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AMERICAN AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES | 10E

Martin N. Marger

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Race and Ethnic Relations

American and Global Perspectives

TENTH EDITION

Martin N. Marger

CENGAGE

Australia • Brazil • Mexico • Singapore • United Kingdom • United States

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***Race and Ethnic Relations: American and Global Perspectives,* Tenth Edition**

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PREFACE

Race and Ethnic Relations: American and Global Perspectives is designed to explore race and ethnic relations in a global context, while covering extensively ethnic groups and issues in American society. The need for such a comparative approach seems especially critical today in light of the increasing ethnic diversity of the United States and most other contemporary societies, as well as the prominence of ethnic conflicts in virtually all world regions. With continuing high levels of immigration, Americans have become increasingly mindful of their society's changing racial and ethnic configuration and its attendant economic, cultural, and political issues. Though usually uninformed about complexities, they have also become at least vaguely aware of comparable issues in other societies. This awareness is episodically heightened by mass media accounts of ethnic conflict in societies as distant and exotic as Rwanda and Kosovo, as well as those closer geographically and culturally, such as Canada and Northern Ireland. With the prevalent forces of globalization and international migration, it has become clear that racial and ethnic issues are no longer confined to specific societies but are linked through social networks, political arrangements, and economic systems.

Curiously, American social scientists have not always kept pace in adapting to the global context of race and ethnic relations. Some continue to focus almost exclusively on the United States, paying only incidental attention to ethnic patterns and events in other societies. In line with this view, texts in the field of race and ethnic relations have ordinarily provided no more than cursory coverage to affairs outside the American sphere—if at all. Students, therefore, often continue to think of racial and ethnic, or minority, issues as uniquely American phenomena.

A growing number of social scientists, however, have come to see the utility and relevance of a more cross-national approach to the study of race and ethnicity. Such an approach distinguished *Race and Ethnic Relations* from other texts in the field when it was first published in 1985. Its objective was to provide readers with

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a comparative perspective without sacrificing a strong American component. That objective was retained in subsequent editions and remains unchanged in this, the tenth, edition. The book's overriding theme is the global nature of ethnicity and the prevalence of ethnic conflict in the modern world.

At the same time that an international perspective seems more compelling than ever, a close and careful analysis of race and ethnicity in America is imperative. For better or worse, the United States, the most diverse of multiethnic societies, more often than not is a global pacesetter in ethnic relations. More important, most readers of *Race and Ethnic Relations* continue to be American students, who require a solid understanding of their own society, which subsequently can be used as a comparative frame of reference. *Race and Ethnic Relations*, therefore, provides thorough coverage of America's major ethnic groups and issues. My own teaching experience has confirmed that American students commonly acquire a broader and richer comprehension of ethnic relations and issues in the United States when these are presented in a global context and can be viewed from a comparative perspective.

The number of American college and university courses with ethnic content has grown enormously in recent years. This, I believe, is a reflection of the pressing problems and commanding issues of race and ethnicity in the United States and the growing awareness of ethnic divisions and inequalities in an increasingly diverse society. The content of *Race and Ethnic Relations* is comprehensive and thus appropriate for a variety of courses that may be differently titled and structured (for example, "race and ethnicity," "minority relations," "ethnic stratification," "multiculturalism") but that all deal in some fashion with ethnic issues.

The theoretical and conceptual thrust of this edition is unchanged from previous editions: a power-conflict perspective, emphasizing the power dynamics among ethnic groups. Race and ethnic relations are seen as manifestations of stratification and of the competition and conflict that develop over societal rewards—power, wealth, and prestige. In accord with this perspective, I have emphasized the structural, or macro-level, patterns of race and ethnic relations rather than the social-psychological, though the latter are interspersed throughout.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

The intent of the chapters that make up Part I, THE NATURE OF ETHNIC RELATIONS, is to introduce the principal terms, concepts, and theories of the field of race and ethnic relations. These chapters are designed to serve as an analytic framework within which U.S. racial and ethnic groups, as well as those of other multiethnic societies, can be systematically examined.

