Laying the Sociological Foundation

As unlikely as it seems, this is a true story. It really did happen to 399 men. Seldom do race and ethnic relations degenerate to this point, but troubled race relations are no stranger to us. Today's newspapers and TV news regularly report on racial problems. Sociology can contribute greatly to our understanding of this aspect of social life, and this chapter may be an eye-opener. To begin, let's consider to what extent race itself is a myth.

Race: Myth and Reality

race physical characteristics that distinguish one group from another

genocide the systematic annihilation or attempted annihilation of a people based on their presumed race or ethnic group

With its more than 6 billion people, the world offers a fascinating variety of human shapes and colors. People see one another as black, white, red, yellow, and brown. Eyes come in shades of blue, brown, and green. Lips are thick and thin. Hair is straight, curly, kinky, black, white, blonde, and red—and, of course, all shades of brown.

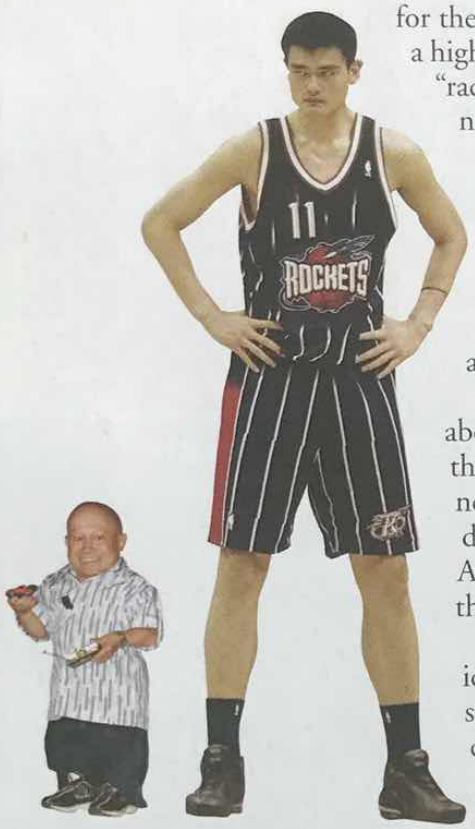
As humans spread throughout the world, their adaptations to diverse climates and other living conditions resulted in this profusion of complexions, colors, and shapes. Genetic mutations added distinct characteristics to the peoples of the globe. In this sense, the concept of **race**—a group of people with inherited physical characteristics that distinguish it from another group—is a reality. Humans do, indeed, come in a variety of colors and shapes.

In two senses, however, race is a myth, a fabrication of the human mind. The *first* myth is the idea that any race is superior to others. All races have their geniuses—and their idiots. As with language, one is not better than the others.

Ideas of racial superiority abound, however. They are not only false, but also dangerous. Adolf Hitler, for example, believed that the Aryans were a superior race, responsible for the cultural achievements of Europe. The Aryans, he said, were destined to establish a higher culture and usher in a new world order. This destiny required them to avoid the "racial contamination" that would come from breeding with inferior races; thus it was necessary to isolate or destroy races that might endanger Aryan culture.

When Hitler's views were put into practice, the world was left an appalling legacy—the Nazi slaughter of those they deemed inferior: Jews, Slavs, gypsies, homosexuals, and people with mental and physical disabilities. Dark images of gas ovens and emaciated bodies stacked like cordwood haunted the world's nations. At Nuremberg, the Allies, flush with victory, put the top Nazi officials on trial, exposing their heinous deeds to a shocked world. Their public executions, everyone assumed, marked the end of such grisly acts.

Obviously, they didn't. In the summer of 1994 in Rwanda, Hutus slaughtered about 800,000 Tutsis—mostly with machetes (Gourevitch 1995). A few years later, the Serbs in Bosnia systematically massacred thousands of Muslims, giving us the new term "ethnic cleansing." As these events sadly attest, **genocide**, the attempt to destroy a people because of their presumed race or ethnicity, remains alive and well. Although more recent killings may not be accompanied by swastikas and gas ovens, the perpetrators' goal is the same.



Humans show such remarkable diversity that, as the text explains, there are no pure races. Shown here are Ming Yao, who weighs 296 pounds and is 7 feet 5 inches tall, and Verne Troyer, who weighs about 45 pounds and is 2 feet 8 inches short.

The *second* myth is that "pure" races exist. Humans show such a mixture of physical characteristics—in skin and eye color, hair texture, shape of nose and head, and so on—that there are no "pure" races. Instead of falling into distinct types that are clearly separate from one another, human characteristics flow endlessly together. The mapping of the human genome system shows that humans are strikingly homogenous, that so-called racial groups differ from one another only once in a thousand subunits of the genome (Angler 2000). As with Tiger Woods (discussed in the Cultural Diversity box on the next page), these minute gradations make any attempt to draw lines purely arbitrary.

Although large groupings of people can be classified by blood type and gene frequencies, even these classifications do not uncover "race." Rather, they are so arbitrary that biologists and anthropologists cannot even agree on how many races there are. They have drawn up many lists, each containing a different number of "races." Ashley Montagu

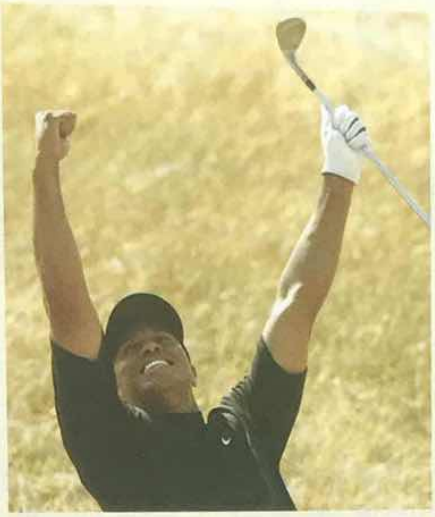
Tiger Woods and the Emerging Multiracial Identity: Mapping New Ethnic Terrain

Tiger Woods, perhaps the top golfer of all time, calls himself Cablinasian. Woods invented this term as a boy to try to explain to himself just who he was—a combination of Caucasian, Black, Indian, and Asian (Leland and Beals 1997; Hall 2001). Woods wants to embrace both sides of his family. To be known by a racial-ethnic identity that applies to just one of his parents is to deny the other parent.

Like many of us, Tiger Woods' heritage is difficult to specify. Analysts who like to quantify ethnic heritage put Woods at one-quarter Thai, one-quarter Chinese, one-quarter white, an eighth Native American, and an eighth African American. From this chapter, you know how ridiculous such computations are, but the sociological question is why many consider Tiger Woods an African American. The U.S. racial scene is indeed complex, but a good part of the reason is simply that this is the label the media chose. "Everyone has to fit somewhere" seems to be our attitude. If they don't, we grow uncomfortable. And for Tiger Woods, the media chose African American.

The United States once had a firm "color line"—barriers between racial-ethnic groups that you didn't dare cross, especially in dating or marriage. This invisible barrier has broken down, and today such marriages are common (*Statistical Abstract* 2002: Table 47). Several campuses have interracial student organizations. Harvard has two, one just for students who have one African American parent (Leland and Beals 1997).

As we march into unfamiliar ethnic terrain, our classifications are bursting at the seams. Kwame Anthony Appiah, of Harvard's Philosophy and Afro-American Studies Departments, says, "My mother is English; my father is Ghanaian. My sisters are married to a Nigerian and a Norwegian. I have nephews who range from blond-haired kids to very black kids. They are all first cousins. Now according to the American scheme of things, they're all black—even the guy with blond hair who skis in Oslo" (Wright 1994).



Tiger Woods, after making one of his marvelous shots, this one at Great Britain's Open Championship at St. George's in Sandwich, UK.

The U.S. census, which is taken every ten years, used to make everyone choose from Caucasian, Negro, Indian, and Oriental. Everyone was sliced and diced and packed into one of these restrictive classifications. After years of complaints, the list was expanded. In the 2000 census, everyone had to declare that they were or were not "Spanish/Hispanic/Latino." Then they had to mark "one or more races" that they "consider themselves to be." They could choose from White; Black, African American, or Negro; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, and other Pacific Islander. Finally, if these didn't do it, you could check a box called "Some Other Race" and then write whatever you wanted.

Perhaps the census should list Cablinasian. Of course there should be GASH for the German-African-Swedish-Hispanic Americans, BITE for those of Botswanian-Indonesian-Turkish-English descent, and STUDY for the Swedish-Turkish-Uruguan-Danish-Yugoslavian Americans. As you read farther in this chapter, you will see why these terms make as much sense as the categories we currently use.

For Your CONSIDERATION

Just why do we count people by "race" anyway? Why not eliminate race from the U.S. census? (Race became a factor in the census during slavery when five blacks were counted the same as three whites to determine how many representatives a state could send to Congress!) Why is race so important to some people? Perhaps you can use the materials in this chapter to answer these questions.

(1964; 1999), a physical anthropologist, pointed out that some scientists have classified humans into only two "races," while others have found as many as two thousand. Montagu (1960) himself classified humans into forty "racial" groups. As the Down-to-Earth Sociology box on page 327 illustrates, even a plane ride can change our race!

The reason I selected these photos is to illustrate how seriously we must take all preaching of hatred and of racial supremacy, even though it seems to come from harmless or even humorous sources. The strange-looking person on the left, who is wearing lederhosen, traditional clothing of Bavaria, Germany, is Adolf Hitler. He caused the horrific scene on the right, which greeted the British army when it liberated the concentration camp in Buchenwald, Germany. They found thousands of people dying of starvation and diseases amidst piles of rotting corpses awaiting mass burial.

The *idea* of race, of course, is far from a myth. Firmly embedded in our culture, it is a powerful force in our everyday lives. That no race is superior and that even experts cannot decide how people should be biologically classified into races is not what counts. "I know what I see, and you can't tell me any different" seems to be the common attitude. As noted in Chapter 4, sociologists W. I. and D. S. Thomas observed that "If people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." In other words, people act on beliefs, not facts. As a result, we will always have people like Hitler, and, as in our opening vignette, officials like those in the U.S. Public Health Service who felt that it was fine to experiment with people they deemed inferior. While few people hold such extreme views, most people appear to be ethnocentric enough to believe, at least just a little, that their own race is superior to others.

IN SUM

Race, then, lies in the eye of the beholder. Humans show such a mixture of physical characteristics—in skin color, hair texture, nose shape, head shape, eye color, and so on—that there is no inevitable, much less universal, way to classify our many biological differences. Instead of falling into distinct types clearly separate from one another, human characteristics flow endlessly together. Because racial classifications are arbitrary, the categories people use differ from one society to another, and they change over time. In this sense, then, race and its accompanying idea of racial superiority are myths.

Ethnic Groups

ethnicity (and ethnic) having distinctive cultural characteristics

Whereas people use the term *race* to refer to supposed biological characteristics that distinguish one people from another, **ethnicity** and **ethnic** apply to cultural characteristics. Derived from the word *ethnos* (a Greek word meaning "people" or "nation"), ethnicity and ethnic refer to people who identify with one another on the basis of common ancestry and cultural heritage. Their sense of belonging may center on their nation of origin, distinctive foods, dress, language, music, religion, or family names and relationships.

Common Sense and Sociology: What Is Race?

AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS TEXT (pages 9–10), I mentioned that common sense and sociology often differ. This is especially so when it comes to race. According to common sense, our racial classifications represent biological differences between people. Sociologists, in contrast, stress that what we call races are *social* classifications, not biological categories.

Sociologists point out that *our "race" depends more on the society in which we live than on our biological characteristics.* For example, the racial categories common in the United States are merely one of *numerous* ways that people around the world classify physical appearances. Although groups around the world use different categories, each group assumes that its categories are natural, merely a response to visible biology.

To better understand this essential sociological point—that race is more social than it is biological—consider this: In the United States, children born to the same parents are all of the same race. "What could be more natural?" Americans assume. But in Brazil, children born to the same parents may be of different races—if their appearances differ. "What could be more natural?" assume Brazilians.

Consider how Americans usually classify a child born to a "black" mother and a "white" father. Why do they usually say that the child is "black"? Wouldn't it be equally as logical to classify the child as "white"? Similarly, if a child's grandmother is "black," but all her other ancestors are "white," the child is often considered "black." Yet she has much more "white blood" than "black blood." Why, then, is she considered "black"? Certainly not because of biology. Rather, such thinking is a legacy of slavery. Whites—in an attempt to preserve the "purity" of their "race" in the face of numerous children whose fathers were white slave masters and mothers were black slaves—classified anyone with even a "drop of black blood" as "not white."

Even a plane trip can change a person's race. In the city of Salvador in Brazil, people classify one another by color of skin and eyes, breadth of nose and lips, and color and curliness of hair. They use at least seven terms for what we call white and black. Consider again a U.S. child who has "white" and "black" parents. If she flies to Brazil, she is no longer "black"; she now belongs to one of their several "whiter" categories (Fish 1995).

On the flight just mentioned, did the girl's "race" actually change? Our common sense revolts at this, I know, but it actually did. We want to argue that because her biological characteristics remain unchanged, her race remains unchanged. This is because we think of race as biological, when *it really is a label we use to describe perceived biological characteristics.* Simply put, the race we "are" depends on *where* we are—on who is doing the classifying.

And our classifications are fluid, not fixed. You can see change occurring even now in the classifications used in the United States. The category "multiracial," for example, indicates changing thought.

For Your CONSIDERATION

How would you ever explain to "Joe Six-Pack" the sociological point that race is more a social classification than a biological one? Can you come up with any arguments to refute it? How do you think our racial-ethnic categories will change in the future?

People often confuse the terms *race* and *ethnic group.* For example, many people, including many Jews, consider the Jews a race. Jews, however, are more properly considered an ethnic group, for it is their cultural characteristics, especially their religion, that bind them together. Wherever Jews have lived in the world, they have intermarried. Consequently, Jews in China may look mongoloid, while some Swedish Jews are blue-eyed blonds. This matter is strikingly illustrated in the photo on the next page. Ethiopian Jews look so different from European Jews that when they immigrated to Israel many European Jews felt that they could not be *real* Jews.

