Introduction to

Sociology

3e.

Social Stratification in the United States

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FIGURE 9.1 This house, formerly owned by the famous television producer, Aaron Spelling, sold in 2019 for $119 million, which set the record for the highest individual home sale in California history. It is the largest private home in Los Angeles, and is considered one of the most extravagant homes in the United States. (Credit: Atwater Village Newbie/flickr)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

9.1 What Is Social Stratification?
9.2 Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States
9.3 Global Stratification and Inequality
9.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Social Stratification

INTRODUCTION Jarrett grew up on a farm in rural Ohio, left home to serve in the Army, and returned a few years later to take over the family farm. He moved into his family house, and eighteen months later married Eric, with whom he had maintained a long-distance relationship for several years. Eric had two children from a previous marriage. They quickly realized the income from the farm was no longer sufficient to meet their needs. Jarrett, with little experience beyond the farm, took on a job at a grocery store to supplement his income. This part-time job shifted the direction of their family's life.

One of the managers at the store liked Jarrett, his attitude, and his work ethic. He began to groom Jarrett for advancement at the store, and encouraged him to take a few classes at a local college. Despite knowing he'd receive financial support from the military, this was the first time Jarrett had seriously thought about college. Could he be successful, Jarrett wondered? Could he actually become the first in his family to earn a degree? Fortunately, Eric also believed in him. Jarrett kept his college enrollment a secret from his mother, his brothers, and his friends. He did not want others to know about it, in case he failed.

Jarrett was nervous on his first day of class. He was older than the other students, and he had never considered

himself college material. When he earned only a C- on his first test, he thought his fears were being realized, and that it was perhaps not a fit for him. But his instructor strongly recommended that Jarrett pay a visit to the academic success center. After a few sessions, he utilized a better study schedule and got a B- on the next exam. He was successful in that class, and enrolled in two more the next semester.

Unfortunately, life took a difficult turn when Jarrett's and Eric's daughter became ill; he couldn't focus on his studies and he dropped all of his classes. With his momentum slowed, Jarrett wasn't sure he was ready to resume after his daughter recovered. His daughter, though, set him straight. One day after telling her to start her homework, she was reluctant and said, "You're not doing your homework anymore; I shouldn't have to do mine." A bit annoyed, Jarrett and Eric explained the difference between being an adult with work and family obligations and being a child in middle school. But Jarrett realized he was most upset at himself for using her illness as an excuse. He thought he wasn't living up to the example he wanted to set for her. The next day, he called his academic advisor and re-enrolled.

Just under two years later, Jarrett was walking across the stage to receive a Bachelor's degree with a special certificate for peer support. The ceremony seemed surreal to Jarrett. He'd earned medals and other recognition in the military, but he always felt those accomplishments were shared among his team. While he'd had a lot of help with college, he felt that graduating was a milestone that was more closely tied to himself.

Stories like this permeate American society and may sound familiar, yet this quest to achieve the American Dream is often hard for many Americans to achieve, even with hard work. After all, nearly one in three first-year college students is a first-generation college student and many are not as successful as Jarrett. According to the Center for Student Opportunity, a national nonprofit, 89% of first-generation students will not earn an undergraduate degree within six years of starting their studies. In fact, these students "drop out of college at four times the rate of peers whose parents have postsecondary degrees" (Center for Student Opportunity quoted in Huot 2014).

Why do students with parents who have completed college tend to graduate more often than those students whose parents do not hold degrees? That question and many others will be answered as we explore social stratification.

9.1 What Is Social Stratification?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Differentiate between open and closed stratification systems
- Distinguish between caste and class systems
- Explain why meritocracy is considered an ideal system of stratification

FIGURE 9.2 In the upper echelons of the working world, people with the most power reach the top. These people make the decisions and earn the most money. The majority of Americans will never see the view from the top. (Credit: Alex Proimos/flickr)

Sociologists use the term social stratification to describe the system of social standing. **Social stratification** refers to a society's categorization of its people into rankings based on factors like wealth, income, education, family background, and power.

Geologists also use the word "stratification" to describe the distinct vertical layers found in rock. Typically, society's layers, made of people, represent the uneven distribution of society's resources. Society views the people with more resources as the top layer of the social structure of stratification. Other groups of people, with fewer and fewer resources, represent the lower layers. An individual's place within this stratification is called **socioeconomic status (SES)**.

FIGURE 9.3 Strata in rock illustrate social stratification. People are sorted, or layered, into social categories. Many factors determine a person's social standing, such as wealth, income, education, family background, and power. (Credit: Just a Prairie Boy/flickr)

Most people and institutions in the United States indicate that they value equality, a belief that everyone has an equal chance at success. In other words, hard work and talent—not inherited wealth, prejudicial treatment, institutional racism, or societal values—determine social mobility. This emphasis on choice, motivation, and self-effort perpetuates the American belief that people control their own social standing.

However, sociologists recognize social stratification as a society-wide system that makes inequalities apparent. While inequalities exist between individuals, sociologists are interested in larger social patterns. Sociologists look to see if individuals with similar backgrounds, group memberships, identities, and location in the country share the same social stratification. No individual, rich or poor, can be blamed for social inequalities, but instead all participate in a system where some rise and others fall. Most Americans believe the rising and falling is based on individual choices. But sociologists see how the structure of society affects a person's social standing and therefore is created and supported by society.

FIGURE 9.4 The people who live in these houses most likely share similar levels of income and education. Neighborhoods often house people of the same social standing. Wealthy families do not typically live next door to poorer families, though this varies depending on the particular city and country. (Credit: Orin Zebest/flickr)

Factors that define stratification vary in different societies. In most societies, stratification is an economic system, based on **wealth**, the net value of money and assets a person has, and **income**, a person's wages or investment dividends. While people are regularly categorized based on how rich or poor they are, other important factors influence social standing. For example, in some cultures, prestige is valued, and people who have them are revered more than those who don't. In some cultures, the elderly are esteemed, while in others, the elderly are disparaged or overlooked. Societies' cultural beliefs often reinforce stratification.

One key determinant of social standing is our parents. Parents tend to pass their social position on to their children. People inherit not only social standing but also the cultural norms, values, and beliefs that accompany a certain lifestyle. They share these with a network of friends and family members that provide resources and support. This is one of the reasons first-generation college students do not fare as well as other students. They lack access to the resources and support commonly provided to those whose parents have gone to college.

Other determinants are found in a society's occupational structure. Teachers, for example, often have high levels of education but receive relatively low pay. Many believe that teaching is a noble profession, so teachers should do their jobs for love of their profession and the good of their students—not for money. Yet, the same attitude is not applied to professional athletes, executives, or those working in corporate world. Cultural attitudes and beliefs like these support and perpetuate social and economic inequalities.

Systems of Stratification

Sociologists distinguish between two types of systems of stratification. **Closed systems** accommodate little change in social position. They do not allow people to shift levels and do not permit social relationships between levels. Closed systems include estate, slavery, and caste systems. **Open systems** are based on achievement and allow for movement and interaction between layers and classes. How different systems operate reflect, emphasize, and foster specific cultural values, shaping individual beliefs. In this section, we'll review class and caste stratification systems, plus discuss the ideal system of meritocracy.

The Caste System

FIGURE 9.5 India used to have a rigid caste system. The people in the lowest caste suffered from extreme poverty and were shunned by society. Some aspects of India's defunct caste system remain socially relevant. (Credit: Elessar/flickr)

Caste systems are closed stratification systems where people can do little or nothing to change the social standing of their birth. The caste system determines all aspects of an individual's life: occupations, marriage partners, and housing. Individual talents, interests, or potential do not provide opportunities to improve a person's social position.

In the Hindu caste tradition, people expect to work in an occupation and to enter into a marriage based on their caste. Accepting this social standing is considered a moral duty and people are socialized to accept their social standing. Cultural values reinforced the system. Caste systems promote beliefs in fate, destiny, and the will of a higher power, rather than promoting individual freedom as a value. This belief system is an ideology. Every culture has an **ideology** that supports its system of stratification.

The caste system in India has been officially dismantled, but is still deeply embedded in Indian society, particularly in rural areas. In India's larger cities, people now have more opportunities to choose their own career paths and marriage partners. As a global center of employment, corporations have introduced merit-based hiring and employment to the nation shifting the cultural expectations of the caste system.

The Class System

A **class system** is based on both social factors and individual achievement. A **class** consists of a set of people who share similar status based on factors like wealth, income, education, family background, and occupation. Unlike caste systems, class systems are open. People may move to a different level (vertical movement) of education or employment status than their parents. Though family and other societal models help guide a person toward a career, personal choice and opportunity play a role.

They can also socialize with and marry members of other classes. People have the option to form an **exogamous marriage**, a union of spouses from different social categories. Exogamous marriages often focus on values such as love and compatibility. Though social conformities still exist that encourage people to choose partners within their own class, called an **endogamous marriage**, people are not as pressured to choose

marriage partners based solely on their social location.

Meritocracy

Meritocracy is a hypothetical system in which social stratification is determined by personal effort and merit. The concept of meritocracy is an ideal because no society has ever existed where social standing was based entirely on merit. Rather, multiple factors influence social standing, including processes like socialization and the realities of inequality within economic systems. While a meritocracy has never existed, sociologists see aspects of meritocracies in modern societies when they study the role of academic and job performance and the systems in place for evaluating and rewarding achievement in these areas.

The differences between an open and closed system are explored further in the example below.

Status Consistency

Sociologists use the term **status consistency** to describe the consistency, or lack thereof, of an individual's rank across the factors that determine social stratification within a lifetime. Caste systems correlate with high status consistency, due to the inability to move out of a class, whereas the more flexible class system demonstrates lower status consistency.

To illustrate, let's consider Serena. Serena earned her high school diploma but did not go to college. Completing high school but not college is a trait more common to the lower-middle class. After high school, she began landscaping, which, as manual labor, tracks with lower-middle class or even lower class. However, over time, Serena started her own company. She hired employees. She won larger contracts. Serena became a business owner and earned more money. Those traits represent the upper-middle class. Inconsistencies between Serena's educational level, her occupation, and income show Serena's flexibility in her social status, giving her low status consistency. In a class system, hard work, new opportunities, coupled with a lower education status still allow a person movement into middle or upper class, whereas in a caste system, that would not be possible. In a class system, low status consistency correlates with having more choices and opportunities.

SOCIAL POLICY AND DEBATE

LEAVING ROYALTY BEHIND

FIGURE 9.6 Prince Harry and Meghan Markle with other members of the Royal family, in 2017. One year later, the couple would wed and the American-born actress and fashion-designer would immediately become Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Sussex, a position and title that bestows significant benefits of social class (Credit: Mark

Jones/Wikimedia Commons)

Meghan Markle, who married a member of the British royal family, for years endured unceasing negative media attention, invasion of privacy, and racially abusive comments. She and her husband–Prince Harry, grandson to Queen Elizabeth–undertook a series of legal actions to push back against overly aggressive media outlets. But because of the continued harassment and disagreements with others in the royal family, Meghan and Harry decided to step down from their royal obligations and begin a disassociation from the British monarchy. In doing so, they gave up honorary positions, titles, and financial support. For Meghan, who had been born in the U.S. and had earned her wealth through a successful career, these changes may not be so jarring. Prince Harry, however, had been "His Royal Highness" since he was born; by nature of his ancestry he was entitled to vast sums of money, property, and cultural-political positions such as Honorary Air Commandant, Commodore-in-Chief, and President of the Queen's Commonwealth Trust. Harry would also lose the military rank he had earned through almost ten years of military service, including two combat deployments to Afghanistan. Would Megxit work for him? What gave him those honors in the first place?

Britain's monarchy arose during the Middle Ages. Its social hierarchy placed royalty at the top and commoners on the bottom. This was generally a closed system, with people born into positions of nobility. Wealth was passed from generation to generation through **primogeniture**, a law stating that all property would be inherited by the firstborn son. If the family had no son, the land went to the next closest male relation. Women could not inherit property, and their social standing was primarily determined through marriage.

The arrival of the Industrial Revolution changed Britain's social structure. Commoners moved to cities, got jobs, and made better livings. Gradually, people found new opportunities to increase their wealth and power. Today, the government is a constitutional monarchy with the prime minister and other ministers elected to their positions, and with the royal family's role being largely ceremonial. The long-ago differences between nobility and commoners have blurred, and the modern class system in Britain is similar to that of the United States (McKee 1996).

Today, the royal family still commands wealth, power, and a great deal of attention. When Queen Elizabeth II retires or passes away, Prince Charles will be first in line to ascend the throne. If he abdicates (chooses not to become king) or dies, the position will go to Prince William, Prince Harry's older brother.

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, meanwhile, moved to Los Angeles and signed a voiceover deal with Disney while also joining Netflix in a series production. They founded an organization focusing on non-profit activities and media ventures. Living in LA and working to some extent in entertainment, they will likely be considered a different type of royalty.

9.2 Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:
- Describe the U.S. class structure
- Describe several types of social mobility
- Recognize characteristics that define and identify class

How does social stratification affect your ability to move up or down the social classes? What is a standard of living? What factors matter in rising up or becoming more successful in the eyes of those around you? Does being in a social class dictate your style, behavior, or opportunities?

Social Classes in the United States

FIGURE 9.7 Does taste or fashion sense indicate class? Is there any way to tell if these people come from an upper-, middle-, or lower-class background? (Credit: Kelly Bailey/flickr)

For sociologists, categorizing social class is a fluid science. Sociologists generally identify three levels of class in the United States: upper, middle, and lower class. Within each class, there are many subcategories. Wealth is the most significant way of distinguishing classes, because wealth can be transferred to one's children and perpetuate the class structure. One economist, J.D. Foster, defines the 20 percent of U.S. citizens' highest earners as "upper income," and the lower 20 percent as "lower income." The remaining 60 percent of the population make up the middle class (Mason 2010). With that distinction, economists can describe the range in annual household incomes for the middle-class, but they cannot show how the range of all incomes vary and how they change over time. For this reason, the Pew Center defines classes based on the median household income. The lower class includes those whose income is two-thirds of the national median, the middle class includes those whose income falls between two-thirds and twice the median, and the upper class includes those whose income is above twice the national median (Kochhar 2015). Though median income levels vary from state to state, at the national level you would be considered in the middle-class if you earned between $48,500 to $145,500 in 2018 U.S. dollars (Bennett 2000).

One sociological perspective distinguishes the classes, in part, according to their relative power and control over their lives. Members of the upper class not only have power and control over their own lives, but their social status gives them power and control over others' lives. The middle class doesn't generally control other strata of society, but its members do exert control over their own lives. In contrast, the lower class has little control over their work or lives. Below, we will explore the major divisions of U.S. social class and their key subcategories.

Upper Class

FIGURE 9.8 Members of the upper class can afford to live, work, and play in exclusive places, such as country clubs and gated communities, designed for luxury, safety, and comfort. (Credit: PrimeImageMedia.com/flickr)

The upper class is considered the top, and only the powerful elite get to see the view from there. In the United States, people with extreme wealth make up one percent of the population, and they own roughly one-third of the country's wealth (Beeghley 2008).

Money provides not just access to material goods, but also access to a lot of power. As corporate leaders, members of the upper class make decisions that affect the job status of millions of people. As media owners, they influence the collective identity of the nation. They run the major network television stations, radio broadcasts, newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, and sports franchises. As board members of the most influential colleges and universities, they influence cultural attitudes and values. As philanthropists, they establish foundations to support social causes they believe in. As campaign contributors and legislation drivers, they fund political campaigns to sway policymakers, sometimes to protect their own economic interests and at other times to support or promote a cause. (The methods, effectiveness, and impact of these political efforts are discussed in the Politics and Government chapter.)

U.S. society has historically distinguished between "old money" (inherited wealth passed from one generation to the next) and "new money" (wealth you have earned and built yourself). While both types may have equal net worth, they have traditionally held different social standings. People of old money, firmly situated in the upper class for generations, have held high prestige. Their families have socialized them to know the customs, norms, and expectations that come with wealth. Often, the very wealthy don't work for wages. Some study business or become lawyers in order to manage the family fortune. Others, such as Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian, capitalize on being a rich socialite and transform that into celebrity status, flaunting a wealthy lifestyle.

However, new-money members of the upper class are not oriented to the customs and mores of the elite. They haven't gone to the most exclusive schools. They have not established old-money social ties. People with new money might flaunt their wealth, buying sports cars and mansions, but they might still exhibit behaviors attributed to the middle and lower classes.

The Middle Class

FIGURE 9.9 These members of a club likely consider themselves middle class, as do many Americans. (Credit: United Way Canada-Centraide Canada/flickr)

Many people consider themselves middle class, but there are differing ideas about what that means. People with annual incomes of $150,000 call themselves middle class, as do people who annually earn $30,000. That helps explain why, in the United States, the middle class is broken into upper and lower subcategories.

Lower-middle class members tend to complete a two-year associate's degrees from community or technical colleges or a four-year bachelor's degree. Upper-middle class people tend to continue on to postgraduate degrees. They've studied subjects such as business, management, law, or medicine.

Middle-class people work hard and live fairly comfortable lives. Upper-middle-class people tend to pursue careers, own their homes, and travel on vacation. Their children receive high-quality education and healthcare (Gilbert 2010). Parents can support more specialized needs and interests of their children, such as more extensive tutoring, arts lessons, and athletic efforts, which can lead to more social mobility for the next generation. Families within the middle class may have access to some wealth, but also must work for an income to maintain this lifestyle.

In the lower middle class, people hold jobs supervised by members of the upper middle class. They fill technical, lower- level management or administrative support positions. Compared to lower-class work, lower-middle-class jobs carry more prestige and come with slightly higher paychecks. With these incomes, people can afford a decent, mainstream lifestyle, but they struggle to maintain it. They generally don't have enough income to build significant savings. In addition, their grip on class status is more precarious than those in the upper tiers of the class system. When companies need to save money, lower-middle class people are often the ones to lose their jobs.

The Lower Class

FIGURE 9.10 Bike messengers and bike delivery people are often considered members of the working class. They endure difficult and dangerous conditions to do their work, and they are not always well represented by government agencies and in regulations designed for safety or fairness. (Credit: edwardhblake/flickr)

The lower class is also referred to as the working class. Just like the middle and upper classes, the lower class can be divided into subsets: the working class, the working poor, and the underclass. Compared to the lower middle class, people from the lower economic class have less formal education and earn smaller incomes. They work jobs that require less training or experience than middle-class occupations and often do routine tasks under close supervision.

Working-class people, the highest subcategory of the lower class, often land steady jobs. The work is hands-on and often physically demanding, such as landscaping, cooking, cleaning, or building.

Beneath the working class is the working poor. They have unskilled, low-paying employment. However, their jobs rarely offer benefits such as healthcare or retirement planning, and their positions are often seasonal or temporary. They work as migrant farm workers, housecleaners, and day laborers. Education is limited. Some lack a high school diploma.

How can people work full-time and still be poor? Even working full-time, millions of the working poor earn incomes too meager to support a family. The government requires employers pay a minimum wage that varies from state to state, and often leave individuals and families below the poverty line. In addition to low wages, the value of the wage has not kept pace with inflation. "The real value of the federal minimum wage has dropped 17% since 2009 and 31% since 1968 (Cooper, Gould, & Zipperer, 2019). Furthermore, the living wage, the amount necessary to meet minimum standards, differs across the country because the cost of living differs. Therefore, the amount of income necessary to survive in an area such as New York City differs dramatically from small town in Oklahoma (Glasmeier, 2020).

The underclass is the United States' lowest tier. The term itself and its classification of people have been questioned, and some prominent sociologists (including a former president of the American Sociological Association), believe its use is either overgeneralizing or incorrect (Gans 1991). But many economists, sociologists government agencies, and advocacy groups recognize the growth of the underclass. Members of the underclass live mainly in inner cities. Many are unemployed or underemployed. Those who do hold jobs typically perform menial tasks for little pay. Some of the underclass are homeless. Many rely on welfare systems to provide food, medical care, and housing assistance, which often does not cover all their basic needs. The underclass have more stress, poorer health, and suffer crises fairly regularly.

Class Traits

Does a person's appearance indicate class? Can you tell a person's education level based on their clothing? Do you know a person's income by the car they drive? **Class traits**, also called class markers, are the typical behaviors, customs, and norms that define each class. Class traits indicate the level of exposure a person has to a wide range of cultures. Class traits also indicate the amount of resources a person has to spend on items like hobbies, vacations, and leisure activities.

People may associate the upper class with enjoyment of costly, refined, or highly cultivated tastes—expensive clothing, luxury cars, high-end fund-raisers, and frequent or expensive vacations. People may also believe that the middle and lower classes are more likely to enjoy camping, fishing, or hunting, shopping at large retailers, and participating in community activities. While these descriptions may identify class traits, they are stereotypes. Moreover, just as class distinctions have blurred in recent decades, so too have class traits. A factory worker could be a skilled French cook. A billionaire might dress in ripped jeans, and a low-income student might own designer shoes.

For famous wealthy people, making choices that do not seem to align with their economic status can often lead to public commentary. Jennifer Lopez being spotted in a dress that cost less than $30 and Zac Efron shopping at thrift stores have made the news. Others, like Halle Berry and Keanu Reeves, are known for frequent use of public transportation and relatively modest living (at least when considering to their net worth). When questioned, most point to nothing more than practicality. Lady Gaga tweeted " why do people look at me like I'm crazy when i use coupons at grocery or try bargaining at retail..." (2012). And in dense, crowded cities such as Washington, Chicago, and New York, riding the trains is often faster and easier than taking a car.

Social Mobility

People are often inspired and amazed at people's ability to overcome extremely difficult upbringings. Mariano Rivera, acknowledged to be the best relief pitcher in history, made a baseball glove out of cardboard and tape because his family could not afford a real one. Alice Coachman grew up with few resources and was denied access to training facilities because of her race; she ran barefoot and built her own high jump equipment before becoming the first Black athlete (and one of the first American track and field athletes) to win an Olympic Gold. Pelé, perhaps the most transformative figure in soccer, learned the game while using a rag-stuffed sock for a ball. These are some of the stories told in documentaries or biographies meant to inspire and share the challenges of unequal upbringings. Relative to the overall population, the number of people who rise from poverty to become very successful is small, and the number that become wealthy is even smaller. Systemic barriers like unequal education, discrimination, and lack of opportunity can slow or diminish one's ability to move up. Still, people who earn a college degree, get a job promotion, or marry someone with a good income may move up socially.

