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SECTION II

EXPERIENCING DIFFERENCE



FRAMEWORK ESSAY

In the first framework essay, we considered the social construction of difference as master statuses were named, aggregated, dichotomized, and stigmatized. Now we turn to *experiencing* these statuses. Two examples illustrate this point.

Some years ago, a friend suggested renting the video *Willow* for her children. The eldest, a seven-year-old, had seen the opening scenes on television and was horrified at the prospect: "They kill the mom and steal the baby. There's dead bodies and blood everywhere." The man working in the video store, however, had seen the movie several times and vouched that it was not violent. Indeed, he did not remember the scenes the child described.

If you have seen *Willow*, you may recall that the movie opens as the soldiers of an evil queen round up all the pregnant women in the empire so that they can slay the enchanted baby when she is born. The soldiers kill the child's mother, but a midwife saves the baby and carries her into the forest. Then the midwife is attacked and killed by a pack of wild animals, and the baby floats downstream in a basket.

This offers a small lesson about social status. What one notices in the world depends in large part on the statuses one occupies; in this way one may be said to *experience* one's social status. The child noticed the violence both because of the unique person he is and because of his age, a master status. That the man in the video store did not see the movie as violent may be attributed, at least in part, to the same master status: age.

Although we do not specifically address age in *MOD*, it operates in ways that are analogous to race, sex, class, sexual orientation, and disability. Being young affects one's treatment in innumerable ways: at a minimum, restrictions on driving, employment, military enlistment, marriage, abortion, admission to movies, and alcohol and cigarette consumption; insurance rates; mandatory school attendance; and "status offenses" (acts that are illegal only for minors). In addition, minors are excluded from voting and other legal rights because they are presumed to be untrustworthy and irresponsible.

In these ways, those defined as "young" are treated differently from those who are not so defined. Because of that treatment, the world looks different to them than to those who are older and no longer operating within these constraints. The young notice things that older people need not notice, because they are not subject to the same rules. One's experiences are tied to the statuses one occupies.

The second example of experiencing one's status comes from the autobiography of one of the first black students in an exclusive white prep school. She recalls what it was like to hear "one [white] girl after another say, 'It doesn't matter to me if somebody's white or black or green or purple. I mean people are just people.'" While she appreciates the girls' intentions, she also hears her own *real* experience being trivialized by the comparison with green and purple creatures. Her status helps to explain what she noticed in these conversations (Cary, 1991:83-84).

In all, you experience your social statuses; you live through them. They are the filters through which you see and make sense of the world, and in large measure they account for how you are treated and what you notice. In the sections that

follow, we will focus on the experiences of privilege and stigma associated with master statuses.

THE EXPERIENCE OF PRIVILEGE

Just as status helps to explain what we notice, it also explains what we *don't* notice. In the following classroom discussion between a black and a white woman, the white woman argues that because she and the black woman are both female, they should be allied. The black woman responds,

"When you wake up in the morning and look in the mirror what do you see?"

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

"That's precisely the issue," replied the black woman. "I see a black woman. For me, race is visible every day, because it is how I am *not* privileged in this culture. Race is invisible to you [because it is how you are privileged]." (Kimmel and Messner, 1989:3; emphasis added)

Thus, we are likely to be fairly unaware of the statuses that *privilege* us, that is, provide us with advantage, and acutely aware of those that are the source of trouble—those that yield negative judgments and unfair treatment. The mirror metaphor used by the black woman in this conversation emerges frequently among those who are stigmatized: "I looked in the mirror and saw a gay man." These moments of suddenly realizing one's social position with all of its life-shaping ramifications are usually about recognizing how one is stigmatized and underprivileged, but rarely about how one is privileged or advantaged, by the statuses one occupies.

Examples of Privilege

This use of the term *privilege* was first developed by Peggy McIntosh (1988) from her experience teaching women's studies courses. She noticed that while many men were willing to grant that women were disadvantaged (or "underprivileged") because of sexism, it was far more difficult for them to acknowledge that they were themselves advantaged (or "overprivileged") because of it. Extending the analysis to race, McIntosh generated a list of the ways in which she, as a white woman, was overprivileged by virtue of racism. Her list of over 40 white privileges included the following:

I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.

When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.

I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily protection.

I can worry about racism without being seen as self-interested or self-seeking.

I can think over many options, social, political, imaginative, or professional, without asking whether a person of my race would be accepted or allowed to do what I want to do. (McIntosh, 1988:5–8)

As she talked to people about her list, McIntosh learned about other white privileges: "A black woman said she was glad to hear me 'working on my own people,' because if she said these things about white privilege, she would be seen as a militant." Someone else noted that one privilege of being white was being able to be oblivious to those privileges. "Those in privileged groups are educated [to be oblivious] about what it is like for others, especially for others who have to be in their presence" (McIntosh, 1988).

One feature of privilege is that it makes life easier: it is easier to get around, to get what one wants, and to be treated in an acceptable manner. This is illustrated by the experience of a white newspaper columnist traveling with an African American colleague. Both were using complimentary airline tickets. The white columnist presented his ticket and was assigned a seat; then he watched the same white ticket agent ask his companion for some identification:

The black man handed over his ticket. The female agent glanced at it and asked, "Do you have some identification?" [The columnist had not been asked for any identification.]

"Yes, I do," the black man said, and he reached for his wallet. "But just out of curiosity, do you mind telling me why you want to see it?"

The agent grinned in embarrassment.

She said nothing in response.

"How about a credit card?" the black man said, and he pulled one out of his wallet.

"Do you have a work ID?" she asked, apparently hoping to see something with the black man's photo on it.

"No," he said, and whipped out another credit card.

"A driver's license would be fine," she said, sounding trapped.

"I don't have my driver's license with me," he said. "I'm taking the plane, not the car. . . ."

"That's fine sir, thank you," the agent finally said, shrinking a bit with each successive credit card. "Enjoy the flight."

The men rode the escalator up to the gate area in silence.

The white man shook his head. "I've probably watched that a hundred times in my life," he said. "But that's the first time I've ever *seen* it."

The black man nodded. He'd seen it more times than he cared to count. "You don't ever need to remind yourself that you're black," he said, "because every day there's somebody out there who'll remind you."

They walked on for a while, and the black man started to laugh to himself. Pirouetting, he modeled his outfit, an Italian-cut, double-breasted suit with a red rose in his lapel for Mother's Day. "I really can't look any better than this," he said sardonically. Then, he looked into his friend's eyes and said, "I had my driver's license. But if I show it, we may as well be in Soweto." (Kornheiser, 1990)

In reading about this exchange, one black student was particularly angered: "Whites will stand by and watch this happen, and either be oblivious to the slight or sympathize with you afterward, but they won't go to the mat and fight for you."

The columnist noted for the first time a privilege that he had as a middle-class white: he was not assumed to be a thief. By contrast, his black colleague was presumed to have potentially stolen the ticket no matter how upper-class or professional he looked. Similarly, many black and Latino students describe being closely

policeman, who offered her twenty dollars and begged her to pay and be gone. C. describes how desperately he was perspiring as he begged and, when she didn't move, how angry he got—how he accused her of being an outside agitator, that she could come from the North and go back to the North, but that there were those of "us" who had to live here and would pay for her activism.

