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❖ CHAPTER 1 ❖

Basic Concepts in the Study of Racial and Ethnic Relations

In the 1980s Susie Guillory Phipps, the wife of a white businessperson in Louisiana, went to court to try to get the racial designation on her birth certificate at the Louisiana Bureau of Vital Records changed from "colored" to "white." A 1970 Louisiana "blood" law required that persons with one-thirty-second or more "Negro blood" (ancestry) were to be designated as "colored" on birth records; before 1970 "any traceable amount" of African ancestry had been used to define a person as colored. The white-skinned Phipps was the descendant of an eighteenth-century white plantation owner and an African American slave, and her small amount of African ancestry was enough to get her classified as "colored" on her official Louisiana birth certificate. Because other records supported the designation, Phipps lost her case against the state of Louisiana.[1]

This controversy raises the basic question of how a person comes to be defined as *white* or *black* in U.S. society. It is only under racist assumptions that having one black ancestor makes one black while having one white ancestor does not make one white. If the latter were the law in Louisiana, of course, many *black* residents there, those who have at least one white ancestor (often a slaveholder), would be classified as *white*! This sad story of legal racism illustrates the way in which racial categories are constructed and defined socially and politically, and not scientifically.

A logical place to start making sense out of this definitional controversy is with basic terms and concepts. People have often used such terms as *racial groups* and *prejudice* without specifying their meaning. Since these are basic concepts in the study of intergroup relations, we will analyze them in detail.

ISSUES OF RACE

Both *racial group* and the more common term *race* have been used in a number of senses in social science and popular writings. *Human race, Jewish race, Negro race*—such terms in the literature suggest a range of meanings. The word *race* in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Europe was used for descendants of a common ancestor, emphasizing kinship linkages rather than physical characteristics such as hair type or skin color. It was only in the late eighteenth century that the term *race* came to mean a distinct category of human beings with physical characteristics transmitted by descent.[2]

In the 1600s François Bernier was one of the first Europeans to sort human beings into distinct categories. Soon a hierarchy of physically distinct groups (but not yet termed *races*) came to be accepted, with white Europeans, not surprisingly, at the top. Africans were relegated by European observers to the bottom, in part because of (black) Africans' color and allegedly "primitive" culture, but also because Africans were often known to Europeans as slaves. Economic and political subordination resulted in a low position in the white classification system.[3]

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Immanuel Kant's use of the German phrase for "races of mankind" in the 1770s was one of the first explicit uses of the term in the sense of biologically distinct categories of human beings. Johann Blumenbach, a German anatomist, is the European scholar whose 1795 classification of all human beings into five racial groups was perhaps the most influential. He was the first influential European to arrange a variety of human groups into a clear racial hierarchy: in order, the Caucasians (Europeans), the Mongolians (Asians), the Ethiopians (Africans), the Americans (Native Americans), and the Malays (Polynesians). Indeed, it was Blumenbach who first coined the term *Caucasian*; he felt that the Europeans in the Caucasus mountains of Russia were "the most beautiful race of men." Ever since, Europeans have been called by a term that once applied only to a small and unrepresentative area of Europe. Blumenbach also used Caucasian because he felt that the earliest human beings probably came from there. (In the twentieth century archaeologists would find the earliest human remains in Africa.)[4]

The concept of race as a biologically distinctive category was developed by northern Europeans who for much of their histories had been largely isolated from contact with people who differed from them physically or culturally. Before the development of large sailing ships in the late 1400s they had little contact with people from Asia, Africa, or the Americas. Soon, however, it was these northern Europeans who established slave systems in the Americas. The slave colonies were legitimated and rationalized by the northern Europeans, including the English, who classified African slaves as a lesser "race." The idea of race was not developed from close scientific observations of all human beings. Rather, "race was, from its inception, a folk classification, a product of popular beliefs about human differences that evolved from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries."[5]

From the eighteenth century to the twentieth century the use of *race* by biologists, physical anthropologists, and other scientists usually drew on this folk classification of race in the sense of biologically distinctive groups. The scientists who used race in this sense only reflected their own racial prejudices or those of the general public. Thus, "the scientists themselves undertook efforts to document the existence of the differences that the European cultural worldview demanded and had already created."[6] Basic to this

increasingly prevalent view was the Blumenbach theory of a set number of biologically distinct "races" with differing physical characteristics and the belief that these characteristics were hereditary and thus created a natural hierarchy of groups. By the late nineteenth century numerous European and U.S. scientists and popular writers were systematically downgrading all peoples not of northern European origin, especially southern Europeans and Jewish Europeans, as inferior "races."[7]

This singling out of people within the human species in terms of a biologized "race" hierarchy is a distinctively European and Euro-American idea. "Indigenous peoples . . . have observed and appreciated cultural diversity as variations on cosmological themes. As a rule, the indigenous worldview encompasses all humanity."[8] In the view of M. Annette Jaimes indigenous peoples around the globe typically emphasize "building alliances" across a variety of racial and ethnic groups. U.S. examples include the assistance in agricultural techniques given by Native Americans to early Europeans settlers and later to Japanese Americans who were imprisoned during World War II (see Chapter 11) in concentration camps located near reservations in the western United States.[9]

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Ideological Racism

The development of ideological racism is rooted in European global expansion that began in earnest in the late 1400s. We can define *ideological racism* specifically as *an ideology that considers a group's unchangeable physical characteristics to be linked in a direct, causal way to psychological or intellectual characteristics, and that on this basis distinguishes between superior and inferior racial groups.*[10] The "scientific racism" of such European writers as De Gobineau in the mid-nineteenth century was used to justify the spread of European colonialism in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. A long line of racist theorists followed in De Gobineau's footsteps, including the Nazi leader Adolf Hitler. They even applied the ideology of racial inferiority to culturally distinct white European groups, such as Jewish Europeans. In a racist ideology real or alleged physical characteristics are linked to *cultural* traits that the dominant group considers undesirable or inferior.

Ideological racism has long been common in the United States. For example, in 1935 an influential white University of Virginia professor wrote:

> The size of the brain in the Black Race is below the medium both of the Whites and the Yellow-Browns, frequently with relatively more simple convolutions. The frontal lobes are often low and narrow. The parietal lobes voluminous, the occipital protruding. The psychic activities of the Black Race are a careless, jolly vivacity, emotions and passions of short duration, and a strong and somewhat irrational egoism. Idealism, ambition, and the co-operative faculties are weak. They love amusement and sport but have little initiative and adventurous spirit.[11]

This example of crude ideological racism links physical and personality characteristics. Although this type of racist portrait often passed for science before World War II—and in today's white supremacy organizations (for example, the Ku Klux Klan), some of it still does—it is, in fact, pseudoscience. Ideological racists have simply accepted as true the stereotyped characteristics traditionally applied by whites to African Americans or other people of color.

Modern biologists and anthropologists have demonstrated the wild-eyed irrationality of this racist mythology. The basic tenet of racist thinking is that physical differences such as skin

color or nose shape are intrinsically and unalterably tied to meaningful differentials in basic intelligence or "civilization." Yet, in spite of periodic assertions of such a linkage by white supremacy groups and pseudoscientists, no scientific support for this assumed linkage exists.