Social mobility refers to the ability of individuals to change positions within a social stratification system. When people improve or diminish their economic status in a way that affects social class, they experience social mobility. Individuals can experience upward or downward social mobility for a variety of reasons. **Upward mobility** refers to an increase—or upward shift—when they move from a lower to a higher socioeconomical class. In contrast, individuals experience **downward mobility** when they move from higher socioeconomic class to a lower one. Some people move downward because of business setbacks, unemployment, or illness. Dropping out of school, losing a job, or getting a divorce may result in a loss of income or status and, therefore, downward social mobility.

It is not uncommon for different generations of a family to belong to varying social classes. This is known as **intergenerational mobility**. For example, an upper-class executive may have parents who belonged to the middle class. In turn, those parents may have been raised in the lower class. Patterns of intergenerational mobility can reflect long-term societal changes.

On the other hand, **intragenerational mobility** refers to changes in a person's social mobility over the course

of their lifetime. For example, the wealth and prestige experienced by one person may be quite different from that of their siblings.

Structural mobility happens when societal changes enable a whole group of people to move up or down the social class ladder. Structural mobility is attributable to changes in society as a whole. In the first half of the twentieth century, industrialization expanded the U.S. economy, raising the standard of living and leading to upward structural mobility for almost everyone. In the decade and a half of the twenty-first century, recessions and the outsourcing of jobs overseas have contributed to the withdrawal of Americans from the workforce (BLS 2021). Many people experienced economic setbacks, creating a wave of downward structural mobility.

When analyzing the trends and movements in social mobility, sociologists consider all modes of mobility. Scholars recognize that mobility is not as common or easy to achieve as many people think.

Stratification of Socioeconomic Classes

In the last century, the United States has seen a steady rise in its **standard of living**, the level of wealth available to acquire the material necessities and comforts to maintain a specific lifestyle. The country's standard of living is based on factors such as income, employment, class, literacy rates, mortality rates, poverty rates, and housing affordability. A country with a high standard of living will often reflect a high quality of life, which in the United States means residents can afford a home, own a car, and take vacations. Ultimately, standard of living is shaped by the wealth and distribution of wealth in a country and the expectations its citizens have for their lifestyle.

Wealth is not evenly distributed in most countries. In the United States, a small portion of the population has the means to the highest standard of living. The wealthiest one percent of the population holds one-third of our nation's wealth while the bottom 50 percent of Americans hold only 2 percent. Those in-between, the top 50 to 90 percent hold almost two-thirds of the nation's wealth (The Federal Reserve, 2021).

Many people think of the United States as a "middle-class society." They think a few people are rich, a few are poor, and most are fairly well off, existing in the middle of the social strata. Rising from lower classes into the middle-class is to achieve the American Dream. For this reason, scholars are particularly worried by the shrinking of the middle class. Although the middle class is still significantly larger than the lower and upper classes, it shrank from 69 percen in 1971 to 51 percent in 2020. argue the most significant threat to the U.S.'s relatively high standard of living is the decline of the middle class. The wealth of the middle class has also been declining in recent decades. Its share of the wealth fell from 32 percent in 1983 to 16 percent in 2016 (Horowitz, Igielnik, & Kochhar 2020).

People with wealth often receive the most and best schooling, access better health care, and consume the most goods and services. In addition, wealthy people also wield decision-making power over their daily life because money gives them access to better resources. By contrasts, many lower-income individuals receive less education and inadequate health care and have less influence over the circumstances of their everyday lives.

Additionally, tens of millions of women and men struggle to pay rent, buy food, find work, and afford basic medical care. Women who are single heads of household tend to have a lower income and lower standard of living than their married or single male counterparts. This is a worldwide phenomenon known as the "**feminization of poverty**"—which acknowledges that women disproportionately make up the majority of individuals in poverty across the globe and have a lower standard of living. In the United States, women make up approximately 56 percent of Americans living in poverty. One reason for this difference is the struggle of single mothers to provide for their children. One in four unmarried mother lives in poverty (Bleiweis, 2020). The wage gap, discussed extensively in the Work and the Economy chapter, also contributes to the gender-disparity in poverty.

In the United States, poverty is most often referred to as a relative rather than absolute measurement. **Absolute poverty** is an economic condition in which a family or individual cannot afford basic necessities,

such as food and shelter, so that day-to-day survival is in jeopardy. **Relative poverty** is an economic condition in which a family or individuals have 50% income less than the average median income. This income is sometimes called the poverty level or the poverty line. In 2021, for example, the poverty for a single individual was set at $12,880 for one individual, $17,420 for a couple, and $26,500 for a family of four (ASPE 2021).

As a wealthy developed country, the United States invests in resources to provide the basic necessities to those in need through a series of federal and state social welfare programs. These programs provide food, medical, and cash assistance. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) provides cash assistance. The goal of TANF is to help families with children achieve economic self-sufficiency. Adults who receive assistance must fall under a specific income level, usually half the poverty level, set by the state. TANF funding goes to childcare, support for parents who are working or training a required number of hours a week, and other services. TANF is time-limited. Most states only provide assistance for a maximum of 5 years (CBPP).

One of the best-known programs is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), administered by the United States Department of Agriculture and formerly known as the Food Stamp Program. This program began in the Great Depression, when unmarketable or surplus food was distributed to the hungry. It was not formalized until 1961, when President John F. Kennedy initiated a food stamp pilot program. His successor Lyndon B. Johnson was instrumental in the passage of the Food Stamp Act in 1964. In 1965, more than 500,000 individuals received food assistance. During the height of the pandemic in 2020, participation reached 43 million people.

9.3 Global Stratification and Inequality

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:
- Define global stratification
- Describe different sociological models for understanding global stratification
- Explain the ways that studies of global stratification enable social scientists to identify worldwide inequalities

FIGURE 9.11 A family lives in this grass hut in Ethiopia. Another family lives in a single-wide trailer in the United States. Both families are considered poor, or lower class. With such differences in global stratification, what constitutes poverty? (Credit: (a) Canned Muffins/flickr; Photo (b) Herb Neufeld/flickr)

Global stratification compares the wealth, status, power, and economic stability of countries across the world. Global stratification highlights worldwide patterns of social inequality.

In the early years of civilization, hunter-gatherer and agrarian societies lived off the earth and rarely interacted with other societies. When explorers began traveling, societies began trading goods, as well as ideas and customs.

In the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution created unprecedented wealth in Western Europe and North America. Due to mechanical inventions and new means of production, people began working in

factories—not only men, but women and children as well. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, industrial technology had gradually raised the standard of living for many people in the United States and Europe.

The Industrial Revolution also saw the rise of vast inequalities between countries that were industrialized and those that were not. As some nations embraced technology and saw increased wealth and goods, the non-industrialized nations fell behind economically, and the gap widened.

Sociologists studying global stratification analyze economic comparisons between nations. Income, purchasing power, and wealth are used to calculate global stratification. Global stratification also compares the quality of life that a country's population can have. Poverty levels have been shown to vary greatly across countries. Yet all countries struggle to support the lower classes.

Models of Global Stratification

FIGURE 9.12 Luxury vacation resorts can contribute to a poorer country's economy. This one, in Jamaica, attracts middle and upper-middle class people from wealthier nations. The resort is a source of income and provides jobs for local people. Just outside its borders, however, are poverty-stricken neighborhoods. (Credit, both photos: Gail Frederick/flickr)

In order to determine the stratification or ranking of a country, economists created various models of global stratification. All of these models have one thing in common: they rank countries according to their economic status, often ranked by gross national product (GNP). The GNP is the value of goods and services produced by a nation's citizens both within its boarders and abroad.

Another system of global classification defines countries based on the gross domestic product (GDP), a country's national wealth. The GDP calculated annually either totals the income of all people living within its borders or the value of all goods and services produced in the country during the year. It also includes government spending. Because the GDP indicates a country's productivity and performance, comparing GDP rates helps establish a country's economic health in relation to other countries, with some countries rising to the top and others falling to the bottom. The chapter on Work and the Economy (specifically the section on Globalization and the Economy) shows the differences in GDP among various countries.

Traditional models, now considered outdated, used labels, such as "first world", "second world," and "third world" to describe the stratification of the different areas of the world. First and second world described industrialized nations, while third world referred to "undeveloped" countries (Henslin 2004). When researching existing historical sources, you may still encounter these terms, and even today people still refer to some nations as the "third world." This model, however, is outdated because it lumps countries together that are quite different in terms of wealth, power, prestige, and economic stability.

Another model separates countries into two groups: more developed and less developed. More-developed nations have higher wealth, such as Canada, Japan, and Australia. Less-developed nations have less wealth to distribute among populations, including many countries in central Africa, South America, and some island

nations.

GNP and GDP are used to gain insight into global stratification based on a country's standard of living. According to this analysis, a GDP standard of a middle-income nation represents a global average. In low-income countries, most people are poor relative to people in other countries. Citizens have little access to amenities such as electricity, plumbing, and clean water. People in low-income countries are not guaranteed education, and many are illiterate. The life expectancy of citizens is lower than in high-income countries. Therefore, the different expectations in lifestyle and access to resources varies.

The Big Picture: Calculating Global Stratification

A few organizations take on the job of comparing the wealth of nations. The Population Reference Bureau (PRB) is one of them. Besides a focus on population data, the PRB publishes an annual report that measures the relativeeconomic well-being of all the world's countries using the Gross National Income (GNI) and Purchasing Power Parity (PPP).

The GNI measures the current value of goods and services produced by a country. The PPP measures the relative power a country has to purchase those same goods and services. So, GNI refers to productive output and PPP refers to buying power.

Because costs of goods and services vary from one country to the next, the PPP is used to convert the GNI into a relative international unit. This value is then divided by the number of residents living in a country to establish the average relative income of a resident of that country. This measure is called the GNI PPI. Calculating GNI PPP figures helps researchers accurately compare countries' standard of living. They allow the United Nations and Population Reference Bureau to compare and rank the wealth of all countries and consider international stratification issues (nationsonline.org).

9.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Social Stratification

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Apply functionalist, conflict theory, and interactionist perspectives on social stratification

Basketball is one of the highest-paying professional sports and stratification exists even among teams in the NBA. For example, the Toronto Raptors hands out the lowest annual payroll, while the New York Knicks reportedly pays the highest. Stephen Curry, a Golden State Warriors guard, is one of the highest paid athletes in the NBA, earning around $43 million a year (Sports Illustrated 2020), whereas the lowest paid player earns just over $200,000 (ESPN 2021). Even within specific fields, layers are stratified, members are ranked, and inequality exists.

In sociology, even an issue such as NBA salaries can be seen from various points of view. Functionalists will examine the purpose of such high salaries, conflict theorists will study the exorbitant salaries as an unfair distribution of money, and symbolic interactionists will describe how players display that wealth. Social stratification takes on new meanings when it is examined from different sociological perspectives—functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

Functionalism

In sociology, the functionalist perspective examines how society's parts operate. According to functionalism, different aspects of society exist because they serve a vital purpose. What is the function of social stratification?

In 1945, sociologists Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore published the **Davis-Moore thesis**, which argued that

the greater the functional importance of a social role, the greater must be the reward. The theory posits that social stratification represents the inherently unequal value of different work. Certain tasks in society are more valuable than others (for example, doctors or lawyers). Qualified people who fill those positions are rewarded more than others.

According to Davis and Moore, a firefighter's job is more important than, for instance, a grocery store cashier's job. The cashier position does not require similar skill and training level as firefighting. Without the incentive of higher pay, better benefits, and increased respect, why would someone be willing to rush into burning buildings? If pay levels were the same, the firefighter might as well work as a grocery store cashier and avoid the risk of firefighting. Davis and Moore believed that rewarding more important work with higher levels of income, prestige, and power encourages people to work harder and longer.

Davis and Moore stated that, in most cases, the degree of skill required for a job determines that job's importance. They noted that the more skill required for a job, the fewer qualified people there would be to do that job. Certain jobs, such as cleaning hallways or answering phones, do not require much skill. Therefore, most people would be qualified for these positions. Other work, like designing a highway system or delivering a baby, requires immense skill limiting the number of people qualified to take on this type of work.

Many scholars have criticized the Davis-Moore thesis. In 1953, Melvin Tumin argued that it does not explain inequalities in the education system or inequalities due to race or gender. Tumin believed social stratification prevented qualified people from attempting to fill roles (Tumin 1953).

Conflict Theory

FIGURE 9.13 These people are protesting a decision made by Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee, to lay off custodians and outsource the jobs to a private firm to avoid paying employee benefits. Private job agencies often pay lower hourly wages. Is the decision fair? (Credit: Brian Stansberry/Wikimedia Commons)

Conflict theorists are deeply critical of social stratification, asserting that it benefits only some people, not all of society. For instance, to a conflict theorist, it seems wrong that a basketball player is paid millions for an annual contract while a public school teacher may earn $35,000 a year. Stratification, conflict theorists believe, perpetuates inequality. Conflict theorists try to bring awareness to inequalities, such as how a rich society can have so many poor members.

Many conflict theorists draw on the work of Karl Marx. During the nineteenth-century era of industrialization,

Marx believed social stratification resulted from people's relationship to production. People were divided into two main groups: they either owned factories or worked in them. In Marx's time, bourgeois capitalists owned high-producing businesses, factories, and land, as they still do today. Proletariats were the workers who performed the manual labor to produce goods. Upper-class capitalists raked in profits and got rich, while working-class proletariats earned skimpy wages and struggled to survive. With such opposing interests, the two groups were divided by differences of wealth and power. Marx believed workers experience deep alienation, isolation and misery resulting from powerless status levels (Marx 1848). Marx argued that proletariats were oppressed by the bourgeoisie.

Today, while working conditions have improved, conflict theorists believe that the strained working relationship between employers and employees still exists. Capitalists own the means of production, and a system is in place to make business owners rich and keep workers poor. According to conflict theorists, the resulting stratification creates class conflict.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism uses everyday interactions of individuals to explain society as a whole. Symbolic interactionism examines stratification from a micro-level perspective. This analysis strives to explain how people's social standing affects their everyday interactions.

In most communities, people interact primarily with others who share the same social standing. It is precisely because of social stratification that people tend to live, work, and associate with others like themselves, people who share their same income level, educational background, class traits and even tastes in food, music, and clothing. The built-in system of social stratification groups people together. This is one of the reasons why it was rare for a royal prince like England's Prince William to marry a commoner.

Symbolic interactionists also note that people's appearance reflects their perceived social standing. As discussed above, class traits seen through housing, clothing, and transportation indicate social status, as do hairstyles, taste in accessories, and personal style. Symbolic interactionists also analyze how individuals think of themselves or others interpretation of themselves based on these class traits.

FIGURE 9.14 (a) A group of construction workers on the job site, and (b) businesspeople in a meeting. What categories of stratification do these construction workers share? How do construction workers differ from executives or custodians? Who is more skilled? Who has greater prestige in society? (Credit: (a) Wikimedia Commons; Photo (b) Chun Kit/flickr)

To symbolically communicate social standing, people often engage in **conspicuous consumption**, which is the purchase and use of certain products to make a social statement about status. Carrying pricey but eco-friendly water bottles could indicate a person's social standing, or what they would like others to believe their social standing is. Some people buy expensive trendy sneakers even though they will never wear them to jog or play sports. A $17,000 car provides transportation as easily as a $100,000 vehicle, but the luxury car makes a social

statement that the less expensive car can't live up to. All these symbols of stratification are worthy of examination by an interactionist.

Key Terms

absolute poverty   deprivation so severe that it puts day-to-day survival in jeopardy.

caste system   a system in which people are born into a social standing that they will retain their entire lives

class   a group who shares a common social status based on factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation

class system   social standing based on social factors and individual accomplishments

class traits   the typical behaviors, customs, and norms that define each class (also called class markers)

closed system   a system of stratification that accommodates little change in social position.

conspicuous consumption   the act of buying and using products to make a statement about one's social standing

Davis-Moore thesis   a thesis that argues some social stratification is a social necessity and is functional

downward mobility   a lowering of one's social class

endogamous marriages   unions of people within the same social category

exogamous unions   unions of spouses from different social categories

global stratification   a comparison of the wealth, status, power, and economic stability of countries as a whole

ideology   the cultural belief system that justifies a society's system of stratification

income   the money a person earns from work or investments

intergenerational mobility   a difference in social class between different generations of a family

intragenerational mobility   changes in a person's social mobility over the course of their lifetime.

meritocracy   an ideal system in which personal effort—or merit—determines social standing

open system   a system of stratification, based on achievement, that allows some movement and interaction between layers and classes.

primogeniture   a law stating that all property passes to the firstborn son

relative poverty   is not having the means to live the lifestyle of the average person in your country

social mobility   the ability to change positions within a social stratification system

social stratification   a socioeconomic system that divides society's members into categories ranking from high to low, based on things like wealth, power, and prestige. Also called inequality.

socioeconomic status (SES)   an individual's level of wealth, power, and prestige

standard of living   the level of wealth available to acquire material goods and comforts to maintain a particular socioeconomic lifestyle

status consistency   the consistency, or lack thereof, of an individual's rank across social categories like wealth, power, and prestige

structural mobility   a societal change that enables a whole group of people to move up or down the class ladder

upward mobility   an increase—or upward shift—in social class

wealth   the value of money and assets a person has from, for example, inheritance or salary.

Section Summary

9.1 What Is Social Stratification?

Stratification systems, where people are ranked based on their wealth, power, and status within society, are either closed, meaning they allow little change in social position, or open, meaning they allow movement and interaction between the layers. A caste system is one in which social standing is based on ascribed status or birth. Class systems are open, with achievement playing a role in social position. People fall into classes based on factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation. A meritocracy is an ideal system of social stratification that confers standing based on solely on personal worth, rewarding effort. A pure meritocracy has never existed. Stratification is reinforced and shaped by cultural beliefs and values, called an ideology.

9.2 Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States

The United States has a high standard of living, where individuals expect to own property and have the ability to travel. Even so, the United States struggles with economic inequality, with a small number of citizens with a large amount of wealth and a larger number of people falling into relative poverty. There are three main classes in the United States: upper, middle, and lower class. Social mobility describes a shift from one social class to another. Class traits, also called class markers, are the typical behaviors, customs, and norms that define each class, but have become less definitive in assigning class to a specific individual.

9.3 Global Stratification and Inequality

Global stratification compares the wealth, status, power, and economic stability, of countries and ranks the countries. By comparing income and productivity between nations, researchers can better identify global financial and economic leaders as well as inequalities within and among nations.

9.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Social Stratification

Social stratification can be examined from different sociological perspectives—functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. The functionalist perspective states that systems exist in society for good reasons, such as incentives and rewards for those who demonstrate high skill and complete a high-level of education or training. Conflict theorists observe that stratification promotes inequality, such as different opportunities and success of rich business owners and their lower paid workers. Symbolic interactionists examine stratification from a micro-level perspective. They observe how social standing affects people's everyday interactions and how the concept of "social class" is constructed and maintained through everyday interactions.

Section Quiz

9.1 What Is Social Stratification?

1. What factor makes caste systems closed?
    a. They are run by secretive governments.
    b. People cannot change their social standing.
    c. Most have been outlawed.
    d. They exist only in rural areas.

2. Which of these systems allows for the most social mobility?
    a. Caste
    b. Monarchy
    c. Meritocracy
    d. Class

3. Which person best illustrates opportunities for upward social mobility in the United States?
    a. First-shift factory worker
    b. First-generation college student
    c. Firstborn son who inherits the family business
    d. First-time interviewee who is hired for a job

4. Which statement illustrates low status consistency?
    a. A suburban family lives in a modest ranch home and enjoys a nice vacation each summer.
    b. A single mother receives food stamps and struggles to find adequate employment.
    c. A college dropout launches an online company that earns millions in its first year.
    d. A celebrity actor owns homes in three countries.

5. Based on meritocracy, a physician's assistant would:
   a. receive the same pay as all the other physician's assistants
   b. be considered a member of the upper class
   c. most likely marry a professional at the same level
   d. earn a pay raise for doing excellent work

9.2 Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States

6. In the United States, most people define themselves as:
   a. middle class
   b. upper class
   c. lower class
   d. no specific class

7. The behaviors, customs, and norms associated with a class are known as:
   a. class traits
   b. power
   c. prestige
   d. underclass

8. Which of the following scenarios is an example of intragenerational mobility?
   a. A janitor belongs to the same social class as his grandmother did.
   b. An executive belongs to a different class than her parents.
   c. An editor shares the same social class as his cousin.
   d. A lawyer belongs to a different class than her sister.

9. Occupational prestige means that jobs are:
   a. all equal in status
   b. not equally valued
   c. assigned to a person for life
   d. not part of a person's self-identity

9.3 Global Stratification and Inequality

10. How do traditional models of global stratification breakdown different categories of countries?
   a. They analyze the degree of industrialization.
   b. They evaluate cultural norms and social goals.
   c. They measure social mobility between classes.
   d. They use measures to assess the economic power each nation.

11. Which event created a significant divide between Western Europe/America and the rest of the world?
   a. The Industrial Revolution
   b. The American Revolution
   c. The Reformation
   d. World War I

12. The GNI PPP figure represents:
   a. a country's total accumulated wealth
   b. annual government spending
   c. the average annual income of a country's citizens
   d. a country's debt

9.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Social Stratification

13. The basic premise of the Davis-Moore thesis is that the unequal distribution of rewards in social stratification:
   a. is an outdated mode of societal organization
   b. is an artificial reflection of society
   c. serves a purpose in society
   d. cannot be justified

14. Unlike Davis and Moore, Melvin Tumin believed that, because of social stratification, some qualified people were _____ higher-level job positions.
   a. denied the opportunity to obtain
   b. encouraged to train for
   c. often fired from
   d. forced into

15. Which statement represents stratification from the perspective of symbolic interactionism?
   a. Men often earn more than women, even working the same job.
   b. After work, Pat, a janitor, feels more comfortable eating in a truck stop than a French restaurant.
   c. Doctors earn more money because their job is more highly valued.
   d. Teachers continue to struggle to keep benefits such as health insurance.

16. When Karl Marx said workers experience alienation, he meant that workers:
   a. must labor alone, without companionship
   b. do not feel connected to their work or to one another
   c. move from one geographical location to another
   d. have to put forth self-effort to get ahead

17. Conflict theorists view capitalists as those who:
   a. are ambitious
   b. fund social services
   c. spend money wisely
   d. get rich while workers stay poor

Short Answer

9.1 What Is Social Stratification?

1. Track the social stratification of your family tree. Did the social standing of your parents differ from the social standing of your grandparents and great-grandparents? Are there any exogamous marriages in your history? Does your family exhibit status consistencies or inconsistencies?

2. Review the concept of stratification. Does your family have wealth? What is the overall family income? What kind of employment do your caregivers/parents/guardians have? Where would you guess you fall within the social classes (low, middle, or high)?