Minority Groups and Dominant Groups

Sociologist Louis Wirth (1945) defined a **minority group** as people who are singled out for unequal treatment *and* who regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination. Either physical (racial) or cultural (ethnic) differences can serve as the basis of the unequal treatment. Wirth added that the discrimination excludes minorities from full participation in the life of their society.

minority group people who are singled out for unequal treatment and who regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination

Surprisingly, a minority group is not necessarily a *numerical* minority. For example, before India's independence in 1947, a handful of British colonial rulers discriminated against tens of millions of Indians. Similarly, when South Africa practiced apartheid, a smaller group of Dutch discriminated against a much larger number of blacks. And all

Because ideas of race and ethnicity are such a significant part of society, all of us are classified according to those ideas. This photo illustrates the difficulty such assumptions posed for Israel. The Ethiopians, shown here as they arrived in Israel, although claiming to be Jews, looked so different from other Jews that it took several years for Israeli authorities to acknowledge this group's "true Jewishness."

over the world, females are a minority group. Accordingly, sociologists refer to those who do the discriminating not as the *majority,* but, rather, as the **dominant group,** for they have the greater power, privileges, and social status.

Possessing political power and unified by shared physical and cultural traits, the dominant group uses its position to discriminate against those with different—and supposedly inferior—traits. The dominant group considers its privileged position to be the result of its own innate superiority.

Emergence of Minority Groups A group becomes a minority in one of two ways. The *first* is through the expansion of political boundaries. With the exception of females, tribal societies contain no minority groups. Everyone shares the same culture, including the same language, and belongs to the same group. When a group expands its political boundaries, however, it produces minority groups if it incorporates people with different customs, languages, values, and physical characteristics into the same political entity and discriminates against them. For example, after defeating Mexico in war, the United States took over the Southwest. The Mexicans living there, who had been the dominant group, were transformed into a minority group, a master status that has influenced their lives ever since. Referring to his ancestors, one Latino said, "We didn't move across the border—the border moved across us."

A *second* way in which a group becomes a minority is through migration. This can be voluntary, as with the millions of people who have chosen to move from Mexico to the United States, or involuntary, as with the millions of Africans who were brought in chains to the United States. (The way females became a minority group represents a third way, but, as discussed in the previous chapter, no one knows just how this occurred.)

Shared Characteristics Anthropologists Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris (1958) noted that no matter where they live in the world, minorities share these five characteristics:

1. Membership is an ascribed status; that is, it is not voluntary, but comes through birth.
2. The physical or cultural traits that distinguish minorities are held in low esteem by the dominant group.

dominant group the group with the most power, greatest privileges, and highest social status

3. Minorities are unequally treated by the dominant group.
4. Minorities tend to marry within their own group.
5. Minorities tend to feel strong group solidarity (a sense of "we-ness").

These conditions—especially when combined with collective discrimination—tend to create a shared sense of identity among minorities, and, in many instances, even a sense of common destiny.

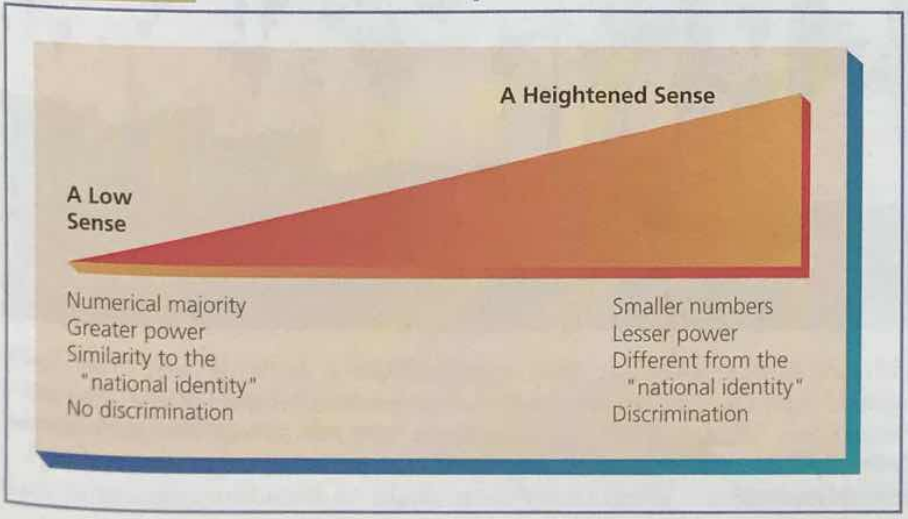
How People Construct Their Racial-Ethnic Identity

Some of us have a greater sense of ethnicity than others. We feel firm boundaries between "us" and "them." Others have assimilated so extensively into the mainstream culture that they are only vaguely aware of their ethnic origins. With interethnic marrying common, some do not even know the countries from which their families originated—nor do they care. If asked to identify themselves ethnically, they respond with something like "I'm Heinz 57—German and Irish, with a little Italian and French thrown in—and I think someone said something about being one-sixteenth Indian, too."

Why do some people feel an intense sense of ethnic identity, while others feel hardly any? Figure 12.1 portrays four factors, identified by sociologist Ashley Doane, that heighten or reduce our sense of ethnic identity. From this figure, you can see that the keys are relative size, power, appearance, and discrimination. If your group is relatively small, has little power, looks different from most people in society, and is an object of discrimination, you will have a heightened sense of ethnic identity. In contrast, if you belong to the dominant group that holds most of the power, look like most people in the society, and feel no discrimination, you are likely to experience a sense of "belonging"—and to wonder why ethnic identity is such a big deal.

We can use the term **ethnic work** to refer to the way people construct their ethnicity. For people who have a strong ethnic identity, this term refers to how they enhance and maintain their group's distinctions—from clothing, food, and language to religion and holidays. For people whose ethnic identity is not as firm, it refers to attempts to recover their ethnic heritage, such as trying to trace family lines. Millions of Americans are engaged in ethnic work, which has confounded the experts who thought that the United States would be a **melting pot**, with most of its groups quietly blending into a sort of ethnic stew. In recent years, however, Americans have become fascinated with their "roots" and increasingly proud of their ethnic backgrounds. Consequently, some analysts think that "tossed salad" is more appropriate than "melting pot."

Figure 12.1 A Sense of Ethnicity



Source: By the author. Based on Doane 1997.

ethnic work activities designed to discover, enhance, or maintain ethnic and racial identification

melting pot the view that Americans of various backgrounds would blend into a sort of ethnic stew

discrimination an *act of unfair treatment directed against an individual or a group*

racism prejudice and discrimination on the basis of race

prejudice an *attitude or prejudging, usually in a negative way*

Prejudice and Discrimination

Prejudice and discrimination are common throughout the world. In Mexico, Hispanic Mexicans discriminate against Native American Mexicans; in Israel, Ashkenazi Jews, primarily of European descent, discriminate against Sephardi Jews from the Muslim world; and in Japan, the Japanese discriminate against just about anyone who isn't Japanese, especially immigrant Koreans and the descendants of the Eta caste. The Eta, now renamed the Burakumin, still bear a stigma because they used to do the society's dirty work—handling dead animals (stripping the hides and tanning the leather) and serving as Japan's executioners and prison guards (Deliege 2001). In some places the elderly discriminate against the young, in others the young against the elderly. And all around the world men discriminate against women.

As you can see from this list, **discrimination** is an *action*—unfair treatment directed against someone. When the basis of discrimination is race, it is known as **racism**, but discrimination can be based on many characteristics other than race—including age, sex, height, weight, income, education, marital status, sexual orientation, disease, disability, religion, and politics. Discrimination is often the result of an *attitude* called **prejudice**—a prejudging of some sort, usually in a negative way. There is also positive prejudice, which exaggerates the virtues of a group, as when people think that some group (usually their own) is more capable than others. Most prejudice, however, is negative and involves prejudging a group as inferior.

Two groups that base their existence on prejudice and discrimination are the neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan. What would happen if a Jew attended the meetings of these groups that make hatred of Jews part of their identity? Would he or she survive? In the Down-to-Earth Sociology box on the next page, sociologist Raphael Ezekiel, a Jew, reveals some of the insights he gained during his remarkable study of these groups.

Learning Prejudice and the Internalization of Dominant Norms

As with our other attitudes, we are not born with prejudice. We can learn prejudice

In the 1920s and 1930s, the Ku Klux Klan was a powerful political force in the United States. To get a sense of the prevailing mood at the time, consider the caption that accompanied this photo of the Ku Klux Klan women from Freeport, New York, when it appeared in the papers: "Here's the Ladies in Their Natty Uniforms Marching in the Parade." Which theories would be most useful to explain this upsurge in racism among mainstream whites of the time?

The Racist Mind

SOCIOLOGIST RAPHAEL EZEKIEL WANTED to get a close look at the racist mind. As a Jew, he faced a unique problem. The best way to study racism from the inside is to do participant observation (see pp. 132–133). Would this be possible for him? Openly identifying himself as a Jew, Ezekiel asked Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazi leaders if he could interview them and attend their meetings. Surprisingly, they agreed. Ezekiel published his path-breaking research in a book, *The Racist Mind* (1995). Here are some of the insights he gained during his fascinating sociological adventure:

> [The leader] builds on mass anxiety about economic insecurity and on popular tendencies to see an Establishment as the cause of economic threat; he hopes to teach people to identify that Establishment as the puppets of a conspiracy of Jews. [He has a] belief in exclusive categories. For the white racist leader, it is profoundly true . . . that the socially defined collections we call races represent fundamental categories. A man is black or a man is white; there are no in-betweens. Every human belongs to a racial category, and all the members of one category are radically different from all the members of other categories. Moreover, race represents the essence *of* the person. A truck is a truck, a car is a car, a cat is a cat, a dog is a dog, a black is a black, a white is a white. . . . These axioms have a rock-hard quality in the leaders' minds; *the world is made up of racial groups.* That is what exists for them.
>
> Two further beliefs play a major role in the minds of leaders. First, life is war. The world is made of distinct racial groups; life is about the war between these groups. Second, events have secret causes, are never what they seem superficially. . . . Any myth is plausible, as long as it involves intricate plotting. . . . It does not matter to him what others say. . . . He lives in his ideas and in the little world he has created where they are taken seriously. . . . Gold can be made from the tongues of frogs; Yahweh's call can be heard in the flapping swastika banner. (pp. 66–67)

Who is attracted to the neo-Nazis and Ku Klux Klan? Here is what Ezekiel discovered:

> [There is a] ready pool of whites who will respond to the racist signal. . . . This population [is] always hungry for activity—or for the talk of activity—that promises dignity and meaning to lives that are working poorly in a highly competitive world. . . . Much as I don't want to believe it, [this] movement brings a sense of meaning—at least for a while—to some of the discontented. To struggle in a cause that transcends the individual lends meaning to life, no matter how ill-founded or narrowing the cause. For the young men in the neo-Nazi group . . . membership was an alternative to atomization and drift; within the group they worked for a cause and took direct risks in the company of comrades. . . .
>
> When interviewing the young neo-Nazis in Detroit, I often found myself driving with them past the closed factories, the idled plants of our shrinking manufacturing base. The fewer and fewer plants that remain can demand better educated and more highly skilled workers. These fatherless Nazi youths, these high-school dropouts, will find little place in the emerging economy . . . a permanently underemployed white underclass is taking its place alongside the permanent black underclass. The struggle over race merely diverts youth from confronting the real issues of their lives. Not many seats are left on the train, and the train is leaving the station. (pp. 32–33)

For Your CONSIDERATION

Use functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interaction to explain (1) how the leaders and followers of these hate groups view the world, and (2) why some people are attracted to the message of hate.

through the mass media, but often we learn it through the people with whom we associate. In a fascinating study, sociologist Kathleen Blee (2002) interviewed women who were members of organized hate groups such as the KKK and Aryan Nations. Just as we would expect, most women were recruited by someone who already belonged to the group. But Blee also found something surprising: Some women learned racism *after* they joined the group. They were attracted to the group not because it matched their racist beliefs but because someone they liked belonged to it. Blee found that their intense racism was not the *cause* of their joining, but the *result* of their membership.

People can even learn to be prejudiced against their *own* group. A national survey of black Americans conducted by black interviewers found that African Americans think

that lighter skinned African American women are more attractive than those with darker skin (Hill 2002). Sociologists call this *the internalization of the norms of the dominant group.*

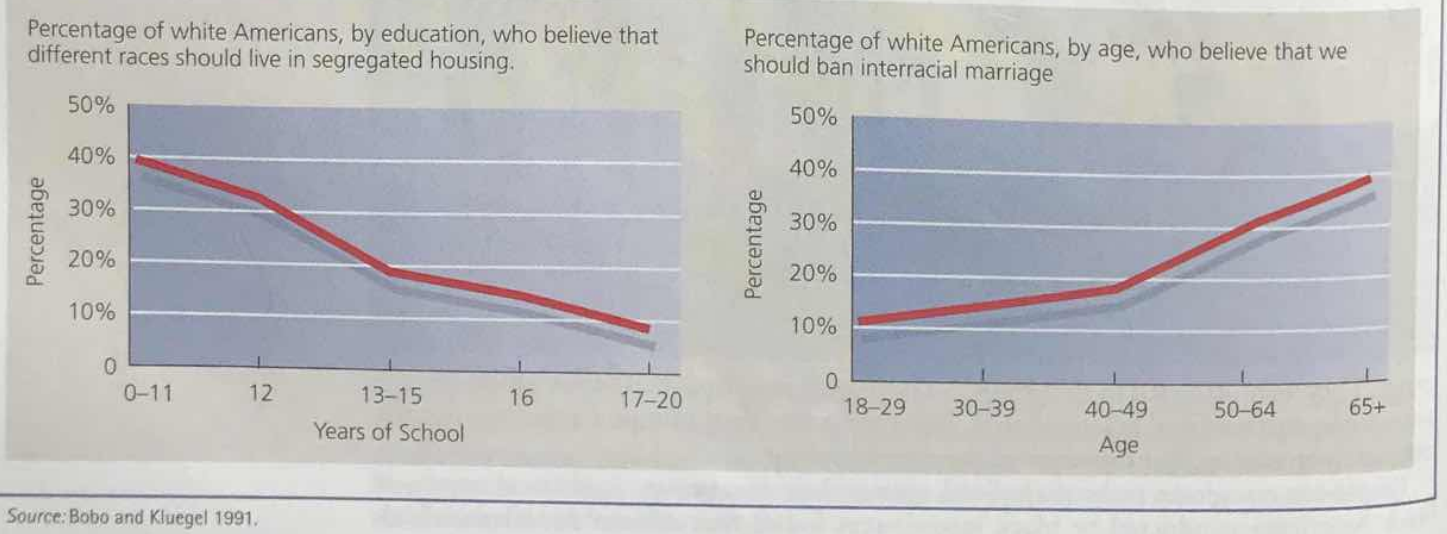
The "Implicit Association Test" created by psychologist Anthony Greenwald confirms the internalization of dominant norms. In one version of this test, good and bad words are flashed on a screen along with photos of African Americans and whites. Subjects are quicker to associate positive words (such as love, peace, and baby) with whites and negative words (such as cancer, bomb, and devil) with blacks. Here's the clincher: This is true for *both* white and black subjects (Chamberlain 1998; Berreby 2000; Dasgupta et al. 2000). Apparently, we all carry around "ethnic maps" of our culture that lead to biased perception.

