Ethnicity and Ethnic Relations

Ethnic strife exists everywhere in the world today. People hate each other with a passion that is sometimes difficult to understand, and in many places, the protagonists seem to be locked in a cycle of mutually escalating violence. People are often proud of their ethnic heritage, and equally often they are suspicious of the heritage of others, seeing another ethnic population as a potential threat to their well-being. Thus, we must reluctantly conclude that ethnicity is a force that mobilizes people's emotions ranging from a sense of ethnic pride, on the one side, to fear and hatred of other ethnics, on the other. In very few places are tolerance and mutual understanding of ethnic differences accepted as normal, or even as desirable. True, ideologies often preach ethnic tolerance and celebration of diversity, but in actual practice, most of the world reveals ethnic tensions, open conflict, and in a few cases, efforts to exterminate others who are seen as different. Tensions are often so profound that societies are de-evolving, breaking apart along ethnic lines. The Soviet Union collapsed around old ethnic lines; Yugoslavia disintegrated into episodes of ethnic cleansing; Czechoslovakia is now two nations; French-speaking Canadians want to break away from the union; and India and Pakistan stand ready to use their nuclear weapons as they dispute the borders that were created to partition ethnic subpopulations. For those populations who cannot be split into new nations, the tensions persist, often erupting into violence and almost always producing systematic efforts at discrimination. And when ethnics migrate to new lands, they almost always encounter discrimination and, at times, violence. Thus, the world is filled with ethnic tension and outright conflict. Noisy and threatening protests, long-term oppression, terrorist bombings, mass killings, and war can be found around the globe. Ethnicity is one of the most volatile forces of the twenty-first century.

Why do ethnic tension and racial hatred persist in patterns of human organization? Why did the early white settlers in North America, for example, kill so many Native Americans? Why did slavery exist? Why are neo-Nazi hate groups emerging in Germany? Why are churches attended by African Americans arson targets? Why do Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland wall themselves off from each other? Why do ethnic jokes about Polacks, Wops, Japs, Jews, and

others persist in America? Why do European-origin Americans so fear Latinos? And so the questions go.

Our goal in this book is to answer these and many related questions that can be asked about ethnicity. Our emphasis is on American ethnic tensions, and compared to the violence and killings in many parts of the world, the dynamics of ethnicity in America can appear rather muted. This is not to say, however, that tensions among American ethnics are not severe. On the contrary, the existing divisions among ethnics in the United States are at a critical phase; America will either become a viable multiethnic society, or it will degenerate into patterns of hatred and violence so evident in our nation's past and so clear in much of the world today. The task before us, then, is to understand American ethnic antagonisms; and with this understanding, perhaps we can better appreciate what needs to be done to reduce the conflicts among ethnic groups in America.

In this chapter, we begin this task by clarifying basic concepts. To understand a phenomenon like ethnicity, we need to define key terms that are used to explain how the phenomenon operates. So let us begin with a conceptual mapping of our subject; in Chapter 2 we can turn to theorizing about the dynamic properties of American ethnic relations.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

The term **race** connotes biological differences among peoples—skin color, facial features, stature, and the like—that are transmitted from generation to generation. As such, these biological differences are seen as permanent characteristics of people. The notion of race does not make much sense as a biological concept, however, because the physical characteristics that make people distinctive are trivial. A few alleles on genes are what account for these differences, and, most important, these alleles are on genes that are not determinative of basic biological functions. These biological differences are, in essence, superficial. Moreover, they do not mark clear boundaries: Where does "black" end and "white" begin? Is the child of an Asian mother and a European father more Asian or more European?

Even though biological differences are superficial and difficult to use as markers of boundaries between peoples, they are important sociologically. For if people believe that others are biologically distinctive, they tend to respond to them as being different. And when people associate superficial biological differences with variations in psychological, intellectual, and behavioral makeup, they may feel justified in treating members of a distinctive group in discriminatory ways. For example, if some individuals in a society consider dark skin an important distinction, and this distinction becomes associated in their minds with differences in the behavior of "black people," then this superficial biological difference will influence how dark-skinned people are treated in that society.

How, then, should we conceptualize the notion of "race" if it does not make much biological sense? Our answer is to subordinate and incorporate the idea of

Race and [illegible] Humans

The concept of "race" does not have great meaning in biology because the genetic differences among humans are not great. Just a small amount of genetic material accounts for differences in skin color, eye folds, hair color and texture, and other markers of "racial differences." Still, social scientists, census takers, newscasters, and the general public continue to denote people by "their race." Race is thus a *social construction*, denoting some rather superficial physical differences among humans.

To put this tendency to denote humans as genetically part of racial groups into evolutionary perspective, the genetic diversity of humans is less than any primate on earth. Why should this be so? The answer is that the human species almost went extinct at two points in its history, the most significant being the decline in humans in Africa to perhaps only a few hundred individuals and certainly not more than a few thousand. Only by migrating out of Africa were these early humans, who came very close to extinction, able to pass on their genes and sustain the species. This fact means that this small "breeding stock" for all modern humans did not reveal much variation, especially compared to other primates and, indeed, most other mammals. Since humans are so closely related genetically, notions of race seem overblown, at least in a biological sense. There are no "races" among chimpanzees, for example, with whom we share 99 percent of our genetic material (although a 1 percent difference in genes can, as is obvious, produce very different-looking and- acting species).

Yet, despite this biological closeness among the over 6.5 billion people on earth, we tend to codify minor differences that represent adaptations of populations to unique ecological locations as "racial." When a biological-sounding label is used to denote such minor differences, these differences take on more *social* significance—as the history of ethnic relations in America and elsewhere so clearly documents.

race into a broad definition of **ethnicity.** When a subpopulation of individuals reveals, or is perceived to reveal, shared historical experiences as well as unique organizational, behavioral, and cultural characteristics, it exhibits its ethnicity. For instance, when country of origin, religion, family practices, interpersonal style, language, beliefs, values, and other characteristics are used to demark a population of individuals from others, then ethnicity is operating. The more visible the characteristics marking ethnicity, the more likely it is that those in an ethnic category will be treated differently.

Here is where race or presumptions of biological differences become a part of ethnicity. Physical features like skin color and facial features can be used as highly visible markers of organizational, behavioral, and cultural differences among individuals. When someone is labeled "black," more than skin color is involved; whole clusters of assumptions about historical experiences, behavior, organization, and culture are associated with this label. The same is true for labels such as "white," "Asian," "Mexican," "Jew," and "Indian."

In fact, as we will come to see, labels are often self-fulfilling in creating and sustaining ethnicity. If people are given a label because of their skin color

and then discriminated against as if they were different, they will react to such treatment by behaving and organizing in ways that are indeed distinctive. Once behavioral and organizational differences exist and are elaborated culturally into norms, beliefs, and other systems of symbols, they become an additional marker of differences, both justifying the earlier label and the distinctive treatment of these others as somehow "different." So if biological distinctiveness can become a part of the label for denoting populations, then biology becomes an aspect of the social dynamics producing and sustaining ethnicity. Indeed, racial labels are like turbochargers in ethnic relations: They escalate the heat and power of emotions and tensions.

The notions of race and ethnicity are thus social constructions. They are conceptions, often inaccurate, that people have about what makes certain people different and unique. Over the last twenty years in America, especially in the last decade, ethnicity appears to have taken on greater significance. Why should this be so? One reason is perhaps obvious: American society is one of the most ethnically diverse in the world, and it is natural for people to notice this simple fact of life. But more is involved. An additional force raising perceptions of ethnicity has been social movements that draw attention to discrimination against a particular group, especially as laws and other policies like "affirmative action" have been designed to compensate for past patterns of discrimination against a particular ethnic population. Another reason is the rapidly changing proportions of various ethnic groups in America, some increasing as a proportion of the total population while others are declining. Such shifts in the ethnic composition often make people aware of ethnic differences, particularly if they feel threatened by demographic changes. Still another reason is the widespread attention paid to ethnicity in schools and the media. When ethnicity gains publicity, and particularly if it becomes a hot-button political issue, it becomes more salient in people's minds. And finally, the U.S. Census Bureau, which collects data on the characteristics of the American population, emphasizes ethnicity; indeed, many of the questions on the census forms are devoted to a person's ethnic background. The Census Bureau increasingly uses the concept of race, especially in its efforts to discover "mixed-race" segments of the population (see Box 1.2).

