

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Learning Outcomes

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

- Distinguish between race and ethnicity.
- Define and give examples of minority and majority groups.
- Differentiate prejudice and discrimination.
- Relate how people come to be prejudiced.

WHY DO WE DEFINE RACE THE WAY WE DO?



Race is socially important yet biologically insignificant in the United States. A **racial group** is a group of people with perceived unique biological and physical characteristics. Race is and has been assumed for centuries as being biologically-based and even biologically distinguishable between various groups (Africans, Whites, Asians, and Natives). Science has proven this to be a myth—racial groups are not in fact biologically different in significant ways. Current conceptions of race originated

long before genetics as a scientific discipline came to be. Here's the simple scientifically-based truth about biological differences between the races—there are very few.

In their article about the existence of race, two geneticists, Bamshad and Olson, have worked on mapping the human genome and their answer was, no, race does not exist.¹ Genetic studies yield more support for geographic ancestral origin than for a claim that our social definitions of race are somehow correlated to our social definitions of being White, Black, Asian, Native American, or any other race. There has been a great deal of intermarriage and cross-cultural unions- so much so that Bamshad and Olson reported that among the billions of genetic markers,

The outward signs on which most definitions of race are based—such as skin color and hair texture—are dictated by a handful of genes. But the other genes of two people of the same “race” can be very different. Conversely, two people of different “races” can share more genetic similarity than two individuals of the same race.²

By far the significance of race and biology is social, meaning that we are culturally socialized to define race in biological terms. In fact, throughout the history of the world, most cultures define race in cultural rather than biological terms. Members of Egyptian royalty were in the sacred race by birthright (even though some were Mediterranean and others African in origin). Scottish kinships were birth, not biologically, based. In the Old Testament, Qur'an, and Torah, Abrahamic descendants were identified by birth and by religion.

In Europe (where most of the early immigrants to the United States originated), various cultures had strong beliefs that Europeans were biologically superior to other peoples of the world. This made it very easy to conquer and colonize other groups. These are often called racial supremacist ideologies, and European immigrants brought those ideologies with them to the U.S. **Ideological racism** is an ideology that considers a group's physical characteristics to be causally related to inferiority or superiority. Slavery, genocide, and cultural destruction by the British were very common between 1400 and 1800.

The U.S.'s version of ideological racism left its mark on mainstream culture, which is to this day strikingly British. British and other European founders created social constructs of non-White groups. Native Americans were either noble savages or barbarians, Blacks were amoral or caustically wild, Asians were either perilous or conniving, and Mexicans were either extremely lazy or intrusive. In the history of the U.S., such ideas led to extreme mistreatment of non-Whites. Oppression in various forms went unanswered by any legal attempts at justice, which at times even lead to unlawful and immoral massacres of people in these categories.

The first U.S. Census, in 1790, was taken by federal mandate. Data extrapolated from it indicate the presence of mostly Whites, while it ignored slaves, Native Americans, and others. Historical studies have shown that Whites were the ones believed to be important enough to count at this time. Every 10 years another Census is taken, yielding 22 U.S. Census collections to date. The 2000 Census was the very first to allow citizens to self-report more than one race. That was about 2.4% of the population (see Table 1). Previous Census enumerations (counts) forced U.S. citizens to claim how Black they were, using complicated formulas and unfamiliar terms such as Mulatto or ½ Black; Quadroon or ¼ Black; and Octoroon or 1/8 Black. Each was a result of misguided thinking that suggested that having a Black ancestor contaminated a White person's blood lines. The **One Drop Rule** or Code Noir claims that *one drop of minority blood forces you to identify as non-White*. This theory was mainly directed towards people of African American descent.