C. says she doesn't remember how she got out of there alive or why they finally let her go; but she supposes that the black man paid for her. But she does remember returning to the car with her two companions and the three of them crying, sobbing, all the way to Miami. "The damndest thing about it," C. said, "was that no one was interested in whether or not I was telling the truth. The glass was sitting there in the middle of all this, with the curdle hanging on the side, but nobody would taste it because a black woman's lips had touched it." (Williams, 1991:56–57)

Several front-page cases have shown dramatically how whites' fear of blacks has prompted aggression toward them—and then been used after the fact to legitimate the violence. Among the more notorious cases are Bernard Goetz's 1984 New York subway shooting of four unarmed black teenagers (two in the back), for which Goetz was found innocent of attempted murder; the 1989 Boston case of Charles Stuart who murdered his pregnant wife but so convinced the police that she had been shot by a black gunman that they failed to pursue an investigation that would have led to the plot hatched by Stuart and his brother; or the 1991 beating of Rodney King by white Los Angeles police, all of whom were acquitted. Thus every day, African Americans, especially men, must always be vigilant about becoming the targets of preemptive violence. Freedom from this kind of life-altering experience is one privilege of being white.¹

The *racial profiling* described by John Lamberth in Reading 30 must be understood against this background of whites' presumption of black aggression and criminality. Racial profiling means singling out particular racial groups for heightened levels of police surveillance or investigation. The profiling Lamberth uncovered in his research in Maryland appears to be the case for police departments across the country as well as in the U.S. Customs Service's body searches for contraband. At least 13 states have laws requiring the collection of data that would indicate whether racial profiling was taking place, several federal agencies are now required to collect similar data, and some agencies (such as the Customs Service) have dramatically changed their practices to curtail profiling (Montgomery, 2001).

The September 11 terrorist attacks, however, have reopened the profiling debate, this time in terms of the profiling of Arab Americans and noncitizens from the Middle East. The public consensus that had come to oppose the profiling of African Americans and Latinos seems much less solidified in this case. The likelihood is that several lawsuits will emerge regarding the constitutionality of targeting Middle Eastern-looking men for investigation, detention, and deportation.

Another privilege likely to be invisible to those in single-race families is the privilege of being recognized as a family. The following account by a mother illustrates how the failure to perceive a family is linked to the expectation of black criminality.

¹Despite whites' fear of violence at the hands of African Americans, crime is predominately *intra*racial.

monitored for shoplifting when they are in department stores, just as the students who work in department store security confirm that they are given explicit instructions to watch black and Latino customers more closely. On hearing this, one black student realized why she had the habit of walking through stores with her hands out, palms open, in front of her: it was a way to prove she was not stealing. Oddly, one of the privileges of being white is that shoplifting is easier, since the security people in stores are busy watching the black and Latino customers.

Just as whites are not assumed to be thieves, they are not assumed to be poor. Michael Patrick MacDonald in Reading 34 describes how neither his Irish neighbors in South Boston nor social welfare activists acknowledged the area's poverty, crime, and drugs. "Those were black things that happened in the ghettos of Roxbury. Southie was Boston's proud Irish neighborhood."

Perhaps even more important in the realm of white privilege is the presumption that one is not aggressive. This is especially worth noting because if a person or group of people are assumed to be violent, acting against them to preemptively ward off that violence is seen as somehow legitimate. While whites do not generally assume that other whites are a threat, they do assume that of blacks. While the percentage appears to be declining, about half of whites think blacks are aggressive or violent (Smith, 2001; National Opinion Research Center, 1990). A mundane example of the consequence of this belief is provided by law professor and author Patricia J. Williams:

My best friend from law school is a woman named C. For months now I have been sending her drafts of this book, filled with many shared experiences, and she sends me back comments and her own associations. Occasionally we speak by telephone. One day, after reading the beginning of this chapter, she calls me up and tells me her abiding recollection of law school. "Actually, it has nothing to do with law school," she says.

"I'll be the judge of that," I respond.

"Well," she continues, "It's about the time I was held at gunpoint by a SWAT team."

It turns out that during one Christmas vacation C. drove to Florida with two friends. Just outside Miami they stopped at a roadside diner. C. ordered a hamburger and a glass of milk. The milk was sour, and C. asked for another. The waitress ignored her. C. asked twice more and was ignored each time. When the waitress finally brought the bill, C. had been charged for the milk and refused to pay for it. The waitress started to shout at her, and a highway patrolman walked over from where he had been sitting and asked what was going on. C. explained that the milk was sour and that she didn't want to pay for it. The highway patrolman ordered her to pay and get out. When C. said he was out of his jurisdiction, the patrolman pulled out his gun and pointed it at her.

("Don't you think," asks C. when I show her this much of my telling of her story, "that it would help your readers to know that the restaurant was all white and that I'm black?" "Oh, yeah," I say. "And six feet tall.")

Now C. is not easily intimidated and, just to prove it, she put her hand on her hip and invited the police officer to go ahead and shoot her, but before he did so *he* should try to drink the damn glass of milk, and so forth and so on for a few more descriptive rounds. What cut her off was the realization that, suddenly and silently, she and her two friends had been surrounded by eight SWAT team officers, in full guerrilla gear, automatic weapons drawn. Into the pall of her ringed speechlessness, they sent a local black

When my son was home visiting from college, we met in town one day for lunch. . . . On the way to the car, one of us thought of a game we'd often played when he was younger.

"Race you to the car!"

I passed my large handbag to him, thinking to more equalize the race since he was a twenty-year-old athlete. We raced the few blocks, my heart singing with delight to be talking and playing with my beloved son. As we neared the car, two young white men yelled something at us. I couldn't make it out and paid it no mind. When we arrived at the car, both of us laughing, they walked by and mumbled "Sorry" as they quickly passed, heads down.

I suddenly understood. They hadn't seen a family. They had seen a young Black man with a pocketbook, fleeing a pursuing middle-aged white woman. My heart trembled as I thought of what could have happened if we'd been running by someone with a gun.

Later I mentioned the incident in a three-day diversity seminar I was conducting at a Boston corporation. A participant related it that evening to his son, a police officer, and asked the son what he would have done if he'd observed the scene.

The answer: "Shot out his kneecaps." (Lester, 1994:56-7)

Let us turn now from the privileges of race to the privileges of sexual orientation. The most obvious privilege enjoyed by heterosexuals is that they are free to talk to virtually anyone about their relationships and to display affection anywhere publicly. Those in same-sex relationships, however, can neither talk openly about their relationships nor display affection in public. Indeed, doing so puts them at risk for unemployment, ostracism, verbal abuse, loss of child custody, and potentially life-threatening physical assault.

Even the ability to display a picture of one's partner on a desk at work stands as an invisible privilege of heterosexuality.

Consider, for example, an employee who keeps a photograph on her desk in which she and her husband smile for the camera and embrace affectionately. . . . [T]he photo implicitly conveys information about her private sexual behavior. [But] . . . most onlookers (if they even notice the photo) do not think of her partner primarily in sexual terms. . . .

[But] if the photograph instead shows the woman in the same pose with a same-sex partner, everyone is likely to notice. As with the first example, the photograph conveys the information that she is in a relationship. But the fact that the partner is a woman overwhelms all other information about her. The *sexual* component of the relationship is not mundane and implicit as with the heterosexual spouse. . . . (Herek, 1992:95-6; emphasis added)

Because heterosexual public affection is so commonplace, it rarely conjures up images of sexual activity. But that is exactly what we may think of when we see a same-sex couple embrace. This is why gay and lesbian people are often accused of "flaunting" their sexuality: *any* display of affection between them is understood by many heterosexuals as virtually a display of the sex act.

In the realm of class privilege, several readings in this text address the considerable differences in health, life span, educational access, and quality of life that accompany American class differences. But these are perhaps the more visible privileges of being middle- and upper-class. Less apparent is the privilege of being treated as a competent member of the community. To get that treatment in his

university, one of our working-class students described how he had to change out of his work clothes before going to campus; otherwise, staff and faculty treated him as though he did not belong at the university. "Competence" is also something disabled people are rarely assumed to possess.