It is difficult, therefore, to not be aware of ethnicity in American society. As attention is called to ethnicity, it takes on more reality and shapes how Americans think about themselves and others around them. While some of this reflection can be positive, much of what individuals think about ethnicity is negative, involving perceptions of others as somehow different and threatening. In the end, when ethnic differences are on people's minds, tensions among ethnic groups inevitably increase.

ETHNIC GROUPS

What is a group? Sociologists generally define a group as a gathering of individuals in face-to-face interaction. According to this definition, an ethnic "group" would be a number of interacting individuals distinguished by their ethnicity. Not every one of these individuals interacts face to face, but they may

[illegible] of "Race"

Despite the fact that "race" has no real meaning in a biological sense, the U.S. Census Bureau has increased its use of the term to denote ethnicity. In so doing, the Bureau is implicitly suggesting that people are biologically different, although this is far from its intent. In the 2000 census, for example, the Bureau asked questions about "mixed" ancestry and race, placing everybody in a "race" and constructing summary data in terms of "race" rather than "ethnicity." Persons responding to the question on "race" in both the 2000 and 2010 censuses chose from the following five categories: (1) White, (2) Black or African American, (3) American Indian and Alaska Native, (4) Asian, and (5) Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. A sixth racial category, "some other race," was provided for those persons unable to identify with one of the five racial categories. In an effort to document the number of multiracial persons in the U.S. population, persons could also respond to the "race" question by selecting one of the following categories: "race alone" or "race in combination." Persons in the "race alone" category reported only one race category, while persons in the "race in combination" category reported two or more race categories.

One result of the treatment of "race" in the census is that the Census Bureau now tabulates the population by "race," downplaying the notion of ethnicity, which, we feel, is the more appropriate label. Curiously, "Hispanics" are often separated from other whites, and one frequently finds tables with labels denoting the distribution of "races" for the non-Hispanic population. In this way, Latinos who are seen as part of the "white race" are separated in calculations on "Hispanics," resulting in the cumbersome categories of "non-Hispanic white" and "white Hispanics." This partitioning of whites into two categories only highlights the insignificance of race as a marker of difference and the importance of ethnicity.

The intent of the Bureau was, no doubt, benign; it simply needed a label for people of mixed ethnic backgrounds. But in using the term "race," the Bureau suggests that the offspring of people from different ethnic groups are of a "mixed race," which makes no sense biologically. They are, in reality, of mixed ethnic ancestry rather than race. In the end, this kind of tabulation makes "race" ever more salient in people's minds, and as ethnic differences become perceived as "racial differences," the lines dividing ethnic subpopulations can harden.

With the 2010 census, the movement to emphasize "race" at the expense of ethnicity will gain traction. For all those who report being "white" or "black," no further questions on their ancestry will be asked. This reverses the policy from the first census conducted in 1790. Thus, we will have no data on the ancestry of all those designated as white or black, while the salience of other ethnicities may increase. For example, if persons identify themselves as Latino or Asian, then there will be further questions about their specific ancestry, especially their national origins. True, the ancestry questions for those categorized as white always represented a problem because of uneven reporting of ancestry, especially as the salience of being Irish, Scottish, Swedish, Italian, and the like declined. Yet, such data are still useful. Indeed, Arab Americans and others from the Middle East are categorized as "white," but their country of origin (e.g., Egypt, Syria, Iran) is still salient to them and is also useful information to have. But, as we will see in various tables in this book, the 2000 census will be the last one where more detailed data about white ancestry will be available.

interact in various social settings. Obviously, when we use the term "ethnic group," we have something much bigger, broader, and more inclusive in mind. **Subpopulations** of individuals in a society can be distinguished by their history as well as their distinctive behavior, organization, culture, and, perhaps, superficial biological features. An **ethnic group** is a subpopulation of individuals who are labeled and categorized by the general population and, often, by the members of the group itself as being of a particular type of ethnicity. They share a unique history as well as distinctive behavioral, organizational, and cultural characteristics, and, as a result, they often are treated differently by others. In addition to the term "ethnic group," in this text we use the terms **ethnic subpopulation** and **ethnic population,** which more accurately describe the groups that we are discussing.

MINORITY GROUPS

What is a **minority group?** Louis Wirth (1945:347) long ago offered the basic definition, the general thrust of which is still used today: "A group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination." There are many problems with this definition, however. First, it is not a group but members of a larger subpopulation who are singled out for unequal treatment. Second, the label "minority" is not always accurate; sometimes it is a majority, as was the case historically in South Africa, that is discriminated against. Thus, we should begin to revise this traditional definition of "minority group" by acknowledging what it really means: an ethnic subpopulation in a society subject to discrimination by members of *more powerful ethnic subpopulations.* Usually the victimized subpopulation is a numerical minority, and the more powerful discriminators are in the majority. Since this is not always true, however, the important issue is this: Which ethnic subpopulation has the power to discriminate? The more powerful subpopulation is the dominant or *superordinate* ethnic group, and the less powerful ethnic subpopulation is the *subordinate* group. The latter terminology, which revolves around dominance and subordination, more accurately frames the issues that were once classified as "minority group relations."

ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION

Phrases like "unequal treatment" and "distinctive treatment" have been used rather loosely thus far. These and related terms can be consolidated by one key term: "discrimination." In general, **discrimination** is the process by which an individual, group, or subpopulation of individuals acts in ways that deny another individual, group, or subpopulation access to valued resources. So, in the context of ethnic relations, **ethnic discrimination** is the process by which the members of a more powerful and dominant ethnic subpopulation deny the members of another, less powerful and subordinate ethnic subpopulation full access to **valued resources**—such as jobs, income, education, health, prestige, power, or **anything else** that the members of a society value.

Today, the term **reverse discrimination** is often used to emphasize that programs designed to overcome the effects of past discrimination against members of a subordinate subpopulation often deny some members of the dominant subpopulation equal access to valued resources. What makes these programs so controversial is that those denied access to resources—say, particular classes of jobs—are usually not the ones who engaged in discrimination in the past. Thus, they feel cheated and angry—emotions that the victims of discrimination almost always feel. The phrase "reverse discrimination" is pejorative in that it emphasizes the net loss of resources for those who may no longer discriminate but whose forefathers did, so they ask: Is this fair? On the other side, those who must live with the legacy of past discrimination ask: How are the effects of past discrimination to be overcome? There is no easy answer to either of these questions, but one thing is clear: The term "discrimination" often becomes the centerpiece of ideological and political debate over ethnic tensions (Feagins, 1990; Kinder and Sanders, 1990; Ross, 1990; Thomas, 1990).

The process of discrimination is the most important force sustaining ethnicity in a society. Discrimination denies some people access to what is valued, making it a highly volatile process. Because discrimination varies in nature, degree, and form, we need to identify some of its dimensions.

Types of Discrimination

The ways in which discrimination is perpetrated against an ethnic population vary considerably. The most intense form is **genocide,** when members of an ethnic subpopulation are killed or, potentially, an entire ethnic group is exterminated. The Nazi death camps with their gas chambers constituted an effort at genocide; the exposure of Native Americans to diseases and then the carnage of the Indian wars resulted in the near-genocide of the original population in America. More recently, the systematic attempt at **ethnic cleansing** by the Serbs in the former Yugoslavia is another example of genocidal behavior. The dominant Serbs tried to rid—"cleanse"—Yugoslavia of Muslims and ethnic Albanians.

Expulsion is a somewhat less intense form of discrimination because those who are exiled from a society retain access to at least one highly valued resource: life. Expulsion is a common form of discrimination. For example, during the time of slavery in the United States, several American presidents, including Abraham Lincoln, contemplated the creation of a black state in Africa to which "free" black people would be sent. Expulsion is usually forced, but it is often the case that one group makes life so miserable for another that the latter leaves "voluntarily." Thus, the concept of expulsion has ambiguity: If we confine its use only to cases in which people are thrown out of a country by direct coercion, the importance of *indirect* expulsion—people packing up and leaving because their lives have been made so miserable—is underemphasized.

