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S. Rowan Wolf
Chapter One

CONSTRUCTING SOCIETY
Chapter 1: Constructing Society

You are a social scientist embarking on a project of social exploration and discovery. The tools presented in these first two chapters will aid you in this project. They are tools to assist you in positioning yourself as both an observer of, and an actor in, society. Your task is to become skillful at identifying patterns of social difference in social interaction and society, and the processes used to create and maintain the system.

Social scientists look for patterns within the society and attempt to see the connections between the patterns. We hunt for processes and mechanisms, themes and story lines. In examining diversity in the United States, we are looking for how it is “built”; what “fuels” it; and where it is going. Chapter one provides the “building blocks” to understand the basic construction of society (particularly U.S. society) in relationship to diversity.

Upon completing this chapter, you should have a basic though sound understanding of how society works. You will be introduced to concepts such as culture, social stratification, and socialization, and see how they interact with each other in a variety of ways. In this endeavor you are both a social scientist examining a particular category of phenomena, and an individual subject to the forces of the society you are examining. I would ask that as you go through this chapter that you think of how these components and mechanisms influence you in your day-to-day life.

While we perceive society as a relative constant, it is not set in stone. One problem with using the ideas of building blocks, and discussions of constructing society, is that it reinforces the idea of society as rigid. The reality is that society is relatively fluid (or malleable) in some ways. While the processes remain relatively stable, societies may change dramatically. We know that the race relations of the eighteenth century are not those of the twenty-first century. We know that the position and lives of women in 1900 are not the same as in 2000 nor will it likely be the same in 2060. We also know that while things have changed, the distinctions have not disappeared. We know that the categories of race and sex (for example) are as important in the present as they have been in the past. However, they are not necessarily important in the same ways.

Building Block One

Culture

Culture is a term that is used to mean a number of things in different contexts. Normally, when people hear the term culture they assume that one is talking about such things as art, architecture, clothing, or food. These types of things are part of what culture is. Others may assume that “culture” means high culture such as opera, ballet, and fancy dinner tables with lots of silverware. This too may be a part of culture. Actually, culture is the values, beliefs, and behavioral expectations shared by a people, as well as physical manifestations that are created by a people. In other words, culture
encompasses both a physical or material component such as clothes and food, and a non-physical (or non-material) component such as values and beliefs.

You notice that part of the definition of culture is that it is shared by a people. Culture is shared, and it varies from one “people” to another. It is culture that both binds people together through shared ways of being in the world, and distinguishes one people from another. Culture provides continuity within the group as it is passed from one generation to the next. As people share a culture, and interact with each other within the rules and structures of that culture, they are a society. Society is people collectively sharing a culture. Failure to pass on the culture, particularly the non-material culture, means the death of the culture and the society even though individuals descended from the group may live on into the indefinite future. One way that a culture might be killed is through genocide which may take both physical and cultural forms. The following insert discusses the United Nations’ position on what constitutes genocidal actions.

### Genocide

Most people are familiar with the term “genocide” as it is used to mean the mass murdering of a people. In 1948 the United Nations passed the Convention on Punishment and Prevention of the Crime of Genocide. This Convention details five acts that are considered genocidal under international law.

“a) Killing members of the group;  
b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;  
c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;  
d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;  
e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”  
(Churchill, 1994:14)

This definition goes far beyond murdering the people of a group to actions that destroy a peoples’ way of life and ability to transmit their culture. Genocide, as defined by the U.N., encompasses both the physical destruction of a group, and the systematic degradation of a group.

It is interesting to note that, unlike most member nations, the United
One way to look at culture would be as in the following diagram.

![Diagram of Culture]

**Material culture includes all physical aspects of a culture.** Different cultures share some material components such as housing, clothes, food, etc. However, what that material culture looks like and the meanings applied to it can be very different across cultures. These meanings are linked to the non-material part of culture.

**The non-material culture includes values and beliefs, the rules for behavior, and language.** Values include the standards of judgement of a people -- what is right / wrong, good / bad, desirable / undesirable, beautiful / ugly. Values include the shared beliefs of a people, and the meanings of the world and interactions around them.

Values provide meaning to the physical culture. All cultures have some form of housing, but not all housing is the same. Even within the United States all housing is not the same. In the U.S., we have gone so far as to have elaborate codes about housing. The basic expectation is that it has sound doors and windows that lock, running hot and cold water, indoor plumbing, electricity and a reliable heat source. Beyond these codes, we have expectations that houses will generally include a minimum of a bedroom, bathroom, and kitchen. In other words, there are specific rooms for specific functions. Obviously, this expectation of what housing is in the U.S. is different from other places around the world. However, even every structure that meets the requirements of housing in the U.S. are not the same. We are taught to value an apartment differently than a three bedroom, two bath private home in the suburbs. In fact, housing in the U.S. is considered to reflect our individual economic status and success. We frequently go so far as to assume that someone who lives in a “nice” house in a “nice” neighborhood is in many ways a “better” person than someone who lives in a “poor” neighborhood and a house that needs a lot of work. We are also “taught” through a variety of means that we should each want and strive for the nice house in the nice neighborhood.
One component of cultural values is **beliefs**. Beliefs include simple things such as glass is a solid (it is actually a liquid which in our environment never truly becomes solid). Beliefs can be more complex such as humans are “above” all other living things. Beliefs help explain “our” world to us and why things are the way they are. In the context of social order, they provide support and maintenance of why people have prestige (or lack of it). In some ways it can be characterized as the “story” (Quinn, 1992) a people live. The realm of values and beliefs will become important when we begin discussing such things as racism, sexism, and classism.

**Norms**, on the other hand, reflect the rules for behavior. This is somewhat different from the way we usually think of norms which is actual behavior in the world. However, when we look at others or ourselves behaving in the world, we are judging their behavior against rules of how people are supposed to behave. Norms are not a list of written rules, though some norms may have been placed in a formal context such as laws. The overwhelming majority of norms are not written down. We enforce norms every day in our interactions with others through the use of sanctions. **Sanctions** are rewards or punishments for following or not following the prescribed norms. Acceptance or inclusion is the most common and powerful reward for following the rules. Exclusion or rejection is the most common penalty for breaking the rules, though penalties can go all the way to death.

Each of us within a culture is what we might call “Norm Police.” We reinforce the cultural norms every day in every interaction regardless of how noteworthy or unnoteworthy those interactions might be. We make positive or negative eye contact; smile or wear a forbidding mask; laugh at or laugh with; nod or ignore; share our space or move away. All of these are signals that someone is okay or not okay; that we judge them as being safe or unsafe people; acceptable or unacceptable. In turn, we monitor our own actions and are reinforced into “proper” behavior by those around us.

Norms are derived from cultural values and serve to reinforce those values. Place yourself in the following scenario. You are at a theater with some friends. You are in line with your friends at the concession stand when you see a guy walk by with toilet paper stuck to his shoe. What do you do? What do your friends do? Why do you respond this way? What rules is the person breaking and why is it a big deal? If you think it’s not a big deal, would you and your friends respond the same way if the guy had a post-it note stuck to his shoe? What is so significant about the toilet paper? What values are being reinforced?

There is obviously something different about toilet paper on one’s shoes. That difference has to do with **values** about bodily functions and what they mean. In mainstream U.S. culture elimination of bodily wastes is considered “dirty.” What goes on the bathroom is also considered personal and private. Therefore, no one is supposed to know that we’ve “been there” and “done that.” We are trained from early on that before we leave the bathroom we are supposed to go through a number of actions which “erase” the evidence of where we have been. We wash our hands, check ourselves over for buttons and zippers, etc. When the man walks through the theater with toilet paper stuck on his shoe, he is
unwittingly breaking this very important rule. We could call it the “been there/done that” rule if we want to.

There is something else happening here. That something is the reaction of observers to this unwitting rule violation. Obviously, the person is not deliberately violating the norm, but that rarely softens our reaction. We may laugh at him; poke our friends in the ribs and make faces; etc. We are pointing out that we are not breaking the rule . . . and he is. He is deviant to some extent. Witnessing this violation, experiencing our feelings and sharing the response with our friends also heightens our awareness of the rule – and what the consequences of violating it are. We will probably have a heightened awareness of this norm for some period of time.

What about language?
Language is at once a part of culture, a reflection of it, and the primary vehicle for transmitting it. Language is a symbolic system. Words and sounds (and in written form signs) are given certain meanings which change, disappear, or are created as the culture changes. This system of shared meanings allows us to communicate with each other. It seems so natural that we rarely stop to think about how we know what things mean, or what the assumptions are that we share with others when we communicate with them. Contained within a culture’s language are the relationships between things and the various ways of expressing those relationships. Also, contained in language are the values and beliefs of the culture.

Language extends beyond the spoken or written words. Tone of voice, inflection, and body language can completely transform the meaning of the words used. The meanings of these things are also shared. This separate language of gestures and facial expressions both modify spoken language and can be a language of its own. This type of language, generally referred to as para-language, follows the same “rules” in that meanings are shared. Language both reflects and defines the reality as perceived through cultural eyes.

While people who share a culture also share a language, sharing a language does not mean they are sharing a culture. For example, though there are strong similarities between England and the United States (peoples of both countries have English as their native language) the two cultures are not the same. Likewise, many peoples have Spanish as their native language; however, they are not all the same culture.

After this brief description of culture, it seems apparent that it forms the framework for social control. Values generate norms and the reinforcement of norms controls or constrains people to act in certain ways. At the same time, enforcing norms reinforces the values that generated the norms. Beyond this, living within the rules, and sanctioning those who step outside them makes us “good” people. Some of the mechanisms for learning (and internalizing) the culture are discussed later in this chapter under
Chapter 1: Constructing Society

Whose Culture?
We make an assumption, which is sometimes incorrect, that culture, society, and nation are the same thing. Society is the people who are collectively sharing the culture. Nations are physical territories with boundaries which are generally agreed upon by governments. Within any given nation you may have multiple cultures, but usually there is what is referred to as a dominant culture. (See insert below for definitions). This culture may achieve dominance in a number of ways. A culture may be imposed on others through conquest, imperialism, war, or internal conflict. The dominant culture may also have been the original culture of an area. In most situations, the dominant culture sets the non-material culture, and the structure of the way things are done within a given nation.

Simply because a culture is the dominant culture, does not mean it is the only culture within a given nation. However, it usually means that everyone within the nation is required to follow the formal rules and norms of the dominant culture. People of other cultures may or may not be able to openly practice their own cultures and speak their own languages. As individuals, and as groups, there are obvious benefits to having your culture be the dominant culture. The world is defined within the framework of your culture. The rules, norms, and language are yours. You may receive formal benefits of being a member of the dominant culture such as entrance into schools and jobs, rights to be a full citizen and be protected by the legal system. You may even have a special status within the society.

Because we are generally raised within a specific culture, we may assume that the way things are within that culture is “natural.” For many, there is little competition to this view. The people around us act like us, look like us, speak like us, etc. Since there is this assumption about the nature of our lives, it is not unusual for people to be

**Dominant and subordinate**, as well as majority and minority, are not simply a question of numerical superiority. In other words, what makes a group the dominant (or majority) group is not because they have more people in their group than other groups within the society.

In the social and sociological context, it is power - not numbers- that determines whether a group is dominant or not. Power means that a group controls access to the social resources of a society. This group makes the rules, determines what the “common” culture will be, and has high status within the social structure.

Two examples of groups who are numerical majorities and social minorities are North American women and Black South Africans. In the U.S. women make up roughly 52% of the population; however, they have historically (and still currently) faced numerous restrictions on participating in the society in relationship to men.

While Black South Africans make up roughly 90% of the people in South Africa, White South Africans are the majority. Even after the end of Apartheid, Black South Africans earn only 25 cents for each dollar earned by White South Africans.
somewhat ethnocentric. Ethnocentrism is the belief that your culture is the only right way to organize society and believe and behave. When this belief is carried to an extreme, people are considered ethnocentric. Ethnocentrism is a form of prejudice. Prejudice is a set of beliefs and/or attitudes about a group of people, or a person, based upon perceived membership in that group. While one can have positive or negative prejudices, the term is generally used to connote negative beliefs and attitudes. In the case of ethnocentrism, the prejudice is a negative belief about cultures different from one’s own. In the United States, the dominant, or “American” culture is said to be Eurocentric. This means that the culture and structure reflect most strongly those who came to North America from, predominantly, western Europe. This raises the question of what happens when people leave one culture for another, or change location - as in the case of Europeans colonizing what became the United States. Environment -both physical and social- obviously plays a role in culture.

Here we had primarily British colonists in a setting very different from Britain. The social structure (based on law, religion, ways of ruling etc.) was British. However, the stresses were very different from Britain. As time passed and other western Europeans colonized, they came into a social environment dominated by those who were of British origin. This essentially means that those of British descent had the upper hand.

Colonization of the Americas is different from people immigrating to a new land. Europeans came into a territory that was populated by at least 500 indigenous societies. The relationship to these peoples was largely not one of a few immigrants coming to someone else’s homeland. It was one of claiming new lands for the possession and control of various European countries. From the outset, the relationship was one of conquest - not immigration. Later immigrants came into a social environment that was still largely British and conquest in orientation. This is because the established colonists wanted to populate this continent with their own kind.

People immigrating to the United States today still bring their cultures with them. Once here they may retain various cultural behaviors, but the environment, especially the social environment, is of the United States - not their cultures of origin. In order to survive in this environment, they must make accommodations to the dominant culture. This changes their culture from what it was originally. Culture is dynamic, meaning that it changes over time. The forces shaping the cultures of immigrants in the U.S. are not the forces shaping culture in the immigrants’ homelands. While ongoing immigration from that homeland will generally keep immigrants cultures in closer synch with their culture of origin, the two will diverge over time. Hence, Japanese American culture is not the same as Japanese culture; Mexican American culture is not the same as Mexican culture; European American culture is not the same as European culture.

This points out another tendency which is to generalize cultures into broad categories and then assume that we are dealing with something specific. We see this tendency when we hear Hispanic, Native, African or Asian American cultures. There is no single, unified culture for any of these groups. For
example, there are over five hundred Native American tribes in the United States, some with their own lands and each with their own language and culture.

A word about deviance

We like to think of deviance as something that is totally separate from normal, and those who are deviant as totally different from ourselves. **Deviance is a violation of norms.** Without norms, there would be no deviance. Stated another way, norms and deviance define each other. **Deviance is culturally based.** Because norms are defined within a specific cultural context, then what is considered rule-breaking is also within the same cultural context. **Deviance is about power – the power to make rules and the power to break them.** Those who have power within the society make the rules. Those with power also are likely to be less heavily penalized if they break the rules.

One of the reflections of the dynamic nature of culture is reflected in the interplay between norms and deviance. It was not that long ago that it was considered a significant norm violation for males in the U.S. to wear ear rings. Males who wore ear rings were considered to be either homosexual, Gypsies, or part of a motorcycle gang. None of these associations were considered positive by the mainstream. Today, men can wear ear rings, but can they wear any ear rings they want? No. There are still norms about men and ear rings, the norms have just changed. This seems to reflect a loosening (or liberalizing) of norms. However, not all norms have gotten looser. For example, the norms around the use of alcohol and tobacco have tightened significantly over the last couple of decades of the twentieth century.

There are tremendous implications to the cultural nature of deviance. If you think back over the discussion of culture above, some of the implications come immediately to mind. First is that there is more than one culture represented in the United States. This means that what might be considered deviant could be an issue. For example, well into the 1970s it was considered appropriate to remove Native American children from their families. Between 25 and 35 percent of Native American children were removed from their families and placed in foster homes. Many more were removed and sent to boarding schools. It is estimated that in 1971 ninety percent of Navajo children were in boarding schools (Byler, 1977). The justification for the removal of these children was largely a consequence of Native American tribal cultures having different family forms and child raising strategies than the dominant cultural group.