The Extent of Prejudice Social scientists have found that each racial-ethnic group views other groups as inferior in at least some ways. In a classic article, psychologist Eugene Hartley (1946) asked people how they felt about several groups. Besides blacks, Jews, and so on, he included the Wallonians, Pireneans, and Danireans—names he had made up. Most people who expressed dislike for Jews and blacks also expressed dislike for these three fictitious groups. Hartley's study shows that prejudice does not depend on negative experiences with others. It also reveals that people who are prejudiced against one racial or ethnic group tend to be prejudiced against other groups. People can be, and are, prejudiced against people they have never met—and even against groups that do not exist!

Sociologists Lawrence Bobo and James Kluegel (1991) found that older and less educated people are more prejudiced than are the younger and more educated. (See Figure 12.2.) Bobo and Kluegel interviewed whites, but other studies show that minority groups have their own prejudices (Brockerhoff 2000; Charles 2000).

Members of some groups are more prejudiced than others. At the University of Alabama, sociologist Donald Muir (1991) measured the attitudes of white students who belonged to fraternities and sororities and compared them to white students who did not belong to these organizations. He asked a variety of questions—from their ideas about dating African Americans to their view on attending classes together. On all measures, fraternity members were more prejudiced than the nonfrats. Research on other campuses supports this finding (Morris 1991). In the Thinking Critically section that follows, we'll take a close look at race relations on U.S. campuses.

Figure 12.2 A Measure of Preferred Social Distance



Source: Bobo and Kluegel 1991.

THINKING Critically

Self-Segregation: Help or Hindrance for Race Relations on Campus?

Only after a long, bitter, and violent struggle was federal civil rights legislation prohibiting racial segregation on college campuses passed in the 1960s. These laws did not mark the end of self-segregation, however. Certain practices continued, such as one area of a cafeteria or lounge being used almost exclusively by a particular group. Minority students often request separate dormitories (called *affinity houses*) and campus centers. At Brown University, an Ivy League school located in Providence, Rhode Island, the old rows of fraternity and sorority houses have been replaced by Harambee House (for African Americans), Hispanic House, Slavic House, East Asian House, and German House. Cornell University offers "theme dorms" for African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans.

Controversy surrounds this self-segregation of racial-ethnic groups. On one side is William H. Gray III, the head of the United Negro College Fund. Both African American and Latino students drop out of college at a much higher rate, Gray says, so colleges should do everything they can to make minority students feel welcome and accepted.

Critics call the trend toward separate housing a "separatist movement" that divides students into "small enclaves." When students self-segregate, they are deprived of the rich experiences that come through intercultural contacts. "We need to help students become 'culturally versatile' or 'culturally competent'," say officials at Dartmouth College, "to help prepare them for the new diverse society.

For this, they need to associate with one another, not separate themselves" (Rimer 2002).

Joshua Lehrer, a Brown University student who is white, says that some racial and ethnic groups "are separating themselves from everybody else, yet complain when society separates them. Can you really have it both ways?" he asks.

For Your CONSIDERATION . . .

Compare separate racial-ethnic housing on college campuses with three patterns discussed in this chapter: segregation, assimilation, and multiculturalism. Is self-segregation permissible if minority students desire it, but not if white students want it? Explain your position.

Sources: Bernstein 1993; Jordon 1996; Terry 2000; Rimer 2002.

Individual and Institutional Discrimination

Sociologists stress that we need to move beyond thinking in terms of **individual discrimination**, the negative treatment of one person by another. Although such behavior creates problems, it is primarily an issue between individuals. With their focus on the broader picture, sociologists encourage us to examine **institutional discrimination**, that is, to see how discrimination is woven into the fabric of society. Let's look at two examples.

Home Mortgages and Car Loans Bank lending provides an excellent illustration of institutional discrimination. As shown in Figure 12.3, race-ethnicity is a significant factor in getting a mortgage. When bankers looked at the statistics shown in this figure, they cried foul. It might *look* like discrimination, they said, but the truth is that whites have better credit histories. To see if this were true, researchers went over the data again, comparing the credit histories of applicants. The lending gap did narrow a bit, but the bottom line was that even when applicants were identical in all these areas, African Americans and Latinos were *60 percent* more likely to be rejected than whites (Thomas 1992; Passell 1996). Other studies show that African Americans are charged more than whites for their mortgages (Leonhardt 2002) and for car loans (Henriques 2001). In short, it is not a matter of a banker here or there discriminating according to personal prejudices; rather, discrimination is built into the country's financial institutions.

Health Care Discrimination does not have to be deliberate. It can occur without the awareness of either those doing the discriminating or those being discriminated against. An example is medical care for heart problems. White patients are more likely than either Latino or African American patients to receive coronary bypass surgery

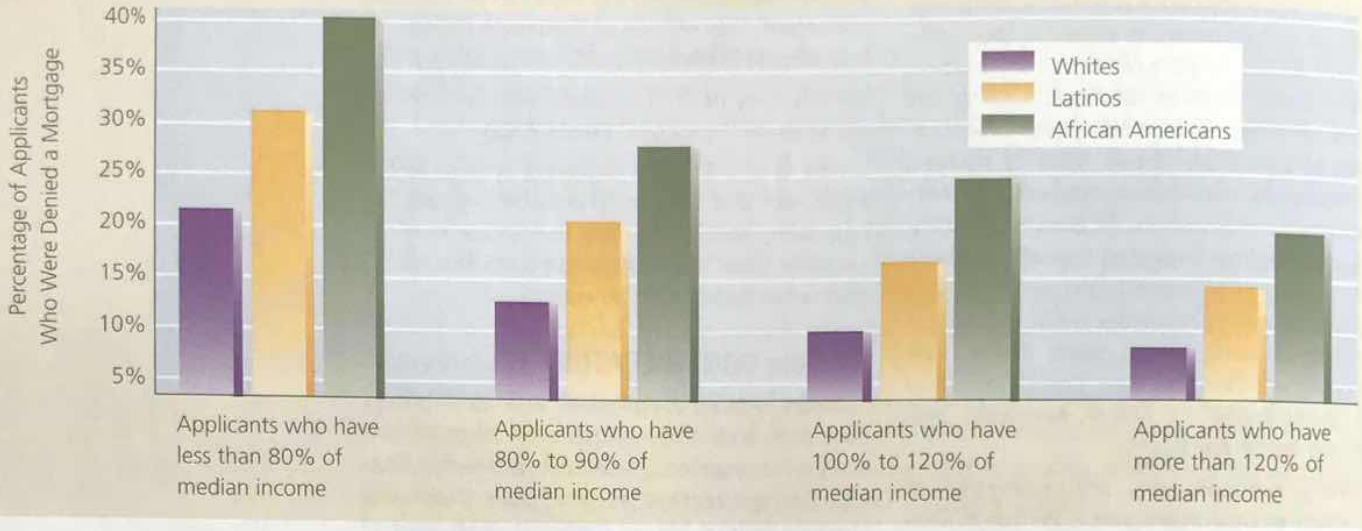
individual discrimination the negative treatment of one person by another on the basis of that person's perceived characteristics

institutional discrimination negative treatment of a minority group that is built into a society's institutions; also called *systemic discrimination*

Figure 12.3 Race-Ethnicity and Mortgages: An Example of Institutional Discrimination

In 1990, the Federal Reserve Board gathered data on the loans made by 9,300 U.S. financial institutions (Thomas 1991). As shown here, loan applicants who had the same income did not receive the same treatment. Note how much more likely banks were to turn down minorities.

This figure illustrates institutional discrimination. (Because the discrimination is part of the social *system*, it is also called systemic discrimination.) As you can see, being turned down for a mortgage is not due to discrimination by an individual banker here and there, but, rather, is nationwide practice.



Source: By the author. Based on Thomas 1991.

(Smedley et al. 2003). Treatment after a heart attack follows a similar pattern. A study of 40,000 patients shows that whites are more likely than blacks to be given cardiac catheterization, a test to detect blockage of blood vessels. This study holds a surprise: Black *and* white doctors are both more likely to give this preventive care to whites (Stolberg 2001).

Researchers do not know why race is a factor in medical decisions. With both white and black doctors involved, we can be certain that physicians *do not intend* to discriminate. In ways we do not yet understand, discrimination is built into medicine. Race apparently works like gender. Just as women's higher death rates in coronary bypass surgery can be traced to attitudes about gender (see page 305), so also race serves as a subconscious reason for giving or denying access to advanced medical procedures.

Theories of Prejudice

Social scientists have developed several theories to explain prejudice. Let's look first at psychological explanations, then at sociological ones.

Psychological Perspectives

Frustration and Scapegoats In 1939, psychologist John Dollard suggested that prejudice is the result of frustration. People who cannot strike out at the real source of their frustration (such as low wages) look for someone to blame for their troubles. This **scapegoat**—often a racial, ethnic, or religious minority—becomes a target on which they vent their frustrations. Gender and age also provide common bases for scapegoating.

scapegoat an individual or group unfairly blamed for someone else's troubles

Even mild frustration can increase prejudice. A team of psychologists led by Emory Cowen (1959) measured the prejudice of a sample of students. They then gave the students two puzzles to solve, making sure they did not have enough time to solve them. After the students had worked furiously on the puzzles, the experimenters shook their heads

in disgust and said they couldn't believe they hadn't finished such a simple task. They then retested the students and found that their scores on prejudice had increased. The students had directed their frustrations outward, onto people who had nothing to do with the contempt shown them for not completing the puzzles.

The Authoritarian Personality Have you ever wondered if personality is a cause of prejudice? Maybe some people are more inclined to be prejudiced, and others more fair-minded. For psychologist Theodor Adorno, who had fled from the Nazis, this was no idle speculation. With the horrors he had observed still fresh in his mind, Adorno wondered if there might be a certain type of person who is more likely to fall for the racist spewings of people like Hitler, Mussolini, and the Ku Klux Klan.

To find out, Adorno (1950) tested about two thousand people, ranging from college professors to prison inmates. He gave them three tests to measure ethnocentrism, anti-Semitism, and support for strong, authoritarian leaders. Adorno found that people who scored high on one test also scored high on the other two. For example, people who agreed with anti-Semitic statements also said that governments should be authoritarian and that foreign ways of life pose a threat to the "American" way.

Adorno concluded that highly prejudiced people are insecure conformists. They have deep respect for authority and are submissive to superiors. He termed this the **authoritarian personality.** These people believe that things are either right or wrong. Ambiguity disturbs them, especially in matters of religion or sex. They become anxious when they confront norms and values that differ from their own. To define people who differ from themselves as inferior assures them that their own positions are right.

Adorno's research stirred the scientific community, stimulating more than a thousand research studies. In general, the researchers found that people who are older, less educated, less intelligent, and from a lower social class are more likely to be authoritarian. Critics say that this doesn't indicate a particular personality, just that the less educated are more prejudiced—which we already knew (Yinger 1965; Ray 1991). Researchers, however, continue to study this concept (Whitley and Egisdottir 2000).

Sociological Perspectives

Sociologists find psychological explanations inadequate. They stress that the key to understanding prejudice is not something inside people, but factors *outside* them. Thus, sociologists focus on how some environments foster prejudice, while others discourage it. With this background, let's compare functionalist, conflict, and symbolic interactionist perspectives on prejudice.

Functionalism In a telling scene from a television documentary, journalist Bill Moyers interviewed Fritz Hippler, a Nazi intellectual who at age 29 was put in charge of the entire German film industry. Hippler said that when Hitler came to power the Germans were no more anti-Semitic than the French, probably less so. He was told to create anti-Semitism. Obediently, Hippler produced movies that contained vivid scenes comparing Jews to rats—their breeding threatening to infest the population.

Why was Hippler told to create hatred? Prejudice and discrimination were functional for the Nazis. The Jews provided a convenient scapegoat, a common enemy against which the Nazis could unite a Germany that had been brought to its knees by defeat in World War I and bled by war reparations and rampant inflation. In addition, the Jews owned businesses, bank accounts, art work, and other property that the Nazis could confiscate. They also held key positions (university professors, reporters, judges, and so on), which the Nazis could replace with their own flunkies. In the end, hatred also showed its dysfunctional side, as the Nazi officials who were hanged at Nuremberg discovered.

When state machinery is harnessed to hatred as it was by the Nazis—who exploited the schools, police, courts, mass media, and almost all aspects of the government—prejudice becomes practically irresistible. Recall the identical twins featured in the Down-to-Earth Sociology box on page 64. Oskar and Jack had been separated as babies. Jack was brought up as a Jew in Trinidad, while Oskar was reared as a Catholic in Czechoslovakia. Under the Nazi regime, Oskar learned to hate Jews, unaware that he himself was a Jew.

authoritarian personality
Theodor Adorno's term for people who are prejudiced and rank high on scales of conformity, intolerance, insecurity, respect for authority, and submissiveness to superiors

That prejudice is functional and is shaped by the social environment was demonstrated by psychologists Muzafer and Carolyn Sherif (1953). In a boys' summer camp, they assigned friends to different cabins and then had the cabins compete in sports. In just a few days, strong in-groups had formed, and even former lifelong friends were calling one another "crybaby" and "sissy" and showing intense dislike for one another.

The Sherif study teaches us several important lessons about social life. Note how it is possible to arrange the social environment so we generate either positive or negative feelings about people, and how prejudice arises when groups are pitted against one another in an "I win, you lose" situation. You can also see that prejudice is functional, how it creates in-group solidarity. And, of course, it is obvious how dysfunctional prejudice is, how it destroys human relationships.

Conflict Theory Conflict theorists also analyze how groups are pitted against one another, but they focus on how this arrangement benefits those with power. They begin by noting that workers want better food, health care, housing, and education. To attain these goals, workers need good jobs. If workers are united, they can demand higher wages and better working conditions. But if capitalists can keep workers divided, they can hold wages down. To do this, capitalists use two main weapons.

