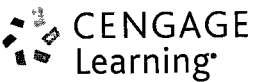


RACE AND ETHNIC RELATIONS

American and Global Perspectives

TENTH EDITION

Martin N. Marger



Australia • Brazil • Japan • Korea • Mexico • Singapore • Spain • United Kingdom • United States

**Race and Ethnic Relations:
American and Global
Perspectives, Tenth Edition**

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ETHNIC STRATIFICATION

CHAPTER

2

Majority and Minority

A prominent sociologist has suggested that the first questions asked by sociology were these: “Why is there inequality among men? Where do its causes lie? Can it be reduced, or even abolished altogether? Or do we have to accept it as a necessary element in the structure of human society?” (Dahrendorf, 1968:152). Such questions remain fundamental to sociological inquiry and are particularly critical in the study of race and ethnic relations.

Humans are unequal, of course, in many ways. They differ in physical features and in mental capacities, talent, strength, musical aptitude, and so on. All these inequalities are a product of both social learning and genetic inheritance, although the significance of each of these factors is, as we have now seen, not always clear. Perhaps more important, however, people are also unequal in their access to social rewards—that is, various forms of wealth, power, and prestige. These inequalities, all primarily of social origin, are of greatest consequence in accounting for who we are and who we ultimately may be as members of our society.

STRATIFICATION SYSTEMS

In all societies people receive different shares of what is valued and scarce. This unequal distribution of resources creates a system of stratification. A rank order, or hierarchy, emerges in which people are grouped on the basis of how much of society’s rewards they receive. Those at the top receive the most of what there is to get, and those at the bottom the least. Societies may comprise any number of strata, but in all cases this system of inequality is structured. That is, stratification is not random, with groups and individuals occupying different positions by chance; rather, social institutions such as government, the economy, education, and religion operate to ensure the position of various groups in the hierarchy. Moreover, the system of stratification in all societies is legitimized by an ideology that justifies the resultant inequality. The pattern of stratification in a society therefore remains stable for many generations.

Modern societies are stratified along several dimensions, the most consequential of which is class stratification, in which groups are ranked on the basis of income, wealth, and occupation. Gender and age are other important dimensions of stratification. Multiethnic societies are also stratified on the basis of ethnicity, and it is on this dimension that we will primarily focus.

POWER AND STRATIFICATION

In a basic sense, power underlies all forms of stratification. Just as differences in wealth, education, occupation, and prestige are mirrors of a society's power arrangement, so too are differences in rank among a society's ethnic groups. Social stratification, then, is a system of unequal distribution of a society's rewards, determined above all by power differentials. In simple terms, those at the top get more of what is valued because they are more powerful; they possess greater power resources in the form of wealth, property, political office, arms, control of communications, and knowledge. The position of others in the stratification system is determined accordingly on the basis of their ability to amass and apply power resources.

STRATIFICATION AND IDEOLOGY

The power of a dominant class or ethnic group is not simply the power of force but also the power to propound and sustain an ideology that legitimizes the system of inequality. Although coercion is always at the root of obedience to authority, and all dominant groups use force when the need arises, coercive techniques are commonly used only in societies where the prevailing system is not accepted by a significant part of the populace. In South Africa under apartheid or in the antebellum U.S. South, for example, whites traditionally enforced their will over nonwhites through blatant forms of repression.

The use of raw force alone, however, cannot be effective in prompting compliance with a system of inequality over long periods. The stability of systems that rely primarily on coercion is always precarious. For government and other supportive institutions of the dominant group to establish and sustain a ruling system that is popularly supported over many generations requires that power be legitimized in less repressive and less direct ways. In protecting their privileges, dominant groups try to engender loyalty and respect in subordinates, not fear (Jackman, 1994). People must come to see the inequalities in power and wealth as just and even socially beneficial. Only then do systems of social inequality attain stability. When this is accomplished, ruling groups need no longer resort to force as the principal means of assuring their power and privilege. Such long-range stability and legitimacy require the development of an effective ideology and its communication through socialization.

Despite their acceptance—usually reflexively—by both ruling groups and masses, the fundamental ideological values tend to accommodate mostly the interests of the society's ruling groups. In the United States, for example, the dominant explanation for social inequality centers on the belief that the society's opportunity structure is open, providing equal chances for all to achieve material success or political power, regardless of their social origins. This presumably being the case, each person

controls his or her placement in the social hierarchy. Social success, then, is explained as the result of one's willingness to work hard; failure is the product of lack of ambition or desire to improve oneself. Differences in wealth and power are not denied, but they are seen as a result of individual capabilities and efforts rather than the workings of a class system that ordinarily engenders success for the well-born and failure for the poor. In reality, however, the opportunity structure is hardly equal, and the dominant values of individualism, competition, and achievement favor those who are well off and can easily avail themselves of the opportunities for success. As we will see, just as there are ideologies that explain and rationalize inequalities in social class, so too there are ideologies that explain the differential treatment of groups on the basis of ethnicity. These ideologies generally constitute some form of racism, the basic components of which were discussed in Chapter 1.

To summarize, **social stratification** is *a system of structured inequality in which people receive different amounts of society's valued resources*. This inequality is relatively stable over long periods and gives rise to social classes—groups of people of approximately equal income and wealth. In multiethnic societies, ethnicity becomes an additional—and critical—basis of stratification. Differential power underlies all forms of inequality, and the system is underwritten by an ideology—propounded by the dominant group but generally accepted by others—that justifies differences in social rewards.

ETHNIC STRATIFICATION SYSTEMS

Ethnic stratification, like other forms of stratification, is a system of structured social inequality. In almost all multiethnic societies, a hierarchical arrangement of ethnic groups emerges in which one establishes itself as the dominant group, with maximum power to shape the nature of ethnic relations. Other, subordinate ethnic groups exert less power, corresponding to their place in the hierarchy, extending down to the lowest ranking groups, which may wield little or no power.

Group rank is determined mainly on the basis of distance from the dominant group in culture and physical appearance. Those most like the dominant group are more highly ranked, and those most different are ranked correspondingly low. A system of **ethnic stratification**, then, is *a rank order of groups, each made up of people with presumed common cultural or physical characteristics interacting in patterns of dominance and subordination*. Sociologists ordinarily refer to *ethnic stratification systems* as **majority-minority**, or **dominant-subordinate**, systems. Let us look more closely at the components of these systems, majority and minority groups.

MINORITY GROUPS

DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT *Minority groups are those groups in a multiethnic society that, on the basis of their physical or cultural traits, receive fewer of the society's rewards.* In a classic definition, Louis Wirth defined a minority group as "a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination" (1945:347). Members of minority groups disproportionately occupy poorer jobs, earn less

income, live in less desirable areas, receive an inferior education, exercise less political power, and are subjected to various social indignities. These inequalities are the result of their social mark—the physical or cultural features that distinguish them. Moreover, as Wirth pointed out, minority group members are conscious of the fact that they are differentially treated.