Indeed, there is no distinctive biological reality called "race" that can be determined by objective scientific procedures. The social, medical, and physical sciences have demonstrated this fact.[12] Given the constant blending and interbreeding of human groups over many centuries and in the present, it is impossible to sort human beings into unambiguously distinctive "races" on genetic grounds. There is simply too much overlapping of genetic characteristics across the variety of human populations. Two randomly selected individuals from the world's population would have in common, on average, about 99.8 percent of their genetic material. Most of the genetic variation in regard to human populations "occurs *within* populations, not *between* them."[13] There are genetic differences between geographically scattered human populations, but these differences are slight. The racial importance of the slight dissimilarities is socially, not scientifically, determined.

Human populations singled out as "races" are simply groups with visible differences that Europeans and European Americans have decided to emphasize as important in their social, economic, and political relations. As physiologist Jared Diamond has noted, such racial categorizing is neither objective nor scientific. Indeed, there are *many* different ways of classifying human populations in terms of genetic characteristics: "One such procedure would group Italians and Greeks with most African blacks. It would classify Xhosa—the South African 'black' group to which [South African] President Nelson Mandela belongs—with Swedes rather than Nigerians."[14] What Diamond has in mind are the antimalarial genes that are not found among the light-skinned Swedes or dark-skinned southern African groups like the Xhosas, but are commonly found in northern African groups and among Europeans such as Italians and Greeks. These antimalarial genes may be more important for human beings than those determining skin color variations, yet they are not used by Europeans or Euro-Americans, including pseudoscientists, for their "racial" classifications.[15]

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There is only one "human race (Homo sapiens)," to which we all belong. Every human being is in fact distantly *related* to every other human being; each person is at least a fiftieth cousin of any other person on the globe. Indeed, for most, the relationship is closer than that. The indigenous view of human beings, noted above, is now accepted by most scientists.[16] Nonetheless, the lack of scientific support has not lessened the popularity of racist ideologies. The scholar Ashley Montagu has noted the extreme danger of ideological racism, a view shaped in part by his observation of the consequence of the German Nazi ideology, according to which there were physically distinct Aryan and Jewish races.[17] That racist ideology lay behind the killing of millions of European Jews during the 1930s and 1940s.

Racial Group

Today social scientists view race not as a given biological reality but as a socially constructed reality. Sociologist Oliver C. Cox, one of the first to underscore this perspective, defined a race as "any people who are distinguished, or consider themselves distinguished, in social relations with other peoples, by their physical characteristics."[18] From the social-definition perspective, characteristics such as skin color have no self-evident meaning; rather, they have *social* meaning. Similarly, a *racial group* has been defined by Pierre

van den Berghe as a "human group that defines itself and/or is defined by other groups as different from other groups by virtue of innate and immutable physical characteristics."[10]

A racial group is not something naturally generated as part of the self-evident order of the universe. A person's race is typically determined by and important to certain outsiders, although a group's self-definition can also be important. In this book we will define a *racial group* as a *social group that persons inside or outside the group have decided is important to single out as inferior or superior, typically on the basis of real or alleged physical characteristics subjectively selected.* Racial group distinctions are rooted in ideological racism, which as we noted previously links physical characteristics to "inferior" or "superior" cultural and intellectual characteristics.

In the United States a number of groups would fit this definition. Asian Americans, African Americans, Native Americans ("American Indians"), and Mexican Americans have had their physical characteristics, such as skin color and eye shape, singled out by dominant white Americans as badges of social and racial inferiority. Some groups once defined as racial groups—and as physically and mentally inferior groups at that—are no longer defined that way. In later chapters we will see that Irish and Italian Americans were once defined as inferior "races" (or racial groups) by Anglo-Protestant Americans. Later, the social definition of these European immigrants as a racial group was replaced by an Anglo-Protestant construction of the groups as white *ethnic groups,* a term we will examine shortly.

The examples of Irish and Italian Americans make it clear that racial definitions are not fixed essences that last forever, but instead are temporary constructions that are shaped in social and political struggles in particular times and in particular societies. Racial definitions can change and even disappear.

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Why are some physical characteristics, such as skin color, selected as a basis for distinguishing racial groups, whereas other characteristics, such as eye color, seldom are? These questions cannot be answered in biological terms. They require historical and sociological analysis. Such characteristics as skin color are, as Banton has argued, "easily observed and ordered in the mind."[20] They take on particular significance in group interaction. More important than ease of observation is the way in which economic or political subordination and exploitation create a need to identify the powerless group in a certain way. In justifying exploitation the exploiting group often defines the real (or alleged) physical characteristics singled out to typify the exploited group as inferior racial characteristics. Technological differences in weaponry and firepower, for example, between European and African peoples facilitated the subordination of Africans as slaves in the English and other European colonies. In turn, the generally darker skin of the Africans and their descendants came to be used by white groups as an indicator of subordinate racial-cultural status. Skin-color characteristics have no inherent meaning; in group interaction they become important because they can be used to classify members of the dominant and subordinate groups.

Knowledge of one's relatives sometimes affects one's assignment to a racial group, particularly for those who lack the emphasized physical characteristics. At various times in many societies people have been distinguished not only on the basis of their own physical characteristics but also on the basis of a socially determined "rule of descent."[21] For example, in Nazi Germany Adolf Hitler's officials often identified Jewish Germans on the basis of their having one or more Jewish ancestors or relatives.

The socially applied rules of descent have varied greatly from society to society. For example, in some countries there are special categories or designations for mixed-ancestry groups, such as the "Coloreds" for people with African and European ancestry in South Africa. Many Latin American countries recognize two or more mixed-ancestry categories, including *mulatto* and *mestizo*. Mixed-ancestry distinctions have been less common in the United States. With regard to African Americans, for example, miscegenation has over time caused dark skin color to become a less reliable distinguishing characteristic, and the rule of descent has become a mechanism of identification of African Americans that has perpetuated their subordination. Today "black" Americans "evidence an unusually wide range of physical traits. Their skin color extends from ebony to a shade paler than many 'whites.' "[22] In many communities in the United States this *social* aspect of the defining process becomes obvious when a light-skinned person, say, of one-eighth African ancestry but without any of the physical traits whites associate with African Americans, is regarded as black because one of his or her ancestors is known to be of African ancestry. Sometimes termed the "one drop of blood" rule, this odd rule of descent is unique to the United States. Indeed, in Caribbean nations such as Jamaica or in many parts of Africa, a person who is one-eighth African in ancestry and seven-eighths European would be considered "white."

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ETHNIC GROUPS

What Is an Ethnic Group?

