AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF MINORITY GROUPS IN THE UNITED STATES

The United States is a nation of groups as well as individuals. These groups vary in many ways, including their size, wealth, education, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, and language. Some groups have been part of American[1] society since colonial days, while others have formed recently.

Questions of unity and diversity are among the most pressing issues facing the United States today. Who should be considered American? How should these groups relate to one another? Should we celebrate our diversity and preserve the many cultural heritages and languages that currently exist? Should we encourage everyone to adopt Anglo American culture and strive to become more similar? Is it possible to do both?

We begin to address these questions and other related issues in Chapters 1 and 2. Our goal throughout the text is to help you develop a broader, more informed understanding of the past and present forces that have created and sustained the groups that make up the United States. We'll sustain this focus throughout this book.

1 DIVERSITY IN THE UNITED STATES

Questions and Concepts

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to do the following:

1.1 Explain the increasing racial and ethnic diversity of the United States.

1.2 Understand the concept of a minority group.

1.3 Explain the sociological perspectives that will guide this text, especially as they relate to the relationships between inequality and minority-group status.

1.4 Explain how race and gender contribute to minority-group status.

1.5 Comprehend four of the key concepts in dominant–minority relations: prejudice, discrimination, ideological racism, and institutional discrimination.

1.6 Apply a global perspective to the relationship between globalization and immigration to the United States.

Who am I? . . . Where do I fit into American society? . . . For most of my 47 years, I have struggled to find answers to these questions. I am an American of multiracial descent and culture [Native American, African American, Italian American, and Puerto Rican]. In this aspect, I am not very different from many Americans [but] I have always felt an urge to feel and live the intermingling of blood that runs through my veins. American society has a way of forcing multiracial and biracial people to choose one race over the other. I personally feel this pressure every time I have to complete an application form with instructions to check just one box for race category.

—Butch, a 47-year-old man

Actually, I don't feel comfortable being around Asians except for my family. . . I couldn't relate to . . . other Asians [because] they grew up in [wealthier neighborhoods]. I couldn't relate to the whole "I live in a mansion" [attitude]. This summer, I worked in a media company and it was kind of hard to relate to them [other Asians] because we all grew up in a different place . . . the look I would get when I say "Yeah, I'm from [a less affluent

neighborhood]" they're like, "Oh, oh" like, "That's unfortunate for your parents; I'm sorry they didn't make it."
—Rebecca, a 19-year-old Macanese-Chinese-Portuguese woman

Yeah, my people came from all over—Italy, Ireland, Poland, and others too. I don't really know when they got here or why they came and, really, it doesn't matter much to me. I mean, I'm just an American. . . . I'm from everywhere . . . I'm from here!
—Jennifer, a 25-year-old white American woman

What do Butch, Rebecca, and Jennifer have in common? How do they differ? They think about their place in American society in very different ways. All are connected to a multitude of groups and traditions but not all find this fact interesting or important. One feels alienated from the more affluent members of her group, one seeks to embrace his multiple memberships, and one dismisses the issue of ancestry as irrelevant and is comfortable and at ease being "just an American."

The United States is growing more diverse in culture, race, religion, and language. The number of Americans who identify as multiracial or who can connect themselves to diverse cultural traditions is increasing. Where will this increasing diversity lead us? Will our nation fragment? Could we dissolve into warring enclaves—the fate of more than one modern nation? Or can we find connection and commonality? Could we develop tolerance, respect, or even admiration for one another? Can we overcome the legacies of inequality established in colonial days? Can Americans embrace our nation's increasing diversity and live out our motto, E Pluribus Unum (out of many, one)?

This book raises many questions about the past, present, and future of group relationships in America. For example, what social, political, and economic forces shaped those relationships historically and how are they shaping contemporary group relations? How do racial and ethnic groups relate to each other today? What kind of society are we becoming because of immigration? What does it mean to be an American? What kind of society do we want to become and how can we move in that direction?

DIVERSITY IN THE UNITED STATES: TRENDS AND QUESTIONS

America is a nation of immigrants and groups. Today, about 13.7% of the U.S. population was born in some other nation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020a). The population of some states is more than one fifth foreign-born (e.g., California is 26% foreign-born; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020a), and some cities are more than one-third foreign-born (e.g., New York is 37% foreign-born; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020b). Since the infancy of our society, Americans have been arguing, often passionately, about inclusion and exclusion and about unity and diversity. Every member of our society is, in some sense, an immigrant or the descendant of immigrants. Even Native Americans migrated to this continent, albeit thousands of years ago. We are all from somewhere else, with roots in other parts of the world. Some Americans came here in chains;

others came on ocean liners, on planes, on busses, and even on foot. Some arrived last week, while others have had family here for centuries. Each wave of newcomers has altered our social landscape. As many have observed, our society is continually under construction and seems permanently unfinished.

Today, America is remaking itself yet again. Large numbers of immigrants are arriving from around the world, and their presence has raised questions about what it means to be an American, who should be granted U.S. citizenship, and how much diversity is best for society. How do immigrants affect America? Are they bringing new energy and revitalizing the economy? Are they draining resources such as school budgets, health care, and jobs? Both? How do they affect Black Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and other groups? Are they changing what it means to be an American? If so, how?

In 2008, Americans elected Barack Obama to become our nation's first African American president. To some, this victory suggested that the United States had finally become what people often claim it to be: a truly open, "color-blind" society where one succeeds based on merit. In 2016, Donald Trump became our country's 45th president. Some see the rise of racist and xenophobic speech and actions that emerged during the 2016 and 2020 elections as a kind of backlash—not just against Democrats or the political system, but against the diversity initiatives that expanded under the Obama administration. In 2020, Americans elected Joe Biden as president, but the start of his term was marked by an attack on the U.S. Capitol led by a coalition of racist, xenophobic, extremist groups that demonstrated some of the ugliest aspects of American history and culture.

Even as we debate the implications of immigration, other long-standing issues about belonging, fairness, and justice remain unresolved. Native Americans and Black Americans have been a part of this society since its start, but they've existed largely as outsiders—as enslaved people, servants, laborers, or even enemies—to the mainstream, dominant group. In many ways, they haven't been treated as "true Americans" or full citizens, either by law or custom. The legacies of racism and exclusion continue to affect these groups today and, as you'll see in future chapters, they and other American minority groups continue to suffer from inequality, discrimination, and marginalization.

Even a casual glance at our schools, courts, neighborhoods, churches, or corporate boardrooms—indeed, at any nook or cranny of our society—reveals pervasive patterns of inequality, injustice, and unfairness and different opportunities. So, which is the "real"[2] America: the land of acceptance and opportunity or the one of insularity and inequity?

Some of us feel intensely connected to people with similar backgrounds and identify closely with a specific heritage. Others embrace multiracial or multiethnic identities. Some people feel no particular connection with any group or homeland. Others are unsure where they fit in the social landscape. Still, elements of our identity influence our lives and beliefs. The groups to which we belong affect our understanding of many social and political issues. Group membership, including our race or ethnicity, gender, class, and sexual orientation, shape our experiences and, therefore, how we think about American society, the world, and ourselves. Additionally, group membership shapes the opportunities available to us and to others in our society.

How do we understand these contrasts and divisions? Should we celebrate our diversity or stress the need for similarity? How can we incorporate all groups while avoiding fragmentation and division? What can hold us together as a nation? The United States may be at a crossroads concerning these issues. Throughout this book, you'll have an opportunity to reexamine the fundamental questions of citizenship and inclusion in our society. This chapter reviews the basic themes to help you do that effectively.

Minority Groups: Trends and Questions

Because our group memberships shape our experiences and worldviews, they also affect the choices we make, including those in the voting booth. People in different groups may view decisions in different ways due to their divergent group histories, experiences, and current situations. Without some knowledge of the many ways someone can be an American, the debates over which direction our society should take are likely to be unmeaningful or even misunderstood.

Increasing Diversity

The choices about our society's future may feel especially urgent because the diversity of American society is increasing dramatically, largely due to high rates of immigration. Since the 1960s, the number of immigrants arriving in America each year has more than tripled and includes groups from around the world.

People's concerns about increasing diversity are compounded by other unresolved issues and grievances. For example, in Part 3, we document continuing gaps in income, poverty rates, and other measures of affluence and equality between minority and dominant groups. In many ways, the problems currently facing Black Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and other minority groups are as formidable as they were a generation (or more) ago. Given these realities, how can the United States better implement its promise of equality for all?

Let's consider the changing makeup of the United States. Figure 1.1 presents the percentage of the total U.S. population in each of the five largest racial and ethnic groups. First, we'll consider this information at face value and analyze some of its implications. Then, we'll consider (and question) the framing of this information, such as group names and why they matter.

Figure 1.1 shows the groups' actual relative sizes from 1980 through 2020 and projected relative sizes of each group through 2060. The declining percentage of non-Hispanic whites reflects the increasing diversity in the United States. As recently as 1980, more than 8 out of 10 Americans were non-Hispanic whites, but by the middle of this century, non-Hispanic white people will become a numerical minority. Several states (Texas, California, Hawaii, and New Mexico) already have "majority minority" populations, and non-Hispanic whites are only 49.9% of all children under the age of 15 (Frey, 2019).

Researchers predict that Black American and Native American populations will increase in absolute numbers but will remain similar in relative size. However, Hispanic American, Asian American, and Pacific Islander populations will grow dramatically. Asian American and Pacific

FIGURE 1.1 ■ U.S. Population by Race and Ethnicity, Selected Years
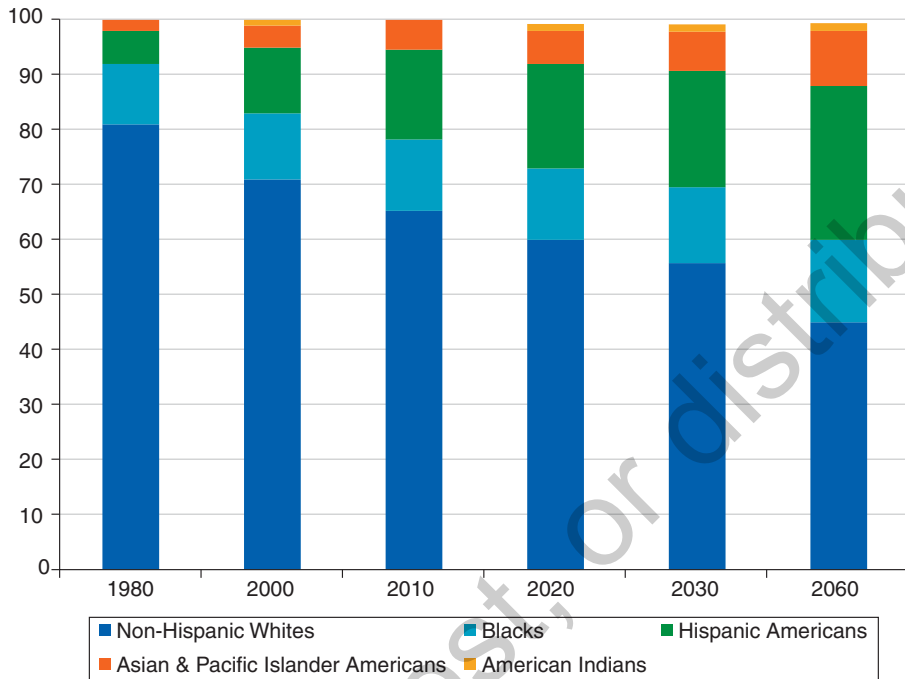
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2020b).

Note: Hispanic people may be of any race.

Islander groups together constituted only 2% of the population in 1980, but that will grow to 10% by midcentury. The most dramatic growth, however, will be among Hispanic Americans. In 2002, this group surpassed Black Americans as the largest minority group. Researchers expect it will be almost 30% of the U. S. population by 2060.

Projections about the future are educated guesses based on documented trends, but they suggest significant change. Our society will grow more diverse racially and culturally, becoming less white and less European—and more like the world as a whole. Some people see these changes as threats to traditional white, middle-class American values and lifestyles. Other people view these demographic changes as part of the ebb and flow of social life. That is, society has changed ever since it began; this is merely another phase in the great American experiment. Which viewpoints are most in line with your own and why?

What's in a Name?

The group names we used in Figure 1.1 are arbitrary, and no group has clear or definite boundaries. We use these terms because they are familiar and consistent with the labels used

in census reports, much of the sociological research literature, and other sources of information. Although such group names are convenient, this doesn't mean that they are "real" in any absolute sense or equally useful in all circumstances. These group names have some serious shortcomings. For example, they reflect social conventions whose meanings change over time and location. To underscore the social construction of racial and ethnic groups, we use group names interchangeably (e.g., Black and African Americans; Hispanic Americans and Latinos). Nevertheless, issues remain.

First, the race/ethnic labels suggest groups are homogeneous. Although it's true that people within one group may share some general, superficial physical or cultural traits (e.g., language), they also vary by social class, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and in many other ways. People within the Asian American and Pacific Islander group, for example, represent scores of different national backgrounds (Japanese, Pakistanis, Samoans, Vietnamese), and the categories of Native American or Alaska Native include people from hundreds of different tribal groups. If we consider people's other social statuses such as age and religious affiliation, that diversity becomes even more pronounced. Any two people within one group (e.g., Hispanics) might be quite different from each other in some respects and more like people from "different" racial/ethnic groups (e.g., white people).

Second, people don't necessarily use these labels when they think about their own identity. In this sense, the labels aren't "real" or important for all the people in these racial/ethnic groups. For example, many white people in the United States think of themselves as "just American." Many Hispanic Americans think of themselves in relation to ethnic origin, such as Mexican or Cuban (see Chapter 7). Or they may identify with a particular region or village in their homeland. For LGBTQIA[3] group members, sexual orientation may be more important to their identity than their race or ethnicity. Thus, the labels don't always reflect the ways people think about themselves, their families, or where they come from. The categories are statistical classifications created by researchers and census takers to help them organize information and clarify their analyses.

Third, even though the categories in Figure 1.1 are broad, several groups don't neatly fit into them. For example, where should we place Arab Americans and recent immigrants from Africa? These groups are relatively small (about one million people each), but there is no clear place for them in the current categories. Should we consider Arab Americans as "Asian," as some argue? Should recent immigrants from Africa be in the same category as African Americans? Should we create a new group for people of Middle Eastern or North African descent (MENA)? The point is that any such classification schemes will have ambiguous boundaries.

Further, we can't neatly categorize people who identify with more than one racial or ethnic group. The number of "mixed-group" Americans is relatively small today—about 3.5% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020b). However, between 2000 and 2019, the number of people who chose more than one racial or ethnic category on the U.S. census increased by 46% (from 2.4% to 3.5% of the total population; Jones & Bullock, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020a). This trend is likely to continue to increase rapidly because of the growth in interracial marriage.

To illustrate, Figure 1.2 shows dramatic increases in the percentage of "new" marriages (couples who got married in the year prior to the survey date) and all marriages that unite members of different racial or ethnic groups (Livingston & Brown, 2017). Obviously, the greater the number of mixed racial or ethnic marriages, the greater the number of mixed Americans who will be born of such partnerships. One study estimates that the percentage of Americans who identify with two or more races will more than double between 2014 (when it was 2.5%) and 2060 (when it will be 6.2%; Colby & Ortman, 2015, p. 9).