Table 1. Major Racial Groups in the U.S.³

| Racial Group | % |
|-------------------|------|
| Caucasian | 75.1 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 12.5 |
| African American | 12.3 |
| Asian | 3.6 |
| Native American | 0.9 |
| Native Hawaiian | 0.2 |
| Two or More Races | 2.4 |
| Other | 5.5 |

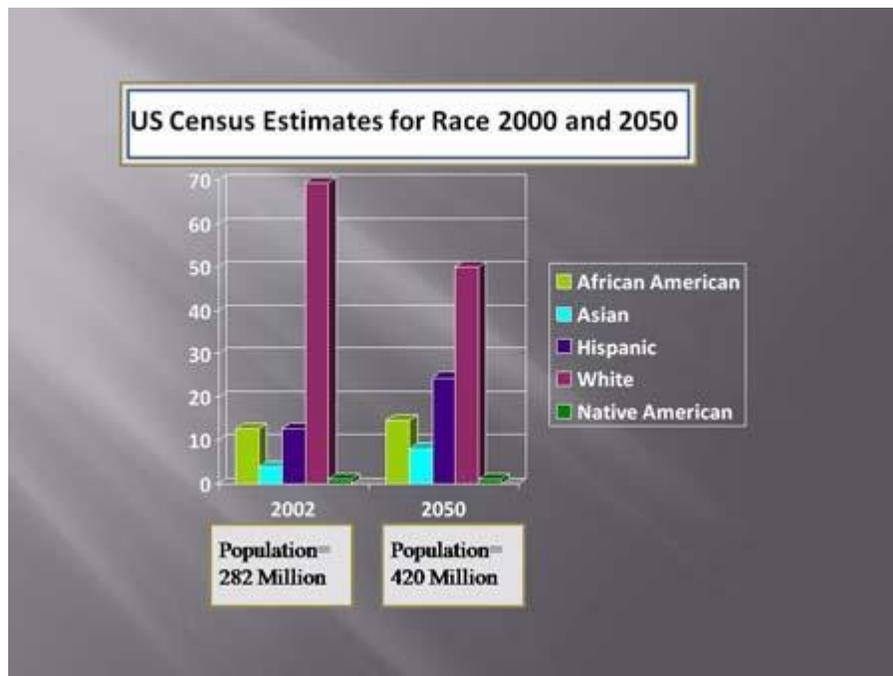
Decades ago, marrying across racial groups was considered a tainting and rendered the child non-White by default. This was true even if the child looked White with red hair, blue

eyes, and fair skin. Children of mixed racial couples confound our ability to perpetuate the myth that race can be biologically discerned. Could you identify the racial heritage of Tiger Woods or Mariah Carey if you didn't know?

Today we realize that we are all biologically more or less the same, and marriage is legal among two people of different races. The 2000 U.S. Census in Table 1 shows a 12.5% portion of the U.S. population self-identifying as being Hispanic. The Census Bureau produced a report showing that there were 37 plus million Hispanics in the U.S. with 67% of those claiming Mexican heritage.⁴

The U.S. Census Bureau also runs complex population projection analyses to estimate future population trends in our country. In Figure 1, you can see a diagram portraying 2002 and then projections for 2050. The non-Hispanic White population is projected to increase from 195.7 million to 210.3 million, which is about 50% of the total population. About 67 million people of Hispanic origin of any race are projected to be added to the U.S. population by 2050. Hispanics are expected to grow from 35.6 million to 102.6 million (+188%). This is a change in percent of total population from 12.6% to 24.4%.⁵

Figure 1. U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates By Race for 2000 and 2050.⁶



WHY SO MUCH RACISM?

You may have already noticed that even though science has established that race is not biologically based, the U.S. Census Bureau continues to use the racial categories. Why?



Most scientists will tell you that if people perceive something as being real then it becomes real in its consequences (Thomas Theorem). Race being based on biology is so intricately connected to all the subtle nuances of everyday life that the average person makes no distinction or effort at understanding—much like gender inequality. Most people simply believe it to be “real”. The constitutional mandate to take a census of the U.S. population so that the people

are represented by Congress requires a count of people and their self-reported racial classification.