The first weapon is to keep workers insecure. The fear of unemployment works especially well. The unemployed serve as a **reserve labor force** for capitalists. They draw on this group to expand production during economic booms, and when the economy contracts, they release these workers to rejoin the ranks of the unemployed. The lesson is not lost on workers who still have jobs. They fear eviction and having their cars and furniture repossessed. Many know they are just one paycheck from ending up "on the streets." This helps keep workers docile.

The second weapon is to exploit racial and ethnic strife. Pitting worker against worker weakens their bargaining power. Sowing fear and suspicion among racial-ethnic groups—such as by letting whites know that blacks are waiting to take their jobs, or by getting blacks to view Latinos as a threat to theirs—also produces docile workers. The result is a **split labor market**, workers divided along racial-ethnic and gender lines (Du Bois 1935/1992; Minchin 1999; Roediger 2002).

The consequences are devastating, say conflict theorists. It is just like the boys in the Sherif experiment. African Americans, Latinos, whites, and others see themselves as able to make gains only at the expense of the others. This rivalry shows up along even finer racial-ethnic lines, such as that in Miami between Haitians and African Americans, who distrust each other as competitors. Divisions among workers deflect anger and hostility away from the power elite and direct these powerful emotions toward other racial and ethnic groups. Instead of recognizing their common class interests and working for their mutual welfare, workers learn to fear and distrust one another.

reserve labor force the unemployed; unemployed workers are thought of as being "in reserve"—capitalists take them "out of reserve" (put them back to work) during times of high production and then lay them off (put them back in reserve) when they are no longer needed

split labor market workers split along racial, ethnic, gender, age, or any other lines; this split is exploited by owners to weaken the bargaining power of workers

selective perception seeing certain features of an object or situation, but remaining blind to others

Symbolic Interactionism While conflict theorists focus on the role of the capitalist class in exploiting racial and ethnic divisions, symbolic interactionists examine how labels affect perception and create prejudice.

How Labels Create Prejudice Symbolic interactionists stress *that the labels we learn affect the way we see people.* Labels cause **selective perception**; that is, they lead us to see certain things while they blind us to others. If we apply a label to a group, we tend to see its members as all alike. We shake off evidence that doesn't fit (Simpson and Yinger 1972). Racial and ethnic labels are especially powerful. They are shorthand for emotionally charged stereotypes. The term nigger, for example, is not neutral. Nor are *honky, spic, mick, kike, limey, kraut, dago, guinea,* or any of the other scornful words people use to belittle ethnic groups. Such words overpower us with emotions, blocking out rational thought about the people to whom they refer (Allport 1954).

Stereotypes and Discrimination: The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy Some stereotypes not only justify prejudice and discrimination—they even produce the behavior depicted in the stereotype. Let's consider Group X. Negative stereotypes characterize Group X as lazy. If they are lazy, they don't deserve good jobs. ("They are lazy and undependable and wouldn't do well.") This attitude creates a *self-fulfilling prophecy.* Because they are denied

jobs that require high dedication and energy, most members of Group X are limited to doing "dirty work," the kind of work thought appropriate for "that kind" of people. Since much dirty work is sporadic, members of Group X are often seen standing around street corners. The sight of their idleness reinforces the original stereotype of laziness. The discrimination that created the "laziness" in the first place passes unnoticed.

Global Patterns of Intergroup Relations

Sociologists have studied racial-ethnic relations around the world. They have found six basic patterns that characterize the relationship of dominant groups and minorities. These patterns are shown in Figure 12.4. Let's look at each.

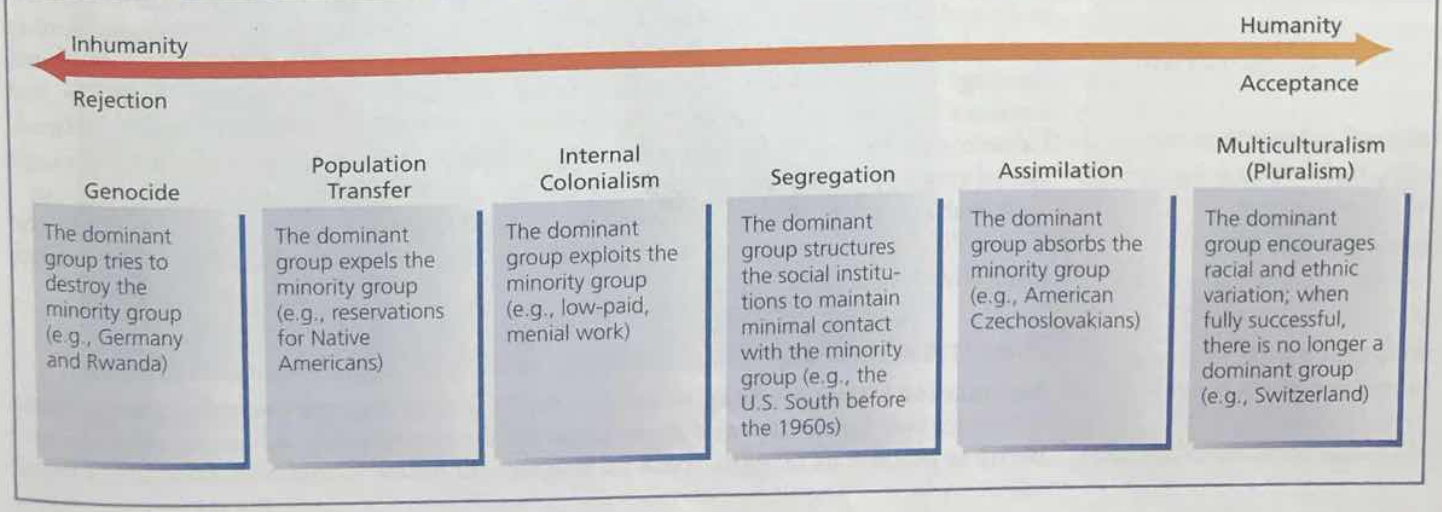
Genocide

Last century's two most notorious examples of genocide occurred in Europe and Africa. In Germany during the 1930s and 1940s, Hitler and the Nazis attempted to destroy all Jews. In the 1990s, in Rwanda, the Hutus tried to destroy all Tutsis. One of the horrifying aspects of these slaughters was that those who participated did not crawl out from under a rock someplace. Rather, they were ordinary citizens whose participation was facilitated by labels that singled out the victims as enemies worthy of death (Huttenbach 1991; Browning 1993; Simmons 1998; Gross 2001).

To better understand how ordinary people can participate in genocide, let's look at an example from the 1800s. The U.S. government and white settlers chose the label "savages" to refer to Native Americans. To define the Native Americans as less than human made it easier to justify killing them in order to take over their resources, and to slaughter those who resisted their advance toward the West. Most Native Americans, however, did not die from bullets but from diseases that the whites brought with them. The Native Americans had no immunity against these diseases, such as measles, smallpox, and the flu (Dobyns 1983; Schaefer 2000). The settlers also ruthlessly destroyed the Native Americans' food supply (buffalos, crops). As a result, about *95 percent* of Native Americans died (Thornton 1987; Churchill 1997).

The same thing was happening in other places. In South Africa, the Boers, or Dutch settlers, viewed the native Hottentots as jungle animals and totally wiped them out. In

Figure 12.4 Global Patterns of Intergroup Relations: A Continuum



Tasmania, the British settlers stalked the local aboriginal population, hunting them for sport and sometimes even for dog food.

Labels are powerful forces in human life. Labels that dehumanize others help people to **compartmentalize**—to separate their acts from their sense of being good and moral people. To regard members of some group as less than human means that it is okay to treat them inhumanely. Thus people can kill—and still retain a good self-concept (Bernard et al. 1971; Markhusen 1995). In short, *labeling the targeted group as less than fully human facilitates genocide.*

Population Transfer

There are two types of **population transfer:** indirect and direct. *Indirect* population transfer is achieved by making life so unbearable for members of a minority that they leave "voluntarily." Under the bitter conditions of czarist Russia, for example, millions of Jews made this "choice." *Direct transfer* occurs when a dominant group expels a minority. Examples include the relocation of Native Americans to reservations and the transfer of Americans of Japanese descent to internment camps during World War II.

In the 1990s, a combination of genocide and population transfer occurred in Bosnia and Kosovo, parts of the former Yugoslavia. A hatred nurtured for centuries had been kept under wraps during Tito's iron-fisted rule from 1944 to 1980. After Tito's death, these suppressed, smoldering hatreds soared to the surface and Yugoslavia split into warring factions. When the Serbs gained power, Muslims rebelled and began guerilla warfare. The Serbs vented their hatred by what they termed **ethnic cleansing:** They terrorized villages with killing and rape, forcing survivors to flee in fear.

Internal Colonialism

In Chapter 9, the term *colonialism* was used to refer to one way that the Most Industrialized Nations exploit the Least Industrialized Nations (pp. 249 and 252). Conflict theorists use the term **internal colonialism** to refer to the way a country's dominant group exploits minority groups for its economic advantage. The dominant group manipulates the social institutions to suppress minorities and deny them full access to the society's benefits. Slavery, reviewed in Chapter 9, is an extreme example of internal colonialism, as was the South African system of *apartheid.* Although the dominant Afrikaaners despised the minority, they found its presence necessary. As Simpson and Yinger (1972) put it, who else would do the hard work?

compartmentalize to separate acts from feelings or attitudes

population transfer forcing a minority group to move

ethnic cleansing a policy of population elimination, including forcible expulsion and genocide

internal colonialism the policy of economically exploiting minority groups

segregation the policy of keeping racial or ethnic groups apart

assimilation the process of being absorbed into the mainstream culture

Segregation

Internal colonialism is often accompanied by **segregation**—the separation of racial or ethnic groups. Segregation allows the dominant group to maintain social distance from the minority and yet to exploit their labor as cooks, cleaners, chauffeurs, housekeepers, nannies, factory workers, and so on. In the U.S. South until the 1960s, by law African Americans and whites had to use separate public facilities such as hotels, schools, swimming pools, bathrooms, and even drinking fountains. In thirty-eight states, laws prohibited marriage between blacks and whites. Violators could be sent to prison (Mahoney and Kooistra 1995). The last law of this type was repealed in 1967 (Spickard 1989). In Israel, Palestinians who work for the dominant Israelis have to carry passes and go through armed checkpoints in the morning and return to their own areas at the end of the day.

Racial-ethnic segregation in housing is still a fact of life for most Americans. In the Cultural Diversity box on the next page, you can see how residential segregation is related to internal colonialism.

Assimilation

Assimilation is the process by which a minority is absorbed into the mainstream culture. There are two types. In *forced assimilation* the dominant group refuses to allow the minority to practice its religion, speak its language, or follow its customs. Prior to the fall of

the Soviet Union, for example, the dominant group, the Russians, required that Armenian children attend schools where they were taught in Russian. Armenians could honor only Russian, not Armenian, holidays. *Permissible assimilation,* in contrast, allows the minority to adopt the dominant group's patterns in its own way and at its own speed.

Multiculturalism (Pluralism)

A policy of **multiculturalism,** also called **pluralism,** permits or even encourages racial and ethnic variation. Minority groups are able to maintain their separate identities, yet freely participate in their country's social institutions, from education to politics. Switzerland provides an outstanding example of multiculturalism. The Swiss are made up of four ethnic groups—French, Italians, Germans, and Romansh. The groups have kept their own languages, and they live peacefully in political and economic unity. Multiculturalism has been so successful that none of these groups can properly be called a minority.

Race and Ethnic Relations in the United States

To write on race-ethnicity is like stepping into a minefield: One never knows where to expect the next explosion. Even basic terms are controversial. The term African American, for example, is rejected by some who ask why this term doesn't include white immigrants from South Africa. Some people classified as African Americans also reject this term because they identify themselves as blacks. Similarly, although some Latinos prefer the term *Hispanic American,* others reject it, saying that it ignores the Indian side of their heritage. Some would limit the term *Chicanos*—commonly used to refer to Americans from Mexico—to those who have a sense of oppression and ethnic unity; they say it does not apply to those who have assimilated.

No term that I use here, then, will satisfy everyone. Racial-ethnic identity is fluid, constantly changing, and all terms carry a risk as they take on newly-charged political meanings. Nevertheless, as part of everyday life we classify ourselves and one another as belonging to distinct racial-ethnic groups. Based on these self-identifications, whites make up 68 percent of the U.S. population, minorities (African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans) 31 percent. See Figure 12.5.