The term *ethnic group* has been used by social scientists in two different senses, one narrow and one broad. Some definitions of the term are broad enough to include socially defined racial groups. For example, in Milton Gordon's broad definition an ethnic group is

a social group distinguished "by race, religion, or national origin."[23] Like the definition of racial group, this definition contains the notion of set-apartness. But here the distinctive characteristics can be physical or cultural, and language and religion are seen as critical markers or signs of ethnicity even where there is no physical distinctiveness. Sociologist Nathan Glazer has given this inclusive definition of ethnic groups:

> A single family of social identities—a family which, in addition to races and ethnic groups, includes religions (as in Holland), language groups (as in Belgium), and all of which can be included in the most general term, ethnic groups, groups defined by descent, real or mythical, and sharing a common history and experience.[24]

Today many scholars, such as Thomas Sowell in his *Ethnic America* and Werner Sollors in an introduction to *The Invention of Ethnicity,* still view religious, national origin, and racial groups as falling under the umbrella term *ethnic group.*[25]

Other scholars prefer a narrower definition of ethnic group, one that omits groups defined substantially in terms of physical characteristics (those called racial groups) and is limited to groups distinguished primarily on the basis of cultural or national-origin characteristics. *Cultural characteristics* include language; *national origin* refers to the country (and national culture) from which the person or his or her ancestors came.

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The word *ethnic* comes from the Greek *ethnos,* originally meaning "nation." In its earliest English usage, about A.D. 1470, the word referred to culturally different "heathen" countries or nations (those not Christian or Jewish). Apparently the first usage of ethnic group to denote national origin developed in the period of heavy immigration from southern and eastern European nations to the United States in the early twentieth century. Since the 1930s and 1940s a number of prominent social scientists have suggested that the narrower definition of ethnic group, more in line with the original Greek meaning of nationality, makes the term more useful.[26]

Social scientist W. Lloyd Warner, who was perhaps the first to use the term *ethnicity,* distinguished between ethnic groups, which he saw as characterized by cultural differences, and racial groups, characterized substantially by physical differences.[27] More recent scholars have also preferred the narrower usage. In van den Berghe's view, for example, ethnic groups are "socially defined but on the basis of cultural criteria."[28]

In this book, the usual meaning of *ethnic group* will be the narrower one—*a group socially distinguished or set apart, by others or by itself, primarily on the basis of cultural or national-origin characteristics.* Such set-apart groups, such as Irish Americans or Italian Americans, usually develop a strong sense of a common cultural heritage and a common ancestry. Some broad social categories, such as the religious category of "Baptists," have been considered by some to be ethnic groups, but in the sense we use the term here they are not. Religious groups that are open to relatively easy conversion are not, strictly speaking, ethnic because ethnicity says something about accepted lines of common descent or origin as well as current cultural characteristics.

Many social analysts who use the broader definition of ethnic group (that is, the one that includes racial groups) argue that the experiences of people defined as "nonwhite" are essentially similar to the experiences of white groups. Sociologists such as Glazer have argued that in the United States the situations and experiences of non-European groups such

as African or Asian Americans are in broad ways similar to those of white immigrants from Europe, especially in regard to the process of gradual integration into the Anglo-Protestant core society. Some analysts further assume that the experiences of both European and non-European groups are adequately explained by the same theoretical framework—typically the conventional assimilationist framework.[29]

In contrast, many analysts who prefer the narrower definition of ethnic group as a socially constructed category that differs in important ways from racial group tend to view the experiences of subordinated racial groups as distinctively different from those of white European ethnic groups.[30] Philomena Essed has even argued that much of the public and scholarly use of the umbrella term *ethnic group* for all groups, including racial groups, in the last two decades has had political and racial overtones: "Indeed, the substitution of 'ethnicity' for 'race' as a basis of categorization is accompanied by increasing unwillingness among the dominant group to accept responsibility for the problems of racism."[31] However, while Essed's point is accurate for much writing that views such groups as African Americans and Mexican Americans as ethnic groups no different from groups like Italian Americans and Irish Americans, it does not apply to those scholars who prefer the term *ethnic group* because they feel its use indicates that all groups have genuine and significant cultural histories.[32]

In addition, many scholars emphasize the point that all socially constructed racial groups contain subgroups that can be seen as ethnic groups because they have distinctive cultural identities. Examples of this include Italian Americans within the white racial group and Jamaican Americans within the black racial group.*

Definitions of *racial group* and *ethnic group* that emphasize their social meaning and construction directly reject the biological determinism that views such groups as self-evident with unchanging physical or intellectual characteristics. People themselves, both outside and inside racial and ethnic groups, determine when certain physical or cultural characteristics are important enough to single out a group for social purposes, whether for good or for ill.

A given social group may be viewed by different outsiders or at different times as a racial or an ethnic group. Indeed, some groups have been defined by the same outsiders on the basis of both physical and cultural criteria. During the 1930s Jewish Germans, for example, were identified as a "race" in Nazi Germany, in part because of physical characteristics that were alleged to be different from those of other Germans. However, as we noted previously, identification of Jewish Germans for persecution by Nazi bureaucrats and storm troopers was based more on ethnic characteristics—cultural characteristics such as religion or language and genealogical ties to known Jewish ancestors—than on physical characteristics.

In their contacts with early European societies black Africans seem to have been viewed in ethnic rather than in racial terms. St. Clair Drake's research on early black African contacts with Europeans and lighter-skinned North Africans has shown that in the first centuries of contact, during the Egyptian, Greek, and Roman periods, European outsiders generally attached far greater significance to Africans' culture and nationality than to their physical characteristics. Before the sixteenth century "neither White Racism nor *racial slavery* existed."[33] Similarly, Frank Snowden has demonstrated that the early encounters

* Today, some Jamaican Americans do not see themselves as African American, although most whites would construct them as African Americans.

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between African blacks and Mediterranean whites led to a generally favorable image of African blacks among whites and to friendships and intermarriage—much different from the black–white relations in modern race-conscious societies. While some Europeans in these periods did express negative views of Africans' color, these views never developed into an acute color consciousness linked to an ideological view of Africans as an inferior species with severe intellectual deficits. Virulent color prejudice in the form of ideological racism emerged only in the modern world, probably with the imperial expansion into Africa and the Americas by European nations seeking colonies between the 1400s and the 1700s.[34] Historical conditions have shaped whether and how skin color becomes a marker in the processes of exploitation and oppression.

Ancestry is important to the concept of ethnic group whether it is defined in a narrow or a broad sense. Perception of a common ancestry, real or mythical, has been part of outsiders' definitions and of ethnic groups' self-definitions. Sociologist Max Weber saw ethnic groups broadly as "human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent."[35] In addition to a sense of common ancestry, a consciousness of shared experiences and of shared cultural patterns is important in shaping a group's ethnic identity.

Recently, a number of social scientists have focused on the ways in which people's constructions and conceptions of their own and other's ethnic identities change over time and from one situation to another. These social constructionists emphasize the importance of studying the "ways in which ethnic boundaries, identities, and cultures are negotiated, defined, and produced through social interaction inside and outside ethnic communities."[36] Drawing on her field research, Mary Waters has shown the *options* white Americans have with regard to their ethnic identity. A white person of both English and Irish ancestry may choose either ethnic identity, both, or none, preferring in the latter case to identify only as "American."[37] Waters has also documented how Afro-Caribbean immigrants sometimes view themselves as African Americans and sometimes as an ethnic group distinct from native-born blacks within the African American racial group.[38] Nonetheless, Afro-Caribbean Americans have *no choice* in how they are viewed, as black Americans, by the dominant white group. This fact of American life again reveals the central role that power inequalities play in the social definition of certain human groups as racial groups.