Two privileges in particular shape the experience of those in nonstigmatized statuses: entitlement and the privilege of being "unmarked." *Entitlement* is the belief that one has the right to be respected, acknowledged, protected, and rewarded. This is so much taken for granted by those in nonstigmatized statuses that they are often shocked and angered when it is denied them.

[After the lecture, whites in the audience] shot their hands up to express how excluded they felt because [the] lecture, while broad in scope, clearly was addressed first and foremost to the women of color in the room. . . . What a remarkable sense of entitlement must drive their willingness to assert their experience of exclusion! If I wanted to raise my hand every time I felt excluded, I would have to glue my wrist to the top of my head. (Ettinger, 1994:51)

Like entitlement, the privilege of occupying an "unmarked" status is shared by most of those in nonstigmatized categories. *Doctor* is an *unmarked* status; *woman doctor* is *marked*. Unmarked categories convey the usual and expected distribution of individuals in social statuses—the distribution that does not require any special comment. Thus, the unmarked category tells us what a society takes for granted.

Theoretically, the unmarked category *doctor* might include anyone, but in truth it refers to white males. How do we know that? Because other occupants of that status are usually marked: woman doctor, black doctor, and so on. While the marking of a status signals infrequency—there are few female astronauts or male nurses—it may also imply inferiority. A "woman doctor" or a "black doctor" may be considered less qualified.

Thus, a privilege of those who are not stigmatized is that their master statuses are not used to discount their accomplishments or imply that they serve only special interests. Someone described as "a politician" is presumed to operate from a universality that someone described as "a white male politician" is not. Because white male politicians are rarely described as such, their anchoring in the reality of their own master statuses is hidden. In this way, those in marked statuses appear to be always operating from an "agenda," or "special interest" (e.g., a black politician is often presumed to represent only black constituents), while those in unmarked statuses can appear to be agenda-free. Being white and male thus becomes invisible, since it is not regularly identified as important. For this reason, some recommend identifying *everyone's* race and sex as a way to recognize that we are all grounded in our master statuses.

This use of marked statuses also applies to classroom interactions. At white-dominated universities, white students are unlikely to be asked what white people think or asked to explain the "white experience." In this way, those who are white, male, heterosexual, and middle class appear to have no race, sex, sexual orientation, or social class, and thus have the privilege of escaping classroom discussions about the problems of "their people."

were of the same race, and even though they were not the victims of racism, this does not mean that we can understand the relationship between them without reference to their race and to the racism that their lives enacted. (Spelman, 1988:104-5)

Similarly, interactions between men are affected by sexism, even though the men themselves are not subject to it.

For example, we can't understand the racism that fueled white men's lynching of Black men without understanding its connection to the sexism that shaped their protective and possessive attitudes toward white women. The ideology according to which whites are superior and ought to dominate Blacks is nested with the ideology according to which white men must protect their wives from attack by Black men. . . . That men aren't subject to sexism doesn't mean sexism has no effect on their relationships to each other. . . . (Spelman, 1988:106)

Similar examples apply to sexual orientation, social class, and disability. Certainly, homophobia shapes heterosexual relations, treatment of those who are disabled affects those who are "temporarily able-bodied," and the stereotypes about poor people affect interactions among those in the middle class. Thus, the most obvious privilege of those in nonstigmatized statuses—that they are not affected by stigma—is not as straightforward as one might think.

Because privilege is usually invisible to those who possess it, they may assume that everyone is treated as they are. When they learn otherwise, they may think that the incident was exceptional rather than routine, that the victim was overreacting or misinterpreting, or that the victim must have provoked the encounter. Such responses do not necessarily deny that the incident took place; rather, they deny that the event carries any negative or special meaning.

Through such dismissals, those operating from positions of privilege can deny the experience of those without privilege. For example, college-age students often describe university administrators as unresponsive until they have had their parents call to complain. If the parents later said, "I don't know why *you* had such a problem with those people, they were very nice to *me*. Did you do something to antagonize them?" that would indicate they were oblivious to their privileged status in the university setting as well as unaware of their child's underprivileged status in it.

Dismissals like these treat the stigmatized person like a child inadequate to judge the world. Often such dismissals are framed in terms of the very stigma about which people are complaining. In this way, what stigmatized people say about their status is discounted precisely because they are stigmatized. The implication is that those who occupy a stigmatized status are somehow the ones *least* able to assess its consequence. The effect is to dismiss precisely those who have had the most experience with the problem.

This process, called *looping* or *rereading*, is described by many who have studied the lives of patients in psychiatric hospitals (Rosenhan, 1973; Schur, 1984; Goffman, 1961, 1963). If a patient says, "The staff here are being unfair to me," and the staff respond, "Of course he would think that—he's crazy," they have reread, or looped, his words through his status. His words have been heard in light of his stigma and dismissed for exactly that reason.

**Stigmatized People and Their Experience of Privilege;
Privileged People and Their Experience of Stigma**

We have described some of the privileges enjoyed by those in nonstigmatized statuses. However, those with stigma also have some experience of privilege—it is just less frequent. For example, in 1991 the Urban Institute investigated racial discrimination in employment by sending previously coached pairs of black and white male college students to apply for jobs in Washington, D.C., and Chicago. They had virtually identical appearance, personal styles, dialects, educations, and job histories.

In 20 percent [of the 576 job applications], the white applicant advanced farther in the hiring process [from obtaining a job application, to interview, to hiring] than his black counterpart, and in 15 percent the white applicant was offered a job while his equally qualified black partner was not. Blacks were favored over comparable white applicants in a much smaller share of cases; in 7 percent of the audits the black advanced farther in the hiring process, and in 5 percent only the black received the job offer. (Turner, Fix, and Struyk, 1991:18)

Black and white applicants both had some experience of preferential hiring, but the white applicant had about three times more. A similar study of job discrimination against Latino males conducted in Chicago and San Diego indicated an even larger gap between the level of privilege experienced by Anglos and Latinos (Cross, Kenney, Mell, and Zimmermann, 1990).

Thus, concerns about “reverse discrimination” often miss the mark. While blacks, Latinos, Asian Americans, or white women are sometimes favored in hiring, they are not favored as *frequently* as white males. Discrimination continues in its historic direction as evidenced in the constancy of race and sex differences in income. In 1975, black per capita median annual income was 58.5 percent that of whites. Over 20 years later, in 1997, the figure was only 60.5 percent. In 1975, the same measure for Latinos was 56.1 percent of whites; by 1997, it was down to 52.7 percent (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1993:454; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997).²

Because the focus is so frequently on how stigma affects those who bear it, it is easy to assume that only the targets of racism, sexism, homophobia, or classism are affected by it. But that is not the case. Those who are not themselves the targets of discrimination may still be affected by it. For example,

Think of white slaveowners and their wives: the meaning of the sexual difference between them was constructed in part by the alleged contrast between them as whites and other men and women who were Black; what was supposed to characterize their relationship was not supposed to characterize the relationship between white men and Black women, or white women and Black men. . . . So even though the white men and women

²Income figures exclude “money income received before payments for personal income, taxes, Social Security, union dues, Medicare deductions, food stamps, health benefits, subsidized housing, or rent-free housing and goods produced and consumed on the farm” (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1993:425).

These dismissals serve a function. Dismissing another's experience of status-based mistreatment masks the possibility that one has escaped such treatment precisely because of one's privilege. If we do not acknowledge that *their* status affects *their* treatment, we need not acknowledge that *our* status affects *our* treatment. Thus, we avoid the larger truth that those who are treated well, those who are treated poorly, and all the rest in between are always evaluated both as individuals and as occupants of particular esteemed and disesteemed categories.

