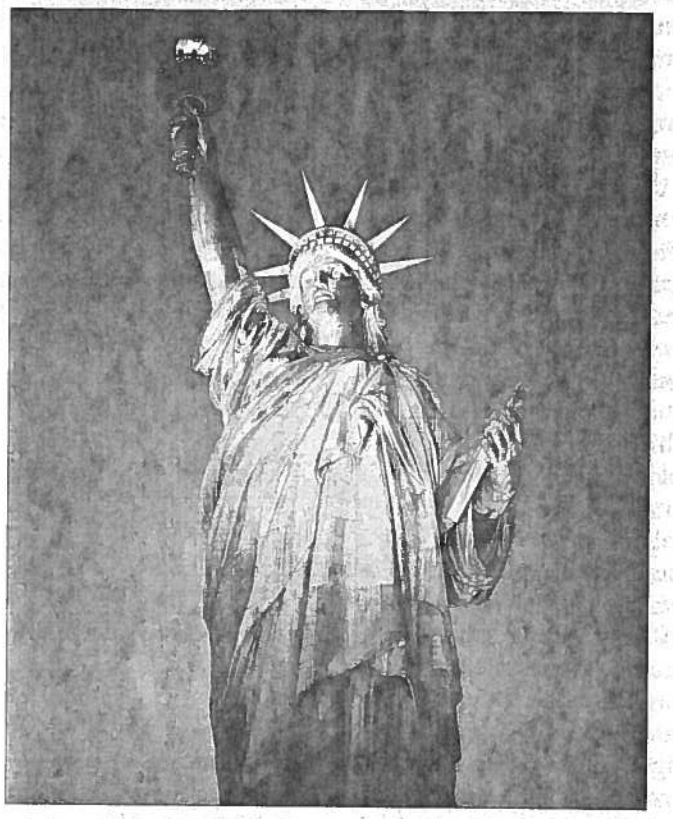
CHAPTER 2

Adaptation and Conflict
Racial and Ethnic Relations in Theoretical Perspective



BIG PICTURE QUESTIONS

- ***How do initial contacts contribute to the creation of dominant and subordinate racial and ethnic groups?***
- ***Have long centuries of immigration made the United States a real melting pot?***
- ***What is the role of systemic racism in the United States today?***

In 1790, the first U.S. Congress limited naturalized U.S. citizenship to "white persons" only. This discriminatory law remained in effect until 1952. Because of the law, numerous immigrants coming into the United States in this long era petitioned U.S. courts to be viewed as "white" so that they could officially become citizens. The first challenge to the law came from Ah Yup, a man who had immigrated from China and petitioned a California court to be admitted as a citizen of the United States. However, after some research on racial hierarchy, and citing Johann Blumenbach's racial typology, the white judge decreed that Ah Yup was not a "white person" under the law, but rather a person of the "Mongolian race."[1]

How do groups that are termed racial groups or ethnic groups develop? How do groups come into contact with one another in the first place? How do they adjust to one another beyond the initial contact? A number of important social science theories analyze how intergroup contact leads to initial patterns of racial and ethnic interaction and stratification. Various other theories explore the persistence of racial and ethnic patterns. Group domination and stratification, as well as intergroup conflict, are critical issues in these racial and ethnic theories.

Racial and Ethnic Hierarchies

Like numerous other societies, U.S. society is made up of a diversity of racial and ethnic groups. As in the 1790s, and so in the present, the number of racial and ethnic groups in North America remains impressive, although the mix of groups has varied over time. Racial and ethnic diversity is basic in the history of this society.

Yet, diversity, as the previously discussed terms *dominant group* and *subordinate group* suggest, has often been linked to a racial and ethnic *hierarchy*—to stratification, domination, and substantial inequality among groups. Human beings organize themselves for a number of different reasons—for example, for earning a living, for conducting religious rituals, and for governing. Among the important features of societal organization are social ranking systems. Such systems rank social categories of people, not just individuals.

In most societies, several social ranking systems coexist. Some classify people by their racial or ethnic group, whereas others rank people by their gender, age, disability, sexuality, or class position. Each ranking system has distinct social categories; rewards, privileges, and power vary with a group's position within the system. Some categories, such as English Americans in the racial and ethnic system, have generally had much greater power and resources than other categories, such as Native Americans, African Americans, or Latinos. Such power and resource inequality tends to persist from one generation to the next. In racial and ethnic ranking systems, certain ascribed (that is, attributed, not achieved) characteristics—such as one group's racial characteristics as perceived by another group—become the criteria for very unequal social positions, privileges, and rewards.[2]

The image of a ladder makes the concept of racial and ethnic stratification clearer. In Figure 2.1, the positions of five selected racial and ethnic groups at a specific time in U.S. history are diagrammed on a hierarchical ladder. Some groups are higher than others, indicating that they have greater privileges—social,

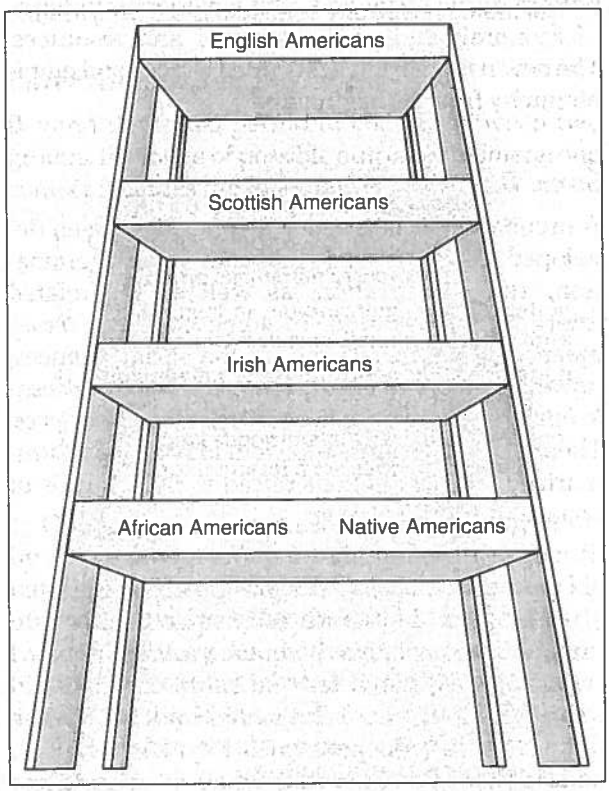


FIGURE 2.1 A Ladder of Dominance: The United States as of 1790

economic, and political—than the lower groups. A group substantially higher than another on an important dimension is viewed as a *dominant group;* one substantially lower than another is seen as a *subordinate group.* The more groups there are in a society, the more complex is the image, with middle groups possibly standing in a relation of dominance to some groups and in a relation of subordination to others.

Consider the United States in 1790, about the time of its founding. For that era one might roughly diagram the five groups in Figure 2.1 in terms of such factors as overall economic or political power, so that the top group would be English Americans, with Scottish Americans a little down the ladder. Farther down would be the early (usually Protestant) Irish immigrants, a group composed at the time mostly of poor farmers and indentured servants. At the bottom in terms of power and resources would be African Americans, most of who were in slavery in the South. Those Native American (Indian) groups and individuals within the boundaries of the new nation—most were still outside it—were also at the bottom of the racial and ethnic hierarchy in terms of economic and political power and resources. The new nation firmly embedded a racial and ethnic hierarchy from its beginning.[3]

Some Basic Questions

A number of social science theories have been developed to explain this societal diversity, domination, and stratification, as well as the related intergroup adaptation. In some contexts, *theory* means vague speculation; in the social sciences, however, **theory** refers to *a conceptual framework used to interpret or explain some aspect of everyday existence.* Theorists Ernest Barth and Donald Noel have summarized major questions raised in the analysis of racial and ethnic relations:

1. How does one explain the origin and emergence of racial and ethnic diversity and stratification?
2. How does one explain the continuation of racial and ethnic diversity and stratification?
3. How does one interpret internal adaptive changes within systems of racial and ethnic diversity and stratification?
4. How does one explain major changes in systems of racial and ethnic diversity and stratification?[4]

What methods have been used to create the racial hierarchy in the United States?

Migration and Group Contact

Racial and ethnic relations and stratification systems originate with intergroup contact as different groups, often with no common ancestry, come into each other's spheres of influence. Contact can be between an established or indigenous people and a migrating people (group A → land of group B) or between two or more migrating groups moving into a previously uninhabited area (group A → new land ← group B). The movement of English colonists into the lands of Native Americans in the 1600s is an example of the first type of contact.

Migration has been viewed by Charles Tilly in terms of the following:

1. The actual migrating units (for example, individuals or families)
2. The situation at the point of origin (for example, the home country)
3. The situation at the destination (for example, a U.S. city)
4. The socioeconomic and political framework within which the migration occurs (for example, modern global capitalism)[5]

Certain precontact factors shape both the migration and the outcome of the contact that results from migration. *Push* factors include what is happening in the immigrants' home country—high unemployment or intergroup hostilities, for example. Depressed economies or painful religious or political conflicts in sending countries have generated major migrations to the United States. *Pull* factors also generate migration. Immigrants may be attracted by the portrayal, accurate or inaccurate, of better conditions—such as abundant jobs—at the destination. The outcome of the initial contact is influenced by the resources and characteristics of the migrating group (such as its economic resources or language) and of the receiving group (such as its receptiveness to newcomers). Technological assets, such as industrial skills or armaments (firepower), have proven an advantage to certain groups. Some argue, for example, that early European colonists were able to conquer (and often destroy) numerous

Native American societies in part because of the latter's less developed weaponry.[6]

Types of Migration

In a classic book, *Comparative Ethnic Relations*, R. A. Schermerhorn suggested four major types of migration that generate racial and ethnic relations. These constitute a continuum running from involuntary migration to completely voluntary migration:

1. Movements of forced labor
2. Contract-labor movement
3. Movement of displaced persons and refugees
4. Voluntary migration[7]

Movements of forced labor include *involuntary immigration, such as the forcible removal of Africans to North America.* **Contract-labor movement** includes the *migration of indentured Irish servants to the English colonies and of Chinese laborers to western North America.* **Political refugees** include the *streams of refugees produced by war,* such as Jewish immigrants from Europe in the 1930s and Vietnamese and Cuban refugees since the 1950s. **Voluntary migration** is *migration primarily by choice,* and includes the great migrations of southern and eastern European groups to the United States in the early twentieth century and of numerous Asian and Latin American groups since the 1960s.