3. Where did your family grow up? What is their understanding of the American Dream and how you can achieve it? Does your family share the same understanding of stratification?

9.2 Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States

4. Which social class do you and your family belong to? Are you in a different or same social class than your grandparents and great-grandparents? Why are you in the class you are? What changed? What stayed the same? Marriages? Acquisition of property? Education? Career changes? Reflect on your family's journey within the classes.

5. What class traits define your peer group? For example, what speech patterns or clothing trends do you and your friends share? What cultural elements, such as taste in music or hobbies, define your peer group? How do you see this set of class traits as different from other classes either above or below yours?

6. Write a list of ten to twenty class traits that describe the environment of your upbringing. Which of these seem like true class traits, and which seem like stereotypes? What items might fall into both categories? How do you imagine a sociologist might address the conflation of class traits and stereotypes?

9.3 Global Stratification and Inequality

7. 7. What does it mean for a country to be seen as "underdeveloped"? What about "developed"? How does this shape our perception of the citizens within those countries?

8. Why is it important to understand and be aware of global stratification? Make a list of specific issues that are related to global stratification. For inspiration, turn on a news channel or read the newspaper. Next, choose a topic from your list, and look at it more closely. Who is affected by this issue? How is the issue specifically related to global stratification?

9.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Social Stratification

9. Analyze the Davis-Moore thesis. Do you agree with Davis and Moore? Does social stratification have an important function in society? What examples can you think of that support the thesis? What examples can you think of that refute the thesis?

10. Consider social stratification from the symbolic interactionist perspective. How does social stratification influence the daily interactions of individuals? How do systems of class, based on factors such as prestige, power, income, and wealth, influence your own daily routines, as well as your beliefs and attitudes? Illustrate your ideas with specific examples and anecdotes from your own life and the lives of people in your community.

Further Research

9.1 What Is Social Stratification?

The New Press provides an interactive helpful in exploring social stratification (http://openstax.org/l/ NY_Times_how_class_works) . Within the relatively straightforward graphic activity, you can select two demographic categories and illustrate the quantity those populations by income level.

9.2 Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States

The Pew Research Center Created an income calculator (http://openstax.org/l/social_class_in_America) to determine people's socioeconomic classification according to state and income.

9.3 Global Stratification and Inequality

Our World in Data's Global Economic Inequality page (http://openstax.org/l/Nations_Online) a wide range of data sources, narratives, and charts. While the sources should be verified before citing them in papers, the presentation offers a multifaceted picture of global inequality : .

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Global Inequality

FIGURE 10.1 Contemporary economic development often follows a similar pattern around the world, best described as a growing gap between the haves and have-nots. (Credit: Alicia Nijdam/Wikimedia Commons)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

10.1 Global Stratification and Classification
10.2 Global Wealth and Poverty
10.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

INTRODUCTION The April 24, 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza in Dhaka, Bangladesh that killed over 1,100 people, was the deadliest garment factory accident in history, and it was preventable (International Labour Organization, Department of Communication 2014).

In addition to garment factories employing about 5,000 people, the building contained a bank, apartments, childcare facilities, and a variety of shops. Many of these closed the day before the collapse when cracks were discovered in the building walls. When some of the garment workers refused to enter the building, they were threatened with the loss of a month's pay. Most were young women, aged twenty or younger. They typically worked over thirteen hours a day, with two days off each month. For this work, they took home between twelve and twenty-two cents an hour, or $10.56 to $12.48 a week. Without that pay, most would have been unable to feed their children. In contrast, the U.S. federal minimum wage is $7.25 an hour, and workers receive wages at time-and-a-half rates for work in excess of forty hours a week.

32 percent of the clothing made in the collapsed Rana Plaza building was intended for U.S., Canadian, and European stores. Walmart jeans were made on the fifth floor. Clothing for The Children's Place was produced in the building, as well. Afterward, Walmart and The Children's Place pledged $1 million and $450,000

(respectively) to the Rana Plaza Trust Fund, but fifteen other companies with clothing made in the building chose not to (Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights 2014).

While you read this chapter, think about the global system that allows U.S. companies to outsource their manufacturing to peripheral nations, where many women and children work in conditions that some characterize as slave labor. Do people in the United States have a responsibility to foreign workers? Should U.S. corporations be held accountable for what happens to garment factory workers who make their clothing? What can you do as a consumer to help such workers?

10.1 Global Stratification and Classification

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:
- Describe global stratification
- Differentiate the development history of various classification systems
- Use terminology from Wallerstein's world systems approach
- Explain the World Bank's classification of economies

Just as the United States' wealth is increasingly concentrated among its richest citizens, **global inequality** concentrates resources within certain nations and among certain people.

Measuring the financial resource of the world's richest people is generally easier than measuring the resources of people living in poverty (Matthews 2019), but researchers and advocates have created some tools to evaluate and understand economic conditions and outcomes.

One straightforward method is to compare the ratio of income of the richest 10 percent to the income of the poorest 10 percent. (The same method is sometime used with the richest 20 percent and the poorest 20 percent.) This method does not always provide a full picture of income inequality (it literally leaves out the middle), but it can certain provide insight.

The Human Development Index expresses the capabilities of people's potential achievement. The index is calculated using data regarding people's lifespan, education, and income. By using both financial and non-financial factors, it paints a deeper picture of the lives and issues in a region. For example, a nation with high income but low education will still have difficulty in overall opportunity. This approach was developed by Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq, who produced the first annual Human Development report, which captures and illustrates development issues and changes each year.
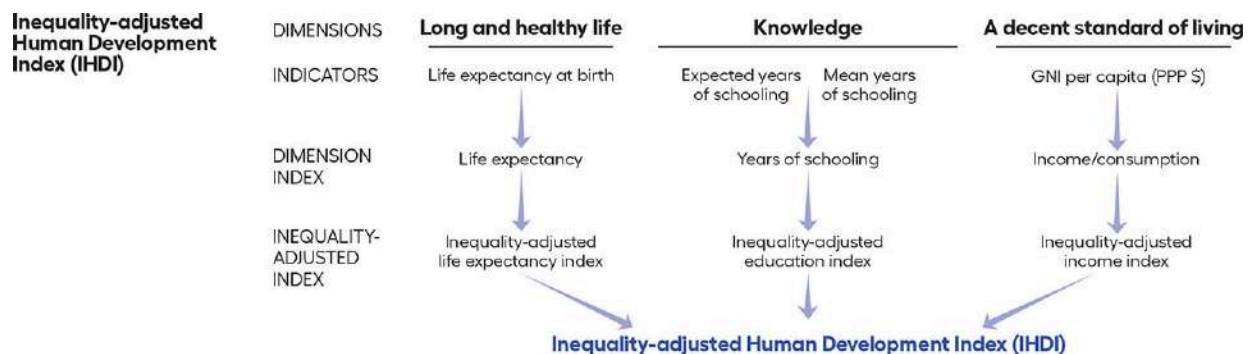
FIGURE 10.2 The Human Development Index and its derivative, and extensions like the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI), were developed to center people—not just finances—as the core determinants of a nation's or region's discussions about economic opportunities, support, and policies. The index considers three main dimension (categories)—which are health, knowledge, and standard of living (income)—to calculate an individual value for each dimension, which is then averaged to produce the final value. (Under decent standard of living, GNI stands for gross national income, and PPP stands for purchasing power parity, both of which are key indicators of income and relative wealth.) (Credit: United Nations Development Programme)

Another measure of inequality is **Gini Coefficient**, named after the Italian sociologist and statistician Corrado Gini. (Be sure not to confuse this with GNI, which is the gross national income.) It is is calculated using a number of financial indicators, and is expressed as either a decimal or a percentage. A country in which every resident has the same income would have a Gini coefficient of 0 (or 0 percent). A country in which one resident earned all the income, while everyone else earned nothing, would have an income Gini coefficient of 1 (or 100 percent). Thus, the higher the number (the closer to that one person having all the income or wealth), the more inequality there is.

Other gauges are a bit more direct: To indicate the level of poverty within a nation or region, researchers calculate the percentage of the population living beneath various poverty thresholds. A common measure is to consider the percentage of a nation's population living on less than $1.90 per day, which is commonly known as the International Poverty Line. (Note that United States dollars are often used as a global standard in these types of measurement.) The table in the next sub-section uses this method.

These are just a few of the ways that sociologists, economists, governments, and others try to understand levels of income inequality and poverty. Changes in these indicators would alert policymakers that something is affecting the population. No changes might tell people that, for example, a new financial assistance program for the poor is not working.

With these analytical elements in mind, let's consider how the three major sociological perspectives might contribute to our understanding of global inequality.

The functionalist perspective is a macroanalytical view that focuses on the way that all aspects of society are integral to the continued health and viability of the whole. A functionalist might focus on why we have global inequality and what social purposes it serves. This view might assert, for example, that we have global inequality because some nations are better than others at adapting to new technologies and profiting from a globalized economy, and that when core nation companies locate in peripheral nations, they expand the local economy and benefit the workers.

Conflict theory focuses on the creation and reproduction of inequality. A conflict theorist would likely address the systematic inequality created when core nations exploit the resources of peripheral nations. For example, how many U.S. companies take advantage of overseas workers who lack the constitutional protection and guaranteed minimum wages that exist in the United States? Doing so allows them to maximize profits, but at what cost?

The symbolic interaction perspective studies the day-to-day impact of global inequality, the meanings individuals attach to global stratification, and the subjective nature of poverty. Someone applying this view to global inequality would probably focus on understanding the difference between what someone living in a core nation defines as poverty (relative poverty, defined as being unable to live the lifestyle of the average person in your country) and what someone living in a peripheral nation defines as poverty (extreme poverty, defined as being barely able, or unable, to afford basic necessities, such as food).

Global Stratification

While stratification in the United States refers to the unequal distribution of resources among individuals, **global stratification** refers to this unequal distribution among nations. There are two dimensions to this stratification: gaps between nations and gaps within nations. When it comes to global inequality, both economic inequality and social inequality may concentrate the burden of poverty among certain segments of the earth's population (Myrdal 1970).

As mentioned earlier, one way to evaluate stratification is to consider how many people are living in poverty, and particularly extreme poverty, which is often defined as needing to survive on less than $1.90 per day. Fortunately, until the COVID-19 pandemic impacted economies in 2020, the extreme poverty rate had been on a 20-year decline. In 2015, 10.1 percent of the world's population was living in extreme poverty; in 2017, that

number had dropped an entire percentage point to 9.2 percent. While a positive, that 9.2 percent is equivalent to 689 million people living on less than $1.90 a day. The same year, 24.1 percent of the world lived on less than $3.20 per day and 43.6 percent on less than $5.50 per day in 2017 (World Bank 2020). The table below makes the differences in poverty very clear.

Country	Percentage of people living on less than $1.90	Percentage of people living on less than $3.90	Percentage of people living on less than $5.50
Colombia	4.1	10.9	27.8
Costa Rica	1.4	3.6	10.9
Georgia	4.5	15.7	42.9
Kyrgyzstan	0.9	15.5	61.3
Sierra Leone	40.1	74.4	92.1
Angola	51.8	73.2	89.3
Lithuania	0.7	1.0	3.8
Ukraine	0.0	0.4	4.0
Vietnam	1.9	7.0	23.6
Indonesia	3.6	9.6	53.2

TABLE 10.1 The differences among countries is clear when considering their extreme poverty rates. For the most part, the selected countries show disparities even within countries from the same regions. All data is from 2018. (World Bank 2020)

Most of us are accustomed to thinking of global stratification as economic inequality. For example, we can compare the United States' average worker's wage to America's average wage. Social inequality, however, is just as harmful as economic discrepancies. Prejudice and discrimination—whether against a certain race, ethnicity, religion, or the like—can create and aggravate conditions of economic equality, both within and between nations. Think about the inequity that existed for decades within the nation of South Africa. Apartheid, one of the most extreme cases of institutionalized and legal racism, created a social inequality that earned it the world's condemnation.

Gender inequity is another global concern. Consider the controversy surrounding female genital mutilation. Nations that practice this female circumcision procedure defend it as a longstanding cultural tradition in certain tribes and argue that the West shouldn't interfere. Western nations, however, decry the practice and are working to stop it.

Inequalities based on sexual orientation and gender identity exist around the globe. According to Amnesty International, a number of crimes are committed against individuals who do not conform to traditional gender roles or sexual orientations (however those are culturally defined). From culturally sanctioned rape to state-sanctioned executions, the abuses are serious. These legalized and culturally accepted forms of prejudice and discrimination exist everywhere—from the United States to Somalia to Tibet—restricting the freedom of

individuals and often putting their lives at risk (Amnesty International 2012).

Global Classification

A major concern when discussing global inequality is how to avoid an ethnocentric bias implying that less-developed nations want to be like those who've attained post-industrial global power. Terms such as developing (nonindustrialized) and developed (industrialized) imply that unindustrialized countries are somehow inferior, and must improve to participate successfully in the global economy, a label indicating that all aspects of the economy cross national borders. We must take care how we delineate different countries. Over time, terminology has shifted to make way for a more inclusive view of the world.

Global classification methods are not only important in understanding economic differences among countries, but also in providing ways to classify countries and identify trends in other areas. The classifications discussed below will be used in other chapters, such as the chapter on health and medicine.

Cold War Terminology

Cold War terminology was developed during the Cold War era (1945–1980). Familiar and still used by many, it classifies countries into first world, second world, and third world nations based on their respective economic development and standards of living. When this nomenclature was developed, capitalistic democracies such as the United States and Japan were considered part of the **first world**. The poorest, most undeveloped countries were referred to as the **third world** and included most of sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and Asia. The **second world** was the in-between category: nations not as limited in development as the third world, but not as well off as the first world, having moderate economies and standard of living, such as China or Cuba. Later, sociologist Manual Castells (1998) added the term **fourth world** to refer to stigmatized minority groups that were denied a political voice all over the globe (indigenous minority populations, prisoners, and the homeless, for example).

Also during the Cold War, global inequality was described in terms of economic development. Along with developing and developed nations, the terms less-developed nation and underdeveloped nation were used. This was the era when the idea of *noblesse oblige* (first-world responsibility) took root, suggesting that the so-termed developed nations should provide foreign aid to the less-developed and underdeveloped nations in order to raise their standard of living.

Immanuel Wallerstein: World Systems Approach

Immanuel Wallerstein's (1979) world systems approach uses an economic basis to understand global inequality. Wallerstein conceived of the global economy as a complex system that supports an economic hierarchy that placed some nations in positions of power with numerous resources and other nations in a state of economic subordination. Those that were in a state of subordination faced significant obstacles to mobilization.

Core nations are dominant capitalist countries, highly industrialized, technological, and urbanized. For example, Wallerstein contends that the United States is an economic powerhouse that can support or deny support to important economic legislation with far-reaching implications, thus exerting control over every aspect of the global economy and exploiting both semi-peripheral and peripheral nations. We can look at free trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) as an example of how a core nation is able to leverage its power to gain the most advantageous position in the matter of global trade.

Peripheral nations have very little industrialization; what they do have often represents the outdated castoffs of core nations or the factories and means of production owned by core nations. They typically have unstable governments, inadequate social programs, and are economically dependent on core nations for jobs and aid. There are abundant examples of countries in this category, such as Vietnam and Cuba. We can be sure the workers in a Cuban cigar factory, for example, which are owned or leased by global core nation companies, are not enjoying the same privileges and rights as U.S. workers.

Semi-peripheral nations are in-between nations, not powerful enough to dictate policy but nevertheless acting as a major source for raw material and an expanding middle-class marketplace for core nations, while also exploiting peripheral nations. Mexico is an example, providing abundant cheap agricultural labor to the U.S., and supplying goods to the United States market at a rate dictated by the U.S. without the constitutional protections offered to United States workers.

World Bank Economic Classification by Income

While the World Bank is often criticized, both for its policies and its method of calculating data, it is still a common source for global economic data. Along with tracking the economy, the World Bank tracks demographics and environmental health to provide a complete picture of whether a nation is high income, middle income, or low income.
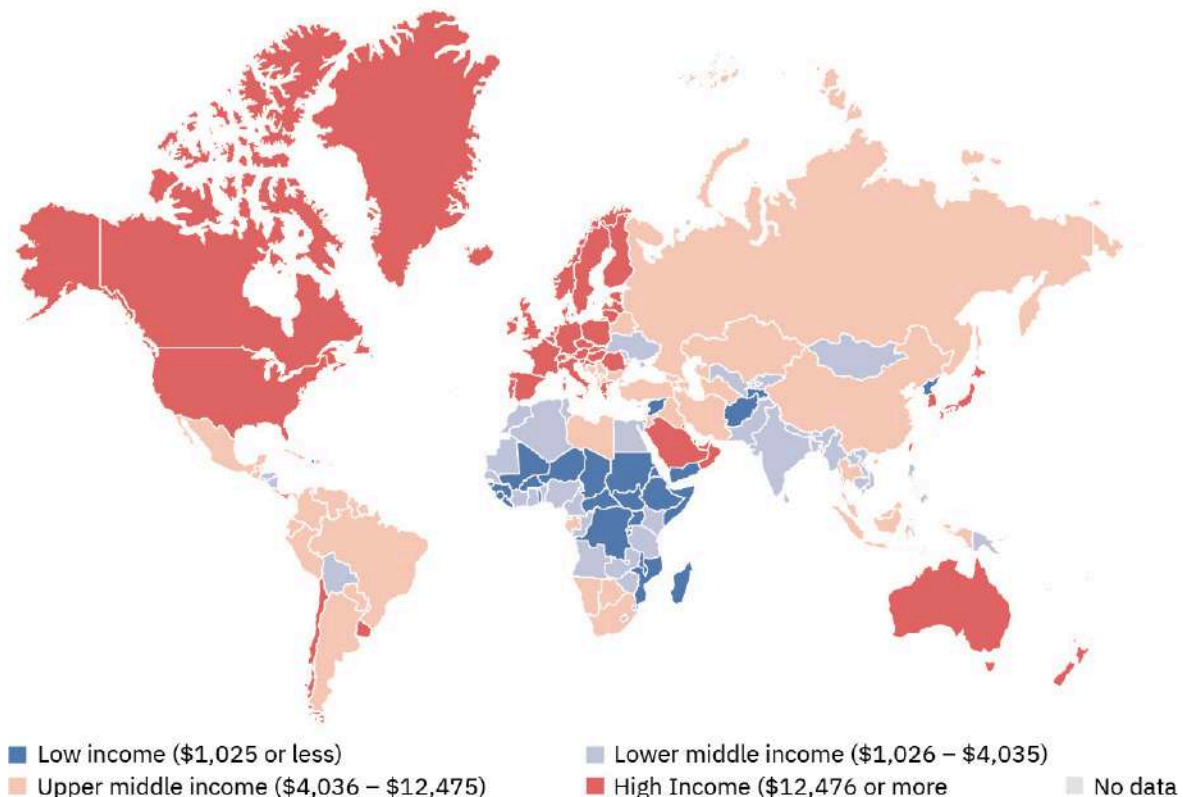
FIGURE 10.3 This world map shows advanced, transitioning, less, and least developed countries. Note that the data in this map is one year older than the data presented in the text below. (Credit: Sbw01f, data obtained from the CIA World Factbook/Wikimedia Commons)

High-Income Nations

The World Bank defines high-income nations as having a gross national income of at least $12,536 per capita. in 2019 (World Bank 2021). (Note that the classifications will always lag by a couple of years so that analysts can evaluate the true income of the nations.) Examples include Belgium, Canada, Japan, Oman, Puerto Rico, and the United States.

High-income countries face two major issues: capital flight and deindustrialization. **Capital flight** refers to the movement (flight) of capital from one nation to another, as when General Motors automotive company closed U.S. factories in Michigan and opened factories in Mexico.

Deindustrialization, a related issue, occurs as a consequence of capital flight, as no new companies open to replace jobs lost to foreign nations. As expected, global companies move their industrial processes to the

places where they can get the most production with the least cost, including the building of infrastructure, training of workers, shipping of goods, and, of course, paying employee wages. This means that as emerging economies create their own industrial zones, global companies see the opportunity for existing infrastructure and much lower costs. Those opportunities lead to businesses closing the factories that provide jobs to the middle class within core nations and moving their industrial production to peripheral and semi-peripheral nations.

BIG PICTURE

Capital Flight, Outsourcing, and Jobs in the United States

FIGURE 10.4 Factories and stores in places like the Detroit metro area have been closed and abandoned as companies go out of business. (Credit: Joe Nuxoll/flickr)

Capital flight describes jobs and infrastructure moving from one nation to another. Look at the U.S. automobile industry. In the early twentieth century, the cars driven in the United States were made here, employing thousands of workers in Detroit and in the companies that produced everything that made building cars possible. However, once the fuel crisis of the 1970s hit and people in the United States increasingly looked to imported cars with better gas mileage, U.S. auto manufacturing began to decline. During the 2007–2009 recession, the U.S. government provided emergency funding (usually called a "bail out") for the three main auto companies, which is evidence of those companies' vulnerability. At the same time, Japanese-owned Toyota and Honda and South Korean Kia maintained stable sales levels.

Capital flight also occurs when services (as opposed to manufacturing) are relocated. Chances are if you have called the tech support line for your cell phone or Internet provider, you've spoken to someone halfway across the globe. This professional might tell you her name is Susan or Joan, but her accent makes it clear that her real name might be Parvati or Indira. It might be the middle of the night in that country, yet these service providers pick up the line saying, "Good morning," as though they are in the next town over. They know everything about your phone or your modem, often using a remote server to log in to your home computer to accomplish what is

needed. These are the workers of the twenty-first century. They are not on factory floors or in traditional sweatshops; they are educated, speak at least two languages, and usually have significant technology skills. They are skilled workers, but they are paid a fraction of what similar workers are paid in the United States. For U.S. and multinational companies, the equation makes sense. India and other semi-peripheral countries have emerging infrastructures and education systems to fill their needs, without core nation costs.

As services are relocated, so are jobs. In the United States, unemployment is high. Many college-educated people are unable to find work, and those with only a high school diploma are in even worse shape. We have, as a country, outsourced ourselves out of jobs, and not just menial jobs, but white-collar work as well. But before we complain too bitterly, we must look at the culture of consumerism that we embrace. A flat screen television that might have cost $1,000 a few years ago is now $250. That cost savings has to come from somewhere. When consumers seek the lowest possible price, shop at big box stores for the biggest discount they can get, and generally ignore other factors in exchange for low cost, they are building the market for outsourcing. And as the demand is built, the market will ensure it is met, even at the expense of the people who wanted it in the first place.

