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Race, Racism, and Immigration

Chapter Outline

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. population identified itself by the following categories for the 2010 census:

White	72.4%	Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin	16.3%
Black	12.6%	Persons reporting two or more races	2.9%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.9%	White persons not Hispanic	63.7%
Asian	4.8%		
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	0.2%		

Do these numbers surprise you? People commonly identify their race and ethnicity according to the demographics of where they were raised. Most Americans live in racially segregated areas and do not interact much with members of other racial groups. Therefore, it makes sense that most would not have a clear idea of the racial makeup of the nation. This chapter examines the racial composition of the United States, relations among the races, the social problem of racial inequality, and responses to the problem.

4.1 Race, Ethnicity, and Changing Perceptions

Definitions of race have changed from age to age and from society to society. The racial categorizations of the U.S. Census have changed many times over the years. For example, Mexicans were labeled White until 1930 when they were given their own racial category, "Mexican," which was eliminated in 1940. In the U.S. Censuses of 1850, 1860, 1870, 1890, 1910, and 1920, census takers identified a person with one Black parent and one White parent as "Mulatto." In 1890, they identified a person with a Black grandparent as "Quadroon" and those with a Black great-grandparent as "Octoroon" (Gibson & Jung, 2002). Other nations identify race differently. For example, Brazil's racial categories include White, Black, Yellow, Brown, and Indigenous (Schwarzman, 2007). South Africa uses the classifications Black, White, Colored, and Asian (Indian) on its census (U.S. Department of State, 2011a). Therefore, a person's racial category may change from country to country. These differences in racial definitions across time and geography make clear that race is a socially constructed idea.

A Closer Look: Race Categories Around the World

Explore how societies across the globe categorize race in different ways by going to http://www.understandingrace.org/lived/global_census.html. Answer the census questions for different countries and see them summarized at the end of the activity. What do you think of the results? If you lived in a different society, would your ethnicity be categorized differently than it is in the United States? If so, what do you think of that in terms of your ethnic identity? Explain your answer.

Race

The understanding that race is a socially constructed idea is relatively new, but the idea that some racial groups are genetically inferior to others has existed throughout history. In the 1800s in both England and the United States, Irish people were portrayed in the popular press and in scientific journals as an inferior "ape-like" race (Steinberg, 1999; Wohl, 1990). Black Americans were also perceived by many as mentally and morally inferior and therefore not suitable for life as free people (Tucker, 1994). It was not until after World War II and the exposure of the Nazis' horrific experiments attempting to prove that some races were genetically inferior to others that attempts to justify racial hierarchy fell into widespread disfavor (DuBow, 1995).

Today, sociologists define a **race** as a group of people *perceived* as a distinct group on the basis of similarities in physical appearance. The word *perceived* is important because most scientists have come to believe that race is not an objective fact of biology but a social creation. **Racism**, meaning discrimination or prejudice based on race, stems from the belief that some races are innately superior to others. However, the Human Genome Project, an extensive federal project to identify all of the genes that make up human biology, has discovered that the genetic makeup of humans varies more within than between races (Jorde & Wooding, 2004). The number of genes that determine skin color and other physical features associated with race is just a minuscule portion (approximately 0.01%) of the 30,000 or so genes that make up a human being (Krieger, 2000; Patrinos, 2004). Therefore, racial inequality stems from social rather than biological causes.

Ethnicity

Many of the differences between groups of people popularly discussed as matters of "race" are more accurately understood as matters of ethnicity. The sociological differences between the terms *race* and *ethnicity* are commonly misunderstood. While race most often refers to physical characteristics, **ethnicity** refers to cultural characteristics such as language, patterns of speech, and preferences for food, religion, and attire.

Racial groups may include several different ethnicities. For example, Italian, Irish, and Polish are White ethnic groups. Africans, Jamaicans, and Haitians are ethnic groups fitting the Black racial label, and Japanese and Chinese are two of the many ethnic groups racially defined as Asian. Likewise, there are hundreds of different ethnic groups, such as Lakota and Hopi, that are included under the racial label of American Indian.

Similarly, the ways of life of different ethnic groups categorized as the same race can vary dramatically. For example, the Lakota and Hopi speak different languages and have very different

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Ethnicity refers to cultural factors such as food and dress.

traditions, in part based on their different geographic regions. Historically, the Lakota, who lived on the Great Plains, were a nomadic hunting society, while the Hopi of the dry Southwest were a sedentary, agricultural society.

Racial Identity and Self-Identification

The ways in which we identify ourselves and others are complex and subjective. **Racial self-identification** does not always match the perception of others. A person who identifies him or herself as a certain race may be perceived by others as belonging to another. For example, a multiracial person with primarily Black racial features may be perceived as belonging to one group but actually have ancestors from many different racial groups and identify as multiracial rather than Black.

When golfer Tiger Woods publicly declared himself "Cablinasian," representing his Caucasian, Black, and Asian ancestry, he reflected how many Americans have grown to feel free to discard rigid racial labels. Race is no longer perceived as static. Some people change their racial identity over time and even from place to place (Burke & Kao, 2010; Khanna, 2011). For example, a high school student may define himself as one race at school to fit in with peers and as another race at home. A nonwhite person perceived as white by coworkers might choose not to correct them to gain a perceived advantage in the workplace. On the other hand, a multiracial college student might describe herself as Black on a scholarship application if that is a perceived advantage. Another person might embrace a multiracial identity after interacting with other multiracial people for the first time.

The freedom to define one's own racial identity is a relatively new idea. The U.S. Census did not allow people to identify themselves as belonging to more than one racial category until 2000. Historically, for example, in the United States a person with any amount of African ancestry was defined as legally "Black" and subject to discriminatory laws. This guideline was known informally as the "one-drop rule" and was used as a basis for widespread discrimination against any person perceived as Black. In the early 1900s, so-called Jim Crow laws, which allowed state and local segregation of Blacks, became entrenched in many areas of the United States, particularly throughout the South. However, over the past few decades the one-drop rule has diminished in influence as growing numbers of Americans define their racial identity in more complex ways or reject racial labels altogether.

The increase in interracial marriages and the subsequent biracial baby boom has contributed to the shift in how people construct their own racial identity. In 1967 sixteen states still prohibited interracial marriage. That year, the U.S. Supreme Court found such laws unconstitutional. By 2008, among people recently married in the United States, 9% of Whites, 16% of Blacks, 26% of Hispanic-Latinos, and 31% of Asians chose a partner of a different race. Interracial marriage rates vary by region, with the most in the Western states, 22%, compared with 13% in the South and Northeast, and 11% in the Midwest (Passel, Wang, & Taylor, 2010). By 2011, one of every seven recently married couples consisted of people from different races.

As interracial marriages produced children, the number of people who identify themselves as biracial or multiracial has increased. Between 2000 and 2010, U.S. Census data

shows the percentage of Americans reporting multiple races increased by one third. In 2010, about 3% of the population checked off more than one racial category on the U.S. Census (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). The number of multiracial children in the United States grew by 50% between 2000 and 2010 (Saulny, 2011). These figures indicate that the percentage of Americans identifying as multiracial will continue to increase rapidly.

How a person or group self-identifies does not always influence how others respond to that identification. For example, people of Hispanic or Latino descent, though officially considered an ethnic group on the U.S. Census (Figure 4.1), often find themselves treated as members of a distinct racial group. Many but not all persons of Hispanic or Latino origin declare their race as White, as shown in the table at the beginning of this chapter. However, those perceived as Hispanic-Latino through appearance or accent often face discrimination closely akin to racial discrimination. If they have racial features associated with non-Whites or speak with a Hispanic-Latino accent, they are often regarded as part of a non-White racial group (rather than as a member of a White ethnic group as an Italian American or Irish American might be). The U.S. Census Bureau makes no distinction between the two terms. It defines Hispanics and Latinos as "persons who trace their origin or descent to Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Spanish-speaking Central and South America countries, and other Spanish cultures." In this chapter, the terms *Hispanic* and *Latino* are interchangeable, and Hispanic-Latino Americans are included as a U.S. racial group.

Figure 4.1: Race and ethnicity in the U.S. Census

Hispanic-Latino Americans are considered an ethnic, not racial, group on the 2010 U.S. Census.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census questionnaire

4.2 Is Racial Inequality a Social Problem?

The criteria for defining a social problem can be applied to the issue of racial inequality. Is it a pattern that violates a core value of society? Does it negatively impact those in power? Can it be remedied?

Racial Inequality and Social Patterns

Using the sociological lens to view the history and present of the United States reveals clear patterns of racial inequality affecting entire broad categories of people, not just individuals. Just as Whites have been the dominant group in many other nations, White citizens in the United States have had more social, political, and economic power than other racial groups. This inequality in power has led to an unjust playing field that has benefited White Americans at the expense of people of color. Racial inequality is reflected in past and present-day racial disparities in access to housing, education, political leadership, and high-income employment.