As you can see from the Social Map on page 342, the distribution of dominant and minority groups among the states seldom comes close to the national average. This is because minority groups tend to be clustered in regions. The extreme distributions are represented by Maine, which has only 3 percent minority, and by Hawaii, where minorities outnumber Anglos 76 percent to 29 percent. With this as background, let's review the major groups in the United States, going from the largest to the smallest.

multiculturalism (also called **pluralism**) a philosophy or political policy that permits or encourages ethnic difference

WASP White Anglo-Saxon Protestant; narrowly, an American of English descent; broadly, an American of western European ancestry

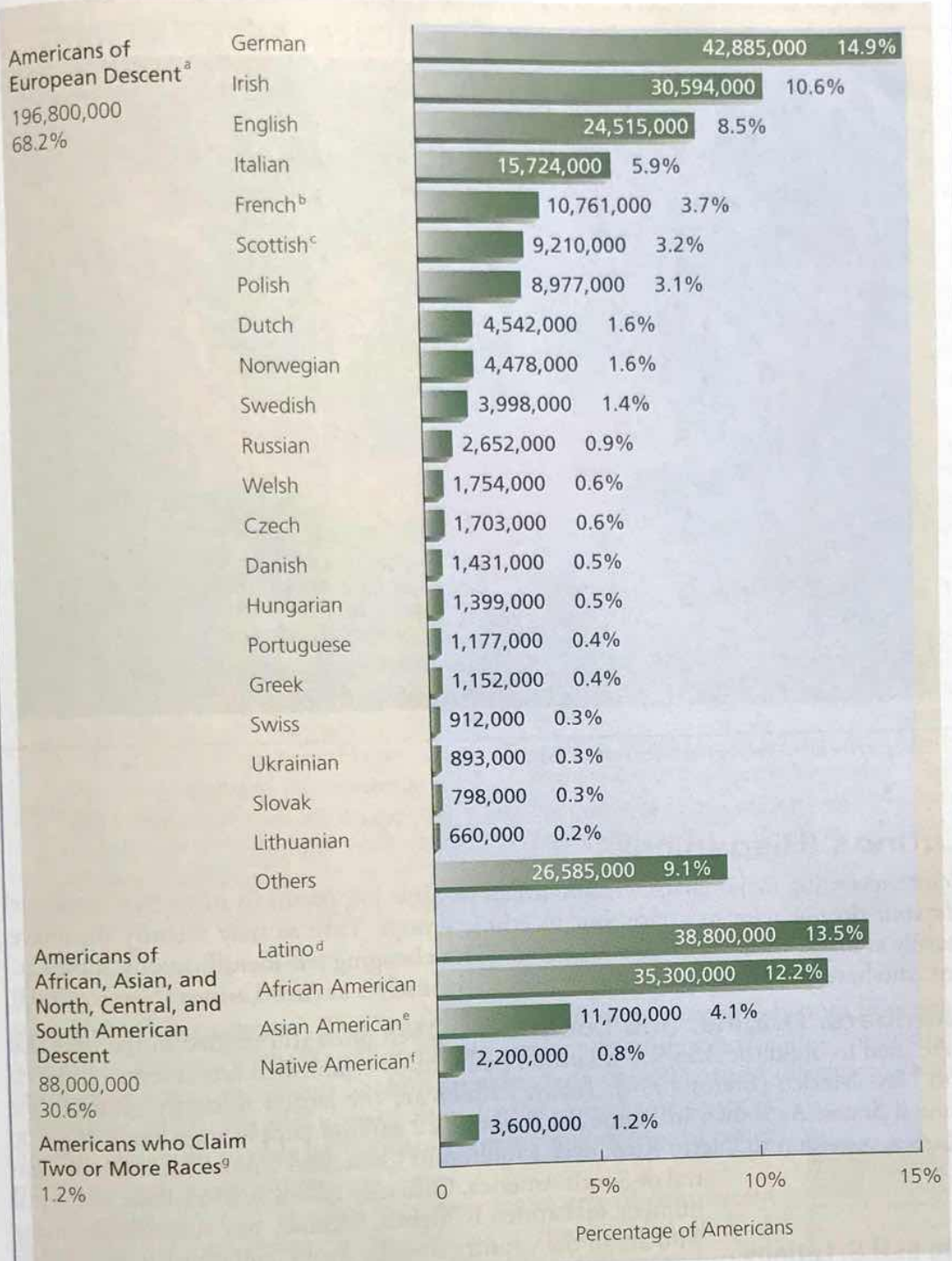
white ethnics white immigrants to the United States whose cultures differ from that of WASPs

White Europeans

Perhaps the event that best crystallizes the racial view of the nation's founders occurred at the first Continental Congress of the United States. There they passed the Naturalization Act of 1790, declaring that only white immigrants could apply for citizenship. The sense of superiority and privilege of **WASPs** (white Anglo-Saxon Protestants) was not limited to their views of race. They also viewed white Europeans from countries other than England as inferior. They greeted **white ethnics**—immigrants from Europe whose language and other customs differed from theirs—with negative stereotypes. They especially despised the Irish, viewing them as dirty, lazy drunkards, but they also painted Germans, Poles, Jews, Italians, and others with similarly broad brush strokes.

The cultural and political dominance of the WASPs placed pressure on immigrants to blend into the mainstream culture. The children of most immigrants embraced the new way of life and quickly came to think of themselves as Americans rather than as Germans, French, Hungarians, and so on. They dropped their distinctive customs, especially their language, often viewing them as symbols of shame. This second generation of immigrants

Figure 12.5 U.S. Racial-Ethnic Groups



Notes:

[a]The totals in this figure should be taken as broadly accurate only. Table 1373 of the 2002 source lists 294,543,000 people in its various racial-ethnic categories, while the 2003 source lists 288,400,000. The 2003 source is used to compute percentages.

[b]Includes French Canadian.

[c]Includes "Scottish-Irish."

[d]Most Latinos trace at least part of their ancestry to Europe.

[e]In descending order, the largest groups of Asian Americans are from China, the Philippines, India, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. See Figure 12.10. Also includes those who identify themselves as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

[f]Includes Native American, Eskimo, and Aleut.

[g]This is 1.2 million fewer people than in the year 2000 census.

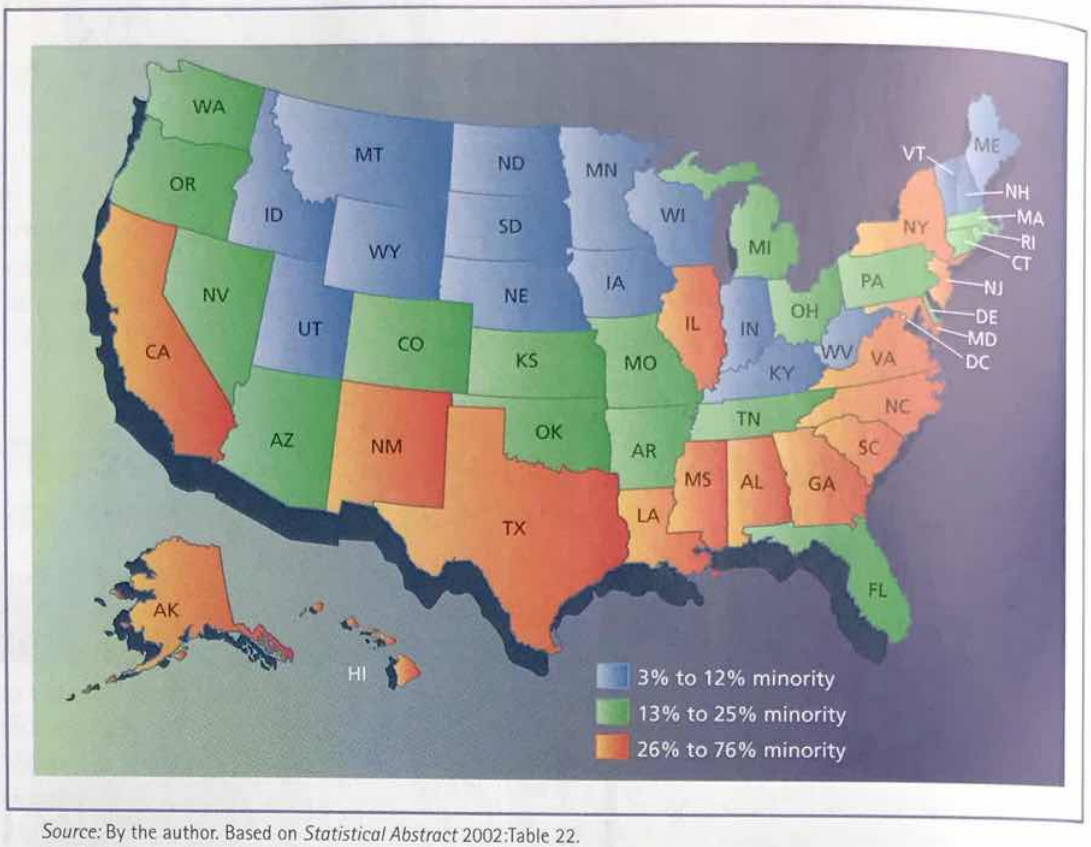
Source: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract* 2002:Tables 36, 38, 1373; Bernstein and Bergman 2003.

was sandwiched between two worlds, that of their parents from "the old country" and their new home. Their children, the third generation, had an easier adjustment, for they had fewer customs to discard. As immigrants from other parts of Europe assimilated into this Anglo culture, the meaning of WASP expanded to include people of this descent.

In sum: Because protestant English immigrants settled the colonies, they established the culture—from the dominant language to the dominant religion. Highly ethnocentric, they regarded as inferior the customs of other groups. Because white Europeans took power, they determined the national agenda to which other ethnic groups had to react. Their institutional and cultural dominance still sets the stage for current ethnic relations, a topic explored in the Down-to-Earth Sociology box on page 343.

Figure 12.6 The Distribution of Dominant and Minority Groups

This social map indicates how unevenly distributed U.S. Minority groups are. The extremes are Hawaii with 75 percent minority and Maine with 3 percent minority.



Source: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract* 2002:Table 22.

Latinos (Hispanics)

Before reviewing major characteristics of Latinos, it is important to stress that *Latino* and *Hispanic* do not refer to a race, but to ethnic groups. Latinos may identify themselves racially as black, white, or Native American. With changing self-identifications, some Latinos who have an African heritage even refer to themselves as Afro-Latinos (Navarro 2003).

Numbers, Origins, and Location When birds still nestled in the trees that were used to build the *Mayflower,* Latinos had already established settlements in Florida and New Mexico (Bretos 1994). Today, Latinos are the largest minority group in the United States. As shown in Figure 12.7, about 22 million people trace their origin to Mexico, 3 million to Puerto Rico, over 1 million to Cuba, and almost 5 million to Central or South America. Officially tallied at 35 million, the actual number of Latinos is higher, because, not surprisingly, many who are in the country illegally avoid contact with both public officials and census forms. Although most Latinos are legal residents, each year about *1.6 million* people are apprehended at the border or at points inland and are deported to Mexico (*Statistical Abstract* 2002:Table 301). Perhaps another million or so manage to enter the United States. Many migrate for temporary work and then return to their homes and families in Mexico.

To gain an understanding of how vast these numbers are, we can note that there are millions more Latinos in the United States than there are Canadians in Canada (32 million). To Midwesterners, such a comparison often comes as a surprise, for Latinos are absent from vast stretches of mid-America. As shown in Figure 12.8, 66 percent are concentrated in just four states: California, Texas, Florida, and New York.

Figure 12.7 Country of Origin of U.S. Latinos

Source: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract* 2002:Table 40.

Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack: Exploring Cultural Privilege

OVERT RACISM IN THE UNITED STATES has dropped sharply, but doors still open and close on the basis of the color of our skin. Whites have a difficult time grasping the idea that good things come their way because they are white. They usually fail to perceive how "whiteness" operates in their own lives.

Peggy McIntosh, of Irish descent, began to wonder why she was so seldom aware of her race-ethnicity, while her African American friends were so conscious of theirs. She realized that people are not highly aware of things that they take for granted—and that "whiteness" is a "taken-for-granted" background feature of U.S. society. To explore this, she drew up a list of things that she can take for granted because of her "whiteness," what she calls her "invisible knapsack."

What is in this "knapsack"? What taken-for-granted-and-usually-unanalyzed privileges can most white people in U.S. society assume? Because she is white, McIntosh (1988) says:

1. If I don't do well as a leader, I can be sure people won't say that it is because of my race.
2. When I go shopping, store detectives won't follow me.
3. When I watch television or open the front page of the paper, I see people of my race widely and positively presented.
4. When I study our national heritage, I see people of my color and am taught that they made our country great.
5. When I cash a check or use a credit card, my skin color does not make the clerk think that I may be financially irresponsible.
6. To protect my children, I do not have to educate them to be aware of racism.
7. I can talk with my mouth full and not have people put this down to my color.
8. I can wear old clothes and not have people attribute this to the poverty of my race.
9. I can speak at a public meeting without putting my race on trial.
10. I can achieve at something and not be "a credit to my race."
11. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my race.
12. If a traffic cop pulls me over, I can be sure it isn't because I'm white.
13. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without people thinking I got the job because of my race.
14. I can be late to a meeting without people thinking I was late because "That's how *they* are."

For Your CONSIDERATION

Can you think of other "unearned privileges" of everyday life that come to whites because of their skin color? (McIntosh's list contains 46 items.) Why are whites seldom aware that they carry this invisible knapsack?

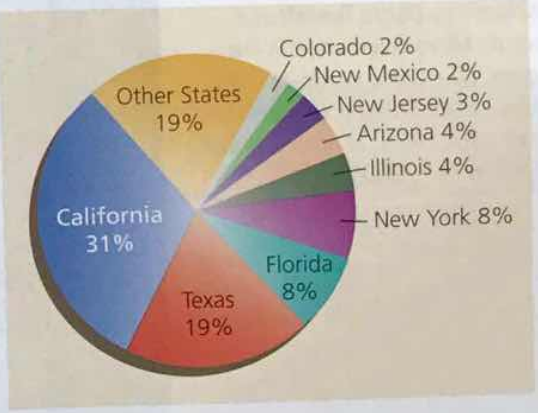
Spanish Language The Spanish language distinguishes most Latinos from other U.S. ethnic groups. With 28 million people speaking Spanish at home, the United States has become one of the largest Spanish-speaking nations in the world (*Statistical Abstract* 2002:Table 1373). Because about half of Latinos are unable to speak English, or can do so only with difficulty, many millions face a major obstacle to getting good jobs.

The growing use of Spanish has become a matter of controversy. Perceiving the prevalence of Spanish as a threat, Senator S. I. Hayakawa of California initiated an "English only" movement in 1981. The constitutional amendment he sponsored never got off the ground, but 23 states have passed a law declaring English their official language (Schaefer 2000).

Diversity For Latinos, country of origin is highly significant. Those from Puerto Rico, for example, feel little in common with people from Mexico, Venezuela, or El Salvador—just as earlier immigrants from Germany, Sweden, and England felt they had little in common with one another. A sign of these divisions is the preference many have to refer to themselves in terms of their country of origin, such as Puerto Rican or Cuban American, rather than as Latino or Hispanic.

As with other ethnic groups, Latinos, too, are separated by social class. The half-million Cubans who fled Castro's rise to power in 1959,

Figure 12.8 Where U.S. Latinos Live



Source: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract* 2002:Table 23.

In reaction to the millions of recent Latino immigrants who speak Spanish, an "English-only" movement has developed in the United States. Twenty-three states have passed laws declaring that English is their official language. One wonders which version of English the legislators had in mind.

for example, were mostly well-educated, well-to-do professionals or businesspeople. In contrast, the "boat people" who fled later were mostly lower-class refugees, people with whom the earlier arrivals would not have associated in Cuba. The earlier arrivals, who are firmly established in Florida and in control of many businesses and financial institutions, distance themselves from the more recent immigrants.

These divisions of national origin and social class are a major obstacle to political unity. One consequence is a severe underrepresentation in politics. Because Latinos make up 13.5 percent of the U.S. population, we might expect 13 or 14 U.S. Senators to be Latino. How many are there? None. In addition, Latinos hold only 4 percent of the seats in the U.S. House of Representatives (*Statistical Abstract* 2002:Table 382).

