

FIFTH EDITION

UNDERSTANDING RACE AND ETHNIC RELATIONS



Vincent N. Parrillo

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Fifth Edition

Vincent N. Parrillo
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Preface

Race and ethnic relations is an exciting, challenging, and dynamic field of study. It touches all of us, directly and indirectly, in many ways, and on personal, regional, national, and even global levels. Each generation thinks it lives through a unique situation, as shaped by the times or the “peculiarities” of a group’s characteristics. In truth, each generation is part of a larger process that includes behavioral patterns inherited from past generations, who also thought their situation was unique.

Intergroup relations change continually, through alternating periods of quiet and turmoil, of entry of new groups of immigrants or refugees, and of problems sporadically arising between native-born racial or ethnic groups within the country. Often, we can best understand these changes within the context of discernible, recurring patterns that are influenced by economic, political, psychological, and sociological factors. This is partly what C. Wright Mills meant when he spoke of the intricate connection between the patterns of individual lives and the larger historical context of society, a concept we discuss in Chapter 1.

To understand both the interpersonal dynamics and the larger context of changing intergroup relations—particularly the reality of historical repetitions of behavior—we must utilize social science theory, research, and analysis. This volume provides the framework for such understanding, as adapted from my more comprehensive book *Strangers to These Shores*. I am grateful for the widespread adoptions of that book and the favorable response to it from colleagues and students throughout Asia, Canada, Europe, and the United States. I am equally pleased with the many similar positive responses from other students and colleagues to this book, which is intended as a concise but thor-

ough sociological introduction to race and ethnic relations.

Following a presentation of some introductory concepts in Chapter 1—particularly that of the stranger as a social phenomenon and the concept of the Dillingham Flaw—the first group of chapters examines differences in culture, reality perceptions, social class, and power as reasons for intergroup conflict. These chapters also look at the dominant group’s varying expectations about how minorities should “fit” into its society.

Chapters 2 and 3 include coverage of some middle-range conflict and interactionist theories. Chapters 4 and 5 explore the dimensions and interrelationships of prejudice and discrimination, and Chapter 6 covers the dominant–minority response patterns so common across different groups and time periods. This chapter presents middle-range conflict theories about economic exploitation too. Chapter 7 employs holistic sociological concepts in discussing ethnic consciousness; ethnicity as a social process; current racial and ethnic issues, fears, and reactions; and the various indicators of U.S. diversity in the twenty-first century.

Discussion questions and Internet activities appear at the end of each chapter, along with a list of key terms. At the end of the book, the reader will find an appendix giving immigration statistics for the period 1820–2011.

What’s New in the Fifth Edition

This new edition reflects a number of changes.

First, and most important, is the continuation of our policy of thoroughly updating all data and information and including the most recent and relevant studies not only in sociology but also in many related fields. Of the 341 reference citations

in this small volume, 38 percent are either new or updated since the previous edition.

Also, a new boxed feature that appears several times in each chapter, “Students Speak,” provides reactive comments from recent student readers. Other additions include these:

- Chapter 1 includes and discusses the latest and largest-ever national study on social distance.
- Chapter 2 includes and discusses the most recent racial and ethnic demographics in professional sports.
- Chapter 4 has a new International Scene feature about the 2012 minority youth riot in France.
- Chapter 5 contains updated information on affirmative action and universities.
- Chapter 6 contains the latest information on hate crime statistics and a new map on hate groups in the United States.
- Chapter 7 contains a new Reality Check feature on immigrant contributions to the United States, new terminology for English acquisition classes, the recent Supreme Court ruling on bilingual education, and updated tables on immigration.

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Chapter 1

The Study of Minorities

*“We may have different religions, different languages,
different colored skin, but we all belong to one human race.
We all share the same basic values.”*

—KOFI ANNAN, FORMER UN SECRETARY GENERAL



Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- 1.1** Explain how the concept of the stranger helps us to understand others.
- 1.2** Identify the characteristics of a minority group.
- 1.3** Distinguish the complex differences between a racial and ethnic group.
- 1.4** Explain how ethnocentrism affects our acceptance of others.
- 1.5** Explain the Dillingham Flaw and why it is important in studying diversity.
- 1.6** Identify the connection between personal troubles and public issues.
- 1.7** Examine the dynamics of intergroup relations.
- 1.8** Evaluate what sociological perspectives tell us about minority groups.