FIGURE 1.2 ■ Interracial and Interethnic Marriages in the United States, 1967–2015
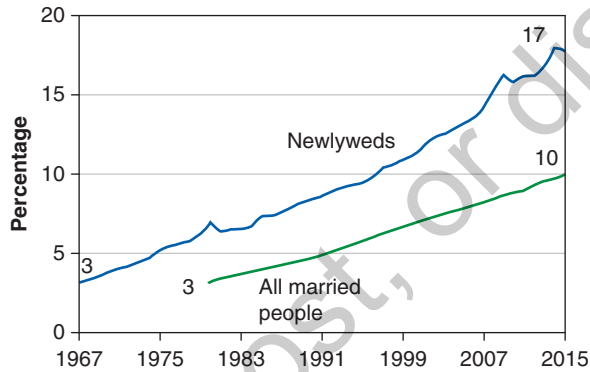
Source: Livingston and Brown (2017).

Finally, we should note that group names are **social constructions**,[4] or ideas and perceptions that people create in specific historical circumstances and that reflect particular power relationships. For example, the group "Native Americans" didn't exist before the European exploration and colonization of North America. Before then, hundreds of separate societies, each with its own language and culture, lived across North America. Native Americans thought of themselves primarily in terms of their own tribal group, not in terms of the totality of groups spread across the vast expanse of the North American continent. However, European conquerors constructed them as one group: the enemy. Today, many Americans see Native Americans as one group. This reflects their historical defeat and domination by white European colonists, which led to Native Americans' current status as a minority group in a largely white society.

Likewise (although through different processes), African, Hispanic, and Asian Americans came to be seen as separate groups as the result of their unequal interactions with white Americans. These group labels have become real because people *believe* they are real. We use these familiar group labels to help our discussion of complex topics, but they don't reflect some unchangeable truth or reality about racial or ethnic groups.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. If asked about your group membership, which of the groups in Figure 1.1 would you choose, if any? Do you feel that you belong to one group or several? How much does your group membership shape your circle of friends, your experiences, and your worldview? How important is your group membership to your self-identity?

2. Savannah is a white, 27-year-old woman who grew up in Georgia but now lives in South Dakota. She is an Episcopalian, has a degree in computer science, and makes $60,000 a year. She is married to Tom, her college sweetheart. Winona is a 40-year-old woman and a member of the Lakota nation. She was raised in South Dakota but moved to California to pursue her career as a pharmacist. She is married to Robert and they have one child. Although the census would classify Savannah and Winona as belonging to different racial/ethnic groups, they are similar in many ways. In what ways are their similarities more significant than their differences?

3. Over the past 5 to 10 years, what signs of increasing diversity have you seen in your community? What benefits and challenges have come with increasing diversity?

4. What does it mean to be American? If you asked Americans today, a popular answer might be "freedom." What does that mean to you—freedom to do what? Or freedom from what? How do you think people of other countries or generations might respond?

Questions About the Future, Sociology, and the Plan of This Book

At our country's start, the law recognized only white Anglo-Saxon Protestant men of elite classes as full citizens deserving of specific rights (e.g., voting) and opportunities (e.g., education). Most of us would agree that this definition of *American* is far too narrow. Given the changing U.S. population (Figure 1.1), you may wonder who should count as American. What does it mean to be an American? Does diversity threaten societal cohesion? Likewise, what problems might come from narrow definitions of what it means to be an American?

We've raised several complex questions in these first few pages. The answers aren't obvious or easy to come by. There is no guarantee that we, as a society, will be willing or able to resolve all the issues related to intergroup relations. However, the issues won't disappear or resolve themselves if we ignore them. We'll never make progress unless we address the issues honestly and with an accurate base of knowledge and understanding. We hope this book helps you develop thoughtful, informed positions on these issues.

Throughout our inquiry, we'll rely on sociology and other social sciences for concepts, theories, and information to gain a greater understanding of the issues. The first two chapters introduce many of the ideas that will guide our investigation. Part 2 explores how relations between the dominant group and minority groups have evolved over time. Part 3 analyzes the current situation of U.S. racial and ethnic minority groups. Finally, Part 4 explores many of the challenges facing our society (and the world) and offers conclusions from our inquiry.

WHAT IS A MINORITY GROUP?

A common vocabulary will help us understand and discuss the issues raised in this text with greater clarity. The mathematical connotation of the term **minority group** implies that minority groups are small. However, they can be quite large—even a numerical majority. For example, most sociologists consider women a minority group, although they are a numerical majority of the U.S. population. White people are a numerical minority in South Africa, accounting for less than 8% of the population (Central Intelligence Agency, 2020). However, they've been the most powerful and affluent group in that nation's history for centuries. Despite the end of **apartheid** (state-sanctioned racial inequality) in South Africa, white people keep their advantage in many ways (e.g., economically, politically). Therefore, sociologists would consider them the dominant group. Sociologists define minority status in terms of the distribution of resources and power. We use the definition of minority group developed by Wagley and Harris (1958) that emphasizes these characteristics:

1. Minority group members experience a pattern of *disadvantage or inequality*.

2. Minority group members share a *visible trait or characteristic* that differentiates them from other groups.

3. Minority group members are *aware* of their shared status with other group members.

4. Group membership is usually *determined at birth*.

5. Members tend to *form intimate relationships* (close friendships, dating partnerships, and marriages) *within the group*.

Next, we briefly explain these five characteristics. Because inequality and visibility are the most important characteristics of minority groups, we'll examine them in detail later in the chapter.

1. **Inequality**. The first and most important defining characteristic of a minority group is its *inequality* (some pattern of disadvantage). The degree of disadvantage varies over time and location and includes such slight irritants as a lack of desks for left-handed students or a policy of racial or religious exclusion at an expensive country club. (Note, however, that you might not agree that the irritant is slight if you're a left-handed student awkwardly taking notes at a right-handed desk or if you're a golf aficionado who happens to be Black or Jewish.) The most significant inequalities include exploitation, such as slavery and **genocide** (the intentional killing of a group, such as the mass execution of Jewish, Slavic, Roma, gays and lesbians, and other people under Nazi rule in Germany).

   Whatever its scope or severity, whether it affects people's ability to gain jobs, housing, wealth, political power, police protection, health care, or other valued resources, the pattern of disadvantage is the key characteristic of a minority group.

Because the group has less of what society values, some people refer to minority groups as *subordinate groups*.

The pattern of disadvantage members of the minority group experience results from the actions of another group that benefits from and tries to sustain the inequality. This advantaged group is the **dominant group**. We use the latter term most frequently because it reflects the patterns of inequality and the lack of power experienced by minority groups. Keep in mind that the inequalities we see today were established in the past, sometimes centuries ago or more. Privilege exists even when the beneficiaries are unaware of it.
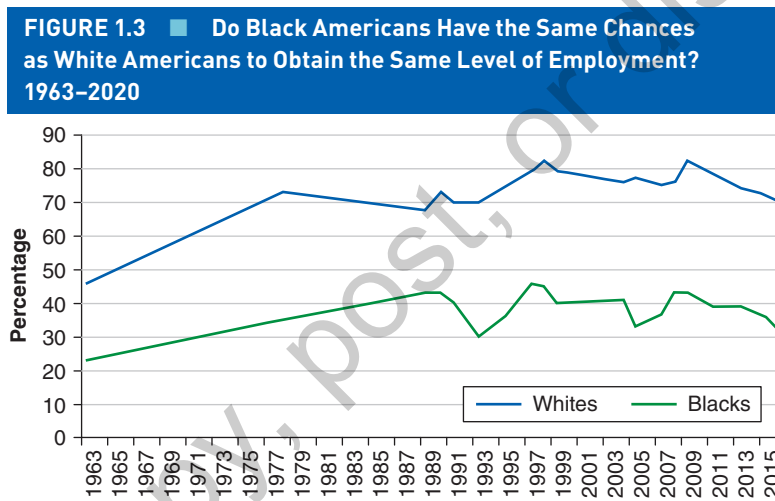
2. **Visibility.** The second defining characteristic of a minority group is some *visible trait* or characteristic that sets members apart and that the dominant group holds in low esteem. The trait can be cultural (language, religion, speech patterns, or dress styles), physical (skin color, stature, or facial features), or both. Groups defined primarily by their cultural characteristics, such as Irish Americans and Jewish Americans, are **ethnic minority groups**. Groups defined primarily by their physical characteristics, such as Black Americans and Native Americans, are **racial minority groups**. These categories overlap. So-called ethnic groups may also have what some people see as distinguishing physical characteristics (e.g., the stereotypical Irish red hair or "Jewish nose"). Racial groups may also have (or be thought to have) cultural traits that differ from the dominant group (e.g., differences in dialect, religious values, or cuisine).

These distinguishing traits help identify minority group members and facilitate separating people into different groups. Thus, such traits help to maintain the patterns of disadvantage. That is, the dominant group has (or at one time had) enough power to create the distinction between groups and thus solidify a higher position for itself. These markers of group membership are crucial. Without visible signs, it would be difficult or impossible to identify who was in which group, and the system of minority group oppression would collapse.

The characteristics marking the boundaries between groups usually aren't significant in and of themselves. They are selected for their visibility and convenience and, objectively, may be trivial and unimportant. For example, scientists now conclude that skin color and other so-called racial traits have little scientific, evolutionary, medical, or biological importance (Gannon, 2016; Yudell et al., 2016). For example, darker skin color simply reflects the body's response to sunlight. In areas with greater sunlight (closer to the equator), people's bodies produce *melanin*, a pigment which screens out the sun's ultraviolet rays and protects the skin. Skin color emerged as an important marker of group membership in our society through a complex and lengthy historical process, not because it has any inherent significance. Again, these markers of minority group membership become important because people give them significance (e.g., superiority, inferiority).

3. **Awareness.** A third characteristic of minority groups is that the members are aware of their differentiation from the dominant group and their shared disadvantage.

This shared social status can provide a sense of solidarity and serve as the basis for strong intragroup bonds. As noted earlier, minority and dominant groups can experience life differently. Thus, minority group members may have worldviews that are markedly different from those of the dominant group and from other minority groups. For example, public opinion polls often show sizeable group differences about the seriousness and extent of discrimination in America. Figure 1.3 shows persistent and sizeable gaps in the percentage of nationally representative samples of white and Black people who agree that Black and white people have equal job opportunities. Given their different group histories, experiences, and locations in the social hierarchy, it may not surprise you that Black Americans see more racial inequality than white people. Even after President Obama's election in 2008, the percentage of Black Americans who believed equal opportunity exists was about half the rate of white Americans.

FIGURE 1.3 ■ Do Black Americans Have the Same Chances as White Americans to Obtain the Same Level of Employment? 1963–2020

Source: Brenan (2020).

Both groups have become more pessimistic about equal opportunity in recent years. A 2020 national poll showed that only 64% of Americans believed Black children have the same opportunity as white children to get a good education. This is the lowest percentage on record since Gallup began asking that question in 1962, less than a decade after the Supreme Court voted to desegregate public schools in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954). Only 67% believe Black Americans have equal opportunities to get housing, which is the lowest rating on this question since 1989 (Brenan, 2020).

4. **Ascription**. A fourth characteristic of minority groups is that, generally, membership is an **ascribed status** given to them, often at birth. The traits that identify minority group membership are typically hard to change. Thus, minority group status is usually involuntary and for life.

In some cases—with "racial" minority groups, for example—this defining characteristic may seem obvious and hardly worth mentioning. Remember, however, that group labels are social constructions based on particular historical circumstances and shared cultural perceptions. Thus, group membership can be negotiable and changeable, and a person's status at birth is not necessarily constant throughout their lifetime. A member of a racial minority may be able to "pass" as a member of a different group, and a member of a religious minority may be able to change status by changing their faith.

It's important to keep in mind the qualification that minority status is *generally* a matter of birth. There are important exceptions to the general rule and a great deal more ambiguity regarding group membership than may appear at first glance. Also, for some groups—gay and lesbian Americans in particular—the notion of membership by ascription is debated. Some say homosexuality is inborn while others say it is learned.

5. **Intimate Relationships.** Finally, minority group members tend to form emotionally close bonds with people like themselves. That is, members tend to choose each other as close friends, dating partners, and legal spouses or cohabitational partners. (Members of the dominant group do this, too.)

Pervasive racial and ethnic segregation of neighborhoods, schools, and other areas of American society influence who one meets or spends time with on a regular basis. In some cases, the dominant group dictates this pattern. For example, many states outlawed interracial marriages until the U.S. Supreme Court declared laws against **miscegenation** unconstitutional in the 1967 case *Loving v. Virginia* (Bell, 1992).

The Wagley and Harris (1958) multipart definition of a minority group encompasses "traditional" minority groups such as Black Americans and Native Americans, but we can apply it to other groups. For instance, women as a group fit the first four criteria, and we can analyze their experience with many of the same concepts and ideas that guide our analysis of racial and ethnic minority groups. Similarly, we can apply this concept to Americans who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender; to Americans with disabilities; to Americans who are left-handed; and to Americans who are very old, very short, very tall, or very obese. We'll consider some of these groups in future chapters. For now, just note that you can apply ideas from this book more broadly than you might think at first. Andwe hope that you'll be able to use these insights in your life after your course ends.
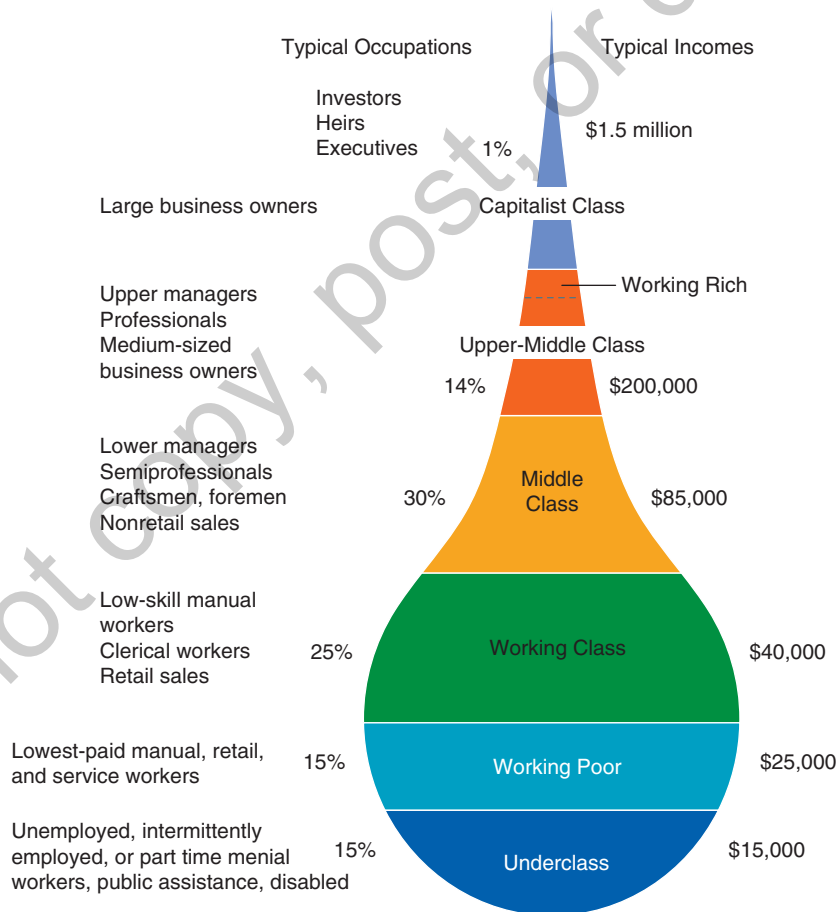
QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

5. Consider the definition of a minority group. Which parts apply to gay and lesbian Americans? Which parts, if any, apply to other groups of interest that are not defined as American minority groups, such as Christians or men? What do your answers suggest about differences between minority and majority groups?