Racial Inequality and Core Values

Racial inequality clearly violates an often-stated core value of American culture. The Declaration of Independence declares that "all men are created equal" and that all should be granted the same rights. However, the treatment of people of color in the United States clearly indicates that they have not enjoyed the same rights as White Americans—racial inequality persists. The reality of this injustice clashes with the ideals of equality on which this nation was founded.

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Racial inequality violates the core American value of equality for all.

Racial Inequality and the Power Structure

A **racial hierarchy** is a stratified system in which some races have more power and opportunity than others. This hierarchy benefits the members of the race or races that have the most power. In their quest to retain power, political leaders across time and place have defended injustices such as slavery, genocide, segregation, and unequal access to government resources. Examples echo throughout the history of the United States. American Indians were hunted down, rounded up, removed from their land, and forced to live on reservations. Black Americans were brutally enslaved and denied civil rights. Asian immigrants were denied citizenship and the right to own land. Hispanic-Latino Americans

were denied civil rights and many were forced to renounce Mexican citizenship after the Mexican-American War of 1846–1848. During World War II, Japanese Americans were forced into internment camps. White Americans and their political and economic leaders, directly or indirectly, benefited and continue to benefit from these acts of racial inequality.

Racism did not become defined as a social problem in the United States until people of color gained increased power. As people of color have been allowed to participate in writing and teaching their own histories, more information about the racial inequality in America's past has come to light. This has, in turn, led to demands on political leaders for action to remedy past and present racial injustices. As racial inequities persist, the backlash against them negatively impacts those in power. For example, those in power must address calls for legislation that remedy racist practices and policies, such as using American Indian imagery for sports mascots or barring children of undocumented workers from attending public schools.

Remedies to Racial Inequality

Thanks to the legislative advances of the Civil Rights Era, the United States no longer sanctions racial discrimination. However, racism has not been legislated out of existence, and racial inequality persists. In the past it was clear that laws such as those forbidding Asian immigrants from owning land or preventing people of color from voting were discriminatory. But the complicated history of race in America lingers in present-day racial inequality. An in-depth look through the sociological lens can often point out the underlying causes of racial inequality and devise responses and remedies. Earlier chapters discussed some remedies for present-day racial inequality, such as equal funding for schools and fairer distribution of highly qualified teachers. This chapter will discuss other remedies and responses, including affirmative action programs, more open discussion of racial issues, and improved enforcement of equal opportunity laws.

4.3 The History of the U.S. Racial Mosaic

A look through a sociological lens reveals patterns of racial inequality throughout the United States, even though it is has always been populated by immigrants from all over the world. The United States is a **racial mosaic**, meaning that it is made up of people of all races and ethnicities, many of whom have retained their cultural identities rather than trying to assimilate into the dominant White culture. Nevertheless, from the genocide of American Indians at the hands of European explorers and, later, American soldiers and settlers, to the forcible capture and enslavement of Africans, to the annexation of large parts of Mexico, to Jim Crow and immigration laws, the United States has a historic pattern of treating people of color unequally.

The earliest example is the decimation of the American Indian population. Estimates of that population before European settlement vary between 1.5 million and 10 million (Lewy, 2007; West, 2007). By the start of the 1900s, just 250,000 American Indians lived in what is now the United States. Estimates indicate that 75% to 90% of the decline in the American Indian population resulted from deaths related to diseases brought to the

continent from Europe. Many others died at the hands of White settlers and soldiers during the many Indian wars that took place throughout colonial and U.S. history up until the end of the 1800s.

At the time of the first U.S. Census in 1790, during the presidency of George Washington, one out of every five U.S. residents was Black. Despite the pronouncement that "all men are created equal" in the Declaration of Independence, 92% of these Black Americans lived in slavery (Painter, 2006). Jim Crow laws, most prevalent in the South, were upheld as constitutional by the 1896 Supreme Court decision *Plessy vs. Ferguson* and enforced racial segregation from the 1880s into the 1960s. Not until the 14th Amendment in 1868 were Blacks granted the rights of citizenship, and those rights were not legally enforced throughout the United States until the passage of civil rights legislation a century later. Black Americans were denied the right to vote in many areas of the South up until the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

History of U.S. Immigration

Those who were conquered or forcibly brought to the United States were not the only people to experience racism. Immigrants who came to these shores also were subject to racist treatment. The earliest immigrants to the United States came mostly from Northern and Western Europe. In the late 1800s, however, a combination of political unrest and economic downturns in other parts of the world led increasing numbers of people from Southern and Eastern Europe, China, and Japan to come to the United States. Succeeding waves of immigration, along with cyclical economic downturns, sparked **racial prejudice**, irrational and usually negative feelings about a racial group. Prejudice goes hand in hand with **racial discrimination**, actions taken against a group of people based on their race.

For example, during economic recessions in the mid-1870s and 1880s, White workers in California feared that Chinese immigrants were taking their jobs and lowering wages. This fear led them to demonize and terrorize the Chinese, in some instances rounding them up and forcibly driving them out of their homes and communities (Pfaelzer, 2007). Such discriminatory legal measures as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Gentlemen's Agreement with Japan in 1907 effectively stopped immigration from these nations to the United States. In 1913, as Japanese immigrants began to acquire land and compete with White landowners, the California legislature overwhelmingly passed the California Alien Land Law. The law prohibited Asian immigrants from owning land, because unlike Black and White Americans they were ineligible for citizenship (Takaki, 1989).

During the peak immigration periods of the late 1800s and early 1900s, anti-immigrant sentiment grew in the United States, fueled in part by anti-Catholicism and beliefs that people from Southern and Eastern Europe were racially inferior. Supposedly "scientific" tests were developed to prove the inferiority of, for example, Jews, Italians, and Slavs, prompting racial discrimination against such immigrants. Intelligence tests given to soldiers during World War I supposedly proved that those from Southern and Eastern Europe had below-average intelligence. Cultural bias in the tests led to claims that these immigrants were mentally feeble and thus a detriment to U.S. society. For example, a test question might ask the respondent what was missing from a picture of a tennis court.

Most poor immigrants, never having seen a tennis court, would lose points on such questions (Wattenberg & Kraut, n.d.). This kind of "evidence" gave native-born Americans an excuse to block immigration.

As the U.S. economy expanded rapidly during most of these years and millions of people from other countries poured into the United States, many Americans feared cultural, economic, and political decline due to the influx of so many people from "inferior" races.

The percentage of the American population made up of the foreign-born was at least 13.2% every decade between 1860 and 1920, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. With more people coming from Southern and Eastern Europe in the early 1900s, the changing racial and ethnic makeup of immigrants led to increased public demand to close the gates to those from certain global regions. Responding to the pressure, Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1924, which cut off almost all immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe and prohibited entry by all persons ineligible to become citizens—primarily immigrants from Asia, including people from India and the Pacific Islands.

Another response to the influx of certain European immigrants to the United States was a school of thought now called **scientific racism**, which used the tools of social science to label the newcomers as biologically inferior. It was not until the horrors of Nazi racial experiments were exposed after World War II and the rise of the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s that scientific racism fell into widespread disrepute. Under international and domestic pressure, the United States addressed its racist immigration policies in

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The 1965 Immigration Act was signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson at the foot of the Statue of Liberty.

the mid-1960s. The 1965 Immigration Act abolished quotas based on national origin instituted by the 1924 Immigration Act. It also established immigration rules based on family relationships and employment skills. These changes in immigration policy dramatically increased the flow of immigration to the United States and, with other factors such as birth rates, led to the increasingly complex and diverse racial mosaic that is America in the early 21st century.

Immigration rates increased dramatically after the 1965 Immigration Act and again after the Immigration Act of 1990, which raised the worldwide and country-based caps on immigration and allowed more immigrants to enter the United States. In 1970, foreign-born residents made up just 4.7% of the overall population but by 2009, represented 12.5% of the U.S. population (Gibson & Lennon, 1999; Grieco & Trevelyan, 2010). The places of origin of foreign-born Americans also shifted dramatically.

A Closer Look: Scientific Racism

Read about and watch a video on the scientific racism that prevailed during the early 20th century at http://www.pbs.org/fmc/segments/progseg2.htm. Although scientific racism has been formally denounced, its ideas crop up here and there in the U.S. national discourse about race and ethnicity. Can you think of times when you've heard or read researchers, pundits, political candidates, or others allude to the ideas of scientific racism? What are your thoughts about this issue?