Part II, ETHNICITY IN THE UNITED STATES, focuses on American society, describing the formation of its ethnic system and its major racial and ethnic populations. Chapter 5 traces the sociohistorical development of the American ethnic configuration and the society's racial/ethnic hierarchy. Chapters 6 through 12 comprise descriptions and analyses of Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, white ethnic Americans, Jewish Americans, and Arab Americans. These are presented within the framework of theories and concepts introduced in Part I. Chapter 13 describes and analyzes what I believe are the most

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critical ongoing issues of race and ethnic relations in the United States: large-scale immigration and its social, political, and economic effects; the persistent gap between Euro-Americans and racial-ethnic groups; and policies designed to address that gap.

All chapters in Part II reflect the processes and consequences of continued immigration to the United States and the reshaping of the society's ethnic configuration. More specifically, Chapter 5 contains an examination of immigration theories, factors that stimulate international migration, and historical patterns of American immigration. Chapter 7 discusses the increasing diversity of the American black population, which now includes a sizable foreign-born element. Similarly, Chapter 8, Hispanic Americans, includes coverage of more recent Central and South American and Caribbean groups, in addition to the three major Latino groups, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans. Arab Americans, one of the society's increasingly prominent and growing ethnic populations, are examined in Chapter 12, entirely new to this edition. Chapter 13 focuses in large measure on the socioeconomic, political, and cultural impact of ongoing immigration to the United States of non-European peoples, creating, in the process, a rapidly changing ethnic order.

A noteworthy trend in American society is the blurring of racial and ethnic identities as a result of rising levels of intermarriage. The traditional racial/ethnic classification scheme, as a result, has come under more scrutiny and its relevance is increasingly questioned. It now seems apparent that the commonplace racial/ethnic categories employed by various societal institutions are losing analytic significance, though they obviously remain of paramount importance as the building blocks of ethnic stratification. Within the chapters that compose Part II, this trend and its potential consequences are addressed, particularly in Chapters 5, 7, and 13. Also, the notion of "whiteness" and the fluid nature of "race" in America are discussed in Chapter 10.

Part III, ETHNIC RELATIONS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE, examines several societies that stand as intriguing and apposite comparisons to the United States. Chapter 14 deals with South Africa, not long ago the most rigidly racist society on the globe. Today, South Africa serves as an important case for students of contemporary ethnic relations, illustrating how oppressive systems of ethnic inequality can undergo fundamental change in a surprisingly brief time with a minimum of violence. Brazil, examined in Chapter 15, is ideally suited to a comparison with the United States, given its past history of slavery and its multiracial composition. Canada, the focus of Chapter 16, is often seen as a northern replica of the United States, but its ethnic ideology and policies are sharply different. In a number of ways, Canada may represent a future model for multiethnic societies. Chapter 17 explores the global nature of contemporary ethnic conflict, focusing first on the increasing ethnic diversity of Western European societies and the ensuing problems of integrating new culturally and racially diverse populations. This is followed by an examination of several relatively recent cases of ethnic conflict: the Rwandan genocide of 1993; the breakup of the former Yugoslavia and the resultant ethnic wars that were waged throughout the 1990s; and the sectarian strife in Northern Ireland, which is most basically an ethnic struggle. Each of these cases demonstrates how in the modern world societies can be consumed with ethnic differences, despite the apparent lack of racial distinctions.

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Studying the ethnic composition and dynamics of other societies enables American students not only to explore unfamiliar social terrains but also to reach a more informed understanding of the structure and social forces of their own society and, to some extent, even their own discrete social worlds. Students will surely recognize differences between the United States and other multiethnic societies, but they will also observe patterns that seem intrinsically common to all. All of the cases explored in Part III lend themselves to easy comparison with the United States, and comparative points are drawn throughout each chapter. No prior familiarity with any of these societies is assumed, on the part of either instructors or students.

Each chapter that deals with a specific American ethnic group (Part II) or multiethnic society (Part III) uses the four theory chapters (Part I) as an organizational framework. This enables students to more easily tie together theoretical and descriptive points.

NEW TO THE TENTH EDITION

As in previous editions of *Race and Ethnic Relations,* all statistical materials have been updated, using the latest figures from the U.S. Census Bureau as well as from other data-gathering organizations in the United States and abroad. Many of the statistical data previously presented in tabular form have been converted into more easily read and comprehended graphs, charts, and maps. All chapters contain new or more recent citations, reflecting the continued vast production of empirical and theoretical literature in the field of race and ethnic relations.

