INEQUALITY: RACE AND ETHNICITY

Social problems in Contemporary Society#2

Race and Ethnicity

Sociologists distinguish among racial, ethnic, and minority groups

- The term *racial group* is used to describe a group that is set apart from others because of obvious physical differences.

- There are no "pure races"

Social Construction of Race

Social construction is the process by which people come to define a group as a race based on physical, historical, cultural and economic factors.

Ethnicity

- **Ethnic group**: group set apart from others primarily because of its national origin or distinctive cultural patterns

  - Distinction between racial and ethnic minorities not always clear-cut
  - Distinction between racial and ethnic groups is socially significant

Minority Groups

- A minority in the sociological sense is a subordinate group whose members have significantly less control or power over their own lives.

1. experience unequal treatment
2. have physical or cultural characteristics different from the dominant group
3. membership is not voluntary (ascribed)
4. strong sense of group solidarity
5. generally marry from within the same group

Prejudice and Discrimination

Prejudice - Prejudice is a negative attitude toward an entire category of people

Discriminatory Behavior

- Denial of opportunities and equal rights to individuals and groups based on some type of arbitrary bias.

- Prejudice can result from ethnocentrism

- Minorities harbor prejudices too.

- A common form of prejudice stereotype.

- Self-fulfilling prophecy – when you respond to stereotypes and act on them.

The Privileges of the Dominant

- Are there any advantages of being White?

1. Housing
2. No suspicion when using credit cards or shopping
3. Parenting
4. Role models in books and media
5. No regard to image reflecting on everyone else

Minority, Racial, and Ethnic Groups

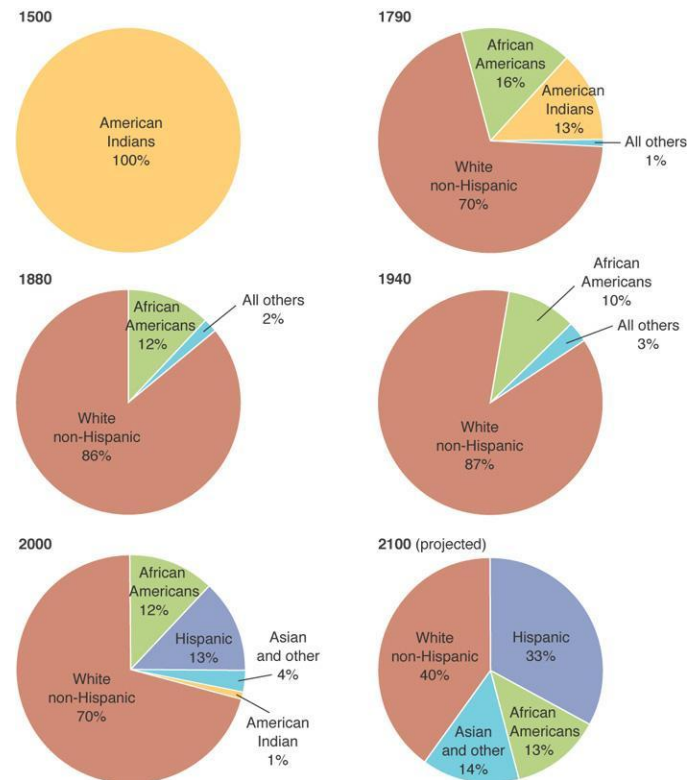Table 11-1. Racial and Ethnic Groups in the United States, 2000

Table 11-1 Racial and Ethnic Groups in the United States, 2000

Classification	Number in Thousands	Percentage of Total Population
Racial groups		
Whites (includes 16.9 million White Hispanics)	211,461	75.1%
Blacks/African Americans	34,658	12.3
Native Americans, Alaskan Native	2,476	0.9
Asian Americans	10,243	3.6
Chinese	2,433	0.9
Filipinos	1,850	0.7
Asian Indians	1,679	0.6
Vietnamese	1,123	0.4
Koreans	1,077	0.4
Japanese	797	0.2
Other	1,285	0.5
Ethnic groups		
White ancestry (single or mixed)		
Germans	42,842	15.2
Irish	30,525	10.8
English	24,509	8.7
Italians	15,638	5.6
Poles	8,977	3.2
French	8,310	3.0
Jews	5,200	1.8
Hispanics (or Latinos)	35,306	12.5
Mexican Americans	23,337	8.3
Central and South Americans	5,119	1.8
Puerto Ricans	3,178	1.1
Cubans	1,412	0.5
Other	2,260	0.8
Total (all groups)	281,422	

