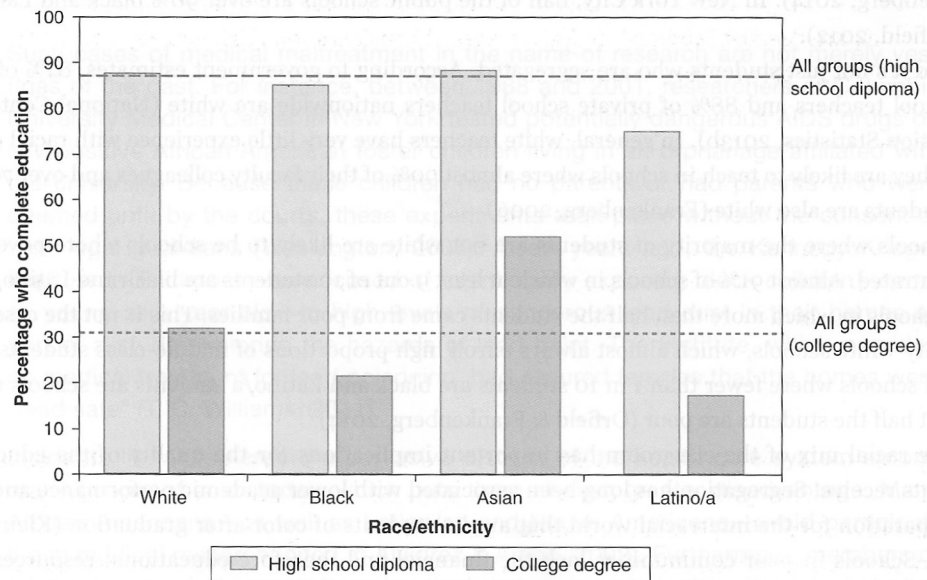
EXHIBIT 11.5a Race, Ethnicity, and Educational Achievement



SOURCES: National Center for Education Statistics, 2015, Tables 221.10 & 222.10; ProQuest Statistical Abstract, 2015, Table 248

a. Scale ranges from 0 to 500

b. Scale ranges from 0 to 300

Exhibit 11.5b High School and College Graduation Rates

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, 2015, Tables 221.10 & 222.10; ProQuest Statistical Abstract, 2015, Table 248.

Lack of money isn't the only problem. Common institutional assumptions and practices within the educational system can also lead to unequal outcomes. For instance, nationwide, black students are significantly more likely than other students to be subjected to disciplinary practices in school. According to 2012 data from the U.S. Department of Education, black students made up 18% of those enrolled in the schools that were studied, yet they accounted for 35% of one-time suspensions, 46% of multiple suspensions, and 39% of expulsions. Black and Latino/a students, particularly those with disabilities, are also more likely to be subjected to seclusion and physical restraints than Whites who exhibit similar behavioral problems (cited in Lewin, 2012). And because of the growing popularity of get-tough, zero tolerance policies, students who exhibit behavioral problems are increasingly likely to wind up in the criminal justice system. Here too, race plays a role. Nationwide, 70% students who are arrested for misdemeanor offenses at school or referred to the courts are black or Latino/a (cited in Alvarez, 2013).

Consider also the widespread use of standardized tests, which are often used as the basis for "tracking" students—that is, as Chapter 5 explains, assigning them to different educational programs based on their intellectual abilities. Standardized tests supposedly measure innate intelligence. Many educational experts agree, however, that these tests are culture bound, tapping an individual's familiarity with a specific range of white, middle-class experiences rather than indicating innate intelligence (Hout & Lucas, 2001). Hence, members of ethnoracial minorities consistently score lower on these tests than Whites (Jencks & Phillips, 1998).

Despite the potential for bias, more and more states across the country require high school students to pass a standardized test to graduate. And, as you recall from Chapter 9, the government uses standardized test scores to determine school funding under No Child Left Behind laws. At the same time, though, many universities and other educational organizations have begun seeking

alternative ways to determine eligibility for admission. For instance, some universities now use a “strivers” approach, whereby college applicants whose SAT scores fall in the borderline range for many selective colleges but who manage to exceed the historical average for students from similar backgrounds are deemed “strivers” and given special consideration (Kahlenberg, 2013). The Texas legislature went a step further, ordering the University of Texas system to accept all students who graduate in the top 10% of their class, regardless of their SAT scores. In 1999, a U.S. district court judge ruled that the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) could no longer use SAT scores to determine athletic eligibility. The court concluded that the test is culturally biased and therefore discriminates against underprivileged students.