Americans pride themselves as part of a nation of immigrants. Many still call the United States a great melting pot where people of all races, religions, and nationalities come to be free and to improve their lives. Certainly, a great number of immigrants offer living testimony to that ideal; their enthusiasm for their adopted country is evident in countless interviews found in oral histories at Ellis Island and elsewhere. As college students, regardless of how recently your family immigrated to the United States, most of you also provide evidence of the American Dream of freedom of choice, economic opportunity, and upward mobility.

Yet beneath the Fourth of July speeches, the nation's absorption of diverse peoples throughout the years, and the numerous success stories, is a disquieting truth. Native-born Americans have not always welcomed newcomers with open arms; indeed, they often have responded with overt acts of discrimination, ranging from avoidance to violence and murder. The dominant group's treatment of native-born blacks and Native Americans disturbingly illustrates the persistence of subjugation and entrenched inequality. Today, serious problems remain in attitudes toward, and treatment of, Native Americans on reservations; poor blacks in urban ghettos; and large concentrations of Arab, Asian, Hispanic, and Muslim Americans struggling to gain acceptance. For some, the American Dream becomes a reality; for others, blocked opportunities create an American nightmare.

Interethnic tensions and hostilities within a nation's borders are a worldwide phenomenon dating from thousands of years ago to the present. In recent years, we have witnessed the horror of terrorist killings in Afghanistan, Indonesia, Iraq, Pakistan, the Philippines, Spain, Turkey, and the United States. Religious factions in India and the Middle East still harbor such animosity toward one another that violence continues to erupt sporadically.

A decade ago, more than 5.4 million died in the armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and more than 300,000 died in Darfur, a vast region in western Sudan. In the 1990s, Orthodox Christian Serbians killed an estimated 60,000 Bosnian Muslims in the name of "ethnic cleansing," and Serbians killed thousands of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, prompting military action by NATO. Tribal warfare between the Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda led to the massacre of hundreds of thousands. In the 1980s, a bloody war raged among the Hausa, Ibo, and Yoruba tribes of Nigeria, and Iraq killed hundreds of Kurds with poisonous gas.

A few years earlier, appalling bloodbaths among Kampuchean (Cambodians), Chinese, Laotians, and Vietnamese horrified the world. Elsewhere, other minorities, such as West Indians in Britain, Algerians in France, Turks in Germany, Roma (Gypsies) in the Czech Republic, and Palestinians in Israel, have encountered prejudice, discrimination, and physical attacks. Within any society, groupings of people by race, religion, tribe, culture, or lifestyle can generate prejudices, tensions, and sporadic outbursts of violence.

On college campuses, which are microcosms of the larger society, intergroup relations thankfully are not as horrific as anything just described, but they sometimes can be rather tense and occasionally worse. Dorm life and social events may be marred by a level of discomfort with unlike roommates or by arguments,

complaints, fights, vandalism, and instances of verbal abuse that erupt out of strained intercultural or interracial interactions. Most common, however, are the self-segregated cafeteria tables or the clustering of specific minority groups at other campus locales, both illustrative of the sociological axiom “like likes to be with like.” This seemingly harmless situation is, nevertheless, an indicator of a less-than-cohesive college community where avoidance and limited social interaction may produce social isolation and reduced acceptance of unlike others as equals.

Individuals of the dominant group usually absolve themselves of blame for a minority group’s low status and problems, instead attributing these to supposed flaws within the group itself (for example, slowness in learning the mainstream language or lack of a work ethic). Sociologists, however, note that interaction patterns among different groups transcend national boundaries, specific periods, or group idiosyncrasies. Opinions may vary as to the causes of these patterns of behavior, but a consensus does exist about their presence.

The Stranger as a Social Phenomenon

1.1 Explain how the concept of the stranger helps us to understand others.

To understand intergroup relations, we must recognize that differences among various peoples cause each group to view other groups as strangers. Among isolated peoples, the arrival of a stranger has always been a momentous occasion, often eliciting strong emotional responses. Reactions might range from warm hospitality, to conciliatory or protective ceremonies, to hostile acts. In an urbanized and mobile society, the stranger still evokes similar responses. From the Tiwi of northern Australia, who consistently killed intruders, to the nativists of any country or time, who continually strive to keep out “undesirable elements,” the underlying premise is the same: the outsiders are not good enough to share the land and resources with the “chosen people” already there.