Certainly the example of the removal of Native children points to an impact of both culture and power. However, it also raises another issue about deviance. The dominant culture in the United States does not reflect all of the peoples of the nation. As discussed above, it reflects the culture of a specific group of Americans. This creates a situation where those not of this dominant group by default are “deviant” to some extent. While race and culture (for example) are beyond our individual control, they may place us either as “normal” or “other” within this society. We will return to this discussion under social
construction later in this chapter.
Building Block Two

Social Stratification
Social stratification can be seen as a foundation for the culture and the society. It sets out the fundamental distinctions between groups and individuals. It largely determines how we will interact with each other, and what the conditions of our lives, as individuals and groups, will be. Social stratification is society’s way of systematically ranking groups and individuals into a hierarchy, and according them power, privilege, and access to social resources relative to that ranking. Stratification systems provide a social hierarchy which results in imbalances of power and access between higher status and lower status groups. This imbalance is an assumed and integral function of stratification, and certainly perpetuates it. In fact, the imbalance makes it very difficult for the hierarchy to do anything but reproduce itself. There are a number of variables in this definition of social stratification.

The first component is the term stratification itself. Stratification is built upon the word “stratum” meaning “layer.” Strata, which is the plural, means multiple layers stacked upon each other. According to our definition, the layering of these strata has a meaning - hierarchy. In the social sense of the term, hierarchy means that not all strata are valued equally. Those in the lower strata are “less important” than those in the higher strata from society’s perspective. The stratum that one belongs to determines what one’s power, privilege, and access to social resources are.

Social resources are essentially anything that is considered valuable or desirable in the society. While this may include such things as money, land, or gold, it may also include less tangible items such as, education, health care, or personal prestige. One’s placement in the social order then affects what level of access and control one will have regarding social resources. Those at the top of the hierarchy will
have relatively free access. In fact, possession of valued social resources may be seen as their “right.” Also the decisions about other people’s access to resources lies largely in the hands of the upper stratum. Those persons/groups lower in the hierarchy may be totally denied access to some social resources.

Critical to social stratification is that it is systematic. In other words, it is organized, arranged. The social stratification system is the basic arrangement of social interaction. Everything relates to it in some way: how we interact with each other; how social institutions such as religion, the political order, education, and economy work and are structured; what things need to be done and who is to do them. Social stratification is systematic in that it organizes social structure.

Strata are comprised of people who meet characteristics the society determines make up the criteria for membership within each stratum. This is important in that access to social resources are determined by what strata one is a member of, and membership is determined by the society - not the individual. Stratification systems, and the characteristics needed to be placed (or located) within a stratum are generally based upon either ascribed or achieved characteristics. Ascribed characteristics are usually those one is born with and cannot change. These types of characteristics may include such things as race, sex, caste or clan, age, and religion. Achieved characteristics are based upon individuals’ achievements and may be such things as skill or economics.

Since ascribed characteristics are ones which cannot be changed under normal circumstance, stratification systems based upon ascriptive characteristics are considered “closed” systems. This means that you are born (or placed) into a stratum and you cannot change it. Achieved systems on the other hand are considered within the realm of the individual’s ability to change (hard work, acquiring a skill, etc) and therefore are considered “open” systems. This means that individuals can change their stratum. In practice, there are no known contemporary societies where the stratification system is either totally closed or totally open. Instead, most societies lie along a continuum of closed to open.

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It was once argued that India was a pure example of a totally closed system as the caste system allowed no social mobility (the ability to move from one stratum to another). However, India began
abolishing the caste system in 1950 and continues to pass laws and policies regarding it today. On the other hand, the United States was touted as being the only totally open system as stratification was seen as being based solely upon socio-economic class (which was seen as purely achievement based). This is a good example of cultural blindness as at the same time this theory was popular, both women (of all races) and people of color (of both sexes) were denied significant rights and access into the social class “competition.” Hence, the U.S. has ascriptive components of its stratification system that affect its achieved components.

It is worth noting that the classification of stratification systems in itself may be culturally biased in several regards. Within the context of the U.S. value system, “closed” is frequently interpreted as “bad” or “undesirable,” while open implies “good” or “desirable.” This is not a “human” interpretation but a cultural one. Not all peoples would make the same value judgement of open versus closed systems as someone socialized in the United States. A second cultural assumption is that hierarchy is “good” or “necessary.” This is especially true in places such as the U.S. where we are socialized to believe that we are all equal and the differences between our achievement rest within ourselves. Therefore, everyone is where they are “supposed” to be because their social placement reflects their efforts and abilities. Further, it is believed that people “deserve” to be in a particular social class either because of their hard work - or the lack of it.

Social stratification systems have two basic similarities: 1) to the best of our knowledge, all societies have some form of stratification system; 2) these systems persist from one generation to the next. Let’s discuss the implications of these two similarities.

First, all societies have a stratification system. While this appears to be true, everything else about these systems may vary from what the characteristics are that shape membership in a strata to the range of inequality between strata. What does remain consistent here is that the characteristics associated with the higher stratum are defined as being more valuable and desirable than those assigned to the lower strata. This is not because every member of a strata has the characteristics intrinsically, but because the society defines that all members have those characteristics. One example of this is the characteristics assigned to men in the U.S. society. Men are assumed to be strong, competitive, and rational. Women, who hold a lower status are assumed to be weak(er), less competitive, and irrational or emotional. This society values strength, competition, and rationality and so those characteristics are assigned to the higher status group - males.

Stratification systems also persist over time. This characteristic is extremely important because it indicates the embeddness of stratification. This multi-generational component means that it is relatively constant within the organization of the society and reinforced through social institutions. Secondly, the only way it can be passed from one generation to the next is through the socialization process. This means that it is ingrained in the culture as well.
One of the most critical functions of the stratification system is that it provides every member of, and visitor to, a society with a status or social location. We generally interpret “status” to mean prestige. Sociologists change this understanding of status by interpreting status as equal to a position which is assigned prestige.

\[ \text{status} = \text{location} = \text{prestige} \]

In this discussion of social stratification each of us is placed into a category or categories at birth. Placement in these categories establishes our social location(s). In the United States, there are a variety of “strands” of our stratification system. At a minimum we are placed in at least four positions based upon our sex, race, social class of our parents, and our age (infant/child). These four different positions are referred to as master statuses because of the importance they hold in broad societal terms. While all of these categories interact with each other, they may also interact with other things on a cultural or sub-cultural level. For example, were we born to an unmarried middle-class teenage woman; left on the door step of the hospital; are we first born son or daughter, or the child of a billionaire, etc.? Our statuses then become the foundation of how others in the society interact with us, and we with them. They determine to a large extent the rules we will live under both in terms of cultural norms and societal laws. Each of us is a walking embodiment of our stratification system.

In the United States, we have three primary components of the stratification system. While each of these are important in their own right, they also interact with, and reinforce each other significantly. Determining what our “real” position is in society is virtually impossible because the statuses are not additive, and are to some extent contextual. Questions such as “what is the most important – race, sex, or class?” are, in this author’s opinion, not answerable. While you will find those who argue that one of these components is more important than the others, it would be a difficult stance to prove. Social scientists know that each of these “strands” have their own measurable significance. Social class differences cross sex and race boundaries; race crosses sex and social class boundaries, and sex crosses race and social class boundaries. Some would argue that social class doesn’t mean quite the same thing when we look at sex and race.

I used the word “strands” above quite deliberately. Social stratification is not two dimensional. In fact, stratification is not even three dimensional. Let’s use rope as an analogy for our stratification system. Ropes are made of numerous strands of material braided together. In fact, each strand is composed of numerous lengths of fiber woven together. Picture that you have this rope in your hands. Look at the end of it and see that there are three major strands that comprise the rope. Imagine that one strand represents sex, another race, and another social class. If you unbraided the rope you have three strands, but you do not have a rope any longer – you have the parts for a rope.

To take this analogy one step further, look at an individual strand. It too is made up of numerous smaller strands of fiber. Each of those strands is part of someone, maybe even you, who has been
grouped together with a number of others based upon a specific criteria. A part of you is braided into each major strand of the rope, along with others who match specific characteristics. Since we are “scattered” across the various major strands of the rope, it would be difficult to take only one strand and say it is the most important (in a social sense).

It is popular in the United States to argue that social class is the most important component of our system. There are a variety of reasons for this, not the least being that we have been taught that social class is “up to the individual.” While there may be an element of truth to this, it ignores the impacts of sex and race on social class achievement. In fact, it ignores the impact of the social class of your family (or family surrogate) on your life chances and access to social resources. We will discuss these arguments at greater length in the chapter on social class.

**Status and roles**

Status, as mentioned above refers to one’s social positions within a society, and we all hold multiple statuses at any given time in our lives. These positions are pre-existing for the individual just as a society pre-exists the individual. We are slotted into our position in the hierarchy based upon what society has determined to be important characteristics, and we share those social locations with others who have similar characteristics. The prestige component of a status has to do with the way that other members of the society view and judge you based upon your social location and how you are performing within that status. Every status has roles that are assigned to it. These roles are the acting out of the responsibilities and norms of the status. An analogy that some find useful is that a status is similar to a job title, while the roles of that status are similar to the job description. *Every status has roles* just as every job has job duties.

In terms of master statuses, the job title (status) might be female, and the roles would be how a female is supposed to act and be within the context of the society. Roles always have two components: a doing component that says what one is supposed to do, and a being component that says how one is supposed to be (act) within that role.

We interact constantly as individuals of different statuses and roles. While we may individualize our roles to reflect our own personality, we generally do that within the limits of what the society has determined to be acceptable. If we exceed those limits we are considered at best odd and at worst deviant. If our status is high enough and we exceed the limits of the role we may be considered eccentric rather than deviant.

**Social institutions**

Social institutions are relatively stable patterns of interaction that members of the society engage in to meet the survival needs of the society. What does a society need in order to survive? What are the basic needs? First, it needs to be able to replace members of the society as they die.
Therefore all societies have some pattern of relations around family, and within that institution other institutions and regulations about marriage, acceptable sexual mates, etc. It is not enough to just replace societal members. These members must learn how to be members of the society and this involves a variety of institutions such as the family, education, religion and more recently the media. These new members need to survive in some way, and so societies have organization around the production and distribution of goods and services. This is known as the institution of economy. In order to maintain stability a society needs to have some sense of order (institutions of the political order, and religion), and a sense of common purpose and identity (all of the above institutions may be involved here). Certainly many other institutions may be created by a society either as distinct patterns, or as part of other social institutions. For example, there may be an institution of medical care.

While we can identify a number of social institutions, they do not function separately, but are strongly integrated with one another. While each have identifiable patterns of interactions aimed at specific functions, they are part of one whole. What ties the institutions together in the society, and sets the framework or context for the interactions, are the same as for individuals in the society - shared culture and the stratification system. Social institutions are not buildings or machines. They are people working and interacting in certain ways. They are us living in our society. The rules (norms) that govern our behavior in society also govern us in social institutions. The values and beliefs that constitute the shared cultural mindscape govern a society’s institutions.

As social scientists, we can look at social institutions to see broad scale patterns of inequality that reflect the stratification system. We can see what groups do well or poorly in institutions such as education, economy and health. We can see what stories and myths are prevalent in the society and the roles that different groups play in them. We can look at the law and see how it deals with different groups. As social scientists, we look for patterns. These patterns consist of the lived experiences of individuals and the social rules that comprise the society. The existence of a pattern does not mean that every individual’s experience is the same or matches the pattern. It does mean that there is something at work in the society that moves collections of individuals to have similar experiences and outcomes.

In the discussion of culture, prejudice was defined as “a set of beliefs and/or attitudes about a group of people, or a person, based upon perceived membership in that group.” When we see and experience the patterns of inequality that are embedded in the stratification system, we know that we are seeing something more than a few prejudiced individuals. Rather we are seeing institutional discrimination. **Institutional discrimination is the arrangements or practices in social institutions and their related organizations that tend to favor one group (the dominant group) over other groups.** These arrangements or practices may be conscious or unconscious actions, policies, and choices that tend to maintain groups in their socially proscribed stations. Institutional discrimination is characterized by its continual and ongoing nature as it is generally embedded within the processes, policies, rules, and norms of the organization or dominant group.
Institutional discrimination reflects the **cultural ideology** that underpins and supports the stratification system. A cultural ideology is a way of thinking that characterizes a particular society. In the United States, we can clearly identify numerous patterns of difference across various groups based on sex, race, ethnicity and social class, among others. We have words such as sexism, racism, ethnocentrism, and classism that we generally assume reflect individual’s beliefs about (and sometimes actions towards) groups that are different from their own. However, the existence of institutional discrimination points to a social, not a personal, phenomenon. It in fact suggests that the source of both individual and institutional prejudice and discrimination springs from the same source - the cultural belief system.

Building Block Three

**Socialization**

Socialization is the process by which we internalize the society around us - particularly the culture. Through socialization we internalize group values and norms. While much of socialization occurs in the early years of life, it is a life long process. Through socialization we internalize the appropriate patterns of interpersonal and group interaction. We internalize the beliefs and values of our group. We develop our sense of individual personhood and world view.

You will notice that I used the term “internalize” several times in the paragraph above. I use this because it is a stronger term than learn, and more accurately captures the essence of what happens in socialization. When we learn something, we assume that we learned it consciously and can recall the information or skill at will. In learning we assume that, to some extent, we are in control of the process. We are rarely aware of what is happening in socialization, and especially as children, are not in control of the process. Socialization happens through the deliberate and incidental actions of those around us. Sociologists refer to these “others” as socialization agents. They include: the family, our peers, schools, churches/long houses, groups we may be a part of (day care, teams, scouts, etc.), and the media to name a few. While we certainly learn explicit things during socialization (chew with your mouth closed, don’t interrupt, etc.) many things we learn simply by watching or by inference.

The following box is a good example of what we learn during socialization. It is the story of a little girl growing up in a small town in Germany during the Nazi era.
We can see that there are explicit things we learn such as the rules of good manners. However, there are implicit parts of socialization -- the status of children in relationship to adults -- and an extrapolative part -- all adults aren’t really adults.

One of the most central aspects of our socialization is interacting within and across statuses. Status becomes central in virtually all of our interactions with the world.

Much of the way we learn to be in the world is through observing how others around us act and interact. We notice who they interact with. We also learn through the ways that people react to us. In the discussion of culture, I stated that one of the strongest sanctions to which we respond is acceptance (and conversely the fear of rejection or exclusion). If we look at this from the eyes of a child, it becomes very clear why acceptance is of highest priority.

Children are defenseless and dependent on others to survive. Learning, and learning quickly to be liked by others – particularly adults – is an absolute necessity. Failure to do so can result in death. We might say that the desire to be accepted is a survival mechanism. However, we need more than for adults to like us enough to feed us and give us a place out of the storm. We need (physically and emotionally need) to be picked up, cuddled, talked sweetly to. In other words we need (not want) to be cared for, loved.

We see this need demonstrated in a number of examples. Luckily for most of us they are the exception and not the rule. Children who are isolated or not lovingly cared for suffer a variety of problems from death, to bizarre behavior, to lack of ability to speak, to what we broadly call “failure to thrive.” While “failure to thrive” can have organic causes, the most prevalent non-organic cause is lack of emotional bonding to an adult. This failure can actually turn off the child’s production of growth hormone which can lead to death. Some researchers, medical and social work practitioners are seeing failure to thrive
as an issue for seniors as well.

This need to be accepted carries over into our most incidental interactions with others. While this need is psychological and physical in nature, it is also strongly social and societal. It is our culture that informs us what is “acceptable” or “unacceptable.” This acceptability applies to our status and our being and doing within those contexts. It also applies to our appropriate interactions with others and acting correctly in an infinite array of social situations. All of this is structured within the society.

As noted above, while a significant amount of socialization occurs when we are children it continues to our death. We like to think of ourselves as gaining personal strength as we age so we are less susceptible to the influences of others; however, we continue to both consciously and unconsciously adapt in order to be accepted and liked by others.

Status socialization is a key component of the socialization process. Certainly whatever master statuses are important in the society will be part of our socialization regardless of where in the status hierarchy we are. By now, most of us have heard of sex role socialization and we will discuss it in detail later in this text. However, there is also the much less explored status socialization into racial and social class statuses.