PATTERNS OF INEQUALITY

The most important defining characteristic of minority group status is inequality. As you'll see, minority group membership affects access to jobs, education, wealth, health care, and housing. It is associated with a lower (often much lower) proportional share of goods and services and more limited opportunities for upward mobility.

Stratification is the hierarchical ranking of groups that results in the unequal distribution of goods and services in society. Every human society, except perhaps the simplest hunter–gatherer societies, is stratified to some degree. You can visualize these divisions as horizontal layers (or strata) that differ from one another by the amount of resources they command. Economic stratification results in different **social classes**; Figure 1.4 shows one view of the class system.

FIGURE 1.4 ■ Class in the United States

Typical Occupations — Typical Incomes

Investors / Heirs / Executives — 1% — $1.5 million

Large business owners — Capitalist Class

Working Rich

Upper managers / Professionals / Medium-sized business owners — Upper-Middle Class — 14% — $200,000

Lower managers / Semiprofessionals / Craftsmen, foremen / Nonretail sales — 30% — Middle Class — $85,000

Low-skill manual workers / Clerical workers / Retail sales — 25% — Working Class — $40,000

Lowest-paid manual, retail, and service workers — 15% — Working Poor — $25,000

Unemployed, intermittently employed, or part time menial workers, public assistance, disabled — 15% — Underclass — $15,000

Source: Gilbert (2011).

Many criteria (e.g., education, age, gender, power, parents' social class) may affect a person's social class position and their access to goods and services. Minority group membership is one of these criteria, and it has a powerful impact on the distribution of resources in the United States and in other societies.

The next section considers different theories about the nature and dimensions of stratification. Then, we discuss how minority group status relates to stratification.

Theoretical Perspectives

Sociologists (and other social scientists) have been concerned with stratification and inequality since the formation of sociology in the 19th century. We highlight four of the most significant thinkers in this section. An early and important contributor to our understanding of the significance of social inequality was Karl Marx, the noted social philosopher and revolutionary. Half a century later, sociologist Max Weber (pronounced *Mahks Vay-ber*), a central figure in the development of sociology, critiqued and elaborated on Marx's view of inequality. Gerhard Lenski was a modern sociologist whose ideas about the influence of economic and technological development on social stratification are relevant for comparing societies and understanding the evolution of intergroup relations. Finally, we consider another modern sociologist, Patricia Hill Collins, who argues for an intersectional approach to inequality, which views inequalities based on class, race or ethnicity, and gender (and other social statuses) as a single, interlocking system of inequality.
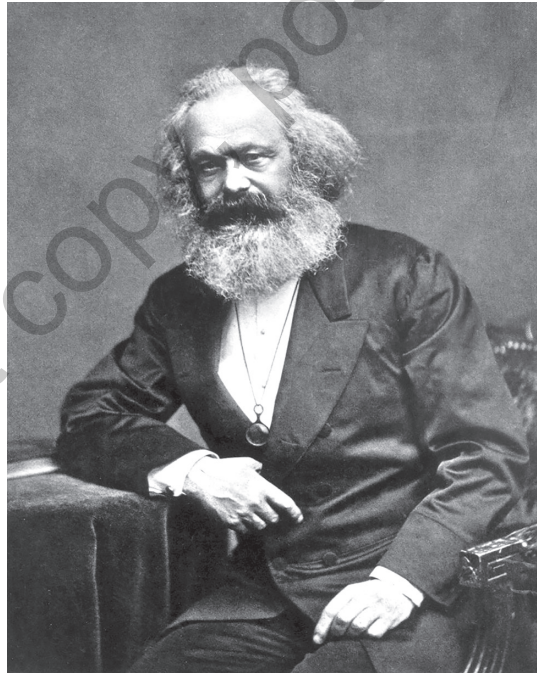
Karl Marx (1818–1883) contributed to the founding of sociology and was one of the authors of the *Communist Manifesto*.

Wikimedia

Karl Marx

Although best known as the father of modern communism, Karl Marx was also the primary architect of a political, economic, and social philosophy that has played a significant role in world affairs for more than 170 years. Marxism is a complex theory of history and social change in which inequality is a central concern.

Marx argued that the most important source of inequality in society was the system of economic production. He focused on the **means of production**, or the materials, tools, resources, and social relationships by which a society produces and distributes goods and services. In an agricultural society, the means of production include land, draft animals, and plows. In an industrial society, the means of production include factories, commercial enterprises, banks, and transportation systems, such as railroads.

In Marx's view, all societies include social classes that struggle over the means of production. In industrial societies, the rise of capitalism created a new class system with two main classes. The **bourgeoisie**, or capitalist class, owns or controls the means of production. It benefits from that arrangement and exploits and oppresses the **proletariat** or working class. Marx called them "two great hostile camps" (Marx & Engels, 1967, p. 1). He believed that class conflict was inevitable and that, ultimately, the working class would revolt against the bourgeoisie and create a society without exploitation, coercion, or inequality. That is, it would create a classless society.

Marx is consistently named one most influential thinkers of all time, yet scholars and others have extensively critiqued or modified his ideas. Nevertheless, modern social science owes a great deal to his insights about inequality, class struggle, social conflict, and group relations, as you'll see in upcoming chapters.

Max Weber (1864–1920) was a major figure in the establishment of sociology. He took issue with many of Marx's ideas in publications such as *The Protestant Ethic* and *The Spirit of Capitalism.*

akg-images/Newscom

Max Weber

One of Marx's major critics was Max Weber, a German sociologist who did most of his work around the turn of the 20th century. Weber saw Marx's view of inequality as too narrow. Weber argued that inequality included dimensions other than one's relationship to the means of production. Weber expanded on Marx's view of inequality by identifying three separate components of stratification.

First, economic inequality is based on ownership or control of wealth (such as property) and income (money from employment, interest on bank holdings, or other payments). This is like Marx's concept of class, and Weber used the term *class* for this specific form of inequality.

A second dimension of stratification involves differences in **prestige**, or the amount of honor, esteem, or respect that people give us. Different factors influence prestige, including one's class position, family lineage, athletic ability, and physical appearance. Group membership also affects prestige. People typically give less prestige to minority group members than dominant group members.

The third component of stratification is **power**, or the ability to influence others, impact the decision-making process of society, and pursue and protect one's self-interest and achieve one's goals. One source of power is a person's standing in politically active organizations that lobby state and federal legislatures, such as labor unions or interest groups. Some politically active groups have access to great wealth and can use it to promote their causes. Other groups may rely more on their size and ability to mobilize large demonstrations to achieve their goals. Political organizations and the people they represent vary in the power that they can mobilize to control political decision making.

Typically, these three dimensions of stratification go together: Wealthy, prestigious classes are generally more powerful (more likely to achieve their goals or protect their self-interest) than low-income groups or groups with little prestige. However, power is a separate dimension: Even very impoverished groups have sometimes found ways to express their concerns and pursue their goals.

Weber's concept of stratification offers more complexity than Marx's. For example, Weber suggests that instead of simply being bourgeois or proletariat, people can be elite in some ways but not in others. An aristocratic family that has fallen on hard financial times might belong to the elite in terms of family lineage and prestige but not in terms of wealth. Or a major figure in the illegal drug trade could enjoy substantial wealth but be held in low esteem.

Gerhard Lenski

Gerhard Lenski was a modern sociologist who expanded on Weber's ideas by analyzing stratification in the context of societal evolution, or the **level of development** of a society (Nolan & Lenski, 2004). Lenski argues that the degree of inequality or the criteria affecting a group's position is closely related to **subsistence technology**, or how the society meets people's basic needs for food, water, shelter, and so on. For example, preindustrial agricultural societies rely on human and animal labor to generate the food necessary to sustain life. Inequality in these types of societies centers on control of land and labor because they are the most important means of production for that level of development.

In modern industrial societies, land ownership isn't as crucial as control of financial, manufacturing, and commercial enterprises. Because the control of capital is more important than control of land for those societies, the level of development and the nature of inequality differ.

The U.S. and other more-industrialized societies have entered another stage of development, so they are often referred to as **postindustrial societies**. In postindustrial societies, developments in new technology, computer-related fields, information processing, and scientific research create economic growth. Additionally, one's economic success is closely related to

formal education, specialized knowledge, and familiarity with new technologies (Chirot, 1994, p. 88; see also Bell, 1973).

These changes in subsistence technology, from agriculture to industrialization to an information-based society, alter the stratification system. As the sources of wealth, success, and power change, so do the relationships between minority and dominant groups. For example, the shift to an information-based, high-tech, postindustrial society means that the advantages conferred by higher levels of education are magnified. Groups that have less access to schooling will likely rank low on all dimensions of stratification.

Patricia Hill Collins

Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (2000) calls for an approach to the study of inequality and group relations that recognizes the multiplicity of systems of inequality and privilege in society. Some stratification systems are based on social class, while others categorize and rank people by their gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, disability, and other criteria. Most people have complex social statuses, some more privileged and some less privileged. For example, consider a heterosexual, college-educated man with a professional job. These social statuses rank high in the United States. But what if he is Latino or bisexual? These latter statuses put him at a disadvantage in a society where whiteness and heterosexuality are more valued.

Collins stresses **intersectionality**, a view that acknowledges that everyone has multiple group memberships and that these crisscross or intersect to create different experiences for people with varying combinations of statuses. For example, the realities faced by gay, white-collar, Mexican American men are different from those faced by heterosexual, blue-collar Puerto Rican women, although both would be counted as *Hispanic* in Figure 1.1. From this perspective, you can see that no singular, uniform Hispanic American (or African American or Asian American) experience exists. Thus, we need to recognize how gender, class, sexual orientation, and other factors intersect with and reinforce one another.

Collins and other intersectional theorists critique the tendency to see inequality in terms of separate simple dichotomous systems, such as those based on class (blue collar vs. white collar), race (Black vs. white), or gender (men vs. women). An intersectional approach involves seeing how these statuses link together to form a "matrix of

Patricia Hill Collins is a major contributor to the ongoing attempts by American social scientists to analyze inequality and group relations.

Patricia Hill Collins

domination." For example, white Americans aren't a homogenous dominant group. Some group members, such as women or poor white people, are privileged in terms of their race (white) but subordinate in terms of their gender (women) or class (poor). Collins's ideas help us see that who is the oppressed and who is the oppressor changes across social contexts, and people can occupy privileged and subordinated statuses simultaneously.

The separate systems of domination and subordination overlap and reinforce one another. This matrix of domination shapes people's opportunities, experiences, and perceptions. As you'll see in later chapters, race and gender interact with each other and create especially disadvantaged positions for people who rank lower on both dimensions simultaneously (e.g., see Chapter 5, Figure 5.6, which shows that Black women consistently earn less income than either Black men or white women).

Likewise, stereotypes and other elements of prejudice are gendered. For example, some stereotypical traits might be applied to all Black Americans (e.g., "laziness"), but others are applied only to women (e.g., "uppity") or men (e.g., "thug").

An intersectional approach stresses the multiplicity of systems of inequality and analyzes the connections between them. It sees groups as complex, not uniform. In this book, we'll use an intersectional lens to explore how class and gender influence racial and ethnic minority group experiences. However, you can apply an intersectional approach to other dimensions of power and inequality, including disability, sexual orientation, and religion.

Minority Group Status and Stratification

The theoretical perspectives we've just reviewed raise three important points about the connections between minority group status and stratification. First, minority group status affects access to wealth and income, prestige, and power. In the United States, minority group status has been and continues to be one of the most important and powerful determinants of one's **life chances**, or opportunities and access to resources such as nutritious food, health care, education, and a job that provides a good income. We explore these complex patterns of inequality in Part 3, but observation of American society reveals that minority groups control proportionately fewer resources and that minority group status and stratification are complexly intertwined. Consider, for example, the life chances of two 18-year-olds. One is white, comes from a wealthy family, was educated in excellent private schools, traveled the world on holiday, and has had the opportunity to network with members of the American elite. The other is a recent immigrant who fled the war in Syria. This one is smart, hardworking, and proficient in English but has a low overall level of education, which makes it hard to find work that pays a living wage. Which person has had and will have greater life chances?

Second, although social class and minority group status are correlated, they are different dimensions of inequality, and they vary independently. The degree to which one status affects the other varies by group and across time. Some groups, such as Irish or Italian Americans, have experienced considerable upward **social mobility** (or movement) within the class stratification system although they faced considerable discrimination in the past. Furthermore, as stressed by the intersectional approach, minority groups are internally differentiated by

systems of inequality based on class, status, or power. Some members of a minority group can be successful economically, wield great political power, or enjoy high prestige while the majority of group members experience poverty and powerlessness. Likewise, members of the same social class vary by ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, and other social statuses.

Third, the struggle to control valued goods and services creates dominant–minority group relationships. Minority group structures (such as slavery) emerge so that the dominant group can control commodities such as land or labor, maintain its position at the top of the stratification system, or eliminate perceived threats to its well-being. Struggles over property, wealth, prestige, and power lie at the heart of every dominant–minority relationship. Marx believed that the ruling class shaped all aspects of society to sustain the economic system that underlies its privileged position. The treatment of minority groups throughout American history provides a good deal of evidence to support Marx's point, as you'll see in upcoming chapters.

VISIBLE DISTINGUISHING TRAITS: RACE AND GENDER

In this section, we focus on the second defining characteristic of minority groups: the visible traits that represent membership. The boundaries between dominant and minority groups have been established along a wide variety of lines, including religion, language, skin color, and sexuality. Let's consider two of the more visible markers of group membership: race and gender.

Race

Historically, race has been widely misunderstood, but the false ideas and exaggerated importance people have attached to race haven't merely been errors of logic that are subject to debate. At various times and places, ideas about race have resulted in some of the greatest tragedies in human history: immense exploitation and mistreatment, such as slavery and genocide. Myths about race continue today, though in different forms. To decrease the likelihood of further tragedies, it's important to cultivate accurate understandings about race.

Thanks to advances in genetics, biology, and physical anthropology, we know more about what race is and, more important, what race isn't. We can't address everything in these first few pages, but we can establish a basic framework and use the latest scientific research to dispel some of the myths.