SOCIAL DEFINITION The physical or cultural traits on which minority status is based are socially defined. Thus any characteristic may serve as the basis of minority status as long as it is perceived as significant. Suppose that in society X, hair color is considered a meaningful distinguishing feature. If blond hair is deemed more desirable than black or brown, those with black or brown hair may be singled out and treated differentially for no other reason than that their hair is not blond. The black-haired and brown-haired populations of society X are minority groups.

DIFFERENTIAL POWER Minority groups are afforded unequal treatment because they lack the power to negate or counteract that treatment. Blond-haired people in our fictional society can continue to treat nonblonds as less than desirable types and withhold various forms of social rewards only if they maintain sufficient power to do so. Minority status, then (like all forms of stratification), is above all a reflection of differential power. In a dominant-minority system, one group possesses sufficient power to impose its will on others.

CATEGORICAL TREATMENT “Minority” denotes a group, not an individual, status. All those who are classified as part of the group will experience differential treatment, regardless of their personal characteristics or achievements. Thus people cannot voluntarily remove themselves from their minority position.

SOCIOLOGICAL AND NUMERICAL MEANINGS The sociological meaning of minority is not the same as the mathematical definition. Numbers have no necessary relation to a group’s minority status. For example, as we will see in Chapter 14, nonwhites in South Africa make up more than 85 percent of the population, yet until only a few years ago they constituted a sociological minority. Nonwhites had almost no access to political and economic power, were assigned the lower occupational positions, and were afforded grossly inferior opportunities in all areas of social life by comparison with South African whites, who made up less than 15 percent of the population. Rather than relative size, it is a group’s marginal location in the social order that defines it as a minority.

TYPES OF MINORITIES

In its sociological meaning, the term *minority* can be applied to a variety of social groups. Our chief concern is with *ethnic minorities*, *those groups singled out and treated unequally on the basis of their cultural or physical differences from the dominant group*. Ordinarily, attention is directed to the most conspicuous ethnic groups, those with especially marked differences in skin color or those that maintain divergent cultural beliefs and behavior. In the United States today, these are blacks, American Indians, Asians, and Latinos. These are the groups that have experienced the most blatant and consequential forms of discriminatory treatment.

In addition to ethnic traits, however, other physical or behavioral characteristics are sufficient to set off groups of people from society's mainstream, resulting in differential treatment. To equate minority groups only with highly visible ethnic groups fails to account for the many other types of minorities found in complex societies.

Sex, for example, is a clearly distinguishable physical characteristic that in most societies serves to single out one group—ordinarily, women—for differential treatment. It is in this sense that women may be said to constitute a minority group. Traditionally, women have rarely occupied positions of great political or economic power, have been barred from entrance into many occupations, and have been excluded from numerous areas of social life. Only in recent times have these deeply rooted patterns of sex discrimination changed radically, particularly in developed societies. In many parts of the developing world, however, the subordination of women, often in extreme form, remains starkly evident.

People with physical disabilities—the blind, the deaf, those confined to wheelchairs, and so on—are another evident minority. On the basis of their physical distinctions, they are singled out and given differential treatment in many social contexts. Not until the last few decades had efforts been made to accommodate such people in public buildings, for example, and they had rarely been afforded equal educational and occupational opportunities.

Sexual orientation has traditionally been the basis for extreme forms of prejudice and discrimination in American society. Gay and lesbian people have, in fact, almost classically evinced all the characteristics of the sociological definition of minority. Most obviously they have been given differential treatment. For example, until 2012, openly declared gay and lesbian people were barred from serving in the military. No more than a few years prior to that, many states maintained anti-sodomy statutes that made homosexuality itself a crime. While the civil rights of gay and lesbian people have increasingly been recognized in the United States in the past few years, including same-sex marriage, there remains an image of fundamental difference from the majority, which continues to serve as a social marker and the basis for differential treatment. In many developing societies, the plight of gay and lesbian people is even more severe, and openly declaring oneself homosexual may actually put one's life at risk.

Age constitutes another physical feature that serves to set groups apart for differential and unequal treatment. In all societies, of course, certain limitations are placed on people according to their age. The very young are not expected to fulfill adult roles, and at the opposite end of the life cycle, the aged are not expected to perform as younger people do. But in some cases, this necessary age differentiation exceeds any rational explanation, and people are singled out for differential treatment merely on the basis of their age. Workers are often forced into retirement at sixty-five, even if they remain capable of carrying out their occupational duties and wish to do so. Or elderly people commonly find themselves dealt with in condescending and child-like fashion, having others address them as “dear” or “sweetie” or simply assuming them to be incompetent. Cases such as these constitute age discrimination.

Certain groups are also singled out for differential treatment on the basis of their past behavior. Those acknowledging treatment for mental illness or a prison record, for example, risk social exclusion and discrimination by employers, landlords, and law enforcement agencies.

For each of these groups, a belief system, or ideology, explains and justifies their differential treatment. Women are alleged to be physically or mentally inferior to men or to be unable to perform at the level of men; the elderly are perceived as slow, ineffective, or senile; gays and lesbians are "deviant" or "immoral"; and so on. These generalized beliefs serve as devices to sustain unequal treatment.

DOMINANT GROUPS

In the study of ethnic relations, it has been most common for sociologists to focus primarily on minority groups. Ethnic relations, however, involve not only the problems of those at the bottom of the ethnic hierarchy but also the manner in which those at the top maintain their dominance. Obviously, the existence of minority groups implies a majority group. In this regard, Hughes and Hughes have noted, "It takes more than one ethnic group to make ethnic relations. The relations can be no more understood by studying one or the other of the groups than can a chemical combination by study of one element only, or a boxing bout by observation of only one of the fighters. Yet it is common to study ethnic relations as if one had to know only one party to them" (1952:158).

In the United States, for example, black-white relations for many decades were portrayed as "the black problem in America," and most studies dealt with the social and psychological problems faced by blacks because of their minority status. Only in the 1960s did sociologists begin to show that intergroup relations between blacks and whites were just as much a *white* problem because it was the dominant white group that controlled the character and course of those relations more than did blacks themselves. Our major concern is not the unique character of particular ethnic groups per se as much as it is the social situation within which different groups interact. It is thus necessary to look carefully at the nature and functions of dominant as well as minority ethnic groups.

Most sociologists refer to a society's majority group as the *dominant* group, and that usage is adopted here. This avoids the tendency to think in numerical terms in cases where the dominant group may not be a numerical majority. For consistency, we might also refer to minority groups as *subordinate* groups, implying the existence of a power relationship rather than a numerical one. However, because the term *minority* is so firmly fixed in the sociological literature as well as in popular usage, we will continue to use it.