Note: Percentages do not total 100 percent and figures under subheadings do not add up to figures under major headings because of overlap among groups (e.g., Polish American Jews or people of mixed ancestry, such as Irish and Italian). Hispanics may be of any race. Sources: Brittingham and de la Cruz 2004; Bureau of the Census 2003a; Grieco and Cassidy 2001; Therrien and Ramirez 2001; United Jewish Communities 2003.

Minority, Racial, and Ethnic Groups

Figure 11-1. Racial and Ethnic Groups in the United States, 1500—2100 (projected)

Sources: Author's estimate; Bureau of the Census 1975; Grieco and Cassidy 2001; Therrien 1987

Studying Race and Ethnicity

- Functionalist Perspective

- Nash's 3 functions that racially prejudiced beliefs have for the dominant group include:
  - Moral Justification for maintaining an unequal society
  - Discouraging subordinate groups from questioning their status
  - Encouraging support for the existing order

Studying Race and Ethnicity

- Functionalist Perspective
  - Rose identified dysfunctions associated with racism

- Society that practices discrimination fails to use resources of all individuals
- Discrimination aggravates social problems

- Society must invest time and money to defend barriers to full participation
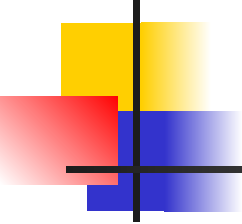- Racial prejudice undercuts goodwill and diplomatic relations between nations

Studying Race and Ethnicity

- The Conflict Response
  - **Exploitation Theory**: racism keeps minorities in low-paying jobs and supplies the dominant group with cheap labor
- The Interactionist Approach
  - **Contact Hypothesis:** interracial contact between people of equal status in cooperative circumstances will cause them to become less prejudiced and to abandon old stereotypes

The Psychology of Prejudice Self-Justification

Self-Justification involves denigrating a person or group to justify maltreatment of them.

- In this case, self-justification leads to prejudice and discrimination against members of another group
- We require reassurance that the things we do and the lives we live are proper
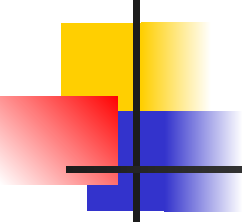
- If we can convince ourselves that another group is inferior, immoral, or dangerous, we may feel justified in discriminating against its members
- This may involve justification for enslaving and even killing another person.
- Self-Justification is used when the dominant group's assumption of an attitude of superiority over other groups
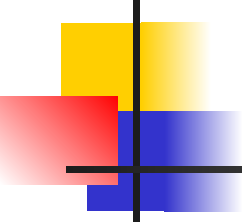
Personality Theories

Psychologist Theodore Adorno reported a correlation between individuals' early childhood experiences of harsh parental discipline and their development of an *authoritarian personality*.

- Highly prejudiced individuals tend to come from families that emphasize obedience

- People with an authoritarian personality tend to be insecure, and highly conformist. They have a deep respect for authority

- They rigidly conform to conventional cultural values, envisioning moral issues as clear cut matters or right and wrong
- Their thinking is oversimplified – others will do the thinking for them.
- Intolerant of any divergence from what they consider normal in terms of religion, race, history, nationality, culture and language
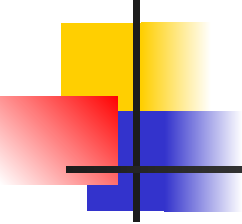
- When children become adults, they may demonstrate *displaced aggression*

  - directing their hostility against a powerless group to compensate for their feelings of insecurity and fear

Frustration

Studies have shown that frustrations tend to increase aggression toward others

- Frustrated people don't strike at the cause of their frustration because is often too nebulous to be identified or too powerful to act against
- In such instances, the result may be displaced aggression

- in this situation, the frustrated individual or group will usually redirects anger against a more visible, vulnerable, and socially sanctioned target, one unable to strike back
- Blaming others for something that is not their fault is known as *scapegoating*.