FIGURE 10.5 Outsourcing was initially a practice for manufacturing and related work. But as more technically skilled people become more available in other countries, customer service and other services are being moved out of the United States as well? (Credit: Carlos Ebert/flickr)

Middle-Income Nations

The World Bank divides middle-income economies into two categories. Lower middle income areas are those with a GNI per capita of more than $1,036 but less than $4,045. Upper middle income areas are those with A GNI per capita between $4,046 and $12,535. Democratic Republic of Congo, Tunisia, Philippines, El Salvador, and Nepal are are examples of lower-middle-income countries. And Argentina, Mexico, China, Iran, Turkey, and Namibia are examples of upper-middle-income nations (World Bank 2021).

Perhaps the most pressing issue for middle-income nations is the problem of debt accumulation. As the name suggests, **debt accumulation** is the buildup of external debt, wherein countries borrow money from other nations to fund their expansion or growth goals. As the uncertainties of the global economy make repaying

these debts, or even paying the interest on them, more challenging, nations can find themselves in trouble. Once global markets have reduced the value of a country's goods, it can be very difficult to ever manage the debt burden. Such issues have plagued middle-income countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as East Asian and Pacific nations (Dogruel and Dogruel 2007).

Low-Income Nations

The World Bank defines low-income countries as nations whose per capita GNI was $1,035 per capita or less in 2019. For example, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Yemen are considered low-income countries. Low-income economies are primarily found in Asia and Africa (World Bank 2021), where most of the world's population lives. There are two major challenges that these countries face: women are disproportionately affected by poverty (in a trend toward a global feminization of poverty) and much of the population lives in absolute poverty.

Nations' classifications often change as their economies evolve and, sometimes, when their political positions change. Nepal, Indonesia, and Romania all moved up to a higher status based on improved economies. While Sudan, Algeria, and Sri Lanka moved down a level. A few years ago, Myanmar was a low-income nation, but now it has moved into the middle-income area. With Myanmar's 2021 coup, the massive citizen response, and the military's killing of protesters, its economy may go through a downturn again, returning it to the low-income nation status.

10.2 Global Wealth and Poverty

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:
- Differentiate relative, extreme, and subjective poverty
- Describe the economic situation of some of the world's most impoverished areas
- Explain the cyclical impact of the consequences of poverty

FIGURE 10.6 This young girl was begging for food in the street in Vietnam, holding a younger child as she was doing so. (Credit: Augapfel/flickr)

What does it mean to be poor? Does it mean being a single mother with two kids in New York City, waiting for the next paycheck in order to buy groceries? Does it mean living with almost no furniture in your apartment because your income doesn't allow for extras like beds or chairs? Or does it mean having to live with the distended bellies of the chronically malnourished throughout the peripheral nations of Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia? Poverty has a thousand faces and a thousand gradations; there is no single definition that pulls together every part of the spectrum. You might feel you are poor if you can't afford cable television or buy your own car. Every time you see a fellow student with a new laptop and smartphone you might feel that you,

with your ten-year-old desktop computer, are barely keeping up. However, someone else might look at the clothes you wear and the calories you consume and consider you rich.

Types of Poverty

Social scientists define global poverty in different ways and take into account the complexities and the issues of relativism described above. **Relative poverty** is a state of living where people can afford necessities but are unable to meet their society's average standard of living. People often disparage "keeping up with the Joneses"—the idea that you must keep up with the neighbors' standard of living to not feel deprived. But it is true that you might feel "poor" if you are living without a car to drive to and from work, without any money for a safety net should a family member fall ill, and without any "extras" beyond just making ends meet.

Contrary to relative poverty, people who live in **extreme poverty** lack even the basic necessities, which typically include adequate food, clean water, safe housing, and access to healthcare. Extreme poverty occurs when someone lives on less than 1.90 U.S dollars per day.

In prior years, the World Bank—the primary organization analyzing these trends––focused heavily on the number of people under that extreme poverty level of $1.90 per day. (The previous term was "absolute poverty.") In 2018, the World Bank added two more measures to consider: people living on less than $3.20 and people living on less than $5.50. As the number of people in that extreme category continues to decline, these two new categories will be important to recognize the population that lives above the $1.90 line, but still remains vulnerable to extreme poverty. Someone who begins to earn enough to live on more than $1.90 is still in severe poverty and should be considered as such (Schoch 2020).

If you were forced to live on $1.90 a day, or even $5.50, how would you do it? What would you deem worthy of spending money on, and what could you do without? How would you manage the necessities—and how would you make up the gap between what you need to live and what you can afford?

FIGURE 10.7 Slums in many countries illustrate absolute poverty all too well. (Credit: Ninara/flickr)

Subjective poverty describes poverty that is composed of many dimensions; it is subjectively present when your actual income does not meet your expectations and perceptions. With the concept of subjective poverty,

the poor themselves have a greater say in recognizing when it is present. In short, subjective poverty has more to do with how a person or a family defines themselves. This means that a family subsisting on a few dollars a day in Nepal might think of themselves as doing well, within their perception of normal. However, a westerner traveling to Nepal might visit the same family and see extreme need.

The Underground Economy Around the World

What do the driver of an unlicensed hack cab in New York, a piecework seamstress working from her home in Mumbai, and a street tortilla vendor in Mexico City have in common? They are all members of the **underground economy**, a loosely defined unregulated market unhindered by taxes, government permits, or human protections. Official statistics before the worldwide recession posit that the underground economy accounted for over 50 percent of nonagricultural work in Latin America; the figure went as high as 80 percent in parts of Asia and Africa (Chen 2001). A recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* discusses the challenges, parameters, and surprising benefits of this informal marketplace. The wages earned in most underground economy jobs, especially in peripheral nations, are a pittance——a few rupees for a handmade bracelet at a market, or maybe 250 rupees ($5 U.S.) for a day's worth of fruit and vegetable sales (Barta 2009). But these tiny sums mark the difference between survival and extinction for the world's poor.

The underground economy has never been viewed very positively by global economists. After all, its members don't pay taxes, don't take out loans to grow their businesses, and rarely earn enough to put money back into the economy in the form of consumer spending. But according to the International Labor Organization (an agency of the United Nations), some 52 million people worldwide will lose their jobs due to the ongoing worldwide recession. And while those in core nations know that high unemployment rates and limited government safety nets can be frightening, their situation is nothing compared to the loss of a job for those barely eking out an existence. Once that job disappears, the chance of staying afloat is very slim.

Within the context of this recession, some see the underground economy as a key player in keeping people alive. Indeed, an economist at the World Bank credits jobs created by the informal economy as a primary reason why peripheral nations are not in worse shape during this recession. Women in particular benefit from the informal sector. The majority of economically active women in peripheral nations are engaged in the informal sector, which is somewhat buffered from the economic downturn. The flip side, of course, is that it is equally buffered from the possibility of economic growth.

Even in the United States, the informal economy exists, although not on the same scale as in peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. It might include under-the-table nannies, gardeners, and housecleaners, as well as unlicensed street vendors and taxi drivers. There are also those who run informal businesses, like daycares or salons, from their houses. Analysts estimate that this type of labor may make up 10 percent of the overall U.S. economy, a number that will likely grow as companies reduce head counts, leaving more workers to seek other options. In the end, the article suggests that, whether selling medicinal wines in Thailand or woven bracelets in India, the workers of the underground economy at least have what most people want most of all: a chance to stay afloat (Barta 2009).

Who Are the Impoverished?

Who are the impoverished? Who is living in absolute poverty? The truth that most of us would guess is that the richest countries are often those with the least people. Compare the United States, which possesses a relatively small slice of the population pie and owns by far the largest slice of the wealth pie, with India. These disparities have the expected consequence. The poorest people in the world are women and those in peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. For women, the rate of poverty is particularly worsened by the pressure on their time. In general, time is one of the few luxuries the very poor have, but study after study has shown that women in

poverty, who are responsible for all family comforts as well as any earnings they can make, have less of it. The result is that while men and women may have the same rate of economic poverty, women are suffering more in terms of overall wellbeing (Buvinic 1997). It is harder for females to get credit to expand businesses, to take the time to learn a new skill, or to spend extra hours improving their craft so as to be able to earn at a higher rate.

Global Feminization of Poverty

In almost all societies, women have higher rates of poverty than men. More women and girls live in poor conditions, receive inadequate healthcare, bear the brunt of malnutrition and inadequate drinking water, and so on. This situation goes back decades, and led University of Michigan sociologist Diana Pearce to coin the term "feminization of poverty" in 1978. Throughout the 1990s, data indicated that while overall poverty rates were rising, especially in peripheral nations, the rates of impoverishment increased for women nearly 20 percent more than for men (Mogadham 2005). More recently, as extreme poverty rates continue to fall, women still make up a disproportionate amount of the world's poor. Gender differences are sometimes difficult to discern in international poverty data, but researchers have undertaken efforts to define the makeup of those affected by poverty. Of people aged 25-34, the world has 122 women living in poverty for every 100 men living in poverty. The world's elderly below the poverty line are also more likely to be women (World Bank 2018).

Why is this happening? While myriad variables affect women's poverty, research specializing in this issue identifies three causes (Mogadham 2005):

1. The expansion in the number of female-headed households
2. The persistence and consequences of intra-household inequalities and biases against women
3. The implementation of neoliberal economic policies around the world

While women are living longer and healthier lives today compared to ten years ago, around the world many women are denied basic rights, particularly in the workplace. In peripheral nations, they accumulate fewer assets, farm less land, make less money, and face restricted civil rights and liberties. Women can stimulate the economic growth of peripheral nations, but they are often undereducated and lack access to credit needed to start small businesses. When women are able to attain higher levels of education, they account for significant economic growth within their nations (OECD 2012).

A wide range of organizations undertake programs or provide support in order to improve opportunity, safety, education, equality, and financial outcomes for women. Some of these efforts involve diplomacy, such as one government (or a coalition) working to secure greater rights and improve circumstances of women in other countries. Key areas of focus are reducing institutional and cultural discrimination, ending domestic violence, providing women more agency in decision making, and increasing education for children (Scott 2012). Other programs focus on more immediate needs and opportunities. Microcredit and women's collective savings accounts are ways to provide financial resources for women and families to make important investments, such as building a well at their home to improve health and reduce time spent obtaining clean water. Other uses may involve starting a business, paying a debt, or buying an important appliance or equipment. Unfortunately, these microfinance programs don't have a track record of alleviating poverty, and in some cases they can lead to negative outcomes such as trapping women in a cycle of debt, or increasing domestic violence. Collective savings programs—where local people pool their resources and extend credit within their group—have shown some more positive outcomes (Aizenman 2016 and Niner 2018). The UN has emphasized that microfinance and cultural empowerment would both be more successful if they were used in concert with each other (Scott 2012).

Africa

The majority of the poorest countries in the world are in Africa. That is not to say there is not diversity within the countries of that continent; countries like South Africa and Egypt have much lower rates of poverty than Angola and Ethiopia, for instance. Overall, African income levels have been dropping relative to the rest of the world, meaning that Africa as a whole is getting relatively poorer. Making the problem worse, 2014 saw an

outbreak of the *Ebola* virus in western Africa, leading to a public health crisis and an economic downturn due to loss of workers and tourist dollars.

Why is Africa in such dire straits? Much of the continent's poverty can be traced to the availability of land, especially arable land (land that can be farmed). Centuries of struggle over land ownership have meant that much useable land has been ruined or left unfarmed, while many countries with inadequate rainfall have never set up an infrastructure to irrigate. Many of Africa's natural resources were long ago taken by colonial forces, leaving little agricultural and mineral wealth on the continent.

Further, African poverty is worsened by civil wars and inadequate governance that are the result of a continent re-imagined with artificial colonial borders and leaders. Consider the example of Rwanda. There, two ethnic groups cohabitated with their own system of hierarchy and management until Belgians took control of the country in 1915 and rigidly confined members of the population into two unequal ethnic groups. While, historically, members of the Tutsi group held positions of power, the involvement of Belgians led to the Hutu seizing power during a 1960s revolt. This ultimately led to a repressive government and genocide against Tutsis that left hundreds of thousands of Rwandans dead or living in diaspora (U.S. Department of State 2011c). The painful rebirth of a self-ruled Africa has meant many countries bear ongoing scars as they try to see their way towards the future (World Poverty 2012a). In 2020, armed conflicts were underway in regions of nations including the Tigray conflict in Ethiopia, the Kamwina Nsapo rebellion in Democratic Republic of Congo, the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria and neighboring countries, and several more. While most of the ongoing conflicts are considered minor, they are both dangerous and disruptive to the people living in those regions, and several have included ethnic cleansing, mass kidnapping, extensive sexual violence, and use of child soldiers.

Asia

FIGURE 10.8 For children who have homes in slums like this one in Phnom Phen, Cambodia, survival and safety are often the primary and immediate concerns. Longer-term goals, such as education and social mobility, may not be available options. (Credit: ND Strupler)

While the majority of the world's poorest countries are in Africa, the majority of the world's poorest people are in Asia. As in Africa, Asia finds itself with disparity in the distribution of poverty, with Japan and South Korea holding much more wealth than India and Cambodia. In fact, most poverty is concentrated in South Asia. One of the most pressing causes of poverty in Asia is simply the pressure that the size of the population puts on its resources. Unlike Africa, many people living in poverty reside in urban areas, often in crowded, unhygenic conditions with limited access to water and resources. Estimates indicate that Asia has 60 percent of the world's people who live in slums (WorldVision 2019). Those who find work often do so in garment factories or other manufacturing facilities, where pay is very low and the demands are incredibly high. (See the feature below on sweatshop labor.) Children are sent to work in these conditions as well.

Asia is also frequently impacted by natural disasters. Countries like India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines experience frequent typhoons (hurricanes) and flooding. For those living in insecure structures —often constructed from various leftover materials and not subject to any type of building codes—such events can leave entire swaths of the population homeless and vulnerable to disease or injury (WorldVision 2019).

MENA

The Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) includes oil-rich countries in the Gulf, such as Iran, Iraq, and Kuwait, but also countries that are relatively resource-poor in relationship to their populations, such as Morocco and Yemen. These countries are predominately Islamic. For the last quarter-century, economic growth was slower in MENA than in other developing economies, and almost a quarter of the 300 million people who make up the population live on less than $2.00 a day (World Bank 2013).

The International Labour Organization tracks the way income inequality influences social unrest. The two regions with the highest risk of social unrest are Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East-North Africa region (International Labour Organization 2012). Increasing unemployment and high socioeconomic inequality in MENA were major factors in the Arab Spring, which—beginning in 2010—toppled dictatorships throughout the Middle East in favor of democratically elected government. Unemployment and income inequalities are still being blamed on immigrants, foreign nationals, and ethnic/religious minorities.

🌐 SOCIOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Sweatshops and Student Protests: Who's Making Your Team Spirit?

FIGURE 10.9 These protesters seek to bring attention to the issue of sweatshop labor in producing clothing. (Credit: Jo Guldi/flickr)

Most of us don't pay too much attention to where our favorite products are made. And certainly when you're shopping for a college sweatshirt or ball cap to wear to a school football game, you probably don't turn over the label, check who produced the item, and then research whether or not the company has fair labor practices. But for the members of USAS—United Students Against Sweatshops—that's exactly what they do. The organization, which

was founded in 1997, has waged countless battles against both apparel makers and other multinational corporations that do not meet what USAS considers fair working conditions and wages. USAS also focuses on ensuring safe and non-exploitative conditions as well as improved pay and benefits for campus workers, including dining hall staff, security guards, and adjuncts (USAS 2021).

How do clothes get made, and why are garment workers among the most commonly mistreated? In many cases, large apparel companies—including Nike, Lululemon, H&M, Urban Outfitters (owner of Anthropologie and Free People), Zara, and most other major brands—outsource their manufacturing to factories around the world. The apparel companies negotiate prices and schedules with the local manufacturers, and often push for the lowest possible manufacturing cost and the fastest schedule. In order to keep up with demand and manufacture the clothing at the required cost, the factories may pay their employees less, force them to work longer hours, and may maintain unsafe conditions. All of those tactics are associated with sweatshop practices (Chan 2019). In response to action from organizations like USAS, many apparel companies have undertaken steps to ensure that the factories they use are treating workers properly, but in reality, it is very difficult to know for sure. Often, the brands work through subcontractors and subsidiaries, and may not know exactly which factories are producing their products.

Members of USAS helped form the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC), which monitors working conditions for a wide array of companies and their affiliated factories. WRC conducts regular reviews of worldwide manufacturing facilities and publishes the results. The WRC also studies and reports on overall economic conditions and their effect on employment. For example, in 2020, as the global economy went through a rapid downturn, apparel companies demanded lower prices while they also reduced their orders, which put workers at risk of exploitation or job loss (Karim 2020).

Consequences of Poverty

FIGURE 10.10 For this child, who is being assessed for malnutrition at a clinic in Kenya, risks associated with poverty and lack of food were exacerbated by a massive drought that hit the region. (Credit: DFID - UK Department for International Development/flickr)

Not surprisingly, the consequences of poverty are often also causes. The poor often experience inadequate healthcare, limited education, and the inaccessibility of birth control. But those born into these conditions are incredibly challenged in their efforts to break out since these consequences of poverty are also causes of poverty, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage.

According to sociologists Neckerman and Torche (2007) in their analysis of global inequality studies, the

consequences of poverty are many. Neckerman and Torche have divided them into three areas. The first, termed "the sedimentation of global inequality," relates to the fact that once poverty becomes entrenched in an area, it is typically very difficult to reverse. As mentioned above, poverty exists in a cycle where the consequences and causes are intertwined. The second consequence of poverty is its effect on physical and mental health. Poor people face physical health challenges, including malnutrition and high infant mortality rates. Mental health is also detrimentally affected by the emotional stresses of poverty, with relative deprivation carrying the most robust effect. Again, as with the ongoing inequality, the effects of poverty on mental and physical health become more entrenched as time goes on. Neckerman and Torche's third consequence of poverty is the prevalence of crime. Cross-nationally, crime rates are higher, particularly for violent crime, in countries with higher levels of income inequality (Fajnzylber 2002).

Slavery

While most of us are accustomed to thinking of slavery in terms of the antebellum South, modern day slavery goes hand-in-hand with global inequality. In short, slavery refers to any situation in which people are sold, treated as property, or forced to work for little or no pay. Just as in the pre-Civil War United States, these humans are at the mercy of their employers. **Chattel slavery**, the form of slavery once practiced in the American South, occurs when one person owns another as property. Child slavery, which may include child prostitution, is a form of chattel slavery. In **debt bondage**, or bonded labor, the poor pledge themselves as servants in exchange for the cost of basic necessities like transportation, room, and board. In this scenario, people are paid less than they are charged for room and board. When travel is required, they can arrive in debt for their travel expenses and be unable to work their way free, since their wages do not allow them to ever get ahead.

The global watchdog group Anti-Slavery International recognizes other forms of slavery: human trafficking (in which people are moved away from their communities and forced to work against their will), child domestic work and child labor, and certain forms of servile marriage, in which women are little more than enslaved people (Anti-Slavery International 2012).

10.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:
- Describe the modernization and dependency theory perspectives on global stratification

As with any social issue, global or otherwise, scholars have developed a variety of theories to study global stratification. The two most widely applied perspectives are modernization theory and dependency theory.

Modernization Theory

According to **modernization theory**, low-income countries are affected by their lack of industrialization and can improve their global economic standing through (Armer and Katsillis 2010):

1. an adjustment of cultural values and attitudes to work
2. industrialization and other forms of economic growth

Critics point out the inherent ethnocentric bias of this theory. It supposes all countries have the same resources and are capable of following the same path. In addition, it assumes that the goal of all countries is to be as "developed" as possible. There is no room within this theory for the possibility that industrialization and technology are not the best goals.

There is, of course, some basis for this assumption. Data show that core nations tend to have lower maternal and child mortality rates, longer life spans, and less absolute poverty. It is also true that in the poorest countries, millions of people die from the lack of clean drinking water and sanitation facilities, which are benefits most of us take for granted. At the same time, the issue is more complex than the numbers might suggest. Cultural equality, history, community, and local traditions are all at risk as modernization pushes into

peripheral countries. The challenge, then, is to allow the benefits of modernization while maintaining a cultural sensitivity to what already exists.

Dependency Theory

Dependency theory was created in part as a response to the Western-centric mindset of modernization theory. It states that global inequality is primarily caused by core nations (or high-income nations) exploiting semi-peripheral and peripheral nations (or middle-income and low-income nations), which creates a cycle of dependence (Hendricks 2010). As long as peripheral nations are dependent on core nations for economic stimulus and access to a larger piece of the global economy, they will never achieve stable and consistent economic growth. Further, the theory states that since core nations, as well as the World Bank, choose which countries to make loans to, and for what they will loan funds, they are creating highly segmented labor markets that are built to benefit the dominant market countries.

At first glance, it seems this theory ignores the formerly low-income nations that are now considered middle-income nations and are on their way to becoming high-income nations and major players in the global economy, such as China. But some dependency theorists would state that it is in the best interests of core nations to ensure the long-term usefulness of their peripheral and semi-peripheral partners. Following that theory, sociologists have found that entities are more likely to outsource a significant portion of a company's work if they are the dominant player in the equation; in other words, companies want to see their partner countries healthy enough to provide work, but not so healthy as to establish a threat (Caniels and Roeleveld 2009).

SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Factory Girls

We've examined functionalist and conflict theorist perspectives on global inequality, as well as modernization and dependency theories. How might a symbolic interactionist approach this topic?

The book *Factory Girls: From Village to City in Changing China*, by Leslie T. Chang, provides this opportunity. Chang follows two young women (Min and Chunming) employed at a handbag plant. They help manufacture coveted purses and bags for the global market. As part of the growing population of young people who are leaving behind the homesteads and farms of rural China, these female factory workers are ready to enter the urban fray and pursue an ambitious income.

Although Chang's study is based in a town many have never heard of (Dongguan), this city produces one-third of all shoes on the planet (Nike and Reebok are major manufacturers here) and 30 percent of the world's computer disk drives, in addition to an abundance of apparel (Chang 2008).

But Chang's focus is centered less on this global phenomenon on a large scale, than on how it affects these two women. As a symbolic interactionist would do, Chang examines the daily lives and interactions of Min and Chunming—their workplace friendships, family relationships, gadgets and goods—in this evolving global space where young women can leave tradition behind and fashion their own futures. Their story is one that all people, not just scholars, can learn from as we contemplate sociological issues like global economies, cultural traditions and innovations, and opportunities for women in the workforce.

