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# Prejudice

**P**REJUDICE IS A NEGATIVE ATTITUDE THAT REJECTS AN ENTIRE group; discrimination is behavior that deprives a group of certain rights or opportunities. Prejudice does not necessarily coincide with discrimination, as is made apparent by a typology developed by sociologist Robert Merton. Several theories have been advanced to explain prejudice: scapegoating, authoritarian personality, exploitation, and the normative approach. Although widespread expression of prejudice has declined, color-blind racism allows the status quo of racial and ethnic inequality to persist. Prejudice is not limited to the dominant group; members of subordinate groups often dislike one another. The mass media seem to be of limited value in reducing prejudice and may even intensify ill feeling. Equal-status contact and the shared-coping approach may reduce hostility between groups, but data show few friendships cross racial lines. In response to increasing diversity in the workplace, corporations and organizations have mounted diversity-training programs to increase organizational effectiveness and combat prejudice. There are also 10 identifiable steps that we as individuals can take to stop prejudice and hatred.

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**I**magine one is a “shooter” who is faced with making a decision whether to shoot a threatening, potentially dangerous person. Social psychologists have created such a constructed situation for police, everyday community residents, and even volunteer college students, using a video simulation. As one might expect, the police as shooters were faster in responding and were more accurate in determining whether the “criminal” was armed with a gun. But what if the situation sometimes shows the target to be Black and sometimes as White? Reflecting general stereotypes, response time is fastest to decide whether to shoot or hold fire if the White target is unarmed and the Black target is armed. Yet when the image does not follow the notion that Black people are less trustworthy, response time falls. People hesitate to shoot armed White targets and take longer to decide whether to shoot unarmed Black targets. This measured bias seems to hold across race and ethnicity in that there were no significant differences based on whether the shooters themselves were White or Black or Hispanic. Particularly troubling was the finding that police assigned to predominantly Black neighborhoods rather than White communities are even quicker to shoot armed Black targets and more hesitant to fire at armed White targets.

These results were not unusual. In a similar study at the University of Washington, psychologists asked college students to distinguish virtual citizens and police officers from armed criminals. They found that subjects were more likely to misperceive and shoot images of Black men than of White men in the video game they created. For the last three decades, in fact, research has suggested that people in the United States are likely to see Black men as being more violent than White men, which translated in this study into the Black men being more likely to be shot at (Correll et al. 2007).

The immigration debate has persisted for years with little action on a complex issue. Some people have advocated measures to allow long-term illegal residents a way to become permanent residents, but loud cries have been made, taking a “What part of *illegal* don’t they get?” argument. It is not too surprising that hate crimes against Latinos have increased by 35 percent over the last three years. The rhetoric over immigration has often stigmatized, or dehumanized, immigrants (even legal arrivals at times) as “invaders,” “criminal aliens,” and “cockroaches.”

Prejudice is so prevalent that it is tempting to consider it inevitable or, even more broadly, just part of human nature. Such a view ignores its variability from individual to individual and from society to society. People must learn prejudice as children before they exhibit it as adults. Therefore, prejudice is a social phenomenon, an acquired characteristic. A truly pluralistic society would lack unfavorable distinctions made through prejudicial attitudes among racial and ethnic groups.

Ill feeling between groups may result from **ethnocentrism**, or the tendency to assume that one’s culture and way of life are superior to all others’. The ethnocentric person judges other groups and other cultures by the standards of his or her own group. This attitude leads people quite easily to view other cultures as inferior. We see a woman with a veil and may regard it as strange and backward yet find it baffling when other societies see U.S. women in short skirts and view the dress as



Imagine seeing this billboard. What is it for? It is an expression of prejudice. One would easily find that it is making a case for an organization that argues White Americans have an unconditional right to territorial and political self-determination.



inappropriate. Ethnocentrism and other expressions of prejudice are voiced very often, but unfortunately they also become the motivation for criminal acts.

## Hate Crimes

Although prejudice certainly is not new in the United States, it is receiving increased attention as it manifests itself in neighborhoods, at meetings, and on college campuses. The Hate Crime Statistics Act, which became law in 1990, directs the Department of Justice to gather data on hate or bias crimes. The government defines an ordinary crime as a **hate crime** when offenders are motivated to choose a victim because of some characteristic—for example, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or disability—and provide evidence that hatred prompted them to commit the crime. Hate crimes are also sometimes referred to as *bias crimes* (Department of Justice 2008).

This law created a national mandate to identify such crimes, whereas previously only 12 states had monitored hate crimes. In 1994, the act was amended to include disabilities, both physical and mental, as factors that could be considered as a basis for hate crimes.

In 2008, law enforcement agencies released hate crime data submitted by police agencies covering 85 percent of the United States. Even though many, many hate crimes are not reported (less than one in seven participating agencies reported an incident), a staggering number of offenses that come to law agencies' attention were motivated by hate. There were official reports of more than 7,600 hate crimes and bias-motivated incidents. As indicated in Figure 2.1, race was the apparent motivation for the bias in approximately 52 percent of the reports, and religion, sexual orientation, and ethnicity accounted for 14 percent to 17 percent each. Vandalism and intimidation were the most common crimes, but 58 percent of the incidents against people involved assault, rape, or murder.

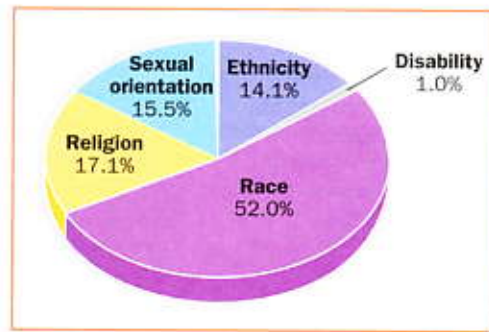
The vast majority of hate crimes are directed by members of the dominant group toward those who are, relatively speaking, powerless, but that does not account for every hate crime. One in five bias incidents based on race are anti-White. Hate crimes, except for those that are most horrific, receive little media attention, and anti-White incidents probably receive even less. Hostility based on race knows no boundaries (Department of Justice 2008; Witt 2007).

The official reports of hate or bias crimes appear to be only the tip of the iceberg. Government-commissioned surveys conducted over a national cross section indicate that 192,000 people annually report they have been victims of hate crimes, but only half of these are reported to police. Of these, only 1 out of 10, according to the victims, are confirmed as hate crimes. Although definitions vary, considerable racial hostility in the country becomes violent (Harlow 2005; Perry 2003).

National legislation and publicity have made hate crime a meaningful term, and we are beginning to recognize the victimization associated with such incidents. A current proposal would make a violent crime a federal crime if it were motivated by racial or religious bias. Although passage is uncertain, the serious consideration of the proposal indicates a willingness to consider a major expansion of federal jurisdiction. Currently, federal law prohibits crimes motivated by race, color, religion, or national origin only if they involve violation of a federally guaranteed right such as voting.

Victimized groups are not merely observing hate crimes and other acts of prejudice. Watchdog organizations play an important role in documenting bias-motivated violence; among such groups are the Anti-Defamation League, the National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence, the Southern Poverty Law Center, and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Established hate groups have even set up propaganda sites on the World Wide Web. This also creates opportunities for previously unknown haters and hate groups to promote



**FIGURE 2.1**  
Distribution of Reported  
Hate Crimes in 2007

Source: Department of Justice  
2008.

### ethnocentrism

The tendency to assume that one's culture and way of life are superior to all others.

### hate crime

Criminal offense committed because of the offender's bias against a race, religion, ethnic/national origin group, or sexual orientation group.



**prejudice**

A negative attitude toward an entire category of people, such as a racial or ethnic minority.

**ethnophaulisms**

Ethnic or racial slurs, including derisive nicknames.

**discrimination**

The denial of opportunities and equal rights to individuals and groups because of prejudice or for other arbitrary reasons.

themselves. However, hate crime legislation does not affect such outlets, because of legal questions involving freedom of speech. An even more recent technique has been to use instant messaging software, which enables Internet users to create a private chat room with another individual. Enterprising bigots use directories to target their attacks through instant messaging, much as harassing telephone calls were placed in the past. Even more creative and subtle are people who have constructed Web sites to attract people who are surfing for information on Martin Luther King, Jr., only to find a site that looks educational but savagely discredits the civil rights activist. A close inspection will reveal that the site is hosted by a White-supremacist organization (M. Davis 2008; Simon Wiesenthal Center 2008; Working 2007).

What causes people to dislike entire groups of other people? Is it possible to change attitudes? This chapter tries to answer these questions about prejudice. Chapter 3 focuses on discrimination.

## Prejudice and Discrimination

Prejudice and discrimination are related concepts but are not the same. **Prejudice** is a negative attitude toward an entire category of people. The two important components in this definition are *attitude* and *entire category*. Prejudice involves attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs, not actions. Prejudice often is expressed through the use of **ethnophaulisms**, or ethnic slurs, which include derisive nicknames such as *honky*, *gook*, and *wetback*. Ethnophaulisms also include speaking to or about members of a particular group in a condescending way, such as saying “José does well in school for a Mexican American” or referring to a middle-aged woman as “one of the girls.”

A prejudiced belief leads to categorical rejection. Prejudice is not disliking someone you meet because you find his or her behavior objectionable. It is disliking an entire racial or ethnic group, even if you have had little or no contact with that group. A college student who requests a room change after three weeks of enduring his roommate’s sleeping all day, playing loud music all night, and piling garbage on his desk is not prejudiced. However, he is displaying prejudice if he requests a change on arriving at school and learning that his new roommate is of a different nationality.