It is interesting that our socialization into the age system is also generally unremarked. It is assumed but not identified as age socialization. Age socialization is perhaps our first and most critical introduction into status and how it works. It teaches us the basic power dynamics of social interaction – that of child and adult. Many of the same dynamics consistent in adult-child interactions are similar to other status interactions. For example, it is not unusual for lower status individuals to be “talked down to,” ignored, reprimanded, or treated as if they were unintelligent.

Putting the Blocks Together

Social construction
The core of social construction is acknowledging that we as human beings and societies apply meaning to the world. Essentially, in defining the world we define social reality. Most students respond to this idea with “that makes sense.” However, that agreement is quickly challenged when we start thinking about the implications of meaning and “reality.” This challenge comes because while we logically understand that we learn the meanings of words and signs, we are taught that the “world” itself and everything in it is an unquestionable reality. In other words, we are raised as “essentialists” believing that the essence of a thing is in the thing itself - not in what we define it to mean.

W.I. and Swayne Thomas (1928) created a theorem that captures the “essence” of social construction.
They argued that things that are defined as real are real in their consequences. This statement can be applied to a large body of experience. Let’s talk about some examples of things that are socially constructed but which we assume to be real or natural.

First let me share a story with you. A friend of mine was at a potluck with a husband and wife (the Somé’s) from Africa. As is not unusual at such events, the men were in the living room and the women were in the kitchen making preparations to put dinner on the table. As the women were putting the food out on the table, my friend asked the woman from Africa to get the casserole out of the oven and put it on the table. She nodded and without hesitation opened the over, took out the casserole and walked into the other room to put it on the table. The women gasped and stuttered with shock, and asked her if she were all right. She replied that of course she was all right, why shouldn’t she be? They wanted to know how she could pick up a casserole dish with her bare hands that had been in the oven at 375 degrees for forty-five minutes and not be burned. The woman looked somewhat puzzled and said “My mother taught me to work with fire.”

Now we “know” that this woman should have been burned. We have all kinds of “scientific” information, backed by personal experience, about what happens when human skin meets hot objects. From the time we are too young to know the words we are told “don’t touch that it is hot,” or “Don’t touch that you’ll get burned.” It is obvious from the story above that this woman had received a very different kind of information and experience about handling hot objects. She was raised with the knowledge to “work with” fire, where “with” means “in partnership” rather than as a tool or weapon. She had a different definition of reality, and demonstrated quite well just how much of a difference that can make in experience.

A second example is most people in the United States generally accept that boys and girls are raised differently from each other in this society. We basically understand that sex roles are social rather than biological. However, we generally assume that the differences between boys and girls (men and women) are biological rather than social. Most of us accept that males are biologically more rational and mechanically oriented, relatively unemotional, and more physically coordinated than girls. We assume that women are “naturally” emotional, nurturing, more sensitive to the needs of others. We then see a “naturalness” to those roles; that the roles reflect something biological. This is not to say that there are not biological differences between the sexes, rather that culture has the ability to greatly modify, accentuate, or even reverse what we see as the behavioral and psychological differences that “naturally” occur between the sexes.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) argued that social construction involves three interlocking processes: externalization, objectification, and internalization. Like W.I. and Swayne Thomas, Berger and Luckmann see social construction happening through our interactions with others and the meanings we apply in those interactions. Externalization is when social phenomena (ideas, values, conceptualizations, etc.) and objects (people, things, etc.)are viewed as external to the individual. When, and if, these
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phenomena and objects “take on a life of their own,” then they become objectified. This means that they somehow stand on their own as separate and distinct from those who created them. They have a meaning within the group or the society that is understood and largely agreed upon. At this point, they have an objective reality of their own. In the last step, these components of objective reality are accepted as social facts and internalized largely through the socialization process.

While it is handy to be able to identify these distinct processes, frequently it is difficult to clear chart the course of a particular social construction. This difficulty arises because we receive a large amount of this social reality through socialization. It has already gone through the externalization and objectification stages.

We live in a socially constructed reality, but are raised to believe that we do not. We are raised to believe that our world is “natural,” our beliefs rational or divinely given, our opinions totally our own. Most people raised in the mainstream culture of the United States feel that humans come first. Humans come first when it comes to development of land, use of resources, saving the victims of a fire, or in medicine to name a few examples. This belief is still commonly held even with broad acceptance of environmentalism and the wide notice of various animal rights organizations. For example, many people are questioning of the use of animals in experimentation and feel it needs to be controlled – few would argue that it should be totally abolished. However, few would argue against the use of a pig or baboon heart to save a human life. In fact, those who would argue that animals have the same standing as humans would be seen as extremists at best, and most likely as fanatics. However, the majority of those in the U.S. do not see their belief in humans first as being extreme or fanatical.

Social construction is nowhere more present than in the issues central to this text – race, class, and gender. We will be discussing social construction as we focus on each of these topics in this book. For now however, we will discuss the general principles of social construction as it relates to groups.

Social construction of groups and boundary maintenance processes
Social stratification creates groups within the society based upon characteristics the society determines to be important. Society then imbues (or assigns) these groups with various traits which may or may not be reflected in the nature of the individuals filling the groups. While we are constantly engaging in group construction and definition, master statuses already exist – they are part of our stratification system and our culture – and we learn them through the socialization process. However, in order to understand how this grouping process works let’s look at how groups are formed and maintained. In sociology, this process is generally called social construction of the “other.”

Social construction of the “other” generally involves a series of actions or processes: categorizing; naming; assigning attributes; stereotyping; and sanctioning. Categorizing involves creating categories for people to be in. These categories are generally mutually exclusive. Names are applied both for one’s own group and the other. Characteristics are assigned to these groups which provide a way of
distinguishing the groups from each other. These attributes, or characteristics, are applied in a blanket way to which is stereotypical. Positive and negative meanings are given and the consequences (sanctions) for being part of the group are applied when appropriate.

Within this construction process, we are simply making groups, applying meaning and value to those groups, and then acting upon the meaning we have created. **Boundary formation and maintenance goes hand in hand with social construction as an interacting process.** We are also creating boundaries between the groups at the same time we are constructing them. Each layer of definition and meaning serves to solidify the groups as real and their differences as real. The following example of Central and Western colleges (fictitious schools) demonstrates part of this process.

### Central vs Western

*In this example, we have two colleges (Central and Western) with basketball teams. These two schools are rivals - meaning they see each other as competitors for something that is valued, such as school pride. We know that over the years a variety of different players and coaches have “peopled” the teams of the two schools; however, the schools are historic rivals so the teams are historic rivals. As new members come onto the team they take on (or are given) the characteristics of the team.*

Central’s team is seen as tough, aggressive, clean players who show absolute loyalty to their coach and other team members. Each year, a number of people try out for the team, but only a few make it. Even among those who make the team, a few seem to drop out within the first few weeks of practice. People attribute this to the high standards of the coach, but players who have left the team say they just didn’t feel comfortable on the team. Team members are seen as special by both teachers and other students. Individually, they have a reputation of not being someone you want to cross. There are rumors that if you mess with one of them that a bunch of them will come after you. They are generally seen as being pretty aggressive physically and verbally.

Western’s team is seen as best under pressure. They are generally pretty laid back, and easy going. They have a high degree of comradery and joke around a lot. Students and teachers at Western see team players as being friendly and easy going, but prone to being pranksters. Still, they are popular at the school because of their affable nature, and their ability to win games.

*Each school’s (and team’s) perception of itself is not necessarily the perception of others from outside the school – especially the way the Central views Western*
and vice versa. Central sees Western as a “bunch of clowns” who play dirty in order to win. They are lazy and lack discipline. Western sees Central as thugs who are overly physical and deliberately hurt the players of other teams so they can win. They are also believed to “gang up” on opposing teams after the game is over.

Now let’s say that one of the team members from Central moves into Western’s school district. He/she still wants to play basketball and goes out for Western’s team. What do you think the response is likely to be? The odds are that he/she will not make the team or will not stay on the team for long if he/she does. Why would this be the case?

Just because the basketball player is now at the rival school does not mean she/he gets a fresh start. She/he was part of Central’s team which means that she/he has the characteristics of that team. Therefore, he/she would not “fit” on Western’s team, and may be poorly received at the school as well.

The Central versus Western example is similar in some ways to stratification. Both of the colleges exist separately from the student body in that students come into and leave the schools, but the school stays the same. The rivalry between the schools is “historic” in that at some point in time they became rivals and have continued to be so over time. We can also look at the two schools as competing groups. As competitors the example highlights a number of functions that are common of group formation and maintenance.

First, these two schools see each other as different from themselves. They have established an “us-them” framework. The Centralians see Westerners as other than themselves. However, this is not a neutral “otherness.” Westerners are not just “other,” they are different, and it is not a neutral or positive difference. Creation of an “other” is a common characteristic of the social construction of groups. Generally, group construction is based on creating dichotomous categories. Dichotomous categories are two mutually exclusive categories which are sometimes opposite from each other.

Each team (and school) sees itself in a favorable light. In other words, they have a positive definition of themselves and what it means to be a Centralian or a Westerner. To some extent the students of the schools, and especially the teams of the schools are going to be seen (and see themselves) as embodying their own definition. Further, they see the rival school in a generally negative way.

The schools have created categories and applied meaning to each of the categories. But these schools are rivals. Losing or winning against each other is highly significant and emotional. Each team sees the others as the “bad guys” who will play “dirty” in order to win. The negative definitions that they have
applied to each other come into play as the two teams come to game times. They are likely to talk poorly about the other team and favorably about their own. The “boundaries” between the two teams becomes stronger.

The strengthening of the boundary involves social construction in part, but it also requires action of some sort – even if that action is name calling. By placing the other team as the enemy who will play dirty if called for, the team increases its unity. The “threat” pulls the team together for a common cause. Virtually anything that increases the distinctiveness and unity of the group will serve to strengthen the boundaries between the groups. During these periods of high loyalty, more sanctions are enforced within the groups. There is less room for dissent, and penalties for not being “true to the group” may become quite harsh.

If we look at the teams we see that each team has a “reputation” and that the players also seem to have similar characteristics to those of their team. This similarity is one of the components of group formation. Generally, individuals are seen as having personalities similar to the group to which they belong. In voluntary groups such as teams, it may be that players take on those characteristics, or that those who don’t “fit” get weeded out along the way.

You may be wondering what the Central versus Western example has to do with anything related to social inequality. After all, inter-school rivalries are as common as there are schools. Every school has a rival; every major league sports team has a rival; so what? Our social stratification system is also “everywhere” and as common (and frequently unnoticed) as inter-school rivalries. The basic processes of social construction and boundary formation are the same whether we are discussing teams, gangs, cliques, nations, or race, class, and gender.

We do not have to look very hard to see social construction and boundary maintenance in society. The sexes are female or male; sexual orientation is straight or gay; race is white or non-white; we are rich or poor. Our language and conceptualization of the world is dichotomous and categorical. A few examples that are common sayings point this out:

“It’s right there in black and white.”
“You’re either right or wrong.”
“All it takes is give and take.”
“My way or the highway.”
“All or nothing.”
“This or that.”
“Us or them.”

Social stratification creates the groups. Culture applies the meaning and how we interact. Social institutions structure our broad societal interactions based upon those groups and their meaning within
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In 1978, the U.S. Congress passed the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-608). The purpose of the Act was to address the massive removal of Indian children from their homes and tribes. This Act has gone through various amendments, the most recent being The Indian Child Welfare Act Amendments of 1999 (S. 1213). The purpose of the original Act, and subsequent amendments to it, has been to provide greater sensitivity to tribal differences and to make decisions and placements which are in the best interests of the Indian children and tribal continuity. One of the best sources for information on the Indian Child Welfare Act, its implementation, and relationship to other child welfare policies in the National Indian Child...
Certainly another factor in the formal policies of removing Native children had to do with a continuing official effort of over 400 years to eradicate Native Americans. As you will recall, it took the United States Congress forty years to sign the U.N. resolution against genocide. A large part of why it was not signed was because under that agreement the U.S. would have been considered engaging in genocide of the Native American population. Further, Native Americans are not the only group who would have been considered victims of the U.S. government at that time. African Americans and Japanese Americans could certainly have brought valid cases against the United States for a variety of federal and state policies and programs that went far beyond discrimination.

Looking Forward
The next chapter builds upon the “building blocks” introduced in this chapter. It explores theoretic frameworks and tools that are used throughout the remainder of the text.

Suggested Reading

Key concepts and terms

| achieved | internalization | social construction |
| ascriptive | major | majority | social institution |
| boundary maintenance | mechanisms | social stratification |
| culture | minority | socialization |
| dichotomous | norms | socialization agents |
| discrimination | objectification | status |
| dominant | power | subordinate |
| ethnocentrism | prejudice | values |
| Eurocentrism | processes | |
| externalization | roles | |
| ideology | sanctions | |
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Chapter Two

MAINTAINING AND REPRODUCING SYSTEMS OF INEQUALITY
Chapter 2 Maintaining and Reproducing Systems of Inequality

Introduction
This chapter introduces you to an analytical model for understanding the dynamics of how social stratification works. This model will be utilized throughout this text as a tool so this chapter explains the model and how it works.

I became interested in social inequality when I was about five years old though I didn’t call it that. At that point I witnessed some people calling names and making fun of a woman with a beard. Like most children that age, I thought that they were very mean. While it struck me as odd why a woman would have a beard, I didn’t understand why people would be so mean. I asked my mother why they were doing that and she said something to the effect that they were stupid. I accepted the answer, but started watching people a lot more closely. I noticed that being a bearded lady was not the only thing that made people be mean. Store owners were mean to some customers and friendly to others, people on the street avoided some people, ignored some people, and smiled at some people.

As I got older, lived in different environments, went to different schools, I still saw an awful lot of people being “mean” – even those that I thought were usually nice to people. I couldn’t really make sense of it, or see a pattern to it. There was a lot of talk about race, especially about African Americans, and that finally started to sink in. I “got it” that race might be a reason for people to be “mean,” but that wasn’t an answer. It didn’t tell me why people would be “mean” to someone because of their race. When I was about seventeen, I became aware of the women’s movement. I found out more, got involved, went to consciousness raising groups, and read a lot of books. I got a pretty good idea about patriarchy and how it worked and I tried to apply that framework to other kinds of inequality. The framework kind of worked, but didn’t satisfy me as to why inequality kept happening.

Then I took my first sociology class and was introduced to the idea of systems, culture, socialization, and social stratification. I was intrigued by the possibilities of stratification as an explanation for what I had seen in the world since I was a child. I read and studied and wrote papers and talked with people trying to find out the why’s and how’s of social inequality. It seemed like there should be something (or some things) that tied all of inequalities and systems together. However, the longer I have been a student of inequality the more discrete these stratification and race, sex and class discussions seem to have become. Over the years I have attempted to resolve the conceptual problems of stratification as being both a multidimensional (i.e. race, sex, and class) and a multilevel (individual, group and institutional) phenomena. In my efforts, I have created an analytical model which I feel addresses both of these areas. The model you are being introduced to is my attempt at a unified explanation of how social inequality is maintained and reproduced.

One of the conceptual challenges for students of stratification is resolving its multidimensional nature. Social scientists seem to have dealt with this challenge in two general ways. First are those who focus
on stratification as largely a social class issue and discuss race and sex within the context of class. In this approach, stratification becomes virtually synonymous with social class inequality. The second approach generally avoids discussion of stratification and focuses on inequality based on race, sex, and class individually or in combination in varying ways. While much of the research and theory illuminates patterns and mechanisms, I haven’t been able to make any of them “work” in a way that makes sense to me.

The second conceptual challenge we face is the multi-leveled nature of stratification in that it functions at all levels of social organization. Once again, we have two primary schools of thought though they do not necessarily correspond to the stratification versus race, sex, class approaches above. One approach takes a social psychological approach and focuses on inequality from the basis of prejudice, stereotypes, and individual experiences of bigotry. The other focuses primarily on the macro level of institutions and what might be broadly termed as institutional discrimination.