These changes indicate a significant effort to undermine institutional racism in the educational system, which is, according to some sociologists, the largest barrier to racial equality that exists in this country today (Jencks & Phillips, 1998).

Remedies for Institutional Racism

If tomorrow all people in the United States were to wake up harboring absolutely no hatred, prejudice, or animosity toward other groups, institutional racism would still exist. It is part of the structure of society. Thus, it requires a structural solution.

You have already seen how the educational system and the legal system are undertaking limited measures to overcome certain types of institutional racism. However, the most far-reaching structural solution to the problem of institutional racism has been **affirmative action**. Affirmative action is a governmental policy, developed in the early 1960s, that requires organizations to draft a written plan on how they will seek out members of minority groups and women for educational or occupational positions from which they had previously been excluded. One assumption is that past discrimination has left certain people ill equipped to compete with others as equals today. Another assumption is that organizations will not change discriminatory policies unless they are forced to do so.

Contrary to popular belief, employers and university admissions officers are not compelled to institute hiring or admissions quotas or to compromise standards to meet affirmative action goals. They are simply required to gather all relevant information on all applicants, to interview qualified minority candidates, and to make sure underrepresented groups have access to needed information. For instance, companies doing business with the government can set numerical hiring goals based on the availability of qualified candidates in the particular field. However, affirmative action guidelines specify that such goals cannot be quotas:

Numerical goals do not create set-asides for specific groups, nor are they designed to achieve proportional representation or equal results. Rather, the goal-setting process in affirmative action planning is used to target and measure the effectiveness of affirmative action efforts to eradicate and prevent discrimination. . . . The regulations . . . specifically prohibit quota and preferential hiring and promotions under the guise of affirmative action numerical goals. In other words, discrimination in the selection decision is prohibited. (United States Department of Labor, 2011, p. 1)

For close to half a century, affirmative action policies have been successful in helping members of ethnoracial minorities get ahead (Katel, 2008). Businesses, unions, universities, and local

governments accused of discrimination in hiring or admissions have been sued under the 1964 Civil Rights Act. In part because of such actions, more than 40% of U.S. colleges and universities reported enrollment gains among African Americans and Latino/as during the mid 1990s (cited in Worsnop, 1996). People of color now hold a greater percentage of management, white-collar, and upper-level blue-collar jobs than ever before. Even young black men—historically the most economically disadvantaged and alienated group in the United States—have made some employment gains (Nasar & Mitchell, 1999). Wages and salaries, relative to those of Whites, have also improved somewhat (although, as we've seen, they still lag behind).

Despite its successes, affirmative action remains highly controversial. In one national survey, for example, 93% of respondents agreed that society has an obligation to help hardworking people overcome disadvantages so they can succeed in life. However, when asked whether a fictitious low-income college applicant who happens to be black should be given preference over a high-income student who happens to be white, only 36% agreed (Carnevale & Rose, 2003).

Opposition to affirmative action comes from all directions. Some politically liberal critics, for example, argue that the lives of people for whom affirmative action policies were originally designed—the poorest and most disadvantaged—remain largely unchanged. Although the percentages of Blacks and Whites earning midrange incomes are roughly the same now, there continues to be a large discrepancy at the top and bottom income levels (ProQuest Statistical Abstract, 2015). While it's true that U.S. colleges are accepting more students of color today than ever before, these students tend to come from middle- or upper-class backgrounds. For example, of the 8% of Harvard's undergraduates who are black, only a handful are from poor families in which all four grandparents were born in this country and are descendents of slaves (Rimer & Arenson, 2004). In addition, many schools don't provide enough support to ensure that students from historically disadvantaged groups actually graduate. The 6-year graduation rate for Latino/a students is around 50%; for Native Americans and African Americans, it's below 40%. By comparison, 62.1% of white students and 70% of Asian students graduate within 6 years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014b). Because a college degree is associated with success later in life (bachelor's degree holders earn about twice as much a year as those with high school diplomas), such educational disappointment can have far-reaching social and personal effects.