The Immigration Debate

People become immigrants through a combination of **push and pull factors**. Hardships, such as economic deprivation and religious or political persecution can *push* people out of their country of origin. At the same time countries that need more people due to economic growth or an aging population tend to *pull* immigrants to them. As Europe became more economically prosperous and politically stable in the second half of the 20th century, fewer Europeans felt pushed to move to the United States. At the same time, economic and political turmoil in Latin America and Asia drove people from these regions toward the economically prosperous United States. Immigrants from these regions believed they would be safer in the United States than in their own countries. In 1960, three out of four foreign-born residents in the United States came from Europe, but by 2009 the racial mosaic had changed dramatically with four out of five U.S. immigrants from Latin America or Asia (Grieco & Trevelyan, 2010). As you can see from the Census information at the beginning of this chapter, the United States of the early 21st century is a very racially diverse nation.

Since the 1965 Immigration Act, the majority of immigrants to the United States have settled in cities in large border states or historically industrial states such as California, Illinois, New York, Florida, and Texas (Passel & Cohn, 2010). However, as industries have moved from these areas in search of cheaper labor (Chapter 2), immigrant settlement patterns have changed accordingly. Immigrants from Latin America, for example, have begun to settle in suburban or less densely populated areas such as Scranton, Pennsylvania; Manassas, Virginia; and Nashville, Tennessee (Socolovsky, 2010; Tankersley & Parsons, 2008). Typical of the historical response to new immigrants, these changes in settlement patterns have prompted renewed calls to close the borders.

However, although many Americans are concerned about the number of immigrants in the United States today, the argument has been made that immigrants help strengthen the nation in many ways. The changes in demographics brought about by immigration have made the United States a more youthful nation. Immigrants have increased the U.S. birth rate, ensuring that the United States will not find itself in the situation of such areas as Europe and Japan, which have aging populations and relatively few young citizens to replace and support them (Frey, Berube, Singer, & Wilson, 2011; Kotkin, 2011). In addition to helping keep the U.S. population relatively youthful compared with many other advanced nations, immigrants strengthen our nation through their contribution to military service. The U.S. military depends largely on the willingness of immigrants to serve and protect their adopted nation. In 2009, almost 8% of active-duty U.S. military personnel were foreign-born (Stock, 2009).

One out of six American workers is an immigrant. Despite perceptions that immigrants are poorly educated, high-skilled immigrants now outnumber low-skilled immigrants and contribute to American economic productivity. Even lower-skilled immigrants tend to make contributions, as they are more likely to be employed and live above the poverty line than similarly skilled American citizens (Hall, Singer, De Jong, & Roempke Graefe, 2011). Less-skilled immigrants carry out particularly vital functions for U.S. agriculture. America depends on immigrants to do the backbreaking work of harvesting its crops. Even when the employment rate is high, most American citizens are reluctant to perform such labor. When farmers cannot find an adequate workforce to respond to the fast-changing needs of the agriculture industry, business can suffer as farmers are forced to leave fields unharvested.

However, as is typical during an economic downturn, many Americans demand a "closing of the borders" and a halt to immigration in light of high unemployment and poverty rates. In 2010, the U.S Census Bureau indicated that foreign-born residents in the United States comprised 12% of the population, which nearly equals the percentage of foreign-born residents, 14.7%, just before the Immigration Act of 1924. And just as many U.S. citizens during the 1920s viewed newly arrived immigrants in a negative light, a majority of Americans today perceive immigrants as a burden who take jobs and other resources (Pew Research Center, 2010). As a result, cries to seal the borders grow louder.

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Many Americans are demanding a "closing of the borders" or halt to immigration in light of economic problems in the United States.

Frustrated by lack of action on the federal level, many states have passed or are trying to pass their own immigration laws, aimed primarily at immigrants who are in the country illegally. In 2010, Arizona passed a law that, among other measures, required immigrants to carry documentation at all times and obligated law enforcement to determine a person's immigration status if it is suspected the person is in the country illegally. Similarly, also in 2010, Alabama followed Arizona's lead and passed a law requiring police to check the immigration status of people stopped for crimes, requiring school officials to collect data on illegal immigrant enrollment, and preventing illegal immigrants from entering into private contracts or conducting business with the state.

A Closer Look: Arizona and Alabama Immigration Laws

Watch a video that includes a debate about the 2010 Arizona immigration law at http://www .cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-20010460-503544.html. Also watch a video about Alabama's 2010 immigration law at http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/alabama-immigration-law-economic -backlash-14741952. What is your opinion about the U.S. immigration debate? Why do you hold the opinion you do? If you view the issue through a sociological lens, does your opinion change? Why or why not?

Unauthorized Immigration

Unauthorized immigrants are people who live in a country in violation of its immigration laws. In 2010, over 11 million people, about 4% of the U.S. population, resided in the United States without legal documentation. The number of undocumented immigrants, after rising for most of the past 20 years, has fallen since the onset of the Great Recession in 2008. Figure 4.2 indicates that the percentage of unauthorized immigrants in the United States dropped dramatically (by 8%) between 2007 and 2009. Likewise, the percentage of the workforce composed of undocumented immigrants sank from 8.4% in 2007 to 5.2% in 2010 (Passel & Cohn, 2010).

Figure 4.2: Average annual flow of unauthorized immigrants, 2000–2009 (thousands)
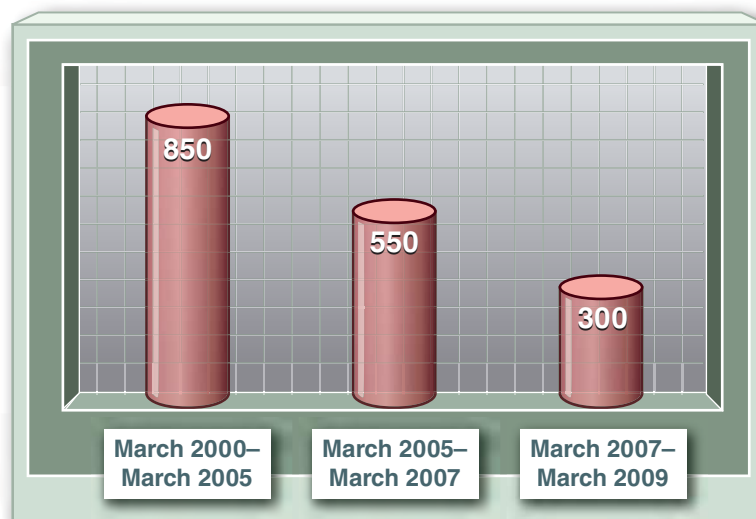
The number of unauthorized immigrants arriving in the United States dropped dramatically during the last decade.

Maury Aaseng

Source: Based on data taken from Pew Hispanic Center based on March supplements to the current population survey.

Most undocumented immigrants to the United States come from the same parts of the world as documented immigrants. Sixty percent immigrated from Mexico and 20% from other Latin American nations. Eleven percent arrived here from South or East Asian countries (Passel & Cohn, 2010). Why do undocumented immigrants come to the United States—and why do some Americans want them to keep coming? Why would *you* risk living in a country without legal documentation? Most undocumented immigrants are motivated by financial and family needs. If few job opportunities exist in one's home country or wages are low, one or more family members might seek employment in the United States. Others may wish to be reunited with family residing in the United States who can't visit their nation of origin for fear of being unable to return.

Those who employ undocumented immigrants for low wages might appreciate a steady influx of undocumented immigrants. However, if the Mexican economy continues to expand, as it has for the past few years, and the U.S. economy continues to flounder, there will be fewer push and pull factors encouraging immigration from Mexico—both documented and undocumented.

Responding to Social Issues: Immigrant Domestic Workers in the United States

Dr. Mary Romero

Mary Romero is a sociology professor and Faculty Head of Justice Studies and Social Inquiry in the School of Social Transformation at Arizona State University. Her research focuses on the unequal distribution of reproductive labor as a paid commodity and its role in reproducing inequality among families within countries and between nations.

This former Carnegie Scholar is the author of two books that examine issues faced by domestic workers in the United States. One of them, *The Maid's Daughter: Living Inside and Outside the American Dream* (2011), is a narrative sociological and ethnographical study that examines the daughter of an immigrant domestic worker in the United States—Olivia is this girl's pseudonym. Olivia moved from Mexico to live with her mother, a live-in domestic worker for a wealthy Los Angeles family, and grew

Photo courtesy of Mary Romero. Used with permission.

up in an environment influenced by both her mother's culture and the employer's culture. In Professor Romero's book, Olivia looks back on her childhood as an adult.

The Maid's Daughter is the result of 20 years of research, interviews, and analyses. In this interview Professor Romero discusses sociological issues related to race, class, and gender and the role of sociological research in understanding social problems.

Sociology and Research

Why did you decide to make a career as a sociological professor and researcher? How did you select your area of emphasis?