In the U.S. we make the race-biology claim a big deal because it is part of our culture and our socialization to do so. We tend to look at four categories of racial traits in order to distinguish ourselves from people of other races: skin color, facial features, hair color and texture, and body shape and size (body morphology). Four simple features have been used as the categorical basis of “Us and Them” thinking patterns throughout U.S. history. Most don’t realize that there is much more variety within a given racial category than between them.

For example, look around your classroom and pick a few students who might fall into just one of the four basic racial groupings: Black, White, Asian, and Native American. Observe their variations in skin tone and hair texture, color, thickness, or curl. It becomes very obvious that not all racial grouping of people look alike when compared to people considered to be of the same race. Why don’t we care about variation in physical features within our own racial groups? It comes back to our culture and socialization. We are socialized to see differences between rather than within racial categories.

What’s the difference between a racial and ethnic group? Race is biology-based and ethnicity is culture-based. Ethnicity is conceptually different from race.⁷ An **ethnic group** consists of *people who share a common orientation toward the world, who develop a sense of people-hood, and who are perceived by others as having distinctive cultural elements* such as religion, language, traditions, and heritage.

One very important U.S. ethnic classification is Hispanic, a category that was developed by the U.S. Census Bureau to describe people of Latin origin and their descendents.⁸ Hispanic, as a categorical classification, is at best an ambiguous one because there are 19 countries between Mexico and South America (including a few Spanish-speaking island nations) and one country in Europe (Spain) that could be a nation of origin for Hispanic persons and their ancestors. By the way, Brazilians are South Americans, but their national language is

Portuguese and their most common ancestral heritage is African. Are they or are they not Hispanic? According to the U.S. Census, they are. *Hispanic* as a Census Bureau concept often leads to ambiguous conclusions. In other words, the U.S. Census seems to be less concerned with the ethnic background of individuals and more concerned with the assumed color of their skin.

To assume **homogeneity**, or *very similar cultural traits*, among all U.S. Hispanics is a mistake. The same mistake is made when people classify all U.S. Whites as being homogeneous. But, there is a reason that Hispanic is an important concept. Basically, it identifies a category of sub-cultures within the mainstream U.S. population of Spanish-speaking members (albeit a very diverse collective).

MINORITIES AND DOMINANT MEMBERS OF SOCIETY

In U.S. history, there have been two basic groupings of citizens: minorities and majorities. A **minority group** is *one that is disadvantaged in terms of political, economic, and cultural power*. U.S. minority groups were originally Native Americans and Blacks, but included Irish, Catholics, and many other non-Protestant and Non-White groups. A **majority group** is *the group that is politically, economically, and culturally dominant*. The dominant group does not always have to be the most populous group in society.

In the last century in South Africa, Blacks were by far the most numerous, yet Whites ruled cruelly with racial supremacist ideologies that led to international outcry and eventual collapse of Apartheid rule there. **Apartheid** was *when South Africa formalized separateness between Blacks and Whites, mandating White supremacy and privileged treatment between 1948 and 1990*. Apartheid was broken apart by the combined international efforts of other countries that put economic and political pressure on the South African Government.

There are a number of ways the dominant group can treat its minority group members. Legislative controls include anti-miscegenation laws (no interracial marriages), forced or reinforced segregation (keeping dominant and minority group communities separate), legal oppression (slavery, denial of right to vote, no public education), expulsion (the Trail of Tears), unjust incarceration (WWII Japanese internment camps, Native American pre-reservation incarceration, and Guantanamo Bay-GITMO), and finally, outright annihilation (conquering Native Americans).

Another slightly more subtle treatment is called **marginalization**, *the purposeful mistreatment of minority group members that yields them geographically part of society while simultaneously being functionally left out of most of its opportunities*. Marginalization often results in material deprivation and exclusion. Most non-Anglo Saxon groups have experienced some level of marginalization in US history.