Conservative critics argue that preferential treatment of any group, even one whose rights have been historically unrecognized, is demeaning to the people it's supposed to help and unfair to everyone else, amounting to a form of "reverse" discrimination. According to one study, such an assessment reflects an attitude held by many Whites that racism is a "zero-sum game," meaning that any *decrease* in bias against members of ethnoracial minorities will be associated with an *increase* in perceived bias against Whites (Norton & Sommers, 2011).

Some go further, arguing that affirmative action isn't needed because discrimination is already illegal and nothing more is required. And others maintain that it's not working because the problems that disadvantaged people face have more to do with economics or with inherent character flaws than with race (Fish, 2000). After four decades of such criticisms, many people have come to believe that affirmative action in all its forms should be abolished.

Ironically, however, other modes of preferential treatment continue to operate with virtually no criticism. For instance, applicants who are most likely to receive favored treatment when it comes to college admissions are white, affluent "legacies," or children of alumni. Playing favorites with alumni children is a common practice at almost every private college and many public institutions as well. At some highly selective universities, like Harvard and Princeton, legacies are five times as likely to be accepted as unconnected applicants with similar or better credentials (cited in Mandery, 2014). Some

schools reserve a certain number of spaces for legacies. In one recent year at Harvard, marginally qualified white legacies outnumbered all African American, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Native American students combined.

Yet all around the country, voters have been approving bans on race-based affirmative action. Five states—California, Florida, Michigan, Nebraska, and Washington—prohibit racial preferences for historically underrepresented groups in college admissions as well as employment. The California case has served as a model for other states considering bans on racial preferences. In 1996, voters there approved Proposition 209, a landmark referendum that bans the consideration of race, ethnicity, and sex in the public sector, including college admissions. Prior to the ban, African Americans, Latino/as, and Native Americans made up 23.1% of first-year students in the University of California system. The first year after the ban went into effect, that figure fell to 10.4% (Bronner, 1998b). In California, Blacks and Latino/as make up 42% of the state's population. However, they accounted for only about 15% of first-year admissions in the University of California system in 2006. At the same time, Asians, who make up about 12% of the state's population, accounted for about half of first-year admissions (Egan, 2007). That year, UCLA had its lowest first-year black enrollment in 30 years (Lewin, 2007). In 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that universities can still consider applicants' race and ethnicity in admissions decisions but only if they can prove their methods are narrowly tailored to reflect a compelling interest in achieving diversity.

Clearly, affirmative action remains a divisive issue. In a society with a tradition of racial stratification, what is the best way to overcome institutional inequality? Does it take discriminating in the opposite direction to "make things equal," or is it enough simply to treat people equally from this point on?

Here's one way to think about these questions: Imagine a fictitious championship game of a basketball tournament between University A and University B. The rules of the game clearly favor University A. Its team is allowed five players on the court, but Team B is allowed only four. Team A gets 4 points for every basket made; Team B gets 2. Team A is given 2 points for each free throw made; Team B gets 1. Team A is allowed to physically impede the progress of the opposing players without being called for a foul, and so on. At halftime, Team A leads Team B by a score of 70 to 15. During halftime, tournament officials decide that the current rules have made the game completely unfair and have harmed the interests of Team B. They declare that from now on, each team will have the same number of players on the court and receive the same number of points per basket. But there's a slight problem—when the game resumes after halftime, the score is still 70 to 15!

In other words, just because opportunities have been equalized in the present doesn't mean that the accumulated disadvantages of the past have been entirely overcome (Shapiro, 2008). Such is the problem we face today. We can legislate hiring and admission policies that do away with unfair advantages to any group, but is that action enough to address a long history of exclusion? For a long time to come, members of certain groups will continue to be underrepresented in traditionally white positions. Can U.S. citizens achieve complete equality without forcing those who have benefited historically to give up some of their advantages? The answer to this question is complex, controversial, and emotionally charged and will have a great impact on the nature of ethnoracial relations in the United States in the foreseeable future.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON RACISM

Given the focus of this chapter so far, you might be tempted to conclude that racism and racial inequality are purely U.S. phenomena. Certainly, these problems are very obvious in a society such as

the United States, which is so ethnically and racially diverse and which has had such a long history of bitter conflict. But ethnoracial tension is the worldwide rule, not the exception.