Prejudice is a belief or attitude; discrimination is action. **Discrimination** is the denial of opportunities and equal rights to individuals and groups because of prejudice or for other arbitrary reasons. Unlike prejudice, discrimination involves *behavior* that excludes members of a group from certain rights, opportunities, or privileges. Like prejudice, it is categorical, perhaps making for a few rare exceptions. If an employer refuses to hire as a computer analyst an Italian American who is illiterate, it is not discrimination. If an employer refuses to hire any Italian American because he or she thinks they are incompetent and does not make the effort to see whether an applicant is qualified, it is discrimination.

### Merton’s Typology

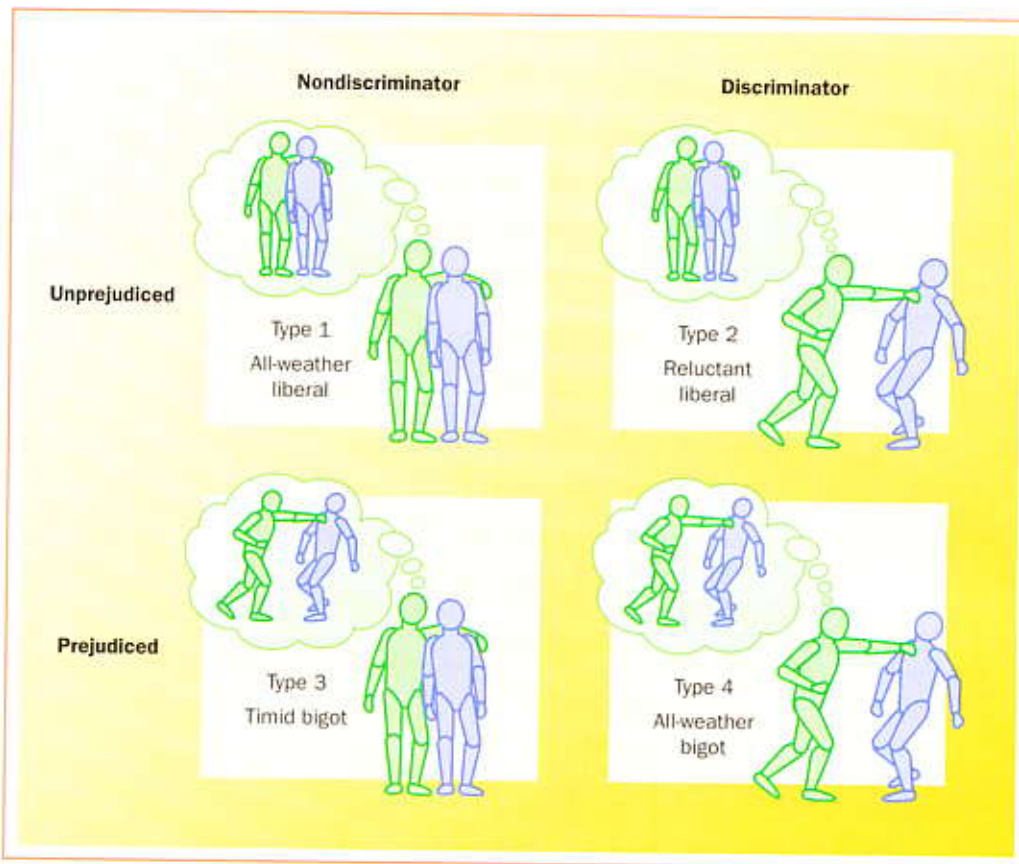
Prejudice does not necessarily coincide with discriminatory behavior. In exploring the relationship between negative attitudes and negative behavior, sociologist Robert Merton (1949, 1976) identified four major categories (Figure 2.2). The label added to each of Merton’s categories may more readily identify the type of person being described. These are

1. the unprejudiced nondiscriminator—or all-weather liberal;
2. the unprejudiced discriminator—or reluctant liberal;
3. the prejudiced nondiscriminator—or timid bigot; and
4. the prejudiced discriminator—or all-weather bigot.

As the term is used in types 1 and 2, liberals are committed to equality among people. The all-weather liberal believes in equality and practices it. Merton was quick to observe that all-weather liberals may be far removed from any real competition with subordinate



Suppose you encounter a person whose prejudice is obvious? Will you say or do anything? What if it is a friend who speaks disparagingly of all members of some ethnic or religious group? Will you speak out? When do you speak out?



**FIGURE 2.2**  
**Prejudice and**  
**Discrimination**

As sociologist Robert Merton's formulation shows, prejudice and discrimination are related to each other but are not the same.

groups such as African Americans or women. Furthermore, such people may be content with their own behavior and may do little to change themselves. The reluctant liberal is not that committed to equality between groups. Social pressure may cause such a person to discriminate. Fear of losing employees may lead a manager to avoid promoting women to supervisory capacities. Equal-opportunity legislation may be the best way to influence the reluctant liberals.

Types 3 and 4 do not believe in equal treatment for racial and ethnic groups, but they vary in their willingness to act. The timid bigot, type 3, will not discriminate if discrimination costs money or reduces profits or if he or she is pressured not to by peers or the government. The all-weather bigot unhesitatingly acts on the prejudiced beliefs he or she holds.

## LaPiere's Study

Merton's typology points out that attitudes should not be confused with behavior. People do not always act as they believe. More than a half century ago, Richard LaPiere (1934, 1969) exposed the relationship between racial attitudes and social conduct. From 1930 to 1932, LaPiere traveled throughout the United States with a Chinese couple. Despite an alleged climate of intolerance of Asians, LaPiere observed that the couple was treated courteously at hotels, motels, and restaurants. He was puzzled by the good reception they received; all the conventional attitude surveys showed extreme prejudice by Whites toward the Chinese.

Was it possible that LaPiere had been fortunate during his travels and consistently stopped at places operated by the tolerant members of the dominant group? To test this possibility, he sent questionnaires asking the very establishments at which they had been served whether the owner would "accept members of the Chinese race as guests in your establishment." More than 90 percent responded no, even though LaPiere's



Chinese couple had been treated politely at all of these establishments. How can this inconsistency be explained? People who returned questionnaires reflecting prejudice were unwilling to act based on those asserted beliefs; they were timid bigots.

The LaPiere study is not without flaws. First, he had no way of knowing whether the respondent to the questionnaire was the same person who had served him and the Chinese couple. Second, he accompanied the couple, but the questionnaire suggested that the arrival would be unescorted (and, in the minds of some, uncontrolled) and perhaps would consist of many Chinese people. Third, personnel may have changed between the time of the visit and the mailing of the questionnaire (Deutscher, Pestello, and Pestello 1993).

The LaPiere technique has been replicated with similar results. This technique raises the question of whether attitudes are important if they are not completely reflected in behavior. But if attitudes are not important in small matters, then they are important in other ways: lawmakers legislate and courts may reach decisions based on what the public thinks.

This is not just a hypothetical possibility. Legislators in the United States often are persuaded to vote in a certain way by what they perceive to be changed attitudes toward immigration, affirmative action, and prayer in public schools. Sociologists have enumerated some of prejudice's functions. For the majority group, it serves to maintain privileged occupations and more power for its members.

The following sections examine the theories of why prejudice exists and discuss the content and extent of prejudice today.

## Theories of Prejudice

Prejudice is learned. Friends, relatives, newspapers, books, movies, television, and the Internet all teach it. Awareness begins at an early age that there are differences between people that society judges to be important. Several theories have been advanced to explain the rejection of certain groups in a society. We will examine four theoretical explanations. The first two (scapegoating and authoritarian personality) tend to be psychological, emphasizing why a particular person harbors ill feelings. The second two are more sociological (exploitation and normative), viewing prejudice in the context of our interaction in a larger society.

### Scapegoating Theory

Some expressions of prejudice are so that people can blame others and refuse to accept responsibility. **Scapegoating theory** says that prejudiced people believe they are society's victims.

The term *scapegoat* comes from a biblical injunction telling the Hebrews to send a goat into the wilderness to symbolically carry away the people's sins. Similarly, the theory of scapegoating suggests that, rather than accepting guilt for some failure, a person transfers the responsibility for failure to some vulnerable group. In the major tragic twentieth-century example, Adolf Hitler used the Jews as the scapegoat for all German social and economic ills in the 1930s. This premise led to the passage of laws restricting Jewish life in pre-World War II Germany and eventually escalated into the mass extermination of Europe's Jews.

Today in the United States, both legal and illegal immigrants often are blamed by "real Americans" for their failure to secure jobs or desirable housing. The immigrant becomes the scapegoat for one's own lack of skills, planning, or motivation. It is so much easier to blame someone else.

Public figures who should know better express their ill feelings. Longtime civil rights leader Andrew Young, in 2006, applauded the expansion of Wal-Mart, noting that the big-box stores were merely replacing small stores run by Jews, Koreans, and Arabs that ripped off customers. In the same year, a drunk Mel Gibson was pulled over by a police officer who was Jewish and told him that "Jews are responsible for all the wars in the world." Both Young

**scapegoating theory**  
A person or group blamed irrationally for another person's or group's problems or difficulties.

and Gibson quickly apologized for their inflammatory remarks, but finding scapegoats among racial and ethnic groups occurs all the time (McGhee 2006; McNamara 2006).

## Authoritarian Personality Theory

Prejudice may be influenced by one's upbringing and the lessons taught early in life. Several efforts have been made to detail the prejudiced personality, but the most comprehensive effort culminated in a volume titled *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al. 1950). Using a variety of tests and relying on more than 2,000 respondents, ranging from middle-class Whites to inmates of San Quentin (California) State Prison, the authors claimed they had isolated the characteristics of the authoritarian personality.