Hierarchies of Stigma and Privilege

While it may appear that people can be easily separated into two categories—privileged and stigmatized—every individual occupies several master statuses. The privilege or stigma that might be associated with one status emerges in the context of *all* of one's other statuses. For example, a middle-class, heterosexual Mexican American male may be privileged in terms of class, sex, and sexual orientation, but stigmatized by virtue of being Latino. Given the invisibility of privilege, he is more likely to notice the ways in which his status as Latino stigmatizes him than to notice the privileges that follow from his other statuses. Nonetheless, he is simultaneously all of his statuses; the privileges and disadvantages of each emerge in the context of all the others. An Anglo male and a Latino male may both be said to experience the privilege of sex, but they do not experience the *same* privilege.

While individuals may experience both privilege and stigma, some stigmas are so strong that they cancel out the privileges that one's other statuses might provide. For example, there is much evidence that the stigma of being black in America cancels any privileges that might be expected to follow from being middle-class.

The first large-scale study of treatment decisions made by primary care physicians found that, when faced with identical complaints of chest pain, doctors were much more likely to recommend further cardiac testing for their white male patients than any others. Black and female patients were referred to heart specialists only 60 percent as often. (Goldstein, 1999:1)

Blacks also remain about half as likely as Latinos or Asians to live in the suburbs. And despite their consistent preference for residential integration, blacks in almost all central cities remain highly segregated from non-Hispanic whites. They are more racially isolated from whites than are Latinos and Asians, and high incomes or levels of education make it no easier for African Americans to move into white neighborhoods. (Hochschild, 1995:42)

A [*Los Angeles Times*] analysis found that while African Americans remain the most segregated group in the nation's top 25 metropolitan areas, Latinos and Asians are beginning to close this gap. . . . Demographers define a place as moderately segregated if more than 50% of a group's population would have to move to become evenly distributed in that place. Some 21 of the nation's 25 largest metropolitan areas registered as moderately segregated or worse for blacks in 2000. Eleven now meet this criterion for Latinos, up from 6 a decade earlier. There are 7 areas for Asians, an increase from 5 in 1990. (Fields and Herndon, 2001:A1-A17)

In 1999 the U.S. Department of Agriculture agreed to settle a class-action lawsuit filed in 1997 by black farmers who claimed they had been denied government loans or given

smaller and more restrictive loans than those awarded to white farmers with similar credit histories and assets. "Discrimination by USDA officials has been cited as a major reason why the ranks of black farmers have dwindled at three times the rate of white farmers. Blacks, who were 14 percent of the nation's farmers in the 1920s, now account for less than 1 percent." (Fletcher, 1999:10)

Roberts v. Texaco, the class action filed in June 1994, charged the company with persistent failure to hire, promote or even treat with decency its African-American staffers. It cited numbers: in 1994 only four of Texaco's top 498 executives were black. And it included stunning affidavits of abuse and insult. . . . The case languished in court until late 1996, when a downsized Texaco executive, in an act of revenge or repentance, turned over tapes that caught top officials at the company—including him—making racist remarks . . . and plotting to purge the documents in the discrimination case. Texaco agreed to pay more than \$115 million in racial reparations. (Solomon, 1996:48-49)

[In a finding] by the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, or ACORN, discrimination is not only not getting any better, it's worsening. And not just in mortgages to buy homes but in refinancings, too. And not just in some jurisdictions but throughout the country as well. The ACORN investigation was released at a Department of Housing and Urban Development news conference, along with a second report by the Urban Institute for HUD that found minorities are less likely than whites to obtain mortgage financing. And when they do, it also discovered, they tend to receive less money at terms that aren't as favorable. . . . The ACORN and Urban Institute reports found that Blacks were denied mortgages 217 percent more often than whites in 1998, up from 206 in 1997. Hispanics were rejected 183 percent as often, up from 169. [The studies also found that] minority testers were less likely to receive information about loan products than their white counterparts. Loan officers also took less time with minorities than with whites and quoted higher rates. (Sichelman, 1999)

Coca-Cola Co. agreed [in November 2000] to pay a record \$192.5 million to settle a racial-discrimination lawsuit brought by black workers and agreed to make significant changes in the way it manages, promotes and treats its minority employees. . . . In the suite the employees accused Coca-Cola of discriminating against black employees in pay, promotions and evaluations. (Schafer, 2000:A1)

The Center for the Study of Sport in Society at Northeastern University reports that U.S. colleges continue to provide the fewest opportunities for people of color at the top management level. In Division I, African-Americans make up only 2.4 percent of athletic directors while women hold 9 percent. The percentage of African-Americans coaching Division I men's basketball increased to 21.6 percent while falling in Division IA football to 4.7 percent, the lowest level since the Racial and Gender Report Card first published results for college sports. (Lapchick and Matthews, 2001)

Research on the effects of other stigmatized racial statuses has not been as thorough, nor are its findings as consistent, but it is clear that for African Americans, middle-class standing provides little protection against racism.

Does the stigma of being an out-of-the-closet gay or lesbian cause one to lose the privilege that comes from being middle-class, white, or both? Sexual orientation is not covered by federal civil rights legislation. While the proportion of Americans who believe gays should have equal job opportunities has increased—

from 56 percent in 1977 to 84 percent in 1996 (Berke, 1998)—there is still no federal protection barring discrimination against gays in employment, housing, or health care. In 1998, President Clinton issued an executive order barring federal agencies from such discrimination, but the House of Representatives denied funding to carry out the order (Berke, 1998). Thus, it often looks as though gays are predominantly white and at least middle-class; in the absence of federal protection, few others can afford to publicly identify themselves as gay (Lester, 1994). While some jurisdictions enact protections, many of those ordinances are later challenged and repealed. In 2000, several state and local referendums barring discrimination against gays were defeated. At present, it appears that the stigma of being gay often overwhelms the privileges that one's other statuses might afford. The 1998 beating death of gay University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard, like other hate crimes directed at gays and lesbians, offers horrifying evidence to that effect.

But which status is most important: one's race, sex, sexual orientation, or social class? For the sizable population that occupies multiple stigmatized statuses, it makes little sense to argue which status presents the greatest obstacle since most people live in the *intersection* of their master statuses. This experience is the subtext of many of the readings included in *MOD*. It is captured by high school teacher Patrick Welsh in Reading 27, as he describes the schisms among Latino students because of their differences in social class and national origin. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson identifies the intersection between sex and disability in Reading 51, and Barbara Reskin and Irene Padavic consider the joint impact of race, sex, and ethnicity on people's work experience. The intersection of master statuses is also one way to understand the anguish Lydia Minatoya in Reading 25 sees in the white husband of a Japanese American woman attending a remembrance ceremony. While people are often asked to make alliances based on one status being more significant than another, their real experience is not often that unidimensional.

Philosopher Elizabeth Spelman (1988), however, suggests a way to assess the relative priority of each of these statuses. If each master status is imagined as a room we will enter, we can consider which sequential ordering of these rooms most accurately reflects our experience. If the first rooms we encounter are labeled black, white, or Asian, we will find ourselves in a room with those who share our "race" but are different in terms of sex, social class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. If the second set of rooms is labeled male and female, we will find ourselves with people of the same race and sex. Other rooms might be labeled with sexual orientation or social class categorizations.