Key Terms

capital flight   the movement (flight) of capital from one nation to another, via jobs and resources

chattel slavery   a form of slavery in which one person owns another

core nations   dominant capitalist countries

debt accumulation   the buildup of external debt, wherein countries borrow money from other nations to fund their expansion or growth goals

debt bondage   the act of people pledging themselves as servants in exchange for money for passage, and are subsequently paid too little to regain their freedom

deindustrialization   the loss of industrial production, usually to peripheral and semi-peripheral nations where the costs are lower

dependency theory   a theory which states that global inequity is due to the exploitation of peripheral and semi-peripheral nations by core nations

extreme poverty   the state where one is barely able, or unable, to afford basic necessities

first world   a term from the Cold War era that is used to describe industrialized capitalist democracies

fourth world   a term that describes stigmatized minority groups who have no voice or representation on the world stage

GINI coefficient   a measure of income inequality between countries using a 100-point scale, in which 1 represents complete equality and 100 represents the highest possible inequality

global feminization of poverty   a pattern that occurs when women bear a disproportionate percentage of the burden of poverty

global inequality   the concentration of resources in core nations and in the hands of a wealthy minority

global stratification   the unequal distribution of resources between countries

gross national income (GNI)   the income of a nation calculated based on goods and services produced, plus income earned by citizens and corporations headquartered in that country

modernization theory   a theory that low-income countries can improve their global economic standing by industrialization of infrastructure and a shift in cultural attitudes towards work

peripheral nations   nations on the fringes of the global economy, dominated by core nations, with very little industrialization

relative poverty   the state of poverty where one is unable to live the lifestyle of the average person in the country

second world   a term from the Cold War era that describes nations with moderate economies and standards of living

semi-peripheral nations   in-between nations, not powerful enough to dictate policy but acting as a major source of raw materials and an expanding middle class marketplace

subjective poverty   a state of poverty composed of many dimensions, subjectively present when one's actual income does not meet one's expectations

third world   a term from the Cold War era that refers to poor, unindustrialized countries

underground economy   an unregulated economy of labor and goods that operates outside of governance, regulatory systems, or human protections

Section Summary

10.1 Global Stratification and Classification

Stratification refers to the gaps in resources both between nations and within nations. While economic equality is of great concern, so is social equality, like the discrimination stemming from race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and/or sexual orientation. While global inequality is nothing new, several factors make it more relevant than ever, like the global marketplace and the pace of information sharing. Researchers try to understand global inequality by classifying it according to factors such as how industrialized a nation is, whether a country serves as a means of production or as an owner, and what income a nation produces.

10.2 Global Wealth and Poverty

When looking at the world's poor, we first have to define the difference between relative poverty, absolute poverty, and subjective poverty. While those in relative poverty might not have enough to live at their country's standard of living, those in absolute poverty do not have, or barely have, basic necessities such as food. Subjective poverty has more to do with one's perception of one's situation. North America and Europe are home to fewer of the world's poor than Africa, which has most poor countries, or Asia, which has the most people living in poverty. Poverty has numerous negative consequences, from increased crime rates to a detrimental impact on physical and mental health.

10.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

Modernization theory and dependency theory are two of the most common lenses sociologists use when looking at the issues of global inequality. Modernization theory posits that countries go through evolutionary stages and that industrialization and improved technology are the keys to forward movement. Dependency theory, on the other hand, sees modernization theory as Eurocentric and patronizing. With this theory, global inequality is the result of core nations creating a cycle of dependence by exploiting resources and labor in peripheral and semi-peripheral countries.

Section Quiz

10.1 Global Stratification and Classification

1. A sociologist who focuses on the way that multinational corporations headquartered in core nations exploit the local workers in their peripheral nation factories is using a _____ perspective to understand the global economy.
   a. functional
   b. conflict theory
   c. feminist
   d. symbolic interactionist

2. A _____ perspective theorist might find it particularly noteworthy that wealthy corporations improve the quality of life in peripheral nations by providing workers with jobs, pumping money into the local economy, and improving transportation infrastructure.
   a. functional
   b. conflict
   c. feminist
   d. symbolic interactionist

3. A sociologist working from a symbolic interaction perspective would:
   a. study how inequality is created and reproduced
   b. study how corporations can improve the lives of their low-income workers
   c. try to understand how companies provide an advantage to high-income nations compared to low-income nations
   d. want to interview women working in factories to understand how they manage the expectations of their supervisors, make ends meet, and support their households on a day-to-day basis

4. France might be classified as which kind of nation?
   a. Global
   b. Core
   c. Semi-peripheral
   d. Peripheral

5. In the past, the United States manufactured clothes. Many clothing corporations have shut down their U.S. factories and relocated to China. This is an example of:
   a. conflict theory
   b. automation
   c. global inequality
   d. capital flight

10.2 Global Wealth and Poverty

6. Slavery in the pre-Civil War U.S. South most closely resembled
   a. chattel slavery
   b. debt bondage
   c. relative poverty
   d. peonage

7. Maya is a twelve-year-old girl living in Thailand. She is homeless, and often does not know where she will sleep or when she will eat. We might say that Maya lives in _____ poverty.
   a. subjective
   b. absolute
   c. relative
   d. global

8. Mike, a college student, rents a studio apartment. He cannot afford a television and lives on cheap groceries like dried beans and ramen noodles. Since he does not have a regular job, he does not own a car. Mike is living in:
   a. global poverty
   b. extreme poverty
   c. subjective poverty
   d. relative poverty

9. Faith has a full-time job and two children. She has enough money for the basics and can pay her rent each month, but she feels that, with her education and experience, her income should be enough for her family to live much better than they do. Faith is experiencing:
   a. global poverty
   b. subjective poverty
   c. extreme poverty
   d. relative poverty

10. In a U.S. town, a mining company owns all the stores and most of the houses. It sells goods to the workers at inflated prices, offers house rentals for twice what a mortgage would be, and makes sure to always pay the workers less than needed to cover food and rent. Once the workers are in debt, they have no choice but to continue working for the company, since their skills will not transfer to a new position. This situation most closely resembles:
   a. child slavery
   b. chattel slavery
   c. debt slavery
   d. servile marriage

10.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

11. One flaw in dependency theory is the unwillingness to recognize _____.
   a. that previously low-income nations such as China have successfully developed their economies and can no longer be classified as dependent on core nations
   b. that previously high-income nations such as China have been economically overpowered by low-income nations entering the global marketplace
   c. that countries such as China are growing more dependent on core nations
   d. that countries such as China do not necessarily want to be more like core nations

12. One flaw in modernization theory is the unwillingness to recognize _____.
   a. that semi-peripheral nations are incapable of industrializing
   b. that peripheral nations prevent semi-peripheral nations from entering the global market
   c. its inherent ethnocentric bias
   d. the importance of semi-peripheral nations industrializing

13. If a sociologist says that nations evolve toward more advanced technology and more complex industry as their citizens learn cultural values that celebrate hard work and success, she is using _____ theory to study the global economy.
   a. modernization theory
   b. dependency theory
   c. modern dependency theory
   d. evolutionary dependency theory

14. If a sociologist points out that core nations dominate the global economy, in part by creating global interest rates and international tariffs that will inevitably favor high-income nations over low-income nations, he is a:
   a. functionalist
   b. dependency theorist
   c. modernization theorist
   d. symbolic interactionist

15. Dependency theorists explain global inequality and global stratification by focusing on the way that:
   a. core nations and peripheral nations exploit semi-peripheral nations
   b. semi-peripheral nations exploit core nations
   c. peripheral nations exploit core nations
   d. core nations exploit peripheral nations

Short Answer

10.1 Global Stratification and Classification

1. Consider the matter of rock-bottom prices at Walmart. What would a functionalist think of Walmart's model of squeezing vendors to get the absolute lowest prices so it can pass them along to core nation consumers?

2. Why do you think some scholars find Cold War terminology ("first world" and so on) objectionable?

3. Give an example of the feminization of poverty in core nations. How is it the same or different in peripheral nations?

4. Pretend you are a sociologist studying global inequality by looking at child labor manufacturing Barbie dolls in China. What do you focus on? How will you find this information? What theoretical perspective might you use?

10.2 Global Wealth and Poverty

5. Consider the concept of subjective poverty. Does it make sense that poverty is in the eye of the beholder? When you see a homeless person, is your reaction different if he or she is seemingly content versus begging? Why?

6. Think of people among your family, your friends, or your classmates who are relatively unequal in terms of wealth. What is their relationship like? What factors come into play?

7. Go to your campus bookstore or visit its web site. Find out who manufactures apparel and novelty items with your school's insignias. In what countries are these produced? Conduct some research to determine how well your school adheres to the principles advocated by USAS.

10.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

8. There is much criticism that modernization theory is Eurocentric. Do you think dependency theory is also biased? Why, or why not?

9. Compare and contrast modernization theory and dependency theory. Which do you think is more useful for explaining global inequality? Explain, using examples.

Further Research

10.1 Global Stratification and Classification

To learn more about the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, look here (http://openstax.org/l/ UN_development_goals) .

To learn more about the existence and impact of global poverty, peruse the poverty and equity data portal here (http://openstax.org/l/poverty_data) .

10.2 Global Wealth and Poverty

Students often think that the United States is immune to the atrocity of human trafficking. Check out this website to learn more about trafficking in the United States (http://openstax.org/l/ human_trafficking_in_US) .

For more information about the ongoing practices of slavery in the modern world take a look at the Anti-Slavery International website (http://openstax.org/l/anti-slavery) .

10.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

For more information about economic modernization, check out the Hudson Institute (http://openstax.org/l/ Hudson_Institute) .

Learn more about economic dependency at the University of Texas Inequality Project (http://openstax.org/l/ Texas_inequality_project) .

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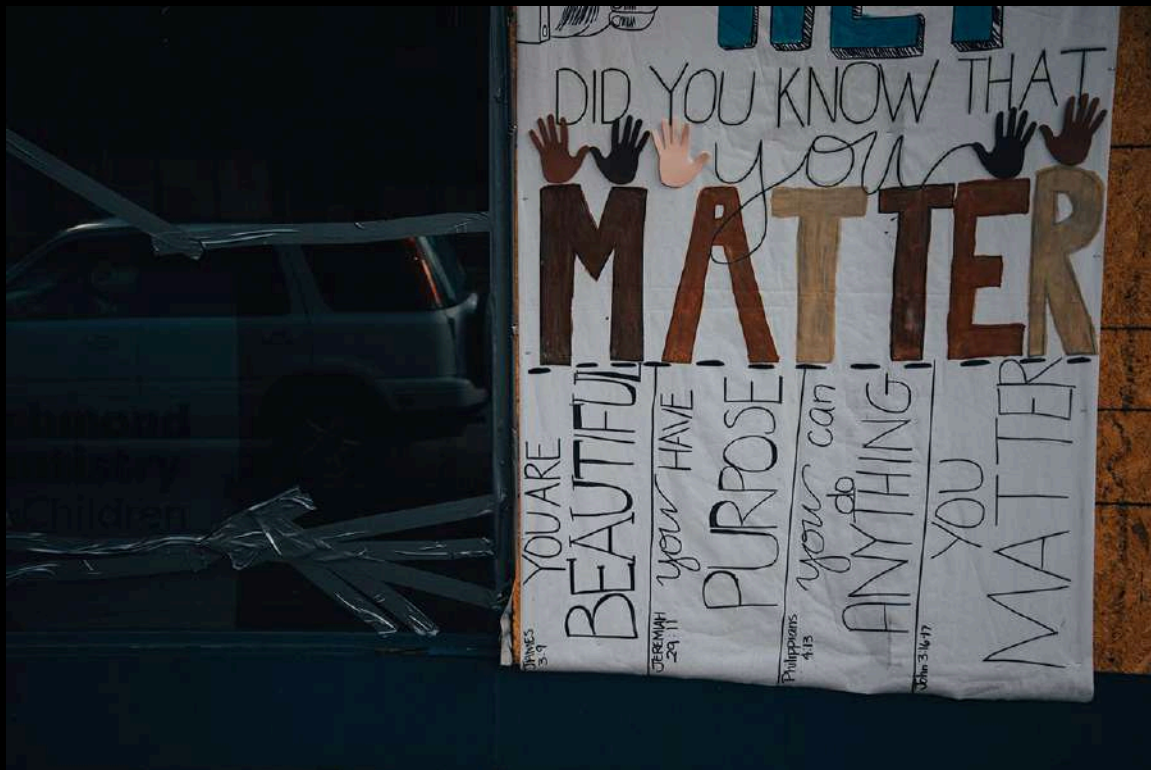
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Race and Ethnicity

FIGURE 11.1 The juxtaposition of anger and hope. Over a window broken during protests in Richmond, Virginia, the business owner placed a sign that reads "Did You Know That You Matter. You are beautiful. You have purpose. You can do anything. You matter," and is accompanied with bible verses. (Credit: I threw a guitar a him/flickr)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

11.1 Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups
11.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity
11.3 Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism
11.4 Intergroup Relationships
11.5 Race and Ethnicity in the United States

INTRODUCTION Trayvon Martin was a seventeen-year-old Black teenager. On the evening of February 26, 2012, he was visiting with his father and his father's fiancée in the Sanford, Florida multi-ethnic gated community where his father's fiancée lived. Trayvon went on foot to buy a snack from a nearby convenience store. As he was returning, George Zimmerman, a White Hispanic man and the community's neighborhood watch program coordinator, noticed him. In light of a recent rash of break-ins, Zimmerman called the police to report a person acting suspiciously, which he had done on many other occasions. During the call, Zimmerman said in reference to suspicious people, "[expletive] punks. Those [expletive], they always get away." The 911 operator told Zimmerman not to follow the teen, as was also stated in the police neighborhood watch guidelines that had been provided to Zimmerman. But Zimmerman did follow the teen, and, soon after, they had a physical confrontation. Several people in the community heard yelling, cries for help, and saw two

people on the ground. According to Zimmerman, Martin attacked him, and in the ensuing scuffle, Zimmerman shot and killed Martin (CNN Library 2021).

A public outcry followed Martin's death. There were allegations of **racial profiling**—the use of race alone to determine whether detain or investigate someone. As part of the initial investigation, Zimmerman was extensively interviewed by police, but was released under Florida's "Stand Your Ground" Law, which indicated police could not arrest him for his actions. About six weeks later, Zimmerman was arrested and charged with second-degree murder by a special prosecutor, Angela Corey, who had been appointed by Florida's governor. In the ensuing trial, he was found not guilty (CNN Library 2021).

The shooting, the public response, and the trial that followed offer a snapshot of the sociology of race. Do you think race played a role in Martin's death? Do you think race had an influence on the initial decision not to arrest Zimmerman, or on his later acquittal? Does society fear Black men, leading to racial profiling at an institutional level?

11.1 Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Understand the difference between race and ethnicity
- Define a majority group (dominant group)
- Define a minority group (subordinate group)

While many students first entering a sociology classroom are accustomed to conflating the terms "race," "ethnicity," and "minority group," these three terms have distinct meanings for sociologists. The idea of race refers to superficial physical differences that a particular society considers significant, while ethnicity describes shared culture. And the term "minority groups" describe groups that are subordinate, or that lack power in society regardless of skin color or country of origin. For example, in modern U.S. history, the elderly might be considered a minority group due to a diminished status that results from popular prejudice and discrimination against them. Ten percent of nursing home staff admitted to physically abusing an elderly person in the past year, and 40 percent admitted to committing psychological abuse (World Health Organization 2011). In this chapter we focus on racial and ethnic minorities.

What Is Race?

A human **race** is a grouping of humankind based on shared physical or social qualities that can vary from one society to another.

Historically, the concept of race has changed across cultures and eras, and has eventually become less connected with ancestral and familial ties, and more concerned with superficial physical characteristics. In the past, theorists developed categories of race based on various geographic regions, ethnicities, skin colors, and more. Their labels for racial groups have connoted regions or skin tones, for example.

German physician, zoologist, and anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840) introduced one of the famous groupings by studying human skulls. Blumenbach divided humans into five races (MacCord 2014):

- Caucasian or White race: people of European, Middle Eastern, and North African origin
- Ethiopian or Black race: people of sub-Saharan Africans origin (sometimes spelled Aethiopian)
- Malayan or Brown race: people of Southeast Asian origin and Pacific Islanders
- Mongolian or Yellow race: people of all East Asian and some Central Asian origin
- American or Red race: people of North American origin or American Indians

Over time, descriptions of race like Blumenbach's have fallen into disuse, and the **social construction of race** is a more accepted way of understanding racial categories. Social science organizations including the American Association of Anthropologists, the American Sociological Association, and the American Psychological Association have all officially rejected explanations of race like those listed above. Research in

this school of thought suggests that race is not biologically identifiable and that previous racial categories were based on pseudoscience; they were often used to justify racist practices (Omi and Winant 1994; Graves 2003). For example, some people used to think that genetics of race determined intelligence. While this idea was mostly put to rest in the later 20th Century, it resurged several times in the past 50 years, including the widely read and cited 1994 book, *The Bell Curve*. Researchers have since provided substantial evidence that refutes a biological-racial basis for intelligence, including the widespread closing of IQ gaps as Black people gained more access to education (Dickens 2006). This research and other confirming studies indicate that any generally lower IQ among a racial group was more about *nurture* than *nature*, to put it into the terms of the Socialization chapter.

While many of the historical considerations of race have been corrected in favor of more accurate and sensitive descriptions, some of the older terms remain. For example, it is generally unacceptable and insulting to refer to Asian people or Native American people with color-based terminology, but it is acceptable to refer to White and Black people in that way. In 2020, a number of publications announced that they would begin capitalizing the names of races, though not everyone used the same approach (Seipel 2020). This practice comes nearly a hundred years after sociologist and leader W.E.B. Du Bois drove newsrooms to capitalize "Negro," the widely used term at the time. And, finally, some members of racial groups (or ethnic groups, which are described below) "reclaim" terms previously used to insult them (Rao 2018). These examples are more evidence of the social construction of race, and our evolving relationships among people and groups.

What Is Ethnicity?

Ethnicity is sometimes used interchangeably with race, but they are very different concepts. **Ethnicity** is based on shared culture—the practices, norms, values, and beliefs of a group that might include shared language, religion, and traditions, among other commonalities. Like race, the term ethnicity is difficult to describe and its meaning has changed over time. And as with race, individuals may be identified or self-identify with ethnicities in complex, even contradictory, ways. For example, ethnic groups such as Irish, Italian American, Russian, Jewish, and Serbian might all be groups whose members are predominantly included in the "White" racial category. Ethnicity, like race, continues to be an identification method that individuals and institutions use today—whether through the census, diversity initiatives, nondiscrimination laws, or simply in personal day-to-day relations.

In some cases, ethnicity is incorrectly used as a synonym for national origin, but those constructions are technically different. National origin (itself sometimes confused with nationality) has to do with the geographic and political associations with a person's birthplace or residence. But people from a nation can be of a wide range of ethnicities, often unknown to people outside of the region, which leads to misconceptions. For example, someone in the United States may, with no ill-intent, refer to all Vietnamese people as an ethnic group. But Vietnam is home to 54 formally recognized ethnic groups.

Adding to the complexity: Sometimes, either to build bridges between ethnic groups, promote civil rights, gain recognition, or other reasons, diverse but closely associated ethnic groups may develop a "pan-ethnic" group. For example, the various ethnic groups and national origins of people from Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and adjoining nations, who may share cultural, linguistic, or other values, may group themselves together in a collective identity. If they do so, they may not seek to erase their individual ethnicities, but finding the correct description and association can be challenging and depend on context. The large number of people who make up the Asian American community may embrace their collective identity in the context of the United States. However, that embrace may depend on people's ages, and may be expressed differently when speaking to different populations (Park 2008). For example, someone who identifies as Asian American while at home in Houston may not refer to themselves as such when they visit extended family in Japan. In a similar manner, a grouping of people from Mexico, Central America and South America—often referred to as Latinx, Latina, or Latino—may be embraced by some and rejected by others in the group (Martinez 2019).

What Are Minority Groups?

Sociologist Louis Wirth (1945) defined a **minority group** as "any group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination." The term minority connotes discrimination, and in its sociological use, the term **subordinate group** can be used interchangeably with the term minority group, while the term **dominant group** is often substituted for the group that represents rulers or is in the majority who can access power and privilege in a given society. These definitions correlate to the concept that the dominant group is that which holds the most power in a given society, while subordinate groups are those who lack power compared to the dominant group.

Note that being a numerical minority is not a characteristic of being a minority group; sometimes larger groups can be considered minority groups due to their lack of power. It is the lack of power that is the predominant characteristic of a minority, or subordinate group. For example, consider apartheid in South Africa, in which a numerical majority (the Black inhabitants of the country) were exploited and oppressed by the White minority.

According to Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris (1958), a minority group is distinguished by five characteristics: (1) unequal treatment and less power over their lives, (2) distinguishing physical or cultural traits like skin color or language, (3) involuntary membership in the group, (4) awareness of subordination, and (5) high rate of in-group marriage. Additional examples of minority groups might include the LGBTQ community, religious practitioners whose faith is not widely practiced where they live, and people with disabilities.

Scapegoat theory, developed initially from Dollard's (1939) Frustration-Aggression theory, suggests that the dominant group will displace its unfocused aggression onto a subordinate group. History has shown us many examples of the scapegoating of a subordinate group. An example from the last century is the way Adolf Hitler blamed the Jewish population for Germany's social and economic problems. In the United States, recent immigrants have frequently been the scapegoat for the nation's—or an individual's—woes. Many states have enacted laws to disenfranchise immigrants; these laws are popular because they let the dominant group scapegoat a subordinate group.

Multiple Identities

FIGURE 11.2 Golfer Tiger Woods has Chinese, Thai, African American, Native American, and Dutch heritage. Individuals with multiple ethnic backgrounds are becoming more common. (Credit: familymwr/flickr)

Prior to the twentieth century, racial intermarriage (referred to as miscegenation) was extremely rare, and in many places, illegal. While the sexual subordination of enslaved people did result in children of mixed race, these children were usually considered Black, and therefore, property. There was no concept of multiple racial identities with the possible exception of the Creole. Creole society developed in the port city of New Orleans, where a mixed-race culture grew from French and African inhabitants. Unlike in other parts of the country, "Creoles of color" had greater social, economic, and educational opportunities than most African Americans.

Increasingly during the modern era, the removal of miscegenation laws and a trend toward equal rights and legal protection against racism have steadily reduced the social stigma attached to racial exogamy (exogamy refers to marriage outside a person's core social unit). It is now common for the children of racially mixed parents to acknowledge and celebrate their various ethnic identities. Golfer Tiger Woods, for instance, has Chinese, Thai, African American, Native American, and Dutch heritage; he jokingly refers to his ethnicity as "Cablinasian," a term he coined to combine several of his ethnic backgrounds. While this is the trend, it is not yet evident in all aspects of our society. For example, the U.S. Census only recently added additional categories for people to identify themselves, such as non-White Hispanic. A growing number of people chose multiple races to describe themselves on the 2020 Census, indicating that individuals have multiple identities.