In these authors' view, the basic characteristics of the **authoritarian personality** construct a personality type that is likely to be prejudiced. It encompasses adherence to conventional values, uncritical acceptance of authority, and concern with power and toughness. With obvious relevance to the development of intolerance, the authoritarian personality was also characterized by aggressiveness toward people who did not conform to conventional norms or obey authority. According to the researchers, this personality type developed from an early childhood of harsh discipline. A child with an authoritarian upbringing obeyed and then later treated others as he or she had been raised.

This study has been widely criticized, but the very existence of such wide criticism indicates the influence of the study. Critics have attacked the study's equation of authoritarianism with right-wing politics (although liberals can also be rigid); its failure to see that prejudice is more closely related to other individual traits, such as social class, than to authoritarianism as it was defined; the research methods used; and the emphasis on extreme racial prejudice rather than on more-common expressions of hostility.

Despite these concerns about specifics in the study completed 60 years ago, annual conferences continue to draw attention to how authoritarian attitudes contribute to racism, sexism, and even torture (Kinloch 1974; O'Neill 2008).

## Exploitation Theory

Racial prejudice is often used to justify keeping a group in a subordinate economic position. Conflict theorists, in particular, stress the role of racial and ethnic hostility as a way for the dominant group to keep its position of status and power intact. Indeed, this approach maintains that even the less-affluent White working class uses prejudice to minimize competition from upwardly mobile minorities.

This **exploitation theory** is clearly part of the Marxist tradition in sociological thought. Karl Marx emphasized exploitation of the lower class as an integral part of capitalism. Similarly, the exploitation or conflict approach explains how racism can stigmatize a group as inferior so that the exploitation of that group can be justified. As developed by Oliver Cox (1942), exploitation theory saw prejudice against Blacks as an extension of the inequality faced by the entire lower class.

The exploitation theory of prejudice is persuasive. Japanese Americans were the object of little prejudice until they began to enter occupations that brought them into competition with Whites. The movement to keep Chinese out of the country became strongest during the late nineteenth century, when Chinese immigrants and Whites fought over dwindling numbers of jobs. Both the enslavement of African Americans and the removal westward of Native Americans were to a significant degree economically motivated.

## Normative Approach

Although personality factors are important contributors to prejudice, normative or situational factors must also be given serious consideration. The **normative approach** takes the view that prejudice is influenced by societal norms and situations that encourage or discourage the tolerance of minorities.

**authoritarian personality**  
A psychological construct of a personality type likely to be prejudiced and to use others as scapegoats.

**exploitation theory**  
A Marxist theory that views racial subordination in the United States as a manifestation of the class system inherent in capitalism.

**normative approach**  
The view that prejudice is influenced by societal norms and situations that encourage or discourage the tolerance of minorities.



**TABLE 2.1**  
**Theories of Prejudice**

There is no one satisfactory explanation of why prejudice exists, but several approaches taken together offer insight.

| Theory        | Explanation  | Example  |
|---------------|--|--|
| Scapegoating  | People blame others for their own failures.                    | An unsuccessful applicant assumes that a minority member or a woman got "his" job. |
| Authoritarian | Child rearing leads one to develop intolerance as an adult.    | The rigid personality type dislikes people who are different.                      |
| Exploitation  | People use others unfairly for economic advantage.             | A minority member is hired at a lower wage level.                                  |
| Normative     | Peer and social influences encourage tolerance or intolerance. | A person from an intolerant household is more likely to be openly prejudiced.      |

Analysis reveals how societal influences shape a climate for tolerance or intolerance. Societies develop social norms that dictate not only what foods are desirable (or forbidden) but also what racial and ethnic groups are to be favored (or despised). Social forces operate in a society to encourage or discourage tolerance. The force may be widespread, such as the pressure on White Southerners to oppose racial equality even though there was slavery or segregation. The influence of social norms may be limited, as when one man finds himself becoming more sexist as he competes with three women for a position in a prestigious law firm.

We should not view the four approaches to prejudice summarized in Table 2.1 as mutually exclusive. Social circumstances provide cues for a person's attitudes; personality determines the extent to which people follow social cues and the likelihood that they will encourage others to do the same. Societal norms may promote or deter tolerance; personality traits suggest the degree to which a person will conform to norms of intolerance. To understand prejudice, we need to use all four approaches together.

## Stereotypes

On Christmas Day 2001, Arab American Walied Shater boarded an American Airlines flight from Baltimore to Dallas carrying a gun. Immediately, the cockpit crew refused to let him fly, fearing that Shater would take over the plane and use it as a weapon of mass destruction. Yet Walied Shater carried documentation that he was a Secret Service agent, and calls to Washington, D.C., confirmed that he was flying to join a presidential protection force at President George W. Bush's ranch in Texas. Nevertheless, the crew could not get past the stereotype of Arab American men posing a lethal threat (Leavitt 2002).

### What Are Stereotypes?

In Chapter 1, we saw that stereotypes play a powerful role in how people come to view dominant and subordinate groups. **Stereotypes** are unreliable generalizations about all members of a group that do not take individual differences into account. Numerous scientific studies have been made of these exaggerated images. This research has shown the willingness of people to assign positive and negative traits to entire groups of people, which are then applied to particular individuals. Stereotyping causes people to view Blacks as superstitious, Whites as uncaring, and Jews as shrewd. Over the last 80 years of such research, social scientists have found that people have become less willing to express such views openly, but prejudice persists, as we will see later (Quillian 2006).

#### stereotypes

Unreliable, exaggerated generalizations about all members of a group that do not take individual differences into account.



## Listen to Our Voices

### NATIONAL MEDIA SHOULD STOP USING OBSCENE WORDS

I am just sick and tired of hearing students and faculty from schools using Indians as mascots say they are doing it to "honor us. . . ."

Who or what is a redskin? It is a derogatory name for a race of people. It's as simple as that. It is akin to the racist names "nigger" or "gook" or "kike" or "wop." It is not, I repeat NOT, an honor to be called a racist name nor is it an honor to see football fans dressed in supposed Indian attire nor to hear them trumpeting some ludicrous war chant nor to see them mimic or ape our dress, culture, or person.

When I saw the Florida State fans doing the ridiculous "tomahawk chop" and heard their Johnny-one-note band play that asinine version of an Indian song over and over, I was heartsick. I was also highly embarrassed for the people of the Seminole Nation of Florida for allowing their good name to be taken in vain.

I am also sick and tired of fanatical sports fans telling Indians who object to this kind of treatment to "lighten up." You know, I didn't hear those same White folks saying this to African Americans in the 1960s when they were objecting to the hideous Black caricature at Sambo's Restaurants or to the Step-in-Fetch-It character used so often in the early movie days to portray Blacks as dimwitted, shiftless people. I didn't hear anybody tell them to "lighten up."



Tim Giago

However, 2000 did give us (Indians) a little reprieve. The Cleveland Indians and their hideous mascot were clobbered and didn't make the playoffs. The Washington Redskins turned into the Washington "Deadskins." The Kansas City Chiefs were real losers. And almost best of all, the Florida State Seminoles were steamrolled by an Oklahoma team with real Indians serving as bodyguards to the Oklahoma coach Bob Stoops. My thrill at watching the Seminoles lose was topped only by watching Ted Turner's Atlanta Braves get "tomahawked" this year. Now that was truly an "honor. . . ."

*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, note the word "collegiate" here, reads the word *redskin* quite simply as "American Indian usually taken to be offensive."

"Usually taken to be offensive." Now what is so hard to understand about this literal translation of the word "redskin"?

Attention major newspapers, CNN, Fox, ABC, CBS and NBC: the word "redskin" is an obscenity to Indians and to people who are sensitive to racism. It is translated by *Webster's* to be offensive. Now what other proof do you need to discontinue its usage?

Source: "National Media Should Stop Using Obscene Words" by Tim Giago, as reprinted in *The Denver Post*, January 21, 2001. Copyright © 2001 by Tim Giago. Reprinted by permission of Tim Giago.

If stereotypes are exaggerated generalizations, then why are they so widely held, and why are some traits more often assigned than others? Evidence for traits may arise out of real conditions. For example, more Puerto Ricans live in poverty than Whites, and so the prejudiced mind associates Puerto Ricans with laziness. According to the New Testament, some Jews were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus, and so, to the prejudiced mind, all Jews are Christ killers. Some activists in the women's movement are lesbians, and so all feminists are seen as lesbians. From a kernel of fact, faulty generalization creates a stereotype.

In "Listen to Our Voices," journalist Tim Giago, born a member of the Oglala Sioux tribe on the Pine Ridge Reservation, comments on the use by college and professional



teams of mascots patterned after American Indians. He finds the use neither harmless nor providing honor to the tribal people of the United States.

## Power of Stereotypes

The labeling of individuals through negative stereotypes has strong implications for the self-fulfilling prophecy. Studies show that people are all too aware of the negative images other people have of them. When asked to estimate the prevalence of hard-core racism among Whites, one in four Blacks agrees that more than half “personally share the attitudes of groups like the Ku Klux Klan toward Blacks”; only one Black in 10 says “only a few” share such views. Stereotypes not only influence how people feel about themselves but also, and perhaps equally important, affect how people interact with others. If people feel that others hold incorrect, disparaging attitudes toward them, then it undoubtedly makes it difficult to have harmonious relations (Sigelman and Tuch 1997).

Do only dominant groups hold stereotypes about subordinate groups? The answer is clearly no. White Americans even believe generalizations about themselves, although admittedly these are usually positive. Subordinate groups also hold exaggerated images of themselves. Studies before World War II showed a tendency for Blacks to assign to themselves many of the same negative traits assigned by Whites. Today, African Americans, Jews, Asians, and other minority groups largely reject stereotypes of themselves.

Although explicit expressions of stereotypes are less common, it is much too soon to write the obituary of racial and ethnic stereotypes. In Chapter 6, we will consider the persistence of two stereotypes: the model minority and acting White. Here we will next consider the use of stereotypes in the contemporary practice of racial profiling.