When the U.S. government took control of what is now the southwestern United States, Mexicans living there were transformed from the dominant group into a minority group. To try to maintain their culture, Chicanos, *Americans of Mexican origin, do* ethnic work, *such as this dance by Danza Teocalt at a Cinco de Mayo celebration in Los Angeles. (The Cinco de Mayo—Fifth of May—holiday marks the Mexican army's 1862 defeat of French troops at the city of Puebla.)*

Fragmented among themselves, Latinos also find that a huge gulf separates them from African Americans (Flippen 2001). With highly distinct histories and cultures, the relationship of these two groups is often tinged with hostility. As Latinos have become more visible in U.S. society and more vocal in their demands for equality, they have come face to face with African Americans who fear that Latino gains in jobs and at the ballot box will come at their expense. Together, Latinos and African Americans make up one-fourth of the U.S. population. It is likely that these two groups will increasingly come to recognize that their unity will produce an unstoppable political force.

Comparative Conditions Table 12.1 shows how Latinos compare with other groups. You can see that compared with white Americans and Asian Americans, Latinos are worse off on all the indicators of well-being shown in this table. You can also see how similar their rankings on these indicators are to those of African Americans. This table also illustrates the significance of country of origin. You can see that Cuban Americans score the highest on these indicators of well-being, while Puerto Rican Americans score the lowest. Table 12.2 shows that one out of three Latinos does not complete high school, and only

Table 12.1 Race-Ethnicity and Comparative Well-Being

	Income		Unemployment		Poverty		Home Ownership	
	Median Family Income	Percentage of White Income	Percentage Unemployed	Percentage of White Unemployment	Percentage Below Poverty Line	Percentage of White Poverty	Percentage Owning Their Homes	Percentage of White Home Ownership
White Americans	$51,224	–	2.3%	–	9.8%	–	71%	–
Latinos	$31,663	62%	3.9%	170%	22.8%	233%	48%	65%
Country of origin								
Mexico	$31,123	61%	4.1%	178%	24.1%	246%	48%	68%
Puerto Rico	$30,129	59%	4.0%	174%	25.8%	263%	35%	49%
Cuba	$38,312	75%	2.7%	117%	17.3%	177%	59%	83%
Central and South America	$33,105	65%	3.5%	152%	16.7%	170%	38%	54%
African Americans	$31,778	62%	5.0%	217%	23.6%	241%	47%	66%
Asian Americans[a]	$54,500[c]	106%	2.6%	113%	10.8%	110%	53%	75%
Native Americans	$31,929	62%	20.2%	878%	28.4%	290%	NA[b]	NA

[a]Includes Pacific Islanders.
[b]Not available.
[c]Extrapolated from changes in income for other groups.

Sources: *Statistical Abstract* 2002:Tables 36, 37, 38, 40; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, *American Fact Finder,* 2003: Tables GCT-P12, P14.

Table 12.2 Education and Race-Ethnicity

	Less than High School Education	High School Education	1–3 Years of College	College Graduate	Number of Doctorates Awarded	Percentage of all Doctorates Awarded	Percentage of U.S. Population
White Americans	15%	33%	25%	26%	23,660	79%	68.2%
Latinos	32%	57%	NA%	11%	1,283	4%	13.5%
African Americans	22%	35%	27%	17%	1,760	6%	12.2%
Asian Americans	14%	22%	20%	44%	2,327	8%	4.1%
Native Americans	28%	59%	NA	13%	179	0.6%	0.8%

Note: NA = Not Available. Totals except for doctorates refer to persons 25 years and over.

Sources: *Statistical Abstract* 2000:Tables 42, 44; 2002:Tables 36, 37, 40, 771; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *American Fact Finder,* 2003: Table GCT-P11.

11 percent graduate from college. In a postindustrial society that increasingly requires advanced skills, these totals indicate that a large number of Latinos will be left behind.

African Americans

After slavery was abolished, in a practice known as *Jim Crow,* the South passed laws to segregate blacks and whites. In 1896, the Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that state laws requiring "separate but equal" accommodations for blacks were a reasonable use of state power. Whites used this ruling to strip blacks of the political power they had gained after the Civil War. They prohibited blacks from voting in "white" primaries. It was not until 1944 that the Supreme Court ruled that African Americans could vote in southern primaries, and not until 1954 that they had the legal right to attend the same public schools as whites (Schaefer 2000). Well into the 1960s, the South was still openly—and legally—practicing segregation.

The Struggle for Civil Rights

It was 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama. As specified by law, whites took the front seats of the bus, while blacks went to the back. As the bus filled up, blacks had to give up their seats to whites.

When Rosa Parks, a 42-year-old African American woman and secretary of the Montgomery NAACP, was told she would have to stand so white folks could sit, she refused (Bray 1995). She stubbornly sat there while the bus driver raged and whites felt insulted. Her arrest touched off mass demonstrations, led fifty thousand blacks to boycott the city's buses for a year, and thrust an otherwise unknown preacher into a historic role.

Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., who had majored in sociology at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, took control. He organized car pools and preached nonviolence. Incensed at this radical organizer and at the stirrings in the normally compliant black community, segregationists also put their beliefs into practice—by bombing homes and dynamiting churches.

Until the 1960s, the South's public facilities were racially segregated. Some were reserved for whites only, others for blacks only. This apartheid was broken by blacks and whites who worked together and risked their lives to bring about a fairer society. Shown here is a 1963 sit-in at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Jackson, Mississippi. Sugar, ketchup, and mustard are being poured over the heads of the demonstrators.

Rising Expectations and Civil Strife The barriers came down, but they came down slowly. Not until 1964 did Congress pass the Civil Rights Act, making it illegal to discriminate in restaurants, hotels, theaters, and other public places. Then in 1965, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act, banning the fraudulent literacy tests that the South had used to keep African Americans from voting.

Encouraged by these gains, African Americans experienced what sociologists call **rising expectations;** that is, they believed better conditions would soon follow. The lives of the poor among them, however, changed little, if at all. Frustrations built, finally exploding in Watts in 1965, when African Americans in that Los Angeles ghetto took to the streets in the first of what have been termed "the urban revolts." When King was assassinated by a white supremacist on April 4, 1968, inner cities across the nation again erupted in fiery violence. Under threat of the destruction of U.S. cities, Congress passed the sweeping Civil Rights Act of 1968.

Continued Gains Since then, African Americans have made remarkable political, educational, and economic gains. At 9 percent, African Americans have *quadrupled* their membership in the U.S. House of Representatives in the past 30 years (Rich 1986; *Statistical Abstract* 2002:Table 382). As college enrollments increased, the middle class expanded. Today, half of all African American families make more than $35,000 a year. One in three makes more than $50,000 a year, and one of six more than $75,000 (*Statistical Abstract* 2002:Table 657). Although their poverty rate is among the highest (see Table 12.1), contrary to stereotypes, the average African American family is *not* poor.

The extent of African American political prominence was highlighted when Jesse Jackson (another sociology major) competed for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1984 and 1988. Political progress was further confirmed in 1989 when L. Douglas Wilder of Virginia became the nation's first elected African American governor. The political prominence of African Americans came to the nation's attention again in 2000 when Alan Keyes competed for the Republican presidential nomination.

Current Losses Despite these gains, African Americans continue to lag behind in politics, economics, and education. No U.S. Senator is African American, and based on the percentage of African Americans in the U.S. population we would expect about 12. As Tables 12.1 and 12.2 on page 345 show, African Americans average only 62 percent of white income, have much more unemployment and poverty, and are less likely to own their home or to have a college education. That half of African American families have an income over $35,000 is only part of the story. The other part is that about one of every five families makes less than $15,000 a year (*Statistical Abstract* 2002:Table 657).

Two worlds of African American experience have developed—one educated and affluent, the other uneducated and poor. Concentrated among the poor are those with the least hope, the highest despair, and the violence that so often dominates the evening news. Although homicide rates have dropped to their lowest point in 20 years, African American males are *seven* times as likely to be homicide victims as are white males. Compared with white females, African American females are more than *three* times as likely to be murdered (*Statistical Abstract* 2002:Table 289). Compared with whites, African Americans are also *eight* times more likely to die from AIDS (*Statistical Abstract* 2002:Table 109).

Race or Social Class? A Sociological Debate This division of African Americans into "haves" and "have-nots" has fueled a sociological controversy. Sociologist William Julius Wilson (1978, 1987, 2000) argues that social class has become more important than race in determining the life chances of African Americans. Prior to civil rights legislation, he says, the African American experience was dominated by race. Throughout the United States, African Americans were detoured from avenues of economic advancement—good schools and good jobs. When civil rights legislation opened new opportunities, African Americans seized them. Following the path taken by other ethnic groups, as African Americans advanced economically, they, too, moved out of the inner city. Just as legislation began to open doors to African Americans, however, manufacturing jobs dried up and many blue-collar jobs were moved to the suburbs. As a result, better-educated African Americans were able to obtain middle-class, white-collar jobs. In contrast, African Americans with poor education and few skills were left behind, trapped by poverty in the inner city.

rising expectations the sense that better conditions are soon to follow, which, if unfulfilled, increases frustration

As discussed in the text, sociologists disagree about the relative significance of race and social class in determining social and economic conditions of African Americans. William Julius Wilson, shown here, is an avid proponent of the social class side of this debate.

The result, says Wilson, is two worlds of African American experience. One group is stuck in the inner city, lives in poverty, attends poor schools, and faces dead-end jobs or welfare. This group is filled with hopelessness and despair, combined with apathy or hostility. In contrast, those who have moved up the social class ladder live in comfortable homes in secure neighborhoods. They work at jobs that provide decent incomes and send their children to good schools. Their middle-class experiences and lifestyle have changed their views on life, and their aspirations and values now have little in common with those of African Americans who remain poor. According to Wilson, then, social class—not race—has become the most significant factor in the lives of African Americans.

Some sociologists reply that this analysis overlooks the discrimination that continues to underlie the African American experience. They note that even when African Americans do the same work as whites they average less pay (Willie 1991; Herring 2002). This, they argue, points to racial discrimination, not to social class.

What is the answer to this debate? Wilson would reply that it is not an either-or question. My book is titled *The **Declining** Significance of Race,* he would say, not *The **Absence** of Race.* Certainly racism is still alive, he would add, but today social class is more central to the African American experience than is racial discrimination. For the poor in the inner city, we need to provide jobs—for the availability of work offers hope, and work provides an anchor to a responsible life (Wilson 1996, 2000).

Racism as an Everyday Burden Today's racism is much more subtle than it used to be, but it still walks among us. To study discrimination in the job market, researchers sent over 5,000 resumes in response to help wanted ads in the Boston and Chicago Sunday papers (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2002). The resumes were identical, but in some they used white-sounding names (Emily and Brandon), in others black-sounding names (Lakisha and Jamal). Although the qualifications of the supposed job applicants were identical, the white-sounding names elicited *50 percent* more callbacks than the black-sounding names. The Down-to-Earth Sociology box on the next page presents another study of subtle racism in more detail.

African Americans who occupy higher statuses enjoy greater opportunities, and they also face less discrimination. The discrimination they encounter, however, is no less painful—and, unlike whites, they feel discrimination's presence constantly hovering over them. Here is how an African American professor puts it:

> [One problem with] being black in America is that you have to spend so much time thinking about stuff that most white people just don't even have to think about. I worry when I get pulled over by a cop. . . . I worry what some white cop is going to think when he walks over to our car, because he's holding on to a gun. And I'm very aware of how many black folks accidentally get shot by cops. I worry when I walk into a store, that someone's going to think I'm in there shoplifting. . . . And I get resentful that I have to think about things that a lot of people, even my very close white friends whose politics are similar to mine, simply don't have to worry about. (Feagin 1999:398)

The following Thinking Critically section highlights a proposal to compensate for injustices to African Americans.

THINKING Critically

Reparations for Slavery: Justice or Foolishness?

The subtitle of this section, "Justice or Foolishness," is intended to frame the stark contrasts that surround the debate about reparations for slavery. The issue itself is simple. The enslavement of millions of Africans was a gross injustice. Since the slaves were never paid for 240 years of work, their descendants should be. This is both a moral and a legal issue.

The argument for reparations, or compensation, contains related matters. The first is that the greater wealth of today's white Americans is built on the

Stealth Racism in the Rental Market: What You Reveal by Your Voice

MOST BLATANT DISCRIMINATION HAS become a thing of the past. There was a time when whites could burn crosses with impunity at the homes of blacks. Some even lynched African Americans and Asian Americans without fear of the law. Today cross burning and lynching will be investigated and prosecuted. If local officials don't make an arrest, the FBI will step in. Similarly, discrimination in public accommodations was once standard. Today, no hotel, restaurant, or gas station would refuse service on the basis of race-ethnicity. This, too, has become a criminal matter.

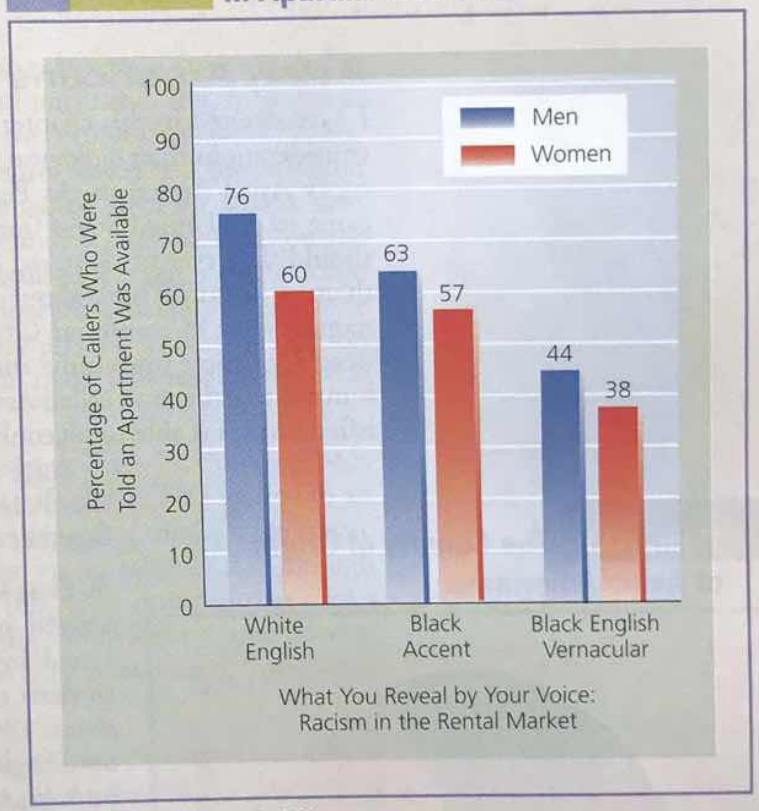
With times so changed, some may think that racism is a thing of the past. Although overt racism has been relegated to the back shelves of social life, stealth racism is alive and well, as sociologist Douglas Massey of the University of Pennsylvania documents (Massey and Lundy 2001). In his undergraduate course in research methods were whites who spoke what is called White Middle Class English, African Americans who spoke a dialect known as Black English Vernacular, and other African Americans who spoke middle-class English with a black accent.