Race and Human Evolution

Humans first appeared in East Africa more than 160,000 years ago. Our ancient ancestors were hunters and gatherers who slowly wandered away from their ancestral region in search of food and other resources. Over the millennia, our ancestors traveled across the entire globe, first to what is now the Middle East and then to Asia, Europe, Australia, and North and South America (see Figure 1.5; Gugliotta, 2008; Hirst, 2017).

FIGURE 1.5 ■ The Migration of Anatomically Modern Humans
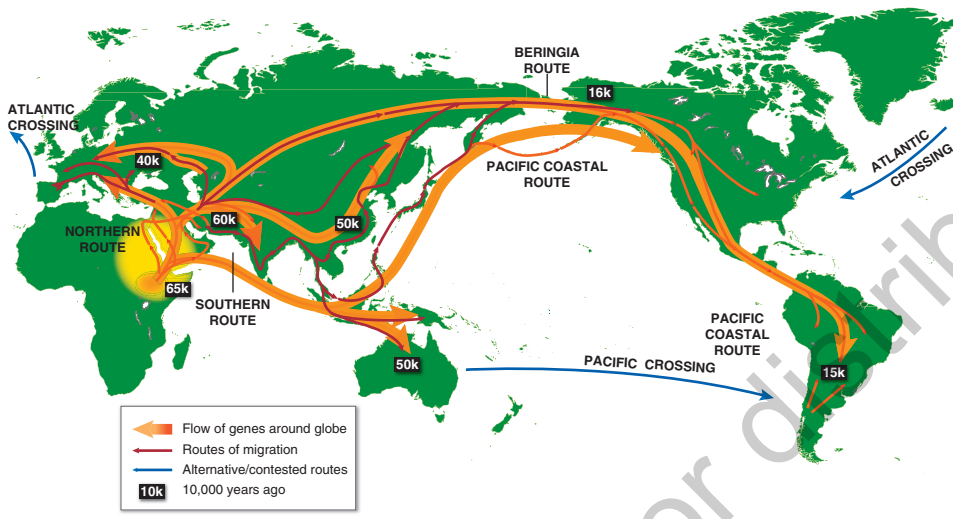
Source: Gugliotta (2008)

"Racial" differences evolved during this period of dispersion, as our ancestors adapted to different environments and ecological conditions. For example, consider skin color, the most visible "racial" characteristic. As noted earlier, skin color derives from a pigment called melanin. In areas with intense sunlight, at or near the equator, melanin screens out the sun's ultraviolet rays, helping to prevent sunburn and, more significantly, skin cancer. Thus, people from equatorial locations produce higher levels of melanin and have darker skin than people who live farther away from the equator (Jablonski & Chaplin, 2010). This almost certainly means that the first humans were dark skinned and that lighter skin colors are the more recent adaptation reflecting migration away from the equator (see Figure 1.6).

The lower concentration of melanin in people adapted to areas with less intense sunlight may also be a biological adaptation to a particular ecology. Lighter skin maximizes vitamin D synthesis, which is important for the absorption of calcium and protection against health problems such as rickets. That is, the skin color of any group reflects the melanin in their skin that helps them balance the need for vitamin D against the need to protect their skin from ultraviolet rays (Jablonski & Chaplin, 2010).

The period of dispersion and differentiation, depicted in Figure 1.5, ended about 10,000 years ago, when some of our hunting and gathering ancestors developed a new subsistence technology and established permanent agricultural villages. Over the centuries, some settlements grew into larger societies, kingdoms, and empires that conquered and absorbed neighboring societies, some of which differed culturally, linguistically, and racially from each other. The great agricultural empires of the past—Roman, Egyptian, Chinese, Aztec—united different

FIGURE 1.6 ■ Skin Color Variation by Latitude

From lightest . . .

. . . to darkest skin

no data
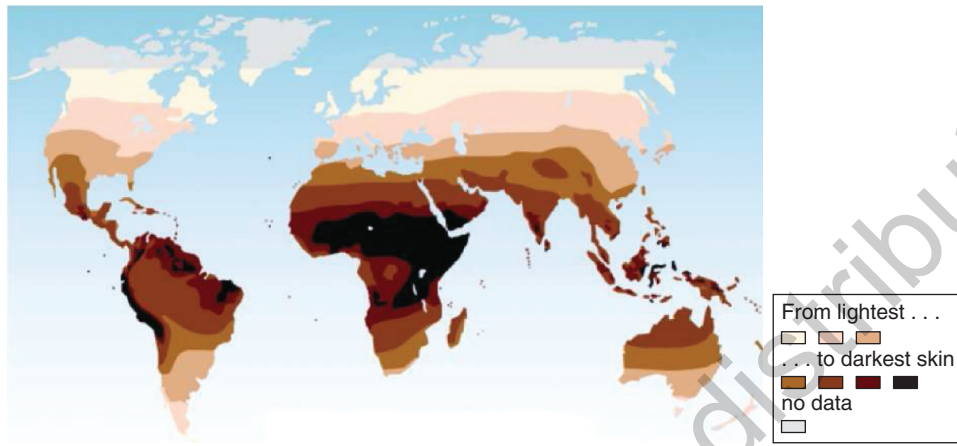
Source: Bournay (2009).

peoples, reversed the process of dispersion and differentiation, and began a phase of consolidation and merging of human cultures and genes. Over the next 10,000 years following the first settlements, human genes were intermixed and spread around the world, eliminating any "pure" races (if such ever existed).

The differentiation created during the period of global dispersion was swamped by consolidation, a process that was greatly accelerated starting about 500 years ago when European nations began to explore and colonize much of the rest of the world (e.g., India, Africa). This consolidation of groups continues today. For example, we can see it with the increasing numbers of Americans who identify as multiracial. We see similar patterns across the world and throughout recent history.

Race and Western Traditions

Europeans had been long aware of racial variation and, aided by breakthroughs in ship design and navigation, the nations of Western Europe began regularly traveling to Africa, Asia, and eventually North and South America in the 1400s. The contact with the peoples of other continents resulted in greater awareness and curiosity about observable physical differences such as skin color.

European travel required tremendous time and resources. The goal wasn't exploration for the sake of exploration, but to lay claim to valued resources (such as gold) that existed elsewhere. In the process, European nations such as England, France, Spain, and Russia conquered, colonized, and sometimes destroyed the peoples and cultures they encountered. This political and military domination (e.g., English colonization of India, French colonization of West and North Africa) required an *ideology* (belief system) to support it. From the beginning, Europeans linked physical variation with judgments about the relative merits of other races: People from

conquering nations thought they were racially and culturally superior to the nations and peoples they conquered.

Since then, other countries have justified military conquest, genocide, exploitation, and slavery with similar racist and xenophobic thinking. But the toxic form of racism that bloomed during the expansion of European power continues to haunt the world today. It was the basis for the concept of race that took root in the United States.
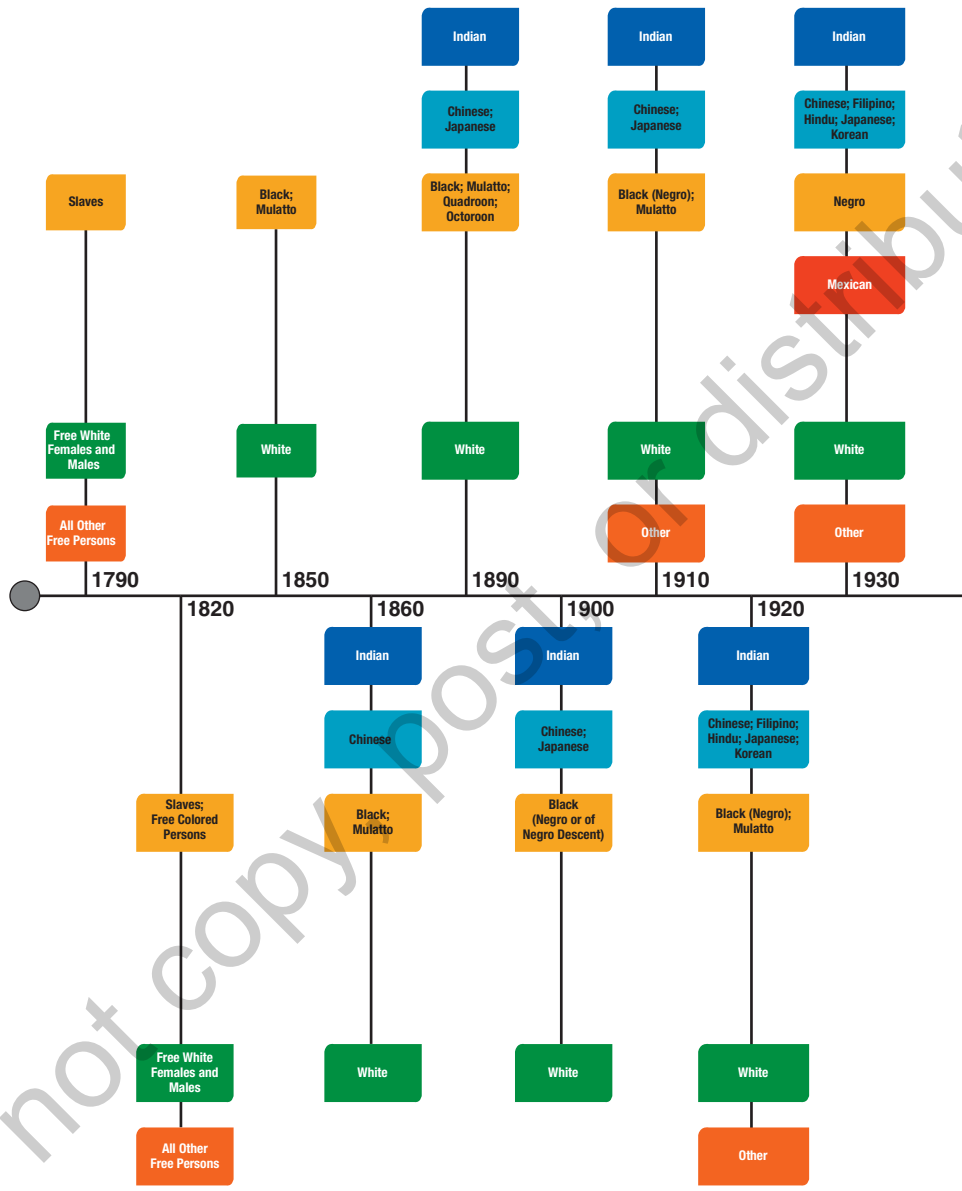
Race and Biology

Europeans primarily used race to denigrate, reject, and exclude people they perceived as non-white. However, as the tools of modern science developed, some people tried to apply the principles of scientific research to the concept of race. These investigations focused on constructing typologies or taxonomies to classify every person of every race into a category. Some typologies were quite elaborate, with numerous races and subraces. For example, the "Caucasian" race was often subdivided into Nordics (blond, fair-skinned Northern Europeans), Mediterraneans (dark-haired Southern Europeans), and Alpines (people between those categories, with qualities from both).

One major limitation of these classification systems is that the dividing lines between the so-called racial groups are arbitrary. There is no clear, definite point where, for example, "Black" skin color stops and "white" skin color begins. The characteristics used to define race blend imperceptibly into one another. Additionally, one racial trait (skin color) can appear with others (e.g., hair texture) in an infinite variety of ways. A given individual might have a skin color that people associate with one race, the hair texture of a second, the nasal shape of a third, and so forth.
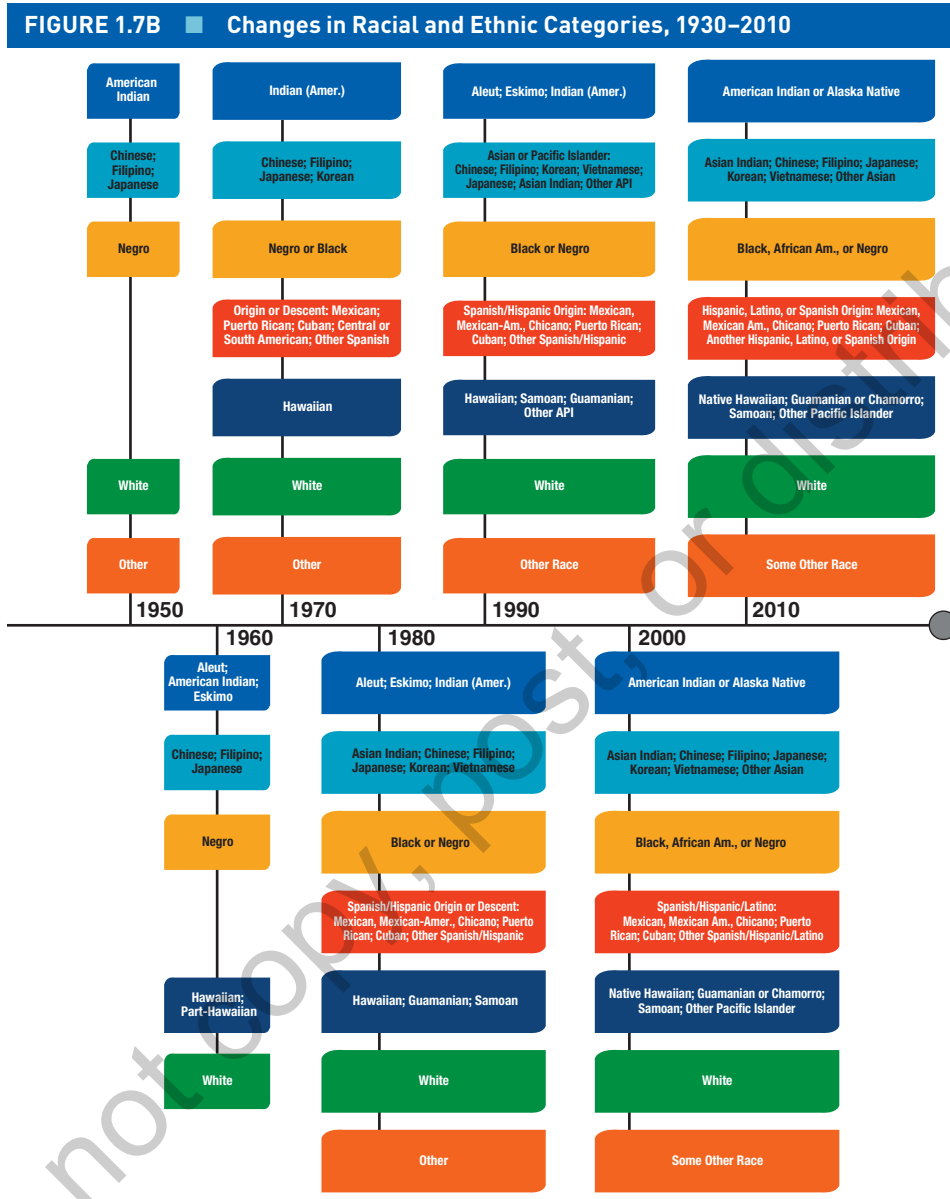
Although people vary in their physical appearance, these differences don't sort themselves out in ways that enable us to divide people into precise groups like species of animals. The differences between the so-called human races aren't at all like the differences between elephants and butterflies. The ambiguous and continuous nature of "racial" characteristics makes it impossible to establish categories that have clear, nonarbitrary boundaries. Even the most elaborate racial typologies can't address the fact that many individuals fit into more than one category while others don't fit into any of them. So, who gets to decide how many groups exist and what racial group people belong to? We'll address that question in future chapters.