Similarity and Attraction

At least since Aristotle commented that we like “those like ourselves . . . of our own race or country or age or family, and generally those who are on our own level,” social observers have been aware of the similarity–attraction relationship.¹ Numerous studies have explored the extent to which a person likes others because of similar attitudes, values, beliefs, social status, or physical appearance. An impressive number of studies examining the development of attraction among people who are initially strangers have found a positive relationship between the similarity of two people and their liking for each other. Most significantly, the findings show that people’s perception of similarity between

Because a health club attracts people who share similar interests in health, exercise, and weight control, new social interactions in that environment are likely, especially among those going regularly. Strangers feel comfortable in striking up casual conversation with one another and it is not uncommon for friendships, even romances, to develop.



themselves is a more powerful determinant than actual similarity.² Cross-cultural studies also support this conclusion.³ Thus, a significant amount of evidence exists showing greater human receptivity to strangers who are considered similar than to those who are viewed as different.

Social Distance

One excellent technique for evaluating how perceptions of similarity attract closer interaction patterns consists of ranking **social distance**, the degree of closeness or remoteness individuals prefer in interaction with members of other groups. In 1926, Emory Bogardus created a measurement device that has been used repeatedly since then.⁴ In seven comparable studies spanning 85 years, researchers obtained responses from college students to identify what changes and continuities in attitudes about minorities occurred over the generations. To measure the level of social acceptance, the social distance studies offered respondents seven choices for each group.

1. Would accept marrying into my family (1 point)
2. Would accept as a personal friend in my social circle (2 points)
3. Would accept as a neighbor on my street (3 points)
4. Would work in the same office (4 points)
5. Would only have as speaking acquaintances (5 points)
6. Would only have as visitors to my country (6 points)
7. Would bar from entering my country (7 points)

In the twenty-first-century studies (Table 1.1), non-ethnic whites still remained in the top position as the most accepted, with 5 of the other top 10 slots filled by Canadians, British, Irish, French, and Germans, essentially continuing an 85-year pattern. Particularly striking, though, was the dramatic rise of African Americans. Now ranking fifth, they first broke the racial barrier by entering the

Table 1.1 Mean Social Distance Rankings in 2012 and Comparisons to 2001

	Mean	(SD)	+/- vs. 2001	Rank in 2001
1. Americans	1.15	(.57)	+ .08	1
2. Italians	1.32	(.80)	+ .17	2
3. Canadians	1.35	(.89)	+ .15	3
4. British	1.36	(.91)	+ .13	4
5. African Americans	1.42	(.78)	+ .09	9
6. Irish	1.46	(.94)	+ .23	5
7. French	1.50	(1.03)	+ .22	6
8. Germans	1.51	(1.01)	+ .18	8
9. Greeks	1.52	(1.01)	+ .19	7
10. Indians (American)	1.57	(.94)	+ .17	12
11. Africans	1.61	(.93)	+ .18	13
12. Dutch	1.62	(1.09)	+ .27	10
13. Polish	1.64	(1.08)	+ .19	14
14. Puerto Ricans	1.64	(1.09)	+ .17	18
15. Filipinos	1.68	(1.08)	+ .22	16
16. Dominicans	1.71	(1.14)	+ .20	21
17. Chinese	1.72	(1.04)	+ .25	17
18. Other Hispanics/Latinos	1.72	(1.14)	+ .27	15
19. Russians	1.73	(1.17)	+ .23	20
20. Cubans	1.74	(1.20)	+ .21	23
21. Jews	1.74	(1.11)	+ .36	11
22. Jamaicans	1.74	(1.08)	+ .25	19
23. Japanese	1.80	(1.14)	+ .28	22
24. Mexicans	1.80	(1.29)	+ .25	25
25. Vietnamese	1.85	(1.11)	+ .16	28
26. Koreans	1.87	(1.24)	+ .33	24
27. Indians (India)	1.89	(1.22)	+ .29	26
28. Haitians	1.91	(1.27)	+ .28	27
29. Arabs	2.16	(1.55)	+ .22	30
30. Muslims	2.23	(1.52)	+ .35	29
All Groups	1.68	(.80)		

SOURCE: Vincent N. Parrillo and Christopher Donoghue, "The National Social Distance Study: Ten Years Later," *Sociological Forum* (September 2013): 597–614; and "Updating the Bogardus Social Distance Studies: A New National Study," *The Social Science Journal* 42 (2005): 257–271.

top sector in 2001 and placing ahead of most white ethnic groups in 2012. Other significant changes were the rise of Italians into the second position—ahead of the previously dominant English, Canadians, and French. Generally, though, the distribution showed non-ethnic white Americans, Canadians, and northern and western Europeans in the top third, with southern, central, and eastern Europeans in the middle third, and racial minorities in the bottom third. However, the researchers cautioned that the exact placement of a group in relation to those near it should not be given much importance because, due to the close scores, these rankings may be the result of sampling variability.