The *voluntary migration of powerful colonizers,* sometimes termed **colonization migration**, often precedes the types just listed. Colonization migration can be seen in the English trading companies whose employees founded the first North American colonies, a development that soon led to the dispersal or brutal destruction of indigenous Indian societies already inhabiting the continent.[8]

Patterns of Racial and Ethnic Adaptation

The Initial Contact

What happens when different human groups come into contact as the result of migration? Outcomes vary. In the initial stage, outcomes include the following:

1. Exclusion or genocidal destruction
2. Egalitarian symbiosis
3. An exploitive hierarchy and stratification system

Genocide is *the deliberate and systematic attempt by one group to exterminate another group*—one outcome of contacts between European colonists and several Native American societies. **Egalitarian symbiosis** refers to *peaceful coexistence and a rough economic and political equality between two racial–ethnic groups.* Occasional examples of this outcome can be found in the history of world migrations, but they are rare, especially in North America. Some authors argue that by the early nineteenth century, Scottish Americans were approaching equality with English Americans in many areas. A more common result of migration and contact is **hierarchy**, *a significant socioeconomic stratification.* Stanley Lieberson noted that **migrant superordination** occurs *when the migrating group imposes its will on indigenous groups, usually through more advanced weaponry and political or military organization.* The indigenous populations of the United States and Canada were subordinated in this fashion. **Indigenous superordination** occurs *when groups immigrating into a new society become subordinate to groups already there,* as was the case for Africans forcibly brought to North and South America by the established European colonists.[9]

Later Adaptation Patterns

Beyond the initial period of contact between two groups, the range of possible outcomes of intergroup contact includes the following:

1. Continuing genocide
2. Continuing egalitarian symbiosis
3. Replacement or modification of stratification by substantial inclusion along conformity lines
4. Replacement or modification of stratification by inclusion along cultural pluralism lines
5. Continuing subordination, ranging from moderate to extreme, of a racial or ethnic group

One type of outcome can be a continuing thrust by the dominant group to exterminate the subordinate group. Attempts by European Americans to kill off indigenous peoples continued until the early twentieth century. Alternatively, an egalitarian symbiosis can continue beyond initial peaceful interaction. The third outcome is for an initial hierarchy, characterized by a sharp inequality of power and resources, to be modified by extensive incorporation of the incoming group into the dominant culture and society. This can take two forms. In the first,

inclusion of the new group occurs by means of substantial conformity to the dominant group's culture. By surrendering much of its cultural heritage and conforming to the dominant group, the incoming group gains increased acceptance and significant resource equality. Some have argued that many non-English European immigrant groups, such as Scots and Scandinavians, eventually gained rough equality with the English Americans in this way.

The fourth possibility is *cultural pluralism*—substantial economic and political assimilation and greater equality along with a significant persistence of subcultural (for example, religious) distinctiveness. In this outcome, the substantial adaptation of the immigrant group to the host group is primarily economic and political, with cultural distinctiveness continuing in certain major respects (such as religion). The interaction of certain white immigrant groups, such as Irish Catholic Americans, with the host-group English Americans offers a possible example of this outcome.

A fifth outcome of continuing intergroup contact is persisting and substantial racial or ethnic subordination and hierarchical stratification. The extent and inequality of this stratification can vary, but for many non-European groups, such as Native Americans and Mexican Americans, economic and political inequality has remained so great as to constitute what some term a condition of *internal colonialism*. Even in this case, however, partial acculturation usually occurs in terms of significant adaptation to the dominant group's culture (for instance, to the English language).

Types of Theories

In the United States, explanatory theories of racial and ethnic relations have been concerned with migration, adaptation, exploitation, oppression, stratification, and conflict. Most such theories can be roughly classified as either order theories or power-conflict theories, depending on their principal concerns and emphases. **Order theories** are *racial and ethnic theories that accent patterns of inclusion—the orderly integration and assimilation of particular racial and ethnic groups to a dominant culture and society*, as in the third and fourth outcomes just described. The central focus is on progressive adaptation to the dominant culture and on stability in intergroup relations. **Power-conflict theories** are *racial and ethnic theories that accent the persisting and great inequalities in the power and resource distributions associated with racial or ethnic subordination in a society*, as in the first and fifth outcomes just described.

Assimilation and Other Order Perspectives

In the United States, much social theorizing has heavily emphasized **assimilation**, *the more or less orderly adaptation of a migrating group to the ways and institutions of an established host group*. Charles Hirschman has noted that "the assimilation perspective, broadly defined, continues to be the primary theoretical framework for sociological research on racial and ethnic inequality."[10] The English word *assimilate* comes from the Latin word *assimulare*, meaning "to make similar."

Robert E. Park

Robert E. Park, a major sociological analyst, argued that European out-migration was a major catalyst for societal reorganization around the globe. In his view, intergroup contacts regularly go through stages of a **race relations cycle**, in which *fundamental social forces, such as out-migration, lead to recurring cycles of contact and assimilation in intergroup history:* "The race relations cycle which takes the form, to state it abstractly, of *contacts, competition, accommodation* and *eventual assimilation*, is apparently progressive and irreversible."[11] In the contact stage, migration and exploration bring peoples together, which in turn leads to economic competition and thus to new social organization. Competition and conflict flow from the contacts between host peoples and the migrating groups. Accommodation, a critical condition in the race relations cycle, often takes place rapidly. It involves a migrating group's forced adjustment to a new social situation.

Park seems to view accommodation as involving a stabilization of relations, including the possibility of permanent caste systems. Sometimes he speaks of the race relations cycle as leading inevitably from contact to assimilation. At other times, however, he recognizes that the assimilation of a migrant group might involve major barriers and take a substantial period of time to complete.

Nonetheless, Park and most scholars working in this tradition have argued that there is a long-term trend toward large-scale assimilation even of subordinated racial and ethnic groups in modern societies. "Assimilation is a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire

the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life."[12] Racially subordinate groups are expected eventually to fully assimilate into the "common culture" and major institutions of the society.[13]

Stages of Assimilation: Milton Gordon

Since Park's pioneering analysis in the 1920s, many U.S. racial and ethnic relations theorists and other analysts have adopted some version of the assimilationist perspective, although most have departed from Park's framework in important ways. Milton Gordon, author of the influential *Assimilation in American Life*, offers a multidimensional perspective. There is a variety of initial encounters between racial and ethnic groups and an array of assimilation outcomes. Gordon presents three competing images of assimilation—the melting pot, cultural pluralism, and Anglo-conformity—but he focuses on Anglo-conformity as having been the usual historical reality for the United States. In Gordon's view, immigrant groups entering the United States have over time given up much of their cultural heritage and conformed substantially to a white Anglo-Protestant core culture.[14] Cultural assimilation (also called *acculturation*)—the change of one group's cultural patterns to those of the host or dominant group—is a very important dimension of intergroup adaptation. Gordon's view emphasizes the way in which new groups must conform to the preexisting Anglo-Protestant culture that they face as they enter U.S. society.

Gordon notes that Anglo-conformity has been substantially achieved for numerous immigrant groups to North America, especially with regard to cultural assimilation. Most groups following the early English migration have adapted to the Anglo core culture. Gordon distinguishes seven dimensions of adaptation:

1. **Cultural assimilation:** *the change of one group's important cultural patterns to those of the core society*
2. **Structural assimilation:** *penetration of cliques and associations of the core society at the primary-group level*
3. **Marital assimilation:** *significant intermarriage*
4. **Identification assimilation:** *development of a sense of identity linked to the core society*
5. **Attitude-receptional assimilation:** *absence of prejudice and stereotyping*
6. **Behavior-receptional assimilation:** *absence of intentional discrimination*
7. **Civic assimilation:** *absence of value and power conflict*

A long line of European immigrants at Ellis Island (about 1900).

Whereas Park believed that structural assimilation, including new primary-group ties such as intergroup friendships, flowed from cultural assimilation, Gordon stresses that these are separate stages of assimilation and may take place at different rates.

For Gordon, structural assimilation generally relates to families and other primary-group relations. (*Primary groups* are small groups characterized by personal closeness, such as family groups and groups of close friends; *secondary groups* are specialized and impersonal groups, such as corporations.) In his view, the movement of a new immigrant group into the secondary groups of the host society—that is, into the employing organizations, such as corporations or government bureaucracies, and educational and political institutions—is *not* a distinctive type of structural assimilation that should be incorporated into an assimilation typology.

The omission of a thorough discussion of this secondary-structural assimilation is a major flaw in Gordon's typology. Looking at U.S. history, one sees that some admission into the society's important secondary groups, such as its economic institutions (workplaces), does not necessarily mean that one gets to enter the dominant group's friendship cliques or families. Also missing in Gordon's analysis is attention to residential integration and Anglo-conformity—to the movement of an incoming group away from segregated immigrant communities into the residential areas of the dominant group, a pattern that has received much attention in some demographic analyses. Moreover, the dimension Gordon calls *civic assimilation* is somewhat confusing because he includes in it "values," which are really part of cultural assimilation, and "power," which is a central aspect of structural assimilation at the secondary-group level.[15]

Still, this assimilation theory is useful and has influenced contemporary social scientists. For example, sociologist Silvia Pedraza has made significant use of Gordon's conceptual framework in her research on Cuban and Mexican immigration, and Richard Alba has contrasted his view of the loss of strong ethnic identities among white ethnic Americans with Gordon's idea of identificational assimilation. Alba and Victor Nee have also pointed out that Gordon's concept of the core culture needs to be modified to take account of the fact that the cultures of new immigrants have sometimes had an effect on that core, particularly in areas such as religion and music. They view the mainstream culture as now a composite of such diverse inputs. The cultural influence is not just one way. Moreover, in an assessment of Gordon's seven dimensions, J. Allen Williams and Suzanne Ortega examined interviews with a Midwestern sample and found that cultural assimilation was not necessarily the first type of adaptation to occur. Thus, in their data Mexican Americans were less culturally assimilated than African Americans, yet more assimilated structurally. Those of Swiss and Swedish backgrounds ranked about the same on the study's measure of cultural assimilation, but the Swedish Americans were less assimilated structurally. Williams and Ortega concluded that assimilation varies considerably from one group to another and that Gordon's seven types can be grouped into just three general categories of structural, cultural, and receptional assimilation.[16]

Focused on the millions of European immigrants and their societal adjustments, Gordon's model emphasizes *generational* changes within immigrant groups over time. For most European immigrant groups, substantial acculturation to the Anglo-Protestant culture has often been completed by the second or third generation. The partially acculturated first generation formed protective communities and associations, but the children of those immigrants were considerably more exposed to Anglo-conformity pressures from the media and in schools.[17] Gordon suggests that substantial assimilation along civic, behavior-receptional, and attitude-receptional dimensions has occurred for numerous European immigrant groups. Most have also made considerable progress toward equality at the secondary-structural levels of employment and politics, although the dimensions of this assimilation are not discussed in any detail by Gordon.

For many white, particularly non-Protestant, groups, substantial structural assimilation at the primary-group level is now accomplished yet still incomplete. Gordon suggests that substantially complete cultural assimilation (for example, full adoption of the English language) along with some structural (primary-group) separateness form a characteristic pattern of adaptation for many white ethnic groups. Even these relatively acculturated white ethnic groups today tend to have disproportionate numbers of informal friendships and marriage ties within their particular ethnic groups or within their general socioreligious community. Following Will Herberg, who argued that there are three great community

"melting pots" in the United States—Jews, Protestants, and Catholics—Gordon and others have suggested that most primary-group ties beyond one's own group are typically developed within one's broad socioreligious community.[18] (According to the traditional **melting pot** view, *immigrants to the United States lose their racial and ethnic identities as they mix together in one new American blend.*)

Assimilation theorists like Gordon recognize that racial prejudice and discrimination have retarded structural assimilation, but they tend to view non-European Americans, including African Americans, particularly those in the middle class, as eventually being assimilated into the dominant culture and institutions. With regard to African Americans, Gordon argues, optimistically, that the United States has "moved decisively down the road toward implementing the implications of the American creed [of equality and justice] for race relations"—such as in employment and housing. The tremendous progress that he perceives African Americans to have made has created a government policy dilemma: Should it adopt a "corporate liberalism" that recognizes group rights along racial lines? Gordon includes under this corporate liberalism numerous government antidiscrimination programs, such as affirmative action, which he generally rejects.[19] The optimism of many assimilation analysts about the eventual implementation of the U.S. creed of equality for African Americans and many other non-European Americans is problematical, as we will see in later chapters.