Like disadvantaged ethnoracial groups in the United States, minority groups in other countries suffer discrimination that limits their opportunities for success:

- During soccer matches all across Europe, black players are routinely subjected to racist taunts, derisive chanting, monkey noises, and hurled bananas from white fans (Garsd, 2015).
- Police in Paris, France, stop young Arab and black men for identity checks in train stations about seven times more often than young Whites (Erlanger, 2009). In 2011, France became the first country in Europe to ban Muslim women from wearing facial veils in public (de La Baume, 2011).
- In Israel, Ashkenazic Jews (who are of European descent) are more likely to be hired and earn more money for the same job than Sephardic Jews (who are of West Asian or North African descent; Rosner, 2013).
- In Eastern European countries such as Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, discrimination against the Roma—or Gypsies—is the norm. They have been despised for centuries as thieving subhumans with no respect for the law and are stereotyped as loud, dirty, indecent, and sloppy (Erlanger, 2000). As a result of such attitudes, Roma suffer disproportionately from poverty, interethnic violence, discrimination, illiteracy, and disease (N. Wood, 2005). Such treatment is not confined to countries where Romas have long resided. In 2010, France embarked on a major push to reduce crime and illegal immigration by forcibly expelling some Romas and demolishing the camps they live in, even though such mass expulsion based on ethnicity violates European Union law (Erlanger, 2010; Sayre, 2012).
- In Mexico, all citizens are considered legally equal under the country's constitution. Yet it is a society deeply divided along racial lines, particularly between dark-skinned people of Indian descent and light-skinned people of Spanish descent. Ironically, most Mexicans are of mixed lineage, so that nearly all of them could be considered at least part Indian. But Mexicans who are considered Indians are the object of severe discrimination. They have significantly lower educational attainment and occupational status than lighter-skinned Mexicans. In addition, they are more likely to live in poverty (Villarreal, 2010).

Sociologists once believed that the global forces of industrialization and modernization would create ethnoracially diverse societies where people's loyalty would be directed to the national society rather than their racial or ethnic community (Deutsch, 1966). But the opposite has happened. At a time when people from every corner of the globe are linked technologically, economically, and ecologically and when mass migrations mix people from different races, religions, and cultures in unprecedented numbers, racial and ethnic hostilities are at an all-time high (Barber, 1992).

It's tempting to view ethnic conflict as the pent-up expression of age-old ethnic loyalties and cultural differences. However, in many areas of the world, the origins of conflict can be traced to the lingering effects of colonialism and the manipulation of political leaders. Consider, for instance, the ethnic violence that occurred between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda in the mid 1990s. The

way the conflict was presented in the media led many outside observers to assume that these two groups had some deep-seated, centuries-old ethnic hatred of one another that had reached its boiling point. It turns out, though, that prior to German colonization in the 19th century and Belgian colonization in the early 20th century, Rwandans didn't consider themselves Hutu or Tutsi. They saw themselves as one group. People drew their identity from where they were born or by how much wealth they had (Bowen, 1996). It was the colonizers who decreed that each person had to have an "ethnic identity" that determined their place in society. By pitting one group against another, colonial rulers, whose numbers were always quite small, could seek out allies among certain ethnic groups. Belgian rulers formed such an alliance with the Tutsis. Their suppression of the Hutus created a sense of collective Hutu identity and outrage. In the 1950s, Hutus successfully rebelled against Tutsis. Eventually, Tutsi resentment led to the creation of their own rebel army. The conflict reached its bloody conclusion in the civil war of 1994, in which hundreds of thousands of Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed.

Regardless of its source, so much ethnic conflict is going on in the world today that we might conclude that hostility between groups is among the most universal of human feelings (Schlesinger, 1992). Look at any online news service these days and you'll see stories of ethnic, religious, or racial conflict: Jews and Palestinians in Israel and Gaza, Buddhists and Muslims in Myanmar, Chechens and Russians in the former Soviet Union, Janjaweed and Darfurians or Sudanese and Nubans in Sudan, Hindus and Muslims or Bengalis and Gurkhas in India, the Han and Uighurs in western China, Lendus and Hemas in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Georgians and Ossetians in Georgia, Sunis and Shiites in Iraq and Syria, Orma and Pokomo in Kenya, Tajiks and Pashtuns in Afghanistan, the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan, and the Ijaw and Itsekiri in Nigeria. According to the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (2015), nearly 60 million people around the world have been forcibly displaced because of ethnic conflict and/or persecution in their home countries.