## Stereotyping in Action: Racial Profiling

A Black dentist, Elmo Randolph, testified before a state commission that he was stopped dozens of times in the 1980s and 1990s while traveling the New Jersey Turnpike to work. Invariably state troopers asked, “Do you have guns or drugs?” “My parents always told me, be careful when you’re driving on the turnpike,” said Dr. Randolph, 44. “White people don’t have that conversation” (Purdy 2001, 37; also see Fernandez and Fahim 2006).

Little wonder that Dr. Randolph was pulled over. Although African Americans accounted for only 17 percent of the motorists on that turnpike, they were 80 percent of the motorists pulled over. Such occurrences gave rise to the charge that a new traffic offense was added to the books: DWB, or “driving while Black” (Bowles 2000).

In recent years, government attention has been given to a social phenomenon with a long history: racial profiling. According to the Department of Justice, **racial profiling** is any police-initiated action based on race, ethnicity, or national origin rather than the person’s behavior. Generally, profiling occurs when law enforcement officers, including customs officials, airport security, and police, assume that people fitting certain descriptions are likely to be engaged in something illegal. Beginning in the 1980s with the emergence of the crack cocaine market, skin color became a key characteristic. This profiling can be a very explicit use of stereotypes. For example, the federal antidrug initiative, Operation Pipeline, specifically encouraged officers to look for people with dreadlocks and for Latino men traveling together.

The reliance on racial profiling persists despite overwhelming evidence that it is misleading. Whites are more likely to be found with drugs in the areas in which minority group members are disproportionately targeted. A federal study made public in 2005 found little difference nationwide in the likelihood of being stopped by officers, but African Americans were twice as likely to have their vehicles searched, and Latinos were

### racial profiling

Any arbitrary police-initiated action based on race, ethnicity, or national origin rather than a person’s behavior.



Ask yourself, how do the images we see affect how we view people? On the left is a scene from the familiar motion picture *The King and I*. On the right is the real monarch, King Chulalongkorn, and his son. The king in real life bore limited similarity to the portrayal made famous by the Russian-born actor Yul Brynner. Is what we know about many ethnic and religious groups more likely the result of portrayals in the popular media than any actual study of their history and customs?

five times more likely. A similar pattern emerged in the likelihood of force being used against drivers: it was three times more likely with Latinos and Blacks than with White drivers. A 2007 study of New York City police officers found that Whites and racial minorities are equally likely to be stopped, but the officers were more likely to frisk, search, arrest, or give summonses to Black and Latino people (Lichtblau 2005; Ridgeway 2007).

Back in the 1990s, increased attention to racial profiling led not only to special reports and commissions but also to talk of legislating against it. This proved difficult. The U.S. Supreme Court in *Whren v. United States* (1996) upheld the constitutionality of using a minor traffic infraction as an excuse to stop and search a vehicle and its passengers. Nonetheless, states and other government units are discussing policies and training that would discourage racial profiling. At the same time, most law enforcement agencies reject the idea of compiling racial data on traffic stops, arguing that it would be a waste of money and staff time.

The effort to stop racial profiling came to an abrupt end after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States. Suspensions about Muslims and Arabs in the United States became widespread. Foreign students from Arab countries were summoned for special questioning. Legal immigrants identified as Arab or Muslim were scrutinized for any illegal activity and were prosecuted for routine immigration violations that were ignored for people of other ethnic backgrounds and religious faiths (Withrow 2006).

National surveys have found little change since 2001 in support for profiling Arab Americans at airports. In 2006, 53 percent of Americans favored requiring Arabs, including those who are U.S. citizens, to undergo special and more-intensive security checks before boarding planes in the United States (Saad 2006b).

## Color-Blind Racism

Over the last three generations, nationwide surveys have consistently shown growing support by Whites for integration, interracial dating, and having members of minority groups attain political office, including even becoming president of the United States. Yet how can this be true and the type of hatred described at the beginning of the chapter persist and thousands of hate crimes occur annually?

**Color-blind racism** refers to the use of race-neutral principles to defend the racially unequal status quo. Yes, there should be “no discrimination for college admission,” yet

### color-blind racism

Use of race-neutral principles to defend the racially unequal status quo.





Color-blind racism can take many forms. Why should the United States not have an official language as most nations do? Typically, calls today for English as the official language reassert values superior to someone else's. Here we see a meeting at a Wisconsin county making English the official language—a move with little practical significance but one that speaks loudly in terms of symbolism in an area with a large presence of Hmong, a South Asian ethnic group from Laos.

tagged. This leads many White people to declare they are not racist and that they really do not know anyone who is racist. It leads to the mistaken conclusion that more progress has been made toward racial and ethnic equality and even tolerance than has really taken place.

When we survey White attitudes toward African Americans, three conclusions are inescapable. First, attitudes are subject to change; during periods of dramatic social upheaval, dramatic shifts can occur within one generation. Second, less progress was made in the late twentieth and the beginning of the twentieth-first centuries than was made in the relatively brief period of the 1950s and 1960s. Third, the pursuit of a color-blind agenda has created lower levels of support for politics that could reduce racial inequality if implemented.

Economically less-successful groups such as African Americans and Latinos have been associated with negative traits to the point that issues such as urban decay, homelessness, welfare, and crime are now viewed as race issues even though race is rarely spoken of explicitly. Besides making the resolution of very difficult social issues even harder, this is another instance of blaming the victim. These perceptions come at a time when the willingness of the government to address domestic ills is limited by increasing opposition to new taxes and continuing commitments to fight terrorism here and abroad. The color line remains even if more and more people are unwilling to accept its divisive impact on everyone's lives (Ansell 2008; Bonilla-Silva 2006, 2008; Bonilla-Silva and Baiocchi 2001; Dovidio 2001; Ferber 2007; Krysan 1998; Mazzocco et al. 2006; Quillian 2006; Winant 2004, 106–108).

## The Mood of the Oppressed

Sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois relates an experience from his youth in a largely White community in Massachusetts. He tells how, on one occasion, the boys and girls were exchanging cards, and everyone was having a lot of fun. One girl, a newcomer, refused his card as soon as she saw that Du Bois was Black. He wrote,

*Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from others . . . shut out from their world by a vast veil. I had therefore no desire to tear down that veil, to creep through; I held all beyond it in common contempt and lived above it in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows. (Du Bois 1903, 2)*

the disparity in educational experiences means that the use of formal admissions criteria will privilege White high school graduates. "Health care is for all," but if you fail to have workplace insurance, you are unlikely to afford it.

Color-blind racism has also been referred to as "laissez-faire" or "postracialism" or "aversive racism," but the common theme is that notions of racial inferiority are rarely expressed and that proceeding color-blind into the future will serve to perpetuate inequality. In the post-civil rights era and with the election of President Barack Obama, people are more likely to assume discrimination is long past and express views that are more proper—that is, lacking the overt expressions of racism of the past.

An important aspect of color-blind racism is the recognition that race is rarely invoked in public debates on social issues. Instead, people emphasize lower social class or the lack of citizenship or illegal aliens; these descriptions serve, in effect, as proxies for race. Furthermore, the emphasis is on individuals failing rather than recognizing patterns of groups being disadvantaged.



In using the image of a veil, Du Bois describes how members of subordinate groups learn that they are being treated differently. In his case and that of many others, this leads to feelings of contempt toward all Whites that continue for a lifetime.

Opinion pollsters have been interested in White attitudes on racial issues longer than they have measured the views of subordinate groups. This neglect of minority attitudes reflects, in part, the bias of the White researchers. It also stems from the contention that the dominant group is more important to study because it is in a better position to act on its beliefs. The results of a nationwide survey conducted in the United States in 2007 offer insight into sharply different views on the state of race relations today (Figure 2.3). Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans all have strong reservations about the state of race relations in the United States. They are skeptical about the level of equal opportunity and perceive a lot of discrimination. It is interesting to note that Hispanics and Asian Americans, overwhelmingly immigrants, are more likely to feel they will succeed if they work hard. Yet the majority of all three groups have a positive outlook for the next 10 years (New America Media 2007; Preston 2007b).

National surveys showed that the 2008 presidential bid of Senator Barack Obama led to a sense of optimism and national pride among African Americans even though political observers saw Obama running a race-neutral campaign and rarely addressing issues specifically of concern to African Americans. Unlike Whites or Hispanics, Black voters still saw his campaign as addressing issues important to the Black community. Survey researchers will be closely following these perceptions in the 2008 election aftermath (ISERP 2008).

We have focused so far on what usually comes to mind when we think about prejudice: one group hating another group. But there is another form of prejudice: a group may come to hate itself. Members of groups held in low esteem by society may, as a result, either hate themselves or have low self-esteem themselves, as many social scientists once believed. Similarly, these theorists argued that Whites had high self-esteem, meaning that an individual has fundamental respect for him- or herself, appreciates his or her own merits, and is aware of personal faults and will strive to overcome them. Indeed, the research literature of the 1940s through the 1960s emphasized the low self-esteem of minorities. Usually, the subject was African Americans, but the argument has also been generalized to include any subordinate racial, ethnic, or nationality group.

This view is no longer accepted. We should not assume that minority status influences personality traits in either a good or a bad way. First, such assumptions may create a stereotype. We cannot describe a Black personality any more accurately than we can a White personality. Second, characteristics of minority-group members are not entirely the result of subordinate racial status; they are also influenced by low incomes, poor neighborhoods, and so forth. Third, many studies of personality imply that certain values are normal or preferable, but the values chosen are those of dominant groups.