C. Wright Mills, a renowned sociologist, argued that good sociology moves between, and connects, history and biography -- the macro and the micro. In stratification systems we have at once the individual as the embodiment of the stratification system, and a system that goes far beyond the individual to the basic structuring of all social activity. The argument underlying the model presented here is that with stratification systems, and all processes and societal systems connected to them, the micro and the macro may (and frequently do) exist simultaneously. The simultaneous nature of stratification systems lies in its embeddedness in the culture and therefore the socialization processes. In this way, individuals are kept in their place not only through broad institutional processes, but also through daily interactions within and across groups.

At its heart, stratification systems are about the division of power (both individual and strata focused) within a society. Power is then a key to maintaining (or changing) any system with unequal distribution of power which is inherent in social stratification systems. Stratification systems - whether ascribed, achieved, or inherited - provide a social hierarchy which results in imbalances of power and access between higher status and lower status groups. This imbalance is an assumed and integral function of stratification, and certainly perpetuates it. In other words, those with power and access retain it and control who gets it, and those without power remain outside the framework of attaining it. This makes it very difficult for the system to do anything but reproduce itself. In looking at the U.S. stratification system, this power feature is consistent regardless of which dimension of stratification we examine.

The model presented here attempts to address the multidimensional nature of stratification by using the unifying concepts from the study of cultural processes (socialization, culture, and norms), the nature and enforcement of power (socialization, and formal and informal sanctions), and the dynamics of maintaining groups (and strata) as distinct entities (boundary maintenance). The purpose of the model is
to provide a unified conceptual and analytical tool for understanding both the multidimensional and multilevel nature of stratification systems. In other words, it can be used to examine how race, sex and class are maintained and reproduced at the individual and societal levels.

Unifying Principles
If power is central to maintaining and reproducing stratification, then we need a useful definition of “power.” People generally think of power in an individual sense. As such, power is usually thought of as lying within the bounds of being able to get what one wants – usually by physical force or coercion. Upon further thought, we may add to this definition the ability to persuade others as a form of power. And upon further reflection, we may add the “grease the wheels” kind of power which involves using various inducements or one’s personal network to achieve the desired end. It is interesting that when we think of power it almost always relates to someone getting his/her own way. From this, we could define power as: the ability of an individual (or group) to realize his/her (their) will in spite of opposition, or to achieve a desired end through finesse, connections, or prestige.

This definition of power may be acceptable at the level of the individual or the group, but it does not work within the context of stratification systems. In stratification systems we have a structured imbalance in power. “Power” is linked to social position within a predefined system. Within this broader social context power takes on a very different form than “individual” power, though the two are certainly not unrelated. Personal power is tied into social position and social definitions of what constitutes “prestige” and “authority” as discussed in Chapter 1. With what we might term “strata power,” there is not necessarily, or generally, the conscious use of power by an entire strata. Instead of conscious strata application of force, we have a system structured to give advantages to some and restrict access to others.

I have stressed the word “conscious” above because in stratification systems the distribution of power is generally seen (if it is seen at all) as “natural,” or “just the way things are” – especially by those in (or near) the upper strata. In this social sense, power becomes more similar to the “grease the wheels” type of power in that “the system” works smoothly for some groups and may not work at all for others. General acceptance of the stratification system occurs through socialization into the society. Those who might challenge the system (generally those in the lower strata) may face significant penalties for attempting to do so.

This brings us to an important point about “strata power” in that it is linked to authority. Authority implies rights within boundaries. Within the context of the social system these “rights within boundaries” govern virtually all aspects of our interactions with each other and within social institutions. Strata placement determines those rights in relationship to the society. The boundedness of these rights means that the exercise of power in ways proscribed by the social system is invalid. Therefore, it is a valid use
of authority for upper strata to utilize social institutions to apply constraints (controls) to other strata. Constraints limit access to those resources that allow parties to add new advantages to a situation. Some constraints may be coercive in nature such as threatening loss of property, threatening livelihood, or threatening physical violence or confinement. This use of coercive force is the domain of the upper strata and the social institutions organized to keep the strata in their places. Further, it is an invalid use of authority for lower strata (or members of lower strata) to do things that are seen as usurping the “rights” of the dominant group.

There are numerous examples where the dominant group responds to a non-dominant group as a “usurping” of dominant group “rights.” A common example has to do with language and self-naming. It is relatively common to hear complaints about “politically correct” language. Dominant group members may feel “put out” that they have to watch what they say. The right to name others is within the authority of the dominant group, while the right to challenge language or for a group to name itself, exceeds the authority of the non-dominant group. The dominant group’s anger is at the infringement of their “natural” rights under the stratification system. Therefore, the right to name and label lies with the dominant group. There was (and in some areas still is) significant resistance to non-sexist language, and there still is resistance to groups of color naming themselves or taking issue with how other things are named. Examples of the latter would be such things as naming a car “Cherokee,” or a restaurant chain “Sambo’s,” or a football team the “Redskins.”

It is interesting to examine dominant group response to group self-naming. One of the best examples of this is the evolution of naming by Black Americans. The dominant group applied the name of Negroes. Blacks went through a series of names, ultimately arriving at a general consensus of African American (though this will probably change over time – one suggestion at this point is Neo-Nubians). The dominant group then reclaimed their naming power by institutionalizing “American” as a designator for other groups.

The naming example above points to the interesting phenomenon of the exercising of power by the dominant group. Namely that as the interests of the dominant group are forwarded so that they express and reinforce the collective advantage of that group. If we assume a Weberian interpretation of social class, it is transparent why power should work in this way. According to a Weberian approach, a social class is a group comprised of members who lie close to each other in wealth, power, and prestige. Due to this, their interests in relationship to their class should also be similar. Taking the definition of “class” that extends beyond socio-economic class, then racial or sex class groups would share similar uniting features.

The reason for this is that stratification systems are normalized through the culture and socialization. We are socialized into the societally appropriate groups and learn to take our place within those groups. If
this is the case, then the rules of norm enforcement also apply to these classes or strata. In other words, normative constraints act on an individual and a group level to reinforce and maintain the stratification system across its various components.

Taking the “group” interests another step, the functioning of societal systems and social processes also serves to reinforce and maintain the boundaries between strata or classes. Therefore group formation and maintenance processes expand to the macro level to maintain and reproduce social stratification – a macro form of boundary formation and maintenance.

The model presented makes the assumption that systems of stratification are maintained through the application and maintenance of power. It is assumed that since strata are “groups” that group processes are in place to maintain the groups. This implies that in part, groups are maintained through the use of normative constraints which require the application of positive and negative sanctions (rewards and penalties) for achieving compliance and maintaining group/stratum integrity. In the maintenance of the system rather than the group, institutional processes are utilized to maintain this system and to mete out rewards and punishments in a manner consistent with the culture.

From the discussions of the maintenance and reproduction of a culture in Chapter 1, we learned that the value component of culture includes cultural ideologies. We also learned that norms are the rules for behavior derived from the cultural values. These norms are then enforced through the application of sanctions (rewards and punishments) which in turn reinforce the value system. This is all pretty straightforward, and the assumption is that norms are generally enforced at the individual level. While part of this enforcement occurs external to the individual, it is certainly also an internal process. In other words, most people keep themselves within the normative rules of behavior.

As social scientists we know that culture is linked to the individual through socialization. This socialization is carried out by socialization agents -- some of which are institutional (e.g. education and media, etc.) and some of whom are individual (e.g. family and peers). The purpose in socialization is the internalization of the culture so that the culture’s members can function both as self-monitors and as enforcers of cultural norms upon others. In fact, in a variety of ways each of us operate at both an individual and institutional level as socialization agents. Essentially this means that norm enforcement and socialization are occurring simultaneously at the micro (individual) and macro (societal) level.

Through socialization we internalize our statuses and roles and an understanding of the broader processes of status outside of our own. Those statuses and roles are institutional in nature – meaning that they occur within the larger context of social institutions. It is interesting that sociologists generally discuss master statuses and social statuses as distinctly different types of status. While we argue that master statuses give us our social location within the broader society, we do not link this to the more
Chapter 2 Maintaining and Reproducing Systems of Inequality

A general discussion of statuses and roles. This oversight provides a blind spot both in the analysis of stratification systems and generally confines such discussions to an extra-personal level. It also has the effect of confining discussion of statuses in general to the largely individual level. I believe that the rules of status at the individual level (status is a social position and every status has roles) also applies to master statuses. In other words, racial, social class, and sexual statuses also have roles. This means, for example, that there is a status of “White” within the racial stratification system and there are “White” roles. While there has been extensive examination, theorizing and acceptance of this in terms of sex-based stratification, even those discussions do not link us generally back to the broader concepts and processes of status and roles.

Assumptions of the Unified Model of Maintenance of Social Stratification Systems

Below are the assumptions upon which the model is based.

1. Maintaining stratification systems requires maintaining the distribution of power within a society. This maintenance includes cultural belief systems and normative constraints as well as institutional structures and rules.

2. Status is both individual and group. And the mechanisms and processes of status as a general concept apply to strata statuses such as sex, social class, and race.

3. Normative constraints are enforced through the application of sanctions which can be applied both individually and systematically. Therefore, rewards are meted out at the individual, strata, organizational, and institutional levels and reinforced across all of them. Given the underlying assumptions of norm enforcement, it is unlikely that only high status groups are “rewarded” and only lower status groups are “penalized” for actions within the society.

4. All systems, stratification systems included, have what we might label as “costs of operating.” Stratification systems are a large form of groups, therefore they are subject to group formation and boundary maintenance processes. Within this boundary formation and maintenance process, groups take on (or are given) dichotomous characteristics (or at least the perception and interpretation of characteristics are dichotomous). Within stratification systems, dominant groups are frequently seen as having the characteristics that the subordinate groups do not; or conversely that desirable social characteristics are embodied by the dominant group while less or undesirable characteristics are assigned to less dominant or subordinate groups.

5. While each form of stratification operates in a somewhat unique way, the basic processes follow a cultural model. In other words, societies build upon a basic template and apply it in a variety of ways.
Now that you have a foundation in the basic concepts and an outline of the thinking behind the model, let’s take a look at it. The table below presents the basic formation of the model.
Basic Overview of the Unified Model of Stratification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dominant Group</th>
<th>Non-Dominant Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rewards</strong></td>
<td>What are the promised or actual benefits (e.g. rights, status, privilege, material) that individuals and/or the group receive for supporting the systems that maintain their position?</td>
<td>What are the promised rewards or benefits to individuals and/or groups, for complying with the systems and processes that maintain the status system the way it is?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Penalties</strong></td>
<td>What are the penalties for engaging in behavior that undermines, or is counter to, the processes that maintain their status within the social system?</td>
<td>What are the penalties for challenging (or being perceived to challenge) the systems and processes that maintain them at a lower status?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Costs</strong></td>
<td>What are the ordinary “costs,” losses, or consequences, that individuals and/or the group pay as a natural consequence of operating within the boundaries of processes and systems?</td>
<td>What are the ordinary “costs,” losses, or consequences, that the individual and/or group or a member pay as a natural consequence of operating within the processes and systems?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explanation of the Unified Model

The question that the model addresses is “How is the power and status maintained within the context of the social stratification system?” Looking across the table, it is divided into Dominant and Non-Dominant categories. These categories reflect the higher status and lower status groups within the context of the stratification system. In this basic model, the non-dominant group is collectively all those of lower status than the high status group. In the case of sex stratification, the table would stand as is with Males being the dominant group and females being the non-dominant group. In the case of race, European Americans would be the dominant group and all other racial groups would be the non-dominant group. This “lumping” of groups together under the non-dominant group category is one way to use the model. However, it can be more specific. For example, we could pick European Americans and Native Americans as the dominant and non-dominant groups respectively.

Looking down the table above, the model takes the norm enforcement process of sanctions – positive and negative (rewards and penalties) – and assumes they apply both individually and to groups as a whole. **Rewards** then are those actions, processes, and benefits either real or promised to societal members for complying with the rules (norms) of stratification. Rewards are positive sanctions that may be applied individually or institutionally for operating within the constraints of the stratification system.
Both dominant and non-dominant groups and their members receive (or are promised) these “benefits.” Benefits provide the positive “incentives” for not challenging the system.

In this context, penalties are negative sanctions that are applied to those who do not conform within the accepted limits of the stratification system. In other words, there are penalties and punishment (real or expected) for not complying with the cultural and institutional rules that maintain the stratification system. This may be either at an individual level, or at a broader group level, though generally they are applied to individuals.

Last are costs, which are the natural consequences of the system operating the way it does. These costs are born by both individuals and strata as a whole. The “costs” of the system are experienced by individuals and groups. If we look at the sex stratification system for example, males are the dominant group and females the non-dominant group. Our society expects males to engage in high risk behaviors (being tough, fighting, promiscuous, etc.). Because of the social expectations, men as a group, have more injuries and die younger than women as a group. On the other hand, women are defined within the culture as being inferior and as sexual objects. A natural “cost” for women then are such things as lower pay than males and sexual harassment.

Extension of the Model
There is an important component not included in the table of the basic model. That component is the dynamics that occur within the non-dominant groups under the stratification system. As you recall, I am assuming that strata are types of groups, and because the society has applied meaning to these groups they have boundaries. Therefore, boundary maintenance processes are operating at various levels within groups as well. This is complicated by the fact that the non-dominant groups are not unified in terms of relations to the dominant group. There may be very strong group identity among some members and not as strong among other members. Within the course of most non-dominant group members daily lives they will encounter others of their group (and even of other non-dominant groups) and be responded to based upon a wide array of expectations depending upon the strength of group identity. Within the context of the model non-dominant group member’s face a dual challenge of working within overlapping pressures from both dominant and non-dominant groups.

Adding this component to the model offers a fuller picture of the actual dynamics of social stratification and I encourage you to expand the model as you become more comfortable working with it. Within the context of non-dominant group analysis, the existing stratification provides the context for the dynamics within the group. The rewards, penalties, and costs become in-group rewards, penalties and costs. These could however, become relevant to the group as a whole if the dominant group perceived a unification of high group identity. In a stratified social environment such as ours, that could result in increased constraints and controls placed on the non-dominant group. The table below reflects what the
addition of the non-dominant group dynamics might examine.

**Expanded Unified Model of Stratification**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominant Group</th>
<th>Non-dominant group in relationship to dominant culture</th>
<th>Inside the non-dominant group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rewards</strong></td>
<td>What are the promised or actual benefits (e.g. rights, status, privilege, material) that individuals and/or the group receive for supporting the systems that maintain their position?</td>
<td>What are the promised rewards or benefits to individuals and/or groups, for complying with the systems and processes that maintain the status system the way it is?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Why bother with this model?**

Our public and private dialogues around social inequality simply don’t get us anywhere. I believe that there are two reasons for this. First is that they are based upon rhetoric that we don’t understand. The knowledge that our society, and many of the individuals in it, apply differential and unequal treatment to men and women, or middle class and poor, or gays and straights, or “whites” and “people of color,” does not tell us why or how. Second, there is a pervasive belief that it is simply uninformed individuals who continue to perpetuate inequality. While individuals are certainly involved, they are not necessarily working as free actors outside the context of the social environment. Social inequality is much bigger than individuals.
Chapter 2 Maintaining and Reproducing Systems of Inequality

Much of the early examination of social inequality, and the one most common in current public discourse is the “discrimination model.” In other words, the discussion focuses around “disadvantaged” groups within the society. If we say we are going to talk about sexual inequality the focus is women; with racial inequality the focus is “people of color;” with wealth inequality the focus is the poor. About a decade ago people started seriously thinking about the idea of privilege as it relates to dominant groups. It is a good and logical inclusion as “disadvantage” implies that someone has “advantage.” In the current public rhetoric however, the discussion of advantage and privilege as a component of social inequality has morphed into the advantage and privilege of “disadvantaged” groups. So we hear about “reverse discrimination” and “special rights” and unfair advantages that disadvantaged groups have.

Perhaps the most important thing this model does is to move us beyond the discrimination model of the enforcement of stratification systems, and beyond the privilege versus discrimination model as well. It offers us a fruitful approach for examining the mechanisms of the stratification system at both the individual and societal levels, and clearly points out the mechanisms utilized to induce non-dominant groups to comply, and the costs that the dominant group pays for their dominance. These two areas are ones that are rarely, if ever examined.