Many white feminists have presumed that the first rooms we encounter are sex categorizations, thus arguing that the statuses of female and male have priority over race or class designations; that one is discriminated against first by virtue of one's sex and then by race. Latino, black, and some white feminists have countered that the first rooms are race classifications. In this case, it is argued that racism so powerfully affects people that men and women within racial categories have more in common with one another than they do with those of the same sex but of a different race. Alliances of gay and lesbian people by implication assume that the first doors are marked gay and straight, with sex, race, and class following; disability rights

activists would argue that that status takes precedence over everything else. In addition to the orderings that correspond to the historical experience of categories of people, each of us likely maintains an ordering based on our personal experience of these statuses.

THE EXPERIENCE OF STIGMA

The previous section considered the privileges conferred by some master statuses; now we examine the stigma conferred by other master statuses.

In his classic analysis of stigma, sociologist Erving Goffman (1963) distinguished between the *discredited*, whose stigma is immediately apparent to an observer (for example, race, sex, some physical disabilities), and the *discreditable*, whose stigma can be hidden (for example, sexual orientation, social class). Since stigma plays out differently in the lives of the discredited and the discreditable, each will be examined separately.

The Discreditable: "Passing"

The discreditable are those who are *passing*, that is, not publicly acknowledging the stigmatized statuses they occupy. (Were they to acknowledge that status, they would become discredited.) The term *passing* comes from "passing as white," which emerged as a phenomenon after 1875 when southern states re-established racial segregation through hundreds of "Jim Crow"³ laws. At that point, some African Americans passed as a way to get decent jobs.

[S]ome who passed as white on the job lived as black at home. Some lived in the North as white part of the year and as black in the South the rest of the time. More men passed than women . . . the vast majority who could have passed permanently did not do so, owing to the pain of family separation, condemnation by most blacks, their fear of whites, and the loss of the security of the black community. . . . Passing as white probably reached an all-time peak between 1880 and 1925. (Davis, 1991:56-57)

"Passing as white" is now quite rare and strongly condemned by African Americans, a reaction that "indicate[s] the resolute insistence that anyone with even the slightest trace of black ancestry is black, and a traitor to act like a white" (Davis, 1991:138). We will use the term *passing* here to refer to those who have not made their stigmatized status evident; it is similar to the phrase "being in the closet" which is usually applied to gays. Because passing is now most frequent among gays—as well as most vehemently debated—many of our examples will focus on that stigmatized status.

One may engage in passing by chance as well as by choice. For example, the presumption that everyone is heterosexual can have the effect of putting gay people in

³"Jim Crow" was "a blackface, signing-dancing-comedy characterization portraying black males as childlike, irresponsible, inefficient, lazy, ridiculous in speech, pleasure-seeking, and happy, [and was] a widespread stereotype of blacks during the last decades before emancipation . . ." (Davis, 1991:51). "Jim Crow" laws were laws by which whites imposed segregation following the Civil War.

the closet even when they had not intended to be. During a series of lectures on marriage and the family, one of our colleagues realized that he had been making assignments, lecturing, and encouraging discussion assuming that all of the students in the class had, or wanted to have, heterosexual relationships. Unless his gay and lesbian students specifically countered his assumption, they were effectively passing. His actions forced them to choose between announcing or remaining silent about their status. Had he assumed that students would be involved only with others of the same race, he would have created a similar situation for those in interracial relationships. Thus, assumptions about others' private lives—for example, asking whether someone is married—may have the effect of making them choose between silence or an announcement of something they may consider private.

Since most heterosexuals assume that everyone else is heterosexual, many social encounters either put gay people in the closet or require they announce their status.

Every encounter with a new classfull of students, to say nothing of a new boss, social worker, loan officer, landlord, doctor, erects new closets [that] . . . exact from at least gay people new surveys, new calculations, new draughts and requisitions of secrecy or disclosure. Even an *out* gay person deals daily with interlocutors about whom she doesn't know whether they know or not [or whether they would care]. . . . The gay closet is not a feature only of the lives of gay people. But for many gay people it is still the fundamental feature of social life; there can be few gay people . . . in whose lives the closet is not a shaping presence. (Sedgwick, 1990:68)

Inadvertent passing is also experienced by those whose racial status is not immediately apparent. An African American acquaintance of ours who looks white is often in settings in which others do not know that she is African American—or in which she does not know if they know. Thus, she must regularly decide how and when to convey that information. This is important to her as a way to discourage racist remarks, since whites often assume it is acceptable to make racist remarks to one another (as men often assume it is acceptable to make sexist remarks to other men, or as straights presume it acceptable to make homophobic remarks to those they think are also straight). It is also important to her that others know she is black so that they understand the meaning of her words—so that they will hear her words through her status as an African American woman. Those whose stigma is not apparent must go to some lengths to avoid being in the closet by virtue of others' assumptions. Those with relatively invisible disabilities also face the tension of inadvertent passing. One of our students arrived in class in tears following an encounter with someone she had not realized was disabled. Seeing the young woman trip, the student had asked if she could help—and was angrily rebuffed. The offer to help had been taken as a show of pity.

But passing may also be an intentional choice. For example, one of our students, who was in the process of deciding that he was gay, had worked for many years at a local library, where he became friends with several of his coworkers. Much of the banter at work, however, involved disparaging gay, or presumably gay, library patrons. As he grappled with a decision about his own sexual identity, his social environment reminded him that being gay is a stigmatized status in American society.

The student did not so much face prejudice personally (since he was not "out" to his work friends) as he faced an "unwilling acceptance of himself by individuals who are prejudiced against persons of the kind he can be revealed to be" (Goffman, 1963:42). Thus, he was not the person his friends took him to be. While survey data indicate that those who personally know a gay man hold consistently more positive feelings about gays in general (Herek and Glunt, 1993), the decision to publicly reveal a stigma that others have gone on record as opposing is not made lightly.

Revealing stigma changes one's interactions with "normals," even with those who are not particularly prejudiced. Such revelations are likely to alter important relationships. Parents sometimes disown gay children, just as they do children involved in interracial relationships. Thus, the decision to pass or be "out" is not easily made. For the discreditable, what Goffman euphemistically described as "information management" is at the core of one's life. "To tell or not to tell; to let on or not to let on; to lie or not to lie; and in each case, to whom, how, when, and where" (Goffman, 1963:42). Such choices are faced daily by those who are discreditable—not just those who are gay and lesbian, but also those who are poor, have been imprisoned, attempted suicide, terminated a pregnancy through abortion, are HIV-positive, are drug or alcohol dependent, or have been the victims of incest or rape. By contrast, those who do not occupy stigmatized statuses don't have to invest emotional energy in monitoring information about themselves; they can choose to talk openly about their personal history.

Passing has both positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, passing lets the stigmatized person exert some power over the situation; the person controls the information, the flow of events, and their privacy. By withholding his or her true identity until choosing to reveal it, the person may create a situation in which others' prejudices are challenged. Passing forces one to be judged as an individual rather than be discounted by virtue of a stigma. Passing also limits one's exposure to verbal and physical abuse, allows for the development of previously forbidden relationships, and improves employment security by minimizing one's exposure to discrimination.

On the negative side, passing consumes a good deal of time, energy, and emotion in the management of personal information. It introduces deception and secrecy even into close relationships. Passing also denies others the opportunity to prove themselves unprejudiced, and it makes one vulnerable to blackmail by those who do know about one's stigma.

The Discredited: Flaming

While the discreditable face problems of invisibility, *visibility* is the problem for those who are discredited. Those who are discredited suffer from undue attention and are subject to being stereotyped.

Being discredited means that one's stigma is immediately apparent to others. As essayist bell hooks describes below, those who are discredited often have little patience for those who at least have the option of passing.