Most simply, then, we can define the **dominant ethnic group** as that *group at the top of the ethnic hierarchy, which receives a disproportionate share of wealth, exercises predominant political authority, dominates the society's cultural system, and has inordinate influence on the future ethnic makeup of the society.* Let's look more closely at each element of the dominant group's power.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DOMINANCE Its power advantage in political and economic realms enables the dominant group to acquire a disproportionate share of the society's wealth and to exercise maximum control of key institutions. This does not mean, of course, that all those classified as part of the dominant ethnic group are equally powerful and wealthy. Rather, it means only that members of the dominant ethnic group disproportionately enjoy those privileges. In the United States, for

example, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs), or Anglo-Americans, historically have been, and to a great extent remain, the dominant ethnic group. But obviously not all members of this category are part of the decision-making elites of government or the economy. They are, however, *disproportionately* holders of the most important positions in those institutions and are able to render decisions that reflect the interests and values of Anglo-Americans generally. Thus, compared with other ethnic groups, Anglo-Americans own a greater share of the society's wealth, earn more income, acquire more and better education, work at higher-ranking and more prestigious occupations, and generally attain more of the society's valued resources.

CULTURAL POWER In addition to the dominant ethnic group's greater economic and political power, its norms and values prevail in the society as a whole. The cultural characteristics of the dominant group become the society's standards. As the sociologist R. A. Schermerhorn explains, "When we speak of a 'dominant group' we mean that group whose historical language, traditions, customs, and ideology are normative for the society; their preeminence is enforced by the folkways or by law, and in time these elements attain the position of cultural presuppositions" (1949:6).

The cultural supremacy of the dominant ethnic group in a multiethnic society applies to *major* norms and values, not to every element of the society's culture. In any heterogeneous society, certain cultural traits of minority ethnic groups are bound to seep into the mainstream. In the United States, to use a simple example, egg rolls, bagels, tacos, and pizza have become standard "American" fare. But items such as foods represent only minor cultural components. There is no similar acceptance of variety regarding the more basic aspects of culture: language, religious values, political practices, and economic ideology. On these counts, ethnic groups are expected to acculturate to the dominant group's customs and ideals. In the United States, for example, it is assumed that all groups will speak English, will maintain Judeo-Christian ethics, will abide by democratic principles, and will accept capitalist values. Those who do not, remain outside the societal mainstream and may be held in contempt. Although changes even in these areas of culture are usually evident over the long run, such changes are slow, deliberate, and may be accompanied by controversy and open conflict. Bilingual education and bilingual government services in the United States, for example, have often met with strong resistance.

CONTROL OF IMMIGRATION The dominant ethnic group, given its political, economic, and cultural power, is able to regulate the flow and composition of new members of the society (usually through immigration) and to determine the social treatment of new groups after they have entered the society. Once its preeminence has been established, *the dominant group becomes synonymous with the "host" or "receiving" society*, or what John Porter calls the *charter group*:

In any society which has to seek members from outside there will be varying judgements about the extensive reservoirs of recruits that exist in the world. In this process of evaluation the first ethnic group to come into previously unpopulated territory, as the effective possessor, has the most say. This group becomes the charter group of the society, and among the many privileges and prerogatives which it retains are decisions about what other groups are to be let in and what they will be permitted to do. (1965:60)

No matter how liberal the immigration policies of a multiethnic society may be, certain restrictions or quotas are always imposed on groups that are highly unlike the dominant group in culture or physical appearance. And in the same manner, those immigrants whose origins are culturally and physically close to those of the dominant group enjoy not only easier entrance but also more rapid and less impeded upward social mobility. Consider, for example, the different social and political responses to Canadian immigrants entering the United States compared to those from Mexico.¹

RELATIVE DOMINANCE Dominant group power is never absolute. Although the dominant group is at the top of the ethnic hierarchy, its power and influence are relative, not total. As explained earlier, members of that group are disproportionately in positions of power and influence. Likewise, cultural dominance should not be interpreted as complete. The dominant group has a disproportionate influence on shaping the society's cultural mold, but, as already noted, minority groups obviously make contributions and compel changes. The United States today is hardly a WASP paragon in literature, music, the arts, politics, education, and most other aspects of culture. On the really fundamental aspects of culture, however—such as language, law, and religion—WASP influence remains much stronger and less vulnerable to minority influences.

Also, the ethnic hierarchy is not fixed. Rather, it is always under challenge to some degree; therefore, groups' positions may change and their power may be enhanced or diminished. For example, to speak of the Anglo group as dominant in American society today is not to imply that its position is comparable to what it was in an earlier time when its power was far more thorough. As minority groups over the years have acquired more economic, political, and cultural resources, WASP power has been diluted.

MIDDLEMAN MINORITIES

Certain ethnic groups in multiethnic societies sometimes occupy a middle status between the dominant group at the top of the ethnic hierarchy and subordinate groups in lower positions. These have been referred to as middleman minorities (Blalock, 1967; Bonacich, 1973; Bonacich and Modell, 1980; Turner and Bonacich, 1980; Zenner, 1991).

Middleman minorities often act as mediators between dominant and subordinate ethnic groups. They ordinarily occupy an intermediate niche in the economic system, being neither capitalists (mainly members of the dominant group) at the top nor working masses (mainly those of the subordinate groups) at the bottom. They play such occupational roles as traders, shopkeepers, moneylenders, and independent professionals. Middleman minorities therefore serve a function for both dominant and subordinate groups. They perform economic duties that those at the top

¹ Petersen (1980) notes that the dominant group may not always be large and powerful enough to act as a "host" to immigrants. He points to modern Israel as a case in which immigrants have been acculturated not to a host population but to an ideology of Zionism. Similarly, Argentina's development since the late nineteenth century has been marked by the economic and political ascendance of immigrants.

find distasteful or lacking in prestige, and they frequently supply business and professional services to members of ethnic minorities who lack such skills and resources.

Given their intermediate economic position, such groups find themselves particularly vulnerable to out-group hostility, emanating from both dominant and subordinate groups. In times of stress they are natural scapegoats (Blalock, 1967). They are numerically and politically lacking in power and therefore must appeal to the dominant group for protection, which will be provided as long as it is felt that their economic role is necessary. But the role may still be seen as tainted, thus prompting feelings of revulsion and discriminatory actions. Subordinate groups also view middleman minorities with disdain because they often encounter them as providers of necessary business and professional services. Such entrepreneurs therefore come to be seen as exploiters. In the United States, for example, Jews often operated businesses in black ghetto areas of large cities—a role increasingly assumed today by new immigrants, especially Koreans. Conflict between these businesspeople and their neighborhood customers has been common.

Because they stand in a kind of social no-man's-land, part of neither the society's dominant group nor a suppressed minority, middleman minorities tend to develop an unusually strong in-group solidarity and are often seen by other groups as clannish (Bonacich and Modell, 1980). Such in-group solidarity, as well as their business success, creates resentment and antipathy, which in turn sustain a high level of ethnic solidarity.