After years, decades, and generations of living under dominant group oppression, minority group members often reach a point of standing up against the dominant group. This happened among the pro-French minority group members in Quebec, Canada; among the Blacks in South Africa; and among the Blacks in the Southern United States (like Rosa

Parks). Sometimes minority group members rise up in defiance and become agents of social change. This was the case with the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968).

Dr. Martin Luther King's life and accomplishments were remarkable even before he became the most influential civil rights change agent in the United States. He graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Sociology in 1948. He earned another Bachelor's degree in Divinity in 1951, then his Ph.D. in Systematic Theology in 1955. He became a pastor in 1954 at the age of 25.⁹ He had a unique ability to ignite a passion for unity among all people, even the White dominant group. He took a Functionalist approach (as opposed to the more common Conflict approach) and preached non-violent resistance.

1. We should all be active in using non violent resistance to evil (racism)
2. We should not seek to defeat our enemy but to win his friendship and understanding
3. We should focus on attacking evil rather than those doing the evil
4. We should be willing to accept suffering as part of the social change process and not retaliate for it
5. We should refuse to hate our opponents
6. We should act with a firm hope that justice will prevail

One of the mighty principles taught by Martin Luther King Jr. was hope for a positive and mutually beneficial outcome. He urged those who followed his example to see evil for what it was, yet hope for things to end on the side of good.

PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

Prejudice is a *prejudgement of someone based on specific characteristics. It is attitudinal. Discrimination* is *behavioral. It is treating someone or some group differently based on membership in a certain group.* Gordon W. Allport (1897-1967) classifies prejudice into three broad levels. The **cognitive level of prejudice** refers to *our perceptions and beliefs and is based on logical and rational thoughts.* The **emotional level of prejudice** refers to *prejudiced feelings which are aroused by expression or thoughts.* The **action-orientation level of prejudice** is a *predisposition to act in favor of or against certain groups.*¹⁰ At the cognitive level prejudice, thoughts are the vehicle for carrying the prejudice. Stereotypes go hand in hand with this level. **Stereotypes** are *broad generalizations about a category of people who are assumed to have positive or negative traits common to every member of that group.*

The concept of relative deprivation applies and often underlies emotional based prejudices. **Relative deprivation** is *the perception of not being the rightful beneficiary of something a person feels entitled to receive.* Once a person feels relative deprivation, then chooses to become the victim, he makes those who are the focus of the deprivation (the perceived cause) into perpetrators. This in turn justifies the prejudice and discrimination against others. In contrast, **absolute deprivation** is *the denial of basic necessities that one needs to survive, such as food and water.* In general, emotional prejudice can be very dangerous because when we are emotional, we are typically feeling rather than using our complex rational thinking processes. Sometimes individuals, mobs, and hostile groups act dangerously when they perceive emotional prejudice.

Allport's action-orientation level simply means that people are predisposed to prejudice and may not know it until circumstances present themselves in such a way that their prejudices emerge.

HOW CAN WE OVERCOME PREJUDICE?

You may have already wondered, what's the difference between prejudice, stereotyping, and your own personal preferences? If you don't like Chinese food, does that make you prejudiced? Of course not, that's a personal preference. The best way to understand prejudiced thinking is to understand the concept of categorical thinking. **Categorical thinking** is *the human cognitive process of storing and retrieving information in sections of our memory that are highly associated with one another*. For example, read this list: awake, dream, snore, bed, eat, slumber, sound, wake, and night.

Now pick the single best word that categorically fits into this list. Computer, wheel, or sleep? The answer would be sleep because it highly related to the original list of concepts. The point is that we think in associations and categories. That's why, if you get wheeled into an emergency room with a fever, side ache, perspiration, and nausea that suddenly hit, doctors suspect Appendicitis. Among other things, categorical thinking saves lives and helps you to pass tests. It is true that categorical thinking makes it so we can function, but it also is the thinking process which underlies prejudice and stereotypes in our relationships. The key is to control categorical thinking, prejudices, and stereotypes.