If assessments of a subordinate group's personality are so prone to misjudgments, then why has the belief in low self-esteem been so widely held? Much of the research rests on studies with preschool-aged Black children asked them to express their preferences for dolls with different facial colors. Indeed, one such study by psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark (1947) was cited in the arguments before the U.S. Supreme Court in the landmark 1954 case *Brown v. Board of Education*. The Clarks' study showed that Black children preferred White dolls, a finding suggesting that the children had developed a negative



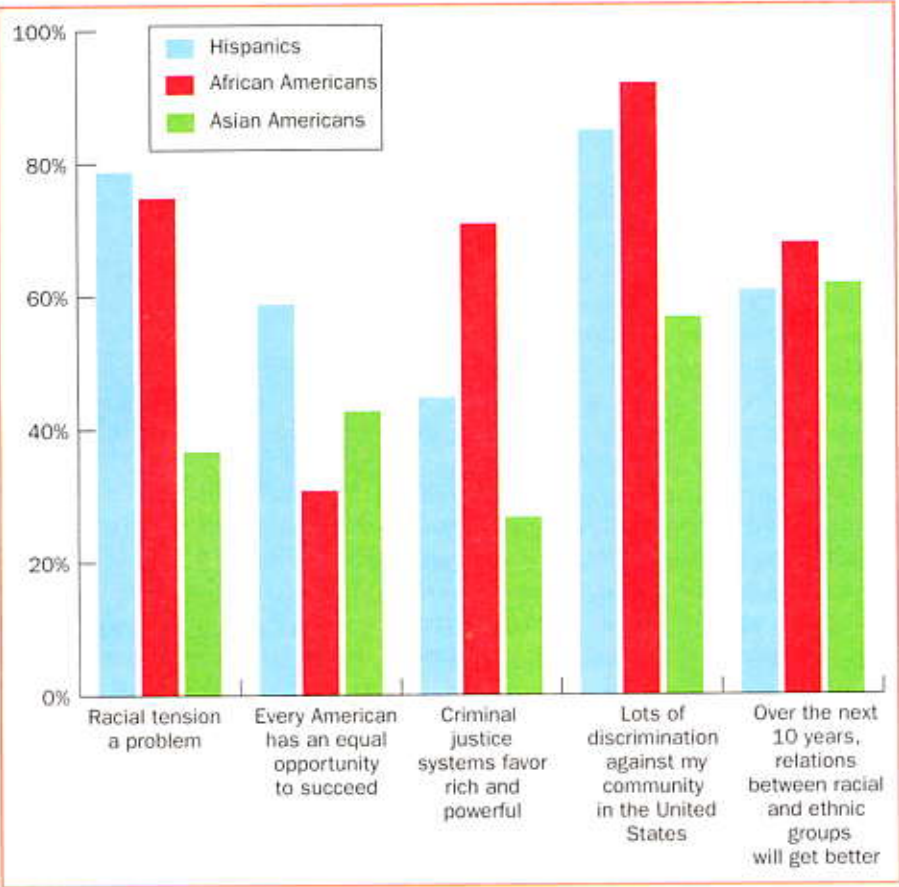
How do children come to develop an image about themselves? Toys and playthings play an important role, and for many children of racial and ethnic minorities, it is unusual to find toys that look like them. In 2005, a new doll was released called Fulla—an Arab who reflects modesty, piety, and respect, yet underneath she wears chic clothes that might be typically worn by a Muslim woman in private.



**FIGURE 2.3**  
**What Is the State of Race Relations? Three Views**

Note: Answers of “very important problem” or “strongly agree” with statements listed. Based on 1,105 interviews in August–September 2007, with bilingual questioners used as necessary.

Source: New America Media 2007, 6, 12, 14, 24, 26.



self-image. Although subsequent doll studies have sometimes shown Black children’s preference for white-faced dolls, other social scientists contend that this shows a realization of what most commercially sold dolls look like rather than documenting low self-esteem (Bloom 1971; Powell-Hopson and Hopson 1988).

Because African American children, as well as other subordinate groups’ children, can realistically see that Whites have more power and resources and, therefore, rate them higher does not mean that they personally feel inferior. Indeed, studies, even those with children, show that when the self-images of middle-class or affluent African Americans are measured, their feelings of self-esteem are more positive than those of comparable Whites (Gray-Little and Hafdahl 2000).

### Intergroup Hostility

Prejudice is as diverse as the nation’s population. It exists not only between dominant and subordinate peoples but also between specific subordinate groups. Unfortunately, until recently little research existed on this subject except for a few social distance scales administered to racial and ethnic minorities.

A national survey revealed that, like Whites, many African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans held prejudiced and stereotypical views of other racial and ethnic minority groups:

- Majorities of Black, Hispanic, and Asian American respondents agreed that Whites are “bigoted, bossy, and unwilling to share power.” Majorities of these non-White groups also believed that they had less opportunity than Whites to obtain a good education, a skilled job, or decent housing.
- Forty-six percent of Hispanic Americans and 42 percent of African Americans agreed that Asian Americans are “unscrupulous, crafty, and devious in business.”

- Sixty-eight percent of Asian Americans and 49 percent of African Americans believed that Hispanic Americans “tend to have bigger families than they are able to support.”
- Thirty-one percent of Asian Americans and 26 percent of Hispanic Americans agreed that African Americans “want to live on welfare.”

Members of oppressed groups obviously have adopted the widely held beliefs of the dominant culture concerning oppressed groups. At the same time, the survey also revealed positive views of major racial and ethnic minorities:

- More than 80 percent of respondents admired Asian Americans for “placing a high value on intellectual and professional achievement” and “having strong family ties.”
- A majority of all groups surveyed agreed that Hispanic Americans “take deep pride in their culture and work hard to achieve a better life.”
- Large majorities from all groups stated that African Americans “have made a valuable contribution to American society and will work hard when given a chance” (National Conference of Christians and Jews 1994).

Do we get along? Although this question often is framed in terms of the relationships between White Americans and other racial and ethnic groups, we should recognize the prejudice between groups. In a national survey conducted in 2000, people were asked whether they felt they could generally get along with members of other groups. In Figure 2.4, we can see that Whites felt they had the most difficulty getting along with Blacks. We also see the different views that Blacks, Latinos, Asian Americans, and American Indians hold toward other groups.

It is curious that we find that some groups feel they get along better with Whites than with other minority groups. Why would that be? Often, low-income people are competing daily with other low-income people and do not readily see the larger societal forces that contribute to their low status. As we can see from the survey results, many Hispanics are more likely to see Asian Americans as getting in their way than the White Americans, who are actually the real decision makers in their community.

Most troubling is when intergroup hostility becomes violent. Ethnic and racial tension among African Americans, Latinos, and immigrants may become manifest in hate crimes. Violence can surface in neighborhoods where there is competition for scarce resources such as jobs and housing. Gangs become organized along racial lines, much like private clubs “downtown.” In recent years, Los Angeles has been particularly concerned about rival Black and Hispanic gangs. Conflict theorists see this violence as resulting from larger structural forces, but for the average person in such areas, life itself becomes more of a challenge (Archibold 2007).

Members of racial and ethnic minorities do not often appear on a regular basis in starring roles on television drama and comedy shows; when they do, it is often in roles that reflect negative stereotypes.

## Reducing Prejudice

Focusing on how to eliminate prejudice involves an explicit value judgment: prejudice is wrong and causes problems for those who are prejudiced and for their victims. The obvious way to eliminate prejudice is to eliminate its causes: the desire to exploit, the fear of being threatened, and the need to blame others for one's own failure. These might be eliminated by personal therapy, but therapy, even if it works for every individual, is no solution for an entire society in which prejudice is a part of everyday life.

The answer appears to rest with programs directed at society as a whole. Prejudice is attacked indirectly when discrimination is attacked. Despite prevailing beliefs to the contrary, we *can* legislate against prejudice: statutes and decisions do affect attitudes. In the past, people firmly believed that laws could not overcome norms, especially racist ones. Recent history, especially after the