Segregation is a process of spatially isolating members of an ethnic subpopulation in areas where they cannot have the same access to valued resources as

A Mexican mother and her children.

do people who are not isolated. For instance, as we will see in Chapter 5, most African Americans were confined to the decaying cores of large cities during the post–World War II era by governmental and private housing policies; and as a result, they were denied access to the jobs, schools, and housing enjoyed by white Americans who moved to suburbia (see Box 1.3). The black townships and various rules of residence in South Africa mark another segregation pattern that historically denied access to resources. The Indian reservations that dot the American landscape are yet another form of segregation.

Exclusion is a pattern of discrimination that denies members of an ethnic group certain positions, independent of the effects of segregation. Slaves were denied basic citizenship rights. Only a few decades ago, African Americans were excluded from most craft unions; even in industrial unions, they were allowed to rise only to certain grade levels and not beyond. For many decades, African Americans and Latinos in the Southwest were excluded from the political arena through poll taxes, literacy tests, gerrymandering of districts, and other exclusionary tactics. Exclusion in the job sphere is especially harmful because it denies members of an ethnic group the money they could use to buy other valued resources—health care, housing, education, and political power. Exclusion from the political arena denies an ethnic group the power to move out of its subordinate position.

Residential Segregation

Over the years, a series of statistical procedures have been developed to calculate the degree of residential segregation among various ethnic populations. The details of these calculations need not concern us here, but in essence, the higher the number for the "index of dissimilarity" the less likely are members of various ethnic groups to live in the same neighborhoods. A number of zero would mean no segregation, while a score approaching 100 would signal complete segregation. The index is calculated for all metropolitan areas and for cities that have more than 25,000 residents; each area or city is given an index score for any two ethnic groups. The average index scores between non-Hispanic whites and other ethnic groups are as follows for cities and metropolitan areas:

	Cities	Metropolitan Areas
White–Black	45	59
White–Asian	32	45
White–Hispanic	35	43
White–American Indian	39	59

Segregation is higher in metropolitan areas than in cities, a finding that should not be surprising, since non-Hispanic whites were the first to move out of the cities to suburbia. It should be emphasized that these are only averages; the range of scores varies enormously. For example, the score for blacks and whites reveals a high of 87 in Chicago and a low of 18 in Newark, California. The number 87 means that 87 percent of whites in Chicago would have to move to a new neighborhood for whites to be evenly distributed throughout the city. Even when cities reveal a high proportion of African Americans, the index can still be high. For instance, New York is 25 percent African American but still has a score of 85; Philadelphia is 43 percent black with a score of 81; Boston is 24 percent black and has a score of 76. The highest score for non-Hispanic whites and Hispanics is 77, and the lowest score is 12. In New York, which is 27 percent Hispanic, the index score is still 70; in Los Angeles with 47 percent Hispanic, the score is 67. For whites and Asians, the highest score is 69 and lowest is 15. New York and Los Angeles, which are both 10 percent Asian, have, respectively, scores of 54 and 49.

Thus segregation is still very evident in American society, and African Americans are the most segregated. When people are segregated, they are typically denied access to valued resources, such as adequate housing, good schools, health care, and better-paying jobs.

Source: Frey and Myers, 2002.

Selective inclusion is the process of allowing members of ethnic subpopulations into certain positions while at the same time excluding them from other positions. For instance, Jews in Europe historically were excluded from most economic, social, and political positions but were included in the world of finance. In the United States, early Asian immigrants were allowed access to some positions—the Chinese were laborers on the railroads and later ran small service businesses. According to Takaki (1993), the Japanese were denied access to the industrial labor market in California during the 1920s; as a result, many moved into the agricultural labor market, in which they used their entrepreneurial skills to become successful farmers and landowners. Today, many Asian immigrants are given easy access to ownership of small retail businesses but are excluded, to some degree, from white- and blue-collar positions in large companies. In the past and still today, Mexican American laborers were included in the low-wage farm labor workforce and, later, in other low-paying jobs in light industry, but they were excluded from better-paying economic positions as well as positions in the political and educational arena. Thus, *exclusion* and *selective inclusion* tend to operate simultaneously, in a pincerlike movement that denies access to some positions and opens access only to those areas that are often (though not always) financially unrewarding or lacking in power and prestige.

Abusive practices are patterns of action against the victims of discrimination by members of other ethnic groups and particularly by those charged with enforcement of the law. These practices may be intentional, but often they are not. However, for their victims it makes little difference because they must suffer. For example, in the United States it is typically in neighborhoods inhabited by poor and relatively powerless ethnic groups that environmental problems are, literally, dumped. Disposal sites are generally near the poor, causing some to label this process **environmental racism** (Bullard, 2000; Farhat, 2002). Or, to take another example, what is now labeled **racial profiling** occurs every single day in American cities when officers use ethnic markers to assess the likelihood of potential crime. The result is that members of particular ethnic populations are likely to be singled out for special surveillance and potential harassment by police officers (Johnson, 2000; Russell, 2001). These kinds of practices typically make the difficult lives of the ethnic poor even more difficult, and in so doing, they ensure that it will be hard for members of these ethnic groups to gain a greater share of resources.

The intensity of discrimination varies according to its type: from genocide and expulsion to physical segregation to exclusion, selective inclusion, and abuse. None is pleasant if you are on the receiving end. These patterns of discrimination have been implemented in various ways, but the underlying mechanisms of discrimination are much the same, as discussed below.

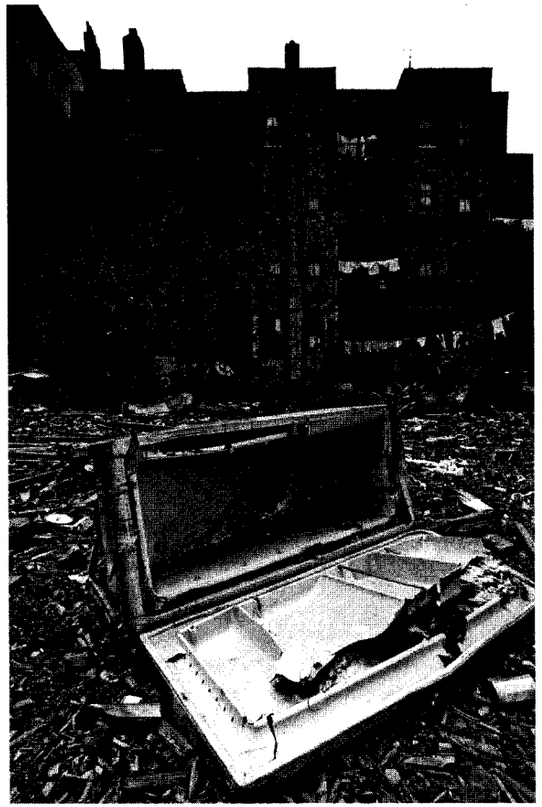
The Institutionalization of Discrimination

Acts by individuals to deny others access to valued resources are the most salient form of discrimination. When a white refuses to sell a house to an Asian, when a police officer physically abuses a member of a minority group, or when a supervisor refuses to promote an ethnic worker and these actions are taken simply because a person is a member of an ethnic group, discrimination is at work. These examples are *isolated* acts of discrimination if (1) they are not sanctioned by cultural values, beliefs, and norms; (2) they are not performed as a matter of policy within an organized structure such as a corporation, police department, board of realtors, school, or factory; and (3) they are not frequent and pervasive in the informal contact among people within an organization. In contrast, **institutionalized discrimination** exists when these individual acts are sanctioned by cultural values, beliefs, laws, and norms; when they are part of the way a social structure normally operates; and when they are a pervasive and persistent feature of the contact among people.

The distinction between isolated acts of discrimination and institutionalized discrimination is easier to make in a definition than in practice. For example, when discrimination is institutionalized in one sphere—say, housing practices—it becomes easier to commit acts of discrimination in other arenas, such as schooling, politics, or jobs. If enough people practice such isolated acts of informal discrimination, these acts become institutionalized. In the United States, civil rights laws and cultural beliefs do not condone discrimination as they once did; indeed, they demand that all individuals be given equal access to schools, jobs, housing, and other important resources. They even mandate punishments for those who discriminate, and they have led to the creation of watchdog and enforcement agencies. Yet individual acts of informal discrimination are so widespread in many communities that discrimination is informally institutionalized even in the face of formal prohibitions.