Sociology of Prejudice

Socialization

- In the socialization process, individuals acquires the values, attitudes, beliefs

- Generally, the child conforms to the parents' expectations in acquiring an understanding of the world and its people

- Being impressionable and knowing of no alternative conceptions of the world, the child usually accepts these concepts without questioning

Social Norms

Stereotyping

- One common reaction to strangers is to categorize them broadly

- A stereotype is an oversimplified generalization by which we attribute certain traits or characteristics to a group without regard to individual differences.

- Stereotypes distort socio-cultural truths but are socially approved images held by one group about another

Institutional Discrimination

Institutional Discrimination- the denial of opportunities and equal rights to individual and groups

1. Housing
   Racial Steering – practice in which real estate brokers refuse to show house outside of specific areas to minority buyers
2. Education

Patterns of Intergroup Relations

Amalgamation – when a majority group and a minority group combine to form a new group

Assimilation

Process by which person forsakes his or her own cultural tradition to become part of a different culture

Segregation

- Refers to physical separation of two groups of people in terms of residence
  - **Apartheid:** Republic of South Africa severely restricted the movement of Blacks and non-Whites

Pluralism

- Based on mutual respect among various groups in a society for one another's cultures

Race and Ethnicity in the United States

- Racial Groups
  - African Americans
    - African Americans currently largest minority group in U.S.
    - Contemporary institutional discrimination and individual prejudice against African Americans rooted in history of slavery
      - **Black Power**: rejected goal of assimilation into White middle-class society

Race and Ethnicity in the United States

- Racial Groups
  - Native Americans
    - 2.5 million Native Americans represent diverse array of cultures distinguishable by language, family organization, religion, and livelihood
    - Life remains difficult for members of 554 tribal groups in U.S.
    - Increasing number claiming identity as Native American

Race and Ethnicity in the United States

- Racial Groups
  - Asian Americans
    - Asian Americans comprise one of fastest growing segments of U.S. population
    - Asian Americans often held up as *model* or *ideal* minority group

Race and Ethnicity in the United States

- Racial Groups
  - Asian Americans
    - Vietnamese Americans
      - Came to U.S. during and after Vietnam War and, over time, gravitated toward larger urban areas
    - Chinese Americans
      - Encouraged to immigrate to U.S. from 1850 to 1880
      - Currently, about 2.7 million Chinese Americans live in U.S.

Race and Ethnicity in the United States

- Racial Groups
  - Asian Americans
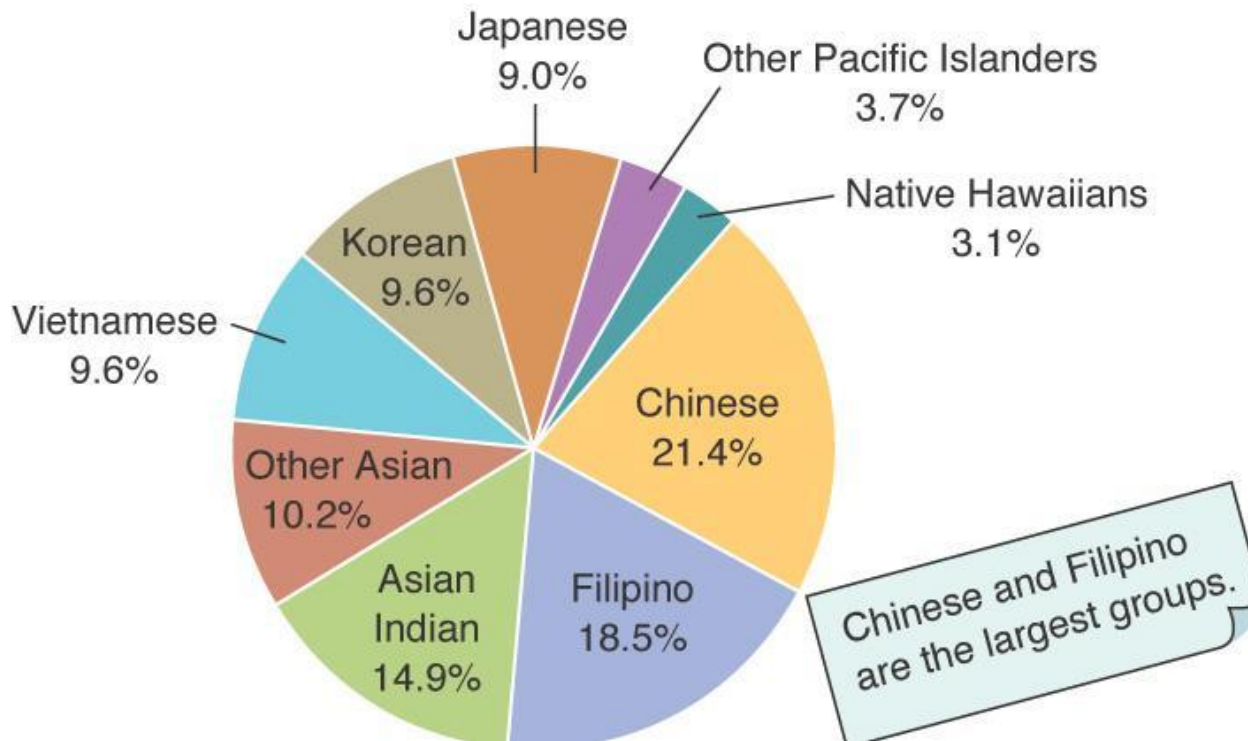   - Japanese Americans
      - **Issei:** first generation of Japanese immigrants
      - In August 1943, 113,000 Japanese Americans forced into hastily built camps in response to World War II
    - Korean Americans
      - At 1.2 million, population of Korean Americans exceeds that of Japanese Americans