Unfortunately, when people feel that their survival is threatened, they often blame others for their problems, particularly newly arrived others who look and act differently. In Great Britain, France, and Germany, loud and sometimes violent resentment occurs between the native born and immigrants from Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. In the United States, such animosity is likely to be directed toward immigrants from Latin America and Asia (see Chapter 13 for more details).

But global forces don't just increase ethnoracial tension and inequality; sometimes they help to resolve it. In South Africa, for example, the end of apartheid in the early 1990s was the result of an international boycott. In the 1980s, the global media brought the world pictures and stories of the brutal treatment of South African blacks. When consumers in the United States and other industrial nations stopped buying products from companies that held investments in South Africa, the companies began to withdraw their money. The minority white government felt the sting as domestic economic problems mounted. As a result of these pressures, the white population of South Africa voted to abolish apartheid. Shortly thereafter, the first black president, Nelson Mandela, was elected. In 1996, a new constitution was adopted that officially and peacefully completed South Africa's transition from white supremacy to nonracial democracy. The document renounces the racism of the past and guarantees all South Africans broad freedoms of speech, movement, and political activity (Daley, 1996). Although serious inequalities and animosities remain, the country is well on its way toward unity and stability.

More recently, we've seen how political developments in one country can reverberate around the globe. Shortly after the 2008 U.S. presidential election, social observers in Europe began to speculate on how Barack Obama's ascendancy to the highest office in the land would influence race

relations in their own countries. As an editor of a French blog put it, "They always said, 'You think race relations are bad here in France, check out the U.S.' But that argument can no longer stand" (quoted in Erlanger, 2008, p. 1). France's defense minister pondered how Obama's victory might serve as a lesson to the French on dealing with issues of immigration and integration. However, others in Italy, Great Britain, and Germany have been more skeptical about the ultimate impact it would have on race relations there. And as I write this chapter 8 years after Obama's first election, worldwide harmony in race relations still seems well out of reach. As for the long-term future, I guess we'll just have to wait and see.

CONCLUSION

On April 16, 1963, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., was arrested and jailed for leading a civil rights demonstration in Birmingham, Alabama. At that time, not only were Blacks being subjected to daily doses of fear, violence, and humiliation, but they also had to constantly fight what Dr. King called "a degenerating sense of nobodiness." Torn between the brutal reality of a racist society and a fierce optimism for the future, he wrote from his jail cell,

Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all of their scintillating beauty. (King, 1991, p. 158)

A half century later, our society—like most societies around the globe—still struggles with the debilitating effects of personal and institutional discrimination based on race, religion, and ethnicity. In the United States, state-supported segregation and discrimination have given way to a form of racism that resides not in flagrant exclusion but in the day-to-day workings of our major social institutions. Despite recent gains, people of color still suffer noticeable disadvantages in economics, education, politics, employment, health care, vulnerability to crime, and many other areas. When opportunities to learn, legislate, and make a living are unequally distributed according to race, all facets of life remain unequal.

Fifty years after racial segregation was ruled unconstitutional in the United States, the complete integration of fundamental social institutions such as public schools, government, and business has only partially been achieved. And some are questioning the very value of integration. One reason race relations are so problematic today is that public debate over the issue confuses personal racism and institutional racism. Different types of racism require different solutions. We cannot put an end to economic deprivation or massive residential segregation by trying to convince people not to stereotype other groups.

I realize that this chapter has been rather depressing. After reading it, you may have a hard time imagining a society without racial or ethnic stratification, one where skin color is about as relevant in determining people's life chances as eye color. As one columnist recently put it, race is "the issue that won't go away" (Krugman, 2015, p. A17).

We must remember, however, that differences do not have to imply inequality. The transformation from difference to disadvantage is a social construction. The people of every society decide which differences should be irrelevant and which should be the primary criteria for making social and legal distinctions between groups of people. The good news is that because we construct these differences, we can tear them down.