Thus, the process of institutionalized discrimination is subtle and complex. It can operate at formal and informal levels, and these two levels can even be in contradiction. Isolated acts of discrimination can increase in frequency when they constitute a normatively sanctioned and, hence, institutionalized form of discrimination.

The subtlety and complexity of institutionalized discrimination is demonstrated in the lingering effect of past patterns of discrimination that are now formally banned and no longer practiced. The legacy and cumulative effects of past discrimination can be so great that they prevent ethnic subpopulations from gaining equal access to resources. Many blacks (and Native Americans, Latinos, and others) are systematically denied by their present circumstances the same access to valued resources as whites have. Even if we could assume that no employer, real estate agent, teacher, or police officer currently acts in a discriminatory way, many African Americans and other ethnic groups would not have the same degree of access to resources as white Americans have because of their present location in segregated slums with a long history of exclusion from most spheres of mainstream life in America. Many African Americans today live in urban slums away from decent schools, housing, and jobs because of past patterns of discrimination. In this environment, they do not acquire the education, job skills, or motivation that would enable them to leave the slums and take advantage of new opportunities that were not available even thirty years ago.



An example of slum housing.

Thus, sometimes the legacy of the past operates as a barrier in the present and constitutes a pervasive pattern of discrimination. We must acknowledge that institutionalized discrimination has a lag effect beyond the period in the past when individuals and organizations practiced discrimination routinely.

Another facet of institutionalized discrimination is that it is often unintentional. This is certainly the case with the holdover effects of past discrimination, but more is involved. To take the most obvious example in the United States today—schools—it is now clear that the school curriculum, testing procedures, and classroom activities place some ethnic students at a disadvantage in comparison with other students. This type of discrimination is not intentional, at least in most instances; and it could be argued (albeit problematically) that schools facilitate the acquisition of the critical skills necessary for success and for overcoming the effects of past discrimination. Yet if the schools are organized in ways that are, for example, alien to students, that are unresponsive to the problems of poor children or immigrant children, and that are insensitive to the distinctive culture of a minority population, then the schools can become a source of discrimination. Students will have difficulty adjusting and will become discouraged—dropping out and finding themselves with few prospects for jobs and income. The school may not have intended this to occur—indeed, just the opposite—but the very nature of its structure and operation has worked to discourage students and, in so doing, has subtly and inadvertently discriminated against students whose access to resources is dramatically lowered when they drop out (Hilliard, 1988; McCarthy, 1990; Medina, 1988; Miller & Porter, 2007; Suh-Ruu, 2008; Trueba, 1986). In a society that uses educational credentials as a quick and easy way to sort people out in a labor market, the consequences for members of ethnic subpopulations who find the school experience unrewarding extend to all spheres of their life—job, home, income, and health.

Thus, the institutionalization of discrimination is an important force in ethnic relations. The pattern of institutionalization affects the type of segregation, exclusion, selective inclusion, and abuse that a subordinate ethnic subpopulation experiences, if it is not killed off or sent away. As the pattern of institutionalized discrimination changes, so do patterns of segregation, exclusion, selective inclusion, and abuse.

ETHNIC STRATIFICATION

Discrimination, as it operates to segregate, exclude, and selectively include members of a subordinate ethnic subpopulation within a society, produces a system of ethnic stratification. Because discrimination determines how many and which types of valued resources the members of an ethnic subpopulation are likely to have, it establishes the location of an ethnic subpopulation within the stratification system of a society. Moreover, discrimination also determines the patterns of mobility, if any, across social class lines.

For our purposes, **ethnic stratification** refers to several interrelated processes:

1. The amount, level, and type of resources—such as jobs, education, health, money, power, and prestige—an ethnic subpopulation typically receives.
2. The degree to which these **resource shares** locate most members of an ethnic subpopulation in various social hierarchies.
3. The extent to which these resource shares contribute to those distinctive behaviors, organizations, and cultural systems that provide justification to the dominant group for making the ethnic subpopulation targets of discrimination.

We can take almost any ethnic group—Latinos, for example (see Chapter 7)—and determine their average income, their level of political representation, and their average years of education. In performing this exercise, we soon find that, on the whole, many Latinos in America have relatively low incomes, are underrepresented in the halls of political power, and attain less education than Anglo-Americans. The statistics can be determined by simple counts of average income, years of education, and number of political offices held. The numbers show the share of resources that Latinos possess in American society.

One often finds, in addition, differences in the shares of resources *within* an ethnic subpopulation. There are affluent Latinos as well as very poor ones; their average level of affluence, power, and prestige tends to vary according to which subpopulation—Mexican American, Cuban, Puerto Rican, South or Central American—is being addressed. Yet when ethnic stratification is in evidence, a majority of a subpopulation does reveal a particular level and configuration of resource shares. On various social hierarchies—power, income and wealth, prestige, and education—a profile of resource shares locates a majority of the ethnic group at a particular place in the broader system of stratification. There are always deviations, of course, but when ethnic stratification is in force, these deviations apply to a minority of cases. Some Latinos, such as Mexican Americans, are located near the bottom of the power, income and wealth, prestige, and education hierarchies, thereby occupying the lower and working classes. There are middle- and upper-class Mexican Americans, to be sure, but they are a tiny minority of this subpopulation as a whole. This profile of resource shares and the resulting location on various social hierarchies contribute to the distinctiveness of Mexican Americans and, as a consequence, justify new and continuing prejudices and discrimination against them, thereby perpetuating the ethnic dimensions of social stratification.

In general, discrimination causes members of an ethnic subpopulation to be (1) overrepresented in lower and working classes or (2) overrepresented in a narrow range of middle-class positions, usually in small businesses of various kinds. As discrimination lessens, mobility to other classes and positions within classes occurs, but a holdover effect persists that limits such mobility for many.

Institutionalized discrimination, as it segregates, excludes, and selectively includes, determines the kinds and shares of resources received by members of an ethnic subpopulation; these shares locate them on society's hierarchies. By virtue of its pattern of resource shares and location on various social hierarchies, an ethnic subpopulation's distinctiveness is created and sustained. Thus, the principal consequence of ethnic discrimination is to give the broader stratification system in a society an ethnic dimension, one that is often more tension producing and volatile than the normal antagonisms between members of different social classes.

One rough measure of the effects of ethnic discrimination is the rate of poverty among various ethnic groups. The higher the poverty rate, the more an ethnic population has been subject to discrimination. Members of this population have been denied equal access to quality education and, thereby, jobs and income.

Table 1.1 summarizes the percentages of all persons, dual-headed families, female-headed families, and unattached individuals whose income falls below the official poverty line in 2008, the last year for which data are available from the Census Bureau's *American Community Survey* (2009). It is clear that non-Hispanic whites have the lowest levels of poverty of all ethnic subpopulations, except for the dual-head category where Asians/Pacific Islanders have a lower rate of poverty. In 2008, 13.2 percent of all persons in the United States were defined as poor, but as is also very clear, Latino, African American, and Native American/Alaskan Natives poverty rates are almost three times those for

TABLE 1.1 Percentages of Persons, Families and Family Types, and Unattached Individuals below Poverty Line, **2008**

	Percentage in Poverty			
	All Persons	Dual-Headed Families	Female-Headed Families	Unattached Individuals
All ethnicities	13.2%	11.5%	31.4%	20.8%
Non-Hispanic whites	8.6	6.4	21.5	17.7
Whites	11.2	9.4	27.2	19.1
Latinos/Hispanics	23.2	22.3	40.5	29.1
African Americans	24.7	23.7	40.5	28.8
Asians/Pacific Islanders	10.2	8.1	14.8	23.4
Native Americans/ Alaska Natives	22.5	22.5	—	—

Dashes represent data not reported by survey.
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Survey: Annual Social and Economic Survey*, 2009.

non-Hispanic whites and over double those for Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders. Marriage consistently reduces rates of poverty for whites (including Hispanics), non-Hispanic whites, and Asians/Pacific Islanders, but for Latinos, African Americans, and Native Americans/Alaska Natives, there is little difference between the overall rates of all persons and those in stable families. Thus, poverty is not simply the result of unstable families and a single source of income, but instead, it is built into the economic system and the ability of certain ethnics to secure adequate income for themselves and their families. Data such as these indicate that discrimination, or, at the very least, the legacy of past discrimination, is at work, pushing certain ethnics into poverty. For all ethnic categories, single-parent households headed by a female have dramatically increased rates of poverty, as might be expected by the fact that there is, at best, only one source of income and, in all likelihood, dependence upon income assistance from welfare agencies. Indeed, for most ethnic populations, the rate of poverty almost doubles for female-headed families. Interestingly, unattached individuals have high poverty rates for all ethnic subpopulations, clearly indicating that being free of family obligations does not make an individual immune to poverty.