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Minority Groups or Subordinate Groups?

Racial group and *ethnic group* are only two of the terms used in research on racial and ethnic relations. Among the other terms is *minority group*.[39] Louis Wirth explicitly defined a minority group in terms of its subordinate position: "A group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination."[40]

In the term's earlier usage *minority group* presupposed the existence of a majority group that was dominant and had superior resources and rights. This usage emphasized differences in *power* among groups and underscored racial and ethnic *stratification*, a hierarchy of more and less powerful groups.

However, in the half-century since Wirth developed his ideas, the term *minority group* has lost much of its conceptual linkage to power inequality in common everyday usage.

Today, many scholars consider it more accurate to use a term such as *dominant group* for the majority group and a term like *subordinate group* for a minority group. This seems especially appropriate because a "majority group" can be numerically a minority, as was once the case with dominant white Europeans in a number of colonial societies. Moreover, many demographic forecasts see the dominant white majority in the United States becoming a statistical minority sometime around A.D. 2060.

The Matter of Culture

Cultural differences between groups are usually at the heart of racial and ethnic relations and conflict. Cultural sociologists and anthropologists define *culture* as the shared values, understandings, symbols, and practices of a group of people. The shared symbols are the means by which people "communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life."[41] There are cultural objects (the symbols and practices) as well cultural creators and cultural receivers (the people who create and use the cultural objects).[42]

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In Chapter 2 we will observe the importance of culture in the process by which one group adapts to another. We will examine the concept of *dominant culture*, the understandings and symbols created and controlled by a powerful group, as well as the concept of an *immigrant culture,* the understandings and symbols of an immigrant group entering the sphere of the dominant culture. Milton Gordon has argued that new immigrant groups coming into North America after the English have tended to give up much of their own cultural heritage to conform to the dominant Anglo-Protestant core culture: "If there is anything in American life which can be described as an overall American culture which serves as a reference point for immigrants and their children, it can best be described, it seems to us, as the middle-class cultural patterns of, largely, white Protestant, Anglo-Saxon origins, leaving aside for the moment the question of minor reciprocal influences on this culture exercised by the cultures of later entry into the United States."[43]

In subsequent chapters we will also see how some subordinated racial and ethnic groups have drawn on their cultures to resist discrimination and slavish assimilation to the dominant Anglo-Protestant culture. Some analysts describe these as *cultures of resistance.* The cultural heritage and present cultural understandings of subordinated groups, such as Native Americans or African Americans, have positive historical and current significance. They not only foster a sense of identity and pride but also facilitate the group's survival and enhance its ability to resist oppression. For example, the strong family and kinship values of various Native American groups enabled them to survive in the face of Euro-American invasions of their lands. Moreover, contrary to prevailing white stereotypes about black families, the strong family ties of African Americans have played a central role in creating a sense of pride and identity and have provided crucial support for coping with widespread discrimination from whites.

PREJUDICE AND STEREOTYPES

Another important term in the study of intergroup relations is *prejudice,* which in popular discourse is associated mostly with negative attitudes about members of selected racial and ethnic groups. An understanding of how and why negative attitudes develop is best achieved

by first defining *ethnocentrism,* which was long ago described by Sumner as the "view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it."[44] Individuals who develop *positive ethnocentrism* are characterized by a loyalty to the values, beliefs, and members of their own group. Ethnocentrism often prompts negative views of outgroups through a constant evaluation of outgroups in terms of ingroup values and ways. Such negative views are manifested in prejudices and stereotypes that influence the social, economic, and political interaction among groups.[45]

Prejudice has been defined by Gordon Allport as "thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant."[46] The term comes from the Latin word *praejudicium,* or a judgment made prior to knowledge or experience. In English the word evolved from meaning "hasty judgment" to the present connotation of unfavorable bias based on an unsupported judgment. Although prejudice can theoretically apply to favorable prejudgments, its current usage in both popular speech and social science analysis is almost exclusively negative. Defined more precisely, *prejudice* is, to closely paraphrase Allport, *an antipathy based on a faulty generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group as a whole, or toward an individual because he or she is a member of that group.*[47] As used in this text, *prejudice* has both an emotional and a cognitive aspect; it involves a negative feeling or attitude toward the outgroup as well as an inaccurate belief. An example might be "I as a white person hate black and Latino people because black and Latino people always smell worse than whites." The first part of the sentence expresses the negative emotion (the hatred); the last part, an inaccurate generalization. This latter cognitive aspect has been termed a *stereotype*—that is, *an overgeneralization associated with a racial or ethnic category that goes beyond existing evidence.*

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Why do some people stereotype others? Why have Irish Americans been stereotyped as lazy drunkards, African Americans as indolent or oversexed, Italian Americans as criminals with "Mafia" ties, Asian Americans as "treacherous Orientals"? Such questions encourage us to examine the role that prejudices and stereotypes play in the history and daily lives of individuals and groups. Sociological analysts of stereotyping emphasize group pressures on individuals for conformity or rationalization, while psychological analysts stress individual irrationality or personality defects.

Much research has highlighted the expressive function of prejudice for the individual. Frustration-aggression theories, psychoanalytic theories, and authoritarian personality perspectives focus on the *externalization* function of prejudice—the transfer of an individual's internal psychological problem onto an external object as a solution to that problem. Psychologically oriented interpretations often attribute racial or ethnic prejudice to special emotional problems of "sick" or "abnormal" individuals, such as a deep hatred of their own fathers.[48]

In a classic study of prejudice and personality, *The Authoritarian Personality,* T. W. Adorno and his colleagues argued that people who hate Jewish Americans or black Americans typically differ from tolerant people in regard to central personality traits—specifically, that they exhibit "authoritarian personalities."[49] Those with authoritarian personalities differ from others in their greater submission to authority, tendency to stereotype, superstition, and great concern for social status. They see the world as sinister and threatening, a view that easily leads to intolerance of outgroups that occupy subordinate positions in the social world around them.