In recent years, several assimilation analysts have argued that certain once-prominent ethnic identities, especially of European Americans, are fading. An advocate of the continuing usefulness of the concept of assimilation is sociologist Richard Alba. He has argued persuasively that, although ethnic identity is still of some consequence for many whites, a new ethnic group is being formed—"one based on a vague *ancestry* from anywhere on the European continent." Distinct ethnic identities as English American and Irish American are giving way to identification as "European American." Similarly, Herbert Gans has suggested that increasingly, especially for whites, ethnicity is only "symbolic" and weakening greatly in significance. Symbolic ethnicity involves little more than a desire to maintain some feeling for one's ethnic background without strong commitments to traditional ethnic behavior or social networks. Interestingly, research on intermarriages linking white ethnic groups reveals that large proportions of the children of such marriages see themselves as having *multiple* ethnic identities, whereas others choose one of their heritages, or simply "American," as their identity.[20]

Q Given the various assimilation theories, which one best describes the adaptation of present-day immigrants in the United States?

Ethnogenesis and Ethnic Pluralism

Some theorists working in the broad assimilation tradition also reject the argument that most European American groups have become or are becoming fully assimilated to a generic Anglo-Protestant or Euro-American identity and way of life. A few have explored models of adjustment that depart from Anglo-conformity in the direction of ethnic or cultural pluralism. It was a Jewish American of Polish and Latvian origin who early formulated a perspective called *cultural pluralism*. Horace Kallen (1882–1974) argued that membership in ethnic–cultural groups was not a membership one could readily abandon. Writing in *The Nation* magazine in 1915, he argued that ethnic groups necessarily adapted to the host society, but had a right to exist on their own terms; that is, democracy applied to ethnic groups. He argued against the ruthless Americanization advocated by many white Anglo-Protestant nativists at the time. By the 1920s, he had given the name **cultural pluralism** to *the view that each ethnic group has the democratic right to retain its own cultural heritage without being forced to assimilate to the dominant culture.*[21] Kallen's pioneering analysis set early precedents for the perspective now called *multiculturalism* (see Chapter 13).

Social scientists adopting a cultural pluralism perspective accept some Anglo-conformity adjustment as inevitable. For instance, in their classic *Beyond the Melting Pot*, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan recognize that the original customs and home-country ways of European immigrants were mostly lost by the third generation. This did not, however, bring an end to their ethnicity. The European immigrant groups usually remained distinct in terms of name, identity, and, for many, primary-group ties.[22]

Andrew Greeley developed the concept of *ethnogenesis* and applied it to white immigrant groups

set off by nationality and religion. **Ethnogenesis** entails *the sociological theory that, over time, immigrant groups not only come to share cultural traits with the host group but also retain many of their own nationality characteristics.* The traditional assimilation perspective assumes "that the strain toward homogenization in a modern industrial society is so great as to be virtually irresistible."[23] The direction of this assimilation is assumed only to be toward the dominant Anglo-Protestant culture. However, from this ethnogenesis perspective, adaptation has meant much more than one-way conformity. The traditional Gordon assimilation model does not explain the persistence of ethnicity—the emphasis among immigrants on ethnicity as a way of becoming American and, in recent decades, self-conscious attempts to create ethnic identity and to manipulate ethnic symbols.

The complex ethnogenesis model of intergroup adaptation is portrayed in Figure 2.2. Greeley suggests, as is shown in the left-hand box (host/common/immigrant), that in many cases host and immigrant groups had a somewhat similar cultural inheritance. For example, some later European immigrant groups had a cultural background initially similar to that of earlier English colonists. As a result of the interaction of subsequent generations with each other and with descendants of earlier immigrants, such as in public schools and through the influence of the media (symbolized by long arrows in the figure), the number of cultural traits common to the host and immigrant groups often increased. Yet, as is illustrated in the right-hand boxes, late in the adaptive process certain aspects of the heritage of the home country have remained important to the character of the immigrant ethnic group. Ethnic groups share traits with the host group but also retain major characteristics of their nationalities. A modern ethnic group is one part home-country heritage and one part common culture, mixed together in a unique way because of a distinctive history of development within the North American crucible.[24]

As we noted in discussing Milton Gordon's ideas, some researchers argue that white ethnic cultures are blending and white ethnic identities are fading. Thus, they do not see a persistence of strong ethnic identities as Greeley does. Nonetheless, a number of research studies have documented the presence today of still-distinctive white ethnic groups, such as Italian Americans and Jewish Americans, in numerous cities, from New York to Chicago to San Francisco, New Orleans, and Tucson. Several researchers have also shown that ethnicity is often an *emergent phenomenon*—that its importance varies in cities and its character and strength depend on the specific historical conditions in which it grows.[25]

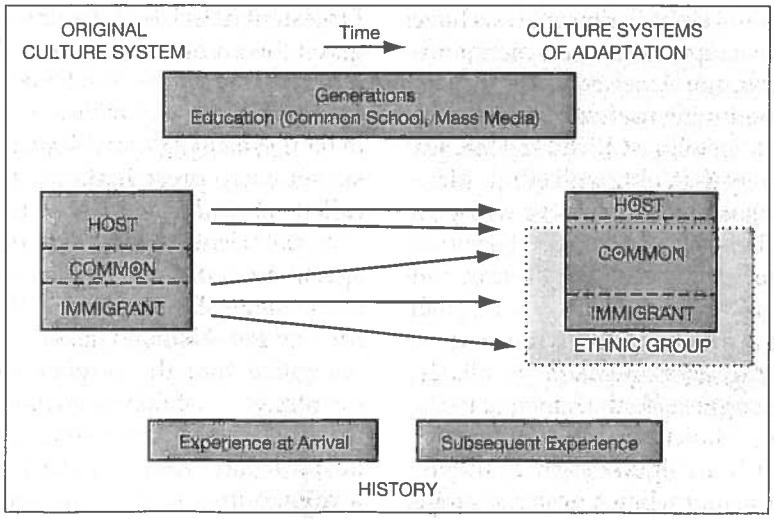


FIGURE 2.2 The Ethnogenesis Perspective

Source: Andrew M. Greeley, *Ethnicity in the United States* (New York: John Wiley, 1974), p. 309. Reprinted with permission.

Additional Problems with Assimilation Theories

Assimilation theorists such as Gordon have often taken as their primary examples of adaptation the European groups that migrated more or less voluntarily to countries such as the United States. But what about the adaptation and incorporation of the numerous non-European groups beyond the stage of initial contact? Most prominent assimilation analysts include non-Europeans in their theories, despite the problems that sometimes arise from such inclusion. They have argued that traditional assimilation, cultural and structural, is the necessary, if long-term, answer to the racial "problem" of the United States. One prominent analyst, Gunnar Myrdal, argued some decades back that as a practical matter it is "to the advantage of American Negroes as individuals and as a group to become assimilated into American culture, to acquire the traits held in esteem by the dominant white Americans."[26] In Myrdal's view there was an ethical contradiction between the democratic principles announced in the Declaration of Independence and the still-institutionalized discrimination against black Americans. For Myrdal this represented a "lag of public morals," a problem solved in principle but still being worked out in an ongoing, one-way assimilation process that may or may not be completed soon.

Optimistic assimilation analysts have emphasized *progressive inclusion*, which they believe will eventually provide racially subordinated groups with full citizenship—in fact as well as in principle. For that reason, they expect ethnic and racial conflict and tensions to disappear as various groups become fully assimilated into the dominant culture and society. Scholars such as Nathan Glazer, Milton Gordon, and Talcott Parsons have stressed what they see as the essential egalitarianism of U.S. institutions and what they view as the ongoing emancipation of non-European groups. They have often underscored what they see as a gradual assimilation of (middle-class) black Americans over several decades. Full membership for black Americans seems inevitable, notes Parsons, for "the only tolerable solution to the enormous [racial] tensions lies in constituting a single societal community with full membership for all."[27] The importance of racial, as well as ethnic, hierarchy and stratification is expected to decline as powerful, universalistic societal forces wipe out the vestiges of earlier ethnocentric value systems. As these analysts see it, white European immigrants have desired substantial assimilation and have been absorbed. The same is expected to happen eventually for non-European groups.

Recently, sociologists Nee and Alba have accented a flexible theory of what they term "rational choice" assimilation, which allows for different patterns of adaptation for different racial–ethnic groups. They argue that the U.S. mainstream to which immigrants assimilate involves "a core set of interrelated institutional structures and organizations regulated by rules and practices that weaken, even undermine, the influence of ethnic origins. . . . A useful way of conceiving of the mainstream is that it is part of the society within which ethnic and racial origins have at most minor impacts on life chances."[28] Nee and Alba adopt a theory of assimilation that is more flexible than that of Gordon and are optimistic that descendants of immigrants of color will increasingly make their way fully into this societal mainstream without prohibitive discrimination. In their view, as the heavily white "baby boomer" generation in the United States continues to retire, many economic opportunities for Americans of color will open up. In this new era, skin color will likely not be the barrier to structural assimilation it once was. Perceptions of racial difference change, and in the future, immigrant groups of color may, like earlier white ethnic groups, be allowed by the dominant white group to integrate fully into core institutions. For example, Nee and Alba see signs of this in the favorable situation of many dark-skinned Asian-Indian Americans today (see Chapter 11).

However, other social scientists, such as Mia Tuan and Rosalind Chou and Joe Feagin, have been critical of such an optimistic assimilation perspective, at least for certain non-European groups. They have researched the situations of later-generation Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and other Asian Americans and found that, although they are substantially acculturated to the Anglo-dominant culture, most still have a strong sense of their racial identity because whites still regularly discriminate against them, overtly or subtly, and impose the identity of "Asian foreigner" on them. Many whites (and others) still view these groups in racialized terms—as somehow not "real Americans." Thus, it seems unlikely that most Asian Americans, to take just one important example of a non-European group, will

soon be absorbed fully and equitably into white middle-class society.[29]

In addition, some assimilation arguments and theories have been criticized for having a serious nativist or "establishment" bias. For example, a number of Asian American scholars and leaders have reacted vigorously to the application of the concept of assimilability (and, thus, unassimilability) to Asian Americans, arguing that the modern version of this concept originated in a period (about 1870 to 1925) of intense attacks by white Americans on the then numerous Chinese and Japanese immigrants. The term *assimilation* was thus tainted from the beginning by its association with the notion that the only "good immigrant groups" were those that could assimilate rapidly and in Anglo-conformity fashion.

In recent years, several researchers have explored another assumption of traditional assimilationist thinking: the idea that new immigrants both should and do adapt to the core culture in a more or less linear, one-directional manner. One old and common view is that new immigrants must gradually "become American" in order to overcome the "inferiority" of their old languages, cultures, and societies. However, this perspective ignores the fact that the assimilation process can also have very significant negative effects. Some research indicates that in certain ways the physical or mental health of immigrant groups *declines* as they become better off economically and more assimilated into the core culture. For example, over time, most immigrants gradually adopt the relatively unhealthy diet of many native-born Americans (and many become overweight and obese) and/or experience family and social stresses (for example, teenagers become depressed) associated with adapting to mainstream U.S. customs. The shift from the culture of origin to the core culture is not necessarily a shift from an inferior to a superior culture, as many native-born Americans might assume.[30]

In addition, assimilation theorists often do not analyze sufficiently the historical development of a particular racial or ethnic group within the larger international context of modern capitalism. Numerous social scientists have developed a perspective called *transnationalism*, which assesses how migration across national boundaries takes place within a highly developed global capitalistic context in which the imperialistic actions of corporate and political actors in major industrial ("core") countries often have (intended or unintended) effects on international migration flows from countries in the "periphery." Like traditional assimilation analyses, transnationalism emphasizes the fact that individual migrants tend to migrate along family and friendship networks. However, as an analysis of Israeli immigrants to the United States puts it, transnationalism also involves "large scale economic, political, and legal structures within which immigrants develop their communities and lives." Transnationalism views immigration as an "on-going process through which ideas, resources, and people change locations and develop meanings in multiple settings."[31]

Thus, many immigrants and their children maintain a strong tie to the home country, with attachments to two "homes" at the same time. They seek opportunities in a new country but also maintain strong ties to the old country. Some immigrants, such as many Puerto Ricans, come to the U.S. mainland to escape pervasive poverty in their home areas, yet return home periodically because of racial discrimination and other factors that make their lives difficult in the United States. *Return* or *circular migration* is a term for this process. For many Israeli, Puerto Rican, and undocumented Mexican immigrants—and even some in the second generation—orientation and self-identity are very strongly linked to their place of origin.