Over the past several decades, advances in genetic research have provided new insights into race that negate the validity of such racial typologies and the racial myths associated with them. One significant finding is that genetic variation *within* the traditional racial groups is greater than the variation *between* those groups (American Sociological Association, 2003; Gannon, 2016). That is, any two randomly selected members of the "Black" race will probably vary genetically from each other *at least* as much as they do from a randomly selected member of the "white" race. This finding refutes traditional, nonscientific ideas that racial categories accurately reflect groups of homogeneous people. In other words, the traditional American perception of race as based primarily on skin color has no scientific validity.

FIGURE 1.7A ■ Changes in Racial and Ethnic Categories, 1790–1930

Source: U.S. Census data

FIGURE 1.7B ■ Changes in Racial and Ethnic Categories, 1930–2010

1950

- American Indian
- Chinese; Filipino; Japanese
- Negro
- White
- Other

1960

- Aleut; American Indian; Eskimo
- Chinese; Filipino; Japanese
- Negro
- Hawaiian; Part-Hawaiian
- White

1970

- Indian (Amer.)
- Chinese; Filipino; Japanese; Korean
- Negro or Black
- Origin or Descent: Mexican; Puerto Rican; Cuban; Central or South American; Other Spanish
- Hawaiian
- White
- Other

1980

- Aleut; Eskimo; Indian (Amer.)
- Asian Indian; Chinese; Filipino; Japanese; Korean; Vietnamese
- Black or Negro
- Spanish/Hispanic Origin or Descent: Mexican, Mexican-Amer., Chicano; Puerto Rican; Cuban; Other Spanish/Hispanic
- Hawaiian; Guamanian; Samoan
- White
- Other

1990

- Aleut; Eskimo; Indian (Amer.)
- Asian or Pacific Islander: Chinese; Filipino; Korean; Vietnamese; Japanese; Asian Indian; Other API
- Black or Negro
- Spanish/Hispanic Origin: Mexican, Mexican-Am., Chicano; Puerto Rican; Cuban; Other Spanish/Hispanic
- Hawaiian; Samoan; Guamanian; Other API
- White
- Other Race

2000

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian Indian; Chinese; Filipino; Japanese; Korean; Vietnamese; Other Asian
- Black, African Am., or Negro
- Spanish/Hispanic/Latino: Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano; Puerto Rican; Cuban; Other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino
- Native Hawaiian; Guamanian or Chamorro; Samoan; Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Some Other Race

2010

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian Indian; Chinese; Filipino; Japanese; Korean; Vietnamese; Other Asian
- Black, African Am., or Negro
- Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin: Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano; Puerto Rican; Cuban; Another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin
- Native Hawaiian; Guamanian or Chamorro; Samoan; Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Some Other Race

Source: U.S. Census data

The Social Construction of Race

Sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois (who you'll read about in Chapter 5) wrote that the "problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line" (1903). He argues that our nation's

history of slavery and the resulting discrimination and inequalities were critical to how U.S. race relations have evolved and, by extension, to how they affect society today.

You can begin to understand the social construction of this "color line" when you examine the U.S. Census race/ethnicity categories over time (see Figures 1.7a and 1.7b). The U.S. Constitution (Section 2, Article 1) requires a census (or population count) every decade (Blank et al., 2004, p. 206). A state's population influences its political representation in the U.S. House of Representatives, its taxation, and the federal resources it receives (Anderson & Fienberg, 1999).

The census also gathers important demographic data about household members such as their race, age, gender, occupation, level of education, marital status, and whether they own their residence. The first census, in 1790, used only three racial categories. (If you consider gender, four subcategories exist; if you include age, there are five categories.) These categories reflect the de facto color line (and sex/age lines) operating in U.S. society at that time:

- Free whites (males under 16 years old, males over 16 years old, females)

- All other free persons (e.g., Native Americans who paid taxes and free blacks)

- Enslaved people

Although southern states fought to define enslaved people as property in all other matters (e.g., see *Missouri v. Celia* in Chapter 4), they argued the opposite about census counts because states with more people would get more political power and resources. Such an arrangement would advantage slave-holding states and, presumably, give them a reason to enslave more people (Blank et al., 2004). Northern and southern states made a compromise to count enslaved people as three fifths of a person to distribute power more equitably, writing that "direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States. . . by adding to the whole Number of free Persons excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons" (Blank et al., 2004, p. 206).

In addition to telling us about the population, census categories also tell us how people think about race at any given time. For example, the first census taken after the Civil War ended used these categories: White, Black, Mulatto, and Indian. (The category of "Mulatto" applied to people with unspecified "mixed" racial heritage.) By 1890, the categories changed, again, to

- White

- Black (a person defined as more than three-fourths Black)

- Mulatto (a person classified as three-eighths to five-eighths Black)

- Quadroon (*quad* meaning *four*, or one-fourth Black)

- Octoroons (*octo* meaning *eight*; that is, people defined as one-eighth or as having any other amount of "Black blood")

- Indian

- Chinese

- Japanese

The addition of Chinese and Japanese categories reflects Asian immigration to the United States. The subcategories of *quadroon* and *octoroon* were an attempt to measure race in more detail, but still along a Black–white dichotomy (Blank et al., 2004), and reflect concerns about the impact of newly freed enslaved people on U.S. society (Hochschild & Powell, 2008). Specifically, lawmakers sought "to ascertain and exhibit the physical effects upon offspring resulting from the amalgamation of human species" and see if "the mulattoes, quadroons, and octoroons are disappearing and the race becoming more purely Negro" (Hochschild & Powell, 2008). While census takers were advised to "be particularly careful to distinguish between blacks, mulattoes, quadroons, and octoroons," they were not told how to determine those specific fractions of "black blood" (Hochschild & Powell, 2008).

Identifying the amount of "Blackness" was more complicated than it sounded, and the census didn't use those categories again. However, southern states continued efforts to do so by introducing the "one-drop rule." Under this law, a person with any trace of Black ancestry, even "one drop" of African blood, was defined as Black and subject to the limitations of extreme racial inequality. Thus, it rigidly solidified the Black–white color line in law and in custom.

The racial categories for Black Americans and other groups continued to change over the years—most notably for Black Americans (see Figures 1.7a and 1.7b). The Census Bureau continues to add ethnic categories as new immigrants come to the United States. For now, ethnic categories fall under one of these "racial" categories: white, Black/African American, Native American/Alaskan Native, Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean), Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (e.g., Samoan, Chamorro), and Other. The Census Bureau notes that people of Hispanic origin may be of any race. Therefore, it asks people of Hispanic origin to identify their place of origin, such as Cuba, Puerto Rico, or Mexico.
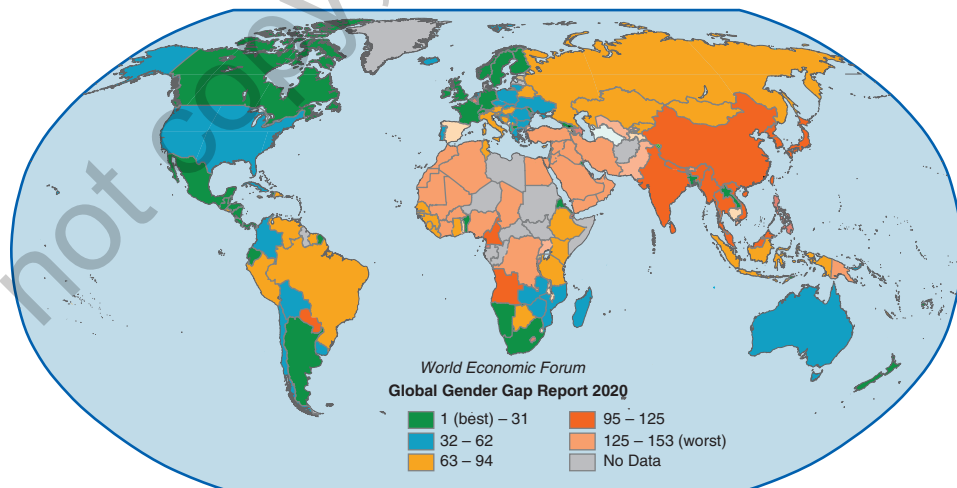
The census has changed in other ways, too. In 1960, the Census Bureau mailed its form to urban residences and, for the first time, respondents could choose their racial identity. (In prior decades, the census taker determined each person's race. This change was important for giving people agency to self-identify their race, but it may also have produced more accurate information. That is, given prejudice and discrimination against nonwhites, people may have been more likely to choose *white* when the census taker was nearby.) The first census to ask about Hispanic origin happened in 1980. The 2000 census was the first to allow people to identify as multiracial by selecting more than one category (Lowenthall, 2014). For example, someone could identify as white *and* Cuban.

Yet even with these changes, the category of "white" has remained remarkably consistent over time (see Figures 1.7a and 1.7b). Nor has it included gradations of "whiteness"; that is, there are no subcategories of "whiteness" as there were of "blackness" in 1890, for example (Blank et al., 2004). Thus, we might consider the U.S. construction of race as involving a white–nonwhite color line (i.e., white is a dominant, nonchanging category) that reflects assumptions of Black inferiority made at the heart of U.S. slavery and Jim Crow segregation.

Despite its scientific limits, the idea of race continues to shape intergroup relations in America and globally. Race, along with gender, is one of the first things people notice about one another. Because race is still a significant way of differentiating people, it remains socially important. In addition to discrimination by out-group members, ideas about race can also shape relations *within* a perceived racial group. For example, people within groups and outside of them may see lighter-skinned Black Americans as superior to darker-skinned Black Americans; thus, they may treat lighter-skinned people better. Walker (1983) named this *colorism*. Such discrimination reflects the dominant racial hierarchy that prefers lighter skin tone and presumed European facial features and body types (Harris, 2008, p. 54). Although this is an important area of study, we (like other researchers) focus on broadly defined racial groups that affect all group members (see Blank et al., 2004, p. 29).

So, how does the idea of race remain relevant? Because of the way they developed, Western concepts of race have social and biological dimensions. Sociologists consider race a social construction whose meaning has been created and sustained not by science but by historical, social, economic, and political processes (see Omi & Winant, 1986; Smedley, 2007). For example, in Chapter 4, we'll analyze the role of race in the creation of American slavery and you'll see that the physical differences between Black and white people became important *as a result* of that system of inequality. The elites of colonial society needed to justify their unequal treatment of Africans and seized on the visible difference in skin color, elevated it to a matter of supreme importance, and used it to justify the enslavement of Black people. That is, the importance of race was socially constructed as the result of a particular historical conflict, and it remains important not because of objective realities, but because of the widespread, shared social perception that it is important.

FIGURE 1.8 ■ Gender Inequality Worldwide

World Economic Forum
Global Gender Gap Report 2020

■ 1 (best) – 31	■ 95 – 125
■ 32 – 62	■ 125 – 153 (worst)
■ 63 – 94	■ No Data

Source: World Economic Foundation (2020).

Gender

You've seen that groups can be internally differentiated by social class and other factors (e.g., sexual orientation). Gender is another source of differentiation. Like race, gender has visible and socially meaningful components that make it convenient for categorizing people and organizing society. Historically, people have used visible biological characteristics such as genitalia to assign people into two sexes, female or male. (Some scholars argue that almost 2% of the U.S. population are intersex, that is, they have biological characteristics from more than one sex category; see Fausto-Sterling, 1993.)

People in the United States primarily recognize two gender statuses: boy/man and girl/woman. Babies are assigned a sex and a gender. For example, when a fetal ultrasound for sex shows a penis, people declare, "It's a boy!" As you'll learn, gender is also a social construct. These ideas about what is masculine or feminine influence **gender norms**, or societal expectations about proper behavior, attitudes, and personality traits.

Gender norms vary across time and from one society to another, but sociologists and other social scientists have documented the close relationship between gender and inequality. Typically, men (as a group) have more property, prestige, and power than women. Figure 1.8 provides some perspective on the global variation in gender inequality. The map shows the Gender Gap Index, a statistic that measures the amount of inequality between women and men based on variables such as education, labor market participation, reproductive health (e.g., maternal mortality rate), and political representation. As you can see, gender equality is generally highest in the more industrialized nations of North America and Western Europe and lowest in the less developed, more agricultural nations of Africa (e.g., Niger, Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Mauritania, Benin) and the Middle East (e.g., Yemen, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Iran).

Although Western European and North American societies rank relatively high on gender equality, gender discrimination continues to be a major issue in many of them. For example, a consistent—and large—gender income gap persists, and women are decidedly underrepresented in the most lucrative and powerful occupations (see Chapter 4, Figure 4.4). Although many societies have made progress, gender inequality appears likely to continue for generations.

Part of the problem is that all societies, including Western European and North American ones, have strong histories of **patriarchy**, or systems of dominance by men. As with racial and class stratification, dominant groups have greater resources. In patriarchal societies, men (as a group) have more control over the economy and more access to leadership roles in business, politics, education, and other institutions. Parallel to forms of racism that sought to justify and maintain racial inequality, **sexism** is an ideology that justifies and maintains gender inequality. For example, people in some societies view women as "delicate," "too emotional," and physically weak for the demands of "manly" occupations. (In the United States and other societies, these ideas about gender were also racialized, applying only to white women. The same men who placed white women "on a pedestal" didn't hesitate to send enslaved women into the fields to perform the most difficult, physically demanding tasks.)

Even in the most progressive societies, women possess many characteristics of a minority group, especially a pattern of disadvantage based on group membership marked by visible

characteristics. Thus, we consider women to be a distinct minority group and we'll examine gender throughout the book. In keeping with our intersectional approach, we'll address women's and men's experiences *within* each racial or ethnic minority group, as well. As stressed in the intersectional approach, the experience of racial or ethnic minority group membership varies by gender (and other social statuses such as age and class). Likewise, the way gender is experienced isn't the same for every racial or ethnic (or other) group. Therefore, some Black women may share common interests and experiences with white women and different interests and experiences compared to Black American men. In other cases, those constellations of interests and experiences would vary. Those in power generally write about history from their own standpoint—ignoring, forgetting, or trivializing minority group experiences. For instance, enslavers wrote much of the history of slavery. Laws against education kept enslaved people illiterate, leaving few mechanisms for recording their thoughts or experiences. A more accurate picture of slavery has emerged only since the mid–20th century, when scholars started to reconstruct the experiences of enslaved Africans from nonwritten documentation (such as oral traditions, including folklore and songs) and from physical artifacts (such as quilts, pottery, and religious objects; e.g., see Fennell, 2013; Levine, 1977).

Despite these advances, the experiences of women minorities are much less well known and documented than men's. One important trend in contemporary scholarship is to correct this skewed focus by systematically incorporating gender as a vital factor for understanding minority group experiences (Espiritu, 1996).