Some people respond to this model critically, feeling that by examining rewards for non-dominant groups and their members it “blames the victim.” There is nothing that is further from the intent of this author. As social scientists, we know that compliance to social rules goes far beyond negative coercion to comply. Social interaction at all levels is a dance. Implicit in the roles of master statuses are the power dynamics of the social dance that maintains the counter-point of societal interaction. Because of the way I conceptualize stratification and its integration into values and norms, we are all participating willingly or unwillingly, consciously and unconsciously, in maintaining and reproducing the stratification system. Being able to look clearly and analytically at all levels and components of this reproduction gives us a more conscious approach to our participation and where the key points are that maintain inequality.

Looking Forward
You will be using this model as you proceed through this text. Refer back to this chapter when you get confused. By the time you get through Section 1 (the next three chapters) you will have had the opportunity to work with it a number of times. It is my experience that people do find it a valuable tool that provides insights that they did not have before. The response from students in my classes is that it does help them see how inequality works – not just in society but in their lives. They say that it also helps them see the pressures they live under and how that affects them in a myriad of ways.

Look for patterns as you use this model. Ask yourself if you see any relationships in the table when you complete a model. For example, is there a relationship between rewards and costs between dominant
and non-dominant groups? Also ask whether the costs are worth the rewards that are offered.
Chapter Three

CONSTRUCTING AND
DECONSTRUCTING SEX AND GENDER
Our sex is a central feature of our selves. **Sex is the physiological and physical distinctions between the sexes.** From the time we are born, and perhaps before, it shapes other’s expectations of us and our expectations of ourselves. Our sex is a biological fact with biological implications. We know that females and males are different from each other. This “knowing” is supported by a large body of scientific and medical facts. We are taught there are many physiological differences between the sexes: general height/weight differences; hormonal and developmental differences; bodily function differences; and many more. We extend this “knowing” to the less physical where it is generally assumed that there are also mental and emotional differences between the sexes. We extend it again to assume that there are behavioral differences. Lastly, we extend it again to assume that males and females are suited for doing different things. Pretty much regardless of the culture in which we are raised, there is an assumed natural link between all of the above. We may believe these linkages between the physical, emotional, doing, and being are due to nature or to the will (or whimsy) of the gods, but regardless it is considered relatively “fixed.”

Many of you are probably arguing at this point that all of this isn’t “natural;” that we are individuals and we make choices; that being male or female may affect a lot of things in our lives, but what we do in the world is based upon what we want to do - not physically “coded” into our basic biological makeup. This argument has arisen in many places in the world, and in the United States, the belief that one’s sex is not one’s destiny has reached a general level of acceptance. This conflict of ideas between the physical nature of sex and the effect it has on our lives is commonly known as the “nature - nurture debate.” How much of our behavior is “natural” (meaning coded into our physical bodies) and how much is nurture (meaning that we have learned it or chosen it in one way or another)?

Most scientists, and most people in the U.S., agree that those things we see as sex differences are a combination of “nature” and “nurture.” Most sociologists lean towards the nurture side of the debate saying that socialization, social construction of sex and gender, and social structuring play a predominant role in our interpretations of what sex means and how it works in the world. From a social science perspective, total dependence on a nature, or god-given explanation of sex differences is known as reification. Reification is the taking of a concept and calling it a natural phenomenon.

In the U.S. (and other places around the world) two terms - sex and gender - are being used interchangeably, or as synonyms for each other. Sociologists and other social scientists treat these two terms as independent concepts.

Sex refers to biological sex differences. Most of the time we assume that these are visible differences between the sexes - most specifically, sex organs and the noticeable presence or absence of breasts. Sex is considered an ascribed status because our determination of peoples sex based upon these visible characteristics. Cultures generally then build upon these differences, or accentuate them through blatant and subtle mechanisms. Blatant means would be such things has hair styles, clothes, and types of bodily decoration. Subtle means would include such things as body movement, (i.e. standing, walking, sitting,
gestures, and freedom of motions) space (how much physical space a person is allowed in their interactions with others), as well as pitch and tone of voice.

We are socialized to the paradigm that there are two sexes - female and male. We generally assume that the cultural accentuations of sex differences reflect biology – especially the subtle accentuations. While there is most likely some sex-based differences in movement and voice, those differences are generally exaggerated by culture. For example, there most likely is a natural difference in voice pitch and tone between males and females; however, societies frequently maximize those differences. In the United States, it is not at all unusual for males to “practice” using a lower pitch of voice (especially during puberty) and for females to “practice” using a higher pitch. People are also trained to different forms of speech. For example, we generally don’t notice that males are more likely to talk with a falling tone of voice at the end of sentences (ending a sentence with a “period” sound) while females are more likely to end sentences with a rising tone of voice (ending a sentence with a “question” sound).

Despite what seems the naturalness of this division of the sexes into two sexes (regardless of differences across cultures), and the assumption that everyone is either one sex or another, a significant portion of the human population does not fit the two sex category. There is an increasing amount of discussion in medicine, the social and behavioral sciences, and the popular media about intersexuals. These are individuals who biologically are neither –or both – male or female. Historically, these individuals have been referred to as “hermaphrodites,” but that term is so laden with mythology that “intersexual” is now more commonly used. Perhaps because of the mythological linkage with the term hermaphrodite, the common perception exists that these people either don’t exist, or exist in such small numbers as to be simple “freaks of nature.” However, it is estimated that up to four percent of the human population is known to be intersex at birth (Fausto-Sterling, 1996: 69). This is roughly the same number of individuals who are born with cystic fibrosis. Another way to look at this, would be in a typical college student body of 8,000, there would be 320 intersexuals (Fausto-Sterling, 1996: 69). There may be more intersexuals than this because some are not “discovered” until they reach puberty.

While more public attention is being paid to intersexuals, misinformation and myth colors what most people know. The myth of the hermaphrodite is an individual who is “half man - half woman.” These half and half individuals are generally referred to in the medical literature as “true hermaphrodites,” but the combination of sex characteristics and chromosomal makeup varies. Other “combinations” are referred to as “pseudo-hermaphrodites,” and once again there is tremendous variation. [See Box 3.1].

The usual manner in which intersexual infants are dealt with in Western medicine is through a number of surgeries in early childhood, followed by hormonal treatments starting at puberty. The first clue to intersexuality is “ambiguous genitalia.” This ambiguity, as noted in Box 3.1, often comes down to a
Chapter 3: Constructing and Deconstructing Sex and Gender

The following quotation is from “A Question of Gender” by Emily Nussbaum.

“Sex, in reality, is more than the simple blueprint learned in high-school biology--XX for female, XY for male. All embryos are identical for the first eight weeks of gestation, and then several factors nudge the infant toward male or female development. But some embryos step off track. The cause can be chromosomal or hormonal. Infants with androgen insensitivity syndrome, for example, have XY cells but cannot process testosterone, and they look like females. An inherited condition called 5-alpha-reductase deficiency triggers an apparent female-to-male sex change at puberty. Congenital adrenal hyperplasia--the most common intersexual condition--results from hormonal imbalances that masculinize the genitals of XX children. Scientists speculate that such an imbalance may also masculinize the brain, establishing gender and sexual orientation.

Intersexuality has achieved public attention in part because intersexual adults are speaking out about their experiences. One of the most vocal organizations is the Intersex Society of North American (ISNA). The experiences and activism of intersexuals has stimulated significant examination of this issue from researchers and clinicians. Given the major medical intervention required at such a young age, the trauma of the procedures, and the relative taboo about discussing intersexuality, sex correction is being discussed as a analogous to childhood judgement call. In other words, the doctor(s) decide that a penis is too small, or a clitoris is too big. The surgeries required to “correct” these anomalies are not easy or painless. In essence, these children are having sex change operations. While surgery may be medically necessary in some cases, much of the surgery is cosmetic. However, the cosmetic surgery is sometimes portrayed as necessary – for example, a mother of an intersexed infant named Emma (Nussbaum, 2000:95). Emma’s mother, Vicki, was led to believe that the surgery on her daughter to move her urethral opening was medically necessary in order to prevent infections, and to simplify a clitoriplasty (reduction of the clitoris) later on (Vicki had refused clitoriplasty feeling it should be up to Emma). However, after the surgery, she was informed that the surgery was largely cosmetic rather than medically necessary.

Intersexual infants range from hard-to-classify ... to those with much subtler anomalies. To some degree, intersexuality is in the eye of the medical beholder: A large clitoris may be considered normal by one doctor, ambiguous by another. One thing all intersexual children have in common, however, is that modern medicine regards them, in the words of the surgical training videotape Surgical Reconstruction of Ambiguous Genitalia in Female Children, as a ”social and psychological emergency.” Surgeons typically perform plastic surgery early on to protect the child--and, not incidentally, the parents--from any sense of ambiguity.”
sexual abuse. (http://home.t-online.de/home/aggpg/parent.htm#wha, Alexander, 2000). Another issue that intersexuals raise is whether surgery that is not medically necessary should be performed without the informed consent of the patient.

Most people who take the time to read, or listen to, the voices of intersexuals, or simply to read the current literature, might well come to the same conclusion as Anne Fausto-Sterling. Given the recent debate about intersexuality and its treatment, the persistence of it across recorded history, and intersexuals’ arguments that they are not “accidents,” some people are questioning the validity of the two-sex paradigm. Even those who just take the time to read the current literature or listen to intersexual’s start questioning this paradigm. Perhaps the most well known author in this area is Anne Fausto-Sterling. Dr. Fausto-Sterling is a geneticist and professor of medical science at Brown University, and has been writing extensively about intersexuality and gender since at least 1985. Based upon her clinical experience, she has presented the theory that there are at least five sexes (Fausto-Sterling 1996:68-73). Fausto-Sterling’s argument is essentially that for as long as we know there have been individuals who biologically were neither male or female but combinations of both. These people are broadly referred to as “intersexuals,” or more commonly as hermaphrodites.

Historically, standard western medicine has treated this phenomenon as a mistake, and more recently has been able through surgery and hormone therapy to cosmetically make people “fit” into the two sex paradigm. However, largely due to the increasing voice of intersexuals, questions have been raised as to whether intersexuals are due to a dysfunction during the gestation process, or are a normal variation on human sex possibilities. The paradigm she presents is one of a continuum of sex rather than a dichotomy (see Figure 3.1). She argues that in addition to males and females, there are the “true hermaphrodites” and at least two groups of “pseudo-hermaphrodites” – “merms” and “ferms.” True hermaphrodites are
those who are biologically roughly equal parts male and female. Merms have the XY chromosome but may also have ovaries and a vagina, while ferms have the XX chromosome but may also have testes and a penis (Fausto-Sterling, 1996:69).

Certainly part of the reason there is a rush to “correct” the ambiguity of the sex of intersexuals is because of the link between sex and gender. Gender reflects the social and personal characteristics a society assigns to the sexes. It is those things that we may consider personality characteristics such as aggressiveness, nurturing, emotional responses, etc. Gender can be considered the “being” part of social assignment. It is how we are supposed to be the sex we are assigned. Since our gender socialization starts at birth, it has been considered critical that the sex of a child be properly determined so that there is no gender confusion in socialization. This is an interesting conclusion for doctors to have come to because the common assumption, and a point frequently argued, is that those characteristics that are socially assigned to the sexes (what we are calling gender) are considered by most to be a “natural” consequence of our sex.

Gender is part of what we might call our “core” identity since it starts so early in our lives and persists throughout our lives. The way that our culture has constructed gender will have deep and significant effects on us throughout our lives. It will affect the way we see ourselves and how others see us. It will affect our expectations of how to be in the world.

In the mainstream U.S. construction of sex and gender, there are two sexes and two genders which correspond to them. A reflection of treating sex and gender as the “same thing” is that on many forms that ask us to specify our sex, the wording has been changed to “gender.” This formalization in practice of the two concepts being identical compounds the naturalness of thinking of them as one and inseparable.

We have already discussed above the possibility of multiple sexes; however, many societies have more than two genders, even if they only note two sexes. Examples of this are what has broadly been labeled the “berdache tradition.” The word “berdache” derives from an Arab word meaning “male prostitute” or “catamite” (Lang, 1998). Anthropologists, and others, have broadly applied this term to a number of different gender, gender role, and sexual orientation variations (i.e. cross-gender, intersexual, transvestism, and homosexuality) across cultures. A wide cross section of cultures across the globe have more than two genders. India has a third gender known as the “hijras,” so do the Hua of Papua New Guinea, and Omani Muslims to name a few (Renzetti and Curran, 2000: 42).

Resistance to the term “berdache” has arisen among “other gendered” Native Americans who have selected the term “two-spirit” as more appropriate. This new term is closer in essence to a perspective that other genders and orientations are not simply physical or acted out in the physical world, but are part of a more wholistic mind/body/spirit connection. A wide representation of American Indian tribes
and bands have recorded inclusion of multiple genders, sexes, and sexual orientations as part of their cultures. Table 3.1 below was created by combining information from Sabine Lang’s review of the literature on two-spirit people among American Indian tribes and bands (Lang, 1998: 248-251, 263-265).

Table 3.1 American Indian Terms for Multiple Gender Individuals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Term for Males</th>
<th>Term for Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crow</td>
<td>bate</td>
<td>woman chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eskimo</td>
<td>anasik</td>
<td>uktasik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopi</td>
<td>na’dle</td>
<td>nadle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klamath</td>
<td>twinnaek</td>
<td>twinna’ek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maidu</td>
<td>suku</td>
<td>suku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maricopa</td>
<td>yesa’an</td>
<td>kwiraxame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoshone (Nevada)</td>
<td>tuyayan</td>
<td>n· w· d· ka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zuni</td>
<td>ko’thalamà</td>
<td>katsotse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not knowing the languages of the tribes above, we can only speculate on whether they include a third gender that designates both males and females, or whether there are two additional genders one for male and one for female two-spirit people. Not all cultures, and this exemplified by Lang’s work, make the two-spirit designation the same way, construct it similarly, or treat two-spirit people the same way. In some groups, intersexuality falls into a joint category with gender and in others it does not. In some cultures two-spirit people are of any sexual orientation and in others they are only bisexual or homosexual. In some cultures they take on the dress and social roles of the opposite gender and in others they do not. In some cultures they are considered normal or held in high esteem, while in others they are stigmatized and held in low regard.

All of these permutations of sex, gender, and sexual orientation, point to cultures’ dealing with human variation in their specific cultural contexts. This argues for a persistent “naturalness” in that these variations as human, but it also points toward the virtually limitless social constructions. Individuals who are of these additional gender categories, are not necessarily either transvestites or homosexual in orientation – they are a separate gender. Also, while there is considerable similarity among general gender expectations cross culturally, there is not total consistency. Both the multiple gender, and gender expectation variation support a social construction of sex and gender perspective, rather than a “natural” order of things.
Gender identity is our internal identification with a gender. It means that we see ourselves within the gender construction of our society. It is an internal knowing that we are a specific gender. Some argue that we also have a sexual identity. This is an internal identification with and “knowing” of our biological sex. Obviously there are many possibilities here, even within the constraints of a two-sex/two-gender system. However, within the constraints of the sex/gender paradigm of mainstream U.S. society, there is only one “acceptable” possibility – consistency between biological sex and social gender assignment.

Males and females are usually expected to take on different roles within the society. These are usually referred to as sex (gender) roles. Sex (gender) roles are social roles assigned to the various gender groups. As you can see from the definition, sex roles could be more appropriately named “gender roles,” and I will refer to them as such throughout this text. They are linked to gender in specific ways as the characteristics that are assigned to the genders are frequently the underpinning of why males and females should do different things within the society. As you may recall, I said that gender could be considered the “being” part of sex within a society. Gender roles can be considered the “doing” part of sex within a society.