Biosocial Perspectives

Some social theorists, including some assimilationists, offer a biosocial perspective on racial and ethnic relations. The old European and American notion that racial and ethnic groups are deeply rooted in human beings' biological makeup has received renewed attention from a few social scientists and biologists in the United States in recent decades. In *Human Nature, Class, and Ethnicity*, for example, Milton Gordon suggests that ethnic group ties are rooted in the "biological organism of man." Ethnicity is a fundamental part of the physiological as well as the psychological self. Ethnicity "cannot be shed by social mobility, as for instance social class background can, since society insists on its inalienable ascription from cradle to grave." Gordon seems to have in mind the rootedness of intergroup relations in the everyday realities of kinship and socially constructed group boundaries, not the old racist notion of the unchanging biological character of racial groups. He goes further, however, emphasizing that human beings tend to be "selfish, narcissistic and perpetually poised on

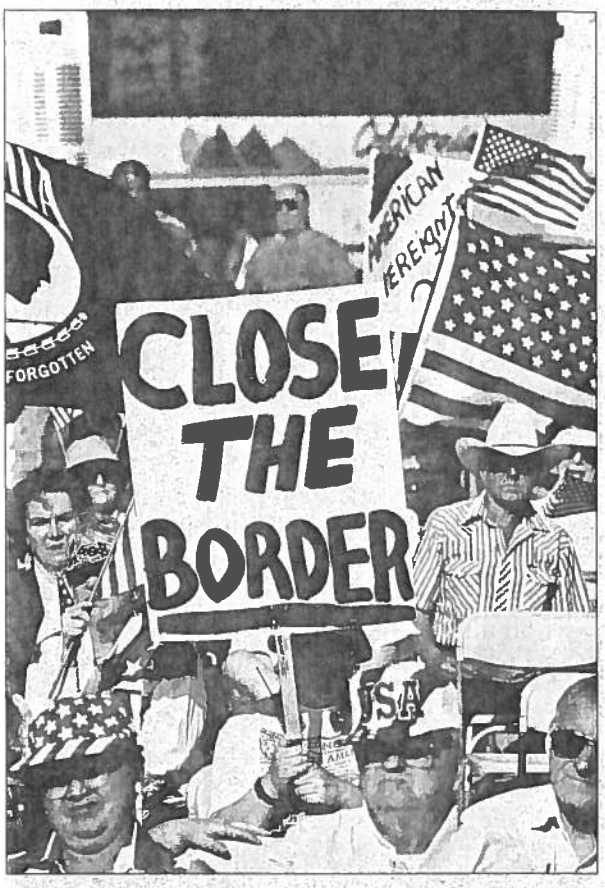
the edge of aggression." In his view, these selfish tendencies lie behind contemporary racial and ethnic tensions.[32] Gordon is adopting a Hobbesian ("dog-eat-dog") view of human nature.

Critics of this biosocial view have suggested that it attributes to fundamental "human nature" what are in reality capitalism's highly individualistic values. That is, under modern capitalism, much selfishness and narcissism are *learned* rather than inherent in human biological makeup. Although decidedly different from earlier biological theories, the modern biosocial analysis remains problematical. The exact linkages between the deep genetic underpinnings of human nature and concrete racial or ethnic behavior are not spelled out beyond some vague analysis of kin selection and selfish behavior.

A major difficulty with any such biosocial approach is that in the everyday world, racial and ethnic relations are *immediately social* rather than biological. As numerous scholars have pointed out, many racial and ethnic groups have mixed biological ancestry. Jewish Americans, for example, have a very mixed ancestry—as a group, they share no distinctive biological characteristics. Biologically diverse Italian immigrants from different regions of Italy gained a sense of being Italian American (even Italian) in the United States. The bonds holding Jewish Americans and Italian Americans together were not genetically based or biologically primordial, but rather the result of real *historical* experiences as these social groups became firmly established in community settings in countries such as the United States. If ethnicity is primordial in a biological sense, it should always be a prominent force in human affairs. Sometimes historical ethnicity leads to ethnic conflicts, as in the case of Jews and Gentiles in the United States; in other cases, as with Scottish and English Americans, it mostly disappears in the mutual adaptation process. Sentiments based on common ancestry are important, but they are activated primarily in the concrete experiences and histories of specific migrating and host groups.[33]

Emphasizing Migration: Competition Theory

Competition theory is a contemporary example of the exploration of migration issues more or less in the tradition of Robert Park. **Competition theory** is *a view of ethnicity that emphasizes the relative stability of ethnic population boundaries over time and the intergroup competition over resources that result from shifts in these boundaries because of migration.* Park emphasized that ethnic and racial relations stem from the migration of peoples, which in turn leads to competition for often scarce resources. Competition theorists have explored the contact and competition parts of the race relations cycle. Unlike some order-oriented theorists, they usually do address questions of protest and conflict, although they do not give much attention to racialized exploitation or wealth-inequality issues.[34]



Protests against legal and undocumented immigration have increased in recent years.

Competition theorists view "ethnicity" in the broad sense as a social phenomenon distinguished by boundaries of language, skin color, and culture. They emphasize the general stability of many ethnic population boundaries, as well as the effects of shifts in these group boundaries; ethnic–group membership often coincides with the creation of a distinctive group niche within the larger labor force. Competition occurs when two or more ethnic

groups attempt to secure the same socioeconomic resources, such as jobs or housing.[35]

According to group competition theorists, intergroup tensions and conflict are fostered by immigration across geographical borders and by the expansion of once-segregated ethnic groups into the same labor and housing markets to which other groups have access. Attacks on immigrant workers or native-born workers of color, for example, increase at the city level when a group moves out of traditionally segregated jobs and thus challenges other groups and not, as one might expect, in cities where ethnic groups are locked into segregation and poverty.

Sociologist Susan Olzak has examined empirical data on ethnic and racial violence in the nineteenth century to show that collective action, such as Anglo-Protestant crowds attacking the newer European immigrants entering the United States, increased when immigration expanded and when economic recessions occurred. The ethnic boundary of the native-born white Americans was mobilized against European immigrant (and black) workers "when ethnic competition was activated by a rising supply of low-wage labor and tight labor markets. In this case the ethnic groups that mobilized were not fully assimilated, but had retained aspects of their traditional identity and drew on that for mobilization against other groups."[36] Olzak distinguishes between (1) societal situations of economic decline, which can increase interethnic competition for jobs and other economic goals, and (2) situations of new ethnic mixing and integration, in which the breakup of once-segregated societies brings ethnic groups into new job competition and other economic competition.

Most recently, using data on ethnic groups in 100 countries, Olzak set these ethnic group competition issues within a broader international context. Examining various conflicts between ethnic groups in numerous countries, and between ethnic groups and their governments, she shows that local ethnic mobilizations are significantly influenced by the larger international setting of politics and world organizations. The more integrated a country is with international human rights organizations and similar world organizations, the more salient ethnic identities become within local country settings and the more likely that local inequalities and limits on human rights will generate ethnic-based group mobilization.[37]

Competition theorists have also emphasized that economic struggles often accompany political competition, which includes competition among ethnic groups for government positions and tax dollars. Joane Nagel has shown how contenders for political power often organize along ethnic lines and argued that "ethnicity is a convenient basis for political organizers due to the commonality of language and culture and the availability of ethnic organizations with ready-made leadership and membership."[38]

A power-conflict theorist might criticize these competition theorists for studying U.S. markets and urban interethnic competition over the last century without a developed analysis of the systemic racism that has long been foundational to the United States. Missing from competition theory is a substantial concern with issues of structural racial inequality, racial exploitation, and racial discrimination accented by numerous power-conflict theories discussed below.

Power-Conflict Theories

The past few decades have witnessed an increased development of major *power-conflict* frameworks that explain racial and ethnic relations in this and other countries. These perspectives place much greater emphasis on economic stratification, racial–ethnic hierarchy, and power issues than one finds in most assimilation and competition theories. Within this broad category of power-conflict theories are a number of subcategories, including the caste perspective, the internal colonialism viewpoint, and a variety of class-based and neo-Marxist theories.

The Caste School

One early exception to the assimilation perspective was the *caste school of racial relations*, which developed in the 1940s mostly under W. Lloyd Warner and Allison Davis and their associates.[39] Focusing on white-on-black oppression in the South, these researchers viewed the position of black Americans as distinctively different from that of other U.S. racial and ethnic groups. After the Civil War, a new societal system, a "caste" system, replaced the southern slavery system. The white and black castes were socially separated by a total prohibition of intermarriage as well as by great economic and social inequalities. These social scientists were critical of the emphasis in most social science analysis on prejudiced attitudes and

feelings. Instead, these advocates of the **caste school of racial relations** accented *well-institutionalized racial discrimination as the foundation of a castelike system of U.S. segregation and apartheid.*[40]

Early Class Theories of Racial Relations

W. E. B. Du Bois, one of the first sociological analysts in the United States, was a black scholar and civil rights activist who had experienced the brutality of white racism firsthand. Drawing on Marxist class analysis in his later writings, Du Bois was perhaps the first major social science theorist to emphasize that racial oppression and social class oppression are closely linked. In his view, the linking together of racial oppression and modern capitalism explained why there has never been true democracy and freedom for all Americans. In a 1948 article titled "Is Man Free?," Du Bois argued that both black workers and white workers were prevented from exercising their full democratic rights because of the control of a small capitalist class (for example, the owners of major workplaces) over the U.S. economy and politics. He argued with evidence that a truly democratic society must include not only social and political equality for Americans of color but also substantial decision-making control of workplaces by workers. Du Bois's sociological ideas are still fresh and provocative, but to this point in time only a modest number of social scientists have used them to analyze the structure of U.S. society.[41]

An early power-conflict analyst who drew on Du Bois and social class analysis was Oliver C. Cox, a scholar whose work has been neglected. Cox also emphasized the role of the capitalist class in U.S. racism. He analyzed the economic dimensions of the forced slave migration from Africa and the great oppressiveness of later conditions for enslaved African Americans. In his view, the slave trade was "a way of recruiting labor for the purpose of exploiting the great natural resources of America." The color of Africans was not important; they were chosen "simply because they were the best workers to be found for the heavy labor in the mines and plantations across the Atlantic."[42] A search for cheap labor by a profit-oriented capitalist class of whites led to a system of racial subordination in the United States. Racial prejudice developed only later, as part of a white-generated ideology rationalizing this economic subordination.

Internal Colonialism

An emphasis on power and resource inequalities across racial lines is at the heart of the internal colonialism theory and its recent descendant, "coloniality" theory. The conceptual framework of internal colonialism is built in part on the work of analysts of external colonialism—the worldwide imperialism of certain capitalist nations, including the United States and European nations, over several centuries.[43] Balandier has noted that Europe's capitalistic expansion has affected non-European peoples across the globe since the fifteenth century: "Until very recently the greater part of the world's population . . . knew only a status of dependency on one or another of the European colonial powers."[44] **External colonialism** *involves the running of a country's economy and politics by an outside colonial power.* Over time, many European colonies in places like Africa became independent of their outside colonizers, such as Great Britain or France, but have continued to have their economies directed substantially by the capitalists and corporations of the former colonial powers.