First, you have to do some self-analysis and discover where you might have learned your prejudices. Many people are taught prejudice from family, friends, teachers, religious leaders, television, the internet, and other agents of socialization. It feels strange to think that family might teach other family members to be prejudiced, but this may be one of the more common sources. In the 1949 musical, *South Pacific*, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, wrote a gutsy song called "You've Got To Be Carefully Taught...to hate and fear, to be afraid..and to hate all the people your relatives hate."¹¹

For the year 1949, this was in truth a very gutsy song that proved to be way ahead of its time. Yet, it impacted a great many people who watched the movie. Without knowing that science would someday prove these lyrics to be true as far as how children do come to be prejudiced, Rodgers and Hammerstein were years in front of the Civil Rights movement in the U.S. **Socialization of prejudice** is *learning prejudice from people we associate with* (family, relatives, teachers). We often learn prejudice from people we look up to.

Another source of our prejudices is the social structural source. **Social structure origin of prejudice** occurs *when prejudice is built into the group, community, and social institutional components of society*. This was the case when Blacks and Whites were segregated in their churches, schools, workplaces, and other social environments. Few questioned it because it appeared to be part of the world-taken-for-granted.

There is also **competition origin of prejudice** which occurs *when members of one group feel threatened and or deprived by members of another group for limited resources*. This ties

in well with the concept of relative deprivation. When groups of people feel that they are losing at the expense of other groups' gains, it breeds and fuels competitive hostility at numerous levels.

Interdependence is the *dependence on others for support in order to be able to succeed*. This principle works just the opposite of competition.¹² One can create a non-prejudiced environment by creating mutual dependence among individuals who are vested in the success of themselves and their group—if the individual's success depends upon the group's success. Prejudices can also originate from negative interactions with members of a certain group that are distorted over time and become applied to the category of all group members.

Once you get an idea of where your own prejudices came from you can employ proven strategies for managing them. First and foremost, you are the only one who can manage your personal prejudices. The safest and most proven way to interact with another at the personal level is to share trusted feelings and thoughts with others while simultaneously having similar thoughts and feelings being shared back with you. You might replace “the, they, theirs,” or the labels we use such as Black, White, etc. with you, me, I, my, or the name of the individual. The personal level quiets the categorical thinking process. You can't use stereotypes if you are genuinely getting to know and trust another person.

Second, find the common ground shared between you and others. Ask questions, share information and look for the experiences, exact or similar, that connect you both on common shared backgrounds. Third, if you say or do something offensive to another, talk about it and apologize. Learn from your mistakes. One prejudiced thought or feeling does not make a person a bigot. Fourth, find someone you can relate to who has managed her prejudices successfully, then let her be a role model.

We discussed discrimination above, but it needs to be revisited here. Discrimination includes behaviors which result in the unfair or unequal treatment of others. Discrimination is an action (not just a feeling or thought) that typically has two forms- **de jure discrimination** is *legalized discrimination which is typically built into the social structure* and **de facto discrimination** is *the actual experience of members of society with discrimination*.

Even though discrimination is illegal, it still occurs in the U.S. People, at times, still aren't served in restaurants, allowed to lodge in motels, or are refused employment. Not all discrimination can be detected, much less punished. In the U.S. history of race relations, tremendous injustices have been meted out against minority group members by dominant group members and organizations. Most of these will never see justice for their losses.

ROBERT K. MERTON ON PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

Figure 2 depicts how Merton crossed the attitude *prejudice* with the behavior *discrimination*. He identified four types of people. It's easy to see why he called those who are not prejudiced and do not discriminate, **friends**. These people tend to be educated,

non-traditional, and open-minded individuals. It's also easy to see that **bigots** are *those who are prejudiced and do discriminate*. These people tend to be extremely disconnected to mainstream values and harbor a profound sense of entitlement in regards to acting as they desire regardless of the laws, norms, and morals of society. The **timid bigots** are *prejudiced but don't discriminate*. These people tend to be afraid of acting on their prejudices, not wanting to be caught or punished. Perhaps the most perplexing group is that of the **institutional discriminators**. They are *not prejudiced but do discriminate*. Why? These people tend to be those who go along with the crowd or obey orders. The discrimination has been **institutionalized**; it is *part of the system and accepted by society's members*.