Many of us have been in discussions where a non-white person—a black person—struggles to explain to white folks that while we can acknowledge that gay people of all colors

are harassed and suffer exploitation and domination, we also recognize that there is a significant difference that arises because of the visibility of dark skin. . . . While it in no way lessens the severity of such suffering for gay people, or the fear that it causes, it does mean that in a given situation the apparatus of protection and survival may be simply not identifying as gay. In contrast, most people of color have no choice. No one can hide, change, or mask dark skin color. White people, gay and straight, could show greater understanding of the impact of racial oppression on people of color by not attempting to make these oppressions synonymous, but rather by showing the ways they are linked and yet differ. (hooks, 1989:125)

For the discredited, stigma is likely to always shape interaction with those who are not stigmatized. However, its effect does not necessarily play out in ways one can easily determine. For those whose stigma is visible, every situation forces them to decide whether the world is responding to them or their stigma. Florynce Kennedy, a black activist in the civil rights and women's movements, once commented that the problem with being black in America was that you never knew whether what happened to you, good or bad, was because of your talents or because you were black (Kennedy, 1976). This situation was described in 1903 by sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois as the "double consciousness" of being black in America. The concept was key to Du Bois's classic, *The Souls of Black Folk*, for which he was rightfully judged "the father of serious black thought as we know it today" (Hare, 1982:xiii). Du Bois described double consciousness this way:

the Negro . . . [is] gifted with a second-sight in this American world—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness. . . . (1982:45)

This is the sense of seeing oneself through the eyes of a harshly critical other, and it relates to our discussion of objectification in Framework Essay I. When those who are stigmatized view themselves from the perspective of the nonstigmatized, they have reduced themselves to objects. This theme of double or "fractured" consciousness can also be found in contemporary analyses of women's experience.

The greatest effect of being visibly stigmatized is on one's life chances—literally, one's chances for living. Thus, the readings in this book detail differences in income, employment, health, lifespan, education, targeting for violence, and the likelihood of arrest and imprisonment. In this essay, however, we will consider the more mundane difficulties created by stigmatization, particularly the sense of being "on stage."

The discredited often have the feeling of being watched or on display when they are in settings dominated by nonstigmatized people. For example, when women walk through male-dominated settings, they often feel they are on display in terms of their physical appearance. Asian, black, and Latino students in white/Anglo-dominated universities often describe a sense of being on display in campus dining facilities. In such cases, the discredited are likely to feel that others are judging them in terms of their stigma.

As sociologist Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1980, 1993) has shown, this impression is likely to be accurate. When Kanter studied corporate settings in which there was one person visibly different from the others, that person was likely to get a disproportionate share of attention. In fact, people in the setting were likely to closely monitor what the minority person did, which meant his or her mistakes were more likely to be noticed—and the mistakes of those in the rest of the group were more likely to be overlooked, since everyone was watching the minority person. Even in after-work socializing, the minority member was still subject to disproportionate attention.

Kanter also found that the minority person's behavior was likely to be interpreted in terms of the prevailing stereotypes about the members of that category. For example, when there were only a few men in a setting dominated by women, the men were subject to intense observation and their behavior was filtered through the stereotypes about men. Perceptions were distorted to fit the pre-existing beliefs.

Without the presence of a visibly different person, members of a setting are likely to see themselves as different from one another in various ways. Through contrast with the visibly different person, however, they notice their own similarities. In this way, majority group members may construct dichotomies—"us" and "them"—out of settings in which there are a few who are different. It is not surprising that those who are visibly different sometimes isolate themselves in response.

Still, none of this is inevitable. Kanter argues strongly that once minority membership in a setting reaches 15 percent, these processes abate. Until that point, however, those who are in the minority (or visibly stigmatized) are the subject of a good deal of attention. As a consequence, they are often accused of "flaming." *Flaming* usually means acting in an effeminate manner, with the intention of letting observers know that one is gay. Most likely, the term originated as a criticism of gay men but has since been appropriated more positively by that community. We use the term here to describe an unabashed display of any stigmatized status.

Flaming is a charge that the nonstigmatized often level at those who are stigmatized. Although there are certainly occasions on which the discredited may deliberately make a show of their status, Kanter's work indicates that when their numbers are low in a setting, they are likely to be charged with flaming no matter what they do. Subjected to a disproportionate amount of attention and viewed through the lenses of stereotypes, almost anything the discredited do is likely to be noticed and attributed to the category to which they belong. Thus, one charge frequently leveled at those in discredited groups is that they are "so" black, Latino, gay, and so on—that is, that they make too big a show of their status.

This charge may affect those who are visibly stigmatized in various ways. Many are careful to behave in ways contrary to expectations. At other times, however, flaming may be deliberate. In the first session of one class, a student opened his remarks by saying, "Well, you all know I am a gay man, and as a gay man I think . . ." The buzz of conversation stopped, other students stared at him, and one asked, "How would we know you were gay?" The student pointed to a pink triangle he had pinned to his book bag and explained that he thought they knew that someone wearing it would be gay. (Pink triangles were assigned to gay men during the Nazi era,

black triangles to lesbians and other "unwanted" women. Both have been adopted as badges of pride among gay activists. Still, his logic was questionable: Anyone supportive of gay rights might wear the button.)

This announcement—which moved the student from a discreditable to a discredited status—may have been intended to keep his classmates from making overtly anti-gay comments in his presence. His strategy was designed to counter the negative consequences of passing. To avoid being mistakenly identified as straight, he decided to flame.

Similarly, light-skinned African Americans are required to "flame" as black, lest they be accused of trying to pass. In adolescence, light-skinned black men are often derided by their black and white peers as not "really" black and so they go to great lengths to counter that charge. As an example, the writer Itaberi Njeri offered a moving description of her cousin Jeffrey, who looked like singer Ricky Nelson, spent his brief life trying to demonstrate that he was black and tough, and died violently as a result (Njeri, 1991). While many light-skinned black men indicate that, when they are older, their skin color puts them at an advantage in both the black and white communities, in adolescence that is certainly not the case and thus they must "flame" their identity (Russell, Wilson, and Hall, 1992).

But flaming need not have this tragic side. For example, many bilingual Latino students talk about how much they enjoy a loud display of Spanish when Anglos are present; some Asian American students have described their pleasure in pursuing extended no-English-used card games in public spaces on campus. Black students and gay students sometimes entertain themselves by loudly affecting stereotypical behavior and then watching the disapproving looks from observers. Those who do not occupy stigmatized statuses may better appreciate these displays by remembering their experience of deliberate flaming as "obnoxious teenagers" in public settings. Thus, for some flaming may also be fun.

In all, those who are visibly stigmatized—who cannot or will not hide their identity—generate a variety of mechanisms to try to neutralize that stigma. Flaming is one of those mechanisms. It both announces one's stigmatized status and proclaims one's disregard for those who judge it negatively. Flaming neutralizes stigma by denying there is anything to be ashamed of. Thus, it functions as a statement of group pride.

European Ethnic Groups and Flaming

Whites of European ancestry sometimes envy the ethnic "flaming" of African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans. As one student said, "It makes me feel like I just don't have anything." While his ancestry was a mix of Russian Jew, Italian Catholic, and Scotch-Irish Protestant, none of these identities seemed as compelling as the black, Asian, and Hispanic identities he saw around him.

This student's reaction reflects the transformed ethnic identity of the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of people who arrived in the peak immigration period of 1880 to 1920. At that time, Hungarians, Bohemians, Slovaks, Czechs, Poles, Russians, and Italians differed culturally and linguistically from one another and from the Irish, German, Scandinavian, and English immigrants who preceded them.