As you know, Americans often identify one another racially by their speech. Massey used this feature of everyday life to test discrimination in the housing market. He and his students designed standard identities for members of these linguistic groups (assigning them similar income, for example). They also developed a standard script, the one group translating it into Black English Vernacular. The students called on 79 apartments that were advertised for rent in newspapers. The study was done blindly, with the white and black students not knowing how the others were being treated.

Compared with whites, African Americans were less likely to speak to rental agents, who often used answering machines to screen calls. They also were less likely to be told that an apartment was available, more likely to have to pay an application fee, and more likely to have credit mentioned. Figure 12.9 shows the percentage of callers who were told that an apartment was available. Students who posed as lower-class blacks (speakers of Black English Vernacular) had the least access to apartments.

As you can see, although both men and women were discriminated against, the discrimination was worse for the women. This is sometimes referred to as the *double bind* that African American women experience—being discriminated against both because they are African Americans and because they are women.

Figure 12.9 Cloaked Discrimination in Apartment Rentals



Source: Massey and Lundy 2001.

centuries of unpaid labor of black slaves. The second is that today's unequal conditions between African Americans and whites (the "racial deficit") in education, housing, and income are a legacy of slavery (Marable 2001; Conley 2002).

Simply put, reparations are a form of back wages. These back wages should be paid either directly to the descendants of slaves or into a reparations trust fund targeted not to individuals but to black communities with the greatest need.

Opponents of reparations agree that slavery was a horrible crime against humanity. They stress that it occurred a long time ago, however, and that it is not a black and white issue. It was Africans who sold African prisoners to white slavers in the first place. And consider the problems in figuring who would get compensation. Would the descendants of free blacks get compensation? How about the descendants of free blacks who owned black slaves? Should reparations be given to the descendants of blacks who immigrated after slavery ended? Or to today's black immigrants?

Then there is the matter of who would pay the reparations. Most U.S. whites are descended from people who moved to the United States after slavery ended. Not only did they have nothing to do with slavery—neither did their ancestors. In addition, the money for reparations would come not only from taxes paid by whites but also from taxes paid by Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. Not incidentally, it would also come from taxes paid by African Americans.

For Your CONSIDERATION . . .

There are finer points on both sides of the argument, but these are the basic issues. What is your opinion of reparations?

Shelby Steele, a psychologist and an African American, argues that it is time to move beyond "thinking of ourselves as victims." He says that "we need to build a positive black identity, an identity built around ingenuity and personal responsibility. We should busy ourselves with the hard work of development, not try to manipulate white guilt" (Steele 2001). What do you think of his position?

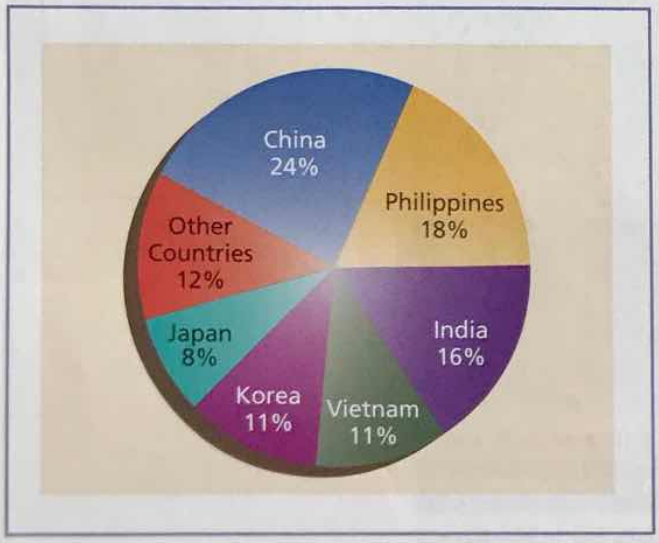
Our opinions are not located in a social vacuum. They are rooted both in history and in our particular location in society. Can you identify how your social location underlies your opinions about this controversial topic? To do so, consider your racial-ethnic background, your social class, the ideas of your parents, the opinions of your friends, and when your ancestors arrived in the United States. How do these factors influence your views of what is both moral and logical in this issue?

Asian Americans

I have stressed in this chapter that our racial-ethnic categories are based more on social considerations than biological ones. This point is again obvious when we examine the category Asian American. As Figure 12.10 shows, those who are called Asian Americans came to the United States from many nations. With no unifying culture or "race," why should they ever be clustered together in a single category—except that others perceive them as a unit? Think about it. What culture or race-ethnicity do Samoans and Vietnamese have in common? Or Laotians and Pakistanis? Or Native Hawaiians and Chinese? Or people from India and those from Guam? Yet all these groups—and more—are lumped together and called Asian Americans. Apparently the U.S. government is not satisfied until it is able to pigeonhole everyone into a racial-ethnic category.

Since Asian American is a standard term, however, let's look at the characteristics of the nearly 11 million people who are lumped together and assigned this label.

Figure 12.10 The Country of Origin of Asian Americans



Source: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract* 2002: Table 24.

A Background of Discrimination From the time they arrived on these shores, Asian Americans met discrimination. Lured by gold strikes in the West and a vast need for unskilled workers to build the railroads, 200,000 Chinese immigrated between 1850 and 1880. Feeling threatened by competing cheap labor, Anglos formed mobs and vigilante groups to intimidate these immigrants. In 1850, California passed the Foreign Miner's Act, which required Chinese (and Latinos) to pay a fee of $20 a month—when wages were a dollar a day. When the famous golden spike was driven at Promontory, Utah, in 1869 to mark the completion of the railroad to the west coast, white workers prevented Chinese workers from being in the photo—even though Chinese made up 90 percent of Central Pacific Railroad's labor force (Hsu 1971). The California Supreme Court ruled that Chinese testimony against whites was inadmissible in court (Carlson and Colburn 1972). In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, suspending all Chinese immigration for 10 years. Four years later,

Amid fears that Japanese Americans were "enemies within" who would sabotage industrial and military installations on the West Coast, in the early days of World War II Japanese Americans were transferred to "relocation camps." Many returned home after the war to find that their property had been vandalized.

the Statue of Liberty was dedicated. The tired, the poor, and the huddled masses it was intended to welcome were obviously not Chinese.

When immigrants from Japan arrived, they met *spillover bigotry,* a stereotype that lumped Asians together, depicting them as sneaky, lazy, and untrustworthy. After Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, conditions grew worse for the 110,000 Japanese Americans who called the United States their home. U.S. authorities feared that Japan would invade the United States and that the Japanese Americans would fight on Japan's side. They also feared that Japanese Americans would sabotage military installations on the West Coast. Although no Japanese American had been involved in even a single act of sabotage, on February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered that everyone who was *one-eighth Japanese or more* be placed in special prisons (called "relocation camps"). They were charged with no crime, and they had no trials. Japanese ancestry was sufficient cause for being put in prison.

A World of Striking Contrasts As you can see from Table 12.1 on page 345, the annual income of Asian Americans has outstripped that of whites. This has led to an assumption that all Asian Americans are successful, a stereotype that masks huge ethnic differences. Look at the poverty rate of Asian Americans shown on Table 12.1. Although it is less than that of any other minority group shown on this table, it means that over a million Asian Americans live in poverty. Their poverty is not evenly distributed: Poverty is unusual among Chinese and Japanese Americans, but it clusters among Americans from Southeast Asia.

Reasons for Success The general success of Asian Americans can be traced to three major factors: family life, educational achievement, and assimilation into mainstream culture.

Of all ethnic groups, including whites, Asian American children are the most likely to grow up with two parents and the least likely to be born to a single mother (Lee 1998; *Statistical Abstract* 2002:Table 74). Most grow up in close-knit families that stress self-discipline, thrift, and hard work (Suzuki 1985; Bell 1991). This early socialization provides strong impetus for the other two factors.

The second factor is their high rate of college graduation. As Table 12.2 on page 345 shows, 44 percent of Asian Americans complete college. To realize how stunning this is, compare this with the other groups shown on this table. Their educational achievement, in turn, opens doors to economic success.

Assimilation, the third factor, is indicated by several measures. With about two of five marrying someone of another racial-ethnic group, Asian Americans have the highest intermarriage rate of any group. They also are the most likely to live in integrated neighborhoods (Lee 1998). Japanese Americans, the financially most successful of Asian Americans, are the most assimilated (Bell 1991; Schaefer 2000). About 73 percent say that their best friend is not a Japanese American.

Asian Americans are becoming more prominent in politics. With more than half of its citizens being Asian American, Hawaii has elected Asian American governors and sent several Asian American senators to Washington, including the two now serving there (Lee 1998, *Statistical Abstract* 2000:Table 25; 2002 election results). The first Asian American governor outside of Hawaii is Gary Locke, who in 1996 was elected governor of Washington, a state in which Asian Americans make up less than 6 percent of the population. Locke was re-elected in 2000.

Native Americans

> "I don't go so far as to think that the only good Indians are dead Indians, but I believe nine out of ten are—and I shouldn't inquire too closely in the case of the tenth. The most vicious cowboy has more moral principle than the average Indian."
>
> —Teddy Roosevelt, 1886
> President of the United States, 1901–1909

Diversity of Groups This quote provides insight into the rampant racism of previous generations. Yet, still today, thanks to countless grade B Westerns, some Americans hold stereotypes of Native Americans who lived on the frontier. They see them as wild, uncivilized savages, a single group of people subdivided into separate tribes. The European immigrants to the Colonies, however, encountered diverse groups of people with a variety of cultures—from nomadic hunters and gatherers to people living in wooden houses in settled agricultural communities. Altogether, they spoke over 700 languages (Schaefer 2000). Each group had its own norms and values—and the usual ethnocentric pride in its own culture. Consider what happened in 1744 when the colonists of Virginia offered college scholarships for "savage lads." The Iroquois replied:

> "Several of our young people were formerly brought up at the colleges of Northern Provinces. They were instructed in all your sciences. But when they came back to us, they were bad runners, ignorant of every means of living in the woods, unable to bear either cold or hunger, knew neither how to build a cabin, take a deer, or kill an enemy. . . . They were totally good for nothing."
>
> They added, "If the English gentlemen would send a dozen or two of their children to Onondaga, the great Council would take care of their education, bring them up in really what was the best manner and make men of them." (Nash 1974; in McLemore 1994)

Native Americans, who numbered between 5 and 10 million, had no immunity to the diseases the Europeans brought with them. With deaths due to disease—and warfare, a much lesser cause—their number was reduced to about *one-twentieth* its original size. A hundred years ago, the Native American population reached a low point of a half million. Native Americans, who now number about 2 million (see Figure 12.5 on page 341), speak 150 different languages. Like Latinos and Asian Americans, they do not think of themselves as a single people that justifies a single label.

From Treaties to Genocide and Population Transfer At first, relations between the European settlers and the Native Americans were by and large peaceful. The Native Americans accommodated the strangers, as there was plenty of land for both. As wave after wave of settlers continued to arrive, however, Pontiac, an Ottawa chief, saw the future—and didn't like it. He convinced several tribes to unite in an effort to push the Europeans into the sea. He almost succeeded, but failed when the English were reinforced by fresh troops (McLemore 1994).

The Native Americans stood in the way of the U.S. government's westward expansion. To seize their lands, the government followed a policy of genocide, *later replaced by* population transfer. *This woodcut by T. DeThulstrup, depicting an attack on a Sioux village by the U.S. Cavalry, appeared in* Harpers Weekly *in 1885.*

A pattern of deception evolved. The U.S. government would make treaties to buy some of a tribe's land, with the promise to honor forever the tribe's right to what it had not sold. European immigrants, who continued to pour into the United States, would disregard these boundaries. The tribes would resist, with death tolls on both sides. Washington would then intervene—not to enforce the treaty, but to force the tribe off its lands. In its relentless drive westward, the U.S. government embarked on a policy of genocide. It assigned the U.S. cavalry the task of "pacification," which translates as slaughtering Native Americans who "stood in the way" of this territorial expansion.

The acts of cruelty perpetrated by the Europeans against Native Americans appear endless, but two were especially grisly. The first was the distribution of blankets contaminated with smallpox—under the guise of a peace offering. The second was the Trail of Tears, a forced march of a thousand miles from the Carolinas and Georgia to Oklahoma. Fifteen thousand Cherokees were forced to make this midwinter march in light clothing. Conditions were so bad that 4,000 died. The symbolic end to Native American resistance came in 1890 with a massacre at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. Of 350 men, women, and children, the U.S. cavalry gunned down 300 and buried them in a mass grave (Thornton 1987; Lind 1995; Johnson 1998). These acts took place after the U.S. government changed its policy from genocide to population transfer and had begun to confine Native Americans to specified areas called *reservations.*

The Invisible Minority and Self-Determination Native Americans can truly be called the invisible minority. Because about half live in rural areas and one-third in just three states—Oklahoma, California, and Arizona—most other Americans are hardly conscious of a Native American presence in the United States. The isolation of about half of Native Americans on reservations further reduces their visibility (*Statistical Abstract* 2000:Table 43; 2002:Table 36).

The systematic attempts of European Americans to destroy the Native Americans' way of life and their resettlement onto reservations continue to have deleterious effects. Table 12.1 on page 345 shows their high rates of unemployment and of poverty. Their rate of suicide is the highest of any racial-ethnic group (Wallace et al. 1996), while their life expectancy is lower than that of the nation as a whole (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1990; Lester 1997). Table 12.2 on page 345 shows that their education also lags behind most groups; Only 13 percent graduate from college.