The Social Construction of Gender

Social scientists see race as a social construction created under certain historical circumstances (e.g., slavery) when it was needed to justify the unequal treatment of nonwhite groups. What about gender? Have socially created ideas enabled and rationalized men's higher status and their easier access to power, prestige, and property? Figure 1.8 shows that every nation has some degree of gender inequality—though it varies a lot. Does that inequality result from popular ideas about gender? For example, are boys and men "naturally" more aggressive, competitive, and independent and girls and women "naturally" more cooperative, helpful, and fragile? Where do these ideas come from? If gender isn't a social construction, why do ideas about what girls/women and boys/men are like vary across time (e.g., 1400, 1776, 2019) and place (e.g., China, Afghanistan, Sweden)? Why do ideas about what they should and shouldn't do vary? And why does gender inequality vary? Many people look to the role of biology when explaining such variation. Yet, if people's biology (e.g., chromosomes, hormones) is fairly constant across time and location, wouldn't gender be as well? Let's dig a bit deeper.

First, the traits people commonly see as typical for women or men aren't disconnected, separate categories. Every person has them, to some degree. To the extent that gender differences exist at all, they are manifested not in absolutes but in averages, tendencies, and probabilities. Many people consider aggressiveness a masculine characteristic, but some women are more aggressive than some men. As with race, research shows that there is more variation *within* categories (e.g., all women, all men) than between them—a finding that seriously undermines the view that gender differences are biological (Basow, as cited in Rosenblum & Travis, 2002).

Second, gender as a social construction is illustrated by the fact that what people think is "appropriate" behavior for a particular gender varies over time and from society to society. The behavior people expected from a woman in Victorian England isn't the same as for women in 21st–century America. Likewise, the gender norms for men in 500 CE China are different from those in Puritan America. This variability makes it difficult to argue that the differences between the genders are hardwired in the genetic code; if they were, these variations wouldn't exist.

Third, the relationship between subsistence technology and gender inequality illustrates the social nature of gender norms. As noted previously, humans evolved in East Africa and relied on hunting and gathering to meet their basic needs. Our distant ancestors lived in small, nomadic bands that relied on cooperation and sharing for survival. Societies at this level of development typically divided adult labor by gender (often men hunting, women gathering). Because everyone's work was crucial to survival, gender inequality was minimal (Dyble et al., 2015). Women's subordination seems to have emerged with settled agricultural communities, the first of which appeared about 10,000 years ago in what is now the Middle East. People in preindustrial farming communities didn't roam, and people could accumulate (and store) wealth (see Dyble et al., 2015). Survival in these societies required the combined labor of many people; thus, large families were valued. Women became consigned to domestic duties, especially having and raising children. Because the infant mortality rate in these societies was high (approximately 50% or more), women spent much of their lives confined to their homes, pregnant or nursing, far removed from the possibility of participating in other extra-domestic life, such as contending for community leadership roles.

Industrialization and urbanization, linked processes that began in the mid-1700s in Great Britain, changed the cost–benefit ratios of childbearing. As people moved to cities, the expense of having children rose, and work increasingly required education and literacy—for women and men. As women increasingly participated in life outside of their homes, they gained additional resources (e.g., income, networks) that put them on more level footing with men. Thus, it's probably not surprising that the push for gender equality is associated with industrial societies and that gender equality is highest in industrial and postindustrial societies (see Figure 1.8).

Researchers continue to explore the links between biology and gender (e.g., see Hopcroft, 2009; Huber, 2007; Udry, 2000). However, at its core, gender is primarily social, not biological. Gender, like race, is a social construction, especially when people treat the supposed differences between men and women as categorical, natural, and fixed and then use those ideas to deny opportunity and equality to women (Booth et al., 2006, pp. 167–191; see also Ridgeway, 2011, pp. 18–23).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

6. How do gender and race exist apart from people's beliefs about them? How are these constructs similar? Different? Are they *equally* matters of perception?

KEY CONCEPTS IN DOMINANT–MINORITY RELATIONS

When people discuss issues such as dominant–minority group relations, the discussion often turns to matters of prejudice and discrimination. This section introduces and defines four concepts to help you understand dominant–minority relations in the United States.

This book addresses how individuals from different groups interact and how groups interact with each other. Thus, we need to distinguish between what is true for individuals (the more psychological level of analysis) and what is true for groups or society (the sociological level of analysis). Additionally, it's helpful to connect these levels of analysis.

At the individual level, what people *think* and *feel* about other groups may differ from how they *behave* toward members of another group. A person might express negative feelings about other groups in private but deal fairly with group members in face-to-face interactions. Groups and entire societies may display similar inconsistencies. A society may express support for equality in its official documents (e.g., laws) while simultaneously treating minority groups in unfair, destructive ways. For example, contrast the commitment to equality stated in the Declaration of Independence ("All men are created equal") and the actual treatment of enslaved Africans, Anglo-American women, and Native Americans at that time.

At the individual level, social scientists refer to the thinking/feeling part of this dichotomy as *prejudice* and the doing part as *discrimination*. At the group level, the term **ideological racism** describes the thinking/feeling dimension and **institutional discrimination** describes the doing dimension. Table 1.1 depicts the differences among these four concepts.

TABLE 1.1 ■ Four Concepts in Dominant–Minority Relations		
Dimension	**Level of Analysis**	
	Individual	**Group or Societal**
Thinking/feeling	Prejudice	Ideological racism
Doing	Discrimination	Institutional discrimination

Prejudice

Individual **prejudice** is partly a set of feelings or emotions, from mild to intense, that people attach to groups, including their own. It has two aspects: **cognitive prejudice**, or the thinking aspect, and **affective prejudice**, or the feeling part. A prejudiced person thinks about other groups in terms of **stereotypes** (cognitive prejudice), generalizations that they think are true for all group members. For example, someone may have a negative, stereotypical view of the Irish and call them "a worthless bunch of drunks." Someone else might think, "I don't like atheists." What makes emotions part of prejudice is their generalized association with and prejudgment of an entire group—often without any actual experience with members of those groups. A prejudiced person also experiences negative emotional responses to other groups (affective prejudice), including contempt, disgust, arrogance, and hatred.

People vary in their levels of prejudice, and levels of prejudice vary in the same person from one time to another and from one group to another. We can say that people are prejudiced to the extent that they use stereotypes in their thinking about other groups or have negative emotional reactions to other groups.

The two dimensions of prejudice are highly correlated with each other; however, they are distinct and separate aspects of prejudice and can vary independently. One person may think entirely in stereotypes but feel no particular negative emotional response to any group. Another person may feel a strong aversion toward a group but be unable to articulate a clear or detailed stereotype of that group.

Individual prejudice, like all aspects of society, evolves and changes. Historically, Americans' prejudice was strongly felt, overtly expressed, and laced with detailed stereotypes. Overt forms declined after the civil rights era of the 1950s and 1960s but didn't disappear, and vast numbers of Americans came to view traditional prejudice as problematic. In modern societies that emphasize mutual respect and tolerance, people tend to express prejudice in subtle, indirect ways. Prejudice might manifest in language that functions as a kind of code (e.g., when people associate "welfare cheats" or criminality with certain minority groups). We'll explore modern forms of prejudice later, but we need to be clear that you should not mistake the *general* decline of blatant prejudice against minority groups in modern society for its disappearance. As you'll see throughout the book, many traditional forms of prejudice and discrimination have reasserted themselves in recent years.

On January 6, 2021, thousands of supporters of then-President Trump attacked the U.S. Capitol building. Many were members of right-wing extremist and hate groups, and came bearing racist symbols.

Saul Loeb/Contributor/AFP/Getty Images

Causes of Prejudice

Prejudice is a complex phenomenon with multiple causes and manifestations. In this section, we'll take a macrosociological approach and examine theories about prejudice that are related to culture, social structure, and group relationships.

Group Competition and the Origins of Prejudice. Every form of prejudice started at some specific point in history. If we go back far enough in time, we can find a moment that predates anti-Black prejudice, antisemitism, negative stereotypes about Native Americans or Hispanic Americans, or antipathy against Asian Americans. What sorts of conditions create prejudice?

The single most important factor in the origin of prejudice is group competition. Prejudice originates in the heat of that competition, and the winning group uses it to justify and rationalize their privileged status. If we go back far enough, we can always find some instance when one group successfully dominates, takes resources from, or eliminates a perceived threat by another group. The successful group becomes the dominant group, and the other becomes the minority group.

Why is group competition associated with the emergence of prejudice? Typically, prejudice doesn't cause group competition; it results from it. Prejudice functions to mobilize emotional energy for conflict and to justify rejection and attack. Additionally, it rationalizes structures of domination, like slavery or segregation, which result from the sense of competition. Groups react to the competition and threat presented by other groups with hostility and by stereotyping those groups. Prejudice emerges from the resulting high levels of emotion, which can persist for years (even centuries) after the end of the original conflict.

Research demonstrates the relationship between prejudice and competition in various situations (e.g., labor strikes, war, social psychology experiments). In future chapters, we'll examine prejudice during the creation of slavery in America, as a reaction to periods of high immigration and to other forms of group competition. To illustrate our central point about group competition and prejudice, let's examine a classic social psychological Robber's Cave experiment that took place in 1954 at a summer camp for 11- and 12-year-old boys.

Social psychologist Muzafer Sherif, posing as the camp director, divided the boys into two groups and put them in separate camp locations. In the experiment's first phase, the boys developed a sense of group membership They played, ate, and did chores within their groups. The boys named their groups (the Rattlers and the Eagles) and received group shirts and flags bearing their group names.

Phase 2 involved conflict created as groups competed for individual and group prizes in various games, sports, and tasks. As the competition intensified and the sense of "us" versus "them" solidified, groups started expressing prejudice (negative feelings, including stereotypes) about the other group. The feelings intensified and surfaced as name-calling, mocking, food fights, raids on the "enemy" group's camp, and the destruction of each other's flags and property. The boys' used their feelings to justify the rejection or and attacks against the out-group.

Phase 3 attempted to reduce the boys' prejudice. They were brought together in pleasant situations featuring food, movies, and other treats. However, tensions remained high and the "rivals" refused to interact. Finally, the researchers created situations that required groups to cooperate (e.g., fixing the camp's "vandalized" water supply). These cooperative activities

decreased intergroup "prejudice" and, over time, cross-group friendships formed (Sherif et al., 1961).

In the experiment, as in real group relationships, prejudice arose to mobilize feelings and to justify the rejection and attacks (verbal and physical) on the out-group. When group competition was replaced by cooperation, prejudice eventually declined and disappeared. This suggests that competition causes prejudice, not the other way around.

However, these results may be only partially generalizable to real group conflicts for several reasons. First, the experiment occurred in an artificial environment and the boys were similar: white, middle class, and with similar education levels, religious beliefs, and family structure. Additionally, the boys had never met. Therefore, they had no history of grievances or animosity. Nonetheless, Robber's Cave demonstrates a central point: Competition is a root cause of prejudice. In future chapters, you'll see how competition and the desire to protect resources and status, and to defend against perceived or real threats, create prejudice and structures of inequality that benefit the dominant group.

Culture, Socialization, and the Persistence of Prejudice. Prejudice originates in group competition, but it can persist in intense ways long after the episode that sparked it has faded from memory. How does prejudice persist through time?

In his classic analysis of American race relations, *An American Dilemma* (1944/1962), Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal proposed the idea that prejudice is perpetuated through time by a self-fulfilling prophecy or a vicious cycle. Figure 1.9 shows three components of the vicious cycle. First, during the contact situation, the dominant group uses its power (e.g., guns, iron shackles, the law) to force the minority group into an inferior social position (e.g., slaves). Second, dominant group members create ways of thinking that justify the racial hierarchy (prejudice at the individual level and racist ideology at the societal level). Third, everyday observation of the minority group's inferior status reinforces ideas about the group's supposed inferiority. For example, white Europeans enslaved Africans. Slaves, as the minority group, became (and stayed) impoverished due to their position at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. The widely accepted belief in slaves' inferiority allowed dominant group members to continue their discriminatory treatment. This discrimination reinforced slaves' inferior status, which continued to validate the prejudice and racism and, in turn, justified further discrimination. Over several generations, a stable, internally reinforced system of racial inferiority becomes an integral, seemingly natural, and (at least for the dominant group) accepted part of everyday life.

FIGURE 1.9 ■ Myrdal's Vicious Cycle

Contact situation → (1) Inferior status → (2) Prejudice/racism → (3) Discrimination → (1) Inferior status
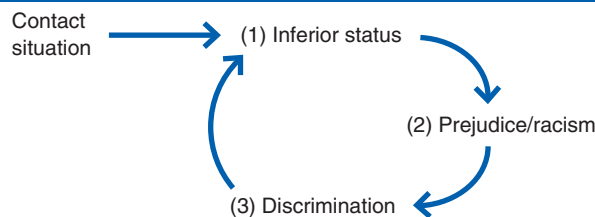
Source: Myrdal (1944/1962).

Culture is slow to change, and once created, prejudice will be sustained over time like any set of attitudes, values, and beliefs. Future generations will learn prejudice in the same way and for the same reasons they learn any other aspect of their culture. Thus, prejudice and racism come to us through our cultural heritage as a package of stereotypes, emotions, and other ideas. We learn which groups are "good" and which are "bad" in the same way we learn table manners and religious beliefs (Pettigrew, 1958, 1971; Simpson & Yinger, 1985). When prejudice is part of the cultural heritage, individuals learn to think and feel negatively toward other groups as a routine part of socialization, even if that socialization doesn't seem overt or intended. Much of the prejudice that Americans (and people in other societies) express is the predictable result of typical socialization in families, communities, and societies that are, to some degree, racist. Given our long history of intense racial and ethnic conflict, it probably isn't surprising that Americans continue to manifest resentment toward and stereotypical ideas about other groups.

The Development of Prejudice in Children. Children learn prejudice through socialization. Children become aware of group differences (e.g., Black vs. white) at an early age, even as early as six months (Katz, 2003). By age three or younger, they recognize the significance and the permanence of racial groups in society and can accurately classify people based on skin color and other cues (Brown, 1995; Katz, 1976). Once children mentally establish the categories, they begin learning the attitudes and stereotypes associated with groups, and affective and cognitive prejudice begin to grow at an early age.

Children can acquire prejudice even when parents and other caregivers don't teach it overtly or directly. Adults control the socialization process and valuable resources (food, shelter, praise), and children are motivated to seek their approval and conform to their expectations (at least in the early years). Additionally, children face strong pressure to learn and internalize the perceptions of the older generation, and even a casual comment or an overheard remark can establish or reinforce negative beliefs or feelings about members of other groups (Ashmore & DelBoca, 1976). Some people say that racial attitudes are "caught and not taught." That is, children don't need to be directly instructed about presumed minority group characteristics.

Additionally, research shows that children are actively engaged in their learning and that their levels of prejudice reflect their changing intellectual capabilities. Children as young as five to six months old can make some simple distinctions (e.g., by gender or race) between categories of people. The fact that this capability emerges so early in life suggests that it's not simply a response to adult teaching. "Adults use categories to simplify and make sense of their environment; apparently children do the same" (Brown, 1995, p. 126).