A number of groups that seem to fit the characteristics of middleman minorities have been evident in almost all parts of the world. Jews in Europe have historically been a classic illustration. As moneylenders in medieval times, they were a generally despised group. They assumed this economic role, however, because for Christians, money lending was regarded as sinful. Such money-lending activity was nonetheless necessary, and as non-Christians, Jews naturally came to fill this occupational niche.

The ethnic Chinese in various Southeast Asian societies, sometimes called the "overseas Chinese," have played a similar role (Chua, 2004; Dobbin, 1996; Freedman, 1955; Zenner, 1991). In the Philippines, for example, the Chinese have traditionally been highly successful in business but have also been the target of much prejudice and discrimination by Filipinos. In Indonesia, too, the overseas Chinese have been prominent as a middleman ethnic group. Although they make up only 3 percent of the population of 240 million, they play a dominant role in the economy, accounting for perhaps 70 percent of all private economic activity (Chua, 2004; Schwarz, 1994). This has bred much resentment on the part of indigenous Indonesians, who view the ethnic Chinese as a cohesive and clannish group—despite the fact that the Chinese have been in Indonesia since the nineteenth century and in recent years have absorbed much of Indonesian culture. Episodes of violence against the ethnic Chinese have been regular occurrences in the past few decades (Chua, 2004; Kristof, 1998; Mydans, 1998).

Obviously, many individuals within groups that have been labeled middleman minorities do not conform to the preeminent characteristics of this type; and even the group as a whole may, at different times, display few of them. But the idea of middleman minorities forces us to consider the many variations among minority groups of a multiethnic society.

THE RELATIVITY OF DOMINANT AND MINORITY STATUS

Minority ethnic status is a relative condition: the treatment of ethnic minorities will vary from group to group and from time to time. Some groups may be consistently singled out and deprived of social rewards, and others may experience only minimal discriminatory treatment. Even for any single group, minority status is not a simple matter to explain. Prejudice and discrimination may be quite strong at certain times and diminished at others depending on various economic, political, and social conditions. Moreover, members of a particular group may experience rejection and denial in some areas of social life but not in others.

Whether a person is part of the dominant group or a minority group depends in all cases on the social context. In some instances people will be part of one, and in other instances they may find themselves part of another. For example, Jews in American society are ordinarily designated a minority group. Yet from the standpoint of blacks, who generally rank lower in economic class and prestige, Jews are part of the dominant white group. Similarly, Appalachian whites who have migrated to northern cities are often discriminated against and derisively referred to as "hillbillies"; they are, then, a minority in that context even though they are usually white, Protestant, and Anglo-Saxon in origin—that is, indisputably part of the society's dominant ethnic group (Killian, 1985; Philliber and McCoy, 1981).

Group membership in a modern, complex society is rarely a simple matter of "either-or" but instead takes the form of combinations that often yield confusing and ambiguous statuses. Different ethnic designations alone can produce equivocal statuses. For example, are Irish American Catholics responded to more generally as whites (that is, part of the dominant group) or as Catholics (that is, part of a minority group)? In different social contexts, either response may be expected. Among blacks, Irish Catholics will be seen and interacted with primarily as white, and their religion or national origin will be of no significance. Among white Protestants, however, their religious identity will be stressed and their racial identity will be unimportant.

ETHNIC STRATA: CLARITY AND MOBILITY

As noted earlier, ethnic stratification, like socioeconomic forms of stratification, is founded on the power of one group over others. The ensuing relations among groups are, therefore, ordinarily relations of conflict (Olsen, 1970). But if the theme of differential power is common to ethnic and socioeconomic forms of stratification, there are also several important differences between the two, namely, the clarity of and mobility between strata.

MOBILITY BETWEEN STRATA In developed societies, socioeconomic classes are relatively open, with porous boundaries between them. Possibilities exist for *individuals to move upward from a lower to a higher class or downward from a higher to a lower class*. Sociologists refer to such movement as *social mobility*. In reality, social mobility from one generation to the next or within one's own lifetime is ordinarily limited. People inherit their class position, and most do not move substantially upward or downward. Nonetheless, equalitarian ideologies proclaim and encourage class mobility. Those born into lower economic classes are, at least theoretically, able to advance.

Ethnic stratification, however, is a system in which the boundaries between strata (ethnic groups) are far more distinct. For most people ethnicity is, as we have seen, an ascribed status; ethnic group membership is assigned at birth and is ordinarily not subject to fundamental change. As a result, ethnic consciousness is more strongly developed among members, and the competition and conflict among ethnic groups are more sharply focused.

In most multiethnic societies, the degree of mobility between ethnic strata is minimal. Particularly where physical differences, such as skin color, are pronounced, extremely wide schisms develop between groups, and the lines of ethnic division remain rigid and relatively impermeable for many generations. This is so even when cultural differences are slight. African Americans, for example, are well assimilated into the dominant culture, yet they remain more rigidly segregated than others. In general, the more visible the differences between ethnic groups, the more clear-cut and inflexible will be the divisions between them. Moreover, physical differences ordinarily relate closely to the degree of inequality between the groups. Wilson notes that "there are no known cases of racial groups in advanced nation states having established equalitarian relationships" (1973:18).

Though it is nowhere common, ethnic mobility differs in degree in various multiethnic societies. In a few, the movement from one ethnic group to another is not unusual. In Mexico and Peru, for example, people who may be Indians can move into the mestizo group, the culturally and politically dominant group, merely by dropping the use of their Indian language and adopting Spanish in its place, by wearing shoes rather than the peasant huaraches, or sandals, and generally by practicing non-Indian ways (van den Berghe, 1978, 1979b). Physical visibility is not a critical factor that prevents such movement. To a lesser degree, the same is true of Brazil. Even in those societies with more rigid boundaries between ethnic groups, mobility may be evident among those close to the dominant group in culture and physical appearance, and such groups may be absorbed into the dominant group over a few generations. But, in general, where groups remain culturally or physically very distinct, mobility between ethnic strata is limited.

CASTE In some cases, ethnic stratification takes on the characteristics of a caste system, *the most rigidly static type of stratification, in which movement from one group to another is highly restricted by custom or law*. The caste system of India is perhaps the most noted, but it is marked not so much by physical distinctions between groups as by people's social descent (Béteille, 1969; Kolenda, 1985). As it is used in non-Indian settings, the idea of caste more generally refers to "a major dichotomous division in a society between pariahs and the rest of the members of the society" (Berreman, 1966:292; see also van den Berghe, 1981). Pariahs are those who are stigmatized on the basis of some physical or cultural feature, and in most multiethnic societies that stigma is skin color or other perceived racial features.