In addition to these updates, several new organizational and content features have been incorporated into this edition.

- What I have called "personal/practical application" questions are included at the end of each chapter. These are designed to supplement the "critical thinking" questions, included in previous editions, with hypothetical situations that students may relate to on a more personal level. Both sets of questions are linked to chapter materials.
- To better enable students to comprehend and apply key terms and concepts, these have been highlighted, along with their definitions, as they appear in each chapter. All are also included in the Glossary.
- An entirely new chapter on Arab Americans (Chapter 12) is now included in Part II, Ethnicity in the United States. Although their roots reach back to the nineteenth century, only in the past few decades have Arab Americans become a highly visible part of the American ethnic mix. This chapter, like others in Part II, traces the sociohistorical development of this group, its socioeconomic characteristics, the nature of prejudice and discrimination it has encountered, and its path toward social integration.

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The Nature of Ethnic Relations

PART I

Chapters 1 through 4 introduce some basic concepts, terms, and theories of the field and, in so doing, erect a framework for analyzing ethnic relations in the United States (Part II) and in several other societies (Part III).

Another, implicit, objective of Part I is to explain the sociological approach to race and ethnic relations. This approach is fundamentally different from the manner in which relations among racial and ethnic groups are commonly viewed and interpreted. Sociologists see everyday social occurrences differently than laypeople do, and they describe them differently as well. They go beneath the superficial to uncover the unseen and often unwitting workings of society, frequently exposing the erroneousness of much of what is considered well-established knowledge. The sociologist Peter Berger has put it well: "It can be said that the first wisdom of sociology is this—things are not what they seem" (1963:23). This is particularly so in the study of race and ethnic relations.

For example, most people, if asked, could attempt an explanation of why black-white relations in the United States have been customarily discordant, and they might even venture to explain why conflict is so commonplace among ethnic groups in other parts of the world. They would probably explain that humans are belligerent "by nature" or that there are "inherent" differences among groups, creating unavoidable fear and distrust. Although these explanations are direct and apparently simple to comprehend, they do not necessarily stand up when subjected to sociological analysis. Groups with different cultural origins and physical traits may indeed clash quite commonly, but as we will see, social factors are more significant than innate tendencies when accounting for that discord.

The subject matter of sociology—or any of the social sciences—is not the abstruse world of physics or chemistry but the everyday life of people. Because the objects of their study are so much a part of common human experience, sociologists often seem to make unnecessarily complex what appears to be quite simple. But the application of rigorous theory and methods and the use of precise terminology are the chief distinguishing features of the sociological approach, in contrast to the more unencumbered ways of problem solving that most people employ. In short, sociologists apply a scientific approach to analyzing human relations. And in doing so,

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they find that much of what is taken for granted as commonsensical is not so simple or common and perhaps not at all "sensical." In studying race and ethnic relations, therefore, it is necessary to establish more precise terms for various racial and ethnic phenomena and to become aware of the major theories and research findings that underlie the sociological approach to this field.

Race and ethnic relations cannot be explained with a single analytic tool or with one general theory. Sociologists are not in agreement on all issues in the field. At times, in fact, they may be sharply opposed. But it is necessary to understand that the very nature of scientific inquiry makes such a lack of consensus an almost foregone conclusion. Scientists, whether physical or social, recognize no absolute explanations or unchanging theories. Like any science, sociology poses more questions than it answers. In the following chapters, therefore, we will find no explanations that have not been questioned, tested, and retested. Though we can obtain no final answers to many puzzling questions using the sociological approach, we can sharpen immeasurably our insight into the whys and wherefores of relations among different racial and ethnic groups. But we must be prepared to accept the frustration that often accompanies the examination of new ideas about what is old and familiar and the use of new methods in observing what has customarily been seen uncritically.