11.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe how major sociological perspectives view race and ethnicity
- Identify examples of culture of prejudice

Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

We can examine race and ethnicity through three major sociological perspectives: functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. As you read through these theories, ask yourself which one makes the most sense and why.

Functionalism

Functionalism emphasizes that all the elements of society have functions that promote solidarity and maintain order and stability in society. Hence, we can observe people from various racial and ethnic backgrounds interacting harmoniously in a state of social balance. Problems arise when one or more racial or ethnic groups experience inequalities and discriminations. This creates tension and conflict resulting in temporary dysfunction of the social system. For example, the killing of a Black man George Floyd by a White police officer in 2020 stirred up protests demanding racial justice and changes in policing in the United States. To restore the society's pre-disturbed state or to seek a new equilibrium, the police department and various parts of the system require changes and compensatory adjustments.

Another way to apply the functionalist perspective to race and ethnicity is to discuss the way racism can contribute positively to the functioning of society by strengthening bonds between in-group members through the ostracism of out-group members. Consider how a community might increase solidarity by refusing to allow outsiders access. On the other hand, Rose (1951) suggested that dysfunctions associated with racism include the failure to take advantage of talent in the subjugated group, and that society must divert from other purposes the time and effort needed to maintain artificially constructed racial boundaries. Consider how much money, time, and effort went toward maintaining separate and unequal educational systems prior to the civil rights movement.

In the view of functionalism, racial and ethnic inequalities must have served an important function in order to exist as long as they have. This concept, sometimes, can be problematic. How can racism and discrimination contribute positively to society? Nash (1964) focused his argument on the way racism is functional for the dominant group, for example, suggesting that racism morally justifies a racially unequal society. Consider the way slave owners justified slavery in the antebellum South, by suggesting Black people were fundamentally inferior to White and preferred slavery to freedom.

Interactionism

For symbolic interactionists, race and ethnicity provide strong symbols as sources of identity. In fact, some interactionists propose that the symbols of race, not race itself, are what lead to racism. Famed Interactionist Herbert Blumer (1958) suggested that racial prejudice is formed through interactions between members of the dominant group: Without these interactions, individuals in the dominant group would not hold racist views. These interactions contribute to an abstract picture of the subordinate group that allows the dominant group to support its view of the subordinate group, and thus maintains the status quo. An example of this might be an individual whose beliefs about a particular group are based on images conveyed in popular media, and those are unquestionably believed because the individual has never personally met a member of that group.

Another way to apply the interactionist perspective is to look at how people define their races and the race of others. Some people who claim a White identity have a greater amount of skin pigmentation than some people who claim a Black identity; how did they come to define themselves as Black or White?

Conflict Theory

Conflict theories are often applied to inequalities of gender, social class, education, race, and ethnicity. A conflict theory perspective of U.S. history would examine the numerous past and current struggles between the White ruling class and racial and ethnic minorities, noting specific conflicts that have arisen when the dominant group perceived a threat from the minority group. In the late nineteenth century, the rising power of Black Americans after the Civil War resulted in draconian Jim Crow laws that severely limited Black political and social power. For example, Vivien Thomas (1910–1985), the Black surgical technician who helped develop the groundbreaking surgical technique that saves the lives of "blue babies" was classified as a janitor for many years, and paid as such, despite the fact that he was conducting complicated surgical experiments. The years since the Civil War have showed a pattern of attempted disenfranchisement, with gerrymandering and voter suppression efforts aimed at predominantly minority neighborhoods.

Intersection Theory

Feminist sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (1990) further developed **intersection theory**, originally articulated in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, which suggests we cannot separate the effects of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other attributes (Figure 11.4). When we examine race and how it can bring us both advantages and disadvantages, it is important to acknowledge that the way we experience race is shaped, for example, by our gender and class. Multiple layers of disadvantage intersect to create the way we experience race. For example, if we want to understand prejudice, we must understand that the prejudice focused on a White woman because of her gender is very different from the layered prejudice focused on an Asian woman in poverty, who is affected by stereotypes related to being poor, being a woman, and her ethnic status.

FIGURE 11.3 Our identities are formed by dozens of factors, sometimes represented in intersection wheels.

Consider the subset of identity elements represented here. Generally, the outer ring contains elements that may change relatively often, while the elements in the inner circle are often considered more permanent. (There are certainly exceptions.) How does each contribute to who you are, and how would possible change alter your self-defined identity?

Culture of Prejudice

Culture of prejudice refers to the theory that prejudice is embedded in our culture. We grow up surrounded by images of stereotypes and casual expressions of racism and prejudice. Consider the casually racist imagery on grocery store shelves or the stereotypes that fill popular movies and advertisements. It is easy to see how someone living in the Northeastern United States, who may know no Mexican Americans personally, might gain a stereotyped impression from such sources as Speedy Gonzalez or Taco Bell's talking Chihuahua. Because we are all exposed to these images and thoughts, it is impossible to know to what extent they have influenced our thought processes.

11.3 Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain the difference between stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, and racism
- Identify different types of discrimination
- View racial tension through a sociological lens

It is important to learn about stereotypes before discussing the terms prejudice, discrimination, and racism that are often used interchangeably in everyday conversation. **Stereotypes** are oversimplified generalizations about groups of people. Stereotypes can be based on race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation—almost any characteristic. They may be positive (usually about one's own group) but are often negative (usually toward other groups, such as when members of a dominant racial group suggest that a subordinate racial group is stupid or lazy). In either case, the stereotype is a generalization that doesn't take individual differences into account.

Where do stereotypes come from? In fact, new stereotypes are rarely created; rather, they are recycled from subordinate groups that have assimilated into society and are reused to describe newly subordinate groups. For example, many stereotypes that are currently used to characterize new immigrants were used earlier in American history to characterize Irish and Eastern European immigrants.

Prejudice

Prejudice refers to the beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes someone holds about a group. A prejudice is not based on personal experience; instead, it is a prejudgment, originating outside actual experience. Recall from the chapter on Crime and Deviance that the criminalization of marijuana was based on anti-immigrant sentiment; proponents used fictional, fear-instilling stories of "reefer madness" and rampant immoral and illegal activities among Spanish-speaking people to justify new laws and harsh treatment of marijuana users. Many people who supported criminalizing marijuana had never met any of the new immigrants who were rumored to use it; the ideas were based in prejudice.

While prejudice is based in beliefs outside of experience, experience can lead people to feel that their prejudice is confirmed or justified. This is a type of confirmation bias. For example, if someone is taught to believe that a certain ethnic group has negative attributes, every negative act committed someone in that group can be seen as confirming the prejudice. Even a minor social offense committed by a member of the ethnic group, like crossing the street outside the crosswalk or talking too loudly on a bus, could confirm the prejudice.

While prejudice often originates outside experience, it isn't instinctive. Prejudice—as well as the stereotypes that lead to it and the discrimination that stems from it—is most often taught and learned. The teaching arrives

in many forms, from direct instruction or indoctrination, to observation and socialization. Movies, books, charismatic speakers, and even a desire to impress others can all support the development of prejudices.

FIGURE 11.4 Stereotypes and prejudices are persistent and apply to almost every category of people. They are also subject to confirmation bias, in which any bit of supporting evidence gives a person more confidence in their belief. For example, if you think older people are bad drivers, every time you see an accident involving an older driver, it's likely to increase your confidence in your stereotype. Even if you hear the statistics that younger drivers cause more accidents than older drivers, the fulfillment of your stereotype is difficult to overcome. (Credit: Chris Freser/flickr)

Discrimination

While prejudice refers to biased thinking, **discrimination** consists of actions against a group of people. Discrimination can be based on race, ethnicity, age, religion, health, and other categories. For example, discrimination based on race or ethnicity can take many forms, from unfair housing practices such as redlining to biased hiring systems. Overt discrimination has long been part of U.S. history. In the late nineteenth century, it was not uncommon for business owners to hang signs that read, "Help Wanted: No Irish Need Apply." And southern Jim Crow laws, with their "Whites Only" signs, exemplified overt discrimination that is not tolerated today.

Discrimination also manifests in different ways. The scenarios above are examples of individual discrimination, but other types exist. Institutional discrimination occurs when a societal system has developed with embedded disenfranchisement of a group, such as the U.S. military's historical nonacceptance of minority sexualities (the "don't ask, don't tell" policy reflected this norm).

While the form and severity of discrimination vary significantly, they are considered forms of oppression. Institutional discrimination can also include the promotion of a group's status, such in the case of privilege, which is the benefits people receive simply by being part of the dominant group.

Most people have some level of privilege, whether it has to do with health, ability, race, or gender. When discussing race, the focus is often on **White privilege**, which are the benefits people receive by being a White person or being perceived to be a White person. Most White people are willing to admit that non-White people live with a set of disadvantages due to the color of their skin. But until they gain a good degree of self-awareness, few people are willing to acknowledge the benefits they themselves receive by being a part of the dominant group. Why not? Some may feel it lessens their accomplishments, others may feel a degree of guilt, and still others may feel that admitting to privilege makes them seem like a bad or mean person. But White (or other dominant) privilege is an institutional condition, not a personal one. It exists whether the person asks for it or not. In fact, a pioneering thinker on the topic, Peggy McIntosh, noted that she didn't recognize privilege

because, in fact, it was not based in meanness. Instead, it was an "invisible weightless knapsack full of special provisions" that she didn't ask for, yet from which she still benefitted (McIntosh 1989). As the reference indicates, McIntosh's first major publication about White privilege was released in 1989; many people have only become familiar with the term in recent years.

Prejudice and discrimination can overlap and intersect in many ways. To illustrate, here are four examples of how prejudice and discrimination can occur. Unprejudiced nondiscriminators are open-minded, tolerant, and accepting individuals. Unprejudiced discriminators might be those who unthinkingly practice sexism in their workplace by not considering women or gender nonconforming people for certain positions that have traditionally been held by men. Prejudiced nondiscriminators are those who hold racist beliefs but don't act on them, such as a racist store owner who serves minority customers. Prejudiced discriminators include those who actively make disparaging remarks about others or who perpetuate hate crimes.

Racism

Racism is a stronger type of prejudice and discrimination used to justify inequalities against individuals by maintaining that one racial category is somehow superior or inferior to others; it is a set of practices used by a racial dominant group to maximize advantages for itself by disadvantaging racial minority groups. Such practices have affected wealth gap, employment, housing discrimination, government surveillance, incarceration, drug arrests, immigration arrests, infant mortality and much more (Race Forward 2021).

Broadly, individuals belonging to minority groups experience both individual racism and systemic racism during their lifetime. While reading the following some of the common forms of racism, ask yourself, "Am I a part of this racism?" "How can I contribute to stop racism?"

- **Individual or Interpersonal Racism** refers to prejudice and discrimination executed by individuals consciously and unconsciously that occurs between individuals. Examples include telling a racist joke and believing in the superiority of White people.
- **Systemic Racism**, also called **structural racism or institutional racism**, is systems and structures that have procedures or processes that disadvantages racial minority groups. Systemic racism occurs in organizations as discriminatory treatments and unfair policies based on race that result in inequitable outcomes for White people over people of color. For example, a school system where students of color are distributed into underfunded schools and out of the higher-resourced schools.
- **Racial Profiling** is a type of systemic racism that involves the singling out of racial minorities for differential treatment, usually harsher treatment. The disparate treatment of racial minorities by law enforcement officials is a common example of racial profiling in the United States. For example, a study on the Driver's License Privilege to All Minnesota Residents from 2008 to 2010 found that the percentage of Latinos arrested was disproportionally high (Feist 2013). Similarly, the disproportionate number of Black men arrested, charged, and convicted of crimes reflect racial profiling.
- **Historical Racism** is economic inequality or social disparity caused by past racism. For example, African-Americans have had their opportunities in wealth, education and employment adversely affected due to the mistreatment of their ancestors during the slavery and post-slavery period (Wilson 2012).
- **Cultural Racism** occurs when the assumption of inferiority of one or more races is built into the culture of a society. For example, the European culture is considered supposedly more mature, evolved and rational than other cultures (Blaut 1992). A study showed that White and Asian American students with high GPAs experience greater social acceptance while Black and Native American students with high GPAs are rejected by their peers (Fuller-Rowell and Doan 2010).
- **Colorism** is a form of racism, in which someone believes one type of skin tone is superior or inferior to another within a racial group. For example, if an employer believes a Black employee with a darker skin tone is less capable than a Black employee with lighter skin tone, that is colorism. Studies suggest that darker skinned African Americans experience more discrimination than lighter skinned African Americans (Herring, Keith, and Horton 2004; Klonoff and Landrine 2000).

- **Color-Avoidance Racism** (sometimes referred to as "colorblind racism") is an avoidance of racial language by European-Americans that the racism is no longer an issue. The U.S. cultural narrative that typically focuses on individual racism fails to recognize systemic racism. It has arisen since the post-Civil Rights era and supports racism while avoiding any reference to race (Bonilla-Silva (2015).

How to Be an Antiracist

Almost all mainstream voices in the United States oppose racism. Despite this, racism is prevalent in several forms. For example, when a newspaper uses people's race to identify individuals accused of a crime, it may enhance stereotypes of a certain minority. Another example of racist practices is **racial steering**, in which real estate agents direct prospective homeowners toward or away from certain neighborhoods based on their race.

Racist attitudes and beliefs are often more insidious and harder to pin down than specific racist practices. They become more complex due to implicit bias (also referred to as unconscious bias) which is the process of associating stereotypes or attitudes towards categories of people without conscious awareness – which can result in unfair actions and decisions that are at odds with one's conscious beliefs about fairness and equality (Osta and Vasquez 2021). For example, in schools we often see "honors" and "gifted" classes quickly filled with White students while the majority of Black and Latino students are placed in the lower track classes. As a result, our mind consciously and unconsciously starts to associate Black and Latino students with being less intelligent, less capable. Osta and Vasquez (2021) argue that placing the student of color into a lower and less rigorous track, we reproduce the inequity and the vicious cycle of structural racism and implicit bias continues.
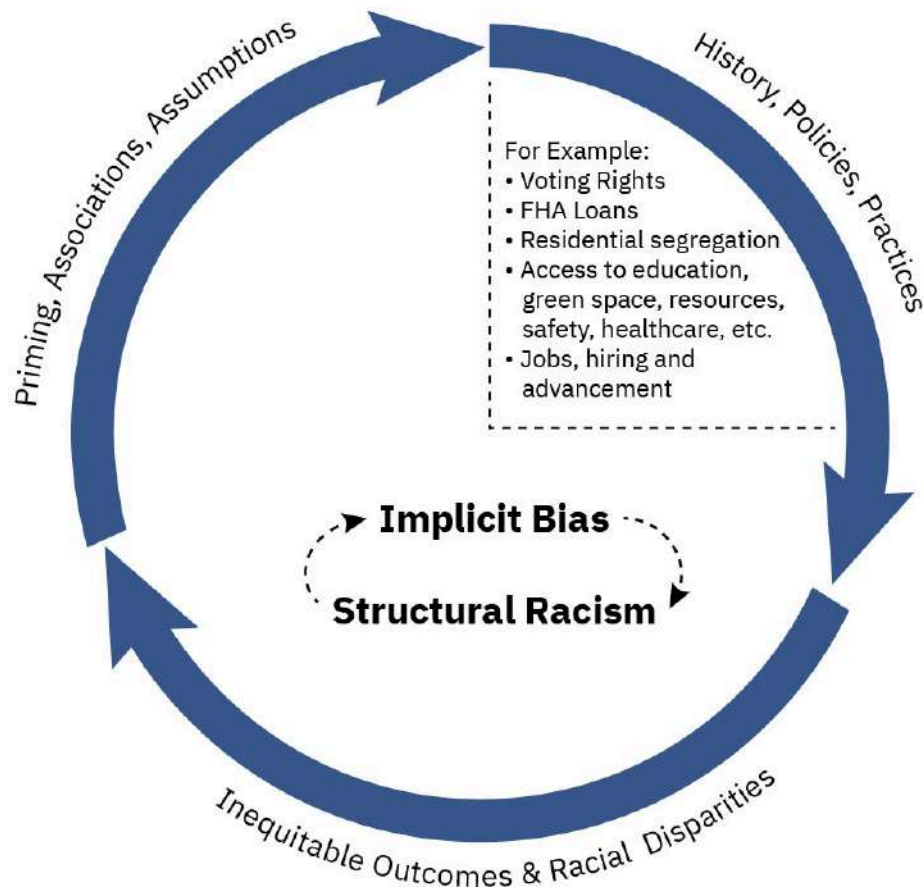
FIGURE 11.5 Implicit Bias and Structural Racialization (Osta and Vasquez 2021)

If everyone becomes antiracist, breaking the vicious cycle of structural racism and implicit bias may not be far away. To be antiracist is a radical choice in the face of history, requiring a radical reorientation of our consciousness (Kendi 2019). Proponents of anti-racism indicate that we must work collaboratively within

ourselves, our institutions, and our networks to challenge racism at local, national and global levels. The practice of anti-racism is everyone's ongoing work that everyone should pursue at least the following (Carter and Snyder 2020):

- Understand and own the racist ideas in which we have been socialized and the racist biases that these ideas have created within each of us.
- Identify racist policies, practices, and procedures and replace them with antiracist policies, practices, and procedures.

Anti-racism need not be confrontational in the sense of engaging in direct arguments with people, feeling terrible about your privilege, or denying your own needs or success. In fact, many people who are a part of a minority acknowledge the need for allies from the dominant group (Melaku 2020). Understanding and owning the racist ideas, and recognizing your own privilege, is a good and brave thing.

We cannot erase racism simply by enacting laws to abolish it, because it is embedded in our complex reality that relates to educational, economic, criminal, political, and other social systems. Importantly, everyone can become antiracist by making conscious choices daily. Being racist or antiracist is not about who you are; it is about what you do (Carter and Snyder 2020).

What does it mean to you to be an "anti-racist"? How do see the recent events or protests in your community, country or somewhere else? Are they making any desired changes?

BIG PICTURE

Racial Tensions in the United States

The death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri on August 9, 2014 illustrates racial tensions in the United States as well as the overlap between prejudice, discrimination, and institutional racism. On that day, Brown, a young unarmed Black man, was killed by a White police officer named Darren Wilson. During the incident, Wilson directed Brown and his friend to walk on the sidewalk instead of in the street. While eyewitness accounts vary, they agree that an altercation occurred between Wilson and Brown. Wilson's version has him shooting Brown in self-defense after Brown assaulted him, while Dorian Johnson, a friend of Brown also present at the time, claimed that Brown first ran away, then turned with his hands in the air to surrender, after which Wilson shot him repeatedly (Nobles and Bosman 2014). Three autopsies independently confirmed that Brown was shot six times (Lowery and Fears 2014).

The shooting focused attention on a number of race-related tensions in the United States. First, members of the predominantly Black community viewed Brown's death as the result of a White police officer racially profiling a Black man (Nobles and Bosman 2014). In the days after, it was revealed that only three members of the town's fifty-three-member police force were Black (Nobles and Bosman 2014). The national dialogue shifted during the next few weeks, with some commentators pointing to a nationwide **sedimentation of racial inequality** and identifying redlining in Ferguson as a cause of the unbalanced racial composition in the community, in local political establishments, and in the police force (Bouie 2014). **Redlining** is the practice of routinely refusing mortgages for households and businesses located in predominately minority communities, while sedimentation of racial inequality describes the intergenerational impact of both practical and legalized racism that limits the abilities of Black people to accumulate wealth.

Ferguson's racial imbalance may explain in part why, even though in 2010 only about 63 percent of its population was Black, in 2013 Black people were detained in 86 percent of stops, 92 percent of searches, and 93 percent of arrests (Missouri Attorney General's Office 2014). In addition, **de facto segregation** in Ferguson's schools, a race-based wealth gap, urban sprawl, and a Black unemployment rate three times that of the White unemployment rate worsened existing racial tensions in Ferguson while also reflecting nationwide racial inequalities (Bouie 2014).

This situation has not much changed in the United States. After Michael Brown, dozens of unarmed Black people have been shot and killed by police. Studies find no change to the racial disparity in the use of deadly force by police (Belli 2020). Do you think that racial tension can be reduced by stopping police action against racial minorities? What types of policies and practices are important to reduce racial tension? Who are responsible? Why?

11.4 Intergroup Relationships

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:
- Explain different intergroup relations in terms of their relative levels of tolerance
- Give historical and/or contemporary examples of each type of intergroup relation

Intergroup relations (relationships between different groups of people) range along a spectrum between tolerance and intolerance. The most tolerant form of intergroup relations is pluralism, in which no distinction is made between minority and majority groups, but instead there's equal standing. At the other end of the continuum are amalgamation, expulsion, and even genocide—stark examples of intolerant intergroup relations.

Pluralism

Pluralism is represented by the ideal of the United States as a "salad bowl": a great mixture of different cultures where each culture retains its own identity and yet adds to the flavor of the whole. True pluralism is characterized by mutual respect on the part of all cultures, both dominant and subordinate, creating a multicultural environment of acceptance. In reality, true pluralism is a difficult goal to reach. In the United States, the mutual respect required by pluralism is often missing, and the nation's past model of a melting pot posits a society where cultural differences aren't embraced as much as erased.

Assimilation

Assimilation describes the process by which a minority individual or group gives up its own identity by taking on the characteristics of the dominant culture. In the United States, which has a history of welcoming and absorbing immigrants from different lands, assimilation has been a function of immigration.

FIGURE 11.6 For many immigrants to the United States, the Statue of Liberty is a symbol of freedom and a new life. Unfortunately, they often encounter prejudice and discrimination. (Credit: Mark Heard/flickr)

Most people in the United States have immigrant ancestors. In relatively recent history, between 1890 and 1920, the United States became home to around 24 million immigrants. In the decades since then, further waves of immigrants have come to these shores and have eventually been absorbed into U.S. culture, sometimes after facing extended periods of prejudice and discrimination. Assimilation may lead to the loss of the minority group's cultural identity as they become absorbed into the dominant culture, but assimilation has minimal to no impact on the majority group's cultural identity.

Some groups may keep only symbolic gestures of their original ethnicity. For instance, many Irish Americans may celebrate Saint Patrick's Day, many Hindu Americans enjoy a Diwali festival, and many Mexican Americans may celebrate *Cinco de Mayo* (a May 5 acknowledgment of the Mexican victory over the French Empire at the Battle of Puebla). However, for the rest of the year, other aspects of their originating culture may be forgotten.