Where ethnic groups are racially defined, relations among them tend toward caste. Endogamy within castes is enforced by custom or law, and interaction between castes in intimate social settings such as peer groups, clubs, and neighborhoods is minimized. Subordinate castes are usually exploited occupationally by the dominant group and experience little or no change in their collective social position.

The United States and South Africa provide the best examples of castelike systems. As we will see in later chapters, in both societies the lines of division between black and white groups are sharply drawn on the basis of perceived physical differences, and endogamy is the norm. Relations between blacks and whites remain chiefly of a secondary nature, that is, in settings that do not call for close personal and intimate contacts.

One interesting case of caste exists in Japan, where a pariah group, the Burakumin, are indistinguishable physically from the rest of the population. Nonetheless, the extreme discrimination imposed on this group has been justified in terms of race. As De Vos and Wagatsuma explain, there is a commonly shared social myth that the Burakumin "are descendants of a less human 'race' than the stock that fathered the Japanese nation as a whole" (1966:xx). In the past, Burakumin were required to wear unique identifying garb, were strictly segregated residentially, and were limited to low-status occupations (Aoyagi and Dore, 1964). Although they are today not as stigmatized as in the past, their social and economic standing remains low, and they still live mostly in isolated communities (Kristof, 1995; Onishi, 2009; Saito and Farkas, 2004). Moreover, many Japanese still take care to avoid marriage with a Buraku individual and may research in great depth the background of a potential mate to assure that there is no trace of Burakumin ancestry.

Northern Ireland, as we will see in Chapter 17, provides another example of a society where its two major religio-ethnic groups, Protestant and Catholic, maintain a castelike relationship. Social interaction other than work usually takes place among coethnics, and contact with members of the other group is limited. Segregated neighborhoods, schools, and recreational activities are the norm, and intermarriage across ethnic lines is severely constrained. As with the Burakumin in Japan, there are no apparent physical distinctions that separate members of the two groups, but through subtle and well-understood social signs, cues, and behaviors, one's ethnic identity is quickly established in all social situations.

The Burakumin in Japan and Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland illustrate how presumed group differences—though objectively slight or even nonexistent—can form the basis of strong ethnic divisions. Group separation is maintained through a perception of and belief in profound and unbridgeable differences.

Ordinarily, however, initial placement and subsequent mobility within an ethnic stratification system are affected greatly by visibility. Those who can be stigmatized on the basis of easily perceived differences are more easily discriminated against and kept in a subordinate position than those whose visible differences are negligible. It is for that reason that the Nazis forced German Jews, physically indistinguishable from the rest of the German population, to wear yellow Stars of David on their clothing.

ETHNICITY, CLASS, AND POWER

Although ethnicity and social class are distinct dimensions of stratification, they are closely interrelated. In almost all multiethnic societies, people's ethnic classification becomes an important factor in the distribution of social rewards and, hence, in their economic and political class positions. Where people begin their quest for the society's rewards and what they ultimately achieve depend in some degree on their ethnicity.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF ETHNICITY TO SOCIAL CLASS AND POWER

That ethnic groups are hierarchically ordered would mean nothing if that rank order were not tied to the distribution of the society's wealth, power, and prestige. The fact that members of one or a few ethnic groups maintain most of the important positions of political and economic power, own an inordinate share of the society's wealth, and enjoy the most social prestige is due neither to chance nor to their greater motivation or innate capabilities. Rather, it is a consequence of the integral link between ethnic stratification and other forms of stratification in the society. In short, the ethnic and class systems are in large measure parallel and interwoven.

CLASS All aspects of social class—occupation, education, income, and wealth—are closely linked to ethnicity. Those occupying the most powerful and prestigious jobs, those most highly educated, those earning the highest incomes, and those possessing the greatest wealth are statistically more likely to be members of the dominant ethnic group or members of ethnic groups closest to the dominant group in culture and physical appearance.

Of course, success is by no means assured simply due to a favored ethnic background. People's class position at birth, even for those of the dominant ethnic group, is an overarching factor in determining their eventual wealth, power, and prestige. Thus not all Anglo-Americans, for example, are doctors, lawyers, corporation executives, and high-ranking politicians. But for dominant group members, the ethnic factor is removed as an impediment to upward economic mobility; other factors, both individual and structural, will affect their fortunes, but ethnicity will not.

In the same way, we should not think that ethnic minority status automatically relegates one to the bottom rungs of the wealth, occupational, educational, political, and other class hierarchies. The election of Barack Obama as U.S. president is a dramatic illustration of this. But for minorities, the chances of winding up at the bottom are much greater. As we proceed down the ethnic hierarchy, we find increasing political powerlessness, lack of economic opportunity, and social discrimination and exclusion. Members of ethnic groups closer to the bottom of the ethnic hierarchy find the path to social and economic success difficult, regardless of their other, nonethnic, social traits.

In sum, the effect of ethnicity is that minority ethnic group members encounter barriers to the attainment of the various rewards of their society that dominant ethnic group members do not face.

This does not mean, however, that all ethnic minorities are affected to the same extent. For those who are members of low-ranking groups with high ethnic visibility—African Americans, for example—minority status may be the overriding determinant of one's economic and political class position. For other groups more highly ranked and less visible—for example, Polish Americans or Irish Americans—ethnicity may have lost almost all social significance. It is important to remember that there are *degrees* of minority status. The ethnic hierarchy in any society is rarely a simple two-part structure with a dominant group at the top and subordinate groups at the bottom. Rather, minority groups occupy places on a continuum, and the impact of ethnicity varies among them. The question for minority group

members, then, is: to what extent does ethnicity become a factor in the allocation of jobs, education, wealth, political power, and other life chances?

SOCIETAL POWER Because all aspects of stratification are founded on power, whatever changes occur in the distribution of wealth, income, education, and other life chances necessarily depend on the makeup of the society's power elites—those who formulate policies, guide the activities, and decide the significant issues of government, the corporation, education, and other major societal institutions. In analyzing the relationship between decision-making power and ethnicity, the key question to be asked is, how open are the power elites to members of different ethnic groups? To the extent that they are closed, the status of those groups in various dimensions of stratification will remain consistently low.

In most multiethnic societies, there is an apparent relationship between ethnicity and access to important power positions. Some groups are favored over others, and much ethnic conflict centers on the process of filling these elite posts. In the United States, the ideology of equal opportunity does not always conform to the reality of ethnic discrimination in elite recruitment. Today, the power elite is more diverse than at any time in the past, but the fact remains that throughout most of American history, the dominance of white Protestant males has been the general rule at the highest levels of government and the economy.

Similar patterns can be discerned in other multiethnic societies. Israel, for example, is a multiethnic society in which Jews of European origin have generally ranked higher in the society's income, occupational, educational, and political hierarchies than Jews from North African and Middle Eastern societies (Goldscheider, 2002; Simon, 1978; Smooha, 1978). Brazil provides another illustration, where, as we will see in Chapter 15, most positions of institutional power are held by whites rather than by Brazilians of color, though the latter make up fully half the population.