As an undergraduate student in the 1970s, I was part of the generation that believed we did not need to live in a world of hunger, racial hatred, war, or inequality. I was drawn to sociology courses because they offered the opportunity to examine the complexity of social issues without falling back on human nature as the source and pointed to social solutions. In graduate school, I found ways to combine teaching, research, and service to work on social justice issues. I decided to pursue a career teaching and conducting research on social inequality and uncovering the everyday practices that reinforce and maintain oppression.

Why is it important to examine relationships of factors such as race, class, gender, or age when studying racism or immigration?

Our thoughts surrounding immigration to the land of opportunity seeking the American Dream is so ingrained in our thinking that these assumptions are reproduced in research. However, race, class, gender, and age influences immigrant experiences and state policies impact populations differently.

Responding to Social Issues *(continued)*

Studying the Lives of Immigrant Domestic Workers

Could you tell us more about researching and writing The Maid's Daughter: Living Inside and Outside the American Dream*? You worked on this project for over 20 years. Why is it important to convey this story?*

Olivia's experiences crossing race, class, and national borders provided her with a critical lens that exposed the contradictions of meritocracy and other narratives that blame poverty on the poor. Having the social skills to navigate in both worlds of white-upper-class employers and the maids and their families gave her first-hand knowledge about the different outcomes of hard work, as well as access to education, health care, and public services.

Initially, I had not planned to interview Olivia for 20 years, but as I began to transcribe tapes—coding and analyzing her stories—I found myself returning to the interview process to obtain clarification. I'd uncover another layer of the complexity of reproducing social equalities in everyday life. Her story is important because her interactions with the employers are similar to the dominant narrative of race relations in the United States. This story points to benefits in a multicultural society and to the consequences of forced assimilation.

Why is it important to study the lives of immigrant domestic workers from a sociological perspective?

While many of these women labor without legal protection, we trust them with our children and elderly. Researching the lives of immigration domestic workers from a sociological perspective highlights the impact that labor and immigration policy has on their employment and the ways that the state maintains their vulnerability in the labor market. This research also gives us a window to view how the inequalities of race, class, gender, and citizenship are played out in the intimacy of employers' homes.

If you were to examine a comparable case today, how might it be similar or different? Has time changed such relationships between domestics and employers?

Examining a similar case today would be different because immigration policies make traveling back and forth across the border a much more difficult and time-consuming activity. However, time has done little to change the relationships between domestics and employers. Domestic workers are still excluded from the National Labor Relations Act. Most are not paid overtime, do not receive raises or benefits, and live-in workers are not guaranteed eight hours of uninterrupted sleep. There is still a need for a bill of rights for domestics.

How does study of one specific section of the population, such as immigrant domestic workers, apply to the population as a whole?

I do not think generalizations can be made but there is a lot to gain by studying the one specific section of the population that applies to the population as a whole. For instance, there are a lot of similarities in the anti-immigrant discourse against Mexican immigrant women that are stereotypes applied to African American women. Accusations that Mexican immigrant women cross the border to have children in order to take advantage of welfare in the U.S. are not much different from arguments made against single mothers on welfare. Debates against amnesty for immigrants today share similar arguments made against affirmative action. Rather than recognizing the privilege that certain immigrants have gained by having access to legal avenues, debates contain the claim that these individuals want to jump the line while others have followed the law. This argument does not recognize the differences that immigrants face by immigration policies and foreign policy. *(continued)*

Responding to Social Issues *(continued)*

Addressing Social Problems

How does research influence development of possible solutions for social problems?

Research brings a systematic analysis to social issues and provides the opportunity to move beyond our own personal agendas and bias to identify circumstances that produce and maintain certain social conditions, such as poverty. Understanding the ways that social institutions, such as schools, the media, and welfare, distribute privileges and disadvantages, we can begin to develop solutions for social change.

Why is it important for students to recognize and learn about social problems?

Learning about social issues is essential to becoming a contributing and informed citizen. We cannot accept racism, discrimination, poverty, pollution, unemployment, and high rates of incarceration as simply the way the world is. These are all human conditions created by the way we live, which includes the types of social inequality we accept and the social and political policies we advocate. Being a responsible citizen means understanding the issues and making the decisions to make our lives and the lives of others better.

Dr. Mary Romero, Arizona State University

http://www.public.asu.edu/~romerom/

Romero, M. (2011). *The maid's daughter: Living inside and outside the American Dream*. New York: New York Press.

http://nyupress.org/books/book-details.aspx?bookid=5331

4.4 Racial and Ethnic Discrimination in America Today

Are Americans, as some pundits proclaimed after the election of the first Black president, Barack Obama, living in a "post-racial" America? Are Americans now "color-blind"? Let's take a closer look at the relationships among racial groups in the United States.

Americans younger than 30 years old have been raised in an era that coincides with the rise of a racial ideology known as **color-blindness**. This point of view was in part a backlash against affirmative action efforts that gained traction in the 1980s. Advocates for this ideology maintain that to end discrimination, race, ethnicity, and culture should be disregarded when determining whether an individual should participate in some activity or receive some service. They argue that people who notice and talk about racial differences cause friction that would otherwise not exist. They also advocate against laws that allow governments to classify people on the basis of race for any reason, such as on college applications. While in some ways this sounds reasonable, it works to uphold the status quo of inequality among different races. Being blind to race also means being blind to injustice based on race.

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Interracial marriages have increased the percentage of Americans who consider themselves multiracial.

People who try to be color-blind are particularly likely to overlook **institutional racism**, which is racial inequality resulting from the way institutions function. An example would be the unequal funding of public schools that was discussed in Chapter 3. Institutional racism can be intended or unintended. When an institution's practices are specifically designed to promote racial inequality, such as U.S. schools in the first half of the 20th century that were legally segregated by race, that is intentional discrimination. When practices create racial inequality but without racist intent, that is defined as **unintentional institutional discrimination**. An example of unintentional discrimination would be local school funding that leads to racial minorities receiving fewer resources than predominantly White schools. Whether or not institutional racial discrimination is intended, the results of a practice like this benefit a particular race at the expense of others, leading to inequality.

Attempts to address unintentional institutional discrimination often face tough hurdles because supporters of the status quo can honestly point to nonracist reasons for maintaining the system as it is. For example, the local funding of schools can result in racial inequality in education because racial minorities often live in poorer neighborhoods that don't raise as much tax revenue to support schools as wealthier neighborhoods do. However, the local funding of schools can be supported by nonracists who simply want local control over schools. The color-blind ideology supports unintentional institutional discrimination because it discourages use of the sociological lens to notice patterns of racial discrimination. In other words, if people act as though they do not notice race, they cannot point out racial inequality.

Similarly, if people do not notice racial inequality, they cannot curb **racial profiling**, a type of institutional discrimination whereby law enforcement officials use people's racial or ethnic appearance to determine whether they should be suspected of committing a crime. Racial profiling became so widespread in the late 20th century that it was dubbed DWB, or "driving while Black (or Brown)." For example, in the 1990s, the New Jersey State Police systematically pulled over people based on racial characteristics (Farmer & Zoubek, 1999). Thanks to statistical data that provided evidence that the state police were intentionally targeting black motorists, legal challenges brought a stop to the practice. The New Jersey State Police now follow guidelines that require officers to focus on people's actions rather than on their racial or ethnic appearance (Riley, n.d.). And in 2005, the state established a law enforcement education program to wipe out what it called "racially influenced policing."

Combating institutional racism, such as racial profiling of drivers and racial discrimination in schools, requires collecting evidence of racial inequality resulting from those

institutionalized practices. Collecting this data requires tracking the treatment of different racial groups, which goes against the idea of color-blindness. But without evidence of racial discrimination, there is little reason to think that people benefiting from the racial status quo will feel any obligation to change it.

Recent events in France provide an example of what can happen when a government does not collect racial data. The French government, in an effort to promote equality, bars the government from making distinctions based on race or ethnicity (Oppenheimer, 2007). Therefore, the French government does not collect race-based data. However, it is clear that racial discrimination exists despite the government's policy to ignore it.

In October and November of 2005, riots broke out in French suburbs largely populated by low-income people of African and Arab descent. The rioters experienced both racial and religious discrimination in a society that officially recognizes neither race nor religion. Most of the rioters were disadvantaged teenagers whose parents immigrated to France a generation ago when jobs were plenti-ful. As job availability decreased, however, the unemployment rate in the neighborhoods where people rioted hovered around 40% compared to the national rate of 10% throughout France (Cesari, 2005).

Bernard Bisson/Getty Images

The 2005 riots that took place in France exemplify what can happen when racial discrimination is ignored.