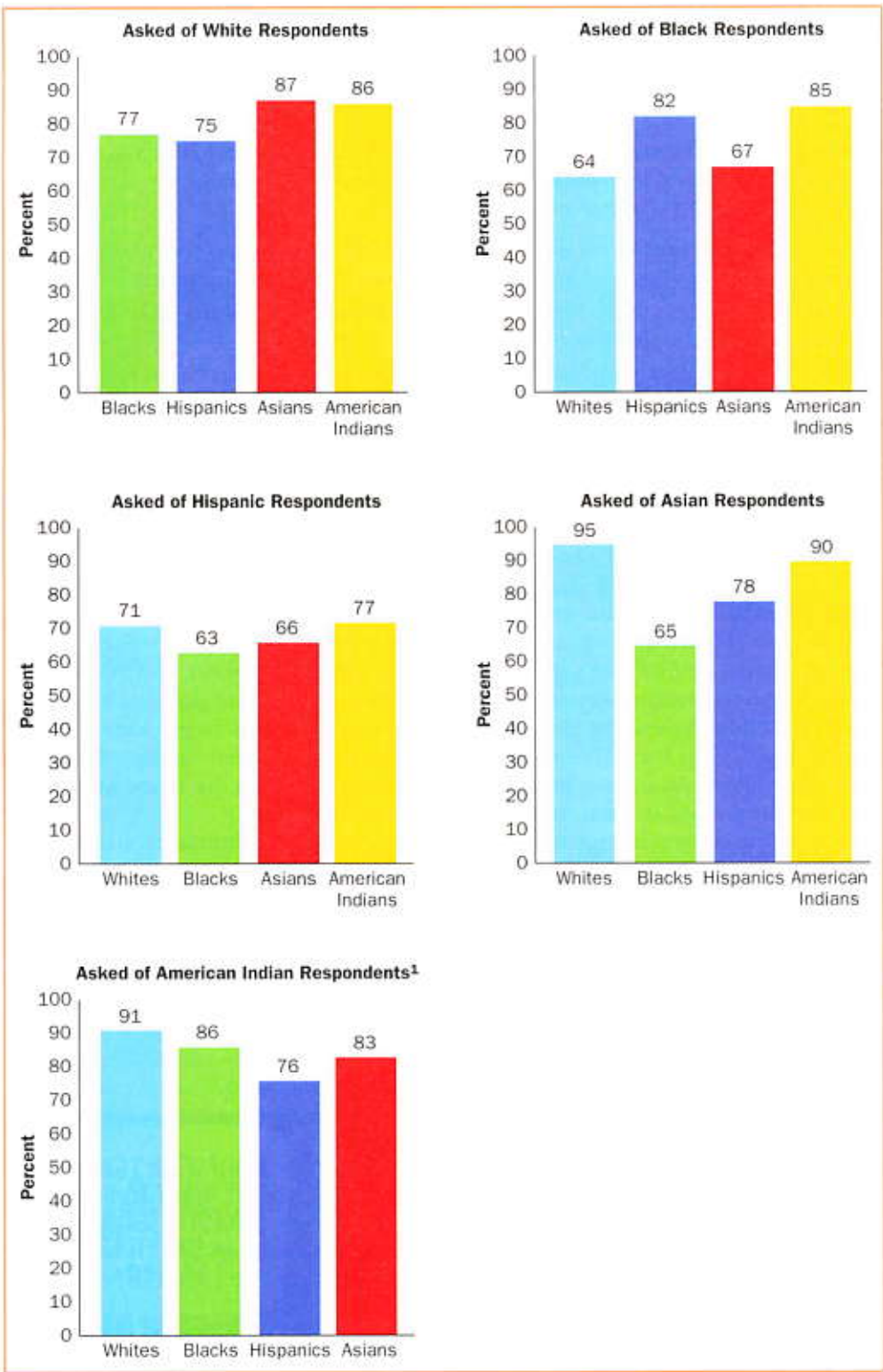


**FIGURE 2.4**  
**Do We Get Along?**

Percentage saying groups get along with each other ("Don't Knows" excluded).  
<sup>1</sup> Sample size for American Indians is very small and subject to large sample variance.

Note: The wording of the question was, "We hear a lot these days about how various groups in society get along with each other. I'm going to mention several groups and ask whether you think they generally get along with each other or generally do not get along with each other." So, in the "Asked of White Respondents" graph, Whites are asked how Whites get along with each ethnic group; in the "Asked of Black Respondents" graph, Blacks are asked how Blacks get along with each ethnic group, and so on.

Source: T. Smith 2006, 65.  
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civil rights movement began in 1954, has challenged that common wisdom. Laws and court rulings that have equalized the treatment of Blacks and Whites have led people to reevaluate their beliefs about what is right and wrong. The increasing tolerance by Whites during the civil rights era from 1954 to 1965 seems to support this conclusion.

Much research has been done to determine how to change negative attitudes toward groups of people. The most encouraging findings point to education, mass media, inter-group contact, and workplace training programs.

## Education

Research on education and prejudice considers special programs aimed at promoting mutual respect as well as what effect more formal schooling generally has on expressions of bigotry.

Most research studies show that well-constructed programs do have some positive effect in reducing prejudice, at least temporarily. The reduction is rarely as much as one might wish, however. The difficulty is that a single program is insufficient to change life-long habits, especially if little is done to reinforce the program's message once it ends. Persuasion to respect other groups does not operate in a clear field because, in their ordinary environments, people are still subjected to situations that promote prejudicial feelings. Children and adults are encouraged to laugh at Polish jokes and cheer for a team named "Redskins." Black adolescents may be discouraged by peers from befriending a White youth. All this undermines the effectiveness of prejudice-reduction programs (Allport 1979).

Studies document that increased formal education, regardless of content, is associated with racial tolerance. Research data show that highly educated people are more likely to indicate respect and liking for groups different from themselves. Why should more years of schooling have this effect? It could be that more education gives a broader outlook and makes a person less likely to endorse myths that sustain racial prejudice. Formal education teaches the importance of qualifying statements and the need to question rigid categorizations, if not reject them altogether. Colleges increasingly include a graduation requirement that students complete a course that explores diversity or multiculturalism. Another explanation is that education does not actually reduce intolerance but simply makes people more careful about revealing it. Formal education may simply instruct people in the appropriate responses, which in some settings could even be prejudiced views. Despite the lack of a clear-cut explanation, either theory suggests that the continued trend toward a better-educated population will contribute to a reduction in overt prejudice.

However, college education may not reduce prejudice uniformly. For example, some White students will come to believe that minority students did not earn their admission into college. Students may feel threatened to see large groups of people of different racial and cultural backgrounds congregating together and forming their own groups. Racist confrontations do occur outside the classroom and, even if they do involve only a few individuals, the events themselves will be followed by hundreds more. Therefore, some aspects of the college experience may only foster "we" and "they" attitudes (Schaefer 1986, 1996).

## Mass Media

Mass media, like schools, may reduce prejudice without requiring specially designed programs. Television, radio, motion pictures, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet present only a portion of real life, but what effect do they have on prejudice if the content is racist or antiracist, sexist or antisexist? As with measuring the influence of programs designed to reduce prejudice, coming to strong conclusions on mass media's effect is hazardous, but the evidence points to a measurable effect.

Today, 40 percent of all youths in the nation are children of color, yet few of the faces they see on television reflect their race or cultural heritage. As of spring 2007, only five of the nearly 60 primetime series carried on the four major networks featured performers of color in leading roles, and only two—*Ugly Betty* and *George Lopez*—focused on minority performers. What is more, the programs that show earlier in the evening, when young people are most likely to watch television, are the least diverse of all.

Why the underrepresentation? Incredibly, network executives seemed surprised by the research demonstrating an all-White season. Producers, writers, executives, and advertisers blamed each other for the alleged oversight. In recent years, the rise of both cable television and the Internet has fragmented the broadcast entertainment market,



We often are unaware of all the social situations that allow us to meet people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds. Such opportunities may increase understanding.



siphoning viewers away from the general-audience sitcoms and dramas of the past. With the proliferation of cable channels such as Black Entertainment Television (BET) and the Spanish-language Univision and Web sites that cater to every imaginable taste, there no longer seems to be a need for broadly popular series such as *The Cosby Show*, whose tone and content appealed to Whites as well as Blacks in a way that newer series do not. The result of these sweeping technological changes has been a sharp divergence in viewer preferences.

It is not surprising that young people quickly develop expectations of the roles that various racial and ethnic group members are likely to play in television and motion pictures. A national survey of teens (people ages 12 to 18) asked what characters members of racial and ethnic groups would be likely to play. The respondents' perception of media, as shown in Table 2.2, shows a significant amount of stereotyping occurring in their minds, in the media, or both.

Television series are only part of the picture. News broadcasting is done predominantly by Whites, and local news emphasizes crime often featuring Black or Hispanic perpetrators; print journalism is nearly the same. This is especially troubling given another finding in the study discussed at the beginning of the chapter. Research showed that people were quicker to "shoot" an armed Black person than a White man in a video stimulation. In another variation of that same study, the researchers showed subjects fake newspaper articles describing a string of armed robberies that showed either Black or White suspects. The subjects were quicker to "shoot" the armed suspect if he was Black but had no impact on their willingness to "shoot" the armed White criminal. This is a troubling aspect of the potential impact that media content may have (Correll et al. 2007b).

## Avoidance versus Friendship

Is prejudice reduced or intensified when people cross racial and ethnic boundaries? Two parallel paths have been taken to look at this social distance and equal-status contact.

### social distance

Tendency to approach or withdraw from a racial group.

### Bogardus scale

Technique to measure social distance toward different racial and ethnic groups.

**The Social Distance Scale** Robert Park and Ernest Burgess first defined **social distance** as the tendency to approach or withdraw from a racial group (1921, 440). Emory Bogardus (1968) conceptualized a scale that could measure social distance empirically. His social distance scale is so widely used that it is often called the **Bogardus scale**.

The scale asks people how willing they would be to interact with various racial and ethnic groups in specified social situations. The situations describe different degrees of social contact or social distance. The items used, with their corresponding distance scores, follow. People are asked whether they would be willing to work alongside someone

**TABLE 2.2****Stereotyping in the Twenty-First Century**

When asked to identify the role a person of a particular ethnic or racial background would be most likely to play in a movie or on television, teenagers cited familiar stereotypes.

| Group            | Media Roles Identified                     |
|------------------|--|
| African American | Athlete, gang member, police officer       |
| Arab American    | Terrorist, convenience store clerk         |
| Asian American   | Physician, lawyer, CEO, factory worker     |
| Hispanic         | Gang member, factory worker                |
| Irish American   | Drunkard, police officer, factory worker   |
| Italian American | Crime boss, gang member, restaurant worker |
| Jewish American  | Physician, lawyer, CEO, teacher            |
| Polish American  | Factory worker                             |

Note: Based on national survey of 1,264 people between ages 13 and 18.  
Source: Zogby 2001.

or be a neighbor with someone of a different group, and, showing the least amount of social distance, be related through marriage. Over the 70-year period in which the tests were administered, certain patterns emerged. In the top third of the hierarchy are White Americans and northern Europeans. Held at greater social distance are eastern and southern Europeans, and generally near the bottom are racial minorities (Bogardus 1968; Song 1991; Wark and Galliher 2007).

Generally, the researchers also found that among the respondents who had friends of different racial and ethnic origin, they were more likely to show greater social distance—that is, they were less likely to have been in each other's homes, shared in fewer activities, and were less likely to talk about their problems with each other. This is unlikely to promote mutual understanding.