ETHNICITY, CLASS, AND POWER RECONSIDERED

At this point, observations of the social standing of some members of dominant and minority ethnic groups might give rise to wonderment at what ethnic dominance and subordination really mean. Do we not see in the United States, for example, Jews in important power positions or blacks in high-ranking occupations? And, conversely, are not some Anglo-Americans continually at the bottom of the economic class hierarchy? If members of certain minority ethnic groups achieve upper-class standing or significant power, and similarly, if members of the dominant ethnic group remain at the bottom of the economic and political hierarchies, does this not negate the idea of ethnic dominance and subordination? How, in short, can we account for these inconsistent cases?

INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT The link between class and ethnicity in any society is not perfect; obviously, some do achieve significant upward mobility despite the handicap of low ethnic rank. But we cannot generalize about groups as collectivities on the basis of the achievement of an outstanding few. Popular interpretations of the relative success or failure of ethnic groups, however, often rely on such faulty generalizations.

For example, a widespread explanation for the inability of certain ethnic groups to rise collectively in economic and political standing is “self-motivation” (Schuman, 1982). It is assumed that individuals themselves, not social forces, are mainly responsible for their social placement. The poor are poor, in this view, because they lack the motivation to improve themselves, and the wealthy are successful because they have greater incentive. That a few from low-ranking minority groups do actually achieve great social success, and that many from the dominant group do not, serve to “confirm” this oversimplistic explanation.

Individual talent, motivation, and ability are, of course, important factors in social success, but only after the competitive field has been severely thinned out by ascribed characteristics such as class origin, gender, and ethnicity. Those with advantages by birth are assured relatively high achievement regardless of their individual capacities. Many in low-ranking groups may have abilities that are necessary to high social achievement, but unless they can gain access to the proper staging of those abilities through quality education, a good first job, and the nurturing of key social connections, they will go unnoticed. One of the basic features of minority groups, it must be remembered, is the social discrimination their members face in important life chances such as these.

UNDERREPRESENTATION No matter how many exceptional cases sneak through the ethnic barriers, minority groups remain underrepresented in the society’s top wealth, power, and prestige classes. This underrepresentation will vary in degree from group to group, but the lack of equal access to the society’s rewards is precisely what defines all such groups as minorities.

PRIVILEGES AND HANDICAPS In accessing the society’s rewards, members of the dominant ethnic group—even those at the bottom of the economic and political hierarchies—often retain privileges not enjoyed by members of minority groups, even those of upper-class standing. For example, before the 1960s in most cities of the American South, black entertainers receiving huge salaries still could not stay at the very hotels in which they were performing. A white person, regardless of income or occupation, would not have experienced such exclusion on the basis of skin color. Today, African Americans with high-status occupations—doctors, lawyers, managers—commonly describe the suspicion their presence arouses in suburban, primarily white, neighborhoods or prestigious shopping areas (Cose, 1993, 2011; Feagin and Sikes, 1994).

Ethnic minority group members are burdened in other ways by their racial or ethnic mark. In situations of interaction with dominant group members, they are often viewed as representatives of their “race” or ethnic group. References made in conversation to “your people” or questions of “how do (black people, Jews, Chinese . . .) feel” about a particular issue assume that the minority person, simply by virtue of the fact that he *is* a minority person, speaks for an entire group. Such forms of address also imply that the minority person is an outsider, not fully part of the social mainstream.

Because they are easily identifiable, minority group members also may suffer the stress of collective remorse when a member of their group is portrayed in a negative light. Korean Americans (and many Asian Americans in general), for example, spoke of the anxiety that they felt after learning of the shooting of thirty-two students and

faculty members at Virginia Tech in 2007, collectively holding their breath, hoping that the shooter was not Korean. Many expressed, almost apologetically, their dismay after learning that the shooter was in fact Korean. The killer was constantly referred to by the media as “Asian,” and later, more specifically as “Korean,” despite the fact that he had grown up in the United States and was fully assimilated. His ethnicity, of course, had no relation to the crime, but for the media, identifying and making repeated reference to it was pertinent. In contrast, consider the media treatment given Timothy McVeigh, who bombed a federal building in Oklahoma City in 1996, killing 168 people. Never was the fact that he was white and born and raised in the United States ever mentioned; it was simply not a relevant detail. Nor did all white people suffer a sense of collective remorse for McVeigh’s heinous crime.

CHANGING CLASS POSITIONS The empirical link between class and ethnicity is complex and subject to frequent change. The class position of particular groups or large segments of those groups may be altered significantly from one generation to another. For example, most members of white ethnic groups in the United States today are part of the middle class or working class, though most of their forebears entered the society at an appreciably lower level. A large proportion of African Americans have also displayed a substantial change in class standing in the past four decades.

Given such changes and the intricacies of the relationship between class and ethnicity, we should not expect to find all members of a particular ethnic group with the same economic and political rank or the same economic and political concerns and attitudes. There is a range of classes *within* each ethnic group even though, for the most part, group members remain clustered at particular levels of the society’s general class system.

THE ORIGINS OF ETHNIC STRATIFICATION

How does ethnic stratification arise? And why does it seem inevitable in multiethnic societies? What are the forces that seem to lead almost always to patterns of dominance and subordination when ethnic groups come into contact with one another? Sociologists have suggested several factors that lead to the emergence of ethnic inequality.

FORMS OF CONTACT

To begin with, all systems of ethnic stratification are products of the contact of previously separated groups (Shibutani and Kwan, 1965). Put simply, the composition of multiethnic societies depends on diverse groups coming together in some manner. This entails the movement of people from one area to another but, more fundamentally, from one political unit to another. People may move great distances and remain within the confines of the same political unit, as when a family in the United States moves from New York to California. Ethnic stratification systems, however, are created by the movement of people across national boundaries, usually bringing with them different languages and cultural systems, or by the establishment of new political boundaries. Multiethnic societies are formed through one or a combination of several contact patterns.

CONQUEST Conquest is a form of contact in which people of one society subdue all or part of another society and take on the role of the dominant group. European

colonialism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries best exemplifies this pattern. Through greater military technology, the British, French, Spanish, Dutch, Belgians, and Portuguese conquered peoples in a variety of world areas, including Asia, Africa, Australasia, and North and South America. Indigenous groups were brought under colonial rule and became economic appendages of the mother country.

ANNEXATION A political occurrence in which a part or possibly all of one society is incorporated into another is annexation. As Burkey explains, "If the incorporating society has a dominant group, then the ethnic groups within the incorporated, or annexed, society become subordinate at the point that sovereignty is transferred" (1978:72). Such annexation may occur in a peaceful or a violent manner. The acquisition of the Louisiana Purchase by the United States from France in 1803 illustrates a peaceful annexation. More commonly, however, such acquisitions of territory are made through successful military ventures. For example, the United States acquired most of what is today its Southwest through its war with Mexico in 1846. After the transfer of territory at the conclusion of the war, Mexicans living in those annexed areas became a minority, subject to the dominance of American political institutions.

