

CHAPTER 1 – UNDERSTANDING RACE AND ETHNICITY

The basic definitions employed in the book are presented. Minority and majority groups are defined in their sociological context as subordinate and dominant groups, respectively, without regard to numerical proportion. Race, which seems to be a simple concept, is very complex. The text distinguishes between race's biological aspect and its sociological significance. The latter is the subject of the book and the source of tension between groups that view each other as different in socially significant ways.

Students are introduced to the functionalist, conflict, and labeling perspectives to racial and ethnic relations. The functionalist perspective cautions us to see racism and sexism as dysfunctional to the dominant group. Conflict theorists emphasize social inequality. Labeling theory and concepts of stratification, stereotyping, and the self-fulfilling prophecy contribute to the analysis of intergroup relations.

A historical analysis of dominant and subordinate relationships identifies some processes that lead to minority group formation and others that destroy subordinate groups. Fusion, as expressed in the popular notion of America as a melting pot, is contrasted with processes of assimilation, which leaves individuals in marginal positions and dictates conformity to the dominant group's way of viewing the world, and pluralism, which enables minority groups to maintain their own culture and also participate in society. The Afrocentric perspective is discussed as one pluralist approach to conformity with the dominant group's tradition. There are definite distinctions among fusion, assimilation, and pluralism as concepts. However, the differences in practice are less striking.

IDENTIFICATION ITEMS

Items marked by a plus sign (+) are in addition to those listed in the chapter's "Key Terms" section.

Afrocentric perspective (p. 36)
+annexation (p. 22)
+Asante, Molefi Kete (p. 36)
assimilation (p. 28)
+Becker, Howard (p. 18)
bilingualism (p. 31)
biological race (p. 10)
+blaming the victim (p. 18)
class (p. 15)
colonialism (p. 22)
conflict perspective (p. 17)
+Du Bois, W. E. B. (pp. 8 - 9)
dysfunction (p. 17)
emigration (p. 21)
ethnic cleansing (p. 24)
ethnic group (p. 8)
+expulsion (p. 25)
+extermination (p. 24)
functionalist perspective (p. 16)
fusion (p. 27)
+gender groups (p. 10)
genocide (p. 24)