These negative conditions are the consequence of Anglo domination. In the 1800s, U.S. courts ruled that Native Americans did not own the land on which they had been

pan-Indianism a movement that focuses on common elements in the cultures of Native Americans in order to develop a cross-tribal self-identity and to work toward the welfare of all Native Americans

settled and had no right to develop its resources. Native Americans were made wards of the state and treated like children by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Mohawk 1991). Then, in the 1960s, Native Americans won a series of legal victories that restored both their control over the land and their right to determine economic policy. As a result, many Native American tribes have opened businesses on their lands—ranging from industrial parks serving metropolitan areas to fish canneries.

It is the casinos, though, that have attracted the most attention. In 1988, the federal government passed a law that allowed Native Americans to operate gambling establishments on reservations. About half of the nation's 340 or so tribes opened casinos, which generate about $13 billion a year (Barlett and Steele 2002). Some tribes have struck it rich. The Oneida tribe of New York has only 1,000 members. Its casino nets $232,000 a year for each man, woman, and child (Peterson 2003). This huge amount, however, pales in comparison with that of the Pequot of Connecticut. With only 310 members, they bring in more than $2 million a day (Zielbauer 2000). Incredibly, one tribe has only *one* member: She has her own casino (Barlett and Steele 2002).

A highly controversial issue is *separatism.* Because Native Americans were independent peoples when the Europeans arrived and they never willingly joined the United States, many tribes maintain the right to remain separate from the U.S. government and U.S. society. The chief of the Onondaga tribe in New York, a member of the Iroquois Federation, summarizes the issue this way:

> For the whole history of the Iroquois, we have maintained that we are a separate nation. We have never lost a war. Our government still operates. We have refused the U.S. government's reorganization plans for us. We have kept our language and our traditions, and when we fly to Geneva to UN meetings, we carry Hau de no sau nee passports. We made some treaties that lost some land, but that also confirmed our separate-nation status. That the U.S. denies all this doesn't make it any less the case. (Mander 1992)

One of the most significant changes is **pan-Indianism.** This emphasis on common elements that run through Native American cultures is an attempt to develop an identity that goes beyond the tribe. Pan-Indianism ("We are all Indians") is a remarkable example of the plasticity of ethnicity. An identity originally imposed by Anglos replaces identities connected with tribes. As sociologist Irwin Deutscher (2002:61) puts it, "The peoples who have accepted the larger definition of who they are, have, in fact, little else in common with each other than the stereotypes of the dominant group which labels them."

Whether Native Americans wish to work together as in pan-Indianism or to stress separatism and to identify solely with their own tribe, to assimilate into the dominant culture or to remain apart from it, to move to cities or to remain on reservations, to operate casinos or to engage only in traditional activities—"Such decisions must be ours," say the Native Americans. "We are sovereign, and we will not take orders from the victors of past wars."

Looking Toward the Future

Back in 1903, sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois said, "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men." Incredibly, a hundred years later, the color line remains one of the most volatile topics facing the nation. From time to time, the color line takes on a different complexity, as with the war on terrorism and the corresponding discrimination directed against people of Middle Eastern descent.

In another hundred years, will yet another sociologist lament that the color of people's skin still affects human relationships? Given our past, it seems that although racial-ethnic walls will diminish, even crumble at some points, the color line is not likely to disappear. Two issues we are currently grappling with are immigration and affirmative action.

The Immigration Debate

Throughout its history, the United States has both welcomed immigration and feared its consequences. The gates opened wide (numerically, if not in attitude) for a wave of immigrants in the late 1800s and early 1900s. During the past 20 years, a second wave of immigration has brought close to a million new residents to the United States each year. Today, more immigrants (31 million) live in the United States than at any time in the country's history (*Statistical Abstract* 1989:Table 46; 2002:Tables 5, 41). Unlike the first wave, which was almost exclusively from western Europe, this second wave is more diverse. In fact, it is changing the U.S. racial-ethnic mix. If current trends in immigration (and birth) persist, in about 50 years the "average" American will trace his or her ancestry to Africa, Asia, South America, the Pacific Islands, the Middle East—to almost anywhere but white Europe. This change is discussed in the Cultural Diversity box on the next page.

In some states, the future is arriving much sooner than this. In California, racial-ethnic minorities already constitute the majority. California has 18 million minorities and 16 million whites (*Statistical Abstract* 2002:Table 23). Californians who request new telephone service from Pacific Bell can speak to customer service representatives in Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Cantonese—or in English.

As in the past, there is concern that "too many" immigrants will change the character of the United States. "Throughout the history of American immigration," write sociologists Alejandro Portés and Ruben Rumbaut (1990), "a consistent thread has been the fear that the 'alien element' would somehow undermine the institutions of the country and would lead it down the path of disintegration and decay." A hundred years ago, the widespread fear was that the immigrants from southern Europe, then arriving in huge numbers, would bring communism with them. Today, some fear that Spanish-speaking immigrants threaten the primacy of the English language. In addition, the age-old fear that immigrants will take jobs away from native-born Americans remains strong. Finally, minority groups that struggled for political representation fear that newer groups will gain political power at their expense.

Affirmative Action

The role of affirmative action in our multicultural society lies at the center of a national debate about race and ethnic relations. In this policy, initiated by President Kennedy in 1961, goals based on race (and sex) are used in hiring, promotion, and college admission. Sociologist Barbara Reskin (1998) examined the results of affirmative action. In agreement with earlier studies (Badgett and Hartmann 1995), she concluded that although it is difficult to separate the results of affirmative action from economic booms and busts and the greater numbers of women in the work force, affirmative action has had a modest impact.

The results may have been modest, but the reactions to this program have been anything but modest. Affirmative action has been at the center of controversy for more than a generation. Liberals, both white and minority, say that this program is the most direct way to level the playing field of economic opportunity. If whites are passed over, this is an unfortunate cost we must pay if we are to make up for past discrimination. Conservatives, in contrast, both white and minority, agree that opportunity should be open to all, but claim that putting race (or sex) ahead of an individual's training and ability to perform a job is reverse discrimination. Because of their race (or sex), qualified people who had nothing to do with past inequity are discriminated against. They add that affirmative action stigmatizes the people who benefit from it, because it suggests that they hold their jobs because of race (or sex), rather than merit.

in the UNITED STATES

Glimpsing the Future: The Shifting U.S. Racial-Ethnic Mix

During the next twenty-five years, the population of the United States is expected to grow by about 22 percent. To see what the U.S. population will look like in twenty-five years, can we simply multiply the current racial-ethnic mix by 22 percent? The answer is a resounding no. As you can see from Figure 12.11, some groups will grow much more than others, giving us a different-looking United States. Some of the changes in the U.S. racial-ethnic mix will be dramatic. In twenty-five years, one of every nineteen Americans is expected to have an Asian background, and one of every six a Latino background.

Two basic causes underlie this fundamental shift: immigration and birth rates. By far, immigration is the more important. The racial-ethnic groups have different rates of immigration and birth rates, and this will change their proportions of the U.S. population. You can see how the proportion of non-Hispanic whites is expected to shrink, that of Native Americans to remain the same, and that of African Americans to increase slightly. With both vast immigration and higher-than-average birth rates, in fifty years almost one of four Americans is expected to be of Latino ancestry.

For Your CONSIDERATION

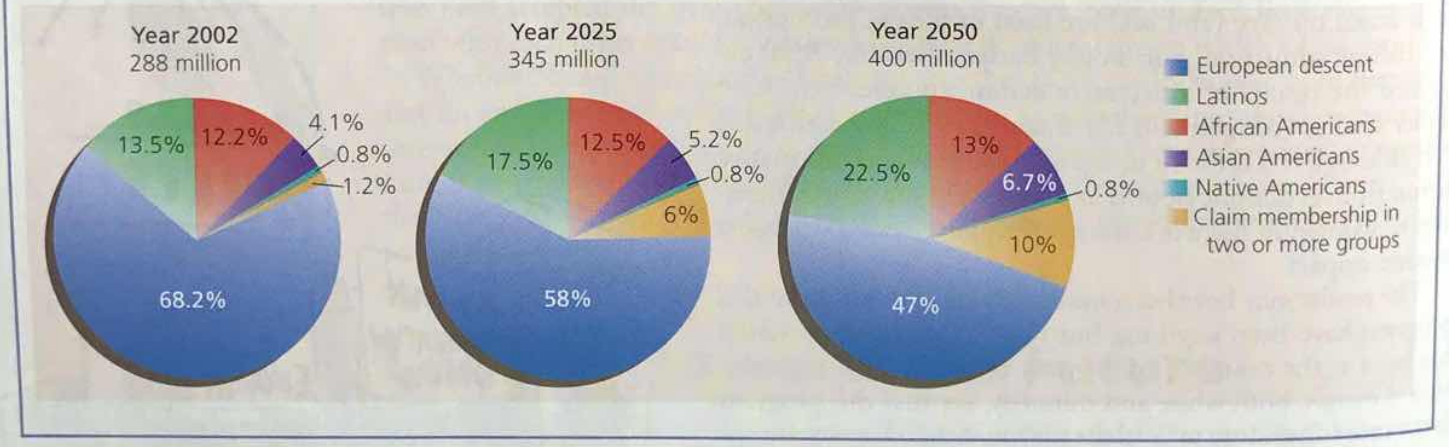
This shifting racial-ethnic mix is one of the most significant events occurring in the United States. To better understand its implications, apply the three theoretical perspectives.

Use the conflict perspective to identify the groups likely to be threatened by this change. Over what resources are struggles likely to develop? What impact do you think this changing mix might have on European Americans? On Latinos? On African Americans? On Asian Americans? On Native Americans? What changes in immigration laws (or their enforcement) can you anticipate?

To apply the symbolic interactionist perspective, consider how groups might perceive one another differently as their proportion of the population changes.

To apply the functionalist perspective, try to determine how each racial-ethnic group will benefit from this changing mix. How will other parts of society (such as businesses) benefit? What dysfunctions can you anticipate?

Figure 12.11 Projections of the Racial-Ethnic Makeup of the U.S. Population



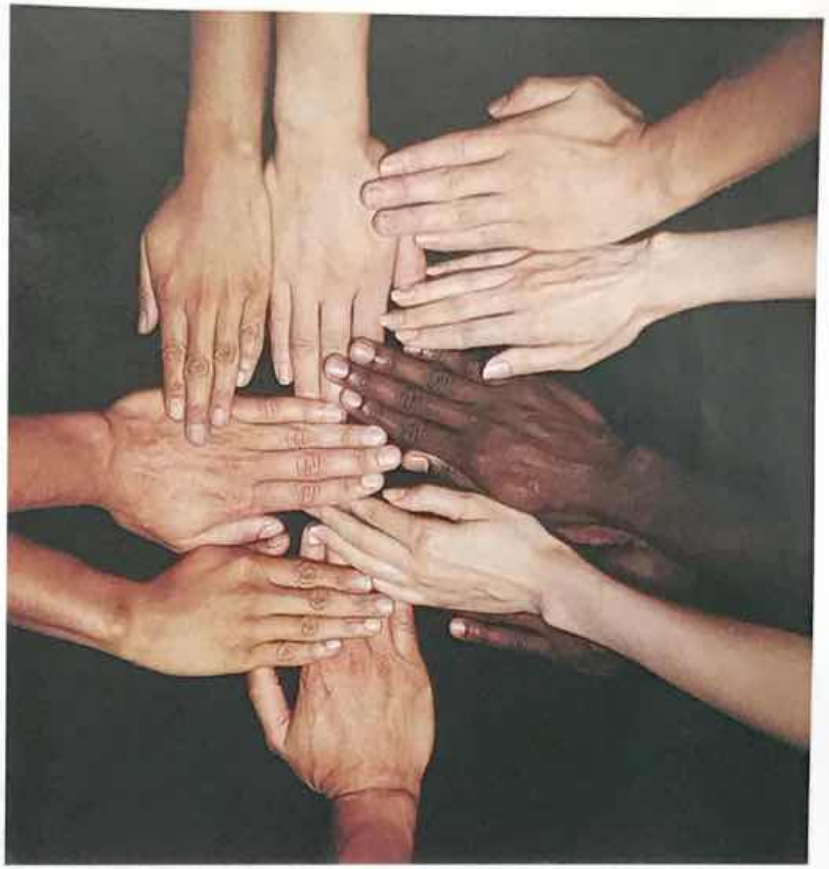
Note: I modified the projections for 2050 based on the new census category of membership in two or more groups and trends in interethnic marriage.

Sources: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract* 2002:Table 16; Bernstein and Bergman 2003.

This national debate crystallized with a series of controversial rulings. One of the most significant was *Proposition 209,* a 1996 amendment to the California state constitution. This amendment banned preferences to minorities and women in hiring, promotion, and college admissions. Despite appeals by a coalition of civil rights groups, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld this California law.

A second significant ruling was made in 2003, in response to complaints from white applicants who had been denied admission to the University of Michigan. They claimed that they were discriminated against because underrepresented minorities were given extra consideration. The Court's ruling was ambiguous. The goal of racial diversity in a student body is laudable, the Court ruled, and universities can give minorities an edge in admissions. Race, however, can only be a "plus factor." There must be, in the Court's words, "a meaningful individualized review of applicants." Mechanical systems, such as automatically giving extra points because of race, are unconstitutional.

Such a murky message leaves university officials—and, by extension, those in business and other public and private agencies—scratching their heads. Trying to bring about racial diversity is constitutional, but using quotas and mechanical systems is not. With the Court providing no specific guidelines to bring about affirmative action and its University of Michigan ruling open to different interpretations, we obviously have not yet heard the final word from the U.S. Supreme Court. This issue of the proper role of affirmative action in a multicultural society is likely to remain center stage for quite some time.



The United States is the most racially-ethnically diverse society in the world. This can be our central strength, with our many groups working together to build a harmonious society, a stellar example for the world. Or it can be our Achilles heel, with us breaking into feuding groups, a Balkanized society that marks an ill-fitting end to a grand social experiment. Our reality will probably fall somewhere between these extremes.

Toward a True Multicultural Society

The United States has the potential to become a society in which racial-ethnic groups not only coexist, but also respect one another—and thrive—as they work together for mutually beneficial goals. In a true multicultural society, the minority groups that make up the United States will participate fully in the nation's social institutions while maintaining their cultural integrity. To reach this goal will require that we understand that "the biological differences that divide one race from another add up to a drop in the genetic ocean." For a long time, we have given racial categories an importance they never merited. Now we need to figure out how to reduce them to the irrelevance they deserve. In short, we need to make real the abstraction called equality that we profess to believe (Cose 2000).