Gross, simplistic distinctions between people may help very young children organize and understand the world around them. The need for such primitive categorizations may decline as children become more experienced in life and more sophisticated in their thinking. Doyle & Aboud (1995), for example, found that prejudice was highest for younger children and actually decreased between kindergarten and the third grade. The decline was related to increased awareness of racial similarities (and differences) and diverse perspectives on race (see also Black-Gutman & Hickson, 1996; Bronson & Merryman, 2009; Brown, 1995; Cristol & Gimbert, 2008; Powlishta et al., 1994; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). Thus, changing levels of prejudice in children may reflect an interaction between children's changing mental capacities

and their environment, rather than a simple or straightforward learning of racist cultural beliefs or values.

Social Distance Scales

Research on social distance offers more evidence about the cultural character of prejudice. **Social distance** is related to prejudice but isn't the same. Social distance is the degree of intimacy that a person will accept in their relations with members of other groups. On this scale, the most intimate relationship is close kinship, and the most distant is exclusion from the country. Emory Bogardus (1933), the inventor of the scale, specified these seven degrees of social distance and asked respondents to which step they would admit members of various groups:

1. To close kinship by marriage

2. To my club as personal chums

3. To my street as neighbors

4. To employment in my occupation

5. To citizenship in my country

6. As visitors only to my country

7. Would exclude from my country

Research using social distance scales demonstrates that Americans rank other groups in similar ways across time periods and geographic locations. This consistency indicates a common frame of reference or set of perceptions that suggest socialization into a common culture.

Table 1.2 presents some results of administrations of the scale to samples of Americans from 1926 to 2011. The groups are listed by the rank order of their scores for 1926. In that year, the sample expressed the least social distance from the English and the most distance from Asian Indians. While the average social distance score for the English was 1.02, indicating virtually no sense of distance, the average score for Asian Indians was 3.91, indicating a distance between "to my street as neighbors" to "to employment in my occupation."

First, as you read Table 1.2, note the stability in the rankings. The actual scores (not shown) generally decrease from decade to decade, indicating less social distance and presumably a decline in prejudice over the years. The group rankings, however, tend to be consistently the same. Considering the changes that America experienced between 1926 and 2011 (e.g., the Great Depression; World War II, the Korean War, and the Cold War with the former Soviet Union; the civil rights movement; the resumption of large-scale immigration; the 9/11 attacks), this overall continuity in group rankings is remarkable.

Second, note the order of the ranking: people rank groups with origins in Northern and Western Europe the highest, followed by groups from Southern and Eastern Europe. They rank racial minorities at the bottom. These preferences reflect the relative status of these groups in the U.S. hierarchy of racial and ethnic groups. The rankings also reflect the relative amount of exploitation and prejudice directed at each group over the course of U.S. history.

TABLE 1.2 ■ Social Distance Scores of Selected Groups (Ranks for Each Year)				
Group	1926	1946	1977	2011
English (British)	1	3	2	4
Americans (white)	2	1	1	1
Canadians	3	2	3	3
Irish	5	4	7	5
Germans	7	10	11	8
Russians	13	13	29	20
Italians	14	16	5	2
Poles	15	14	18	14
Native Americans	18	20	10	12
Jews	19	19	15	11
Mexicans	21	24	26	25
Japanese	22	30	25	22
Filipinos	23	23	24	16
African Americans	24	29	17	9
Turks	25	25	28	—
Chinese	26	21	23	17
Koreans	27	27	30	24
Asian Indians	28	28	27	26
Vietnamese	—	—	—	28
Muslims	—	—	—	29
Arabs	—	—	—	30
Mean (all scores)	2.14	2.12	1.93	1.68
Range	2.85	2.57	1.38	1.08

Note: Values in the table are ranks for that year. For example, the Irish were ranked fifth of 28 groups in 1926, rose to fourth of 30 in 1946, and so forth. To conserve space, some groups and ranks have been eliminated.

Source: 1926–1977—Smith and Dempsey (1983, p. 588); 2011—Parrillo and Donoghue (2013).

Finally, note how the relative positions of some groups change with international and domestic relations. For example, rankings for the Japanese and Germans fell at the end of World War II (1946). Comparing 1977 with 1946, Russians fell and Japanese rose, reflecting changing

patterns of alliance and enmity in the global system of societies. The dramatic rise of African Americans in 2011 may reflect declining levels of overt prejudice in American society, and the low rankings of Muslims and Arabs in 2011 may reflect negative feelings related to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

Although these patterns of social distance scores support the general point that prejudice is cultural, this body of research has some important limitations. The respondents were college students from a variety of campuses, not representative samples of the population, and the differences in scores between groups are sometimes very small.

Still, the stability of the patterns can't be ignored: The top two or three groups are always Northern European, Poles and Jews are always ranked in the middle third of the groups, and Koreans and Japanese always fall in the bottom third. African Americans and Native Americans were ranked toward the bottom until the most recent rankings.

How do we explain the consistency of group rankings from the 1920s to 2011? The stability strongly suggests that Americans view these groups through the same culturally shaped lens. A sense of social distance, a belief that some groups are better than others, is part of the cultural package of intergroup prejudices we acquire through socialization in America. The social distance patterns illustrate the power of culture to shape individual perceptions and preferences and attest to the fundamentally racist nature of American culture.

Modern Racism: A New Face of Prejudice?

It is clear from national headlines (e.g., the white supremacist rallies in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017 and the attack on the Capitol building on January 6, 2021) that traditional, blatant prejudice is still very much a part of American society. At the same time, some forms of prejudice are changing and evolving, especially those found in mainstream society and "polite company." Public opinion polls show that, for most Americans, the willingness to express the blunt, overt feelings and ideas of traditional prejudice has declined in recent decades. Some might say that this decline means that individual prejudice is becoming less of a problem in America. However, a growing body of research argues that the apparent decline is misleading and that, for many Americans, prejudice has evolved into a subtler but just as consequential form called modern racism, symbolic racism, and color-blind racism. This new form is a more indirect and complex way of thinking or expressing negative feelings about minority groups or about one's opposition to changes in dominant–minority relations (see Bobo, 1988, 2001; Bobo et al., 2012; Bonilla-Silva, 2001, 2006; Kinder & Sears, 1981; Kluegel & Smith, 1982;McConahy, 1986; Sears, 1988; for a review, see Quillian, 2006).

People who are prejudiced in these ways typically reject "old-fashioned" blatant prejudice and the traditional view that racial inferiority is innate or biological. They often proclaim their allegiance to the ideals of equality of opportunity and treatment for all. Analysis of their thinking, however, reveals prejudice beneath the surface of these egalitarian sentiments, powerfully influencing their views of racial issues.

Sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2006, p. 28), one of the leading researchers in this area, argues that people express the new form of prejudice in seemingly neutral language or objective

terms. For example, the modern racist might attribute the underrepresentation of people of color in high-status positions to cultural rather than biological factors ("they don't emphasize education enough") or explain continuing residential and school segregation by the "natural" choices people make ("they would rather be with their own kind"). This kind of thinking rationalizes the status quo and permits dominant group members to live in segregated neighborhoods and send their children to segregated schools without guilt or hesitation. It obscures the myriad, not-so-subtle social forces that created segregated schools, neighborhoods, and other manifestations of racial inequality in the first place and maintains them in the present (e.g., see Satter, 2009). This framework permits people to ignore the social, political, and economic realities that actually create and sustain racial inequality and, by this selective perception, to support a kind of racism without appearing to be a racist. We'll return to the subject of modern racism frequently, especially in Chapter 5.

The Sociology of Individual Prejudice

The sociological approach to prejudice stresses several points. Competition between groups results in prejudice. Prejudicial thinking helps people mobilize feelings and emotional energy for competition and rationalize the creation of minority group status. Then, it becomes a part of the cultural heritage passed on to later generations as part of their taken-for-granted world, where it helps to shape their beliefs and reinforces the group inferiority that created it in the first place. Although it has evolved into a subtler form, prejudice remains an important force in American society and will continue as long as there are patterns of inequality and systems of group privilege and disadvantage that require justification by the dominant group.

Discrimination

Discrimination is the unequal treatment of people based on their group membership. For example, an employer might not hire someone because they are Black (or Jewish, Chinese, gay, etc.). If the unequal treatment is based on the individual's group membership (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion), the act is discriminatory.

Just as the cognitive and affective aspects of prejudice can be independent, discrimination and prejudice don't necessarily occur together. Even highly prejudiced individuals may not act on their negative thoughts or feelings. In social settings regulated by strong egalitarian codes or laws (e.g., restaurants and other public facilities), people who are highly bigoted in their private thoughts and feelings may follow the norms in public. However, when people approve of prejudice in social situations, such support can produce discrimination from otherwise unprejudiced individuals. In the southern United States during the height of segregation and in South Africa during the period of state-sanctioned racial inequality called *apartheid*, it was usual and customary for white people to treat Black people in discriminatory ways. Regardless of individuals' actual level of prejudice, they faced strong social pressure to conform to the official forms of racial superiority and discrimination.

Ideological Racism

Ideological racism is a belief system asserting that a particular group is inferior; it is the group or societal equivalent of individual prejudice. Members of the dominant group use ideological racism to legitimize or rationalize the unequal status of minority groups. Through the process of socialization, such ideas pass from generation to generation, becoming incorporated into the society's culture. It exists separately from the individuals who inhabit the society (Andersen, 1993, p. 75; See & Wilson, 1988, p. 227). An example of a racist ideology is the elaborate system of beliefs and ideas that attempted to justify slavery in the American South. Whites explained their exploitation of enslaved people in terms of the supposed innate racial inferiority of Blacks and the superiority of whites.

In later chapters, we'll explore the relationship between individual prejudice and racist ideologies at the societal level. For now, we'll make what may be an obvious point: People socialized into societies with strong racist ideologies are likely to internalize those ideas and be highly prejudiced; for example, a high level of personal prejudice existed among whites in the antebellum American South or in other highly racist societies, such as in South Africa under apartheid. Yet, ideological racism and individual prejudice are different phenomena with different causes and different locations in the society. Racism isn't a prerequisite for prejudice and prejudice can exist in the absence of racist ideology.

Institutional Discrimination

Institutional discrimination is the societal equivalent of individual discrimination. It refers to a pattern of unequal treatment, based on group membership, built into the daily operations of society, whether or not it is consciously intended. Public schools, the criminal justice system, and political and economic institutions can operate in ways that put members of some groups at a disadvantage.

Institutional discrimination can be obvious and overt. For many years following the American Civil War, practices such as poll taxes and rigged literacy tests (designed to ensure failure) prevented Black Americans in the South from voting. Well into the 1960s, elections and elected offices in the South were restricted to whites only. The purpose of this blatant pattern of institutional discrimination was widely understood by Black and white southerners alike: It existed to disenfranchise the Black community and to keep it politically powerless (Dollard, 1937).

At other times, institutional discrimination may operate subtly and without conscious intent. For example, if schools use biased aptitude tests to determine which students get to take college preparatory courses, and if such tests favor the dominant group, then the outcomes are discriminatory—even if everyone involved sincerely believes that they are merely applying objective criteria in a rational way. If a decision-making process has unequal consequences for dominant and minority groups, institutional discrimination may well be at work.

Although individuals may implement and enforce a particular discriminatory policy, it is better to recognize it as an aspect of the institution. For example, election officials in the South

during segregation didn't (and public school administrators today don't) have to be personally prejudiced to implement discriminatory policies.

However, a major thesis of this book is that racist ideologies and institutional discrimination are created to sustain the stratification system. Widespread institutional discrimination maintains the relative advantage of the dominant group. Members of the dominant group who are socialized into communities with strong racist ideologies and a great deal of institutional discrimination are likely to be personally prejudiced and to routinely engage in acts of individual discrimination. The mutually reinforcing patterns of prejudice, racism, and discrimination on the individual and institutional levels preserve the respective positions of dominant and minority groups over time.

Institutional discrimination is one way that members of a minority group can be denied access to goods and services, opportunities, and rights (such as voting). That is, institutional discrimination helps sustain and reinforce the unequal positions of racial and ethnic groups in the stratification system.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

7. How are the ideas in this section sociological? How do they differ from more psychological theories of prejudice and discrimination?

8. Like most Americans, you are probably familiar with the stereotypes associated with various groups. Does this mean you are prejudiced against those groups? Does it mean you have negative emotions about those groups and are likely to discriminate against them? Explain.

9. In general, would you say that whiteness is "the norm" in U.S. society? Is racial identity "invisible" to whites? How does racial privilege permit white people to ignore race?

A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

In future chapters, we'll discuss additional concepts and theories and apply those ideas to minority groups in the United States. However, it is important to expand our perspective beyond our country. Therefore, we'll also apply our ideas to the histories and experiences of other peoples and places. If the ideas and concepts developed in this book can help us make sense of intergroup relations around the world, we'll have some assurance that they have some general applicability and that the dynamics of intergroup relations in the United States aren't unique.

On another level, we must also consider how economic, social, and political forces beyond our borders shape group relations in the United States. As you'll see, American society can't be understood in isolation because it is part of the global system of societies. Now, more than ever, we must systematically analyze the complex interconnections between the domestic and the international, particularly with respect to immigration issues. The next section explores one connection between the global and the local.

Immigration and Globalization

Immigration is a major concern in our society today, and we'll address the issue in the pages to come. Here, we'll point out that immigration is a global phenomenon that affects virtually every nation in the world. About 272 million people—about 3.5% of the world's population—live outside their countries of birth, and the number of migrants has increased steadily over the past several decades (International Organization for Migrants, 2020). Figure 1.10 illustrates the global nature of the migration by listing the top 20 destinations for migrants (on the left) and the top 20 nations of origin on the right. Note that the United States and Western European nations are well represented among the receiving nations, but so are other nations from around the globe. The sending nations come from every continent and area, including Asia, Central America, and Africa.

FIGURE 1.10 ■ **Top 20 Destination Nations (on the Left) and Top 20 Sending Nations (on the Right) for Migrants, 2019 (in Millions)**
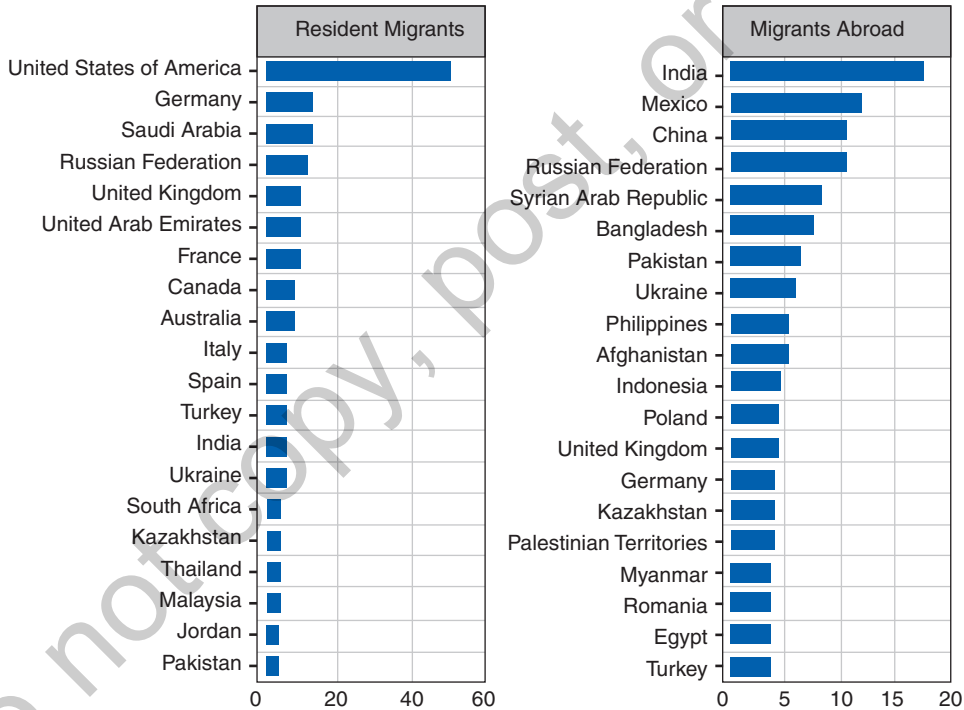
Source: International Organization for Migrants (2020, p. 44).