Over the generations—and through intermarriage—this ethnic distinctiveness has been replaced by a socioeconomic “convergence” (Alba, 1990). Among non-Hispanic whites, ethnic ancestry no longer shapes occupation, residence, or political interest, nor is it the basis of the creation of communities of interest. While many enjoy ethnic food and celebrations or have strong feelings attached to stories of immigration, the attachment is not likely to be deep or have much impact on behavior. Most important, the attachment is understood in terms of the history of one’s family rather than of a particular culture or nationality (Alba, 1990; Schaefer, 1990).⁴

Thus, it is possible that “European American” is emerging as a panethnic identity much like Asian American (Omi, 1996); both are identities that span a wide range of ancestries. It is also possible that as ethnic identities disappear for whites, they will be replaced by heightened attention to race. “[M]ost whites do not experience their ethnicity as a definitive aspect of their social identity. . . . The ‘twilight of white ethnicity’ in a racially defined, and increasingly polarized, environment means that white racial identity will grow in salience” (Omi, 1996:182).

The Expectations of Those Who Share One’s Stigma

Stigma also affects interaction among those *within* the stigmatized category. From others in the category one learns a sense of group pride and cues about how to behave, what to expect from those in and outside the category, and how to protect one’s self. For those stigmatized by color, sex, or social class, such coping lessons likely come from family members. For those who are gay or lesbian, the lessons are usually provided later in life by members of the gay community.

Particularly for those with visible stigma, there are also frequent reminders that one will be seen as a representative of *all* members of the category. Thus, many in stigmatized categories must factor in virtually everyone’s opinion: What will others in my category think? What will those who are not stigmatized think? Indeed, one may even be criticized for failing to deal with oneself as a stigmatized person—“After all, who do you think you are?” In a sense, members of stigmatized categories may monitor one another much as they are policed by those outside the category, with the difference that those within one’s category can at least claim to be operating for one’s defense.

This point is illustrated in a story by the late tennis champion Arthur Ashe (1993). Ashe described watching his daughter play with a gift she had just

⁴An exception to the process of convergence among European-originated groups may be white, urban, Catholic ethnics. Throughout the 19th century, American Catholic churches were established as specifically ethnic churches (called “nationality churches”). These mostly urban churches were tailored to serve a particular ethnic group, which often included sending a priest from the home country who spoke the immigrants’ native language. Thus, within a single urban area one might find separate Irish, Italian, and Polish Catholic churches, as well as effectively separate Catholic schools. The formation of ethnic churches meant that parishes also became ethnically segregated. On occasion, those parishes came to constitute stable, distinctive, working-class ethnic enclaves. In these cases ethnic identity continues as an active, viable reality.

received—a white doll—as they sat in the audience of a televised match in his honor. When the cameras panned his section of seats, he realized that he needed to get the doll away from his daughter or risk the anger of some black viewers who would argue that by letting his child play with a white doll, he appeared to be a bad role model for the black community.

A different example is provided by a Mexican American acquaintance who worked in an office with only a few other Hispanics, most of whom felt that the routes to upward mobility were closed to them. Together they drafted a letter to the firm's president detailing their concerns and seeking some corrective action. Although he had qualms about signing the letter, our acquaintance felt there was no alternative. Because he worked for management, he was then called in to explain his behavior, which his supervisor saw as disloyal. Thus, he was put in the position of having to explain that, as a Chicano, he could not have refused to sign the letter.

Codes of conduct for those in stigmatized categories often require loyalty to the group, a fact of life that in this case the supervisor was unaware of. Indeed, the operating rule for many in stigmatized categories is to avoid public disagreement with one another or public airing of the group's "dirty laundry." Such codes are not trivial, because when violated members of stigmatized categories risk ostracism from a critical support network. The reality of discrimination makes it foolhardy to reject those who share one's stigma. What would it have meant to Arthur Ashe to lose the support of other African Americans? To whom would our acquaintance have turned in that organization had he refused to sign the letter? When they are unaware of these pressures, those in privileged categories may make impossible demands of those who are stigmatized; when aware of these pressures, however, such requests are clear tests of loyalty.

POINTS OF CONTENTION, STAGES OF CONTENTIOUSNESS

This essay focused on how privilege and stigma yield different treatment and different world views. In this final section we will examine the differing conceptions of racism. Then we will consider the stages of identity development within which privilege and stigma are experienced.

As we said earlier, flaming sometimes leaves those who are not members of the stigmatized category feeling excluded. For example, when Latino students talked about their enjoyment of using Spanish, an Anglo friend immediately responded with a description of how excluded she felt on those occasions. While aware of this, the Latino students nonetheless made it clear that they were not willing to forgo these opportunities. Their non-Spanish-speaking friends would just have to understand that it wasn't anything personal. This may well mark the bottom line: Those who are not stigmatized will sometimes feel and be excluded by their friends.

But another question is implied here: If the Hispanics exclude the Anglos, can the Anglos similarly exclude the Hispanics? As a way to approach this, consider the following two statements about gays and straights. In what ways are they similar, and in what ways different?

A heterosexual says, "I can't stand gays. I don't want to be anywhere around them."

A gay says, "I can't stand straights. I don't want to be anywhere around them."

While the statements are almost identical, the speakers come from very different positions of power. The heterosexual could likely structure his or her life so as to rarely interact with anyone gay, or at least anyone self-identified as gay. Most important, however, the heterosexual's attitude is consistent with major social, political, legal, and religious practices. Thus, the heterosexual in this example speaks from a position of some power, if only that derived from alignment with dominant cultural practices.

This is not the case for the gay person in this example, who is unlikely to be able to avoid contact with straights—and who would probably pay a considerable economic cost for self-segregation if that were attempted. There are no powerful institutional supports for hatred of straights. Similarly, the pleasure of exclusiveness enjoyed by bilingual Latino students exists against a backdrop of relative powerlessness, discrimination, stigmatization, and the general necessity of speaking English. The same might be said of men's disparagement of women compared to women's disparagement of men. As one student wrote, "As a male I have at times been on the receiving end of comments like, 'Oh, you're just like all men,' or 'Why can't men show more emotion?'" but these comments or the sentiments behind them do not carry any power to affect my status. Even in the instance of a black who sees me as a representative of all whites, his vision of me does not change my privileged status."

Thus, the exclusiveness of those in nonstigmatized statuses has as its backdrop relative powerfulness, a sense of entitlement, infrequent discrimination based on master status, and a general ability to avoid those who might be prejudiced against people like themselves. The forms of exclusion available to minority group members are unlikely to tangibly affect the lives of those in privileged statuses. Being able to exclude someone from a dance or a club is not as significant as being able to exclude that person from employment, residence, or educational institution. This is what is meant when it is said that members of stigmatized categories may be prejudiced but not racist, or sexist, etc.; they do not have access to the institutional power by which to significantly affect the lives of those in nonstigmatized groups.

The term *racist* also carries different connotations for blacks and whites. For whites being color conscious is taken as evidence of racism; those who are not color conscious are not racists (Blauner, 1992). This understanding of what it means to be a racist has its basis in the civil rights movement. If, as the civil rights movement taught, color should not make a difference in the way people are treated, whites who make a point of *not* noticing race argue that they are being polite and not racist (Frankenberg, 1993).

But given America's historical focus on race, it seems unrealistic for any of us to claim that we are oblivious to it. While many consider it impolite to mention race, differential treatment does not disappear as a consequence. Further, a refusal

to notice race conveys that being black, Asian, or Latino is a "defect" that is indelicate (for whites) to mention. Thus, it can be argued that colorblindness is not really a strategy of politeness; rather, it is a strategy of power evasion. Since race clearly makes a difference in people's lives, pretending not to see it is a way to avoid noticing its effect. The alternative would be a strategy of race cognizance, that is, of paying systematic attention to the impact of race on oneself and others (Frankenberg, 1993).