**Equal Status Contact** An impressive number of research studies have confirmed the **contact hypothesis**, which states that intergroup contact between people of equal status in harmonious circumstances will cause them to become less prejudiced and to abandon previously held stereotypes. Most studies indicate that such contact also improves the attitude of subordinate-group members. The importance of equal status in the interaction cannot be stressed enough. If a Puerto Rican is abused by his employer, little interracial harmony is promoted. Similarly, the situation in which contact occurs must be pleasant, making a positive evaluation likely for both individuals. Contact between two nurses, one Black and the other White, who are competing for one vacancy as a supervisor may lead to greater racial hostility (Schaefer 1976).

The key factor in reducing hostility, in addition to equal-status contact, is the presence of a common goal. If people are in competition, as already noted, contact may heighten tension. However, bringing people together to share a common task has been shown to reduce ill feelings when these people belong to different racial, ethnic, or religious groups. A study released in 2004 traced the transformations that occurred over the generations in the composition of the Social Service Employees Union in New York City. Always a mixed membership, the union was founded by Jews and Italian Americans, only to experience an influx of Black Americans. More recently, it comprises Latin Americans, Africans, West Indians, and South Asians. At each point, the common goals of representing the workers effectively overcame the very real cultural differences among the rank and file of Mexican and El Salvadoran immigrants in Houston. The researchers found when the new arrivals had contact with African Americans, intergroup relations generally improved, and the absence of contact tended to foster ambivalent, even negative, attitudes (Fine 2008; Foerster 2004; Sherif and Sherif 1969).

**contact hypothesis**

An interactionist perspective stating that intergroup contact between people of equal status in noncompetitive circumstances will reduce prejudice.





### FEW OF MY BEST FRIENDS ARE . . .

**D**o people really have close friends of different racial and ethnic backgrounds? Some sociologists have attempted to gauge the degree of White-Black interaction in the United States. They indicate that many people overestimate the degree of “racial togetherness” in our society.

Sociologist Tom Smith, who directs the respected General Social Survey, has noticed that a high proportion of both White and African American respondents claim to have close friends of another race. But is that really true? When Smith and fellow researchers analyzed the survey data, they found that response rates varied with the way the question was phrased. When asked whether any of the friends they felt close to was Black, 42.1 percent of Whites said yes. Yet when asked to give the names of friends they felt close to, only 6 percent of Whites listed a close friend of a different race or ethnicity (Figure 2.5).

When asked the race of their best same-sex friend, most Americans choose someone of the same race as themselves. In a national study of adolescents, more than 91 percent of non-Hispanic Whites claimed a White non-Hispanic as their best same-sex friend. The General Social Survey yielded almost the same result for all adults. Given the fact that more than one-third of the teens in the United States are

either non-White or Hispanic, we might have expected to find more cross-race friendships. Members of minority groups seem more willing than Whites to cross racial and ethnic boundaries, however. A slightly lower 85 percent of Black adolescents selected a Black for a best friend, and a markedly lower 62 percent of Mexican Americans named another Mexican American.

In yet another study, in 2004, sociologists Grace Kao and Kara Joyner considered the responses of more than 90,000 adolescents nationwide in an in-school survey. Among many questions, students were asked to identify their best friend and later to identify that person’s race and ethnicity. For their primary friendships, most people chose someone of the same race or ethnicity.

We can see that more than 81 percent of White youths had as their best friend someone who was also White. Other racial and ethnic groups are more likely to venture outside their group’s boundaries, but friendships within racial and ethnic groups still dominate, especially when one considers the potential to befriend a member of the White majority.

Research of the last 10 years shows that regardless of one’s racial or ethnic group, friendships that cross racial and ethnic boundaries are less likely than others to

Although such studies are encouraging, what remains troubling is how little significant intergroup contact exists. In “Research Focus,” we consider recent efforts to measure how much contact occurs.

The limited amount of intergroup contact is of concern given the power of the contact hypothesis. If there is no positive contact, then how can we expect there to be less prejudice? National surveys show prejudice directed toward Muslim Americans, but social contact bridges that hatred. In a 2006 survey, 50 percent of people who were not acquainted with a Muslim favor special identification for Muslim Americans, but only 24 percent of those who know a Muslim embrace that same view. Similarly, people personally familiar with Muslims are more than one-third less likely to endorse special security checks just for Muslims and are nervous to see a Muslim man on the same flight with themselves. Although negative views are common toward Muslim Americans today, they are much less likely to be endorsed by people who have had intergroup contact (Saad 2006a).

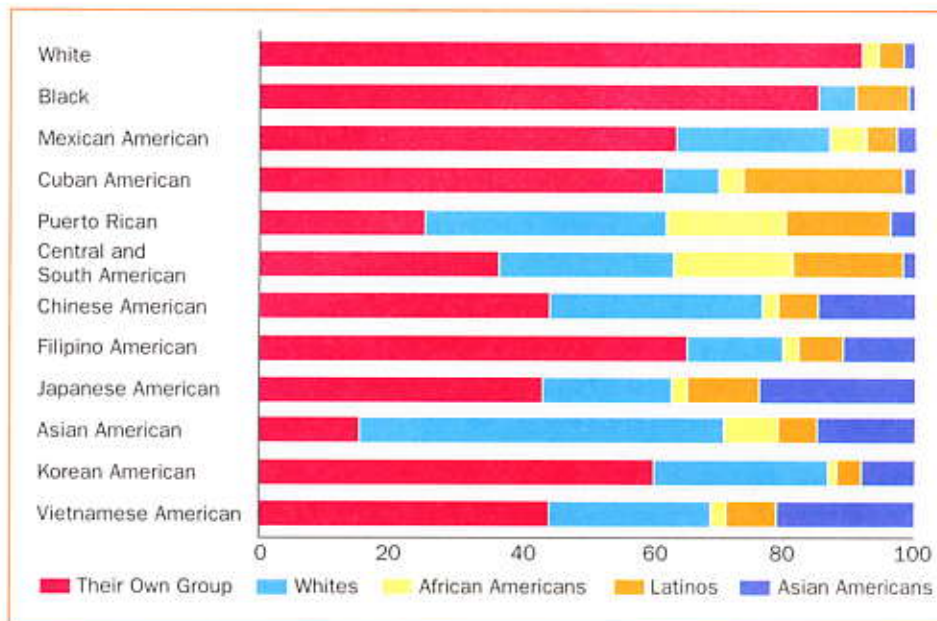
## Research Focus

involve visits to each other's homes. They are also less likely than others to feature a sharing of personal problems.

In sum, careful research shows that to a great degree, our society's growing diversity

is not necessarily reflected in our choice of friends.

Source: Briggs 2007; Hamm, Brown, and Heck 2005; Kao and Joyner 2004; Kao and Vaquera 2006; Mouw and Entwisle 2006; Smith 1999.



**FIGURE 2.5**  
**Who's Your Best Friend?**

Source: Adapted from Table 1 in Kao and Joyner 2004, 564. Reprinted by permission of Wiley-Blackwell Publishing.

As African Americans and other subordinate groups slowly gain access to better-paying and more-responsible jobs, the contact hypothesis takes on greater significance. Usually, the availability of equal-status interaction is taken for granted, yet in everyday life intergroup contact does not conform to the equal-status idea of the contact hypothesis. Furthermore, as we have seen, in a highly segregated society such as the United States, contact tends to be brief and superficial, especially between Whites and minorities. The apartheid-like friendship patterns prevent us from learning firsthand not just how to get along but also how to revel in interracial experiences (Bonilla-Silva and Embrick 2007; Miller 2002).

## Corporate Response: Diversity Training

Prejudice carries a cost. This cost is not only to the victim but also to any organization that allows prejudice to interfere with its functioning. Workplace hostility can lead to lost



productivity and even staff attrition. Furthermore, if left unchecked, an organization—whether a corporation, government agency, or nonprofit enterprise—can develop a reputation for having a “chilly climate.” This reputation of a business unfriendly to people of color or to women discourages both qualified people from applying for jobs and potential clients from seeking products or services.

In an effort to improve workplace relations, most organizations have initiated some form of diversity training. These programs are aimed at eliminating circumstances and relationships that cause groups to receive fewer rewards, resources, or opportunities. Typically, programs aim to reduce ill treatment based on race, gender, and ethnicity. In addition, diversity training may deal with (in descending order of frequency) age, disability, religion, and language, as well as other aspects, including citizenship status, marital status, and parental status (Society for Human Resource Management 2008).

It is difficult to make any broad generalization about the effectiveness of diversity-training programs because they vary so much in structure between organizations. At one extreme are short presentations that seem to have little support from management. People file into the room feeling that this is something they need to get through quickly. Such training is unlikely to be effective and may actually be counterproductive by heightening social tensions. At the other end of the continuum is a diversity training program that is integrated into initial job training, reinforced periodically, and presented as part of the overall mission of the organization, with full support from all levels of management. In these businesses, diversity is a core value, and management demands a high degree of commitment from all employees (Dobbin, Kalev, and Kelly 2007).

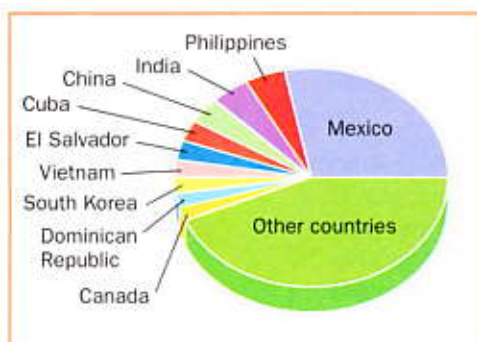
As shown in Figure 2.6, the workforce is becoming more diverse, and management is taking notice. An increasing proportion of the workforce is foreign-born, and the numbers of U.S.-born African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans are also growing. Growing research in business and the social sciences is documenting that diversity is an asset in bringing about creative changes. The benefits of workplace diversity is especially true at management levels where leadership teams can develop innovative solutions (DiTomaso, Post, and Parks-Yancy 2007; Page 2007)

It is not in an organization’s best interests if employees start to create barriers based on, for example, racial lines. We saw in the previous section that equal-status contact can reduce hostility. However, in the workplace, people compete for promotions, desirable work assignments, and better office space, to name a few sources of friction. When done well, an organization undertakes diversity training to remove ill feelings among workers, which often reflect the prejudices present in larger society.