In contrast, the European colonies in the Americas that experienced a large in-migration of whites have had a different pattern. In such cases, external colonialism has often become **internal colonialism**, in which *the control and exploitation of non-European groups in the colonized country passes from whites in the home country overseas to white immigrant groups within the newly independent country.*[45] Non-European groups in the United States have been viewed in terms of such internal colonialism. The origin and initial stabilization of this internal colonialism predate the Revolutionary War in the United States. The systematic subordination of non-Europeans began with "genocidal attempts by colonizing settlers to uproot native populations and force them into other regions."[46] A great many indigenous Americans were killed or driven off desirable lands. Enslaved Africans became a source of labor for white farmers before and after the Revolution. Later, Asian and Pacific peoples were imported as contract workers or annexed in the expansionist nineteenth-century period of U.S. development. Robert Blauner, an internal colonialism theorist, has noted that agriculture in the U.S. South depended on black labor; in the Southwest, Mexican agricultural development was forcibly taken over by European migrants there

after the 1840s Mexican-American War.[47] From the internal colonialism perspective, contemporary racial–ethnic inequalities are grounded in the long-term economic interests of white employers in low-wage labor—the underpinning of capitalistic economic exploitation.

In recent years, colonialism theory has been reinvigorated by social science research showing how the global colonialism of the past created social structures of oppression that persist today. The scholars Ramón Grosfoguel and Chloe Georas have shown that the current situation for key racial–ethnic groups in the United States is still often one of "coloniality"—a situation of cultural, political, and economic oppression for subordinated racial–ethnic groups without the existence of an overt colonial administration and without legal segregation. Official decolonization does not mean an end to coloniality, for the colonial hierarchies of racial–ethnic oppression often remain more or less intact. Indeed, seen from this coloniality perspective, most mainstream analyses of racial relations underestimate the major continuities between the overtly colonial past and the racial and ethnic hierarchies of the present.[48]

Grosfoguel and Georas cite the examples of Puerto Ricans and African Americans. Both were early colonial-racial subjects of a global U.S. empire, and their situations today show many aspects of that old U.S. colonialism. Today, European Americans remain at the top of, and in control of, the racial hierarchy, and African Americans and Puerto Ricans remain racially subordinated groups at the bottom.

Cultural Resistance and Oppositional Cultures

Internal colonialism theorists accent the role of the cultural stereotyping and racist ideologies of dominant groups seeking to subordinate people of color. A racist ideology, itself part of a broader racist framing, dominates an internal colonialist society, intellectually dehumanizing the colonized. Stereotyping and prejudice, seen in many traditional social science theories as more or less *temporary* problems, are viewed by colonialism analysts as a way of rationalizing exploitation over a very long period. Attempts are made by the dominant group to envelop subordinate groups in dominant cultural values, traditions, and language—in the case of people of color, to "whiten" their cultures. In a system of internal colonialism, cultural as well as physical markers are used to set off subordinate groups such as Native Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and African Americans from the European American group.[49]

Thus, a number of power-conflict scholars have honed the idea of **oppositional culture**—*the culture of resistance often found among subordinate groups*—as a basis for understanding the resistance of non-European groups to the dominant Euro-American culture. Bonnie Mitchell and Joe Feagin have argued that the oppositional cultures of Americans of color are "distinct from the dominant Euro-American culture, while also reflecting or reacting to elements of the larger society. . . . In the colonies and later the United States the pressures on non-Europeans for conformity to the Euro-American culture forced minority Americans to become bicultural, to know both the dominant Euro-American culture and their own oppositional culture as well."[50]

The nation of the United States, created in the 1700s, encompassed African enslavement and genocidal attacks on the indigenous societies. Faced with oppression, these and other targets of colonialism have long drawn on their own cultural resources, as well as distinctive knowledge of Euro-American culture and society, to resist oppression. The cultures of those oppressed by European Americans have not only provided a source of individual, family, and community resistance to racial oppression but also infused a few new elements into the evolving cultural mix that now constitutes the U.S. culture. The cultures of racially colonized groups such as African, Latino, and Native Americans have also helped preserve key aspects of certain U.S. ideals, including the important tradition of civil rights, freedom, and social justice.[51]

Looking back over U.S. history, several social scientists have researched cultural strategies developed by subordinate racial and ethnic groups to resist oppression. For example, James Scott has shown that intentional deception is central to much interaction between the powerless and the powerful.[52] Most groups of color, including Asian, African, Latino, and Native Americans, have used a variety of techniques to hide their critical views of the U.S. system of racial oppression. The concealed discourse of oppressed groups includes critiques that cannot be discussed publicly. For example, early

Afro-Christianity often involved the enslaved African Americans resisting the "ideological hegemony" (attempts to brainwash) of their white slavemasters. In public religious services, enslaved African Americans usually pretended to accept Christian teachings about complete obedience. However, when and where no whites were present, Afro-Christianity might emphasize "themes of deliverance and redemption, Moses and the Promised Land, the Egyptian captivity, and emancipation."[53] For many of those enslaved the "Promised Land" meant the North and freedom, and the afterlife was often viewed as a place where white oppressors would be punished.[54] Surviving elements of African culture and religion were also major sources of this recurring inclination to resistance and rebellion.

Q: What are the major strengths and weaknesses of the order and power-conflict theories we have explained in this chapter?

Anticolonial Nationalism

Ideological resistance takes different forms. For example, anticolonial *nationalism* has developed as part of the cultural resistance to European colonialism and its racist ideology. Pan-Africanism and cultural nationalism are two examples of this resistance to both internal colonialism and liberal solutions for that colonialism.

From the early 1900s to the 1960s, for example, W. E. B. Du Bois was a major advocate of cultural nationalism. He saw pan-African nationalism as a partial solution for the colonized conditions in which people of African descent around the world found themselves.[55] Despite objections from the U.S. State Department, Du Bois succeeded in putting together the first Pan-African Congress in 1919, which was attended by delegates from fifteen countries. The Congress did not ask for immediate decolonization of Africans around the globe, but for more democratic treatment. The Congress called for abolition of slavery and curtailment of colonial exploitation. The Pan-African Congress was an important step toward uniting people of African descent and was perceived as radical by white European and American leaders.[56]

Many racially oppressed peoples have historically drawn on cultural nationalism as a means of resisting Euro-American cultural pressures and discrimination. For example, in Chapter 6 we will examine the cultural and other resistance of numerous Native American societies to the threat of both white violence and cultural imposition. In Chapter 8 we will examine protests by Mexican Americans in New Mexico. The Alianza Federal de Mercedes in the 1960s sought to recover lands in New Mexico taken by the Anglo-American invaders and to establish a stronger Mexican American identity with links to the Mexican heritage. A militant Chicano movement, which emphasized Mexican culture and national pride, emerged among Mexican Americans in a dramatic way in the 1960s and 1970s.

In recent decades, African American scholars and activists have developed a comprehensive Afrocentric perspective that includes a strong critique of the cultural imperialism of European Americans. Sociologist Molefi Kete Asante, among others, has spurred the development of this perspective, arguing for the concept and term *Afrocentricity*. Asante and his colleagues analyze the Eurocentric bias in the dominant culture, particularly the elements of that culture that have been absorbed by African Americans. Indeed, these analysts are critical of the language of much "ethnic" analysis: "The use of the terms *ethnicity, disadvantaged, minority,* and *ghetto* are antithetical to our political consciousness which is indivisible from the international political struggle against racism."[57]

Similarly, anthropologist Marimba Ani writes: "European cultural imperialism is the attempt to proselytize, encourage, and project European ideology. . . . European nationalism implies European expansion, that, in turn, mandates European imperialism."[58] Beginning in the 1400s, European imperialism was supported by a well-developed theory of European supremacy, a worldview that attempted to destroy the cultures of African and African American peoples. From this perspective, the Euro-American worldview includes the myth of European cultural and national superiority, a celebration of materialism over cooperative and spiritual values, and a belief in the superiority of the Judeo-Christian religious tradition over other religious traditions. Because of the profound effect this Euro-American framing of the world has had on the subordinated peoples, Afrocentric theorists argue that African Americans must direct their "energies toward the recreation of cultural alternatives informed by ancestral visions of a future

An African American family in African clothing celebrates Kwanzaa.

that celebrates . . . Africaness."[59] Numerous other Americans of color have engaged in similar struggles against what they view as a Eurocentric dominant culture.

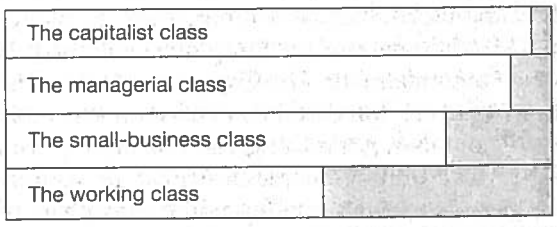
A Neo-Marxist Emphasis on Class

Analysts of racial oppression have sometimes combined an internal colonialism perspective with an emphasis on class stratification, drawing on the Marxist research pioneered by such analysts as Du Bois and Cox. For example, Mario Barrera suggests that the heart of internal colonialism is an interactive structure of class and racial stratification that divides U.S. society. Social class, in the economic-exploitation sense of that term, is central in this perspective. Basic to current internal colonialism are four classes that have developed in U.S. capitalism:

1. *Capitalists:* a small group of people who control capital investments and the means of production and who buy the labor of many others
2. *Managers:* a modest-sized group of people who work as administrators for the capitalists and have been granted control over the work of others
3. *Petit bourgeoisie:* a group of small-scale merchants who control their own businesses and do most of their work themselves, buying little labor power from others
4. *Working class:* a very large group of blue-collar and white-collar workers who sell their labor to employers in return for wages and salaries

The dominant class in the U.S. political-economic system is the capitalist class, which routinely subordinates workers from various racial–ethnic groups for its own corporate profit and investment needs. It is the capitalists who usually decide whether and where to create jobs.

As shown in Figure 2.3, each class is crosscut by a line of racial segmentation that separates those who suffer from institutionalized discrimination—such as African, Latino, Asian, and Native American



Note: Shaded area represents people of color.