Gender roles are those “jobs” that people are expected to do in a society. They may include such things as mother or father, but extend into the sexual division of labor. For example, tasks and jobs (or employment) that are considered most appropriate for one sex or another might include such things as secretaries, nurses, childcare workers, and grade school teachers as “female” jobs, and construction worker, doctor, president, or mechanic as “male” jobs. In the case of those cultures with more than two genders, two-spirit people take on the same or opposite gender roles, or have specific gender roles that apply to their status.

Finally, we have sexual orientation. Sexual orientation can be considered the basic orientation of physical and emotional attraction. I use the term orientation rather than “preference” for a variety of reasons. First, it is something which is internal. It is part of how we see ourselves – in other words it is part of our identity. Second, it appears to be relatively unchangeable. Our sexual orientation is a relatively fixed, and is not a matter of choice. Last, preference connotes choice and it presumes acting on that choice. We may or may not act on our basic attraction. Many people who see themselves as homosexual engage solely in heterosexual (opposite sex) sexual activity, while many who see themselves as heterosexual may engage in homosexual (same sex) sexual activity during their lives. While sexual activity may be linked to sexual orientation, it is not necessarily predictive of it.

In the United States, there has been considerable rhetoric defining sexual orientation as sexual activity. Further, is the underlying assumption that sexual orientation is confined to sexual activity. I think that most of us in looking at ourselves, would not limit our orientation only to those times we are actively engaged in sexual activity. It pervades our lives in a variety of ways beyond any physical action we may take in the world.
Like sex and gender, sexual orientation is dealt with in a dichotomous, either/or, manner. We are either heterosexual or homosexual. There is no room for bisexuality within this paradigm, which in part accounts for the generally negative view of bisexuality. There is research dating from the Kinsey reports on human sexuality (1948 and 1953) and Masters and Johnson (1966) that have consistently shown sexual orientation to be a continuum from total heterosexuality to total homosexuality. ¹ We might visualize this continuum as depicted in Figure 3.2 below.

Total heterosexuals show no, or even negative, physical sexual response to same sex visual stimuli, and total homosexuals show the same to opposite sex visual stimuli. A variety of clinical studies have been done using various forms of stimuli; however much of the material presented during the studies is not sexual, or even erotic, in nature. Some include simple scenes of same and opposite sex couples engaging in behavior such as eating dinner or talking at a café.

It should be mentioned here that it is difficult to remove bias from the study of sexual orientation. Given the stigma of homosexuality in U.S. society, self-reports are likely to be weighted towards heterosexual responses. Clinical studies are generally focused on physiological response to a wide array of stimuli, but focus towards sexual response. Since our sexual orientation seems to be highly complex and not simply sexual response, one can question whether these studies can be expanded to sexual orientation. A further problem may arise with studies of orientation in terms of who participates in these studies. Are they reflective of the general human population, or even a particular culture’s population? These problems aside, the research evidence tends to support the theory of a continuum rather than a dichotomy.

Let’s look at an “exception” -- people who are transsexual. Transsexual are individuals who for whatever reason feel they are in the “wrong body,” or that the sex of the body they are in is wrong.

¹ For an excellent discussion of the history of sex research, see David Rowland, 1999.
Let’s assume that we have a female transsexual who has a heterosexual orientation (in her original female body she is oriented towards males). Now she has a sex change operation that changes her sex to male. What happens to her previous sexual orientation? NOTHING! He is still oriented towards males, but now his orientation is labeled “homosexual.” One thing that this demonstrates is that the labeling of sexual orientation is an external manifestation that may or may not reflect the inner reality of the individual.

Table 3.2 depicts the paradigm of the construction of sex, gender and sexual orientation for mainstream U.S. society. Not all societies have the same construct.

Table 3.2 Paradigm of Sex, Gender and Sexual Orientation in Mainstream U.S. Society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Role</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 outlines the mainstream U.S. conception of the constellation of sex, gender, and sexual orientation. Scientific and social research aside, the general construction is that these are a “package deal.” In other words, people are born biologically male; have a male gender assignment, act as males are supposed to act, and are heterosexual. Conversely, people are born biologically female; have a female gender assignment, act as females are supposed to act, and are heterosexual. Variations from this construct are seen as dysfunctional, sick, wrong, or at least odd.

As has been discussed earlier, there are numerous “exceptions” to the “rule” as ordained by the culture. These “exceptions” are “natural” in that they seem to occur in virtually all human groups, but social in that they are treated in such a variety of ways. Intersexuality can challenge our perspective of a two-sex paradigm. Varying genders, gender roles, and gender identity challenge the limitations of the sex-gender package within mainstream U.S. society. And the research on the continuum of sexual orientation challenges the dichotomy of heterosexual and homosexual as the only two orientation possibilities.

Within the framework of the U.S. construction, if someone does not seem “appropriate” in terms of gender or gender role, they are generally assumed to be homosexual. If someone is homosexual, it is assumed they are “opposite” in terms of gender identity or even that they want to be (or perhaps are) the opposite sex. If you refer to Table 3.2 as we go through an example, you will see the internal consistency to the U.S. model, though externally it is nonsensical. Let’s say that we have a male who is an interior decorator. The general assumption is that he is “gay,” and has a female gender identity.
therefore he takes on a female gender role. In short, he “switches sides” of the model from male to female and it becomes a “consistent package” again. . . . Or does it? Now that he is on the female side of the model, he is now “heterosexual” again in that he is “female-labeled.” However, if he is gay, he is supposedly sexually relating to other males who are switching sides of the model which actually places them in a female-female relationship -- according to the model.

It is obvious from looking at the U.S. model that there is no place for bisexuals. Bisexuals are generally seen by both those who identify as heterosexual and homosexual as being “straight” when they are in an opposite sex relationship, and “gay” when they are in a same sex relationship. In other words, bisexuality, like homosexuality is based upon sexual activity -- not sexual orientation. Bisexuals are also stereotyped as being hyper-sexual, or sexually indiscriminate. In reality, they are no more so than the general population. Just as a “heterosexual orientation” does not determine the number of one’s sexual partners, or one’s likelihood of remaining faithful, neither does bisexuality (or for that matter homosexuality). The idea of bisexuality as an orientation does not fit the U.S. mainstream construction, and is broken down to “activity” so it does fit.

One question that students frequently raise is why does society seem less harsh on women’s sexual orientation than on men’s? In other words, why does male homosexuality seem to get a stronger response than women’s homosexuality, and why is bisexuality currently seen as being more acceptable than bisexual men? The answer, or at least part of it, lies in the definition of sex within the society. “Real sex” is seen as involving a penis. If a penis is not involved, it is not “real sex.” The definition of sex is constructed around male sexuality -- it is male-defined. As such the sexuality of women (including in heterosexual relationships) has generally been seen as unimportant or secondary. Because of this definition, only men, or sex with men, is sex. Female-female sexuality is seen as not being really sex, and is frequently eroticized for the titillation of males. Just because generally there is not as strong a negative response to female-female sexuality, does not mean that the punishments for it can not be as significant as for gay males. Those perceived as lesbian are harassed, raped, beaten, and murdered as are males perceived to be gay. While there are reporting problems, it is likely that lesbians are more likely to be raped than gay men are to be beaten because the purported “cure” for lesbianism is sex with a man. No such folk cure is promoted to change the sexual orientation of a man.

The Workings of Power
What do you think of when you consider the word “power?” You might come up with a list such as strength, control, money, influence, and freedom. Sex is part of the stratification system, and in mainstream U.S. society, males have higher status than females. Please think back to Table 3.2, and the areas of sex, gender, gender roles, and sexual orientation. Now look at Figure 3.3a below.
On the far left of the continuum is extreme masculinity, we might think of Conan the Barbarian. On the far right is extreme femininity, for example Barbie. Now think about how far females can move towards the male side of the continuum in terms of gender, gender role, and sexual orientation before they receive serious sanctions. Think in terms of mainstream U.S. society, because appropriate gender/gender role behavior varies considerably across cultures. While there are certainly many considerations, try to think in generic terms, or in most situations. Now do the same thing for males. How far can males move towards the male side of the continuum in terms of gender, gender role, and sexual orientation before they receive serious sanctions?

Figure 3.3b represents where most people generally place the boundaries of acceptable behavior for males and females. There are certainly those situations when those boundaries can move in either direction, and certain things that individuals might do to make it “acceptable” for them to engage in opposite gender role activities. For example, a woman might be able to engage in highly masculine
behavior without too many negative sanctions if she made a “convincing demonstration of femininity – a 
female heavy equipment operator who pastes pictures of her boyfriend or husband on the dash board of 
her rig, or a female body builder who wears lots of makeup and high heels during competition.

On the other hand, it is much more difficult for males to “explain away” what is seen as inappropriate 
gender behavior – especially with males. Homophobia (fear of homosexuality and homosexuals) is 
frequently used by males in a joking (or not so joking) manner to let males know they are in dangerous 
behavior territory. Comments such as “are you going queer on us,” or are you’re a sissy” are not 
uncommon. The tone may be joking, but the warning is explicitly clear.

Some people argue that the middle of the continuum reflects the boundary for both sexes as the middle 
would be “androgynous,” or an equal combination of both female and male characteristics. Being 
androgyous has been a model that has waxed and waned in popularity – especially in terms of 
psychology. However, when we think about actual androgyous behavior, it is not judged the same for 
both males and females. Let’s take assertiveness for example. Think of a man and a woman in identical 
situations being equally assertive. Do we perceive them as acting in the same way? Generally not. Most 
people will judge the man as being too weak, and the woman as being aggressive. This is because their 
behavior is being judged against societal male and female norms.

If the placement of the gender boundaries are generally correct, we have a major conundrum (a very 
puzzling situation). If we think of status and power, the general assumption is that those with power can 
do whatever they want. They have all the control, make the rules, etc. If that is the case, why do males 
in U.S. mainstream society have significantly less gender and gender role range than females? Or 
conversely, why do women (who are lower status) seem to have more role range than males?

There are several things at work here. First, if we think about general U.S. mainstream values, we have 
the value of equality, and the value that one is supposed to “improve” themselves. In a system where 
males have higher status, and equality and higher status are defined as lying within the male domain, 
women must move towards the male standard in order to “improve” in the broader societal 
environment - though this is not necessarily improvement as females. This role expansion for females is 
more acceptable in the public domain of work than in the private domain of personal relationships. In 
other words, women moving into male job occupations is largely considered acceptable, but they 
should remain as “feminine” as possible within that environment.

The second area is boundary maintenance. In the environment of cultural values mentioned above, the 
pressure on maintaining the status boundary for males becomes more difficult. The “line” becomes 
clearer and harsher, and norm violations stricter for males. While males are given a number of privileges 
and freedoms to compensate for this restriction, the restriction is still there.
I want to stress that the discussion here is focused on the mainstream U.S. manifestation of sex and gender, and this is not “global.” What is considered appropriate for males and females and their associated roles and behavioral ranges, can and do vary significantly across cultures. There are those cultures where the two are totally distinct and relatively narrow. There are those cultures where multiple genders (and sexes) as discussed earlier in the chapter, create a totally different system.

**Sex and Socialization**

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, our sex is considered critically important by our society. At birth, we enter into a society with deep social constructions of sex and gender. We don’t choose this, but we cannot escape it. Our society’s construction of sex, gender and sexual orientation will shape and affect us in innumerable ways throughout our lives. Therefore, our socialization (internalization of cultural aspects) into our status and roles pervasive is throughout all forms of socialization we receive. We examined socialization as a concept in Chapter One, so I won’t repeat that information here. If you need to refresh your understanding of socialization, review Building Block 3 in Chapter One.

At birth, and for some before birth due to modern medical technology that allows the determination of a fetus’ sex in utero, we are given a name which is generally appropriate to our sex rather than appropriate to either sex. This naming places us immediately as people first interact with us as telling the difference between male and female infants is virtually impossible with diapers and clothes on. Frequently, sex appropriate clothing and accessories will be placed on us. Girls get pinks and “feminine” prints and patterns while boys get blues and “masculine patterns. In some social classes, a special room may be set up and designed specifically with our sex in mind. The color and patterns on the walls; the play things; our bassinet and even diaper bags and pacifiers may be selected with our sex in mind. Family members, family friends and even strangers, are bombarded by our sex so that they will respond to us from birth in the manner appropriate to our sex.

While the world is responding to us in a sex appropriate manner, they are also teaching and eliciting from us gender appropriate responses. Female infants are held more, coddled, and responded to more quickly when they cry. Male infants are held less, played with more physically (twirling them, throwing them into the air, etc) and responded to more slowly or ignored when they cry. Female infants behavior is interpreted through a “feminine lens” and male infants behavior through a “masculine lens.” Infants who do not engage in what is considered sex appropriate behavior at even this early age can raise concerns of parents and others.

Certainly as infants mature into young childhood the expectation of gender appropriate behavior increases and the penalties for inappropriate behavior intensifies. Males especially get the message to “be tough,” and “boys don’t cry.” Females may not get these explicit messages, but the implicit ones are clear. Girls are allowed to cry and responded to with comfort (generally), they are told to be gentle and encouraged to be so. Very early on they are frequently given their own “babies” (stuffed animals,
baby dolls) and even “homes” (play houses, house settings including family members, kitchen sets, etc) as play objects. Boys are given items appropriate to their gender – sports equipment, action toys, toy trucks, cars and heavy equipment, “work benches,” and construction toys. Girls get dolls and boys get action figures and most children know the difference.

Early on we are separated by sex to play – girls with girls doing girl things, boys with boys doing boy things. It is interesting to consider the similarities and differences between boys and girls play activities. Boys play generally involves imagination, but it is in a “real context.” They actually construct things with the tool toys, actually move sand with the equipment, play competitive games with the sporting goods, and engage in “war play.” Girls, on the other hand, generally engage in a very different kind of play. They take care of their “babies,” cook imaginary food and serve it to real and imaginary guests/families, etc. Much more of what girls do requires creation not only of the play, but play members.

Generally speaking, as children grow there is not a convergence in their play or interests. For all the changes regarding women’s sports, most girls do not pursue it the way boys do. With the introduction of Nintendos, Play-Stations, video games, and computerized games, we see “gender appropriateness” continue with different games marketed to boys and girls. Taking these things into consideration and leaving out educational biases, it is not surprising that boys and girls “like” different things – a difference that largely continues throughout the life course and affects educational, occupational, and hobby choice. What is amazing is not the lack of women who go into math, science, and technology (or boys who go into language arts, social work, or secretarial/clerical), but that educators and researchers continue to be dismayed that they don’t suddenly “change” despite efforts to do so.

This persistence of differentiation is frequently pointed to as support for the argument that these differences are a “normal and natural” consequence of biological sex differences. This takes us back to the heart of the nature - nurture debate in relationship to sex and gender. From a sociological perspective, it is basically impossible to separate out what is natural differences between the sexes from what is learned because we are affected by “nurture” from the moment of our birth. It would be highly unethical, and probably result in the death of the child, to isolate a sufficient sample of female and male infants from all human and social influences at birth and see what “natural” differences arise. Those who support the “nature” side of the debate argue that there are brain differences between males and females (as evidenced through studies of primarily adults). However, this difference is not necessarily “natural” as brain areas and pathways change depending on use - like any muscle does. Consistent and prolonged activity is going to strengthen activity aspects of the brain - both physical and mental activities. Males are considered to have better spatial skills than females, but look at what most young boys are doing – things involving spatial skills (throwing and catching balls for example). Females on the other hand are considered to have better verbal skills, but look at what they are doing – talking, and conversing, and making up conversations, even reading to their dolls). These activity differences are going to develop different pathways in the brain because that is how pathways are made in the brain – through practice and repetition.
Socialization agents teach us through example and reiteration, through positive and negative reinforcements, and through explicit statements, how we are to be our gender within the society. These agents are the same whether we are discussing gender and gender role socialization, socialization into other status positions, or the general values and norms of the society – family, peers, religious organizations, schools, media, etc. We will examine some of the ways gender and gender role socialization occurs below.