Some scholars have raised serious questions about this stress on the expressive function of prejudice. They have suggested that social *conformity* may be a much more important factor.[50] Most people accept their own social situations as given and hold the prejudices taught at home and at school. Conformity to the prejudices of relatives and friends is a major source of individual prejudice. In this view, most prejudices are not the result of deep psychological pathologies, but rather reflect shared social definitions of outgroups. In such cases prejudice functions as a means of social adjustment. Most of us can think of situations in which we or our acquaintances have adjusted to new racial beliefs while moving from one region or setting to another. As Schermerhorn notes, "prejudice is a product of *situations*," not "a little demon that emerges in people simply because they are depraved."[51]

An additional function of prejudice is to rationalize a subordinate group's powerless position. Herbert Blumer suggested some years ago that prejudice is more than a matter of negative feelings possessed by members of one group for another; it is also "rooted in a sense of group position."[52] The dominant group comes to rationalize its privileged position. Prejudice is deeply rooted in the history of human contacts, but modern prejudices can sometimes be found grouped together in some type of ideological racism. Fully developed racist ideologies, as we have noted, appear to have arisen with European imperialism and colonization of people of color around the world. Modern prejudice, Oliver C. Cox argues, "is a divisive attitude seeking to alienate dominant group sympathy from an 'inferior' race, a whole people, for the purpose of facilitating its exploitation."[53] When peoples are subordinated, as in the cases of the white enslavement of black Africans in the American colonies and the restrictive quotas for Jewish Americans in some colleges in the 1920s and 1930s, those in power—here, Anglo-Protestant whites—gradually develop views that rationalize the exploitation and oppression of others.

This tendency to develop a racial ideology that defends privilege persists. In recent years a number of scholars in a variety of disciplines have suggested that the majority of white Americans possess a racial consciousness that consists of not just a few prejudices and stereotypes but a broader structure of racialized thought, a way of organizing and processing information about themselves and people of color. A sense of racial superiority grows out of a process in which whites grow up with power over and separated from people of color. Many racial ideas are formed by the informal and tacit lessons whites learn as children at home and school and as adults as they absorb messages from the mass media and socialize with relatives, coworkers, and friends.[54]

Some members of dominant groups who discriminate are motivated by a desire for economic or political gain. Such people strive to maintain their undeserved privileges, whether or not they rationalize the striving in terms of racial prejudices and stereotypes.[55] Such striving involves a system of racial inequality in which the dominant racial group benefits economically, politically, and psychologically—and acts to maintain its privileges. However, in the everyday world of discrimination it is very likely that the desire to protect privilege will be accompanied by negative views of the group targeted for discrimination.

Images of people of color that are held by dominant white groups today have many similarities with stereotypes of the past, although some changes in white thinking have occurred since the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Recent changes in racial prejudices and stereotypes in the United States have been examined by a number of researchers. David Sears and John McConahay have identified what they term *symbolic* or *modern racism*—

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that is, white beliefs that serious antiblack discrimination does not exist today and that black Americans are making illegitimate demands for social changes. These social psychologists have found that among whites "old-fashioned racism" favoring rigid segregation and extreme antiblack stereotypes has largely been replaced by this modern racism whose proponents accept modest desegregation but resist the large-scale changes necessary for full racial integration of the society.[56] Similarly, Lawrence Bobo has suggested that whites have an "ideology of bounded racial change." That is, whites' support for changes in discrimination ends when such changes seriously endanger their standard of living. Bobo suggests that many whites display "a loosely coherent set of attitudes and beliefs that, among other things, attributes patterns of black–white inequality to the dispositional shortcomings of black Americans."[57]

Thomas Pettigrew has also noted white reactions to the achievements of African Americans in the recent years and has suggested that what he calls the "ultimate attribution error" on the part of whites includes not only blaming black victims for their failures but also discounting black successes by attributing the latter to luck or unfair advantages rather than to intelligence and hard work.[58] While this research on modern racism has mostly examined white attitudes toward black Americans, many of the new concepts can be used to interpret white prejudices and stereotypes directed at other people of color.

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DISCRIMINATION

Distinguishing Dimensions

Public discussions of discrimination and of government programs to eradicate it (for example, affirmative action) are often confusing because the important dimensions of racial or ethnic discrimination are not distinguished. As a first step in sorting out the confusion, we suggest the diagram in Figure 1–1. The dimensions of discrimination include (a) motivation, (b) discriminatory actions, (c) effects, (d) the relation between motivation and actions, (e) the relation between actions and effects, (f) the immediate institutional context, and (g) the larger societal context.[59] A given set of discriminatory acts—such as the exclusion of Jewish American applicants to Ivy League colleges in the 1920s or the exclusion of African American children from all-white public schools until the 1960s—can be looked at in terms of these dimensions. One can ask what the motivation was for this discrimination. Was it prejudice, stereotyping, or another motive? One can also ask what form the exclusionary practices actually took. For example, in the case of segregated public schools in the South, principals refused black children entrance into their buildings. Also of importance are the effects of these practices. One effect was the poorer school facilities most black children encountered. Yet these practices were not the actions of isolated white principals. Rather, they were part of an institutionalized pattern of segregated education in the South, the effects of which are still present in U.S. society. Finally, such legalized patterns of school discrimination were part of a larger social context of general racial subordination of black Americans across many institutional areas in the South. Today, discrimination remains a multidimensional problem encompassing all institutional areas of U.S. society.

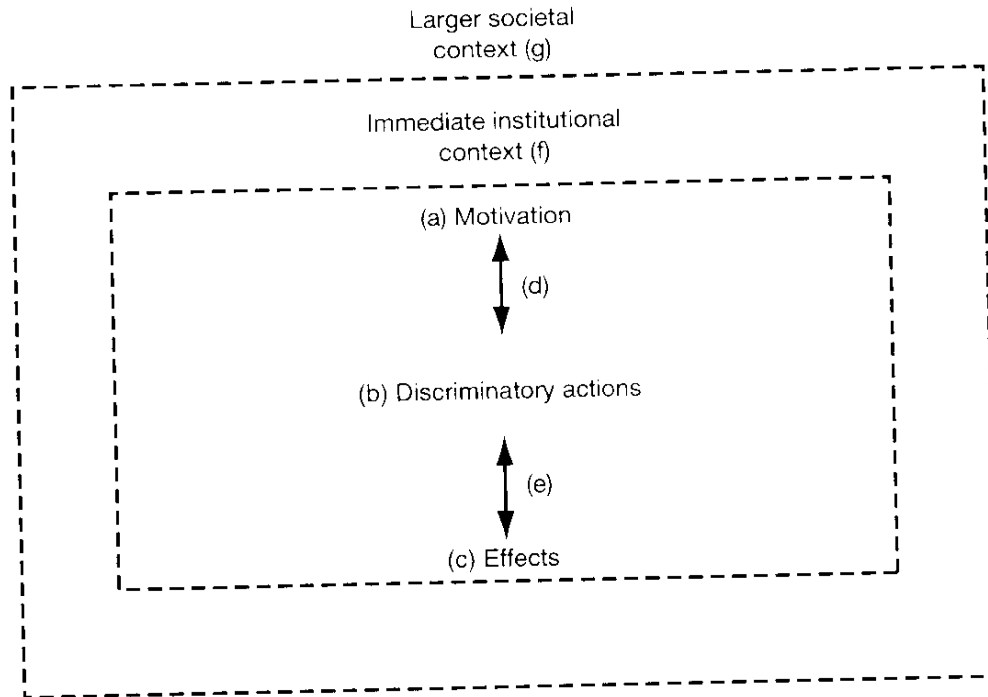

FIGURE 1–1 The Dimensions of Discrimination
***Source*: Adapted from Joe R. Feagin, "Affirmative Action in an Era of Reaction," in *Consultations on the Affirmative Action Statement of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982), pp. 46–48.**