Race and Ethnicity in the United States

Figure 11-7. Major Asian American Groups in the United States, 2000
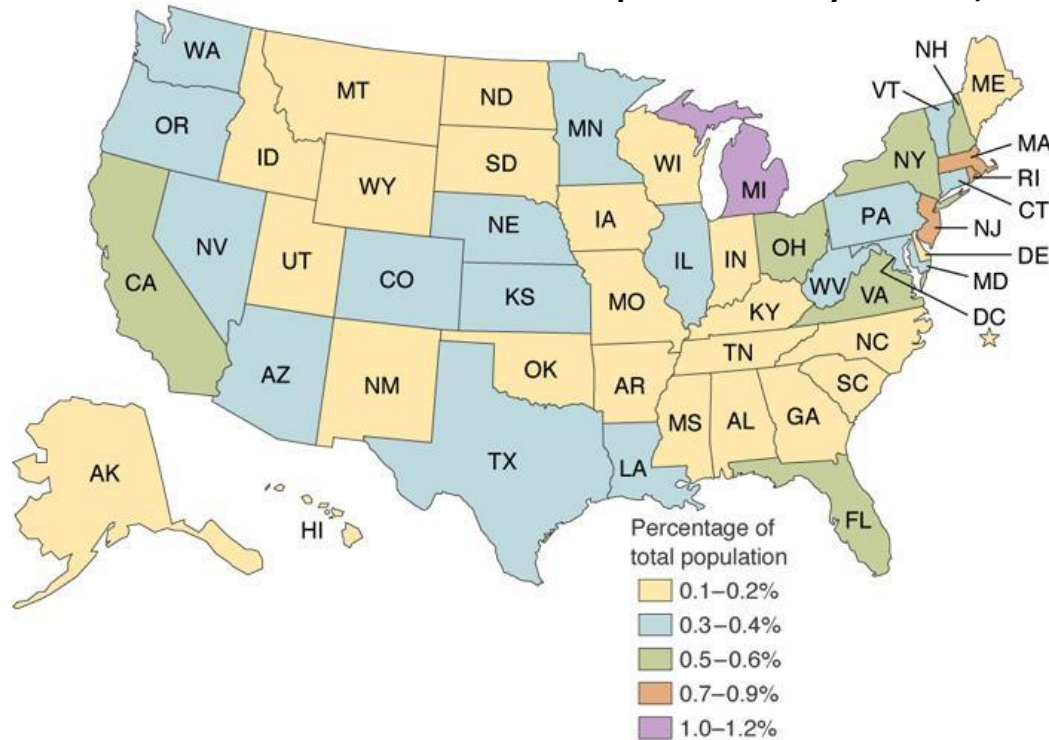

Source: Logan 2001

Race and Ethnicity in the United States

- Racial Groups
  - Arab Americans
    - Up to 3 million people of Arab ancestry reside in the United States
    - Cannot be characterize as having a specific family type, gender role, or occupational pattern