However, the upward movement of African Americans over many white ethnic groups is particularly noteworthy. First, it reveals African Americans' strong social acceptance level and may therefore reflect students' ease in racial interactions on their increasingly diverse campuses. Making this strong level of social acceptance even more striking is the underrepresentation of blacks among respondents. In the 2012 study, only 6.9 percent of the sample was black, lower than in all previous national studies, yet African Americans attained the best-ever social distance ranking. Furthermore, Asians and Hispanics expressed

Reality check

Cross-Racial College Friendships

Do college students actually have close friends in everyday life from outside their own racial or ethnic group? A recent study offers insight into that question.

While measuring social distance among college students at a midsize state university in the northeastern United States, three researchers also examined friendship patterns between Blacks-Hispanics, Blacks-Whites, Hispanics-Blacks, Hispanics-Whites, Whites-Blacks, and Whites-Hispanics. Their sample consisted of 297 freshmen, 52 sophomores, 73 juniors, and 83 seniors, of whom 297 were white, 71 black, and 80 Hispanic. No significant differences in responses existed among grade levels, but variances did occur among groups.

For black students, 60 percent had white friends and 38 percent had Hispanic friends. About 37 percent of Hispanic students had black friends and 42 percent reported having white friends. Among white students, 42 percent had black friends and 36 percent had Hispanic friends.

In an academic setting with a diverse student body (about 12 percent each of blacks and Hispanics), three of five black students have at least one white friend, meaning two of five do not. In the other five friendship possibilities, on average, two of five students have a cross-racial friend and three of five do not. The good news is that cross-racial friendships have increased in recent years, but the bad news is that these generally do not exist yet for the majority of college students.

Critical Thinking Questions

What percentage of your friends is not part of your own racial or ethnic group? Why do you think it is that way?

SOURCE: Adapted from Patricia Odell, Kathleen Korgen, and Gabe Wang, "Cross-Racial Friendships and Social Distance between Racial Groups on a College Campus," *Innovative Higher Education* 29 (2005): 291–305. Copyright © 2005 Springer. Used with permission.

greater social distances than did whites toward African Americans. These findings suggest that it is not the greater presence of people of color among respondents that explains the strong showing of blacks, but rather a much greater receptivity among white college students.

A slight increase in social distance occurred between 2001 and 2012, but that may be due to the passage of time. The 2001 study occurred just two months after the terrorist attacks on September 11, causing what the researchers called a “unity syndrome,” the reactive coalescing of diverse respondents into a shared group identity of “Americans” united against a common enemy.⁵ If so, then the 2012 data is perhaps an adjustment in attitudes a bit less tempered by the immediacy of that tragic and traumatic event. Generally speaking, college students of the twenty-first century are more receptive to outgroups than their twentieth-century counterparts, but their level of social acceptance of others still appears dependent on the similarity–attraction bond.

STUDENTS SPEAK

“All over the campus—in the student center, dining hall, and outside walking from class to class—mostly everywhere you look, a group of students of one ethnic group is sitting together separate from other ethnic groups that are sitting with their own as well. I don’t think people do this intentionally because they dislike people of other ethnic groups. I just think it is something based on interests. People make friends with others who have the same interests and values so they enjoy hanging out with each other.”

—GERMAN DECENA

Perceptions

By definition, the stranger is not only an outsider but also someone different and personally unknown. People perceive strangers primarily through **categoric knowing**—the classification of others on the basis of limited information obtained visually and perhaps verbally.⁶ People make judgments and generalizations on the basis of scanty information, confusing an individual’s characteristics with typical group-member characteristics. For instance, if a visiting Swede asks for tea rather than coffee, the host may conclude incorrectly that all Swedes dislike coffee.

Native-born Americans usually have viewed immigrants—first-generation Americans of different racial and ethnic groups—as a particular kind of stranger: one who intended to stay. A common reaction pattern is an initial curiosity about the presence of immigrants that is replaced by fear, suspicion, and distrust as their numbers increase. As a result, the strangers remain strangers as each group seeks its own kind for personal interaction.