FIGURE 2.3 The Class and Racial Structure of Internal Colonialism

workers—from those whites who do not. Take the example of the working class. Although these workers of color may share the same class position with white workers in that they are struggling against capitalists for better wages and working conditions, they are also in a subordinate position because of structural discrimination along racial lines within that working class. The dimensions of this discrimination often include lower wages for many subordinate-group workers, as well as their concentration in lower-status jobs.[60]

The Split Labor-Market View

Racial and ethnic analysts who emphasize class are sometimes unclear about whether all social classes of whites benefit substantially from the colonization of people of color, or just the dominant class of capitalist employers. A power-conflict perspective that helps in assessing this question is the **split labor-market view**, which *treats class in the sense of people's position in the economic "means of production" and argues that the white employer class and whites in the working class both discriminate against those in the working class who are not white.* Sociologist Edna Bonacich argued that in U.S. society, dominant-group (white) workers generally do not share the economic interests of the top social class, the capitalists, yet both the white employer class and the white part of the working class play key roles in discriminating against the racially subordinated part of the U.S. working class.[61]

Developing a neo-Marxist class analysis of racial subordination, Oliver Cox argued that the U.S. capitalist class, motivated by a desire for profit and cheap labor, sought African labor for the slave system in the United States. Ever since, this employer class has played the major role in keeping African Americans in a subordinate economic position in U.S. society. Similarly, Al Szymanski argued that because U.S. employers have not created enough jobs for all those who wish to work, white workers and workers of color are often pitted against each other for too few jobs, often to the broad advantage of capitalists as a class.[62]

However, Bonacich emphasizes that aggressive discrimination against black workers by white workers seeking to protect their own racial privileges is also very important in U.S. society. Historically, white workers have often resisted the full racial desegregation of their workplaces because they fear job displacement or lower wages. For example, until rather recently in U.S. history white workers' unions often openly restricted the access of workers of color to many job ladders, thus splitting the labor market and significantly reducing those workers' and their families' incomes. For example, from the 1880s to the 1960s, in states such as Alabama, the industrial unions controlled by white workers "helped forge a labor framework" that created and perpetuated rigidly segregated white and black jobs.[63] Informal job restrictions and other informal discrimination targeting workers of color are still maintained by white workers in some U.S. workplaces to the present day. White workers both gain and lose from this discrimination. They gain because there is less competition for better-paying job categories from workers of color who are restricted or marginalized. Historically, however, white workers have frequently lost in the long run because employers can use a cordoned-off sector of lower-wage workers of color to undercut white workers if they try to protest or to strike for better working conditions.[64]

In the 1930s, W. E. B. Du Bois explained how both of these class perspectives might be brought together. Du Bois examined the "public and psychological wage" that white workers have received in the U.S. system of racial oppression.[65] Most working-class whites—those with far fewer resources than whites in the higher classes—have come to accept less in the way of economic and political resources and power substantially because of their access to the racial privileges of whiteness. And it is the white elite that has historically convinced and actively pressured white workers to accept an ideology that celebrates "whiteness." When white working people, viewing themselves as racially superior, have refused to organize effectively with workers of color against white employers in order to secure better wages, they have often received fewer economic resources than might have been the case had they effectively organized *with* workers of color.

Ordinary whites suffer in the class-stratified society that is the United States, and the dominant racial frame—with its racist stereotypes of Americans of color—makes it harder for most of these whites to understand not only the situation of the racialized "others" but also their own oppressed economic situation in society. Most whites do not feel powerful or privileged, especially relative to the white elite,

but many are unable to see clearly the real sources of class and racial inequality in this society. Indeed, many unfairly target Americans of color as bearing substantial responsibility for their, or the country's, serious economic difficulties. Some even join white supremacist groups, which engage in threats of overt violence against Americans of color.

Middleman Minorities, Ethnic Enclaves, and Segmented Assimilation

Social scientists have explored the in-between position, in terms of power and resources, that certain racial and ethnic groups have occupied in highly stratified societies. These groups periodically find an economic niche as small-business people positioned between more powerful producers and less powerful consumers (often consumers of color). Some ethnic and racial groups become small-scale traders and merchants doing jobs that dominant groups are not eager to do. For example, many first-generation Jewish and Japanese Americans, excluded from mainstream employment by white Protestant Americans, became small-scale merchants, tailors, and restaurant operators. Such groups have held "a distinctive class position that is of special use to the ruling class." That is, they often "act as a go-between to this society's more subordinate groups."[66]

Edna Bonacich and John Modell found that Japanese Americans fit what has been termed the *middleman minority model*. A **middleman minority** is *a racial or ethnic group that occupies an in-between position in terms of societal power and resources.* Before World War II, for example, Japanese Americans resided in highly organized communities, primarily on the West Coast. Their local economies were based on self-employment, including gardening and truck farming, and on other nonindustrial family businesses. The social solidarity of the first generation of Japanese Americans helped them establish successful small businesses. However, they faced hostility from whites. In fact, Japanese Americans were often driven into the businesses they developed because they were denied many other employment opportunities by white discrimination.[67]

Some middleman groups, such as Korean or Cuban American merchants in certain central cities today, have frequently become targets of hostility from groups that are less well off, such as low-income Mexican or African Americans. Strong in-group bonds can make the middleman group an effective competitor, and even white merchants and other entrepreneurs may sometimes become hostile toward an immigrant group of color that competes too effectively in the economy. Historically and in the present day, Korean or Jewish business people have periodically been viewed negatively by better-off, white Protestant merchants who have the power to discriminate against them, as well as by the poor renters and customers of color with whom they deal as landlords and merchants. Some scholars have criticized a broad application of "middleman minority" theory to certain Asian American groups, arguing that groups such as Chinese or Japanese Americans, even when substantially involved in trade, have rarely been a *middle* group of modest entrepreneurs situated between a poor racial–ethnic group and a richer racial–ethnic group. More generally, this middleman perspective also does not deal adequately with the movement, over time, of large numbers of small entrepreneurs in a particular middleman group into a yet more powerful business group, as has happened for many Jewish Americans over the last century.

A similar perspective, *enclave theory*, examines secondary-structural incorporation of a group into the U.S. economy, especially the ways in which certain non-European immigrant groups have created **ethnic enclaves**—that is, *distinctive social and economic niches in U.S. cities.* Both the middleman and the enclave perspectives give more emphasis to economic inequality and racial or ethnic discrimination than do the traditional assimilation perspectives such as Milton Gordon's. Enclave theorists stress the incorporation of certain groups—such as the Cubans, Chinese, and Koreans—into the United States through the means of small businesses and specialized "ethnic economies." The major differences between the two theories here seem to stem from the examples emphasized. Groups studied by enclave theorists, such as Cuban Americans, have generally created enclaves that are more than merchant or trading economies; they often include manufacturing enterprises, for example. These substantial economic enclaves may compete directly with established white-Anglo business elites. In contrast, the "middleman" groups have developed trading economies and have more often than not just filled an economic niche that has mostly complemented that of established white businesses.

Alejandro Portes and Robert Manning examined the communities of Cubans in Miami and Koreans in Los Angeles—groups that have developed many small businesses that cater to customers inside and outside their own communities. Enclave economies require an immigrant group with entrepreneurial talents, business experience, some capital, and a pool of low-wage labor. These characteristics enabled Cuban Americans in Miami to build a strong enclave economy. These enclaves, unlike the "colonies" of internal colonialism, typically do not relegate newcomers to a more or less permanent position of inferiority. Enclave scholars sometimes criticize the internal colonialism and split labor-market viewpoints for trying to encompass all subordinated groups, although they agree that the situations of African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans can perhaps be better explained as variations on internal colonialism. Yet, enclave analysts have so far paid insufficient attention to the economic exploitation that takes place in enclave economies, such as exploitation of low-wage immigrant workers by immigrant (for example, Cuban American) employers. They also tend to neglect the effects of the surrounding political and economic system—in the Cuban and Korean cases, multinational capitalism—that shapes the initial migration of these groups as well as the character of their specific enclave economies. In some ways enclave theorists straddle the fence between the order and power-conflict theories.[68]

Some researchers concerned with structural barriers that prevent immigrants of color from assimilating as might be predicted from a traditional assimilation perspective have suggested the concept of *segmented* assimilation. Rubén Rumbaut has underscored the diversity of the adaptation experiences of various immigrant groups, calling on immigration researchers to spell out what is "being 'assimilated,' by whom, under what circumstances, and in reference to what sector of American society." Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou have argued that over time the outcomes of adaptation by immigrants to U.S. society vary greatly, with some confined to the lower economic rungs of the societal ladder and others experiencing rapid economic development while maintaining much of their traditional culture. An example of segmented assimilation is the situation of many second-generation Mexican Americans today. Unlike the children and grandchildren of earlier white immigrants from Europe, who over these generations moved into better economic circumstances and living conditions, many second-generation and third-generation Mexican Americans continue to face difficult economic circumstances, with lower-paying jobs and inadequate housing (see Chapter 8). Moreover, in contrast, one 2008 New York City study, titled *Inheriting the City*, examined the situations of selected immigrants of color—for example, Dominicans, South Americans, and Chinese—and found that the second-generation children of these immigrants were so far mostly upwardly mobile and assimilating relatively well to certain "American ways," compared to their parents and to children in much older groups of color such as African Americans. Of course, one reason for the upward mobility of many recent legal immigrants of color (and their children) is the fact that many come into the United States with some socioeconomic resources, especially many who have come since 1990. In recent decades, much of the legal immigration to the United States has involved people from the middle and upper classes of the sending countries.[69]

Over the generations, then, the experiences of immigrants and their children can involve upward or downward mobility, and reflect a variable and segmented assimilation in key areas such as the economy. The arguments about segmented assimilation parallel to some degree the ideas of the ethnogenesis theory. The main difference lies in the greater attention given by segmentation theorists to major structural barriers such as the discrimination and entrenched segregation that have faced many people of color.

A Note on Market-Dominant Minorities

We should consider briefly who it is that has gained the top economic position in market-driven economies around the globe. In a provocative analysis of contemporary capitalism, Amy Chua has developed the concept of *market-dominant minorities*. She shows that in many areas, certain racial or ethnic minorities have come to economically dominate the population majorities in their countries. These market-dominant groups include, in her analysis, white South Africans in contemporary South Africa, people mainly of European descent (considered "whites") in many Latin American countries, Jewish Russians in

contemporary Russia, Chinese Indonesians in contemporary Indonesia, Croatians in the former Yugoslavia, and Lebanese in several West African countries.

Historically, the European colonizers were market-dominant minorities in the areas on every continent where they came to dominate—almost always at the expense of impoverished indigenous peoples of color. Huge wealth increases came out of this process of greatly exploiting the labor, land, and natural resources of other peoples. In addition to these white Europeans becoming market-dominant minorities, the divide-and-conquer process of colonialism over time also favored certain other groups, "exacerbating ethnic wealth imbalances and fomenting group tensions. . . . most starkly in southern Africa but also in Latin America."[70]

Central to Chua's argument, as well as that of other recent U.S. analysts, is a concern that in many countries today the operation of capitalistic markets comes into serious conflict with the operation of expanding political democracies. Markets tend to favor small groups of people, often people who have accented their own racial or ethnic superiority. Yet, the opening up of democratic political institutions means that impoverished, often racially oppressed, majorities can gain political power and begin to counter the smaller, economically privileged racial or ethnic groups.

Women and Gendered Racism

Most theories of racial and ethnic relations have neglected gender stratification. In recent decades, numerous social scientists have researched the situations of women within various U.S. racial and ethnic groups. Their analyses often assess the ways in which male supremacy, or a **patriarchal system**—*a social hierarchy in which men as a group dominate women as a group, especially in terms of socioeconomic power and resources*—interacts with and operates within a system of racial and ethnic stratification. Discussing racial and ethnic cultures around the globe, Adrienne Rich has explained a patriarchal system in more detail as "a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men—by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor—determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male."[71]

Asking whether racism or patriarchy has been the primary source of oppression, Philomena Essed examined the situations of black women in the Netherlands and United States. She found racism and sexism interacting. Thus, *societal oppression of women of color* is often a **gendered racism**.[72] For example, under slavery, African American women were exploited not only for labor but also often as sex objects for white men, including slaveholders. After slavery ended, under Jim Crow segregation these women were excluded from most job categories available to white men and women; major employment changes came only with the civil rights movement of the 1960s (see Chapter 7). Today, racism still has gendered forms. In the media, including on the Internet, the white woman is usually the standard for female beauty. Women of color are often stereotyped as exotic sex objects, matriarchs in female-headed families, or "welfare queens." In the economy they are often found disproportionately in lower-paid "female jobs," such as nurses' aides, fast-food restaurant workers, and clerical workers. Some women of color, such as Mexican American and African American women in the South and Southwest, are closely bound in their social relations with those who oppress them in such areas as domestic employment (as "maids").

Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins has argued that a solid black feminist theoretical framework analyzes critically the negative stereotypes of black women—the white-generated, historical, and contemporary stereotypes such as docile mammy, domineering matriarch, promiscuous prostitute, and irresponsible welfare mother. These severely negative images, which are also sometimes applied to Mexican American and Puerto Rican women, are central to the old white racial framing of these groups and persist because they are fostered by the media and undergird whites' discrimination against women of color.[73]

Scholars assessing the situations of women of color—including Native, Asian, Latino, and African American women—have emphasized the cumulative and interactive character of racial and gender oppression and the necessity of liberating these women from racial stereotypes and discrimination. Denise Segura has examined labor force data on Mexican American women and developed the concept of *triple oppression*—the mutually reinforcing and interactive set of racial, class, *and* gender forces whose cumulative effects "place women

of color in a subordinate social and economic position relative to men of color and the white population."[74] Numerous social scientists have called for more research to explore the character, interaction, and consequences of these triple oppressions of race, class, and gender.

Men in some racial or ethnic groups also face a type of gendered racism. For example, gender-specific stereotypes are often directed at men of color. Whereas black women are frequently stereotyped by whites and others as matriarchs or "welfare queens," black men are often stereotyped as oversexed criminals. In addition, Asian American and Mexican American women are sometimes stereotyped as exotic sex objects, and Asian American men are sometimes stereotyped as impotent or unmasculine. Gendered racism takes many forms.

Q: How does gendered racism shape an individual's position in U.S. racial and gender hierarchies?

The State and Racial Formations

Looking at the important role of governments in creating racial and ethnic designations and institutionalizing discrimination, creative social theorists Michael Omi and Howard Winant have developed an innovative theory of *racial formation*. Racial tensions and oppression, in their view, cannot be explained solely in terms of social class or nationalism. In **racial formation theory**, *racial relations are substantially defined by government actions that range from the passing of racist legislation, such as restrictive immigration laws, to the racially motivated imprisonment of groups defined as a threat* (for example, Japanese American imprisonment during World War II, discussed in Chapter 10).

The U.S. government has greatly shaped the contours and stereotypes of racial and ethnic relations in this country: The U.S. Constitution and a lengthy series of laws have long defined racial groups and interracial relationships (for example, slavery) in openly racist terms. The U.S. Constitution, for example, counted each enslaved African American as only three-fifths of a person (for the purpose of white political representation), and the Naturalization Law of 1790 explicitly declared that only "white" immigrants could qualify to become naturalized U.S. citizens. Non-European immigrants, such as Asians, were thereby prevented from becoming citizens. Japanese and other Asian immigrants, for example, were banned by racist laws from becoming U.S. citizens *until the 1950s*. In 1854, the California Supreme Court even ruled that Chinese immigrants should be classified as "Indians," thereby denying them political rights available to white Americans.[75]

For centuries, as we will see in later chapters, the U.S. government officially favored northern European immigrant groups over southern Europeans, such as Italians, and over people of color from other continents. For example, the Immigration Act of 1924 was used to exclude Asian immigrants and many immigrants from southern and eastern Europe—those whom the Anglo-Protestant political leaders in Congress and the White House saw as inferior and a threat to their control of society. Northern European Americans working through the government thereby greatly shaped the subsequent racial, ethnic, and religious mix of the United States. For example, today there are far fewer Catholic, Jewish, and Buddhist Americans than there would have been if the U.S. government had not enforced discriminatory immigration laws for many decades.

Toward a Theory of Systemic Racism

The social scientists and other scholars who were reviewed in the power-conflict theory section of this text are grappling with important dimensions of racial oppression as it has developed in countries like the United States. Drawing on the research and ideas of these authors—particularly Du Bois, Cox, Blauner, and Ture and Hamilton—and using much recent research work by Joe Feagin and his colleagues, we can trace out briefly the contours of a more comprehensive power-conflict theory, one we can call a *theory of systemic racism*. **Systemic racism** encompasses *the white prejudices, stereotypes, emotions, framing, discriminatory practices, and institutions that are integral to the long-term domination of Americans of color*. We suggest here key themes in the development and continuing maintenance of systemic racism in the United States:

1. *Initiation of oppression:* At an early point in time, European colonists established hierarchical group relations with the people of color they oppressed and exploited for their land (for example, Native Americans) and labor (for

example, African Americans). Later, descendants of these self-named "white" colonists would add many other Americans of color (for example, Latino and Asian American groups) to the system of racial exploitation and oppression.

2. *Mechanisms of oppression:* In the past and in the present, these substantial racial hierarchies have involved material oppression that is supported by a strong racial framing with its range of stereotyped ideas, narratives, and emotions. Racial hierarchies are perpetuated centrally by the exploitative and other oppressive (discriminatory) practices carried out by members of the dominant racial group (in this case, white Americans) against those in numerous subordinate racial groups.
3. *Privileges and costs of oppression:* Substantial material and symbolic privileges come to those in the dominant racial group. Much misery and serious social and economic burdens come to those in subordinate racial groups. Critical to the maintenance of hierarchical group relations is the ongoing societal reproduction of this unjust enrichment for white Americans and unjust impoverishment for many Americans of color, now over many generations.
4. *Elite maintenance of oppression:* Many actions of the white economic and political elites have created and maintained the societal institutions, interpretive frames, and ideologies that reflect the elites' interests in racial (and class and gender) hierarchies. Most non-elite whites have more or less accepted the society's racial hierarchy, along with fewer socioeconomic resources than the elites, because of their access to privileges and advantages associated historically with "whiteness."
5. *Rationalization of oppression:* Once the system of racial oppression and social privilege was firmly put into place in the 1600s and 1700s, it was increasingly defended and rationalized by a broad racist framing with its supporting racist ideology. Since at least the late 1600s, a broad racist frame accenting superior and inferior racial groups has been created and circulated by elite whites in power. For centuries now, that racist frame has been accepted and further circulated by most rank-and-file whites.
6. *Resistance to oppression:* Opposition to systemic racism is a constant in North American history. Native Americans, African Americans, and other Americans of color have a long history of individual and group counterframing and protest against the reality and burdens of racial oppression by white Americans. Some antiracist whites have periodically joined in this centuries-old struggle against systemic racism.

To varying degrees, these dimensions of historical and contemporary racial oppression are relevant to understanding the oppressed situations of most non-European Americans, including Native Americans, African Americans, Latino Americans, Asian Americans, and Middle Eastern Americans. We will examine these dimensions in detail in later chapters, but let us illustrate them briefly here, with particular reference to white oppression of African Americans over nearly four centuries.

A previous history of oppression often explains many contemporary societal realities. For example, the pioneering W. E. B. Du Bois, in his book *The World and Africa* (1946), showed how the great misery and poverty evident in Europe's many African colonies were linked directly to the "wealth and luxury in Europe. The results of this poverty were disease, ignorance, and crime. Yet these had to be represented as natural characteristics of backward peoples."[76] Du Bois argued that a serious history of African colonization has been omitted from most mainstream histories of European development, wealth, and affluence. He further demonstrated that a complete understanding of European wealth and prominence must *center* on the history of African colonialism, for the material and labor resources of many Africans were exploited and taken to create much of that European wealth and prominence.

Similarly, a first step in developing a comprehensive theory of systemic racism in the United States is to put the four-centuries-long white exploitation and domination of people of color at the center of the social science analysis. From the beginning, European colonialism in North America involved racialized exploitation and oppression: European colonists built up much wealth by unjustly taking for themselves the material and labor resources of Native Americans and Africans. Today, a major educational task is to analyze critically the mythologized and falsified past history often taught in U.S. school books and to learn more about our actual racial and ethnic history.

Together with Du Bois, Oliver Cox was one of the first to examine the colonial origins of systemic racism in North America. He showed how capitalism, which

was involved in the movement of Europeans overseas, created a situation that was "favorable for the development of white race prejudice."[77] Modern racial prejudice, ideology, and framing developed as these colonizers moved from viewing the early colonized populations of indigenous Americans and African Americans (and soon, Mexican and Chinese Americans) as "uncivilized savages" or "heathens" to seeing them as racially inferior and well below whites on the hierarchy of "races." This colonialism, with its substantial theft of land and labor, created our modern racial relations. The racial oppression of recent centuries did not arise out of some "abstract, natural, immemorial feeling of mutual antipathy between groups" but rather grew out of "a practical exploitative relationship" that was soon combined with a justifying racial framing with its racist ideology.[78]

Examining the origins of *racial hierarchies* in the colonialism and exploitation of particular historical periods, rather than in innate intergroup hostilities, is a second major theme for a comprehensive theory of systemic racism. "Race" is not an inborn human trait but rather a *way of relating* between individuals and groups. A comprehensive theory should begin with the real world of everyday exploitative and oppressive experiences and thus the historical relationships between large groups of human beings.

This systemic racism framework recognizes the centrality of the history of material and economic exploitation in North America, which began with the seizure by whites of Native American lands (see Chapter 6) and the enslavement of Africans (see Chapter 7) by violent means. Land and labor obtained unjustly, by theft and chicanery, formed much of the economic and social foundation of what became the United States. Most Native Americans were killed or driven out of major white-controlled areas, while enslaved Africans were forced to become a central part of the economies of the white colonial communities. The often genocidal action against many indigenous societies and the importation, subordination, and exploitation of enslaved Africans set in place the strong societal foundation for nearly 400 years of group oppression in North America.

By the mid-1600s, the liberty and lives of Americans of African heritage were controlled by a system of racial oppression put into place by European Americans. For most, this meant legalized slavery. Transplanted and enslaved Africans became a major point of reference for European colonists in their construction of the colonial economy, polity, legal system, and values, and even their "white" selves. African American subjugation then became the common model for their treatment of other Americans of color in later periods. The white male elite among the colonizers reinforced this economy of oppression by legalizing it in the laws and political institutions of the new republic. Enslavement of African Americans was upheld in numerous provisions of the U.S. Constitution. Wealthy slaveholders—including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison—led in the creation of the legal and political arrangements of the new nation: Americans of color of that day, mainly Indian and African Americans, had *no* representation whatsoever in this nation-creating process. From the beginning, white-controlled local, state, and federal governments created and enforced an extensive system of racial exploitation and other oppression that would soon expand in the mid-nineteenth century to encompass yet other groups, such as Mexican and Chinese Americans.

A third theme in this comprehensive overview is the importance of the power and privilege of whites and the related burdens of the racial "others." Oppression operates from a socially framed set of ideas and practices that deny Americans of color the privileges, power, opportunities, and rewards that this society offers whites as a group. The racial hierarchy offers generally different resources and life chances for the racially dominant and racially subordinate groups.[79] Thus, white Americans and Americans of color have different group interests because they have historically had unequal access to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" and to the material and other resources that shape everyday life.

For systemic racism to persist across generations, it must reproduce the necessary socioeconomic conditions. These conditions include a greatly disproportionate control by whites of major economic resources and of the political, police, and ideological power to control subordinate racial groups. This *social reproduction process* is often hard to see because it is so much a part of everyday existence. Every new generation of whites has inherited an array of social, economic, and political privileges that are associated with being white. For more than three centuries of this country's existence, racial oppression

was firmly enforced and reinforced by legal and political institutions. Once legal slavery and official segregation were finally eliminated—the latter only in the late 1960s—this action did not eliminate the *racial hierarchy* that put privileged whites generally toward the top and disadvantaged people of color on lower rungs of the hierarchical ladder. Over centuries now, the majority of whites have inherited some economic resources—often in the form of a farm, some house equity, or family savings—or other valuable social resources, such as job training or the ability to get a good education, from their white ancestors. These ancestors usually benefitted significantly from legal slavery, legal segregation, or other legalized discrimination.