Profiling of potential terrorists has put Arab and Muslim Americans under special surveillance

Race and Ethnicity in the United States

Figure 11-8. Distribution of the Arab Population by State, 2000

Percentage of total population
- 0.1–0.2%
- 0.3–0.4%
- 0.5–0.6%
- 0.7–0.9%
- 1.0–1.2%

Source: Bureau of the Census 2003c

Race and Ethnicity in the United States
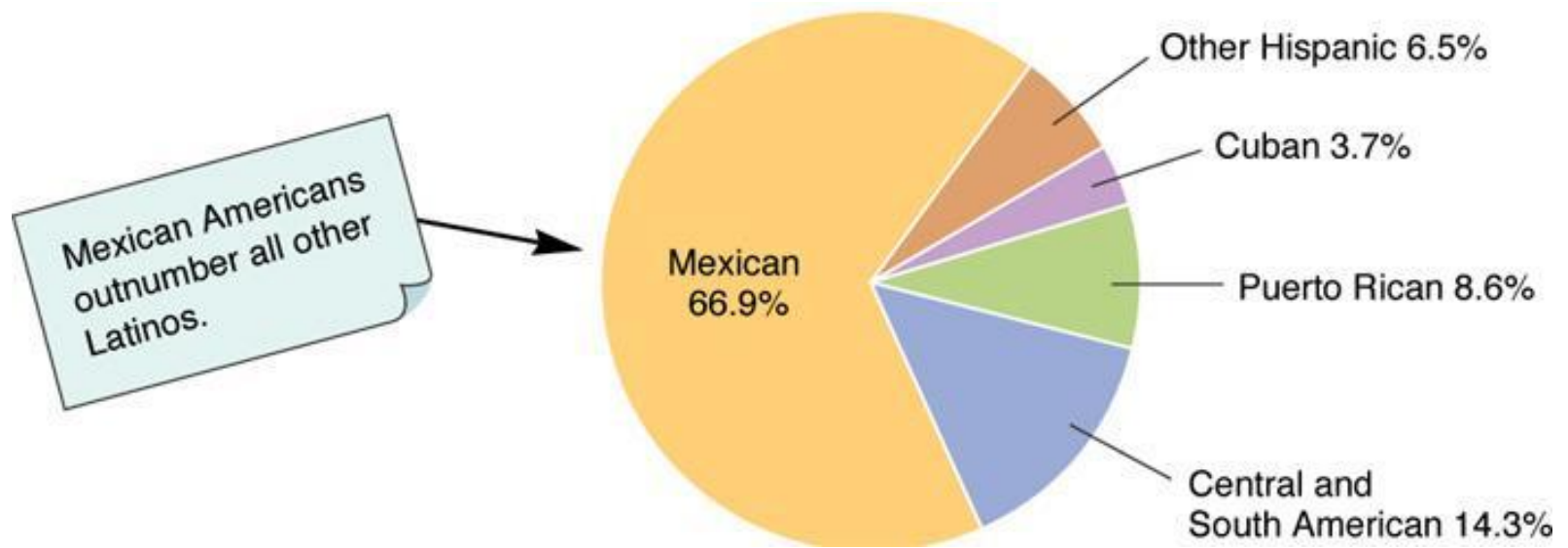
- Ethnic Groups
  - Latinos
    - Largest minority in the United States
    - Mexican Americans
      - Largest Latino population
    - Puerto Ricans
      - Residents of Puerto Rico are American citizens
    - Cuban Americans
      - Immigration began in earnest following Castro's assumption of power in Cuban Revolution (1959)

Race and Ethnicity in the United States

Figure 11-9. Major Hispanic Groups in the United States, 2002

Mexican Americans outnumber all other Latinos.

Mexican 66.9%

Other Hispanic 6.5%

Cuban 3.7%

Puerto Rican 8.6%

Central and South American 14.3%

Source: R. Ramirez and de la Cruz 2003:1

Race and Ethnicity in the United States

- Ethnic Groups
  - Jewish Americans
    - Constitute almost 3% of population
      - **Anti-Semitism:** anti-Jewish prejudice
    - White Ethnics
      - White ethnics' ancestors came from Europe in last 100 years

Symbolic ethnicity: emphasis on ethnic food or political issues rather than on deeper ties to one's ethnic heritage