VOLUNTARY IMMIGRATION The most common patterns by which ethnic groups come into contact involve immigration. *The migration of peoples from one society to another* may be either voluntary or involuntary. **Voluntary immigration** has been the chief source of ethnic heterogeneity in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Argentina. All white ethnic groups in these societies have been the product of voluntary immigration from European societies during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the United States and Canada, immigrants from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean have, in recent decades, contributed even greater diversity to these societies' ethnically varied populations. In the modern world, Brazil and Israel are other societies that have relied heavily on immigration in creating a diverse population. In addition, many previously ethnically homogeneous societies, especially those of Western Europe, have been infused with new racial and ethnic groups as a result of voluntary immigration since the end of World War II.

INVOLUNTARY IMMIGRATION **Involuntary immigration** involves the forced transfer of peoples from one society to another. Such forced movements are best exemplified by the slave trade of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, which brought millions of blacks from Africa to work the cotton and sugar plantations of the United States, Brazil, and the West Indies.

Patterns of immigration, both voluntary and involuntary, to the United States and other societies are discussed in later chapters.

OUTCOMES OF CONTACT

The way in which diverse ethnic groups initially meet has been shown to be a critical factor in explaining the emergence of ethnic inequality and the specific patterns it subsequently takes.

LIEBERSON'S MODEL. Stanley Lieberman (1961) distinguishes two major types of contact situations: those involving subordination of an indigenous population by a migrant group and those involving subordination of a migrant population by an indigenous racial or ethnic group. The first type, *migrant superordination*, is illustrated by *various colonial conquests in which a technologically and organizationally more powerful migrant group subdues the native population*. The second, *indigenous superordination*, is characteristic of most voluntary and involuntary immigrations such as those to North America; in such cases, *the arriving groups are initially made subordinate to a resident dominant group*.

Lieberman maintains that long-term conflict is more likely in societies where the indigenous population at initial contact is subordinate. Native groups less powerful than the arriving colonials are left with few options other than resistance to the new social order imposed on them. This hostility is further strengthened when the conquering group, over time, becomes itself an indigenous group. Where an invading group is successful in subduing the native population, the political and economic systems of the new group are imposed, and warfare and general conflict are likely to result quickly. van den Berghe (1976) also points out that in contact situations between a conquering group and a weaker native group, there is usually a territorial factor, with the defeated group retaining an indigenous area. Indian reservations in North America are an example. Such a territorial base may provide the foundation for a separatist movement, an option not available to immigrant groups who enter as subordinates and typically disperse to different areas.

Situations in which the native group wields greater power and immigrant groups enter as subordinates produce less overt conflict initially. The indigenous group retains control over the size and character of immigration and may encourage quick assimilation, as in the case of most European immigrants to the United States. Moreover, conflict is diminished by the fact that if the immigration is voluntary, dissatisfied immigrants may return to their society of origin.

NOEL'S MODEL. Although the nature of initial group contact is critical, Donald Noel (1968) has pointed out three additional factors that give rise to and shape the eventual system of ethnic stratification: ethnocentrism, competition for scarce societal resources, and an unequal distribution of power.

When culturally or physically dissimilar groups meet, *ethnocentrism* can be expected to typify intergroup attitudes. That is, divergent groups will judge each other in terms of their own culture and their evaluations will usually be negative. The extent of these negative judgments will, however, depend on the degree of difference between the groups: the more dissimilar they are, the more negative the judgment. Studies measuring the degree of acceptance of members of different ethnic groups in the United States, for example, have consistently shown those groups closest in culture and physical appearance to the dominant Anglo group (such as northwestern Europeans) to be ranked more favorably than southern and eastern Europeans such as Italians and Poles and considerably more favorably than African Americans, Mexican Americans, and American Indians (Bogardus, 1959; Owen et al., 1981).

However, ethnocentrism alone, explains Noel, is not sufficient to produce ethnic stratification. Groups may view one another negatively without the necessary emergence of dominant-subordinate relations among them. An additional prerequisite is

competition, structured along ethnic lines. When groups strive for the same scarce resources, their interrelations take on the characteristics of competition and conflict. Noel posits that the more intense such competition, the greater the likelihood of the emergence of ethnic stratification. Within the competitive arena, those groups with the greatest capacity to adapt to the social and physical environment will end up higher in the ethnic hierarchy. Thus, in the American case, groups emigrating from Europe arrived with different skills, which initially determined their occupational place and subsequently enabled them to climb upward at different rates. In no case, however, was any European group stationed below blacks, because the latter were kept in a basically noncompetitive situation.

Differential power among the various groups is, according to Noel, the final prerequisite for the development of ethnic stratification. Unless one can overpower another, there is no basis for a stable rank order of ethnic groups, even if there is competition and ethnocentrism among them. When a particularly wide power gap exists between competing and ethnocentric groups, the emergent stratification system is likely to be quite durable. Power breeds more power; and once established, the dominant group uses its power to obstruct the competition of other groups and to solidify its dominance. In the end, then, differential power among the various groups is the most critical requirement for the emergence of ethnic stratification (see also Wilson, 1973).

In sum, Noel's theory postulates that competition for scarce resources provides the motivation for stratification, ethnocentrism channels this competition along ethnic lines, and differential power determines whether one group will be able to subordinate others (Barth and Noel, 1972).

MINORITY RESPONSES TO SUBORDINATION

Not all minority groups react similarly to their subordinate status. Some may begrudgingly accept their place and wait for a more just world in the future, and others may struggle relentlessly to reverse their position. A typology of minority response—pluralistic, assimilationist, secessionist, and militant—originally suggested by Wirth (1945), remains an apt and concise model of different strategies of adaptation employed by minority groups in a multiethnic society.

PLURALISTIC MINORITIES

Pluralistic minorities seek to maintain their cultural ways at the same time as they participate in the society's major political and economic institutions. Some groups that enter multiethnic societies as voluntary immigrants adopt this position for a time after their arrival and appeal to the dominant group to tolerate their differences.