For example, under just one major federal program (set up by a Homestead Act) from the 1860s to the 1930s, the U.S. government provided, for little or no money, some 246 million acres of land for some 1.5 million homesteads. Because of official discrimination and Klan-type violence, almost all of these homesteading families were white. Research by Trina Williams estimates that perhaps some 46 million (mostly white) people *today* are the descendants and heirs of those who received just this one major "affirmative action" benefit from the U.S. government.[80] The ancestors of contemporary African Americans were mostly excluded from this land and from many other economic resources by blatant, often violent, discrimination. (Note too that the land provided here had often been stolen, often by violence, from Native American societies.)

In addition, as we document in later chapters, many whites discriminate today against Americans of color in order to protect their group interests and privileges. For example, frequent discriminatory actions by whites still restrict the access of many Americans of color to better-paying jobs, higher political positions, and some residential areas. This persisting discrimination generally outweighs the expressed commitments of many whites now to the values of racial fairness and equality.[81] Note the continuing hierarchical structure of employment. Today, the majority of low-wage service and unskilled menial jobs in numerous employment sectors are held by workers of color; employees in these jobs often service better-off whites, such as employers, managers, and skilled workers. As a result, "these jobs entail a transfer of energies whereby the servers enhance the status of those served."[82]

The other side of white privilege is the set of material and psychological burdens that bear down on African Americans and other Americans of color. In its everyday operation, systemic racism *dehumanizes* those in a racially subordinated group. The most precious asset a person can have—substantial control over personal life and liberty—is often that which is most taken away. Institutionalized discrimination and inequality constitute the social structure of systemic racism, and part of its psychological dynamic is individual dehumanization. Our conceptual framework recognizes some degree of variation in these discriminatory burdens depending on the social position and gender of the oppressed individual. For example, middle-class Americans of color usually have more socioeconomic or political resources to counter some of the racial discrimination they face. In addition, women of color often face gendered racism—the double burden of suffering discrimination because they are not white and because they are female. Historically and in the present, institutionalized racial oppression has prevented most Americans of color, in all social classes, from developing to their full human potential.

A fourth aspect of this theory of systemic racism recognizes the differential role of different class and gender groups among white Americans. The actions of the white elite—originally centrally composed of slaveholding planters, other major farmers, merchants, and bankers, but later of industrialists and other major entrepreneurs—are critical in the creation and maintenance of the racist system at the foundation of U.S. society. As the scholars Du Bois and Cox made clear, in the process of protecting its top position, the overwhelmingly white (mostly male) elite has worked to create organizations, institutions, and ideologies that substantially incorporate its group interests. This elite group has long held disproportionate power and wealth. When its interests have conflicted with those of other groups, the elite has worked hard to deflect challenges to its dominance. The exploitative and discriminatory treatment of racially subordinated groups has varied, but in every case it is the dominant white group—and within it the ruling elite—that has set the basic terms for this treatment and, thus, for group development and mobility in society.[83]

In the economic arena, the white elite has been substantially interested in the exploitation of the land and labor of Americans of color, whereas the

white working and middle classes have been more concerned about job, educational, and housing competition with Americans of color. Ordinary whites are important in enforcing discrimination in everyday life, because they constitute the majority of whites. Middle-class and working-class whites are responsible for much of the everyday discrimination against people of color, as contemporary studies of employment and housing discrimination show (see Chapters 6–12).

A fifth theme in our theory is that once racial oppression is in place, it is vigorously defended and rationalized. The taking of land and labor of Americans of color is rooted in this country's laws and founding documents. It is also rooted in a strong racial framing accenting the alleged cultural, intellectual, or biological inferiority of those on lower rungs of the racial ladder. This framing has been structured by certain white intellectuals and other white leaders and communicated to the general public in overt and subtle forms, often through schools, churches, and the media.

Since the seventeenth century, white intellectuals and other leaders have frequently tried to hide the actual sources of racial and class inequalities. The dominant group has regularly generated images of itself as racially superior and explained inequality in racist terms. A comprehensive theory of oppression must include this rationalization process. From the seventeenth century onward, religious, economic, political, intellectual, and media elites have perpetuated negative images of racialized outgroups to legitimate racial oppression. The often unseen power of the white elite still works through the white racial frame's strong stereotyped beliefs and images (for example, the woman or man of color as lazy or dangerous) perpetuated in the media, schools, workplaces, and churches.

A sixth aspect of a complete theory of systemic racism emphasizes the many resistance strategies developed by members of racially oppressed groups, individually and collectively. Protest against oppression includes overt confrontation with the dominant group and development of an alternative perspective on the everyday world, a counterframing of society generated over a long period of time by those fighting racial discrimination and domination. Americans of color are theorists of their own experience, as they have frequently made clear in the long history of antidiscrimination protest and civil rights movements. Out of their everyday experiences with the white-generated system of racism, Americans of color have created counterframes and countercultures of resistance that are the basis for individual and group strategies to challenge or destroy oppression.

Evidence of a counterculture of resistance, for example, can be seen in the black, Native American, and Mexican American protest movements that were so powerful in the 1950s and 1960s. Organized protests against discrimination during this period included economic and bus boycotts, sit-ins, and demonstrations. African American resistance to segregation spurred the creation of civil rights organizations. Many civil rights demonstrations included large-scale participation by Americans from all class and racial backgrounds. This organized activism was often rooted in a strong local base of churches, clubs, and other organizations. These groups provided money and mobilized people to enable civil rights organizations to achieve success in fighting entrenched patterns of legal segregation.[84]

In summary, then, a racially oppressive society can best be comprehended in its totality. These several dimensions are important to a fully developed framework for understanding systemic racism in the United States.

How has the U.S. racial hierarchy changed from the 1790s to the present?

A Note on the "Black–White Paradigm"

In recent decades, some academic researchers and other commentators have criticized what they see as a "binary black–white paradigm," which is said to dominate too much analysis of U.S. racial and ethnic relations.[85] These analysts feel that government, social science, and the media give (1) too much attention to white–black issues and (2) too little attention to the situations of other groups of color such as Asian, Latino, and Middle Eastern Americans. As we will see in later chapters, the view that these other non-European groups have not received adequate public attention and research is generally quite accurate.

However, the critical power-conflict analysts discussed previously have shown that a thorough understanding of the current and historical oppression

of all non-European groups requires a recognition that the economic and social *foundation* of the North American colonies, and later of the United States, was created and concretized with the destruction of Native American societies and enslavement of Africans and African Americans. Once indigenous peoples were killed off or driven away and white-on-black oppression became an institutionalized foundation of the European-American–dominated society, that system was enshrined in legal institutions and rationalized in a racist framing and ideology that has endured to the present day.[86]

From this power-conflict perspective, U.S. society is not an array of disconnected racisms affecting peoples of color. Rather, this society has a racialized foundation and core that asserts and maintains substantial white superiority over all groups of color—a comprehensive system of racial domination that whites first developed for African Americans, and to some extent Native Americans, *within* the new society and extended later to other non-European groups. Since the mid-nineteenth century, other groups of non-European workers—for example, Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Puerto Rican, and Mexican Americans—have been brought into the racialized system to be exploited for their labor. The generally more powerful white group exploited, evaluated, and imaged later non-European immigrants and their descendants from within the already well-institutionalized system of racial oppression and its rationalizing white racial frame.

The dominant white group has typically placed new non-European groups somewhere on a white-to-black continuum of status and privilege—with white Americans at the highly privileged end, black Americans at the bottom, and various other racial and ethnic groups placed somewhere in between, generally at the discretion of powerful elite whites. For nearly four centuries in North America, white minds and practices have constructed and maintained this hierarchical continuum of racial status, power, and privilege. As we demonstrate in later chapters, at certain points in U.S. history white Americans have come to view certain groups among Americans of color as more socially acceptable than African Americans or than the darker-skinned, or less acculturated, members of those particular groups of color. For example, whites have periodically granted some non-European groups, such as Japanese and Cuban Americans, an intermediate-group status between the white and black ends of the white-generated racial ladder and continuum. The "model minority" stereotype that white commentators have often applied to Japanese, Chinese, and other Asian American groups (see Chapters 10 and 11) provides evidence of this strategy. These latter groups did not create this "model minority" perspective; elite white commentators did.

Indeed, at earlier points in U.S. history, Chinese and Japanese immigrants' character, values, and societal position were very negatively framed and stereotyped by whites—even as "black" or "near-black" on the socioracial continuum. However, in recent years, many whites have constructed certain groups, such as Japanese or other Asian Americans, as "model minorities" and as "nearer to white" on the socioracial continuum (see Chapter 10). They then criticize groups such as African or Mexican Americans for not possessing the work ethic, and for not achieving the economic successes, of such "model minorities." As Gary Okihiro has expressed it, whites have historically

> upheld Asians as "near-whites" or "whiter than whites" in the model minority stereotype, and yet Asians have experienced and continue to face white racism "like blacks" in educational and occupational barriers and ceilings and in anti-Asian abuse and physical violence. . . . This marginalization of Asians, in fact, within a black and white racial formation, "disciplines" both Africans and Asians and constitutes the essential site of Asian American oppression.[87]

By placing certain groups of color in an intermediate status on the socioracial ladder and continuum, white Americans as a group can effectively maintain and perpetuate the age-old racial hierarchy that began in this country with white oppression of Native Americans and African Americans.

When new immigrants arrive in the United States, what criteria are used to place them in the persisting racial hierarchy?

Summary

In this chapter, we have reviewed major theories of migration and subsequent patterns of intergroup adaptation. Migration—varying from the movement

of conquerors to slave importation to voluntary immigration—creates intergroup contact and thus racial and ethnic relationships and conflicts. Adaptation can have different outcomes in the period of initial contact, ranging from genocide to peaceful symbiosis to some type of societal hierarchy and large-scale inequality. Further adaptation may lead to further genocide, to egalitarian symbiosis, to full adaptation to the dominant culture and institutions, to some type of cultural pluralism, or to continuing large-scale inequality and a persisting socioracial hierarchy.

Most theories discussed in this chapter fall more or less under the two broad categories of order theories and power-conflict theories. Both types of theories offer useful insights into the character and development of certain racial or ethnic relationships. Assimilation theories tend to focus on voluntary immigrant groups and emphasize inclusion along conformity lines or pluralism outcomes. Assimilation analysts have pointed out the different dimensions of intergroup adaptation, such as acculturation and marital assimilation, and have often accented the role of value consensus in holding a racial and ethnic system together.

In contrast, power-conflict theories typically focus on involuntary immigration or colonial-type oppression and thus examine the substantial inequality and hierarchy in society. Power-conflict theories have certain recurring themes:

1. A central concern for major racial and ethnic inequalities in economic position, power, and resources
2. An emphasis on the interrelationship of racial oppression, the economic institutions of Western capitalism, and the subordination of women under patriarchal systems
3. An emphasis on the role of the government in legalizing and maintaining exploitation and segregation and in defining racial and ethnic relations
4. An emphasis on resistance to racial or ethnic domination by those who are oppressed

In analyzing U.S. history, power-conflict analysts have emphasized the forced character of much cultural and economic adaptation, particularly for non-European groups, and the role of coercion, segregation, exploitation, colonization, and institutionalized discrimination in keeping groups such as African, Latino, Asian, and Native Americans on or near the bottom rungs of the societal racial and ethnic ladder. Power-conflict theorists have also emphasized the importance of examining racial and ethnic relations in the context of the historical and global development of capitalism and patriarchy. In the introduction to Part II, we will explore the utility of such an approach in evaluating the broad contours of racial and ethnic relations over nearly four centuries of North American and world history.

Key Terms

theory 28
movements of forced labor 29
contract-labor movement 29
political refugees 29
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colonization migration 29
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egalitarian symbiosis 29
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