Different conceptions of racism also emerge in the course of *racial and ethnic identity development*, which is the "understanding shared by members of ethnic groups, of what it means to be black, white, Chicano, Irish, Jewish, and so on" (White and Burke, 1987:311). We offer here a brief composite sketch of what appear to be the stages of this development (Cross, 1971, 1978; Hazen, 1992, 1994; Helms, 1990; Morton and Atkinson, 1983; Thomas, 1970; Thomas and Thomas, 1971). This framework might also be extended to the sex, class, disability, and sexual orientation identities we have focused on in this text. One important caution is necessary, however: Not everyone necessarily goes through each of these stages. For example, it is argued that African Americans are rarely found in the first of the stages we detail (Hazen, 1992).

For those who are stigmatized, the first stage of identity development involves an internalization of the culture's negative imagery. This stage may include the disparagement of others in one's group and a strong desire to be accepted by dominant group members. For women, this might mean being highly critical of other women. For those who are low income or gay, this stage might entail feelings of shame. For people of color, it might involve efforts to lighten one's skin, straighten one's hair, or have an eye tuck.

In the second stage, anger at the dominant culture emerges, usually as the result of specific encounters with discrimination. Philosopher Sandra Bartky (1990), focusing on women's discovery of the extent of sexism, describes this as a period in which sexism appears to be everywhere. Events and objects that previously had been neutral are discovered to be sexist; it becomes impossible to get through the day without becoming enraged—and the injustices one discovers are communicated to everyone within earshot. One's own behavior is also subject to scrutiny: "Am I being sexist to buy a doll for my niece?" Situations that used to be straightforward become moral tests.

The third stage is sometimes called an immersion stage, because it involves total involvement in one's own culture. In the previous stage, the individual is focused on evaluating and reacting to the dominant culture. In this stage, however, the focus shifts to one's own group. Dominant group members and the dominant group culture become less relevant to one's pursuits. This is often a period of participation in segregated activities and organizations as one seeks distance from dominant group members. While anger is somewhat lessened here, the process of re-evaluating one's old identity continues.

The final stage is described as a period of integration as one's stigmatized status becomes integrated with the other aspects of one's life rather than taking precedence

over them. Still, an opposition to prejudice and discrimination continues. At this point, one can distinguish between supportive and unsupportive dominant group members and thus is more likely to establish satisfying relations with them.

For those who do not occupy stigmatized statuses, the first stage of race or ethnic identity development is identified as an unquestioning acceptance of dominant group values. This acceptance might take shape as being oblivious to discrimination or as espousing supremacist ideologies. In Reading 29, Thandeka posits that whiteness is produced when the white child submits to the threats of family members to obey the racial divides.

In the second stage, one becomes aware of stigmatization, often through an eye-opening encounter with discrimination. Such an experience may produce a commitment to social change or a sense of powerlessness. As is the case for those in stigmatized statuses, in this stage those in privileged statuses also find themselves overwhelmed by all the forms of discrimination they see, often accompanied by a sense of personal guilt. In an attempt to affiliate and offer assistance, they are likely to seek alliances with those in stigmatized statuses. On college campuses this timing couldn't be worse, since many of those in stigmatized statuses are at their peak level of anger at those in privileged groups.

In stage three, those in privileged statuses focus less on trying to win the approval of those in stigmatized groups and instead explore the history of privileged and stigmatized statuses. Learning how privilege has affected one's own life is often a central question in this period.

The final stage involves integrating one's privileged statuses with all the other aspects of one's life, recognizing those in stigmatized categorizations as distinctive individuals rather than romanticizing them as a category ("just because oppressors are bad, doesn't mean that the oppressed are good" [Spivak, 1994]), and understanding that many with privilege have worked effectively against discrimination.

The research on cognitive development in higher education bears interestingly on the stages of race and ethnic identity development and on the diversity of the college population. For example,

Our analyses suggest that diversity experiences in the first year of college seem to be particularly important in developing critical thinking. Indeed, diversity experiences at the beginning of college may positively affect a student's cognitive growth throughout his or her entire college career. Finally . . . racially oriented diversity experiences may be particularly important for the critical-thinking growth of white students. Indeed, experiences like making friends with students from a different race and attending a racial or cultural awareness workshop had positive impacts on growth in critical thinking only for white men and women. (Pascarella, 2001:25)

It is interesting that perceptions about balkanization and self-segregation are shared by many [college] students, even when the evidence suggests that students are often part of diverse networks. In his dissertation on "The Impact of Friendship Groups in a Multicultural University," Anthony Antonio found that although the students he surveyed perceived the campus to be segregated, their friendship groups tended to be racially and ethnically mixed. It appears that students see ethnic clusters but do not see the increasingly diverse peer groups that are emerging of which they are a part. It may also be

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that students on our campuses are reflecting some disappointment with the campuses' inability to capitalize fully on the potential created by increasing diversity on campus. These findings underscore the fact that individuals, groups, and institutions thrive under campus conditions that acknowledge multiple affiliations and identities and facilitate their engagement. (Smith and Schonfeld, 2000:19)

Movement through the stages of ethnic or racial identity is positively related to self-esteem for all American race and ethnic groups, but the relationship is stronger for those who are Asian American, African American, and Latino than for those who are white (Hazen, 1994:55). Indeed, on various measures of self-esteem, African Americans score significantly higher than those in other race or ethnic groups (Hazen, 1992).

We once observed an African American student explain to his white classmates that he and his sister both self-identified as black, even though their mother was white. At that point a white student asked why he didn't call himself white since he looked white and that status would yield him more privilege. In response, he detailed all the qualities he prized in the black community and said he would never give up that status to be white. Much of what he said was new to the white students; many had never thought there was anything positive about being black in America.

The student's question reflected the common assumption that those who are stigmatized wish they belonged to the privileged group. Yet the woman who asked the question was clear that she never wanted to be a male, which was equally surprising to the men in the class. Thus, many men presume there is nothing positive about being female, many straights assume there is nothing positive about being gay, many able-bodied people assume that being disabled guarantees misery and loneliness (French, 1996), and many in the middle and upper classes assume there is nothing positive in life for those who are poor. But most people value and appreciate the statuses they occupy. We may wish those statuses weren't stigmatized or overprivileged, but that does not mean we would want to be other than who we are.

THE READINGS IN THIS SECTION

Our goal in this essay was to provide you with a framework by which to make sense of people's experience of privilege and stigma. Because there is a great deal of material that illustrates privilege and stigma, the readings in this section raise general issues or concepts applicable to those in various stigmatized or privileged statuses.

KEY CONCEPTS

discredited and discreditable The discredited are those whose stigma is known or apparent to others. The discreditable are those whose stigma is unknown or invisible to others; they are not yet discredited. (pages 188–93)

double consciousness A concept first offered by W. E. B. Du Bois to describe seeing oneself (or members of one's group) through the eyes of a critical, dominant group member. (pages 191–92)

entitlement The belief that one has the right to respect, protection, reward, and other privileges. (page 182)

flaming As used in this text, a flagrant display of one's stigmatized status; more often used to refer to gay men acting effeminately. (pages 190–93)

looping or rereading Interpreting (and usually dismissing) someone's words or actions because of the status that the person occupies. (page 184)

marked and unmarked statuses A marked status is one identified as "special" in some way, for example, a blind musician or a woman doctor. Unmarked statuses, such as musician or doctor, do not have such qualifiers. (page 182)

passing Not revealing a stigmatized identity. (pages 188–90)

privilege The advantages provided by some statuses. (pages 177–85)

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