Gender and Stories
Stories, including children’s stories are a strong form of socialization. In U.S. mainstream culture, we are taught that stories are for the most part for entertainment – not for teaching. When we think about the term “story” we are immediately faced with at least two possible meanings - true stories and made-up stories. In English we use the same word for both meanings, but the general assumption is that “story” is fictitious unless it is specified in some way as a “true” story. This way of designating stories focuses us on different things. In a “true story” we are taught to focus on the events and content of the story – we are listening for “facts.” Conversely, when we listen to or read a story, we are focusing on the context, looking for the plot or meaning. While this distinction becomes clear when we think about it, generally speaking, we see stories as not having any implicit meaning - they are simply diverting entertainment.

This perception of stories then leads us to believe that whether we are looking at children’s books and fairy tales, watching cartoons or movies, or reading novels and short stories, that we are just being entertained. This perception can lull us into not knowing what we actually take away from “stories.” Let’s look at a couple of common fairy tales.

Most people raised in the U.S. are familiar with the tale of Jack and the Beanstalk. Jack is a young boy who lives in a stereotypical female-headed household. His father died and left Jack and his mother in dire economic straits. Jack’s mother struggles valiantly along, but eventually there just isn’t enough money for them to survive. The only thing they have of value is a cow. Jack’s mother explains the situation to Jack and asks him to take the cow to the village and sell it. So Jack sets out with the cow.

He doesn’t get very far down the road before he runs into a stranger. This man asks Jack where he’s going with that fine cow. Jack tells him the story and the stranger says he would like to trade for the cow. He tells Jack about these magic beans and how they are better than the little money he would get selling the cow. Jack agrees to the trade and heads back home. Upon arriving his mother asks Jack if he sold the cow - of course the response is “not exactly.” Jack tells her about the “magic beans” and how it was a great deal. Not surprisingly Jack’s mother is crushed and outraged. She takes the beans and throws them out the window and sends Jack to his room.

The next morning Jack wakes up early so he can sneak out of the house without confronting his mother.
Upon exiting, he sees the huge vines that have grown all the way into the clouds. He realizes that these are from his magic beans and might as well check out where they go – anyway it will be a fine adventure. So Jack climbs and climbs and ultimately arrives at a land that is totally unfamiliar. He starts exploring, sees a huge castle in the distance and heads towards it.

Ultimately he arrives at the castle and it is indeed huge. He sneaks in and finds that two giants live there – a giant and the giant’s wife. He decides to follow the giant around. The giant goes out to the barnyard and goes to a goose. He starts collecting the goose eggs and Jack sees they are made of gold. Thinking this will patch things up with his mother, he decides to steal one. He waits and plots, and ultimately attempts to steal an egg. Unfortunately, the goose raises such a ruckus that the giant runs out and catches him. The giant locks him in a cage in the kitchen and tells his wife to keep an eye on him. Of course, she complies.

As the giant’s wife goes about her chores in the kitchen, Jack tells her his sad story and she takes pity on him. She decides to let him escape and lets him go. Jack, not wanting to leave empty handed, steals an egg, goes to the beanstalk and shimmies down. Upon arriving home, his mother is tremendously relieved to see him. He presents her with the golden egg and tells his fantastic story. They buy new clothes, furniture, food, another cow etc., and live a fine life for a while. Then the money runs out. Jack decides to revisit the giant’s realm and steal not another egg, but the goose. So he climbs back up the beanstalk, gets chased by the giant and the giant’s wife (who we gather had gotten into a lot of trouble for letting Jack go), but ultimately he grabs the goose and runs - giant in pursuit. He practically flies down the beanstalk where his mother is waiting at the bottom. He hands her the goose, and chops down the beanstalk, and they live happily and comfortably for the rest of their lives.

When we look at the story, what is it telling us?

Messages in Jack and the Beanstalk
Make your own decisions even if your mother tells you something different
Take risks - it can pay off
Have adventures
Be physical
Support your family
It’s okay to steal if you really need to
Anything is fair if your opponent has an advantage
Women are soft-hearted
If you have money you have everything
Don’t steal an egg when you can steal the whole goose
The end justifies the means
etc.
Chapter 3: Constructing and Deconstructing Sex and Gender

Now Jack is a boy. When you think about this story and you think about how males are “supposed to be” in mainstream U.S. culture, what is the relationship to male gender and gender role expectations? For sake of comparison, think for a moment about the tale of Little Red Ridinghood. What messages are there in this tale and what is the correlation to female gender messages and expectations?

Both of these are simple, entertaining stories. However both, and thousands like them contain explicit and implicit messages about how we are supposed to be in the world. Children do not miss these messages, but parents frequently do.

Gender and the Media

It is not just children’s stories that convey how we are supposed to be men and women in the world. There is little doubt that whether in movies, advertising, the news, fiction and non-fiction books, etc., there are significant differences in how males and females are portrayed, and even the number that are portrayed. First there are dramatically more men than women portrayed in virtually all media. Second, males and females are most frequently portrayed very differently. Men are doing things and women are generally portrayed as adjuncts to males – frequently sexual adjuncts.

The media, especially the televised media, plays a key role in socialization today – and not only gender and gender role socialization. There are at least three major reasons that this medium carries such socialization force. First, is its persistence in most peoples’ lives in the United States from very early in life – the lifetime averages are between five and seven hours a day. Second, it is highly visual and our brains respond differently to visual images than to verbal images. We tend to believe what we see because we do not automatically process it cognitively. Third, in order for television programs to be popular, they must resonate with the conceptualizations of the public (or at least a good part of it). Because of this “resonance,” it portrays images, beliefs, and relationships that are part of the cultural value system, and the current cultural construction of reality. “Real” crime has become a popular prime time genre and serves to blur the distinction between reality and fiction. One assumes in watching “real crime” shows that one is seeing reality, but this is not true in a variety of ways. First comes in what is selected to be on the shows, and second that much is reenactment rather than actual. These shows build upon and expand the cultural constructions of victims and criminals and police responses to them. They generally reinforce stereotypes.

Cavendar and Bond-Maupin (1999) did research on several seasons of the popular “America’s Most Wanted” real crime television show spanning a period from 1989 - 1996. According to the study of Cavendar and Bond-Maupin, as well as others, white women were significantly over represented as victims and this trend increased between the 1989 season and the 1996 season (from 67% to 74% of female victims). “Real” victims as portrayed in “real” crime shows play on the cultural image of who is innocent – young, white, women and children or young married mothers. The images presented appeal to the vulnerability of women to male physical and sexual aggression.
While these “real crime” shows and popular media portray images of women, they also portray images of men. Men as criminals, men as aggressors, men as protectors, as competent, as strong, etc. Beauty images are created for both males and females, as well as appropriate gender behavior and roles. While much of the focus of gender analysis of the media has been on women (largely because of feminist researchers), the models for males are equally strong. If an image of beauty and behavior is constructed for women, at the very least the message to men is to desire that image, and that acquiring it reflects his status as a male. This certainly reflects not just the social construction of gender and gender roles, but the social construction of sexual desire and orientation as well.

The pervasiveness of white female beauty does not confine itself only to white women (and men), but to men and women of color, and to those across the globe who are inundated with U.S. media and advertisements. On February 2, 1999, Nightline aired a story called “Erasing Race.” It discussed the practice of some people of color and “ethnic” people engaging in plastic surgery to bring them closer to the white European norm of features. In an interview with a plastic surgeon (Dr. Harold Clavin) he stated about 40 percent of his patients are people trying to “erase some ethnic feature.” In other words, they are trying to look more like what is considered the “beauty standard.” This effort to fit a different standard is discussed at length in the book *Venus Envy* by Elizabeth Haiken.(1997). In the interview on Nightline she stated:

“We as a society have to look at what we mean when we use words like "pretty" and "beautiful." We're constantly flooded with images of what is beautiful, what is pretty, what is acceptable, what is normal. And most of the images are of white people. “

When she was asked how common plastic surgery to erase ethnic features was, she responded: “It's quite common. And in many ways, it's becoming more common as ethnic minority groups move into income levels where they can afford cosmetic surgery.”

While all of this pressure towards a “white” beauty norm is not solely the responsibility of the media, a fair amount of it is. As Jean Kilgore in the video “The Ad and the Ego” notes, the difference between beauty depicted in ancient art and sculpture and that being presented now is that we now have essentially one standard that is permeating peoples’ lives. It is an image that is present everywhere one looks whether it is in the privacy of one’s own home watching television, or in the public spaces of the society. This pervasive presence imprints itself in a way that no art work or sculpture ever could. And if the image is that pervasive and has such dramatic impacts from styles and fashions, to construction of beauty, then certainly the gendered contexts in which these images are presented are no less impactful.

And so on . . .
The enforcements and reinforcements for gender, gender role, and sexual orientation are all around us, seeping into every crack in our consciousness. They shape our view of ourselves and our world view. They shape our relationships with others be they strangers or intimates or characters in a movie.
Certainly some people resist, live and be a different way, but the images and expectations still pervade our environment and sometimes our consciousness. Remember that socialization is at least in part a process of internalization. It is that internalization that casts the doubts and nags us. It is that internal voice that we may try not to listen to that says we are too fat or thin, too wimpy or too aggressive, too dumb or too smart. We can refuse to follow the voice, but it is almost impossible to shut out.

The voice is there not just because socialization agents instilled it in us at an early age, but because the message goes on day after day, year after year. We police each other and ourselves. We see and hear the messages at every turn. The voice is not solely the voice of childhood, but the voice of our current selves. However, it is not only through values and images and social constructions that our gender complex is shaped, but through structured interactions, expectations, and rules in social institutions and organizations.

Institutionalization of the Sex-Based System
The sex-based system of stratification in the U.S. is not new and did not start with the creation of the United States as a nation. Most people came here from somewhere else, and they brought their cultures with them. As discussed in Chapter One, everyone’s culture did not (and does not) have equal power within the U.S. context. Certainly, the concept of women as property was not invented in the United States, but it was brought here by early British colonists and the laws they lived under. Actually under those laws (and contemporary law as well) children are a form of property. The sex difference historically was that males (white) outgrew their property status, but (white) women did not. Females were first the property of their fathers and then the property of their husbands. Any rights they had derived from the rights of father/husband as independently they were not recognized under the law. Actually this issue of attached rights applied to all women in the United States regardless of race, and social class differences also played a role in these rights. If a father/husband was not eligible for citizenship then neither were the women attached to him.

Laws regarding citizenship for women were deeply entwined with race (which will be discussed later), but significantly restricted a woman’s citizenship rights until 1952. Generally, until 1952, a white woman could have citizenship only by marrying a citizen. If she married a non-citizen, or person ineligible for citizenship, then she lost her U.S. citizenship. The 1952 law change also allowed foreign women (and non-white foreign women) to gain citizenship by marrying a citizen. This law however did not extend to foreign males gaining citizenship by marrying a woman citizen.

Initially, and carrying over to current social structure, neither all men nor all women were created equal. The mythology is that women’s primary roles have always been within the home and with children. To extend this further, men worked in the world and women worked in the home. This is related to discussions of spheres of influence where women’s primary domain is in the domestic sphere and men’s in the public sphere. In other words, women’s lives were and are bounded by home and family while men are “in the world.”
While we may structure our expectations and what is considered appropriate around the domestic/public spheres, the reality of women’s lives varies from the myth significantly. Having women remain within the domestic sphere requires enough material surplus (money) to accommodate an additional dependent within the family. The myth also presumes a protectiveness by the society towards women, when in reality that protectiveness has not, and is not, extended to all women. The differences in women’s lives, in particular, interacts strongly with both social class and race.

As alluded to above, having women stay within the home requires sufficient social class standing that the family can survive. Poor women, regardless of social class, have always worked for pay in money-based economies and the United States is no exception. Historically, poor and working class women worked in women’s factories (sweat shops), cottage industries (piece work within their homes, in the fields and mining camps, and as domestic servants – to name a few. The myth of the woman at home is that she is largely engaged in maintenance rather than productive labor. However, even women’s work at home (while unpaid) is frequently necessary to the survival of most families. Whether engaged in gardening and livestock care or making clothes and household products or the care of children and those unable to work, the work and production of women is significant even if it doesn’t “count.” Even today in the U.S., women’s unpaid labor is worth billions of dollars and facilitates men’s broader participation in the paid labor market.

Race also made significant differences in women’s lives and rights. As Bonnie Thorton Dill (1988) notes, European women’s role in reproduction and the raising of children was nourished through a variety of practices and laws. However, the situation for women of color and racialized ethnics was significantly different and without the protections and nurturance experienced by white women. For women of color, particularly Black slaves, and Mexicans, the expectation was production of children as additional workers, and to be productive workers outside the homes. Little consideration, and frequently deliberate barriers, were provided for families of color. For slaves, marriage was banned in most places and families were often broken by sale of family members. For American Indians, children were deliberately removed from families and sent away to “boarding schools,” and early Chinese laborers were unable to bring their families or establish them here. People of color – women, men, and children – were primarily seen as a cheap and exploitable labor force (Dill, 1988:418).

While many think that the issues of structured and social gender inequality are located in the distant past, it is not. Women were not protected from sex discrimination in getting consumer credit until 1974 with the passage of the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, and those protections were not extended to commercial credit (i.e. business loans) until 1988. Prior to that time it was very difficult for women to get credit in their own names, and upon marriage the woman’s credit automatically transferred to her husband. Sexual harassment was not added to the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) until 1980, and it was 1986 before the Supreme Court declared sexual harassment as a form of illegal job discrimination. It wasn’t until 1981 in Kirchberg v. Feenstra that the Supreme Court overturned state laws that declared husbands as having total control over property held jointly with
wives. And it wasn’t until the mid 1970s that the last of the state laws allowing a husband to physically chastise (discipline) his wife were removed from the books (National Women’s History Project).

Even though laws and legislation regarding discrimination against women in housing, employment, education, and credit have been passed, discrimination still occurs. There is still disparity between the sexes in wages, poverty levels, credit worthiness, and political representation, to name a few areas. Discrimination and sexual harassment are common experiences for women, and violence against women has not seemed to decrease. Women are still seen as primarily responsible for home and children, and occupational segregation has not markedly decreased. The portrayal of gender roles in the media has expanded somewhat, but with a clear link to their sexual status and position as women.

We could argue that there has not been sufficient time for substantial changes in the sex-based stratification system, and to some extent this would be a justifiable argument. What concerns me as a teacher however, is the perception that inequality between the sexes no longer exists. It is a new myth of equality that is not supportable by women’s lives nor statistics. Nor is it supportable by men’s lives and statistics. Men’s roles are not changing substantively; they still die considerably earlier than women even though they have been the focus of most medical research; they still are not generally seen as appropriate sole caretakers of their children in custody cases; they are still seen as not “real” men if they cross over to female occupations. Some of what we are witnessing are true changes, but much of what we are seeing are shifts in the ways that sexual stratification is manifesting itself.

**Maintenance of the Sex Stratification System**

Let’s utilize the model we introduced in the last chapter to illuminate the processes of sex stratification. Actually, I want you to utilize the model to examine two different, though related systems. First, examine sex stratification within the framework of the model, then examine it within sexual orientation. I will start the model for you, and you should complete it yourself.
Chapter 3: Constructing and Deconstructing Sex and Gender

Maintaining the Sex Status System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rewards (those things</td>
<td>respect, power, freedom of movement . . .</td>
<td>protection, support, acceptance, . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individuals and groups receive</td>
<td>(or are promised) by staying within the rules and behaviors of the system)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishments (punishments</td>
<td>exclusion, verbal harassment, . . .</td>
<td>labeled as “dykes, considered unattractive, . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individuals receive for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>breaking the rules)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs (what negative</td>
<td>restricted emotional and personal expression, . . .</td>
<td>discrimination in employment, . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consequences are there for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individuals and the stratum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the system being as it is;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or what do people “give up”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because of the system?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Homophobia and Heterosexism

It is interesting as we look at the dynamics of the sex-gender system and the sexual orientation system that two interacting processes come to light – homophobia and compulsory heterosexuality. Homophobia is the fear and hatred of homosexuality and homosexuals. Homophobia was a term coined by a psychologist by the name of George Weinberg in the late 1960s, and then discussed at length in his book Society and the Healthy Homosexual (Weinberg, 1972). Heterosexism is directly linked to homophobia – we might call it the opposite side of the same coin. Heterosexism is the institutional and ideological domination of heterosexuality as a fundamental part of the structure of patriarchy. It is a belief system like racism, sexism, or classism. Some authors use the term heterosexism to describe a belief system which is fundamentally anti-gay such as Herek (1990). Herek (2000) has continued to pursue this line of inquiry, and has broadened her research into sexual prejudice. Sexual prejudice refers to all negative beliefs based on sexual orientation. Like other forms of prejudice, sexual prejudice is a belief or judgement based upon perceived membership in a social group.