Ethnic stratification is generated by discrimination whereby one or more ethnic subpopulation(s) act(s) in ways to deny other ethnic subpopulations access to valued resource such as income, power, prestige, education, health care, or anything that people value. As we reviewed earlier, discrimination can take many forms. We have discussed the more blatant forms, but as we will come to appreciate, discrimination can often be subtle and even unintended. Still, discrimination decreases people's access to resources throughout the world today, and it has been part of American society since its founding.

Rates of poverty are only a rough proxy for assessing ethnic discrimination and stratification. When people lack income to buy the necessities of life, this fact usually signals that they cannot get a job or, if they have a job, it does not pay enough. The ability to secure a job is often related to the amount of education that people have been able to secure, for, in a society where educational credentials determine who gets, and does not get, jobs that carry income, prestige, and even power, those without much education are doomed to low incomes; and as Table 1.1 emphasizes, many fall into poverty.

When children grow up in poverty, they are at a great disadvantage in the school system, which in turn means they will have difficulty in the job market. And when children do not have sufficient education and cannot, as adults, secure well-paying jobs, they often will not be able to make sufficient incomes to meet basic needs. We can see these mutually reinforcing consequences of education, jobs, and income by reviewing briefly the fate of ethnic subpopulations in their ability to generate access to education, jobs, and income. Thus, rates of poverty signal a chain of causes: Lack of education leads to poor job prospects that lead to low incomes, which ensure poverty. To anticipate the data that will be presented for each ethnic subpopulation, let us follow this causal chain in more detail.

TABLE 1.2 Median Family Income for Ethnic Subpopulations, 2007

Ethnic Subpopulation	Median Family Income
Non-Latino white	$65,652
Latino	42,074
African American	40,259
Native American/Alaska Native	40,310
Asian	77,046
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	58,990
All households	**$61,173**

Source: 2010 *Statistical Abstract*, Table 36.

Table 1.2 reports the median family income of key ethnic subpopulations in the United States. Total median family income in 2007 varied considerably by ethnic group. The median income for all families was $61,173, with non-Latino whites and Asians evidencing incomes considerably above the median. In contrast, Latinos, African Americans, and Native Americans/Alaska Natives show median incomes significantly below the figure for the total population and even farther below the incomes of non-Latino whites and Asians. Since the median is a statistic that divides a population equally above and below a given distribution, this means that one-half of all Latinos, African Americans, and Native Americans/Alaska Natives earn incomes below the median. As a result, some portion of this lower half must live in poverty, for the median figure is not dramatically above the income figures that establish the poverty line for families of five or more individuals (and many poor families are large).

Table 1.3 reports the mean earnings of selected racial and ethnic populations by sex. One can see in the table that black and Latino mean earnings lag behind the earnings of white persons, 77 percent and 69 percent, respectively. Black men earn 69 percent of the mean earnings of white men, while Latino men earn 64 percent. Black women earn 95 percent of the mean earnings of white

TABLE 1.3 Mean Earnings by Race/Ethnicity and Sex, 2007

	Total	Percentage of White Income
White	$43,139	
Male	51,781	
Female	32,899	
Black	$33,333	77%
Male	35,668	69*
Female	31,317	95†
Latino	$29,910	69%
Male	33,040	64*
Female	25,262	77†

*Percentage of white male income.
†Percentage of white female income.
Source: 2010 *Statistical Abstract*, Table 227.

women, while Latino women earn 77 percent. Comparatively speaking, the mean earnings of black and Latino women are closer to the mean earnings of white women than those of black and Latino men relative to white men. However, the earnings differential between whites, blacks, and Latinos can serve as a constraint on the economic well-being of blacks and Latinos.

Income comes from work, and so a low income means that certain individuals cannot get higher-paying jobs. Table 1.4 presents the occupational distribution of selected ethnic subpopulations in the United States. As is evident, African Americans and Latinos are underrepresented in the best-paying occupational category, "Management/Professional." In contrast, whites and Asians are much more likely to be in managerial and professional occupations. Latinos and African Americans reveal much higher rates of employment in low-paying service jobs. Whites, African Americans, and Asians approximate the total population in sales and office jobs, which generally do not reveal a high-wage structure. Thus, the higher rate of poverty for particular ethnic subpopulations reflects low pay at work and, in many cases, periodic unemployment.

Low pay generally means that individuals do not have the educational credentials to qualify for higher-paying jobs. Table 1.5 summarizes the educational attainment of key ethnic subpopulations in the United States. As is immediately evident, Latinos and Native Americans/Alaska Natives have noticeably lower high school graduation rates than the rest of the population—a fact that condemns them to marginal economic success. About 28 percent of working adults have a college degree, but this too varies by ethnic group. Whites (29 percent with degrees) and Asians (50 percent with degrees) are much more likely to have educational credentials that give them access to better-paying jobs, whereas Latinos (13 percent with college degrees), African Americans (17 percent), and Native Americans/Alaska Natives (13 percent) are much less likely to have a college degree that can open up job opportunities.

Table 1.6 reports dropout rates from high school for 1990, 2000, and 2008. Although all dropout rates have declined somewhat between 1990 and 2008, rates for certain ethnic groups are still very high. The rates for Latinos and American Indian/Alaska Natives are dramatically higher than for the white population. These dropouts severely limit opportunities for jobs and income, and indeed, many who drop out are likely to be chronically unemployed. They have few chances for success, and they are likely to pass these lowered chances on to their children, who will be more likely to drop out of high school.

Without sufficient money and income or secure employment, individuals cannot gain access to other valued resources in American society. They cannot buy homes or cars; they cannot take interesting vacations; they cannot buy decent clothes; and they often do not have access to health care. Indeed, as Table 1.7 documents for selected ethnic groups, health insurance and, hence, access to the health care system is like any resource: It is unequally distributed. In 2004–2006, 15.3 percent of the population did not have health insurance, but this percentage is much higher for Latinos, Native Americans/Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders. And while the rate for African Americans and Asians is lower than the rate for Latinos, Native Americans/Alaska Natives, and

TABLE 1.4 Occupational Distribution of Ethnic Subpopulations, 2007

	Percentage of Adults Employed in:				
	Management/ Professional	Service	Sales/Office	Construction/ Extraction/ Maintenance	**Production/ Transport/ Materials Moving**
Ethnic Subpopulation					
White	36.6%	15.0%	25.9%	10.0%	**11.9%**
Latino	17.7	24.3	21.5	16.1	**18.0**
African American	26.8	24.1	20.6	6.1	**16.1**
Asian	46.9	15.7	23.0	3.7	**10.4**
American Indian/ Alaska Native	25.3	22.4	22.9	13.5	**14.3**
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	21.9	22.9	29.5	10.5	**14.8**
Total U.S. labor force	**34.6%**	**16.7%**	**25.6%**	**9.7%**	**12.7%**

Source: 2010 *Statistical Abstract*, Table 36.

TABLE 1.5 Educational Attainment of Ethnic Subpopulations, 25 Years Old and Older, 2007

Ethnic Subpopulation	Percentage with High School Diploma or More	Percentage with Undergraduate Degree or More
White	81.0%	29.1%
African American	80.1	17.3
Native American	76.2	12.7
Asian	85.8	49.5
Latino	60.6	12.5
Total U.S. population	**84.5%**	**27.5%**

Sources: 2010 *Statistical Abstract*, Table 36.

TABLE 1.6 High School Dropout Rates by Ethnic Subpopulation, Ages 16–24, 1990–2008

	Percentage Who Drop Out		
Ethnic Subpopulation	1990	2000	2008
White	9.0%	6.9%	4.8%
Latino	32.4	27.8	18.3
African American	13.2	13.1	9.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.9	3.8	4.4
American Indian/Alaska Native	12.1	10.9	8.0
All persons 16–24	**12.1%**	**10.9%**	**8.0%**

Source: 2008 *Statistical Abstract*, The Condition of Education 2010, Indicator 20.