Assimilation is antithetical to the "salad bowl" created by pluralism; rather than maintaining their own cultural flavor, subordinate cultures give up their own traditions in order to conform to their new environment. Sociologists measure the degree to which immigrants have assimilated to a new culture with four benchmarks: socioeconomic status, spatial concentration, language assimilation, and intermarriage. When faced with racial and ethnic discrimination, it can be difficult for new immigrants to fully assimilate. Language assimilation, in particular, can be a formidable barrier, limiting employment and educational options and therefore constraining growth in socioeconomic status.

Amalgamation

Amalgamation is the process by which a minority group and a majority group combine to form a new group. Amalgamation creates the classic "melting pot" analogy; unlike the "salad bowl," in which each culture retains its individuality, the "melting pot" ideal sees the combination of cultures that results in a new culture entirely.

Amalgamationin the form of miscegenation is achieved through intermarriage between races. In the United States, antimiscegenation laws, which criminalized interracial marriage, flourished in the South during the Jim Crow era. It wasn't until 1967's *Loving v. Virginia* that the last antimiscegenation law was struck from the books, making these laws unconstitutional.

Genocide

Genocide, the deliberate annihilation of a targeted (usually subordinate) group, is the most toxic intergroup relationship. Historically, we can see that genocide has included both the intent to exterminate a group and the function of exterminating of a group, intentional or not.

Possibly the most well-known case of genocide is Hitler's attempt to exterminate the Jewish people in the first part of the twentieth century. Also known as the Holocaust, the explicit goal of Hitler's "Final Solution" was the eradication of European Jewry, as well as the destruction of other minority groups such as Catholics, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ people. With forced emigration, concentration camps, and mass executions in gas chambers, Hitler's Nazi regime was responsible for the deaths of 12 million people, 6 million of whom were Jewish. Hitler's intent was clear, and the high Jewish death toll certainly indicates that Hitler and his regime committed genocide. But how do we understand genocide that is not so overt and deliberate?

The treatment of the Native Americans by the European colonizers is an example of genocide committed against indigenous people. Some historians estimate that Native American populations dwindled from approximately 12 million people in the year 1500 to barely 237,000 by the year 1900 (Lewy 2004). European settlers coerced American Indians off their own lands, often causing thousands of deaths in forced removals, such as occurred in the Cherokee or Potawatomi Trail of Tears. Settlers also enslaved Native Americans and forced them to give up their religious and cultural practices. But the major cause of Native American death was neither slavery nor war nor forced removal: it was the introduction of European diseases and Indians' lack of immunity to them. Smallpox, diphtheria, and measles flourished among indigenous American tribes who had no exposure to the diseases and no ability to fight them. Quite simply, these diseases decimated the tribes. How planned this genocide was remains a topic of contention. Some argue that the spread of disease was an unintended effect of conquest, while others believe it was intentional, citing rumors of smallpox-infected blankets being distributed as "gifts" to tribes.

Genocide is not a just a historical concept; it is practiced even in the twenty- first century. For example, ethnic and geographic conflicts in the Darfur region of Sudan have led to hundreds of thousands of deaths. As part of an ongoing land conflict, the Sudanese government and their state-sponsored Janjaweed militia have led a campaign of killing, forced displacement, and systematic rape of Darfuri people. Although a treaty was signed in 2011, the peace is fragile.

Expulsion

Expulsion refers to a subordinate group being forced, by a dominant group, to leave a certain area or country. As seen in the examples of the Trail of Tears and the Holocaust, expulsion can be a factor in genocide. However, it can also stand on its own as a destructive group interaction. Expulsion has often occurred historically with an ethnic or racial basis. In the United States, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 in 1942, after the Japanese government's attack on Pearl Harbor. The Order authorized the establishment of internment camps for anyone with as little as one-eighth Japanese ancestry (i.e., one great-grandparent who was Japanese). Over 120,000 legal Japanese residents and Japanese U.S. citizens, many of them children, were held in these camps for up to four years, despite the fact that there was never any

evidence of collusion or espionage. (In fact, many Japanese Americans continued to demonstrate their loyalty to the United States by serving in the U.S. military during the War.) In the 1990s, the U.S. executive branch issued a formal apology for this expulsion; reparation efforts continue today.

Segregation

Segregation refers to the physical separation of two groups, particularly in residence, but also in workplace and social functions. It is important to distinguish between *de jure* segregation (segregation that is enforced by law) and *de facto* segregation (segregation that occurs without laws but because of other factors). A stark example of *de jure* segregation is the apartheid movement of South Africa, which existed from 1948 to 1994. Under apartheid, Black South Africans were stripped of their civil rights and forcibly relocated to areas that segregated them physically from their White compatriots. Only after decades of degradation, violent uprisings, and international advocacy was apartheid finally abolished.

De jure segregation occurred in the United States for many years after the Civil War. During this time, many former Confederate states passed Jim Crow laws that required segregated facilities for Black and White people. These laws were codified in 1896's landmark Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which stated that "separate but equal" facilities were constitutional. For the next five decades, Black people were subjected to legalized discrimination, forced to live, work, and go to school in separate—but *unequal*—facilities. It wasn't until 1954 and the *Brown v. Board of Education* case that the Supreme Court declared that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal," thus ending *de jure* segregation in the United States.

FIGURE 11.7 In the "Jim Crow" South, it was legal to have "separate but equal" facilities for Black people and White people. (Credit: Library of Congress/Wikimedia Commons)

De facto segregation, however, cannot be abolished by any court mandate. Few institutions desegregated as a result of *Brown*; in fact, government and even military intervention was necessary to enforce the ruling, and it took the Civil Rights Act and other laws to formalize the equality. Segregation is still alive and well in the United States, with different racial or ethnic groups often segregated by neighborhood, borough, or parish. Sociologists use segregation indices to measure racial segregation of different races in different areas. The indices employ a scale from zero to 100, where zero is the most integrated and 100 is the least. In the New York metropolitan area, for instance, the Black-White segregation index was seventy-nine for the years 2005–2009. This means that 79 percent of either Black or White people would have to move in order for each neighborhood to have the same racial balance as the whole metro region (Population Studies Center 2010).

11.5 Race and Ethnicity in the United States

When colonists came to the New World, they found a land that did not need "discovering" since it was already inhabited. While the first wave of immigrants came from Western Europe, eventually the bulk of people entering North America were from Northern Europe, then Eastern Europe, then Latin America and Asia. And let us not forget the forced immigration of enslaved Africans. Most of these groups underwent a period of disenfranchisement in which they were relegated to the bottom of the social hierarchy before they managed (for those who could) to achieve social mobility. Because of this achievement, the U.S. is still a "dream destination" for millions of people living in other countries. Many thousands of people, including children, arrive here every year both documented and undocumented. Most Americans welcome and support new immigrants wholeheartedly. For example, the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act introduced in 2001 provides a means for undocumented immigrants who arrived in the U.S. as children to gain a pathway to permanent legal status. Similarly, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) introduced in 2012 gives young undocumented immigrants a work permit and protection from deportation (Georgetown Law 2021). Today, the U.S. society is multicultural, multiracial and multiethnic that is composed of people from several national origins.

The U.S. Census Bureau collects racial data in accordance with guidelines provided by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB 2016). These data are based on self-identification; generally reflect a social definition of race recognized in this country that include racial and national origin or sociocultural groups. People may choose to report more than one race to indicate their racial mixture, such as "American Indian" and "White." People who identify their origin as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be of any race. OMB requires five minimum categories: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. The U.S. Census Bureau's QuickFacts as of July 1, 2019 showed that over 328 million people representing various racial groups were living in the U.S. (Table 11.1).

Population estimates, July 1, 2019, (V2019)	328,239,523
Race and Hispanic Origin	**Percentage (%)**
White alone	76.3
Black or African American alone	13.4
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	1.3
Asian alone	5.9
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0.2
Two or More Races	2.8
Hispanic or Latino	18.5

TABLE 11.1 Percentage of Race and Hispanic Origin Population 2019
(Table courtesy of U.S. Census Bureau)

White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	60.1

TABLE 11.1 Percentage of Race and Hispanic Origin Population 2019 (Table courtesy of U.S. Census Bureau)

To clarify the terminology in the table, note that the U.S. Census Bureau defines racial groups as follows:

- White – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.
- Black or African American – A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.
- American Indian or Alaska Native – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
- Asian – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

Information on race is required for many Federal programs and is critical in making policy decisions, particularly for civil rights including racial justice. States use these data to meet legislative redistricting principles. Race data also are used to promote equal employment opportunities and to assess racial disparities in health and environmental risks that demonstrates the extent to which this multiculturality is embraced. The many manifestations of multiculturalism carry significant political repercussions. The sections below will describe how several groups became part of U.S. society, discuss the history of intergroup relations for each faction, and assess each group's status today.

Native Americans

Native Americans are Indigenous peoples, the only nonimmigrant people in the United States. According to the National Congress of American Indians, Native Americans are "All Native people of the United States and its trust territories (i.e., American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, Chamorros, and American Samoans), as well as persons from Canadian First Nations and Indigenous communities in Mexico and Central and South America who are U.S. residents (NCAI 2020, p. 11)." Native Americans once numbered in the millions but by 2010 made up only 0.9 percent of U.S. populace; see above (U.S. Census 2010). Currently, about 2.9 million people identify themselves as Native American alone, while an additional 2.3 million identify themselves as Native American mixed with another ethnic group (Norris, Vines, and Hoeffel 2012).

🌐 SOCIOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Sports Teams with Native American Names

FIGURE 11.8 Many Native Americans (and others) believe sports teams with names like the Indians, Braves, and Warriors perpetuate unwelcome stereotypes. The Not Your Mascot protest was one of many directed at the then Washington Redskins, which eventually changed its name. (Credit: Fibonacci Blue/fickr)

The sports world abounds with team names like the Indians, the Warriors, the Braves, and even the Savages and Redskins. These names arise from historically prejudiced views of Native Americans as fierce, brave, and strong: attributes that would be beneficial to a sports team, but are not necessarily beneficial to people in the United States who should be seen as more than that.

Since the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) has been campaigning against the use of such mascots, asserting that the "warrior savage myth . . . reinforces the racist view that Indians are uncivilized and uneducated and it has been used to justify policies of forced assimilation and destruction of Indian culture" (NCAI Resolution #TUL-05-087 2005). The campaign has met with limited success. While some teams have changed their names, hundreds of professional, college, and K–12 school teams still have names derived from this stereotype. Another group, American Indian Cultural Support (AICS), is especially concerned with the use of such names at K–12 schools, influencing children when they should be gaining a fuller and more realistic understanding of Native Americans than such stereotypes supply.

After years of pressure and with a wider sense of social justice and cultural sensitivity, the Washington Football Team removed their offensive name before the 2020 season, and the Cleveland Major League Baseball team announced it would change its name after the 2021 season.

What do you think about such names? Should they be allowed or banned? What argument would a symbolic interactionist make on this topic?

History of Intergroup Relations

Native American culture prior to European settlement is referred to as Pre-Columbian: that is, prior to the coming of Christopher Columbus in 1492. Mistakenly believing that he had landed in the East Indies, Columbus named the indigenous people "Indians," a name that has persisted for centuries despite being a

geographical misnomer and one used to blanket hundreds of sovereign tribal nations (NCAI 2020).

The history of intergroup relations between European colonists and Native Americans is a brutal one. As discussed in the section on genocide, the effect of European settlement of the Americas was to nearly destroy the indigenous population. And although Native Americans' lack of immunity to European diseases caused the most deaths, overt mistreatment and massacres of Native Americans by Europeans were devastating as well.

From the first Spanish colonists to the French, English, and Dutch who followed, European settlers took what land they wanted and expanded across the continent at will. If indigenous people tried to retain their stewardship of the land, Europeans fought them off with superior weapons. Europeans' domination of the Americas was indeed a conquest; one scholar points out that Native Americans are the only minority group in the United States whose subordination occurred purely through conquest by the dominant group (Marger 1993).

After the establishment of the United States government, discrimination against Native Americans was codified and formalized in a series of laws intended to subjugate them and keep them from gaining any power. Some of the most impactful laws are as follows:

- The Indian Removal Act of 1830 forced the relocation of any Native tribes east of the Mississippi River to lands west of the river.
- The Indian Appropriation Acts funded further removals and declared that no Indian tribe could be recognized as an independent nation, tribe, or power with which the U.S. government would have to make treaties. This made it even easier for the U.S. government to take land it wanted.
- The Dawes Act of 1887 reversed the policy of isolating Native Americans on reservations, instead forcing them onto individual properties that were intermingled with White settlers, thereby reducing their capacity for power as a group.

Native American culture was further eroded by the establishment of boarding schools in the late nineteenth century. These schools, run by both Christian missionaries and the United States government, had the express purpose of "civilizing" Native American children and assimilating them into White society. The boarding schools were located off-reservation to ensure that children were separated from their families and culture. Schools forced children to cut their hair, speak English, and practice Christianity. Physical and sexual abuses were rampant for decades; only in 1987 did the Bureau of Indian Affairs issue a policy on sexual abuse in boarding schools. Some scholars argue that many of the problems that Native Americans face today result from almost a century of mistreatment at these boarding schools.

Current Status

The eradication of Native American culture continued until the 1960s, when Native Americans were able to participate in and benefit from the civil rights movement. The Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968 guaranteed Indian tribes most of the rights of the United States Bill of Rights. New laws like the Indian Self-Determination Act of 1975 and the Education Assistance Act of the same year recognized tribal governments and gave them more power. Indian boarding schools have dwindled to only a few, and Native American cultural groups are striving to preserve and maintain old traditions to keep them from being lost forever. Today, Native Americans are citizens of three sovereigns: their tribal nations, the United States, and the state in which they reside (NCAI 2020).

However, Native Americans (some of whom wish to be called American Indians so as to avoid the "savage" connotations of the term "native") still suffer the effects of centuries of degradation. Long-term poverty, inadequate education, cultural dislocation, and high rates of unemployment contribute to Native American populations falling to the bottom of the economic spectrum. Native Americans also suffer disproportionately with lower life expectancies than most groups in the United States.

African Americans

As discussed in the section on race, the term African American can be a misnomer for many individuals. Many people with dark skin may have their more recent roots in Europe or the Caribbean, seeing themselves as Dominican American or Dutch American, for example. Further, actual immigrants from Africa may feel that they have more of a claim to the term African American than those who are many generations removed from ancestors who originally came to this country.

The U.S. Census Bureau (2019) estimates that at least 13.4 percent of the United States' population is Black.

How and Why They Came

African Americans are the exemplar minority group in the United States whose ancestors did not come here by choice. A Dutch sea captain brought the first Africans to the Virginia colony of Jamestown in 1619 and sold them as indentured servants. (Indentured servants are people who are committed to work for a certain period of time, typically without formal pay). This was not an uncommon practice for either Black or White people, and indentured servants were in high demand. For the next century, Black and White indentured servants worked side by side. But the growing agricultural economy demanded greater and cheaper labor, and by 1705, Virginia passed the slave codes declaring that any foreign-born non-Christian could be enslaved, and that enslaved people were considered property.

The next 150 years saw the rise of U.S. slavery, with Black Africans being kidnapped from their own lands and shipped to the New World on the trans-Atlantic journey known as the Middle Passage. Once in the Americas, the Black population grew until U.S.-born Black people outnumbered those born in Africa. But colonial (and later, U.S.) slave codes declared that the child of an enslaved person was also an enslaved person, so the slave class was created. By 1808, the slave trade was internal in the United States, with enslaved people being bought and sold across state lines like livestock.

History of Intergroup Relations

There is no starker illustration of the dominant-subordinate group relationship than that of slavery. In order to justify their severely discriminatory behavior, slaveholders and their supporters viewed Black people as innately inferior. Enslaved people were denied even the most basic rights of citizenship, a crucial factor for slaveholders and their supporters. Slavery poses an excellent example of conflict theory's perspective on race relations; the dominant group needed complete control over the subordinate group in order to maintain its power. Whippings, executions, rapes, and denial of schooling and health care were widely practiced.

Slavery eventually became an issue over which the nation divided into geographically and ideologically distinct factions, leading to the Civil War. And while the abolition of slavery on moral grounds was certainly a catalyst to war, it was not the only driving force. Students of U.S. history will know that the institution of slavery was crucial to the Southern economy, whose production of crops like rice, cotton, and tobacco relied on the virtually limitless and cheap labor that slavery provided. In contrast, the North didn't benefit economically from slavery, resulting in an economic disparity tied to racial/political issues.

A century later, the civil rights movement was characterized by boycotts, marches, sit-ins, and freedom rides: demonstrations by a subordinate group and their supporters that would no longer willingly submit to domination. The major blow to America's formally institutionalized racism was the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This Act, which is still important today, banned discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

Current Status

Although government-sponsored, formalized discrimination against African Americans has been outlawed, true equality does not yet exist. The National Urban League's *2020 Equality Index* reports that Black people's overall equality level with White people has been generally improving. Measuring standards of civic engagement, economics, education, and others, Black people had an equality level of 71 percent in 2010 and

had an equality level of 74 percent in 2020. The *Index*, which has been published since 2005, notes a growing trend of increased inequality with White people, especially in the areas of unemployment, insurance coverage, and incarceration. Black people also trail White people considerably in the areas of economics, health, and education (National Urban League 2020).

To what degree do racism and prejudice contribute to this continued inequality? The answer is complex. 2008 saw the election of this country's first African American president: Barack Obama. Despite being popularly identified as Black, we should note that President Obama is of a mixed background that is equally White, and although all presidents have been publicly mocked at times (Gerald Ford was depicted as a klutz, Bill Clinton as someone who could not control his libido), a startling percentage of the critiques of Obama were based on his race. In a number of other chapters, we discuss racial disparities in healthcare, education, incarceration, and other areas.

Although Black people have come a long way from slavery, the echoes of centuries of disempowerment are still evident.

🌐 SOCIOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Black People Are Still Seeking Racial Justice

FIGURE 11.9 This gathering at the site of George Floyd's death took place five days after he was killed. The location, at Chicago Avenue and 38th Street in Minneapolis, became a memorial. (Credit: Fibbonacci Blue/flickr)

In 2020, racial justice movements expanded their protests against incidents of police brutality and all racially motivated violence against Black people. Black Lives Matter (BLM), an organization founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman, was a core part of the movement to protest the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and other Black victims of police violence. Millions of people from all racial backgrounds participated in the movement directly or indirectly, demanding justice for the victims and their families, redistributing police department funding to drive more holistic and community-driven law enforcement, addressing systemic racism, and introducing new laws to punish police officers who kill innocent people.

The racial justice movement has been able to achieve some these demands. For example, Minneapolis City Council unanimously approved $27 million settlement to the family of George Floyd in March 2021, the largest pre-trial settlement in a wrongful death case ever for the life of a Black person (Shapiro and Lloyd, 2021). $500,000 from the

settlement amount is intended to enhance the business district in the area where Floyd died. Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, was arrested and murdered in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020. Do you think such settlement is adequate to provide justice for the victims, their families and communities affected by the horrific racism? What else should be done more? How can you contribute to bring desired changes?

Asian Americans

Asian Americans represent a great diversity of cultures and backgrounds. The experience of a Japanese American whose family has been in the United States for three generations will be drastically different from a Laotian American who has only been in the United States for a few years. This section primarily discusses Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese immigrants and shows the differences between their experiences. The most recent estimate from the U.S. Census Bureau (2019) suggest about 5.9 percent of the population identify themselves as Asian.

How and Why They Came

The national and ethnic diversity of Asian American immigration history is reflected in the variety of their experiences in joining U.S. society. Asian immigrants have come to the United States in waves, at different times, and for different reasons.

The first Asian immigrants to come to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century were Chinese. These immigrants were primarily men whose intention was to work for several years in order to earn incomes to support their families in China. Their main destination was the American West, where the Gold Rush was drawing people with its lure of abundant money. The construction of the Transcontinental Railroad was underway at this time, and the Central Pacific section hired thousands of migrant Chinese men to complete the laying of rails across the rugged Sierra Nevada mountain range. Chinese men also engaged in other manual labor like mining and agricultural work. The work was grueling and underpaid, but like many immigrants, they persevered.

Japanese immigration began in the 1880s, on the heels of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Many Japanese immigrants came to Hawaii to participate in the sugar industry; others came to the mainland, especially to California. Unlike the Chinese, however, the Japanese had a strong government that negotiated with the U.S. government to ensure the well-being of their immigrants. Japanese men were able to bring their wives and families to the United States, and were thus able to produce second- and third-generation Japanese Americans more quickly than their Chinese counterparts.

The most recent large-scale Asian immigration came from Korea and Vietnam and largely took place during the second half of the twentieth century. While Korean immigration has been fairly gradual, Vietnamese immigration occurred primarily post-1975, after the fall of Saigon and the establishment of restrictive communist policies in Vietnam. Whereas many Asian immigrants came to the United States to seek better economic opportunities, Vietnamese immigrants came as political refugees, seeking asylum from harsh conditions in their homeland. The Refugee Act of 1980 helped them to find a place to settle in the United States.

FIGURE 11.10 Thirty-five Vietnamese refugees wait to be taken aboard the amphibious USS *Blue Ridge (LCC-19)*. They are being rescued from a thirty-five-foot fishing boat 350 miles northeast of Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, after spending eight days at sea. (Credit: U.S. Navy/Wikimedia Commons)

History of Intergroup Relations

Chinese immigration came to an abrupt end with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This act was a result of anti-Chinese sentiment burgeoned by a depressed economy and loss of jobs. White workers blamed Chinese migrants for taking jobs, and the passage of the Act meant the number of Chinese workers decreased. Chinese men did not have the funds to return to China or to bring their families to the United States, so they remained physically and culturally segregated in the Chinatowns of large cities. Later legislation, the Immigration Act of 1924, further curtailed Chinese immigration. The Act included the race-based National Origins Act, which was aimed at keeping U.S. ethnic stock as undiluted as possible by reducing "undesirable" immigrants. It was not until after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 that Chinese immigration again increased, and many Chinese families were reunited.

Although Japanese Americans have deep, long-reaching roots in the United States, their history here has not always been smooth. The California Alien Land Law of 1913 was aimed at them and other Asian immigrants, and it prohibited immigrants from owning land. An even uglier action was the Japanese internment camps of World War II, discussed earlier as an illustration of expulsion.

Current Status

Asian Americans certainly have been subject to their share of racial prejudice, despite the seemingly positive stereotype as the model minority. The **model minority** stereotype is applied to a minority group that is seen as

reaching significant educational, professional, and socioeconomic levels without challenging the existing establishment.