Because these disadvantaged youth had dropped out of school or graduated without the skills needed to attain a job and faced racial and ethnic discrimination in the workplace, their employ-ment prospects were dim (Bell, 2005). Although it appears that the parents of most of those who rioted were practicing Muslims (Cesari, 2005), these young peo-ple did not riot because of religious beliefs. In fact, they were largely alienated from reli-gious as well as from governmental and educational institutions in France (Cesari, 2005). What they did have in common were experiences of discrimination based on their per-ceived racial and religious backgrounds—in a nation that prohibits classifying people by race or religion.

4.5 Inequality and Racial Hierarchy

Looking at society through a sociological lens reveals many patterns of racial inequal-ity. Racial discrimination contributes to inequities in economic, health, education, political, and housing policy. These inequities constitute a clear racial hierarchy.

Economic Inequality

Evidence of racial economic inequality abounds (Chapter 2). A clear economic hierarchy exists in the United States, with White Americans on top and Hispanic-Latino, Black, and American Indians on the lower rungs of the economic ladder. For example,

- American Indians, Blacks, and Hispanics have poverty rates between two and three times that of Whites in America (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011e).
- Hispanic-Latino Americans have a 50% higher and Black Americans have a 100% higher unemployment rate than that of White Americans (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011a).
- On average, among full-time workers, Black males make 79.2% of the weekly earnings of White workers, and Black women make 84% of the average earnings of White women. Hispanic workers typically make less than Black full-time workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011b).
- The average White American now holds 20 times the wealth of the average Black American and 18 times the wealth of the average Hispanic-Latino person in the United States, with typical Black households claiming $5,677, Hispanics $6,325, and Whites $113,149 in wealth (Kochar, Fry, & Taylor, 2011, p. 1).
- In 2011, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the federal agency that enforces employment antidiscrimination laws, received a record number of complaints, indicating that racial discrimination on the job and in hiring remains widespread (EEOC, 2011).
- A study in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and New York City revealed that among equally qualified White and Black job applicants, White applicants were more than twice as likely to be offered a second interview. Even White applicants with a criminal record were as, if not more, likely than Black applicants *without* a criminal record to get a second interview (Pager, 2008).
- As seen in Table 4.1, household income reveals wide race-based disparities, with Black, Hispanic-Latino, and American Indian households having far lower incomes than White, Asian, and Pacific Islander American households. In the table, household income includes income of all workers per household. As the Economic Policy Institute (2009) notes, the relatively high Asian household income results from the fact that "Asian families tend to be larger and to include more workers than White families. Research that compares income *per person* rather than per household finds that the income advantage remains with Whites."

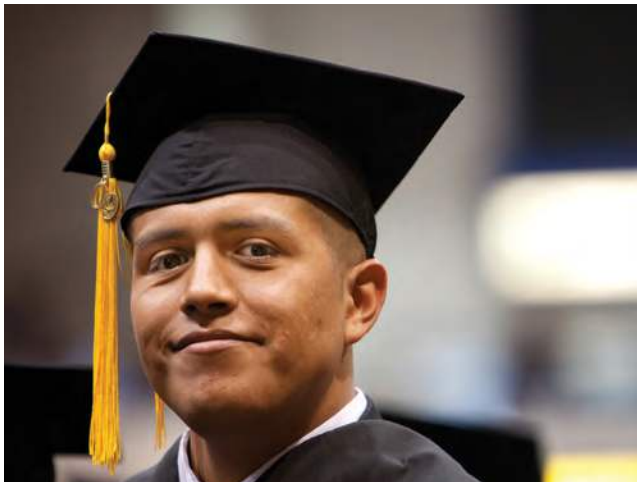| Table 4.1: Household income in 2009	
White	$51,861
Black	$32,584
Asian and Pacific Islander	$65,469
Hispanic-Latino	$38,039
American Indian	$37,348

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2011f). Table 690: Money Income of Households—Percent Distribution by Income Level, Race, and Hispanic Origin, in Constant (2009) Dollars: 2000-2009 and U.S. Census Bureau (2011e). American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month: November 2010.

Educational Inequality

Racial inequality exists at every level of our educational system in the United States (Chapter 3).

- Students of color are more likely to have out-of-field teachers (Gemeraad, 2008).
- Black and Hispanic-Latino students have fewer "shadow education" experiences than do White and Asian students (Buchmann, Condron, & Roscigno, 2010).
- While 52% of Asians and 30% of Whites 25 years and older graduate from college in the United States, only 20% of Blacks, 16% of American Indians, and 14% of Hispanics-Latinos have college degrees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011a; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010b).
- Three out of four Black and Hispanic-Latino children go to schools where students of color represent the majority. Almost 40% of Black and Hispanic-Latino children attend schools where *all* or *almost all* (90%–100%) of the students are of color (Bhargava, Frankenber, & Le, 2008).

Ryan McGinnis/Flickr/Getty Images

One result of racial inequality in education is the fact that only 14% of Hispanic-Latinos have college degrees.

This education inequality results in many students of color having less access to employment and a good income.

Inequality and Health

Economic disparities relate to inequality in health. The disparities in health among American populations are startling and stark. American Indians and Black Americans have more health problems and shorter life expectancies than White Americans. For example,

- Black infants experience mortality rates 1.5 to 3 times higher than those of other races (CDC, 2011a);
- Americans of color (with the exception of Asians and Pacific Islanders) have higher rates of AIDS than Whites in the United States (CDC, 2011a);
- Black men and women are more likely to die from heart disease and stroke than Whites (CDC, 2011a);
- in 2007, at birth, White females had a life expectancy of 80.8 years compared to 76.8 for Black females, 75.9 for White males, and 70.0 for Black males (CDC, 2010a);
- American Indians and Alaskan Natives have shorter life expectancies than the average American (Indian Health Services, n.d.).

Reasons for these health disparities include less access to health care and nutritious food (LaVeist, 2005; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). These racial groups

have lower employment rates and income levels, making clear the significant connection between socioeconomic class and health (Halleröd & Gustafsson, 2009; LaVeist, 2005; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). Also, regardless of social class, groups that face racial discrimination experience greater stress levels than others, negatively impacting their health (Szanton, Rifkind, Mohanty, Miller, Thorpe, Nagababu, Epel, Zonderman, & Evans, 2011).

A Closer Look: Health Care and Inequality

See how the health of poor Hispanic-Latino immigrants declines as their time in the United States increases by watching "Arriving Healthy" at http://www.unnaturalcauses.org/video_clips.php. Does the information presented in this video surprise you? Why or why not? How do you think this issue relates to the current debate about U.S. health care reform? Does viewing the issue of health care reform through a sociological lens change your opinions about health care reform? Why or why not?

Inequality and Politics

While the election of President Barack Obama has shown that the office of the presidency is open to a person of color, as Table 4.2 shows, persons of color still find themselves underrepresented in the U.S. government. For example, there are no Black Americans in the Senate, and the overwhelming majority of members of both Houses of Congress are White. No doubt, money plays a large role in the racial disparities among members of Congress. The average winner in the 2010 House of Representatives election spent $1,439,997 on his campaign, and the average winner in the Senate in 2010 spent $9,028,148 (Opensecrets .org, 2012). Economic inequality clearly affects the racial gap in politics.

Table 4.2: Racial composition of the 112th Congress (including delegates in the House)		
	U.S. House	**U.S. Senate**
White	82.9% (361)	96% (48)
Black	10.1% (44)	0% (0)
Hispanic-Latino	5.7% (25)	2% (1)
Asian	1.6% (7)	2% (1)
American Indian	0.2% (1)	0% (0)

Source: Congress.org

Inequality in Housing

Congress passed the Fair Housing Act in 1968 in an attempt to outlaw discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race and ethnicity. Before this law was passed, housing segregation of Black Americans and other racial minority groups was common due to unequal access to financing and the practice of guiding prospective

homebuyers into and out of particular neighborhoods. While this kind of institutional segregation is no longer legal, racial inequality in housing still remains a social problem. Residential segregation does not just mean that racial minorities and Whites live in different neighborhoods but that, on average, minority families also live in communities with fewer resources (Logan, 2011). In addition, racial minorities in the United States do not have the same housing options as Whites of comparable social classes (Logan, 2011; Spivak, Spivak, & St. John, 2011). For example,

- Blacks and Hispanics-Latinos who make over $75,000 a year tend to live in lower-income neighborhoods than Whites who earn less than $40,000 (Logan, 2011);
- on average, racial minorities live in higher poverty neighborhoods than White Americans (Logan, 2011);
- public housing is located in predominantly minority neighborhoods and remains largely racially segregated, with almost half of public housing residents being Black, and one out of five Hispanic-Latino (de Leeuw, Whyte, Ho, Meza, & Karteron of Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson, 2008);
- since 1990, integration among Blacks, Hispanics-Latinos, and Asians has increased, but these groups have become more residentially segregated from Whites (Logan, 2011);
- Blacks (even affluent Blacks) remain largely residentially segregated from White Americans (Logan, 2011).