TABLE 1.7 Percentage of Ethnic Subpopulations without Health Insurance, Three-Year Average for 2004–2006

Ethnic Subpopulation	Percentage without Health Insurance
White	14.5%
Latino	32.7
African American	19.4
Native American/Alaska Native	31.4
Asian	16.1
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	21.7
Total U.S. population	**15.3%**

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Survey, 2005 to 2007 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.*

Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders, it is still significantly higher than the rate for whites. Health insurance and access to medical care can be a life-and-death issue, as those who cannot easily enter the health care system have a much greater chance of being denied the ultimate resource: life and health. Indeed, along with difficulties in securing adequate health care, the persistence of prejudice, discrimination, and poverty increases both the physical and the psychological burdens on individuals, which, in turn, leads to shortened life spans and chronic health problems. For example, **African Americans**, who have probably endured more extreme discrimination than any other minority subpopulation, live, on average, five to six years less than white Americans; they have the highest infant mortality rate of all ethnic subpopulations (indeed, a rate that approaches the rates of impoverished nations); and they are more likely to suffer from heart disease, malignant neoplasms (cancers), influenza and pneumonia, diabetes, and unintentional injuries (their death rate from homicide is five times higher than that of whites). Thus, like any valued resource, health and life are unequally distributed in the United States (Spalter-Roth, Lowenthal, and Rubio, 2005).

One consequence of not having access to adequate health care is higher rates of infant mortality: Infants of some ethnic subpopulations are more likely to die soon after birth than those of other ethnic groupings. Overall, the United States has a very high infant mortality rate compared to other post-industrial nations. The reason for this is that a higher percentage of the American population is poor than in other post-industrial societies and a much higher percentage of Americans do not have health care insurance (indeed, virtually all post-industrial societies mandate health insurance or provide it through a government-sponsored program). Table 1.8 reports the infant mortality rates per 1,000 live births; and as is immediately evident, there are large differences. Black non-Hispanics and American Indians/Alaska Natives—the poorest of ethnic subpopulations in the United States—have the highest rates, with Hawaiians and part-Hawaiians also having very high rates. Another way to look at these rates is to ask: How many times greater than the non-Hispanic white rate is the rate of any particular ethnic population? This can be done by a simple ratio of infant mortality for each ethnic population against the non-Hispanic white rate. Looking down the right column in Table 1.8, it is evident that the very young children of black non-Hispanics, American Indians/Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and Puerto Ricans are

TABLE 1.8 Infant Mortality Rates According to Race: United States

Race of Mother and Hispanic Origin of Mother	Rates*	Nonwhite/White Ratio
White, non-Hispanic	**6.0**	
Black, non-Hispanic	**13.9**	**2.32**
American Indian or Alaska Native	**9.3**	**1.55**
Asian or Pacific Islander	**5.2**	**0.87**
Chinese	3.4	0.57
Japanese	4.3	0.72
Filipino	5.9	0.98
Hawaiian and part-Hawaiian	8.2	1.37
Other Asian or Pacific Islander	5.5	0.92
Hispanic origin	**5.9**	**0.98**
Mexican	5.8	0.97
Puerto Rican	8.1	1.35
Cuban	4.7	0.78
Central and South American	5.2	0.87
Other and unknown Hispanic	6.8	1.13

**Infant deaths per 1,000 live births.*

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, 2001, p. 153, as cited in Rubio and Williams, 2004.

much more likely to die than the very young children of non-Hispanic whites and other minority subpopulations. Thus, once again, the ethnic stratification system is a matter of life and death.

These kinds of data are presented throughout this book. Even though data often seem dry and dull, they are essential to the analysis of discrimination and ethnic stratification (see Box 1.4). They tell us where people stand in the class system and what opportunities are available to them. When certain minority subpopulations are consistently overrepresented in poverty categories, in low-paying jobs, and in low educational attainment categories, we can easily see how ethnic stratification works. Young people find school alienating; they drop out; they have dramatically lowered job prospects and, indeed, have few job prospects in a society that values education; they have low incomes or no income when unemployed; and as a result, they are much more likely to be in poverty, which, if chronic, destroys educational and occupational opportunities for the next generation while increasing the health risks for all members of poor families.

These kinds of data, however, give us only the outcome of ethnic stratification. They do not tell us *how discrimination actually works* to produce this outcome. Our goal in the next chapters is to explain the specific discriminatory processes that have worked to generate ethnic stratification in America. One of the processes sustaining ethnic stratification is ethnic prejudice.

ETHNIC PREJUDICE

The terms "prejudice" and "discrimination" are often uttered together, for it is presumed that prejudiced people discriminate, and vice versa. **Prejudice** is a set of beliefs and stereotypes about a category of people; hence, **ethnic prejudices** are beliefs and stereotypes about designated subpopulations who share certain identifying characteristics—biological, behavioral, organizational, or cultural—or at least are perceived to share these identifying characteristics. Those prejudices that lead to, and are used to justify, discrimination are negative, emphasizing the undesirable features of a subpopulation.

Does prejudice invariably lead to discrimination? In a classic study in the early 1930s, Richard La Piere (1934) observed in his travels with a Chinese couple that, despite a climate of hostility toward Asians in the United States at that time, the couple was served and treated courteously at hotels, motels, and restaurants. He was puzzled by this observation because all the attitude surveys at that time revealed extreme prejudice by white Americans toward the Chinese. La Piere sent a questionnaire to the owners of the establishments where he and his Asian companions had experienced courteous service, asking if they would "accept members of the Chinese race as guests in [their] establishment." More than 90 percent said no, thus demonstrating that prejudice and discrimination do not always go together.

Robert Merton (1949) defined four categories of people in his analysis of the relationship between prejudice and discrimination:

1. **All-weather liberals** who are not prejudiced and do not discriminate.
2. **Reluctant liberals** who are unprejudiced but will discriminate when it is in their interest to do so.

Box 1.4
The Intersection of Dimensions of Stratification: Ethnicity and Gender

Just as ethnic inequality intersects with class stratification, so do other dimensions of stratification. As the figures below document, males and females within an ethnic subpopulation do not receive the same levels of income. In general, women earn less than men—a fact that is accounted for by their distribution in different kinds of occupations. Men are overrepresented in higher-paying jobs, but there is considerable difference among ethnic subpopulations. As the figures below document, the median incomes of males and females differ, but to varying degrees. This variability is captured by computing the percentage of male income earned by females within ethnic subpopulations (see column 3 in the figures below). For all income earners, women earn on average about 77 percent of what males earn. Among all whites, including white Hispanics, this figure drops somewhat to about 75 percent, and drops a bit more among non-Hispanic whites, with women earning only about 73 percent of the income of males. Asians fall within the range of whites, with women earning about 77 percent as much as their male counterparts. Among the lowest-income ethnics, however, there is more convergence in the incomes of males and females. Latino and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander women earn about 90 percent of what Latino males earn; African American women earn about 88 percent as much as their male counterparts; and American Indian/Alaska Native women earn about 84 percent as much as their male counterparts. Moreover, if women's income is compared to that of white males, the differences across ethnic groups are even more pronounced. For example, among all income earners, women earn only 67 percent of the income of men. Latino women earn only 52 percent as much as white males; American Indian/Alaska Native women earn about 58 percent of what white males do; African American women earn about 62 percent; and Asian women earn the most—75 percent of the income of white males (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2007, Table 2, p. 7). There is, then, both a gender and ethnic basis to class stratification.

	Median Income		Female Income as a Percentage of Male Income
	Males	Females	
All income earners	$42,210	$32,649	77.4%
Whites	45,727	34,133	74.7
Non-Hispanic whites	47,814	35,151	73.5
Latinos	27,494	24,737	90.0
African Americans	34,480	30,398	88.2
American Indians/ Alaska Natives	32,684	27,370	83.7
Asians	50,159	38,613	77.0
Native Hawaiians/ Pacific Islanders	34,641	31,171	90.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2007), Table 7, p. 16.

3. **Timid bigots** who are prejudiced but afraid to show it.
4. **Active bigots** who are prejudiced and quite willing to discriminate.