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Research on Prejudice and Discrimination

Much research on discrimination has focused on one type of motivation (a in Figure 1–1)—prejudice. Many analysts emphasize the relation between prejudice and discrimination (d in Figure 1–1), viewing prejudice as the critical cause of discriminatory treatment of a singled-out group. Allport suggested that few prejudiced people keep their prejudices entirely to themselves; instead they act out their feelings in various ways.[60] In his classic study *An American Dilemma* (1944), Gunnar Myrdal saw racial prejudice as "the whole complex of valuations and beliefs which are behind discriminatory behavior on the part of white Americans."[61] A few years later Robert K. Merton argued that for some people discrimination is motivated not by their own prejudices but by fear of the prejudices of others in the dominant group.[62]

Some experimental studies by social psychologists have focused on the relationship between prejudice and expressed discrimination. These researchers have examined whether prejudiced people do in fact discriminate, and, if so, how that prejudice is linked to discrimination. Such studies have generally found a weak positive correlation between expressed prejudice (for example, on questionnaires) and the measured discriminatory behavior. Knowing how prejudiced a subject is does not necessarily help predict the character of his or her actions. In addition, some experimenters have tried to develop non-obvious measures of discrimination. One such measure involved setting up an experimental situation in which whites encountered a black person (a confederate of the researcher) who needed help making a phone call at a public telephone. The researcher then observed if the racial identity of the person needing help affected the white responses. As

we noted previously, public opinion surveys of white attitudes toward blacks have shown a significant decline in certain old-fashioned racist attitudes since the 1940s, and some of these experimental researchers have questioned whether the whites responding to such surveys are actually concealing their racial prejudices. Reviewing laboratory studies that used less obvious measures of discrimination, such as the phone call experiment mentioned above, Faye Crosby and her associates have shown that white discrimination actually varies with the social situation. It is more likely in anonymous situations than in face-to-face encounters whites sometimes have with blacks they know. The researchers also noted that experimental studies have found much more antiblack discrimination than they should have if the unprejudiced views that many whites express in public opinion surveys were their real views of black Americans. Many whites seem to hide their racial feelings when responding to pollsters.[63]

Defining Institutional and Individual Discrimination

The emphasis on individual prejudice and on bigoted individuals in many traditional assessments of discrimination has led some scholars to accent the institutionalization of discrimination. For example, Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton distinguished the concepts of *individual racism,* exemplified by the actions of white terrorists bombing a black church, and of *institutional racism,* illustrated by accumulating institutional practices that lead to large numbers of black children suffering because of seriously inadequate food and medical facilities in U.S. central cities.[64] Carmichael and Hamilton introduced the concept of institutional racism to the discussion of U.S. racial relations. In their book *Black Power* these authors move beyond a focus on individual bigots. In their view institutional racism can involve actions in which dominant group members have "no intention of subordinating others because of color, or are totally unaware of doing so."[65] We should note that the term *racism* is used here for patterns of discrimination that target *racially* subordinated groups such as African Americans.

In his analysis of racial discrimination and mental health, Pettigrew has distinguished between *direct* and *indirect* racial discrimination, applying the latter term to restrictions in one area (such as screening out job applicants because they do not have a college degree) that are shaped by racial discrimination in another area (historical exclusion of black Americans from many white universities prior to the 1960s).[66]

Recent conceptual work on racial discrimination emphasizes the close relationship between its individual ("micro") and institutional ("macro") dimensions, which must be viewed as two aspects of the same phenomenon. Social psychologist Essed has underscored the "mutual interdependence of the macro and micro dimensions" of racial discrimination. From the macro perspective racism is "a system of structural inequalities and a historical process." From a micro perspective racism involves individual discriminators whose specific actions are racist "only when they activate existing structural racial inequalities in the system."[67] The routine actions of discriminators reinforce and are shaped by a hierarchical system of racial dominance and inequality.

Thus, the group context of discriminatory actions is very important. The working definition of *discrimination* we emphasize in this book is as follows: *actions carried out by members of dominant groups, or their representatives, that have a differential and harm-*

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ful impact on members of subordinate groups. The dominant and subordinate groups we focus on here are racial and ethnic groups. From this perspective, the most serious discrimination in U.S. society involves the harmful practices taken by members of powerful racial and ethnic groups against those with much less power and fewer resources. Discrimination involves *actions* as well as one or more *discriminators* and one or more *victims.* A further distinction between *intentional* (motivated by prejudice or intent to harm) and *unintentional* (not motivated by prejudice or intent to harm) is useful for identifying different types of discrimination.[68]

Drawing on the two dimensions of scale and intention, we suggest four major types of discrimination. Type A, *isolate discrimination,* is harmful action taken intentionally by a member of a dominant racial or ethnic group against members of a subordinate group, without the support of other members of the dominant group in the immediate social or community context. An example would be a white Anglo police officer who implements anti-Latino hostility by beating up Mexican American prisoners at every opportunity, even though the majority of Anglo officers and department regulations specifically oppose such actions. (If the majority of Anglo officers in that department behaved in this fashion, the beatings would fall under the heading of type C discrimination.) The term *isolate* should not be taken to mean that type A discrimination is rare, for it is indeed commonplace.

Type B, *small-group discrimination,* is harmful action taken intentionally by a small number of dominant-group individuals acting in concert against members of subordinate racial and ethnic groups, without the support of the norms and of most other dominant group members in the immediate social or community context. The bombing of Irish Catholic churches in the 1800s by small groups of British Americans or the burning of crosses at black homes in several U.S. cities in the 1990s by members of white supremacist groups are likely examples.

Type C, *direct institutionalized discrimination,* is organizationally prescribed or community-prescribed action that by intention has a differential and negative impact on members of subordinate racial and ethnic groups. Typically, these actions are not sporadic but are routinely carried out by a large number of dominant-group individuals guided by the legal or informal norms of the immediate organizational or community context. Historical examples include the intentional exclusion, by law, of African Americans and Jewish Americans from certain residential neighborhoods and jobs. Type C discrimination can be seen today in the actions of real estate agents who regularly steer black homebuyers away from white neighborhoods. They are acting in accord with informal norms shared by many whites in their profession and communities.[69]

Type D, *indirect institutionalized discrimination,* consists of dominant-group practices having a harmful impact on members of subordinate racial and ethnic groups even though the organizationally or community-prescribed norms or regulations guiding those actions have been established with no intent to harm. For example, intentional discrimination institutionalized in the schooling of subordinate group members such as black and Latino Americans—resulting in inadequate educations for many of them—has often handicapped their attempts to compete with dominant-group members in the employment sphere, where hiring and promotion standards incorporate educational credentials. In addition, the impact of past discrimination often lingers on in the present: current generations of groups

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once severely subordinated usually have less inherited wealth and other resources than dominant groups do.