YOUR TURN

A curious and disturbing feature of prejudice is that many of our beliefs and attitudes about other racial or ethnic groups are formed without any direct contact with members of those groups. The media—most notably television—play a significant role in providing the public with oversimplified and often inaccurate ethnoracial information, which indirectly shapes public attitudes.

For one week, observe several prime-time television shows that feature prominent African American, Latino/a, Asian, or Middle Eastern characters. The shows can be either comedies or dramas. Note the number of characters on each show who are people of color. Pay particular attention to the way the characters are portrayed. For instance, are they college educated? Gainfully employed? Happily married? What is their apparent social class standing? How do their mannerisms, appearances, and speech patterns conform to common stereotypes associated with members of these groups? How frequently do their words or actions refer to their own race

or ethnicity? Do the plots of the shows revolve around what you might consider “racial” themes? That is, how often does the issue of race or ethnicity come up during the course of the show?

If you have time, you can expand your analysis to examine the role of race and ethnicity in stand-up comedy. What proportion of comedians of color use race as part of their act compared with white comedians? What are the consequences of comedians such as Chris Rock, Kevin Hart, Margaret Cho, George Lopez, Aziz Ansari, and Maz Jobrani playing on ethnoracial stereotypes in their acts?

Interpret your observations sociologically. What are the implicit messages communicated by the portrayal of ethnoracial minorities in American media? What role does humor play in reinforcing or fighting prejudice? Are characters who do not act in stereotypical ways conforming instead to a white, middle-class standard? If so, how will this portrayal ultimately affect public perceptions of race?

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

- The history of race and ethnicity in U.S. society is an ambivalent one. Famous sayings about equality conflict with the experiences of most ethnoracial minorities—experiences of oppression, violence, and exploitation. Opportunities for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness have always been distributed along racial and ethnic lines.
- Personal racism is manifested in the form of bigotry, prejudice, and individual acts of discrimination. Quiet discrimination is expressed not directly but rather indirectly through anxiety about or avoidance of minorities.
- Racism can also be found in language and norms prescribing differential treatment of certain groups.
- Institutional racism exists in established institutional practices and customs that reflect, produce, and maintain ethnoracial inequality. Institutional racism is more difficult to detect than personal racism and hence is more difficult to stop. Because such racism exists at a level above personal attitudes, it will not disappear simply by reducing people's prejudices.
- Ethnoracial conflict is not just an American phenomenon. It is a global reality.

KEY TERMS

- affirmative action:** Program designed to seek out members of minority groups for positions from which they had previously been excluded, thereby seeking to overcome institutional racism
- ✓ **colorism:** Skin color prejudice within an ethnoracial group, most notably between light-skinned and dark-skinned blacks
- ✓ **discrimination:** Unfair treatment of people based on some social characteristic, such as race, ethnicity, or sex
- ✓ **ethnicity:** Sense of community derived from the cultural heritage shared by a category of people with common ancestry
- ✓ **institutional racism:** Laws, customs, and practices that systematically reflect and produce racial and ethnic inequalities in a society, whether or not the individuals maintaining these laws, customs, and practices have racist intentions
- ✓ **panethnic labels:** General terms applied to diverse subgroups that are assumed to have something in common
- ✓ **personal racism:** Individual expression of racist attitudes or behaviors
- ✓ **prejudice:** Rigidly held, unfavorable attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about members of a different group based on a social characteristic such as race, ethnicity, or gender
- ✓ **quiet discrimination:** Form of discrimination expressed subtly and indirectly through feelings of discomfort, uneasiness, and fear, which motivate avoidance rather than blatant discrimination
- race:** Category of people labeled and treated as similar because of allegedly common biological traits, such as skin color, texture of hair, and shape of eyes
- racial transparency:** Tendency for the race of a society's majority to be so obvious, normative, and unremarkable that it becomes, for all intents and purposes, invisible
- ✓ **racism:** Belief that humans are subdivided into distinct groups that are different in their social behavior and innate capacities and that can be ranked as superior or inferior
- ✓ **stereotype:** Overgeneralized belief that a certain trait, behavior, or attitude characterizes all members of some identifiable group

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