In the study of motel owners, then, La Piere encountered timid bigots who, in face-to-face contact with an ethnic group, did not implement their prejudices.

Even though prejudice does not always translate into discrimination, it is an important force in ethnic relations, for several reasons. First, prejudicial beliefs and stereotypes highlight, usually unfairly and inaccurately, certain characteristics of an ethnic subpopulation. By spotlighting these characteristics, they make ethnic group members more identifiable, alerting others to their existence, separating them from the majority, and potentially making them easier targets for discrimination. Second, prejudices present negative images of an ethnic group, legitimizing discrimination against such "undesirable" persons. Third, prejudices arouse fears about, and anger toward, an ethnic group, placing members of the ethnic group in constant tension with those who are prejudiced and often making them vulnerable to unprovoked acts of discrimination. Fourth, prejudice creates a general climate of intolerance for differences exhibited not only by members of a selected ethnic group but other categories of individuals as well (such as individuals who are disabled or elderly).

Prejudice may generate potential or actual discrimination, but the reverse is also true: Acts of discrimination can generate prejudice or, as is often the case, reinforce existing prejudices. Most people feel they must justify their acts of discrimination; in a society like the United States, where cultural values emphasize equality and freedom, discrimination violates these values and must be rationalized and made to seem appropriate. Prejudice is one mechanism for doing this because it makes the denial of freedom and equality seem acceptable "in this one case" since "after all, these people are so . . . [fill in the prejudice]." Those who are victims of discrimination react in different ways: sometimes passively and other times aggressively. The results of people's reaction against prejudice and discrimination vary—prejudicial stereotypes are sometimes reinforced, other times changed or eliminated.

Thus, prejudicial beliefs based on negative and stereotypical portrayals of an ethnic subpopulation stimulate and sustain ethnic tensions. Such beliefs do not always translate into direct discriminatory action, but they target and highlight negative beliefs that arouse fear and anger, and create a culture of intolerance that can erupt into discriminatory acts or legitimate those that have been practiced in the past. Prejudice provides the rationale for discrimination, either before or after the fact, and is thus central to understanding discrimination and patterns of ethnic stratification.

ADAPTATIONS TO PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

When confronted with discrimination, members of a subordinate subpopulation respond. Usually, they seek to make the best of a difficult situation. Depending on the nature and magnitude of discrimination, as well as on other social conditions, several responses are possible: (1) passive acceptance, (2) marginal participation, (3) assimilation, (4) withdrawal and self-segregation, (5) rebellion and revolt, (6) organized protest, and (7) ethnogenesis. Different segments of a minority population may resort to several of these adaptations at the same time, or a population may pass through different patterns of adaptation.

Passive Acceptance

If the power of an ethnic group is small and the magnitude of the discrimination great, members of the group may have no choice but to accept the discrimination. During the slavery era in the United States, it was nearly impossible for African slaves to do anything but accept subjugation. Yet even under severely oppressive conditions, populations acquire interpersonal techniques for dealing with their oppressors while maintaining their sense of identity and dignity. The stereotypical slave, as portrayed in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, offers a vivid example of such techniques. Bowing and scraping and repeated use of the phrase "Yes sir, yes sir" allowed Uncle Tom to gain favor with white people and to enjoy some degree of privilege. **Passive acceptance,** then, is often not passive but, rather, active manipulation of a situation. Some slaves were able to develop their own culture and to enjoy some of the basic pleasures of life through the appearance of passive acceptance. Of course, such a pattern of adjustment tends to perpetuate itself; the subordinate population does not initiate change, and the majority is not pressured to cease its discriminatory practices.

Marginal Participation

At times, subordinate ethnic subpopulations can find a niche where they can use their creative resources and prosper. In essence, these subpopulations are allowed **marginal participation.** For example, Jews have often been able to find business opportunities and to prosper in societies that actively discriminated against them. From the turn of the twentieth century to the present, many Chinese Americans have been able to prosper in small businesses providing services to the white American majority. Such marginal niches are created when the majority is not inclined to enter a specialized field. Marginal participation tends to be most successful when the minority population is small and does not enter areas dominated by the majority. It is probably for this reason that African Americans and Latinos have been unable to find specialized niches; their numbers are simply too great.

Assimilation

Assimilation is the process by which the members of an ethnic group become part of the broader culture and society, losing their distinctive character. Minorities that are less identifiable biologically and culturally are more readily assimilated. Ethnic populations that can be easily identified, however, have greater difficulty assimilating. It is for this reason that white ethnic groups in

Civil rights March on Washington for jobs and freedom, Washington, DC.

America, such as the Protestant Irish and Germans, have become largely assimilated, although enclaves are thriving in some large eastern cities. Other Caucasian migrants, such as Poles, Italians, and Catholic Irish, have also tended to assimilate, although the East and Midwest have cohesive ethnic cultures of these populations. African Americans, in contrast, have had a more difficult time assimilating because of their visibility and the resulting ease with which the majority can locate them as targets of discrimination.

Withdrawal and Self-Segregation

Another adaptation to discrimination is withdrawal and the creation of a self-sustaining "society" within the broader society. Such **self-segregation** enables a population to create and support their own communities, businesses, schools, leadership, churches, and other social forums. For example, the early Black Muslim movement in America advocated a separate African American community, self-supporting and isolated from "white" institutions. Urban communities as well as rural communes were established and still prosper, although there has been a clear trend away from complete withdrawal and isolation among many Black Muslims. Self-segregation is a difficult adaptation to maintain. Opportunities are necessarily limited compared to those in the broader society. As a result, some seek these outside opportunities. Moreover, economic, political, and social isolation is often difficult to sustain in urban, media-dominated societies, in which alternatives and options constantly present themselves.

Rebellion and Revolt

Subordinate ethnic subpopulations do not always accept, assimilate, withdraw, or marginally participate. Frequently they rebel. Such **rebellion** can take a number of forms, one being general hostility and aggressive behavior toward the majority. Few white Americans would feel comfortable walking through a black ghetto or a Chicano barrio, because they fear that there is some likelihood of intimidation and assault. Another form of rebellion is rioting, such as the widespread urban riots in the United States in the 1960s and the turmoil associated with the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles in the early 1990s. All forms of rebellion involve minorities' "striking back" and venting their frustrations, and at times, these revolts become extremely violent, mobilizing people for mass killings.

Organized Protest

Rebellious outbursts are often part of a larger social movement and, hence, may become **organized protests** when subordinate ethnic groups become organized to make broad-based and concerted efforts to change patterns of discrimination. The civil rights movement represents one such effort. Beginning with sit-ins and freedom rides in the 1960s, progressing to large-scale demonstrations (sometimes boiling over into riots), and culminating in creation of successful national organizations that effectively changed many legal and social patterns, the civil rights movement of African Americans successfully challenged pervasive discriminatory practices. The movement has been far from totally successful, however, since substantial integration of African Americans into the American mainstream has not occurred. But when an ethnic population is large and organized, it can generate political power and initiate some degree of social change. When minorities become majorities in cities and regions, as was the case in the late twentieth century in the United States, they can wield additional power and can force changes in old patterns of discrimination.

Ethnogenesis

At times, prejudicial beliefs and patterns of discrimination assume that individuals from diverse cultural and ancestral backgrounds are "all alike." For example, Asians as an ethnic subpopulation are a very diverse mix of persons who have very little in common, except an eye fold that makes them an easy target for prejudice and discrimination. Indeed, Asian Americans come from a broad range of societies with vastly different cultures—to name just a few: Korea, Japan, China, Vietnam, Philippines, Cambodia, and Laos. Similarly, Arab Americans also come from diverse societies and possess different religious affiliations. Historically, Native Americans or "Indians" as an ethnic category represented diverse cultures across the North American landmass. Yet despite their differences, prejudice and discrimination often treat target ethnics *as if* they are all the same. Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Arab Americans are portrayed by prejudicial beliefs as the same, justifying common forms of discrimination against them.

In fact, the Census Bureau's classification of ethnic groups implicitly reaffirms—in a manner certainly not intended—the lumping of individuals with very different backgrounds and cultures into one "ethnic category." The same thing could be said for chapters in a book on ethnicity, such as the one you are now reading.