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INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

Some Basic Concepts

Every four years, January 20 is an important date in the United States, the day on which a new (or reelected) president is sworn into office. January 20 of 2008, however, carried even greater than usual significance, for it marked the beginning of what seemed like a new era in American history. Barack Obama, a self-identified African American, took the oath of office as the forty-fourth occupant of the White House. He had been elected with what had been, in the contemporary American political context, a solid majority of the vote. No more than a few years before Obama's election, national polls had indicated the improbability of such an occurrence; a black candidate winning the presidency, though perhaps inevitable, seemed many decades in the future. Obama's election, then, evinced a remarkable shift in American race and ethnic relations—the acceptance by a majority of voters of a black man as the nation's most powerful, prestigious, and celebrated figure. That Obama's election in 2008 was not a fluke or the result of unusual political circumstances was confirmed by his reelection—also by a comfortable majority of the vote—in 2012.

The symbolic importance of Obama's election and reelection cannot be overstated. Indeed, many Americans regarded them as milestones, the culmination of generations of struggles to eradicate the social and political inequalities founded on race and ethnicity that had been such a central part of America's heritage. Beneath the veneer of these historic accomplishments and obscured in their celebration, however, were deep and steadfast racial and ethnic divisions, on which the presidential elections of 2008 and 2012—undeniably momentous events—would have no tangible effect.

Despite the fact that an African American occupied the presidency for two terms, the economic and social discrepancies between blacks and whites remain enormous. Consider that blacks earn, on average, about two-thirds of what whites earn, suffer an unemployment rate double that of whites, are almost three times more likely than whites to live below the poverty line, and are five times more likely to be incarcerated. Similar, if somewhat less severe, discrepancies are evident between whites and other racial and ethnic minorities, particularly Latinos.

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Moreover, for the most part, blacks and whites (and to a lesser extent Latinos and whites) continue to live apart, attend segregated schools and churches, and intermarry at a low rate. Although all of these patterns are slowly changing, leading to a reduction of economic inequalities and a rise in social integration, clearly racial and ethnic divisions continue to create great strains in the social fabric of America.

Along with issues of economic inequality and social segregation that have traditionally plagued American society, new problems of ethnic division and conflict have arisen as the result of a veritable ethnic transformation that has been unfolding since the 1970s. Almost from its very beginnings, the United States was ethnically diverse. But for the past several decades, large-scale immigration has produced a vastly more heterogeneous nation. Literally dozens of new groups, varied in racial and ethnic characteristics, have reconfigured the U.S. population. Virtually no community or region of the country has been unaffected by this newest influx of immigrants. With growing ethnic populations, most of them non-European in origin, has come public debate—often passionate and shrill—over issues of affirmative action, multiculturalism, and immigration itself.

The Global Nature of Ethnic Relations

In recognizing that racial and ethnic issues in the United States are deep-seated and thus not quickly or easily resolved, we should not think that they are uniquely American. Indeed, as we look at the contemporary world, it becomes evident that ethnic conflict and inequality are basic features of almost all modern societies with diverse populations.

Resurgent Ethnicity

Social scientists had maintained for many years that industrialization and the forces of modernization would diminish the significance of race and ethnicity in heterogeneous societies (Deutsch, 1966). They felt that with the breakdown of small, particularistic social units and the emergence of large, impersonal bureaucratic institutions, people's loyalty and identity would be directed primarily to the national state rather than to internal racial and ethnic communities. The opposite trend, however, seems to have characterized the contemporary world. Indeed, the past sixty years have witnessed the emergence of ethnic consciousness and division around the globe on a scale unprecedented. The upshot has been an unleashing of ethnic-based conflict, usually contained at a low level, but at times fearsome and deadly.[1]

In developed nations, ethnic groups thought to be well absorbed in the national society have reemphasized their cultural identity, and new groups have demanded political recognition. In Western Europe, ethnically based political movements have emerged in several countries. Throughout Eastern Europe, the late 1980s brought massive economic and political change, rekindling ethnic loyalties that had been suppressed for several decades. And in Canada, the traditional schism dividing English- and French-speaking groups has periodically threatened a breakup of the Canadian nation.

[1] The seriousness of ethnic conflict in the modern world is highlighted by the fact that, during the five decades from 1945 to 1994, perhaps as many as 20 million people died as a result of ethnic violence (Williams, 1994). In the past two decades, ethnic conflicts in every world region created additional millions of deaths and displacements.