Figure 2. Robert Merton's Prejudice and Discrimination Typology.¹³

| | | Prejudiced | |
|---------------|-----|--------------|----------------------------------|
| | | Yes | No |
| Discriminates | Yes | Bigots | Institutionalized Discriminators |
| | No | Timid Bigots | Friends |

One extreme form of discrimination is the hate crime. **Hate crimes** are *perpetrated by individuals who attack others based on their own intense feelings of bias and bigotry*. The FBI estimates that fewer than 10,000 Hate Crimes occur each year in the U.S. But this is highly deceptive because most hate crimes are not reported, and are not required to be reported, in contrast to all other crimes in the FBI Uniform Crime Report.¹⁴

Two FBI researchers, John R. Schafer and Joe Navarro, conducted research on understanding hate and those who criminally perpetrate it.¹⁵ They referenced three types of hate crime perpetrators: **thrill seekers** tend to *commit hate crimes with peer group members but do not belong to a hate group*; **hard-core offenders** are *extremely violent and aggressive* (typically hate group members); and **reactive offenders** *ground their attack on a perceived transgression, such as an insult, interracial dating, or a neighborhood integration*.

Many hate crime perpetrators are not members of hate groups. They tend to be young, White, from poorer families, and have very weak self-concepts. Their hate crimes are the result of compensating for their insecurities by making victims out of others.¹⁶

Also, many of these perpetrators utilize secondary justification where they try before, during, and after the assault to prove to themselves and others that they were the victims and not the perpetrators. They lie to police, they react to negative coverage in the media as being an act of aggression, and they self-deceive in terms of what the offense is. For example, they feel that they have been violated when they have to see an interracial or same sex couple in public. Many look for potential victims in places they are likely to hang out.¹⁷

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- ¹ Scientific American, Does Race Exist? December, 2003; pages 78-85
- ² Scientific American, Does Race Exist? December, 2003; pages 80
- ³ US Census, 2000, see <http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html>
- ⁴ See <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/p20-545.pdf>
- ⁵ See Press Release taken from Internet 11 June, 2008 from <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/001720.html>
- ⁶ Retrieved from www.census.gov 3 April 2009. Notice that the Native American category is 1 percent and tends to be very constant at 1 percent of the population. It was not mentioned in this specific Census Bureau report but tends to hover at about 1 percent.
- ⁷ See Max Weber's 1922 work, reprinted in 1978, *Economy and Society* in Roth, G. and Wittich, C. U of Cal Press
- ⁸ See description in U.S. Census Bureau Guidance on the Presentation and Comparison of Race and Hispanic Origin Data. <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/compraceho.html>
- ⁹ See <http://www.thekingcenter.org>
- ¹⁰ *The Nature of Prejudice*. 1979, Perseus Books
- ¹¹ Retrieved 12 June, 2008 from <http://www.lyrics007.com/print.php?id=TkRRNE1USTM>
- ¹² See the "Jigsaw Method" at <http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/PD/coop/page4.html>
- ¹³ See Merton, R. K. 1949, "Discrimination and the American Creed," in *Discrimination and National Welfare*, edited by Maclver, R. M. Harper Pub. NY, pages 77-145
- ¹⁴ See Beirich 2007 Taken from Internet 10 June 2008 from <http://www.splcenter.org/blog/2007/11/19/fbi-releases-hate-crime-statistics/>
- ¹⁵ See from <http://www.fbi.gov/publications/leb/2003/mar2003/mar03leb.htm>
- ¹⁶ See "Why Do Young Men Commit Hate Crimes?" NPR News and Notes 23 June 2006 from <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5506152>
- ¹⁷ See table at FBI.gov retrieved from Internet 10 June 2008 from <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/hc2006/table1.html>