The Sites and Range of Discrimination

Discrimination includes a spatial dimension. For instance, in a white-dominated society a racially subordinated person's vulnerability to discrimination can vary from the most private to the most public sites. If the latter is in a relatively protected site, such as with friends at home, then the probability of experiencing racial or ethnic hostility and discrimination from dominant-group members is low. In contrast, if that same person–for example, a professor–is in a moderately protected site, such as in a departmental setting within a predominantly white university, the probability of experiencing hostility and discrimination may increase, although the professional status of the professor offers some protection. The probability of hostility and discrimination may increase further as this person moves from work and school settings into such public accommodations as hotels, restaurants, and stores, or into public spaces such as city streets, because the social constraints on discriminatory behavior are weaker there. As we will see in the chapters that follow, those members of subordinate racial and ethnic groups who have ventured the most into settings once reserved for members of dominant groups, either in the past or in the present, are likely to face substantial discrimination and hostility.[10]

In his classic study *The Nature of Prejudice*, Allport notes that discrimination by members of a dominant group against those in a subordinate group ranges from *antilocution*, or speaking against, to avoidance, to exclusion, to physical attack, to extermination.[11] For example, a dominant-group member, such as an English American, may try to exclude a Jewish American from his or her university or club. Or a white American may hurl a racist epithet at an Asian American or an African American.

One can also distinguish subtle and covert categories of discrimination from the more blatant forms. *Subtle discrimination* can be defined as unequal and harmful treatment of members of subordinate racial and ethnic groups that is obvious to the victim but not as overt as traditional, "door-slamming" varieties of discrimination. In modern bureaucratic settings such as corporate workplaces many white employers and employees have internalized inclinations to subtle discriminatory behavior that they consider normal and acceptable. This type of discrimination often goes unnoticed by nondiscriminating members of the dominant group.[12]

For instance, in research on African American managers who have secured entry-level positions in corporations, Ed Jones has found a predisposition among whites, both coworkers and bosses, to assume the best about persons of their own color and the worst about (black) people different from themselves in evaluating job performance. Like Pettigrew's "ultimate attribution error," this critical predisposition, which can be conscious or subconscious, can result in discrimination in promotions that is more subtle than the blatant discrimination of exclusion. The black managers interviewed by Jones and other researchers report that their achievements are often given less attention than their failures, while the failures of comparable white managers are more likely to be excused in terms of situational factors or even overlooked. This negative feedback on a black worker's performance makes it more difficult for her or him to perform successfully in the future.[13]

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Covert discrimination, in contrast, is harmful treatment of members of subordinate racial and ethnic groups that is hidden and difficult to document and prove. Covert discrimination includes sabotage and tokenism. For example, in one research study a black female mail carrier reported that white male co-workers were hiding some of her mail, so that when she returned from her route, there was still mail waiting to be delivered. Because of this sabotage her white manager blamed her and gave her a less desirable route.[74] Moreover, African, Asian, and Latino Americans are sometimes hired as "tokens" or "window dressing": they are placed in conspicuous positions just to make an organization look good instead of being evaluated honestly in terms of their abilities for higher-level employment. Some employers hire a few for "front" positions in order to reduce pressures to expand the number of employees from racially or ethnically subordinated groups to more representative proportions. Tokenism thus becomes a barrier to individual and group advancement.

Cumulative and Systemic Discrimination

Various combinations of blatant, covert, and subtle forms of discrimination can coexist in a given organization or community. The patterns of discrimination cutting across political, economic, and social organizations in our society can be termed *systemic discrimination*. One National Council of Churches group portrayed systemic racial discrimination this way: "Both consciously and unconsciously, racism is enforced and maintained by the legal, cultural, religious, educational, economic, political, environmental and mili-

tary institutions of societies. Racism is more than just a personal attitude; it is the institutionalized form of that attitude."[5] Related to systemic discrimination is the *cumulative* impact of discrimination on its victims. Particular instances of racial or ethnic discrimination may seem minor to outside observers if considered in isolation. But when blatant actions, such as verbal harassment or physical attack, combine with subtle and covert slights, such as sabotage, the cumulative impact of all this discrimination over months, years, and lifetimes is usually far more than the sum of the individual instances. Racial and ethnic oppression is typically both systemic and cumulative.

Responding to Discrimination

The responses of subordinate-group members to discrimination can range from deference or withdrawal, to verbal confrontation and physical confrontation, to legal action. Even where dominant-group members expect acquiescence in discrimination, some subordinate-group members may not oblige. Victims often fight back, sometimes in organized ways, as was exemplified by the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and sometimes as individuals in everyday settings, especially if they are among those subordinate group members with some monetary or legal resources. Discrimination that begins as one-way action may become two-way negotiation, often to the surprise of the discriminators.

Consider this example from research by Joe Feagin and Melvin Sikes, in which a black woman manager in a U.S. corporation describes a meeting with her white boss about her job performance:

> We had a five scale rating, starting with outstanding, then very good, then good, then fair, and then less than satisfactory. I had gone into my evaluation interview anticipating that he would give me a "VG" (very good), feeling that I deserved an "outstanding" and prepared to fight for my outstanding rating. Knowing, you know, my past experience with him, and more his way toward females. But even beyond female, I happened to be the only black in my position within my branch. So the racial issue would also come into play. And he and I had had some very frank discussions about race specifically. About females, but more about race when he and I talked. So I certainly knew that he had a lot of prejudices in terms of blacks. And [he] had some very strong feelings based on his upbringing about the abilities of blacks. He said to me on numerous occasions that he considered me to be an exception, that I certainly was not what he felt the abilities of an average black person [were]. While I was of course appalled and made it perfectly clear to him. . . . But, when I went into the evaluation interview, he gave me glowing comments that cited numerous achievements and accomplishments for me during the year, and then concluded it with, "so I've given you a G." You know, which of course just floored me. . . . [I] maintained my emotions and basically just said, as unemotionally as I possibly could, that I found that unacceptable, I thought it was inconsistent with his remarks in terms of my performance, and I would not accept it. I think I kind of shocked him, because he sort of said, "well I don't know what that means," you know, when I said I wouldn't accept it. I said, I'm not signing the evaluation. And at that point, here again knowing that the best way to deal with most issues is with facts and specifics, I had already come in prepared. . . . I had my list of objectives for the year where I was able to show him that I had achieved every objective and I exceeded all of them. I also had . . . my sales performance: the dollar amount, the products . . . both in total dollar

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> sales and also a product mix. I sold every product in the line that we offered to our customers. I had exceeded all of my sales objectives. You know, as far as I was concerned, it was outstanding performance. . . . So he basically said, "well, we don't have to agree to agree," and that was the end of the session. I got up and left. Fifteen minutes later he called me back in and said, "I've thought about what you said, and you're right, you do have an O." So it's interesting how in fifteen minutes I went from a G to an O. But the interesting point is had I not fought it, had I just accepted it, I would have gotten a G rating for that year, which has many implications.[75]

This example of a blatant attempt at employment discrimination is a common one and illustrates a number of points we have made in this chapter. Because of certain physical characteristics this woman was viewed by her white boss as a member of a racial group he stereotypes as generally incapable. He discriminated against her by downplaying her accomplishments with a low evaluation. In this case she did not acquiesce to his negative rating. Because of prior experience with his racist and sexist attitudes this woman came to the encounter with some expectation of having to counter his actions. The one-way action that was probably expected by the boss soon became two-way negotiation. This black woman made tactical use of her middle-class resources to win a concession and a changed evaluation.