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Moreover, much of Europe, like the United States and Canada, has been affected in recent decades by a greatly increased flow of immigration, made up of people markedly different racially and ethnically from the native population. As these diverse ethnic communities have grown and become permanent parts of the social landscape, social tensions have arisen, sparking outbreaks of aggression and anti-immigrant political movements.

In the developing nations, too, the ethnic factor has emerged with great strength. World War II marked the end of several centuries of imperialist domination of non-Western peoples by European powers, and many new nations were created in Africa and Asia, the political boundaries of which were often carved out of the administrative districts of the old colonial states. Many of these artificial boundaries were drawn with little consideration of the areas' ethnic composition. As a result, the new nation-states often found themselves faced with the problem of integrating diverse cultural groups, speaking different languages and even maintaining different belief systems, into a single national society. The result has been numerous ongoing ethnic conflicts that have erupted periodically in horrendous violence.

In short, racial and ethnic forces have emerged with great power in the modern world. In all societies they are important—in many cases the *most* important—bases of both group solidarity and cleavage. As we look ahead, their impact is not likely to diminish throughout the twenty-first century.

RACE AND ETHNIC RELATIONS

Societies comprising numerous racial, religious, and cultural groups can be described as **multiethnic**. In the contemporary world, multiethnic societies are commonplace, not exceptional. Only a handful of the more than 190 member countries of the United Nations are ethnically homogeneous. "Multiethnicity," notes the sociologist Robin Williams, "is the rule" (1994:50). Moreover, the extent of diversity within many of these societies is very great. As can be seen in Table 1.1, societies that are multiethnic in some degree are found on every continent and in various stages of socioeconomic development.

The study of race and ethnic relations is concerned generally with the ways in which the various groups of a multiethnic society come together and interact over extended periods. As we proceed in our investigation, we will be looking specifically for answers to four key questions.

TABLE 1.1 | ETHNIC DIVERSITY OF SELECTED NATION-STATES

High	Medium	Low
United States	United Kingdom	Finland
Canada	Nigeria	Czech Republic
Australia	Malaysia	Egypt
Israel	Argentina	Japan

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Basic Questions

1. *What is the nature of intergroup relations in multiethnic societies?* Ethnic relations commonly take the form of conflict and competition. Indeed, we can easily observe this by following the popular media accounts of ethnic relations in the United States and other nations, which are usually descriptions of hostility and violence. However, intergroup relations are never totally conflictual. Ethnic groups do not exist in a perpetual whirlwind of discord and strife; cooperation and accommodation also characterize ethnic relations. Just as we will be concerned with understanding why conflict and competition are so common among diverse groups, we will also investigate harmonious conditions and the social factors that contribute to them.
2. *How are the various ethnic groups ranked, and what are the consequences of that ranking system?* In all multiethnic societies, members of various groups are treated differently and receive unequal amounts of the society's valued resources—wealth, prestige, and power. In short, some get more than others and are treated more favorably. Moreover, this inequality is not random but is well established and persists over many generations. A structure of inequality emerges in which one or a few ethnic groups, called the *dominant group* or groups, are automatically favored by the society's institutions, particularly the state and the economy, whereas other ethnic groups remain in lower positions. These subordinate groups are called ethnic *minorities*. We will be concerned with describing this hierarchy and determining how such systems of ethnic inequality come about.
3. *How does the dominant ethnic group in a multiethnic society maintain its place at the top of the ethnic hierarchy, and what attempts are made by subordinate groups to change their positions?* The dominant group employs a number of direct and indirect methods (various forms of prejudice and discrimination) to protect its power and privilege. This does not mean, however, that subordinate groups make no attempts to change this arrangement from time to time. In fact, organized movements—by African Americans in the United States or Catholics in Northern Ireland, for example—may challenge the ethnic hierarchy. One of our chief objectives, then, will be to examine the ways in which systems of ethnic inequality are maintained and how they change.
4. *What are the long-range outcomes of ethnic interrelations?* When ethnic groups exist side by side in the same society for long periods, either they move toward some form of unification or they maintain or even intensify their differences. These various forms of integration and separation are called *assimilation* and *pluralism*. Numerous outcomes are possible, extending from complete assimilation, involving the cultural and physical integration of the various groups, to extreme pluralism, including even expulsion or annihilation of groups. Usually, less extreme patterns are evident, and groups may display both integration and separation in different spheres of social life. Again, our concern is not only with discerning these outcomes but also with explaining the social forces that favor one or the other.