Some groups may carry the pluralistic idea further, opting out almost completely from the larger cultural, economic, and political systems. Certain religious groups in the United States and Canada such as Hutterites, the Amish, and Hasidic Jews have chosen to segregate themselves even though they have not necessarily been rejected by the dominant group. These groups view contact with the larger society as a kind of contamination and a threat to their cultural integrity. Thus they may not use the public schools or participate in mainstream political processes. Even economic matters may be largely self-contained within these groups (Hostetler, 1993; Kephart and

Zellner, 1994; Poll, 1969). Such groups have achieved an accommodation with the dominant group in their society, permitting them to practice cultural patterns that are clearly aberrant in terms of the mainstream culture. Consider, for example, this description of the Amish:

At best, the Amish seek accommodation, or a state of equilibrium in which working arrangements can be developed whereby they may maintain their unique group life without conflict; in short, they seek a kind of antagonistic cooperation. The Amish group's aim, then, is merely tolerance for their differences, and they are not at all interested in assimilation, "Americanization," or anything that would tend to merge them with the American culture and society. (Smith, 1958:226)

ASSIMILATIONIST MINORITIES

By contrast with pluralistic minorities, *assimilationist minorities seek integration into the dominant society*. Wirth explained that such groups crave "the fullest opportunity for participation in the life of the larger society with a view to uncoerced incorporation in that society" (1945:357-58). Thus, whereas the pluralistic minority will usually insist on endogamy and will enforce adherence to the norms and values of the in-group, assimilationist minorities aim for eventual absorption into the larger society.

Most Euro-American groups have maintained assimilation as their long-range objective, though some have been more desirous than others of retaining their ethnic heritage for several generations. Those groups closely similar to the dominant group in culture and physical appearance will ordinarily assimilate more easily and thoroughly than others. Some may even reach the point of complete absorption into the dominant group. For example, ethnic groups of northwestern European origin (Dutch, Scandinavian, and German) have been so completely assimilated over several generations that today they are virtually indistinguishable as ethnic units. However, such cases are exceptional. Rarely are minority ethnic groups completely absorbed into the dominant group, totally relinquishing their culture or physical identity. Moreover, even where assimilation is the group's objective, the prejudice and discrimination the group encounters will often retard such efforts. In Chapter 4, the process of assimilation and the factors that promote it are discussed at greater length.

SECESSIONIST MINORITIES

Secessionist minorities desire neither assimilation nor cultural autonomy. Their aim is a more complete political independence from the dominant society. Such groups are usually what were earlier referred to as "nations," not only aspiring to some degree of political autonomy but also maintaining territorial integrity. The separatist movement in the Canadian province of Quebec represents a contemporary secessionist minority. In this case, a substantial element of the Quebec populace seeks not only to retain the French language and French Canadian culture but also to establish an independent Quebec state. A similar movement in the Basque provinces of Spain seeks political autonomy for the Basque people, distinguished as they are from the rest of Spain by language and culture (Douglas et al., 1999; Kurlansky, 1999; Molina, 2010). As we will see in Chapter 17, most nationalist movements are the

outgrowths of dissatisfaction on the part of ethnic groups stemming from their minority status and treatment.

In addition to seeking separation from the larger society, a secessionist minority may desire integration with another group or society to which it feels a closer cultural and political similarity. For example, many among Northern Ireland's minority Catholics seek to unite the six counties of Ulster (Northern Ireland) with the Catholic-dominated Irish Republic.

MILITANT MINORITIES

Militant minorities seek as their ultimate goal not withdrawal, as do secessionist minorities, but rather status as the society's dominant group. The case of Latvia, a small Baltic country, illustrates this. During the period when Latvia was ruled by the Soviet Union, natives were in some ways reduced to minority status, particularly regarding language and culture, which favored ethnic Russians. With the breakup of the USSR, resulting in Latvian independence, a shift in political power to the native Latvian group occurred. As a result, Latvians not only replaced the Russian political elite but also imposed language and citizenship measures that made non-Latvians, including ethnic Russians, minorities (Bilefsky, 2006; Chinn and Kaiser, 1996; Jubulis, 2001).

It is important to consider that these variable responses of minority groups are not totally or, in some cases, even largely voluntary. Rather, they very much depend on the power of the dominant group to accept or reject minority group aims (Schermerhorn, 1970). It is not only a question of what a minority group initially desires but also what it desires in conjunction with what the dominant group desires for it. A minority group may seek assimilation, for example, but be repelled by the dominant group's aim to keep it isolated. Minority objectives may also change depending on the dominant group's responses. Continual frustration of assimilationist goals, for example, is likely to eventually create a pluralistic or secessionist response.

SUMMARY

- Social stratification is a system of structured social inequality in which groups receive different amounts of the society's wealth, power, and prestige and are hierarchically arranged accordingly.
- In multiethnic societies, ethnicity is a critical basis of stratification. There is, therefore, a hierarchy of ethnic groups in which one, the dominant group, maintains maximum power to determine the nature of interethnic relations: Minority, or subordinate, groups rank in different places below the dominant group, depending on their cultural and physical distance from it.
- Dominant-minority relations are relations of *power*. On the basis of their physical and cultural characteristics, ethnic minorities are distinguished from others and given differential treatment. The dominant group holds disproportionate control of the society's political and economic resources and the ability to shape the society's major norms and values.
- Ethnic rank commonly closely parallels rank in the society's class system. Members of minority ethnic groups are never randomly scattered throughout the economic and political class hierarchies but tend to cluster at specific points.

- Ethnic stratification is the product of contact between previously separate groups. Initial contact may be in the form of conquest, annexation, voluntary immigration, or involuntary immigration. The manner in which ethnic groups meet is a decisive factor in explaining the shape of the system of ethnic inequality that ordinarily ensues. Following contact, groups engage in competition and view one another ethnocentrically; then, ultimately, one imposes its superior power over the others, emerging as the dominant group.
- There are four types of ethnic minorities: *pluralistic* minorities, seeking to maintain some degree of separation from the larger society; *assimilationist* minorities, aiming for full integration into the dominant society; *secessionist* minorities, seeking political autonomy from the dominant society; and *militant* minorities, trying to establish dominance themselves.

CRITICAL THINKING

1. Consider the sociological meaning of **minority**. Then identify several social categories, aside from race and ethnicity, that fit that definition in the United States today. On what bases do they conform to the definition?
2. We saw in this chapter that minority status is flexible, not static. Looking at the development of the American ethnic hierarchy, it is very evident that numerous groups who entered the United States and took their place as minorities are no longer seen or defined that way. What happened to change their status?
3. Social attitudes in the United States toward new immigrants from Europe and Canada are quite different from social attitudes toward immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean or from Asia or Africa. What accounts for the difference? What factors determine the rank of a new group entering the society?
4. Consider the four major types of ethnic minority discussed in this chapter. Are there cases of all four in the United States today or in past eras? Give some examples of each.

PERSONAL/PRACTICAL APPLICATION

1. Suppose you are part of the society's dominant ethnic group. To what extent are you able to empathize with those who are members of ethnic minorities? Conversely, if you are part of an ethnic minority, can you empathize in any way with those who are members of the dominant group?
2. Stratification, as this chapter explains, is a ranking system and can be based on various social characteristics. Does your socioeconomic rank (your social class) match your ethnic rank?