If it is to have a lasting impact on an organization, diversity training should not be

separated from other aspects of the organization. For example, even the most inspired program will have little effect on prejudice if the organization promotes a sexist or ethnically offensive image in its advertising. The University of North Dakota launched an initiative in 2001 to become one of the top institutions for Native Americans in the nation. Yet at almost the same time, the administration reaffirmed its commitment, despite tribal objections, to having as its mascot for athletic teams the “Fighting Sioux.” It does little to do diversity training if overt actions by an organization propel it in the opposite direction. In 2005, the National Collegiate Athletic Association began a review of logos and mascots that could be considered insulting to Native Americans. Some colleges have resisted suggestions to change or alter their publicity images, although others have abandoned the practice (University of North Dakota 2008).

Despite the problems inherent in confronting prejudice, an organization with a comprehensive, management-supported program of diversity training can go a long way toward reducing prejudice in the workplace. The one major qualifier is that the rest of the organization must also support mutual respect.



**FIGURE 2.6**  
**Foreign-Born Workers in the United States, by Country**

About 15 percent of the civilian labor force is foreign-born, with Mexico the largest source.

Source: Data for 2004 from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in Mosisa 2006, 48.



## Ways to Fight Hate

What can schools do? Television and movie producers? Corporate big shots? It is easy to shift the responsibility for confronting prejudice to the movers and shakers, and certainly they do play a critical role. Yet there definitely are actions one can take in the course of everyday life to challenge intergroup hostility.

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), founded in 1971 and based in Montgomery, Alabama, organized committed activists all over the country to mount legal cases and challenges against hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan. The center's courtroom challenges led to the end of many discriminatory practices. Its cases have now gone beyond conventional race-based cases, with the center winning equal benefits for women in the armed forces, helping to end involuntary sterilization of women on welfare, and working to reform prison and mental health conditions.

Recognizing that social change can also begin at the individual level, the SPLC has identified 10 ways to fight hate on the basis of its experience working at the community level:

1. *Act.* Do something. In the face of hatred, apathy will be taken as acceptance even by the victims of prejudice themselves. The SPLC tells of a time when a cross was burned in the yard of a single mother of Portuguese descent in Missouri; one person acted and set in motion a community uprising against hatred.
2. *Unite.* Call a friend or co-worker. Organize a group of like-thinking friends from school or your place of worship or club. Create a coalition that is diverse and includes the young, the old, law enforcement representatives, and the media. Frustrated when a neo-Nazi group got permission to march in Illinois, a Jewish couple formed Project Lemonade. Money raised helps to create education projects or monuments in communities that witness such decisive events.
3. *Support the victims.* Victims of hate crimes are especially vulnerable. Let them know you care by words, in person, or by e-mail. If you or your friend is a victim, report it. In the wake of an outbreak of anti-Native American and anti-Jewish activity in Montana, a manager of a local sports shop replaced all his usual outdoor advertising and print advertisements with "Not in Our Town," which soon became a community rallying point for a support network of hate victims.
4. *Do your homework.* If you suspect a hate crime has been committed, do your research to document it. An Indiana father spotted his son receiving a "pastor's license," did some research, and found that the source was a White supremacist group disguised as a church. It helped explain the boy's recent fascination with Nazi symbols. The father wrote to the "church," demanded that the contacts be stopped, and threatened suit.
5. *Create an alternative.* Never attend a rally where hate is a part of the agenda. Find another outlet for your frustration, whatever the cause. When the Ku Klux Klan held a rally in Wisconsin, a coalition of ministers organized citizens to spend the day in minority neighborhoods.
6. *Speak up.* You, too, have First Amendment rights. Denounce the hatred, the cruel jokes. If you see a news organization misrepresenting a group, speak up. When a newspaper exposed the 20-year-old national leader of the Aryan Nation, he resigned and closed his Web site.
7. *Lobby leaders.* Persuade policy makers, business heads, community leaders, and executives of media outlets to take a stand against hate. Levi Strauss contributed \$5 million to an antiprejudice project and a program that helps people of color to get loans in communities where it has plants.
8. *Look long range.* Participate or organize events such as annual parades or cultural fairs to celebrate diversity and harmony. Supplement it with a Web site that can be a 24/7 resource. In Selma, Alabama, a major weekend street fair is held on the anniversary of Bloody Sunday, the day in 1965 when voting-rights activists



attempted to walk across a bridge to Montgomery but were attacked and beaten back by police.

9. *Teach tolerance.* Prejudice is learned, and parents and teachers can influence the content of curriculum. In Brooklyn, New York, an interracial basketball program called Flames was founded in the mid-1970s. Since then, it has brought together more than 10,000 youths of diverse backgrounds.
10. *Dig deeper.* Look into the issues that divide us—social inequality, immigration, and sexual orientation. Work against prejudice. Dig deep inside yourself for prejudices and stereotypes you may embrace. Find out what is happening and act!

Expressing prejudice and expressing tolerance are fundamentally personal decisions. These steps recognize that we have the ability to change our attitudes, resist ethnocentrism and prejudice, and avoid the use of ethnocentrism and stereotypes (SPLC 2000; Willoughby 2004).

## Conclusion

This chapter has examined theories of prejudice and measurements of its extent. Several theories try to explain why prejudice exists. Some emphasize economic concerns (the exploitation and scapegoating theories) whereas other approaches stress personality or normative factors. No one explanation is sufficient. Surveys conducted in the United States over the past 60 years point to a reduction of prejudice as measured by the willingness to express stereotypes or maintain social distance. Survey data also show that African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and American Indians do not necessarily feel comfortable with each other. They have adopted attitudes toward other oppressed groups similar to those held by many White Americans.

The absence of widespread public expression of prejudice does not mean prejudice itself is absent by any means. Recent prejudice aimed at Hispanics, Asian Americans, and large recent immigrant groups such as Arab Americans and Muslim Americans is well documented. Issues such as immigration and affirmative action reemerge and cause bitter resentment. Furthermore, ill feelings exist between subordinate groups in schools, in the streets, and in the workplace. Color-blind racism allows one to appear to be tolerant while allowing racial and ethnic inequality to persist.

Equal-status contact may reduce hostility between groups. However, in a highly segregated society defined by inequality, such opportunities are not typical. The mass media can be of value in reducing discrimination, but they have not done enough and may even intensify ill feeling by promoting stereotypical images.

Even though we can be encouraged by the techniques available to reduce intergroup hostility, there are still sizable segments of the population that do not want to live in integrated neighborhoods, do not want to work for or be led by someone of a different race, and certainly object to the idea of their relatives marrying outside their own group. People still harbor stereotypes toward one another, and this tendency includes racial and ethnic minorities having stereotypes about one another.

Reducing prejudice is important because it can lead to support for policy change. There are steps we can take as individuals to confront prejudice and overcome hatred. Another real challenge and the ultimate objective is to improve the social condition of oppressed groups in the United States. To consider this challenge, we turn to discrimination in Chapter 3. Discrimination's costs are high to both dominant and subordinate groups. With this fact in mind, we will examine some techniques for reducing discrimination.

## Summary

1. Prejudice consists of negative attitudes, and discrimination consists of negative behavior toward a group.
2. Hate crimes highlight hostility that culminates in a criminal offense.
3. Robert Merton's formulation clarifies how individuals may be prejudiced and not necessarily discriminatory and find themselves acting in discriminatory ways while not harboring prejudices.

Theories for prejudice include two that tend to be psychological (scapegoating and authoritarian personality) and emphasize why a particular person harbors ill feelings. Others are more sociological (exploitation and normative), viewing prejudice in the context of our interaction in a larger society.

4. Although evidence indicates that the public expression of prejudice has declined, there is ample evidence that people are expressing race-neutral principles or color-blind racism that still serves to perpetuate inequality in society.
5. Typically, members of minority groups have a significantly more negative view of social inequality and are more pessimistic about the future compared to Whites.
6. Not only is prejudice directed at racial and ethnic minorities by people in dominant positions but also intergroup hostility among the minorities themselves persists and may become violent.
7. Various techniques are utilized to reduce prejudice, including educational programs, mass media, friendly intergroup contact, and diversity-training programs by the corporate sector.

## Key Terms

|                              |                        |                        |
|------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| authoritarian personality 39 | ethnocentrism 34       | prejudice 36           |
| Bogardus scale 50            | ethnophaulisms 36      | racial profiling 42    |
| color-blind racism 43        | exploitation theory 39 | scapegoating theory 38 |
| contact hypothesis 51        | hate crime 35          | social distance 50     |
| discrimination 36            | normative approach 39  | stereotypes 40         |

## Review Questions

1. How are prejudice and discrimination both related and unrelated to each other?
2. How do theories of prejudice relate to different expressions of prejudice?
3. How is color-blind racism expressed?
4. Are there steps that you can identify that have been taken against prejudice in your community?

## Critical Thinking

1. Identify stereotypes associated with a group of people such as older adults or people with physical disabilities.
2. What social issues do you think are most likely to engender hostility along racial and ethnic lines?
3. Consider the television programs you watch the most. In terms of race and ethnicity, how well do the programs you watch tend to reflect the diversity of the population in the United States?