4.6 Remedies to Racial Inequality

One of the four criteria for defining an issue as a social problem is that society must be able to remedy the problem. Therefore, what can be done about racial inequality? Before a society can address racial inequality, it must notice it. The first step in reducing inequality requires using a sociological lens to recognize patterns of racial discrimination.

Using Sociological Tools to Raise Awareness and Intervene

Many sociologists focus their research and work on confronting and mitigating racism. Two examples are Tassy Parker and Mark Patrick George. Parker is an associate professor of family and community medicine and nursing at the University of New Mexico and director of the Center for Native American Health at the UNM Health Sciences Center. Her work focuses primarily on race-based health inequality. A registered nurse, sociologist, and member of the Seneca nation, Parker uses her training to shape efforts to improve the health of American Indians. American Indians have relatively short life expectancies due, in part, to some of the many repercussions of racial inequality.

Some of Parker's work includes cultural sensitivity training for medical professionals dealing with American Indians. Parker also focuses on developing culturally informed intervention strategies to prevent and address depression among American Indian women. In carrying out this work, Parker addresses some of the gender-specific repercussions of racial inequality facing American Indian women.

Mark Patrick George, an assistant professor at Valdosta State University in Georgia, has used sociological tools to promote racial equity in the Valdosta County Schools. Using sociological data on internal segregation and racial disparities within the Valdosta schools, George showed that 60 years after *Brown vs. Board of Education* declared segregated schools unconstitutional, the Valdosta schools system provides unequitable educational experiences for Black and White students. His research has sparked community interest in racial inequity and provided evidence needed to make a compelling argument for change.

George's research has strengthened anti-racist organizations and helped others who would like to work for racial justice. His coauthored report, *On the Ground: Struggles and Lessons of Anti-Racism Work*, provides a reflection on progress made, impediments to racial justice work, and suggestions on how to fight effectively for racial justice.

Challenging the Color-blind Racial Ideology

Social scientists note that the color-blind ideology works to conceal, rather than reveal, patterns of racial inequality (Brunsma, 2006; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Fryberg, 2010; Williams, 2011). The idea that people should act as if they do not notice people's racial appearance or racial patterns prevents people from discussing issues of racial inequality. Ignoring race does not create racial harmony. Instead, it marginalizes nonwhite races and those who argue that all races should be acknowledged and appreciated (Scruggs, 2009; Williams, 2002). In the process, the color-blind ideology supports the racial status quo and leaves racial discrimination unchallenged (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). If the United States became like France and did not categorize and track people by race, patterns of racial inequality would be much more difficult to detect and prove. For example, imagine if

- police officers did not have to note the race of the people they stop;
- colleges did not have to note the race of the students they accept;
- banks did not have to note the race of the people to whom they loaned funds;
- employers did not have to note the race of the people they hired or promoted.

Organizations created to track and mitigate racial discrimination, such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), must have access to race-based data to carry out their mission.

A Closer Look: Multiracial Families May Be More Common, But . . .

The multiracial population is growing in the United States, but racial questions still confront one family as they attempt to live a color-blind life. View the video "In Strangers' Glances at Family, Tensions Linger," at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/13/us/for-mixed-family-old-racial-tensions-remain-part-of-life.html?hp. How does this video support the argument that racial inequality has declined over the past couple of generations in the United States? How does it indicate that racial inequality still exists? Are you in or have you had an interracial romantic relationship? Is your family multiracial? If yes, can you relate to the experience of this family?

Funding for Anti-Discrimination Efforts

Despite the push in some quarters for a color-blind ideology, government agencies are still charged with enforcing laws against racial discrimination. But these agencies must have proper funding to do their jobs effectively. Funding tends to rise and fall depending on the interests of the political party in power. For example, funding for the EEOC and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance, which enforce federal government hiring and anti-discrimination rules, was reduced under President George W. Bush. However, President Obama and the Democratic Congress increased funding in both organizations, allowing the agencies to hire more staff and begin to reduce the backlog of cases that had grown when funding was cut during the previous administration (Allison, 2010).

Affirmative Action

Affirmative action programs are one attempt to level the playing field for different racial groups in the United States. The roots of affirmative action go back many decades, and the concept has provoked a great deal of controversy and debate in this country.

Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and prohibited discrimination in the workplace on the basis of race, sex, national origin, and religion. In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson required federal contractors to establish goals and timetables to ensure equitable minority group representation in their companies. In 1972, the Equal Opportunity Act directed most federal contractors and subcontractors, all state governments and institutions, and most local governments to increase the percentage of employees of color to match the proportion of people of color in the pool of potential employees. Two years later, in 1974, President Nixon ordered reviews to ensure compliance with the Equal Opportunity Act. Those found in noncompliance were required to meet government-imposed goals and timetables. All large companies

Thomas Barwick/Getty Images

Affirmative action programs attempt to increase racial diversity in the workplace and on college campuses.

receiving assistance of any form from the federal government through tax breaks, loans, or other programs must maintain affirmative action programs. Private companies with 50 or fewer employees are exempt from these regulations, which means that about one third of American workers are not affected by affirmative action (Davies, 2010).

Americans have passionately debated the merits of affirmative action programs. Some states, such as Michigan, California, Nebraska, and Washington, have prohibited affirmative

action. However, it seems likely that the Supreme Court will ultimately rule on its consti-tutionality. The last affirmative action case heard by the Supreme Court, in 2003, examined the admissions policies of the University of Michigan. While it upheld the benefits of a diverse campus for both White students and students of color and said that race could be a factor in determining whom universities admit, the court noted that it could not be a *deciding* factor. The court's decision stated that the University of Michigan's point system, whereby every minority student was granted 20 out of the 100 points needed for admission due to race alone, was unconstitutional (University of Michigan News Service, 2011). In February 2012, the court announced that it would consider its first affirmative action case since the 2003 ruling. The new case, involving the University of Texas, could potentially result in the court abolishing racial preferences entirely.

As Table 4.3 shows, public support for affirmative action has increased since the 1990s, when news coverage of the issue was frequent.

Table 4.3: Increased support for affirmative action programs				
Affirmative action programs designed to help Blacks, women, and other minorities get better jobs and education:	Aug 1995 %	Aug 2003 %	Mar 2005 %	Jan 2007 %
Favor	58	64	67	70
Oppose	36	31	28	25
Don't know	3	5	5	5
	100	100	100	100

Source: Pew Research Center

This support decreases, particularly among Whites, when poll questions about affirma-tive action include the words "preferential treatment" (see Table 4.4). It seems that the majority of White people support helping racial minorities but not if that support entails giving them an advantage over White applicants.

Table 4.4: "Preferential treatment" and support for affirmative action				
To overcome past discrimination, do you favor affirmative action programs . . .				
To help Blacks get better jobs and education?	Total %	White %	Black %	Hispanic %
Favor	60	52	89	77
Oppose	30	37	6	17
Don't know	10	11	5	6
	100	100	100	100
N =	1541	767	498	198

Table 4.4: "Preferential treatment" and support for affirmative action *(continued)*				
To overcome past discrimination, do you favor affirmative action programs . . .				
Which give special preference to qualified Blacks in hiring and education?	Total %	White %	Black %	Hispanic %
Favor	46	39	78	61
Oppose	40	47	13	26
Don't know	14	14	9	13
	100	100	100	100
N =	1545	769	509	190

Source: Pew Research Center

4.7 Theoretical Perspectives

Sociologists from the five theoretical perspectives examined in this text view racism and racial inequality differently, depending on their overall understanding of how society operates. While only race-centered theorists focus exclusively on racial issues, theorists from other perspectives provide elements to the equation defining racism and racial inequality as a social problem and, in some cases, provide insight into what can be done to provide a remedy.

Functionalist Perspective

Functionalists like Durkheim maintain that racism harms society in several ways. They argue that it promotes external inequality, preventing some members of society from contributing as much as they otherwise could. If, for example, Black Americans were not treated as racially inferior in the 1700s and were granted full citizenship when the U.S. Constitution went into effect in 1789, how might the nation be stronger today? What technological inventions, medical cures, or other innovations might have been developed if this portion of the population had not been held back by slavery and racial discrimination?

Functionalists tend to focus on latent, unintended functions when analyzing the impact of racism on a society. Racism is a belief system that, to be sustained, must not be seen as *designed* to impact society in a certain way. However, functionalists argue that racism serves several hidden purposes in society. It can provide an excuse for racial inequality and the maintenance of the status quo. Racism also discourages racially oppressed groups from working to change the system that oppresses them. Members of groups deemed racially inferior grow up with the message that they *should* be treated as inferior.