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A Comparative Approach

The study of race and ethnic relations has a long tradition in American sociology, beginning in the 1920s with the research of Robert Park, Everett Hughes, and Louis Wirth. These scholars were among the first to focus attention on the relations among ethnic groups, particularly within the ethnic mélange of large U.S. cities such as New York and Chicago. The sociology of race and ethnic relations has progressed enormously since that time, and it now constitutes one of the chief subareas of the sociological discipline.

With few exceptions, however, American sociologists have continued to concentrate mainly on American groups and relations, often overlooking similarities and differences between the United States and other heterogeneous societies. But if we are to understand the general nature of race and ethnic relations, it is necessary to go beyond the United States—or any particular society—and place our analyses in a comparative, or cross-societal, framework. As we have already noted, ethnic diversity, conflict, and accommodation are worldwide phenomena, not unique to American society. However, because most research in race and ethnic relations has been the product of American sociologists dealing with the American experience, we are often led to assume that patterns evident in the United States are much the same in other societies.

This book adopts a comparative perspective in which the United States is seen as one among many contemporary multiethnic societies. Because readers are likely to be most familiar with American society, however, the center of attention will fall most intently on American groups and relations. Even in those chapters in which other societies are the major focus (Part III), we will draw attention to U.S. comparisons.

A comparative approach not only enables us to learn about race and ethnicity in other societies but also provides us with a sharper insight into race and ethnicity in the United States. It has often been observed that we cannot begin to truly understand our own society without some knowledge of other societies. Moreover, in addition to the differences revealed among societies, similarities may also become apparent. As the sociologists Tamotsu Shibutani and Kian Kwan have pointed out, comparing American ethnic relations with those of other societies "reveals that patterns of human experience, though infinitely varied, repeat themselves over and over in diverse cultural contexts" (1965:21). Discovering such generalizable patterns of the human experience is the ultimate aim of all sociological efforts.

ETHNIC GROUPS

Although they are now familiar and commonly used, the terms *ethnic group* and *ethnicity* are relatively new, not even appearing in standard English dictionaries until the 1960s (Glazer and Moynihan, 1975). Groups generally referred to today as "ethnic" were previously thought of as races or nations, but these terms clearly have different meanings.

Characteristics of Ethnic Groups

Unique Cultural Traits Basically, **ethnic groups** are *groups within a larger society that display a unique set of cultural traits*. The sociologist Melvin Tumin more

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specifically describes an ethnic group as "a social group which, within a larger cultural and social system, claims or is accorded special status in terms of a complex of traits (ethnic traits) which it exhibits or is believed to exhibit" (1964:243). Ethnic groups, then, are subcultures, maintaining certain behavioral characteristics that, in some degree, set them off from other groups, creating cultural divisions within the larger society. Such unique cultural traits are not trivial but are fundamental features of social life such as language and religion.

Unique cultural traits, however, are not sufficient alone to delineate ethnic groups in a modern, complex society. Can we speak of physicians as an ethnic group? Or truck drivers? Or college students? Obviously, we would consider none of these categories "ethnic" even though they are composed of people who exhibit some common characteristics that identify them from others. Clearly, we need further qualifications for distinguishing ethnic groups.

Sense of Community In addition to a common set of cultural traits, ethnic groups display a sense of community among members, that is, a consciousness of kind or an awareness of close association. In simple terms, a "we" feeling exists among members. Milton Gordon (1964) suggests that the ethnic group serves above all as a social-psychological referent in creating a "sense of peoplehood." This sense of community, or oneness, derives from an understanding of a shared ancestry, or heritage. Ethnic group members view themselves as having common roots, as it were. When people share what they believe to be common origins and experiences, "they feel an affinity for one another," writes sociologist Bob Blauner, "a 'comfort zone' that leads to congregating together, even when this is not forced by exclusionary barriers" (1992:61).