Over the last two decades there has been an increase in the number of middle-class African Americans and other people of color who have the resources to contest blatant discrimination more directly and, sometimes, successfully. Thus, microlevel discrimination may be the first stage in a two-way encounter. The initial discrimination, the counter, and the discriminator's response, as well as the resources and perceptions of those involved, are important aspects of everyday racism in the United States.

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What Is "Reverse Discrimination"?

Many neoconservative analysts, both scholars and popular commentators, have written about "reverse discrimination" and "reverse racism" in recent decades. Most of these discussions argue that white Americans suffer seriously from the implementation of affirmative action programs that attempt to redress discrimination against African Americans or members of other subordinate racial groups. During the Ronald Reagan and George Bush administrations in the 1980s and early 1990s the idea of reverse discrimination was used to legitimate a restructuring of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and the U.S. Department of Justice so that both formerly pro-affirmative-action agencies became opponents of affirmative action programs.

Much of the neoconservative discussion uses the phrase *reverse discrimination* in order to deflect attention from the serious problem of large-scale patterns of institutionalized discrimination still directed by whites against African Americans and other people of color. As we have seen, racial discrimination, as conceptualized by most scholars of racial and ethnic relations, emphasizes the dominant group–subordinate group context of discrimination. Thus, racial discrimination refers to the actions of members of dominant groups—for example, white Americans—that are taken to harm members of subordinate groups, such as blacks, Latinos, or Native Americans. Historically and today,

systemic white discrimination, often called *white racism* when it targets racial groups, is not just a matter of occasional white bigotry but involves the white group's power and resources to enforce white prejudices in discriminatory practices in all major social institutions.

Certainly, individual members of subordinated racial groups can be motivated by their prejudices to take action to harm those in the dominant white group. There is antiwhite prejudice among people of color. There is also some antiwhite discrimination, but it is *relatively uncommon* compared with discrimination against people of color. With a modest number of exceptions, members of racially subordinate groups do not have the power or institutional position to express the prejudices they may hold about whites in the form of everyday discrimination. As a rule, African Americans and other people of color do not have the institutional support to inflict substantial and recurring discrimination on whites in such areas as employment, business contracts, college classrooms, department stores, and housing. Indeed, not one member of these racially subordinated groups participates in systemic society-wide discrimination against white Americans, because the possibility does not exist in the United States. Indeed, there is no indication that any currently oppressed group would want to turn the tables and oppress white Americans if they could do so.

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Think for a moment about the historical and contemporary patterns of racial discrimination directed by large numbers of whites against just one major group, African Americans. That mistreatment has meant, and still means, widespread blatant and subtle discrimination by whites against blacks in most organizations in all major institutions in U.S. society—in housing, employment, business, education, health services, and the legal system. (See Chapter 8 for details.) For nearly four centuries now, many millions of whites have participated directly in discrimination against millions of blacks. Judging from public opinion polls, at least 80 million whites currently hold some negative stereotypes of African Americans and millions still participate in acts of discrimination. In addition, most whites still watch antiblack discrimination taking place in the United States without actively working personally or politically to stop it. This widespread and systemic discrimination has brought extraordinarily heavy economic and social losses (perhaps trillions in monetary costs alone over nearly 400 years) for African Americans in most institutional sectors of this society.[illegible]

What would the *reverse* of this centuries-old antiblack discrimination really look like? The reverse of the institutionalized discrimination by whites against blacks would mean reversing the power and resource inequalities for several hundred years. In the past and today, most organizations in major institutional areas such as housing, education, and employment would be run at the top and middle-levels by a disproportionate number of powerful black managers and officials. These powerful black officials would have aimed much racial discrimination at whites, including many years of slavery and legal segregation. As a result, millions of whites would have suffered—and would still suffer—trillions of dollars in economic losses and lower wages, as well as high rates of unemployment, political disenfranchisement for long periods, widespread housing segregation, inferior school facilities, and violent lynchings. That societal condition would be something one could reasonably call a condition that "reversed the discrimination" against African Americans. It does not now exist, nor has it ever existed.

What is usually termed *reverse discrimination* is something much different from this antiwhite scenario. The usual reference is to affirmative action programs that for a time or in certain places have used racial screening criteria to overcome a small amount of the discrimination that targets people of color. Whatever cost a few years of affirmative action have meant for whites (or white men), those costs do not add up to anything close to the total cost that inverting the historical and contemporary patterns of discrimination against people of color would actually entail. Affirmative action plans as currently set up—and there are far fewer effective plans than most critics suggest[78]—do not make concrete and devastating a widespread antiwhite prejudice on the part of people of color. As established and implemented, affirmative action plans have mostly involved modest remedial efforts (typically designed by white men) to bring token-to-modest numbers of people of color and white women into certain areas of our economic, social, and political institutions where these groups have historically been excluded. A modest number of white men have indeed paid a price for some affirmative action programs. If affirmative action is successful, it will entail some cost to be paid by those who have benefited most from centuries of racial and gender discrimination. Yet, to compare the scale of white male suffering to the scale of the suffering of people of color or white women from institutionalized discrimination is inappropriate and unrealistic.

Thus, a white man who suffers as an individual from remedial programs such as affirmative action in employment or education suffers in only one area of life and only because he is an *exception* to his privileged racial group. A person of color who suffers from racial discrimination usually suffers in all areas of his or her life and primarily because the whole group has been and still is subordinated, not because he or she is an exception.[79]

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SUMMARY

In this chapter we have examined the key terms *race, racial group, racism, ethnic group, minority (subordinate) group, majority (dominant) group, prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, individual* and *institutional discrimination, subtle* and *covert discrimination, systemic* and *cumulative discrimination,* and *reverse discrimination.* These critical concepts loom large in discussions of race and ethnic issues. More than a century of discussion of these concepts lies behind the voyage we have set out on here and in the following chapters. We must carefully think through the meaning of such terms as *race* and *racial group,* because such concepts have themselves been used in the shaping of ethnic and racial relations.

Ideas about race and racial groups have been dangerous for human beings, playing an active role in the triggering, or the convenient rationalizing, of societal processes costing millions of lives. Ideas can and do have an impact. The sharp cutting edge of race, in the context of theorizing about "racial inferiority," can be seen in the enslavement by white Europeans of millions of Africans between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries and in Nazi actions taken against European Jews in the 1930s and 1940s. Sometimes it is easy to consider words and concepts as harmless abstractions. However, some reflection on both recent and distant Western history exposes the lie in this naive view. The concept may not be "mightier than the sword," to adapt an old cliché, but it is indeed mighty.

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