Functionalists also point out that racism can have the latent function of providing a release for those who might otherwise focus their discontent on political leaders, potentially destabilizing society. Groups in power can use racism to encourage citizens to vent their frustrations

Courtesy Everett Collection

The Holocaust is one of the most tragic examples of racial scapegoating.

about their own problems by scapegoating a minority racial group rather than turning on the government. Anger with racial minority groups during times of economic turmoil can be found throughout history. The Holocaust is perhaps the most notorious and devastating example of racial scapegoating in human history. It began when Jewish people, widely perceived at the time as a distinct racial group, faced persecution in Germany after the economic devastation following World War I. Jews were blamed for the defeat of Germany in World War I and the economic crisis during the Great Depression after the war. When Adolf Hitler rose to power, he stripped Jews of their civil rights and embarked on his campaign to eliminate them from German society, leading to the Holocaust.

Other examples of scapegoating racial groups abound, including some in the United States:

- Chinese immigrants in California were attacked by mobs of White men who resented their competition for jobs during the gold rush in the 1840s and 1850s and during a recession in the 1870s and 1880s (Japanese American Citizens League, 2003; Pfaelzer, 2007).
- Japanese immigrants, recruited during a labor shortage after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, faced resentment and discrimination when many became successful farmers.
- The Depression of 1893 helped spark discrimination against Jewish and Italian immigrants. Members of both groups faced employment discrimination and, in many cases, were denied entry to public schools, private clubs, fraternities, and neighborhoods (Olson & Beal, 2010).
- Asian Americans faced hate crimes in the 1980s when Japan's economy outpaced the U.S. economy, including the beating death of a young Chinese man, Vincent Chin, by two White autoworkers who mistakenly thought Chin was Japanese.

Functionalists note that the persecution of these minority groups allowed citizens to release their frustrations without affecting the stability of the overall society.

Conflict Perspective

Conflict theorists believe that long-term stability in society is not possible because groups constantly compete for power. They argue that racial inequality is a natural consequence of the struggle for power among social groups. Marxist conflict theorists maintain that

racial inequality in the United States has been used to divide the working class so they will not unite and overthrow the ruling class. Racism acts to distract workers from asserting their rights with the owners by whom they are employed.

The **split-labor market theory** is a conflict theory that builds on the Marxist perspective. This theory describes a workforce split along racial lines by economic competition, with Whites having more security and better-paying jobs than other racial groups. While benefiting White workers, the divisions among workers compromise the position of *all* workers in relation to the owners of the means of production. When they fight among themselves, workers are distracted from their economic oppressors. Splitting the labor market supports the economic status quo and those in power (Bonacich, 1972, 1976). Split-labor market theorists argue that members of the working class should unify around their "class consciousness" instead of opposing one another due to "race consciousness."

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism theorists examine how interactions among people perpetuate racial inequality. In a racist society, the socialization process includes learning to believe that some racial groups are superior to others. These irrational beliefs about racial groups, **racial stereotypes**, affect everyone in that society. For example, stereotypes affect individuals' impressions of themselves and others, and how and to what extent they interact with members of different racial groups. Stereotypes also play a role in who an individual chooses as friends, neighbors, and romantic partners.

Symbolic interactionism theorists note that some racial groups bear the burden of labels deeming them intellectually inferior to others. Building on Cooley's looking-glass self, the concept of **stereotype threat** describes how people stereotyped as intellectually inferior subconsciously produce academic test results that fit the stereotype. When believing that a test measures intelligence, negatively stereotyped respondents perform less competently than those who believe some other quality is being measured (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Social scientists are using this data to examine how such knowledge can reduce race-based academic achievement gaps (Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, & Master, 2006; Walton & Cohen, 2007). These findings would seem to have great potential if they can be used effectively in school settings.

Race-Centered Perspective

Racial inequality lies at the heart of the race-centered perspective. Race-centered theorists from W.E.B. DuBois to contemporary sociologists such as Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Douglas Massey, Mary C. Waters, C.N. Le, and Nikki Khanna have provided evidence for and analyzed the causes of racial inequality. While each views the impact of race on Americans from a different perspective, all agree that racial inequality persists in the United States and must be actively confronted.

Noting the persistent racial hierarchy in the United States, race-centered theorists maintain that we are far from a color-blind society. All point out that color-blind ideology works to perpetuate racial inequality and thwarts the efforts of racial justice advocates who work to

alleviate racial discrimination. They argue for a renewed focus on racial inequality in the United States and throughout the world.

A Closer Look: Racism: Not Just in the United States

The effects of racism have increased in Europe in recent decades. Watch "A Simple Question—Racism in Europe" at *http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=DfMp_Ml7SYg* and "Racism in European Football" at *http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMr2PphDt7E&feature=related*. How does the information in these videos relate to what you read in this chapter? What theoretical perspectives find support in these videos? Were you surprised by anything you saw in either video? Why or why not?

Feminist Perspective

The feminist perspective is primarily concerned with gender inequality, but it also analyzes racial inequality. This perspective notes that gender inequality operates differently across races and that racial inequality varies by gender. Therefore, they maintain that feminist and race-centered theoretical perspectives benefit one another (Saunders & Darity, 2003).

Both feminist and race-centered theorists maintain that gender and racial stereotypes result in the **double marginalization** of women of color. They also note that the racial stereotypes and race-based hurdles women face are different than those faced by men. Minority women must deal with a wide range of stereotypes, from "submissive" to "overly sexualized" to "aggressive." These stereotypes vary across racial groups and time. For example, over the course of history, American Indian women have been stereotyped in all three ways. Overall, though, young minority women tend to be perceived as less of a threat to the dominant culture than young minority men. As such, they face fewer pressures to act tough and, for example, drop out of school (Cokley & Moore, 2007). This reduces the likelihood that they will be incarcerated or fail to go to a college, which is a problem for minority men, particularly Black men.

Jason Homa/Getty Images

Feminists and race-centered theorists believe that gender and racial stereotypes result in the double marginalization of women of color.

Using the Sociological Lens: Muslims and Multiculturalism: Comparing Europe with North America

Comparing the North American experience with the European experience sheds light of different approaches to multiculturalism and immigration.

Europe and the United States have taken vastly different approaches to assimilating their growing Muslim immigrant populations. In Western Europe, bans on the construction of minarets (the tower of a mosque from which the summons to prayer is called) and prohibitions on publicly worn religious garments have attempted to curb Islam's encroach on the public sphere, though such measures have provoked tension, violence, and terrorism in both directions and on both communities.

In North America, however, fast-tracked paths to citizenship coupled with a strategy of attracting skilled, educated immigrants have resulted in a more successful experience with multiculturalism. The United States' longstanding position as a magnet for immigrants and its diversity have also helped the immigrant experience there. Comparing the North American experience with the European experience sheds light on how different approaches to multiculturalism and immigration can cause and offer solutions to a variety of resulting social problems.

Europe Struggles with Multiculturalism

Over the last several decades, Western Europe has seen an influx of Muslim immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East. According to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, there were about 29.6 million Muslims in Europe in 1990. By 2010, that number had swelled to 44.1 million, and if current immigration trends continue, will exceed 58 million by 2030, a 31.9% increase. To put that in a different way, in 1990, Muslims accounted for 4.1% of the total European population; by 2010 they accounted for 6%. By 2030 they are expected to make up 8% of the total European population, and in some countries—such as France and Belgium—may comprise more than 10%. A different marker showing the rise of Islam in Europe came in 2010, when the United Kingdom's Office for National Statistics reported that Mohammed had become the number-one name for baby boys in Britain, beating out traditional favorites such as Jack and Harry (Doyle, 2010).

These growing Muslim communities have clashed with the prevailing monocultures. Many such communities tend to keep to themselves, retaining cultural and religious traditions, maintaining cultural dress, food, holidays, and independent schools, with the end result being that they operate like enclaves that are culturally independent of broader society.

The Muslim veil has been an iconic symbol of these tensions in Europe. France banned the full-body veil, or burqua, in 2011, followed by Belgium. Bans have been considered in other countries, based on the argument that such pieces of clothing are inappropriate in secular societies, because they prevent women from fully functioning in democratic society and prevent Muslims from assimilating into mainstream society. Banning veils, supporters claim, helps multiculturalism by giving Muslims a chance to better assimilate and women a chance to freely participate. As French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who championed the burqa ban in his country, put it, burqas are "a sign of subservience, a sign of debasement" (Allen, 2009). Liberal, multicultural, inclusionary societies, Sarkozy and others argue, must guard against such tools of repression and symbols of difference. Opponents disagree, arguing that banning an item of religious clothing worn by one specific group is racist and the very opposite of inclusionary. *(continued)*

Using the Sociological Lens: Muslims and Multiculturalism *(continued)*

A 2010 study conducted by the Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project (2010) found overwhelming support for full-body veil bans in France and elsewhere in Europe, and illuminates the difference of opinion on the issue in Europe and North America. In France, 82% of those polled approved of banning full veils in public places, including schools, hospitals, and government offices. In Germany, 71% of those polled approved of such a ban, as did majorities in Britain (where 62% approved) and Spain (59%). In stark contrast, just 28% of Americans said they would support such a ban in the United States.