One result of this process of categorization is for discrimination and prejudicial beliefs to "fulfill their own prophecy." Victims of discrimination who are lumped into the same ethnic category may have little in common except their similar treatment by the majority of a population. At times, this common experience leads to the creation of a new ethnic identity among the victims of discrimination who share common experiences as a result of prejudice and discrimination. This process of creating a new ethnic identity can be termed **ethnogenesis,** and it represents a final type of reaction to prejudice and discrimination.

The concept of ethnogenesis is often used to explain how ethnic subpopulations reveal a mix of characteristics, some involving assimilation into the dominant culture and others unique to their particular backgrounds (Greeley, 1974). We are using the term in a somewhat different way: to address the process whereby new ethnic identities are created as a response to prejudice and discrimination. The most dramatic example of this process is the fate of Arab Americans, examined in Chapter 9, who are divided by their countries of origin and religion (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism) but must endure prejudices that assume that they "are all alike" and that lead to similar experiences with discrimination. As a result of their common experiences, Arab Americans appear to be developing a new kind of ethnic identity, built around certain common traditions and around similar experiences with prejudice and discrimination by non-Arabs. To a lesser degree, Asians have also generated a certain level of common ethnic identity based on their common experiences with prejudices and discrimination, as have Native Americans. The same can be said for African Americans who, as slaves, came from diverse cultures but who, over centuries of prejudice and discrimination, have developed a unique "black" culture that unites all African Americans.

SUMMARY

Ethnic antagonism is one of the oldest and most pervasive dimensions of human social organization. To study this phenomenon, it is necessary to define terms and key concepts. The term "race" is of little importance biologically, but it is relevant sociologically. For if people perceive and believe others to be biologically distinctive and different, superficial biological traits become an important consideration in the formation of ethnicity. For our purposes, "ethnicity" refers to the history as well as the behavioral, organizational, and cultural features of people that make them distinctive and distinguishable from others. People can be distinguished on the basis of superficial biological traits, but these traits are associated with presumed behavioral, organizational, and cultural features—that is, with ethnicity.

The term "ethnic group" is commonly used, but we prefer "ethnic subpopulation." The latter term emphasizes the fact that people who are distinguished on the basis of an interrelated cluster of characteristics—biological, cultural, behavioral, and organizational—constitute a population more than a closed group. They are not all necessarily engaged in face-to-face contact, as the notion of "group" implies. To be sure, people's involvement in local groups and other structures sustains their distinctive patterns of organization, but these do not embrace the population as a whole. Ethnic subpopulations exist, instead, within a larger, more inclusive population. This point is not merely semantic; it is fundamental to an understanding of the dynamics of ethnicity.

The term "minority group" is also limited. Not all ethnic subpopulations subject to discrimination are minorities. They can constitute the majority in a community or in a nation as a whole. The underlying issue is *power*. Which groups have the power to limit the activities of other groups? More accurate terms are "*super*ordinate ethnic subpopulations" and "*sub*ordinate ethnic subpopulations."

Discrimination is the process of denying others access to valued resources. Ethnic discrimination occurs when members of a superordinate ethnic subpopulation are able to limit or deny members of a subordinate ethnic population access to valued resources—jobs, income, education, power, health care, and anything else that is valued and prized in a society. Ethnic discrimination surfaces in several different forms: genocide, or the systematic killing of members in a subordinate ethnic population; expulsion, or the exiling of all or selected members of an ethnic population; segregation, or the spatial confinement or isolation of members of an ethnic group so that they have difficulty gaining access to resources; exclusion, or the denial of rights to positions in a society that provide access to valued resources; and selective inclusion, or the confinement of members of an ethnic subpopulation to a narrow range of positions in the society. In addition to these forms of discrimination are a wide range of abusive practices against targeted ethnics. These types of discrimination gain effectiveness as discrimination becomes institutionalized. We define "institutionalized discrimination" as individual acts of discrimination that are (1) pervasive; (2) culturally supported in norms, beliefs, and values; and (3) lodged in social structures as matters of policy and practice. The more institutionalized the discrimination is, the more a subordinate ethnic subpopulation is segregated, excluded, and selectively included, while being vulnerable to genocide and expulsion. Discrimination is thus the central process underlying ethnic problems in society.

Institutionalized discrimination produces ethnic stratification. When members of a subordinate ethnic subpopulation receive only certain types and levels of valued resources, it becomes possible to establish their location on the social hierarchy of society. On the basis of this location, the distinctiveness of an ethnic group is retained, thereby making it a target of further prejudice and discrimination.

"Prejudice" refers to negative and stigmatizing beliefs, concepts, and stereotypes about people; "ethnic prejudice" is based on negative beliefs, conceptions, and stereotypes about members of a subpopulation distinguishable in their history and biological, behavioral, cultural, and organizational features. Prejudice

and discrimination are not perfectly correlated, but discrimination cannot be easily institutionalized without widespread prejudice among dominant ethnic subpopulations.

Prejudice and discrimination force their targets to respond and adapt. Assimilation, or the elimination of ethnically distinct characteristics and adoption of those of the superordinate ethnic population, is one method of adaptation. At the other extreme are rebellion and revolt against superordinate ethnic groups, with the goal being redistribution of power and, hence, changes in the patterns of discrimination. Another response to discrimination is organized protest, often arising out of or even prompting acts of rebellion, in which ethnic groups and their allies organize to change patterns of discrimination. Yet another response is withdrawal and self-segregation of the subordinate ethnic group in order to isolate itself from the discriminatory acts of others. Members of an ethnic group may choose to accept their position passively, or they may participate marginally, finding narrow niches in which they can secure resources.

This chapter presents many useful terms and distinctions that will deepen our understanding of and provide a perspective on ethnic relations in America. These terms and distinctions do not explain ethnic relations; they merely describe them. We also need to know *why* people focus on perceived ethnic differences, *why* they discriminate, *why* they hold prejudices, and *why* superordinate populations force subordinate groups to adapt in certain ways. Explaining these "why" issues is the job of theory. Within the framework of definitions and distinctions developed in this chapter, we can now move on to explore the theories that have been used to explain ethnicity, prejudice, discrimination, and other aspects of ethnic relations.

POINTS OF DEBATE

In any society where distinct ethnic subpopulations exist, the issue of ethnicity is a subject of debate and controversy. No society revealing ethnic differences has ever been able to organize itself in ways that avoid the tension and conflict accompanying ethnic identity. The United States is not an exception; indeed, American society is one of the few in history that has sought to integrate so many large and diverse ethnic subpopulations into its cultural core. The problems of ethnicity in the United States have stimulated and continue to create many points of debate. When reading the coming chapters, keep in mind the following controversial issues.

1. The "first American dilemma": How can a society that values equality and freedom engage in systematic discrimination against minority subpopulations? This question is rhetorical because the evidence is irrefutable that discrimination has occurred, and continues to occur, on a massive and long-term scale. Can the accumulated effects of such discrimination be undone?
2. The "second American dilemma": Can the values of freedom and equality be used to justify efforts to compensate the descendants of past discrimination? An affirmative answer to this question has many implications, all of which are debatable: (a) Are Americans willing to spend billions of tax dollars to create jobs, housing, and educational programs to overcome the effects of past discrimination? (b) Is private enterprise willing or able to participate on a massive scale in creating jobs for members of particular ethnic groups who have been the victims of this legacy of discrimination? (c) Are white Americans willing to give up some of their access to valued resources so that disadvantaged minority groups can increase their access, or is such action simply going to encourage accusations of "reverse discrimination"?
3. If Americans are unwilling to meet the challenges posed by the second American dilemma, what is the alternative? Conflict and violence among ethnic groups are escalating; poverty among ethnic groups is on the rise; out-of-wedlock childbearing is reaching epidemic proportions (now 63 percent among African Americans); substance abuse and other social problems among minority groups are growing; the number of crimes committed by minority group members is increasing; and innumerable problems are arising from the accumulated effects of past discrimination. This reality confronts Americans in their daily lives. What is to be done? Nothing? Build more prisons? Hire more police? Actively try to address the problems at enormous cost? What are the viable options? Such questions are ultimately part of any discussion of ethnicity in America.

KEY TERMS

abusive practices, 10
active bigots, 24
all-weather liberals, 22
assimilation, 25
discrimination, 6
environmental racism, 10
ethnic cleansing, 7
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