Such common ancestry, however, need not be real. As long as people regard themselves as alike by virtue of their perceived heritage, and as long as others in the society so regard them, they constitute an ethnic group, whether or not such a common background is genuine. Everett and Helen Hughes have perceptively recognized that "an ethnic group is not one because of the degree of measurable or observable difference from other groups; it is an ethnic group, on the contrary, because the people in it and the people out of it know that it is one; because both the ins and outs talk, feel, and act as if it were a separate group" (1952:156). Ethnic groups, then, are social creations wherein ethnic differences are basically a matter of group perception. Groups may be objectively quite similar but perceive themselves as very different, and the converse is equally true.

Sociologists have debated the relative significance of the cultural element and the sense of community as most critical to the formation of an ethnic group (Dorman, 1980). The argument boils down to a question of whether ethnic groups are objective social units that can be identified by their unique culture or merely collectivities that people themselves define as ethnic groups. Whereas some view the cultural features of the group as its key distinctive element, others argue that stressing its unique culture minimizes the importance of the subjective boundaries of the group that people themselves draw (Barth, 1969). Most simply, the latter maintain that if people define themselves and are defined by others as an ethnic group, they *are* an ethnic group, whether or not they display unique cultural patterns. If this is the case, the cultural stuff of which the ethnic group is composed is unimportant.

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Although this point may seem like a relatively minor theoretical one, it is of importance when ethnic groups in a society begin to blend into the dominant cultural system. Sociologists have traditionally assumed that as groups integrate into the mainstream society, the basis of retention of ethnicity diminishes. But whether people continue to practice ethnic ways may matter little as long as they continue to define themselves and are defined by others in ethnic terms. Many Americans continue to think of and identify themselves as ethnics even though they exhibit little or no understanding of or interest in their ethnic culture. Do third- or fourth-generation Irish Americans, for example, really share a common culture with their first-generation ancestors? Wearing a button on St. Patrick's Day proclaiming "I'm proud to be Irish" is hardly a display of the traits of one's Irish American forebears. Yet an ethnic identity may remain intact for such people, and they may continue to recognize their uniqueness (and proudly acknowledge it) within the larger society. Thus, despite the lack of a strong cultural factor, the sense of Irish American identity may be sufficient to sustain an Irish American ethnic group.

We thus have two views of the ethnic group: (1) it is an objective unit that can be identified by a people's distinct cultural traits, or (2) it is merely the product of people's thinking of and proclaiming it as an ethnic group. To avoid the extreme of either of these views, sociologist Pierre van den Berghe defines the ethnic group as both an objective and a subjective unit: "An ethnic group is one that shares a cultural tradition *and* has some degree of consciousness of being different from other such groups" (1976:242). As he points out, it is foolish to think that ethnic groups simply arise when people so will it. Fans of a particular football team may feel a sense of commonality and even community, but they surely do not compose an ethnic group. In short, there must be some common cultural basis and sense of ancestry to which ethnic group members can relate. As van den Berghe notes, "There can be no ethnicity (or race) without some conception and consciousness of a distinction between 'them' and 'us.' But these subjective perceptions do not develop at random; they crystallize around clusters of objective characteristics that become badges of inclusion or exclusion" (1978:xvii). Although ethnic boundaries are very flexible, they are always founded on a cultural basis. At the same time, however, an ethnic group cannot exist in an objective sense independent of what its members think and believe. There must be a sense of commonality, and such a feeling of oneness arises generally through the perception of a unique cultural heritage.

ETHNOCENTRISM The "we" feeling of ethnic groups ordinarily leads naturally to **ethnocentrism**, *the tendency to judge other groups by the standards and values of one's own group*. Inevitably, this produces a view of one's own group as superior to others. The ways of one's own group (*in-group*) become "correct" and "natural," and the ways of other groups (*out-groups*) are seen as "odd," "immoral," or "unnatural." Sociologists and anthropologists have found the inclination to judge other groups by the standards of one's own and to view out-groups as inferior or deficient to be a universal practice.

In multiethnic societies, such feelings of group superiority become a basis for group solidarity. In addition to fostering cohesiveness within one group, however, ethnocentrism also serves as the basis of conflict between different groups. As Bonacich and Modell have explained, "Ethnicity is a communalistic form of social

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