In the following perspective, Shada Islam, of the European Policy Centre, details Europe's challenge to embrace multiculturalism while at the same time retain its secular, democratic culture. She highlights the increasing divide between the two communities, arguing that Europeans have done a poor job at opening their society to Muslims, yet at the same time immigrant communities have not tried hard enough to find common cultural ground with their neighbors, and have at times unreasonably demanded that Europeans change their values and traditions in order to accommodate them.

Shada Islam, "Beyond Minarets: Europe's Growing Problem with Islam," *YaleGlobal*, January 14, 2010. http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/beyond-minarets-europes-growing-problem

North American Muslims are Better Assimilated

In contrast to the experience of Europe's Muslim immigrants, in the United States, millions of Muslims have assimilated easily and eagerly. Not only have Muslim Americans faired well economically and educationally, but civically, they feel a deep connection with the United States. Evidence of this was a 2011 Gallup poll showing that 93% of Muslim Americans say they are primarily loyal to the United States, versus any other country or organization (Abu Dhabi Gallup Center, 2011).

Also improving the immigration experience in North America is the fact that there are far fewer Muslims in the United States than in Europe. The Pew Research Center's Forum on Religious and Public Life (2011) reported that in 2010, there were 2.6 million Muslims in the United States, about 0.8% of the total population. Although by 2030 the American Muslim population is expected to more than double to 6.2 million, Muslims will still only comprise about 1.7% of the total population by that point, compared to projections in Europe that put the total Muslim population at about 8% by 2030 (and more than 10% in certain countries). Finally, American Muslims are more racially diverse than Europe's: A 2009 Gallup poll found that 35% of American Muslims are African American; 28% are White; 18% are Asian; 18% identified as other; and 1% identified as Hispanic (Younis, 2009). This fact has also helped them assimilate, because they come to the already diverse population as a diverse group themselves, less prone to the enclave type of lifestyle adopted by some European Muslim groups.

In the following report published by the Manhattan Institute, scholar Jacob Vigdor reports that the United States and Canada have more effectively assimilated Muslims into mainstream culture than European nations. Studying immigration in a variety of societies, Vigdor concludes that Muslims are better assimilated in North America than they are in Europe, enjoying greater civic and military participation, economic success, and higher rates of educational attainment. Specifically, Muslim immigrants are best   *(continued)*

Using the Sociological Lens: Muslims and Multiculturalism *(continued)*

integrated into mainstream Canadian society, and next in the Untied States. In contrast, Muslim assimilation has been difficult in Austria, France, Greece, Italy, and Switzerland, where long-standing monocultures have been more resistant to multiculturalism.

Jacob L. Vigdor, "Comparing Immigrant Assimilation in North America and Europe," *Manhattan Institute*, Civic Report no. 64, May 2011. http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cr_64.htm

Critical Thinking and Discussion Questions

1. Are France and Belgium right to ban burqas in public spaces? Are such bans racist or reasonable? Why or why not? In your opinion, do burqa bans promote or inhibit multiculturalism?
2. When thinking about Muslim immigrant communities in, say, Switzerland, what is an example of a reasonable request to make of greater society? Is it reasonable for Muslims to build as many minarets as they would like? Wear burqas or face veils in their driver's license photos? Request that restaurants located in certain neighborhoods serve only halaal (permissible by Islamic law) food?
3. In what ways, if any, does a religious Islamic lifestyle clash with core French values? What about with core American values?

For Further Consideration

Nothing to Fear

Bowen, J. R. (2010, February 1). Nothing to fear: Misreading Muslim immigration in Europe. *Boston Review*. Retrieved from http://bostonreview.net/BR35.1/bowen.php

The Great Shift

Ben-David, E. (2009, Spring). Europe's shifting immigration dynamic. *Middle East Quarterly*. Retrieved from http://www.meforum.org/2107/europe-shifting-immigration-dynamic

Summary & Conclusion

The racial makeup of the United States has undergone dramatic changes over the past half century, making the America of the early 21st century a diverse mosaic of races and ethnicities. Despite this diversity, a racial hierarchy exists. White Americans continue to possess more social, political, and economic power than other racial groups. Racial inequality is reflected in past and present-day disparities in access to housing, education, political leadership, and high-income employment.

Modern sociologists define a race as a group of people perceived as distinct on the basis of similarities in physical appearance. Many of the distinctions among groups are actually matters of ethnicity, meaning they are determined by a person's socialization in their culture or country of origin. Scientists have come to believe that race is not a biological fact but a social creation. The question of racial identity has grown more complex as the multiracial population of the United States has increased.

The United States has a turbulent history regarding race and immigration. The indigenous population was more than decimated by White settlement, Blacks were enslaved, and Asians and Hispanics-Latinos were stripped of their rights. In times of economic stress, immigrants have been targeted for discrimination, scapegoated, and portrayed as racially inferior or threatening. This continues to this day in the debate over what, if anything, should be done to curb undocumented immigration.

The legislative advances of the Civil Rights Era were meant to abolish intentional forms of institutional discrimination. Prejudicial treatment of racial and ethnic minorities also comes in the form of unintentional institutional discrimination. The past 30 years has seen the rise in the United States of the idea of a color-blind society. Its advocates believe race should be ignored and treated as a non-issue. On the other side of the question are advocates of affirmative action, which is seen by some as a reasonable remedy to racism and by others as preferential treatment.

The main theoretical perspectives offer different explanations for the causes of racism and racial inequality, their effects on society, and their possible remedies. The first step in addressing racial inequality is to challenge the ideology of color-blindness and notice, discuss, and address patterns of racial inequality.

Key Terms

affirmative action Policies and practices that, in an effort remedy past or present discrimination, consider factors such as race and national origin in order to help minority groups succeed in areas such as education and employment.

color-blindness A racial ideology that maintains that racial discrimination will end when race, ethnicity, and culture are disregarded when determining whether an individual should participate in some activity or receive some service.

double marginalization When an individual suffers discrimination or stereotyping because he or she belongs to two different minority groups (e.g., women of color).

ethnicity Cultural characteristics such as language, patterns of speech, and preferences for food, religion, and attire.

institutional racism Racial inequality resulting from the way institutions function.

push and pull factors Reasons why individuals become immigrants, whether they are pushed out of their country of origin or pulled into a new country. Push factors include hardships, such as economic deprivation and religious or political persecution. Pull factors include economic growth or an aging population in a new country.

race A group of people perceived as a distinct group on the basis of similarities in physical appearance.

racial discrimination Actions taken against a group of people based on their race.

racial hierarchy A stratified system in which some races within a society have more power and opportunity than others.

racial mosaic The state of being comprised of people of all races and ethnicities, many of whom have retained their cultural identities rather than trying to assimilate into the dominant culture.

racial prejudice Irrational and, usually, negative feelings about a racial group.

racial profiling A type of institutional discrimination whereby law enforcement officials use an individual's racial or ethnic appearance to determine whether he or she should be suspected of committing a crime.

racial self-identification How an individual identifies himself or herself in terms of race.

racial stereotypes Irrational and, usually, negative beliefs about a racial group.

racism Discrimination or prejudice based on race.

scientific racism The use of the tools of social science to support the belief that one racial group is biologically superior or inferior to another.

split-labor market theory A conflict theory that describes a workforce as split along racial lines by economic competition, with a dominant racial group having more security and better-paying jobs than other racial groups.

stereotype threat A concept that describes how individuals stereotyped as intellectually inferior subconsciously produce academic test results that fit the stereotype.

unauthorized immigrants Individuals who live in a country in violation of its immigration laws.

unintentional institutional discrimination Policies and practices that create racial inequality but without racist intent.

Critical Thinking and Discussion Questions

1. How might historical racial inequalities inform structural inequality today?
2. How are racial differences socially constructed? What does this mean, according to the text? How does the idea that racial differences are socially constructed contradict racism?
3. Discuss the history of immigration in the United States and the effects anti-immigration laws have had on the nation's legal but foreign-born citizens. During which periods did immigration quotas and laws shift, and for what reason?
4. Is the United States post-racial? Why or why not? What sparked the claim that the nation is now color-blind?
5. What are the goals, achievements, and drawbacks of affirmative action policies?