This stereotype is typically applied to Asian groups in the United States, and it can result in unrealistic expectations by putting a stigma on members of this group that do not meet the expectations. Stereotyping all Asians as smart and capable can also lead to a lack of much-needed government assistance and to educational and professional discrimination.

🌐 SOCIOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Hate Crimes Against Asian Americans

FIGURE 11.11 In response to widespread attacks against Asian people, partly linked to incorrect associations regarding Asian people and the COVID-19 pandemic, groups around the country and world held Stop Asian Hate rallies like this one in Canada. (Credit: GoToVan/flickr)

Asian Americans across the United States experienced a significant increase in hate crimes, harassment and discrimination tied to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Community trackers recorded more than 3,000 anti-Asian attacks nationwide during 2020 in comparison to about 100 such incidents recorded annually in the prior years (Abdollah 2021). Asian American leaders have been urging community members to report any criminal incidents, demanding local law enforcement agencies for greater enforcement of existing hate-crime laws.

Many Asian Americans feel their communities have long been ignored by mainstream politics, media and entertainment although they are considered as a "model minority." Recently, Asian American journalists are sharing their own stories of discrimination on social media and a growing chorus of federal lawmakers are demanding actions. Do you think you can do something to stop violence against Asian Americans? Can any of your actions not only help Asian Americans but also wider people in the United States?

White Americans

White Americans are the dominant racial group in the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), 76.3 percent of U.S. adults currently identify themselves as White alone. In this section, we will focus

on German, Irish, Italian, and Eastern European immigrants.

Why They Came

White ethnic Europeans formed the second and third great waves of immigration, from the early nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. They joined a newly minted United States that was primarily made up of White Protestants from England. While most immigrants came searching for a better life, their experiences were not all the same.

The first major influx of European immigrants came from Germany and Ireland, starting in the 1820s. Germans came both for economic opportunity and to escape political unrest and military conscription, especially after the Revolutions of 1848. Many German immigrants of this period were political refugees: liberals who wanted to escape from an oppressive government. They were well-off enough to make their way inland, and they formed heavily German enclaves in the Midwest that exist to this day.

The Irish immigrants of the same time period were not always as well off financially, especially after the Irish Potato Famine of 1845. Irish immigrants settled mainly in the cities of the East Coast, where they were employed as laborers and where they faced significant discrimination.

German and Irish immigration continued into the late 19th century and earlier 20th century, at which point the numbers for Southern and Eastern European immigrants started growing as well. Italians, mainly from the Southern part of the country, began arriving in large numbers in the 1890s. Eastern European immigrants—people from Russia, Poland, Bulgaria, and Austria-Hungary—started arriving around the same time. Many of these Eastern Europeans were peasants forced into a hardscrabble existence in their native lands; political unrest, land shortages, and crop failures drove them to seek better opportunities in the United States. The Eastern European immigration wave also included Jewish people escaping pogroms (anti-Jewish massacres) of Eastern Europe and the Pale of Settlement in what was then Poland and Russia.

History of Intergroup Relations

In a broad sense, German immigrants were not victimized to the same degree as many of the other subordinate groups this section discusses. While they may not have been welcomed with open arms, they were able to settle in enclaves and establish roots. A notable exception to this was during the lead up to World War I and through World War II, when anti-German sentiment was virulent.

Irish immigrants, many of whom were very poor, were more of an underclass than the Germans. In Ireland, the English had oppressed the Irish for centuries, eradicating their language and culture and discriminating against their religion (Catholicism). Although the Irish had a larger population than the English, they were a subordinate group. This dynamic reached into the New World, where Anglo-Americans saw Irish immigrants as a race apart: dirty, lacking ambition, and suitable for only the most menial jobs. In fact, Irish immigrants were subject to criticism identical to that with which the dominant group characterized African Americans. By necessity, Irish immigrants formed tight communities segregated from their Anglo neighbors.

The later wave of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe was also subject to intense discrimination and prejudice. In particular, the dominant group—which now included second- and third-generation Germans and Irish—saw Italian immigrants as the dregs of Europe and worried about the purity of the American race (Myers 2007). Italian immigrants lived in segregated slums in Northeastern cities, and in some cases were even victims of violence and lynching similar to what African Americans endured. They undertook physical labor at lower pay than other workers, often doing the dangerous work that other laborers were reluctant to take on, such as earth moving and construction.

Current Status

German Americans are the largest group among White ethnic Americans in the country. For many years, German Americans endeavored to maintain a strong cultural identity, but they are now culturally assimilated into the dominant culture.

There are now more Irish Americans in the United States than there are Irish in Ireland. One of the country's largest cultural groups, Irish Americans have slowly achieved acceptance and assimilation into the dominant group.

Myers (2007) states that Italian Americans' cultural assimilation is "almost complete, but with remnants of ethnicity." The presence of "Little Italy" neighborhoods—originally segregated slums where Italians congregated in the nineteenth century—exist today. While tourists flock to the saints' festivals in Little Italies, most Italian Americans have moved to the suburbs at the same rate as other White groups. Italian Americans also became more accepted after World War II, partly because of other, newer migrating groups and partly because of their significant contribution to the war effort, which saw over 500,000 Italian Americans join the military and fight against the Axis powers, which included Italy itself.

As you will see in the Religion chapter, Jewish people were also a core immigrant group to the United States. They often resided in tight-knit neighborhoods in a similar way to Italian people. Jewish identity is interesting and varied, in that many Jewish people consider themselves as members of a collective ethnic group as well as a religion, and many Jewish people feel connected by their ancestry as well as their religion. In fact, much of the data around the number of Jewish Americans is presented with caveats about different definitions and identifications of what it means to be Jewish (Lipka 2013).

As we have seen, there is no minority group that fits easily in a category or that can be described simply. While sociologists believe that individual experiences can often be understood in light of their social characteristics (such as race, class, or gender), we must balance this perspective with awareness that no two individuals' experiences are alike. Making generalizations can lead to stereotypes and prejudice. The same is true for White ethnic Americans, who come from diverse backgrounds and have had a great variety of experiences.

💬 SOCIAL POLICY AND DEBATE

Thinking about White Ethnic Americans: Arab Americans

FIGURE 11.12 The Islamic Center of America in Dearborn, Michigan is the largest mosque, or Islamic religious place of worship, in the United States. Muslim women and girls often wear head coverings, which sometimes makes them a target of harassment. (Credit A: Ryan Ready/flickr; B: U.S. Department of Agriculture/flickr)

The first Arab immigrants came to this country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were predominantly Syrian, Lebanese, and Jordanian Christians, and they came to escape persecution and to make a better life. These early immigrants and their descendants, who were more likely to think of themselves as Syrian or Lebanese than Arab, represent almost half of the Arab American population today (Myers 2007). Restrictive

immigration policies from the 1920s until 1965 curtailed immigration, but Arab immigration since 1965 has been steady. Immigrants from this time period have been more likely to be Muslim and more highly educated, escaping political unrest and looking for better opportunities.

The United States was deeply affected by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and racial profiling has proceeded against Arab Americans since then. Particularly when engaged in air travel, being young and Arab-looking is enough to warrant a special search or detainment. This Islamophobia (irrational fear of or hatred against Muslims) does not show signs of abating. Arab Americans represent all religious practices, despite the stereotype that all Arabic people practice Islam. Geographically, the Arab region comprises the Middle East and parts of North Africa (MENA). People whose ancestry lies in that area or who speak primarily Arabic may consider themselves Arabs.

The U.S. Census has struggled with the issue of Arab identity. The 2020 Census, as in previous years, did not offer a (MENA) category under the question of race. The US government rejected a push by Arab American advocates and organizations to add the new category, meaning that people stemming from the Arab region will be counted as "white" (Harb 2018). Do you think an addition of MENA category is appropriate to reduce prejudice and discrimination against Arab Americans? What other categories should be added to promote racial justice in the United States?

Hispanic Americans

The U.S. Census Bureau uses two ethnicities in collecting and reporting data: "Hispanic or Latino" and "Not Hispanic or Latino." Hispanic or Latino is a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. Hispanic Americans have a wide range of backgrounds and nationalities.

The segment of the U.S. population that self-identifies as Hispanic in 2019 was recently estimated at 18.5 percent of the total (U.S. Census Bureau 2019). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, about 75 percent of the respondents who identify as Hispanic report being of Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban origin. Remember that the U.S. Census allows people to report as being more than one ethnicity.

Not only are there wide differences among the different origins that make up the Hispanic American population, but there are also different names for the group itself. Hence, there have been some disagreements over whether Hispanic or Latino is the correct term for a group this diverse, and whether it would be better for people to refer to themselves as being of their origin specifically, for example, Mexican American or Dominican American. This section will compare the experiences of Mexican Americans and Cuban Americans.

How and Why They Came

Mexican Americans form the largest Hispanic subgroup and also the oldest. Mexican migration to the United States started in the early 1900s in response to the need for inexepensive agricultural labor. Mexican migration was often circular; workers would stay for a few years and then go back to Mexico with more money than they could have made in their country of origin. The length of Mexico's shared border with the United States has made immigration easier than for many other immigrant groups.

Cuban Americans are the second-largest Hispanic subgroup, and their history is quite different from that of Mexican Americans. The main wave of Cuban immigration to the United States started after Fidel Castro came to power in 1959 and reached its crest with the Mariel boatlift in 1980. Castro's Cuban Revolution ushered in an era of communism that continues to this day. To avoid having their assets seized by the government, many wealthy and educated Cubans migrated north, generally to the Miami area.

History of Intergroup Relations

For several decades, Mexican workers crossed the long border into the United States, both "documented" and "undocumented" to work in the fields that provided produce for the developing United States. Western growers

needed a steady supply of labor, and the 1940s and 1950s saw the official federal Bracero Program (*bracero* is Spanish for *strong-arm*) that offered protection to Mexican guest workers. Interestingly, 1954 also saw the enactment of "Operation Wetback," which deported thousands of illegal Mexican workers. From these examples, we can see the U.S. treatment of immigration from Mexico has been ambivalent at best.

Sociologist Douglas Massey (2006) suggests that although the average standard of living than in Mexico may be lower in the United States, it is not so low as to make permanent migration the goal of most Mexicans. However, the strengthening of the border that began with 1986's Immigration Reform and Control Act has made one-way migration the rule for most Mexicans. Massey argues that the rise of illegal one-way immigration of Mexicans is a direct outcome of the law that was intended to reduce it.

Cuban Americans, perhaps because of their relative wealth and education level at the time of immigration, have fared better than many immigrants. Further, because they were fleeing a Communist country, they were given refugee status and offered protection and social services. The Cuban Migration Agreement of 1995 has curtailed legal immigration from Cuba, leading many Cubans to try to immigrate illegally by boat. According to a 2009 report from the Congressional Research Service, the U.S. government applies a "wet foot/dry foot" policy toward Cuban immigrants; Cubans who are intercepted while still at sea will be returned to Cuba, while those who reach the shore will be permitted to stay in the United States.

Current Status

Mexican Americans, especially those who are here undocumented, are at the center of a national debate about immigration. Myers (2007) observes that no other minority group (except the Chinese) has immigrated to the United States in such an environment of legal dispute. He notes that in some years, three times as many Mexican immigrants may have entered the United States undocumented as those who arrived documented. It should be noted that this is due to enormous disparity of economic opportunity on two sides of an open border, not because of any inherent inclination to break laws. In his report, "Measuring Immigrant Assimilation in the United States," Jacob Vigdor (2008) states that Mexican immigrants experience relatively low rates of economic and civic assimilation. He further suggests that "the slow rates of economic and civic assimilation set Mexicans apart from other immigrants, and may reflect the fact that the large numbers of Mexican immigrants residing in the United States undocumented have few opportunities to advance themselves along these dimensions."

By contrast, Cuban Americans are often seen as a model minority group within the larger Hispanic group. Many Cubans had higher socioeconomic status when they arrived in this country, and their anti-Communist agenda has made them welcome refugees to this country. In south Florida, especially, Cuban Americans are active in local politics and professional life. As with Asian Americans, however, being a model minority can mask the issue of powerlessness that these minority groups face in U.S. society.

SOCIAL POLICY AND DEBATE

Arizona's Senate Bill 1070

FIGURE 11.13 Protesters in Arizona dispute the harsh new anti-immigration law. (Credit: rprathap/flickr)

As both legal and illegal immigrants, and with high population numbers, Mexican Americans are often the target of stereotyping, racism, and discrimination. A harsh example of this is in Arizona, where a stringent immigration law—known as SB 1070 (for Senate Bill 1070)—caused a nationwide controversy. Formally titled "Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act, the law requires that during a lawful stop, detention, or arrest, Arizona police officers must establish the immigration status of anyone they suspect may be here illegally. The law makes it a crime for individuals to fail to have documents confirming their legal status, and it gives police officers the right to detain people they suspect may be in the country illegally.

To many, the most troublesome aspect of this law is the latitude it affords police officers in terms of whose citizenship they may question. Having "reasonable suspicion that the person is an alien who is unlawfully present in the United States" is reason enough to demand immigration papers (Senate Bill 1070 2010). Critics say this law will encourage racial profiling (the illegal practice of law enforcement using race as a basis for suspecting someone of a crime), making it hazardous to be caught "Driving While Brown," a takeoff on the legal term Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) or the slang reference of "Driving While Black." Driving While Brown refers to the likelihood of getting pulled over just for being nonWhite.

SB 1070 has been the subject of many lawsuits, from parties as diverse as Arizona police officers, the American Civil Liberties Union, and even the federal government, which is suing on the basis of Arizona contradicting federal immigration laws (ACLU 2011). The future of SB 1070 is uncertain, but many other states have tried or are trying to pass similar measures. Do you think such measures are appropriate?

Key Terms

amalgamation   the process by which a minority group and a majority group combine to form a new group

antiracist   a person who opposes racism and acts for racial justice

assimilation   the process by which a minority individual or group takes on the characteristics of the dominant culture

colorism   the belief that one type of skin tone is superior or inferior to another within a racial group

culture of prejudice   the theory that prejudice is embedded in our culture

discrimination   prejudiced action against a group of people

dominant group   a group of people who have more power in a society than any of the subordinate groups

ethnicity   shared culture, which may include heritage, language, religion, and more

expulsion   the act of a dominant group forcing a subordinate group to leave a certain area or even the country

genocide   the deliberate annihilation of a targeted (usually subordinate) group

institutional racism   racism embedded in social institutions

intersection theory   theory that suggests we cannot separate the effects of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other attributes

minority group   any group of people who are singled out from the others for differential and unequal treatment

model minority   the stereotype applied to a minority group that is seen as reaching higher educational, professional, and socioeconomic levels without protest against the majority establishment

pluralism   the ideal of the United States as a "salad bowl:" a mixture of different cultures where each culture retains its own identity and yet adds to the "flavor" of the whole

prejudice   biased thought based on flawed assumptions about a group of people

racial profiling   the use by law enforcement of race alone to determine whether to stop and detain someone

racial steering   the act of real estate agents directing prospective homeowners toward or away from certain neighborhoods based on their race

racism   a set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices that are used to justify the belief that one racial category is somehow superior or inferior to others

redlining   the practice of routinely refusing mortgages for households and business located in predominately minority communities

scapegoat theory   a theory that suggests that the dominant group will displace its unfocused aggression onto a subordinate group

sedimentation of racial inequality   the intergenerational impact of de facto and de jure racism that limits the abilities of Black people to accumulate wealth

segregation   the physical separation of two groups, particularly in residence, but also in workplace and social functions

social construction of race   the school of thought that race is not biologically identifiable

stereotypes   oversimplified ideas about groups of people

subordinate group   a group of people who have less power than the dominant group

White privilege   the benefits people receive simply by being part of the dominant group

Section Summary

11.1 Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

Race is fundamentally a social construct. Ethnicity is a term that describes shared culture and national origin. Minority groups are defined by their lack of power.

11.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

Functionalist views of race study the role dominant and subordinate groups play to create a stable social

structure. Conflict theorists examine power disparities and struggles between various racial and ethnic groups. Interactionists see race and ethnicity as important sources of individual identity and social symbolism. The concept of culture of prejudice recognizes that all people are subject to stereotypes that are ingrained in their culture.

11.3 Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism

Stereotypes are oversimplified ideas about groups of people. Prejudice refers to thoughts and feelings, while discrimination refers to actions. Racism is both prejudice and discrimination due to the belief that one race is inherently superior or inferior to other races. Antiracists fight against the systems of racism by employing antiracist policies and practices in institutions and communities.

11.4 Intergroup Relationships

Intergroup relations range from a tolerant approach of pluralism to intolerance as severe as genocide. In pluralism, groups retain their own identity. In assimilation, groups conform to the identity of the dominant group. In amalgamation, groups combine to form a new group identity.

11.5 Race and Ethnicity in the United States

The history of the U.S. people contains an infinite variety of experiences that sociologist understand follow patterns. From the indigenous people who first inhabited these lands to the waves of immigrants over the past 500 years, migration is an experience with many shared characteristics. Most groups have experienced various degrees of prejudice and discrimination as they have gone through the process of assimilation.

Section Quiz

11.1 Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

1. The racial term "African American" can refer to:
    a.   a Black person living in the United States
    b.   people whose ancestors came to the United States through the slave trade
    c.   a White person who originated in Africa and now lives in the United States
    d.   any of the above

2. What is the one defining feature of a minority group?
    a.   Self-definition
    b.   Numerical minority
    c.   Lack of power
    d.   Strong cultural identity

3. Ethnicity describes shared:
    a.   beliefs
    b.   language
    c.   religion
    d.   any of the above

4. Which of the following is an example of a numerical majority being treated as a subordinate group?
    a.   Jewish people in Germany
    b.   Creoles in New Orleans
    c.   White people in Brazil
    d.   Black people under apartheid in South Africa

5. Scapegoat theory shows that:
    a. subordinate groups blame dominant groups for their problems
    b. dominant groups blame subordinate groups for their problems
    c. some people are predisposed to prejudice
    d. all of the above

11.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

6. As a White person in the United States, being reasonably sure that you will be dealing with authority figures of the same race as you is a result of:
    a. intersection theory
    b. conflict theory
    c. White privilege
    d. scapegoating theory

7. Speedy Gonzalez is an example of:
    a. intersection theory
    b. stereotyping
    c. interactionist view
    d. culture of prejudice

11.3 Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism

8. Stereotypes can be based on:
    a. race
    b. ethnicity
    c. gender
    d. all of the above

9. What is discrimination?
    a. Biased thoughts against an individual or group
    b. Biased actions against an individual or group
    c. Belief that a race different from yours is inferior
    d. Another word for stereotyping

10. Which of the following is the best explanation of racism as a social fact?
    a. It needs to be eradicated by laws.
    b. It is like a magic pill.
    c. It does not need the actions of individuals to continue.
    d. None of the above

11.4 Intergroup Relationships

11. Which intergroup relation displays the least tolerance?
    a. Segregation
    b. Assimilation
    c. Genocide
    d. Expulsion

12. What doctrine justified legal segregation in the South?
    a. Jim Crow
    b. *Plessy v. Ferguson*
    c. *De jure*
    d. Separate but equal

13. What intergroup relationship is represented by the "salad bowl" metaphor?
    a. Assimilation
    b. Pluralism
    c. Amalgamation
    d. Segregation

14. Amalgamation is represented by the _____ metaphor.
    a. melting pot
    b. Statue of Liberty
    c. salad bowl
    d. separate but equal

11.5 Race and Ethnicity in the United States

15. What makes Native Americans unique as a subordinate group in the United States?
    a. They are the only group that experienced expulsion.
    b. They are the only group that was segregated.
    c. They are the only group that was enslaved.
    d. They are the only group that is indigenous to the United States.

16. Which subordinate group is often referred to as the "model minority?"
    a. African Americans
    b. Asian Americans
    c. White ethnic Americans
    d. Native Americans

17. Which federal act or program was designed to allow more Hispanic American immigration, not block it?
    a. The Bracero Program
    b. Immigration Reform and Control Act
    c. Operation Wetback
    d. SB 1070

18. Many Arab Americans face _____, especially after 9/11.
    a. racism
    b. segregation
    c. Islamophobia
    d. prejudice

19. Why did most White ethnic Americans come to the United States?
    a. For a better life
    b. To escape oppression
    c. Because they were forced out of their own countries
    d. a and b only

Short Answer

11.1 Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

1. Why do you think the term "minority" has persisted when the word "subordinate" is more descriptive?

2. How do you describe your ethnicity? Do you include your family's country of origin? Do you consider yourself multiethnic? How does your ethnicity compare to that of the people you spend most of your time with?

11.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

3. How do redlining and racial steering contribute to institutionalized racism?

4. Give an example of stereotyping that you see in everyday life. Explain what would need to happen for this to be eliminated.

11.3 Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism

5. Give three examples of White privilege. Do you know people who have experienced this? From what perspective?

6. What is the worst example of culture of prejudice you can think of? What are your reasons for thinking it is the worst?

11.4 Intergroup Relationships

7. Do you believe immigration laws should foster an approach of pluralism, assimilation, or amalgamation? Which perspective do you think is most supported by current U.S. immigration policies?

8. Which intergroup relation do you think is the most beneficial to the subordinate group? To society as a whole? Why?

11.5 Race and Ethnicity in the United States

9. In your opinion, which group had the easiest time coming to this country? Which group had the hardest time? Why?

10. Which group has made the most socioeconomic gains? Why do you think that group has had more success than others have?

Further Research

11.1 Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

Explore aspects of race and ethnicity at PBS's site, "What Is Race?" (http://openstax.org/l/PBS_what_is_race) .

11.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

Are you aware of your own or others' privilege? Explore the concept with the White privilege checklist (http://openstax.org/l/white_privilege_checklist) to see how much of it holds true for you or others.

11.3 Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism

How far should First Amendment rights extend? Read more about the subject at the First Amendment Center. (http://openstax.org/l/first_amendment_center)

Learn more about institutional racism at the Southern Poverty Law Center's website (https://openstax.org/l/SPL_Center) .

Learn more about how prejudice develops by watching the short documentary "Eye of the Storm" (https://openstax.org/l/Eye_Storm)

11.4 Intergroup Relationships

So you think you know your own assumptions? Check and find out with the Implicit Association Test (http://openstax.org/l/implicit_association_test)

What do you know about the treatment of Australia's aboriginal population? Find out more by viewing the feature-length documentary *Our Generation* (https://openstax.org/l/Our_Gen) .

11.5 Race and Ethnicity in the United States

Are people interested in reclaiming their ethnic identities? Read the article *The White Ethnic Revival* and decide (http://openstax.org/l/ethnic_revival) .

What is the current racial composition of the United States? Review up-to-the minute statistics at the United States Census Bureau (https://openstax.org/l/US_Census) .

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