To illustrate, consider the southern border of the United States. For the past several decades, there's been an influx of people from Mexico and Central America, and the presence of these newcomers has generated a great deal of emotional and political heat, especially because many of these migrants are undocumented.

What has caused this massive population movement? One very important underlying cause is *globalization*, or the increasing interconnectedness of people, groups, organizations, and nations. This process is complex and multidimensional, but perhaps the most powerful dimension of globalization—especially for understanding contemporary immigration—is economics and the movement of jobs and opportunity from place to place. People flow from areas of lower opportunity to areas with greater opportunity.

Some Americans see these newcomers as threats to traditional American culture and the English language and may associate them with crime, violence, and drug smuggling. Others see them simply as people trying to survive as best they can, desperate to support themselves and their families. Few, however, see these immigrants as the human consequences of the economic globalization of the world.

What is the connection between globalization and this immigrant stream? The population pressure on the southern border has been, in large part, a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), implemented in 1994. NAFTA united the three North American nations in a single trading bloc—economically globalizing the region—and permitted goods and capital (but not people) to move freely among Canada, the United States, and Mexico.
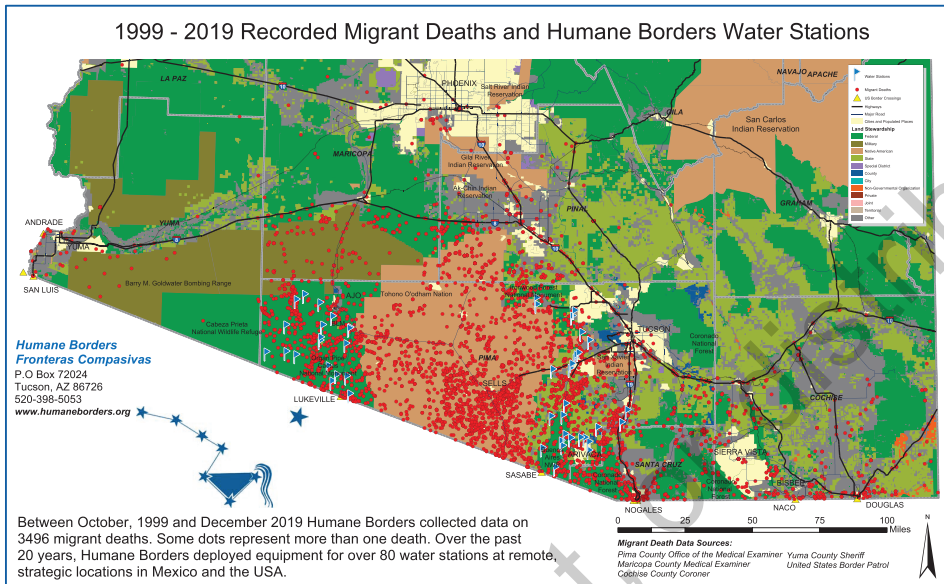
Among many other consequences, NAFTA opened Mexico to the importation of food products produced at very low cost by the giant agribusinesses of Canada and the United States. This cheap food (corn in particular) destroyed the livelihoods of many rural Mexicans and forced them to leave their villages in search of work. Millions pursued the only survival strategy that seemed at least remotely sensible: migration north. Even the worst job in the United States pays many times more than the average Mexican wage.

Even as NAFTA changed the economic landscape of North America, the United States became increasingly concerned with the security of its borders (especially after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001) and attempted to stem the flow of people, partly by building fences and increasing the size of the Border Patrol. The easier border crossings were quickly sealed, but this didn't stop the pressure from the south. Migrants moved to more difficult and dangerous crossing routes, including the deadly, forbidding Sonoran Desert in southern Arizona, resulting in an untold number of deaths on the border since the mid-1990s. Since then, immigration has continued to be a concern for Americans. President Donald Trump used this concern as one of his major appeals to voters in his 2016 election campaign. In July 2020, NAFTA was replaced by the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA). At the time of writing, it's too early to tell what the effects will be or how the policy might change under the Biden administration.

Figure 1.11 displays one estimate of recent deaths in southern Arizona, but these are only the bodies that have been discovered. Some estimates put the true number at 10 deaths for every recovered corpse, suggesting that that approximately 34,000 migrants have died in Arizona since the mid-1990s.

The relationship between NAFTA and immigration to the United States is only one aspect of a complex global relationship. Around the world, significant numbers of people are moving from less industrialized nations to those with more affluent economies. The wealthy nations of Western Europe, including Germany, Ireland, France, and the Netherlands, are also receiving large numbers of immigrants, and many citizens of these nations are concerned about their jobs,

FIGURE 1.11 ■ Recorded Migrant Deaths Along the Southern Arizona Border, 1999 to 2018

1999 - 2019 Recorded Migrant Deaths and Humane Borders Water Stations

Humane Borders
Fronteras Compasivas
P.O Box 72024
Tucson, AZ 86726
520-398-5053
www.humaneborders.org

Between October, 1999 and December 2019 Humane Borders collected data on 3496 migrant deaths. Some dots represent more than one death. Over the past 20 years, Humane Borders deployed equipment for over 80 water stations at remote, strategic locations in Mexico and the USA.

Source: Humane Borders (2020).

communities, housing, and language—and the integrity of the national cultures changing in response. Many Americans have similar concerns. The world is changing, and contemporary immigration must be understood in terms of changes that affect many nations and, indeed, the entire global system of societies.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

10. How does globalization spur immigration? Consider examples outside of the United States, too (e.g., from Africa to Europe).

11. What are the most significant challenges new immigrants will face in the United States and why? Consider the following: (a) transportation, (b) communication, (c) finding a job that pays enough and that you can walk to, or is on the bus line, (d) household matters (e.g., cleaning, food), (e) safety, (f) finances (e.g., getting a bank account), (g) relationships (e.g., friends, dating), and (h) education. How might prejudice or discrimination influence these challenges?

12. Some people make a distinction between "deserving immigrants" and "undeserving immigrants" (Aptekar, 2015, p. 112). What do you make of this distinction? What are the most important factors to consider when deciding which immigrants to let in? How important are "merits" such as English fluency, education, and religion? How important are other factors such as humanitarian needs for safety or the ability to find work that enables people to obtain food and shelter?

CONCLUSION

Our goal in writing this book is to teach you how to apply the sociological perspective to the world around you. With the concepts, theories, and body of research developed over the years, we can illuminate and clarify the issues. In many cases, we can identify approaches and ideas that are incorrect and those that hold promise. This chapter raises many questions. Sociology can't answer all questions, but it provides important research tools and ideas to help you think with greater depth and nuance about the issues facing our society and the world.

SUMMARY

We've organized this summary around the Learning Objectives at the beginning of the chapter.

1.1 Explain the increasing racial and ethnic diversity of the United States.

Rates of immigration are high, and, as shown in Figure 1.1, non-Hispanic white Americans are declining in relative numbers. By midcentury, they will no longer be a numerical majority of the U.S. population. (Which groups are increasing in relative size? What will the United States look like in the future in terms of ethnicity, race, culture, language, and cuisine?)

Rates of marriage across group lines are also increasing, along with the percentage of the population that identifies with more than one racial or ethnic group. Groups that do not fit into the categories in Figure 1.1 (e.g., Arab Americans, immigrants from Africa) are growing in size.

Many of the grievances and problems that affect American minority groups (e.g., African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanic Americans) have not been resolved, as we shall see in Part 2 of this text.

1.2 Understand the concept of a minority group.

A minority group has five characteristics:

- They experience a pattern of disadvantage, which can range from mild (e.g., casual snubs or insults) to severe (e.g., slavery or genocide).
- They have a socially visible mark of identification which may be physical (e.g., skin color), cultural (e.g., dress, language), or both.
- They are aware of their disadvantaged status.
- They are generally members of the group from birth.
- They tend to form intimate associations within the group.

The first two traits are the most important.

1.3 Explain the sociological perspectives that will guide this text, especially as they relate to the relationships between inequality and minority-group status.

A stratification system has three different dimensions (class, prestige, and power), and the nature of inequality in a society varies by its level of development. Minority groups and

social classes are correlated in many complex ways. Minority groups generally have less access to valued resources and opportunity. However, minority status and inequality are separate and may vary independently. Members of minority groups can be differentiated by gender, social class, and many other criteria; likewise, members of a particular social class can vary by gender, race, ethnicity, and along many other dimensions.

1.4 Explain how race and gender contribute to minority-group status.

Visible characteristics such as skin color or anatomy are widely used to identify and differentiate people (e.g., woman/man, black/white/Native American/Asian/Latino). So-called racial characteristics, such as skin color, evolved as our ancestors migrated from East Africa and spread into new ecologies. During the period of European colonization of the globe, racial characteristics became important markers of "us and them," conqueror and conquered.

Race and gender are socially constructed ideas that become filled with social meaning (e.g., strong, nurturing, smart, lazy). These meanings change over time and across geographic location. Although they are just ideas, these social constructions feel "natural" and "real." Thus, they powerfully influence the way we think about one another. They influence minority-group membership and, therefore, one's life chances such as access to resources and privilege (e.g., education, legal rights, pay, prestige). Sexism and racism attempt to explain patterns of gender and racial inequality in terms of group members' "inferiority."

1.5 Comprehend four of the key concepts in dominant–minority relations: prejudice, discrimination, ideological racism, and institutional discrimination.

This text analyzes dominant–minority relationships at both the individual and societal levels. *Prejudice* refers to individual feelings and thoughts while *discrimination* is different treatment of people based on their group membership. Individual discrimination is behavior of individuals. Ideological racism and institutional discrimination are parallel concepts that refer to prejudice and discrimination at the societal level.

1.6 Apply a global perspective to the relationship between globalization and immigration to the United States.

A global perspective means that we will examine dominant–minority relations not just in the United States but in other nations as well. We will address the ways that group relations in the United States are affected by economic, cultural, political, and social changes around the world. The relationship between USMCA (which replaced NAFTA) and immigration to the United States illustrates one of the many connections between domestic and international processes.

KEY TERMS

affective dimension of prejudice (p. 33)   ascribed status (p. 13)

apartheid (p. 11)   bourgeoisie (p. 17)

cognitive dimension of prejudice (p. 33)

discrimination (p. 41)

dominant group (p. 12)

ethnic minority groups (p. 12)

gender norms (p. 30)

genocide (p. 11)

ideological racism (p. 33)

institutional discrimination (p. 33)

intersectionality (p. 19)

level of development (p. 18)

life chances (p. 20)

means of production (p. 17)

minority group (p. 11)

miscegenation (p. 14)

patriarchy (p. 30)

postindustrial societies (p. 18)

power (p. 18)

prejudice (p. 33)

prestige (p. 18)

proletariat (p. 17)

racial minority groups (p. 12)

sexism (p. 30)

social classes (p. 15)

social constructions (p. 9)

social distance (p. 38)

social mobility (p. 20)

stereotypes (p. 33)

stratification (p. 15)

subsistence technology (p. 18)

APPLYING CONCEPTS

Do you have a sense of social distance from other groups? Has it changed over the past 10 years? Use the Social Distance Scale below to indicate the level of intimacy that you're comfortable with for each of the groups listed in the table.

1. Willing to have them marry into my family

2. Willing to have them as friends

3. Willing to have them as neighbors

4. Willing to have them employed in my occupation

5. Willing to have them gain citizenship in my country

6. Willing to have them as visitors in my country

7. I would ban them from entering my country

Group	Your Social Distance Score Today	Your Social Distance Score 10 Years Ago
White Americans		
Irish		
Russians		
Italians		
Native Americans		

Group	Your Social Distance Score Today	Your Social Distance Score 10 Years Ago
Jews		
Mexicans		
African Americans		
Chinese		
Muslims		

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of Figure 1.1? What are some of the limitations and problems with the group names it uses? How are the group names social constructions? Does increasing diversity in the United States represent a threat, an opportunity, or both? Should we celebrate group differences, or should we strive for more unity and conformity? What are the advantages and disadvantages of stressing unity and conformity? Explain your answers in detail.

2. Wagley and Harris (1958) developed their five-part definition of a minority group with racial and ethnic minorities in mind. What other groups share those five characteristics? For example, which characteristics apply to religious groups such as Mormons or Muslims? To people who are left-handed, very overweight, or very old? Why is it useful or significant to consider other groups beyond racial, ethnic, class, and gender-based groups?

3. What is a social construction? As social constructions, how are race and gender the same and how do they differ? What does it mean to say, "Gender becomes a social construction—like race—when it is treated as an unchanging, fixed difference and then used to deny opportunity and equality to women"? Consider the changing social constructions of race over time suggested by the Census Bureau categories. What do you make of them? Which categories make sense to you and why? How do those categories reflect particular meanings or ways of thinking at the time?

4. When analyzing dominant–minority relations, why is it important to take a global perspective? What can we learn by looking outside the United States? Besides immigration, how does globalization shape dominant–minority relations in the United States?

5. Explain the terms in Table 1.1. Cite an example of each from your own experiences, those of someone you know, or from current events, then compare them. How does *ideological racism* differ from *prejudice*? How does *institutional discrimination* differ from *individual discrimination?* Why is it important to analyze the societal level in addition to the individual level?

ANSWERS TO APPLYING CONCEPTS

How do your scores compare with those in Table 1.2? How did you acquire your feelings about social distance? Did they come from your family, friends, or community? Or are they based on personal experience with members of these groups? That is, were they "caught and not taught"? Did your feelings change over time? If so, why? What do you make of these changes and comparisons, considering the information in this chapter?

ENDNOTES

1. When we use *America* or *American*, we are referring to the United States of America and its citizens. We recognize that people living in North and South America are also Americans.

2. We sometimes use quotation marks to indicate social constructs or widely held beliefs about what is real or true. For example, "race" or "Caucasian."

3. LGBTQIA stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual/allied.

4. Boldfaced terms are also defined in the glossary at the end of the book.