Perception and reality are often not the same thing, whether it is an observation about the characteristics of a minority group, or an optical illusion like this one. Since light travels at different speeds in and out of such different optical mediums as air and water, it creates the impression that the straw in the water is in a different place than its true position.

The status of a stranger is consistent, whether we speak of the past, present, or future. German sociologist Georg Simmel (1858–1918) explained that strangers represent both *nearness*, because they are physically close, and *remoteness*, because they react differently to the immediate situation and have different values and ways of doing things.⁷ The stranger is both inside and outside: physically present and participating but mentally outside the situation with a mindset influenced by a different culture.

The natives perceive the stranger in an abstract, typified way, so the individual becomes the *totality*, or stereotype, of the entire group. In other words, because the stranger is someone unknown or unfamiliar, someone not understood, they see the stranger only in generalized terms, as a representative member of a “different” group.

In contrast, said Simmel, the stranger perceives the natives not in abstract but in specific, individual terms. Strangers are more objective about the natives because the strangers’ geographic mobility enhances their mental mobility. The stranger—not caught up in taken-for-granted assumptions, habits, and traditions, and also not participating fully in society—has a certain mental detachment and so observes each situation more acutely.

Interactions

Simmel approached the role of the stranger through an analysis of the formal structures of life. In contrast, Alfred Schutz—himself an immigrant from Austria to the United States—analyzed the stranger as lacking “intersubjective understanding.”⁸ By this, he meant that people from the same social world mutually “know” the language (including slang), customs, beliefs, symbols, and everyday behavior patterns that the stranger usually does not.

For the native, every social situation is a coming together not only of roles and identities but also of shared realities—the intersubjective structure of consciousness. What is taken for granted by the native is problematic to the stranger. In a familiar world, people live through the day by responding to the daily routine without questions or reflection. To strangers, however, every situation is new and is therefore experienced as a crisis (see the accompanying International Scene box).

Strangers experience a “lack of historicity”—a lack of the shared memory of those with whom they live. Human beings who interact over a period of time “grow old together.” Strangers, however, are “young”; as newcomers they experience at least an approximation of the freshness of childhood. They are aware

the International scene

Enhancing German Interaction with Americans

U.S. International, an organization that runs exchange programs, distributed a pamphlet, “An Information Guide for Germans on American Culture,” to Germans working as interns in U.S. companies. The pamphlet was based on previous German interns’ experiences and on their interviews with other colleagues; its intent was to provide insights into U.S. culture to ease German interactions with Americans. Here are some examples:

- Americans say “Hello” or “How are you?” when they see each other. “How are you?” is like “Hello.” A long answer is not expected; just answer, “Thank you, fine. How are you?”
- Using deodorant is a must.
- American women usually shave their legs and under their arms. Women who don’t like to do this should consider wearing clothes that cover these areas.
- Expect to be treated like all other Americans. You won’t receive special treatment because you are a German. Try not to talk with other Germans in German if Americans are around; this could make them feel uncomfortable.
- Please consider the differences in verbal communication styles between Americans and Germans. The typical German speaking style sounds abrupt and rude to Americans. Keep this in mind when talking to Americans.
- Be polite. Use words like “please” and “thank you.” It is better to use these too often than not enough. Also, be conscious of your voice and the expression on your face. Your voice should be friendly, and you should wear a smile. Don’t be confused by the friendliness and easygoing, non-excitable nature of the people. They are deliberate, think independently, and do things their own way. Americans are proud of their independence.
- Keep yourself out of any discussions at work about race, sex, religion, or politics. Be open-minded; don’t make judgments based on past experiences in Germany.
- Be aware that there are a lot of different cultures in the United States. There also are many different churches, which mean a great deal to their members. Don’t be quick to judge these cultures; this could hurt people’s feelings.
- Do it the American way, and try to intermingle with the Americans. Think positive.

Critical Thinking Question

What guidelines for overcoming ethnocentrism should Americans follow when traveling to or working in other countries?

of things that go unnoticed by the natives, such as the natives’ customs, social institutions, appearance, and lifestyle. Also existing within the natives’ taken-for-granted world are social constructions of race and ethnicity that, to the stranger, are new realities. Race as a social construct can be illustrated by the case of Barack Obama. To many whites, he is a black man. Considering the long-standing, rigid, racial classification system in the United States of white or non-white, perhaps this perception is understandable. Obama, however, had a black Kenyan father and a white American mother, so he is actually biracial. This led