Homophobia, like other forms of prejudice, is also societal in nature – not just a product of individuals. We live in a generally homophobic society where dislike and even hatred of homosexuals is considered acceptable, and even normal. Further, this prejudice is reinforced through a wide array of social practices and institutions. This reinforcement can be seen in the legal denial of allowing same-sex couples to marry, laws against sodomy that are almost explicitly aimed at homosexuals, and lack of job
or housing protection in areas of the country. It is also highly reflected in the June 29, 2000 ruling of the United States Supreme Court who decided that the Boy Scouts of America have the right to expel from leadership or participation in Scouts any member who is homosexual. This ruling is interesting because they ruled the Scouts are a private organization aimed at teaching values. However, they have not expelled scout members who are not homosexual, but are not condemning of homosexuality.

**Compulsory heterosexuality is the systematic and systemic bias towards heterosexuality and a heterosexual lifestyle as reflected in social institutions such as the family, religion, and the state (Rich, 1980).** Compulsory heterosexuality is also reflected in the pervasive nature of its presentation in the society through stories, myths, values, and all forms of media. Compulsory heterosexuality is the presentation of heterosexuality as the only acceptable choice. This is one of the reasons that many prefer the term sexual orientation – there is not a choice that is involved in the atmosphere of compulsory heterosexuality.

The birth of the concepts of homophobia, heterosexism, and compulsory heterosexuality came largely out of the feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s, and especially out of radical feminist and lesbian feminist theory (Daly, 1978; Rich, 1980; Ettore, 1985; etc). However, the discussion and elaboration of these concepts has gone far beyond the feminist movement to be integrated into the studies of philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, literature, ethics and medical ethics, social work, etc. It is also regularly included in classes in Women’s and Gay Studies programs. Compulsory heterosexuality is certainly part of the paradigm of sexual orientation, but it is also considered by some a key component in maintaining male dominance and patriarchy. According to J. Keith Vincent (1997), we are in an “age characterized by an unprecedented convergence of gender identity with sexual behavior” that is characterized by the present manifestation of compulsory heterosexuality.
Chapter 3: Constructing and Deconstructing Sex and Gender

Maintenance of the Sexual Orientation System
As you will have noticed from completing the Maintaining the Sex Status System grid above, sexual orientation and the processes around it are important within the maintenance of the sex and gender system. We might look at it as a process within a process. For that reason, please do the same exercise for maintaining the status system for sexual orientation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Heterosexuals</th>
<th>Bisexuals and Gays</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rewards (those things individuals and groups receive (or are promised) by staying within the rules and behaviors of the system)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishments (punishments individuals receive for breaking the rules)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs (what negative consequences are there for individuals and the stratum of the system being as it is; or what do people “give up” because of the system?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Putting it Together
As is obvious to you from this chapter, sex, sex identity, gender, gender identity, gender roles, and sexual orientation all interact significantly with each other. In fact, while we can discuss them independently of each other they also give meaning to each other. The ways that these various components of the sex/gender system change from context to context, and variable to variable is complex. It is an arena that is at one intimately personal and incredibly public. Take a few moments and think about their interaction in your life. Take one day as a sample and see the dance of these constructs in your life. You will note that they change from situation to situation and interaction to interaction. How does your awareness of the constructs affect your response to the world around you, the advertisement you just saw, or the movie you just watched?

Looking Forward
You should now have a feel for how the sex stratification system works. We will examine throughout the rest of this section how other highly significant stratification systems - social class and race. We
started with the sex-based system because it is to most people the one they have the most information about. While it is easy to see how personal the effects of sex are, for many social class and race seem much more obscure and distant. As you will find in the discussions that follow, their impacts are as personal and as broad as sex and gender. The skills you gained in using the model of status maintenance will be employed as we examine social class and race. Then as we move through the other areas of the text, you will be able to add to that model and your understanding of how these very different, but very integrated systems work together shaping our lives and our society.

Suggested Reading and Resources
Intersex Society of North America  http://www.isna.org/

Intersex Voices  http://www.qis.net/~triea/inter.html

National Women’s History Project  http://www.nwhp.org/links.html

Women’s Legacy 1998  http://www.legacy98.org/

Key Concepts and Terms
berdache               gender                       intersexual
bisexual               hermaphrodite                 public sphere
compulsory heterosexuality heterosexism       sex
domestic sphere        heterosexual                      sexual orientation
gender identity        homophobia                           two spirit
gender role            homosexual
Chapter Four

CONSTRUCTING AND DECONSTRUCTING SOCIAL CLASS
What is Social Class
The way people in the U.S. most commonly think of social class is in terms of income. Income is money that comes in – largely through earnings. If you have very little money you are poor, if you have a “decent” job and wage you are middle class, and if you have “tons of money” you are rich. We also see social class as very permeable, meaning that people can move from one social class to another largely based upon their own efforts and desires. Because of this perception of free movement across class boundaries, social class becomes a “choice.” If you want to “move up” in social class, all you need to do is work harder or smarter, get more money, and there you are. This all leads us to think of social class as relatively artificial and personal rather than as a significant issue of stratification and social inequality.

Sociologists tend to think to social class as more than just income. Generally, sociologists accept Weber’s argument that groups are stratified by a combination of power, wealth and prestige. Wealth is what you own, not simply what you earn. It includes physical property, valuable objects, an investments. As you may recall from the discussion of social stratification in the first chapter, prestige is a consequence of status, which is a consequence of social placement. Applying this conceptualization to social class allows us to look at the dynamics of how social class operates within a society. When sociologists use the term “social class” or “class,” we are using it as a short hand for socio-economic status (commonly abbreviated as SES). Socio-economic status encompasses both the economic component of class as well as the social characteristics of it.

When we expand our thinking about social class, we intuitively know that there is more than money involved. For example, a person who makes $8,000 a year and wins a 30 million dollar lottery is not in the same situation as one who owns a business and is worth 30 million dollars. Similarly, a person who is in corporate management and earning 30 million and loses his/her job, is not the same as an electronic assembler who loses his/her job. We know, though rarely think about what those differences are.

Many people see social class stratification as the central form of stratification in the United States. This perception of social class takes essentially two forms. The theoretical approach sees that resolving social class inequality will resolve disparities between sexes and races. The general public (and frequently political groups) argues for the centrality of social class because it fits nicely with other core American beliefs such as equality and opportunity. From this perspective social class is the primary divider, but since social class is somewhat voluntary (or we can overcome it if we try hard enough) there is no truly structured inequality.

Another way to see social class is that it is both a starting place and an outcome. It is a starting place because we all have a social class when we are born, which affords us certain opportunities and barriers. And it is an outcome as it is a major way that social resources are divided. Ultimately, regardless of the way that one thinks about social class, it involves the distribution of social (both material and non-material) resources within this society. Social class placement has a large
influence on our access to, and control of, social resources. The higher our social class, the more access and control we have; the lower our social class the less we have, and we may have no access or control at all of certain resources.

Discussions of social class inevitably lead to questions of how many social classes there are and what are the income limits for each class. There are many ways to break down the social classes in the U.S. In terms of simply dividing the population into classes in terms that are commonly used, there are at least the following five methods (see Table 4.1 below).

### Table 4.1 Dividing the Classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper Class</td>
<td>Upper Class</td>
<td>Upper Upper</td>
<td>Upper Upper</td>
<td>Capitalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Middle Upper</td>
<td>Petti-Bourgeoisie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>Lower Upper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class</td>
<td>Lower Class</td>
<td></td>
<td>Upper Lower</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Upper Lower</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Middle Lower</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Lower</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One might wonder why there are all these possibilities. What people are trying to capture with the different schemas is where the meaningful social breaks are – not simply income and wealth break points. Let’s just take a brief look at why we might make these different breakdowns of the class structure. Column A assumes that people who are upper class have wealth and money and are in positions of power and prestige (upper management and company owners), while the middle class are college educated skilled workers, and the lower class is virtually everyone else. Column B makes similar assumptions to A, but includes the working class as (usually) skilled workers who are making above minimum wage (and perhaps even middle class wages). Column C breaks the upper, middle and lower classes into upper and lower which is largely an accommodation for wage and occupational status differences, and adds the lower lower class as essentially those who are without continuous employment or are permanently unemployed. Column D is a finer division of Column C. Lastly, we have Column E which is a Marxist approach to social class. The Capitalist class is the large business owners and wealthy financiers. The Petti-Bourgeoisie are small business owners with the management class being all those who maintain the rules of the capitalists and petti-bourgeoisie in controlling the
proletariat, which is everyone else who works for a wage (or who can be called into the workforce at need).

So, we have numerous possibilities for dividing the social classes, but it still doesn’t tell us to determine which class we (or someone else) is in. While it does not correspond with social class structure as we have been discussing it, the most common way to look at income and wealth is in quintiles or twenty percents of the population. The Table 4.2 depicts the quintile breakdown of income based upon 1997 figures.

Table 4.2 1998 Family Income Quintiles in 1998 Constant Dollars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top 5 % (lower limit of)</td>
<td>$145,199.00</td>
<td>21.40%</td>
<td>15.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Quintile</td>
<td></td>
<td>49.20%</td>
<td>43.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Quintile</td>
<td>$83,693.00</td>
<td>23.20%</td>
<td>24.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Quintile</td>
<td>$56,020.00</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>16.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Quintile</td>
<td>$37,692.00</td>
<td>8.90%</td>
<td>10.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest 20%</td>
<td>$21,600.00</td>
<td>3.60%</td>
<td>4.30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Table F-1. Income Limits for Each Fifth and Top 5 Percent of Families (All Races): 1947 to 1998 and Table H-2. Share of Aggregate Income Received by Each Fifth and Top 5 Percent of Households (All Races): 1947 to 1998

Table 4.2 gives a the income limits for quintiles one through four with the lower limit of the top five percent of the fifth quintile for the entire U.S. population and is based on family incomes. For example, the bottom twenty percent of families earned from zero dollars to $21,600.00. At the top end of the quintiles, the fifth quintile starts at $83,694. And goes up to the highest income. The lowest level of the top five percent of families is $145,199.00. Table 4.2 also shows the percentage of total income held by families in each quintile and the top five percent of families.

Several things are of note from the above data. First, is that there is more income disparity in the highest quintile than among the rest to the population. Starting at roughly $84,000.00, it goes up to the billions of dollars. Second, many people are surprised that the dollar levels aren’t higher and more difference between the quintiles. Related to this, many are surprised that 95% of families earn less than $145,199.00.
Another set of data presented in the table is the percentage of all income received by each quintile and how it has changed from 1980 to 1998. Two things become apparent from looking at this information. First, that income is not evenly distributed across the quintiles. One form of equality would be reflected by the percentage of income being twenty percent for each of the quintiles. Looking at the 1998 percentage distribution, we see that the top twenty percent of families have almost fifty percent of the income and that the top five percent have more than 20% on their own. If we compare the 1980 to 1998 figures, we see another thing that is happening. While the top quintile has increased their share of income, the remaining 80% of families have lost income. What this reflects is symptomatic of increasing income inequality which you have probably heard referred to from a variety of news and information sources.

One way we could roughly look at how the quintiles correlate to social class standing would be as depicted in Table 4.3 below. This is a simplistic and not very accurate approach with a number of methodological problems. However, some ways it captures what many people’s idea of social class is. First that social class is simply income. Second that there is an unequivocal line that moves one from one class to another. Third, that because we have an equal society that having an equal percentage of the population in each class seems intuitively correct. And finally, that the classes are the same for the entire population (the same for all races and ethnic groups).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quintile</th>
<th>Upper Income Limit - 1998 dollars</th>
<th>Social Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Quintile</td>
<td>unlimited</td>
<td>Upper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Quintile</td>
<td>$83,693.00</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Quintile</td>
<td>$56,020.00</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Quintile</td>
<td>$37,692.00</td>
<td>Working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest 20%</td>
<td>$21,600.00</td>
<td>Lower</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While Table 4.2 presents income information for all families, and Table 4.3 presents a hypothetical social class breakdown, it is important to realize that this does not reflect reality for all families. To demonstrate this, examine Table 4.4. It shows the quintile income limits for 1980 and 1998 for European American, African American, and Hispanic Origin families. Table 4.5 portrays the percentage of change in income for African and Hispanic Origin Americans between 1980 and 1999. This information is presented to demonstrate that when you look inside the data, things are not necessarily what they appear to be when you are looking at the big picture.
Chapter 4: Constructing and Deconstructing Social Class

Table 4.4 Quintile comparison by Race and Hispanic Origin for 1980 and 1998 on Family Income Limits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>European American</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Hispanic Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower level of Top 5%</td>
<td>$55,000</td>
<td>$145,199</td>
<td>$56,163</td>
<td>$149,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>$34,800</td>
<td>$83,693</td>
<td>$35,643</td>
<td>$86,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>$24,800</td>
<td>$56,020</td>
<td>$25,600</td>
<td>$58,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>$17,510</td>
<td>$37,692</td>
<td>$18,560</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>$10,400</td>
<td>$21,600</td>
<td>$11,460</td>
<td>$23,916</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Combined from U.S. Census Bureau. Income Limits for Each Fifth and Top 5 Percent of Families - F Series Tables

One thing that is clear from Table 4.4 is that for both 1980 and 1998, across all quintiles and including the top five percent, African Americans and Latino Americans made significantly less money. For example, let’s look at the third quintile. For all families, the highest income limit was $56,020, for European Americans it was higher than the average at $58,450, while for African Americans it was $37,260 and Latino Americans it was $35,854. So African American families earned 63.7%, and Hispanic Americans earned 61.3% compared to European Americans in the third quintile. If we take this information and compare it to the theoretical class breakdown in Table 4.3, both African and Hispanic Americans fall into the second rather than the third quintile. In other words, they would be in the working rather than the middle class.

Table 4.2 also examined the percentage of income shares between 1980 and 1998 for all families. Table 4.5 below looks at the percentage of change reflected in the table above for African and Hispanic Americans. While the table for all families (Table 4.3) shows that the top twenty percent of families increased their income shares by 5.5 percent (top 5% by 5.6%), the remaining eight percent of the population lost income shares (actually from -.7 to -1.9). However, when we look at Table 4.5 below, we see that the top five percent of African American families lost 2.93% while Hispanic Americans in the top five percent lost 8.25%. From this we can see that at the highest levels, whites have increased their shares of income while Blacks and Hispanics have lost, even though we are talking about the most economically advantaged of all income groups. Another thing that is clear from Table 4.5 (below) is that African Americans (as a group) did better economically from 1980-98 while Hispanic Americans position declined significantly.
Table 4.5 Percent Change in Quintile Limits for African American and Hispanic Origin for 1980 and 1998.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Hispanic Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Level of Top 5%</td>
<td>70.30</td>
<td>67.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>70.05</td>
<td>70.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>62.50</td>
<td>63.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>53.45</td>
<td>63.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>48.60</td>
<td>50.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Derived from Table 4.4

Earlier, I presented a theoretical social class breakdown based on income quintiles. I also mentioned there were problems with using that method for determining social class. Social class is socio-economic status, not just income. Dinesh D’Souza (1999) has devised what he calls “the new class structure” which includes income, and net wealth (what you own minus what you owe). While I disagree with Dr. D’Souza’ theories, his model for social class has its strengths. Table 4.6 presents D’Souza’s social class model, and as a reference point the 1998 quintile limits.

Table 4.6 D’Souza’s New Class Structure and 1998 Income Quintiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class &amp; Number of Households</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Net Wealth</th>
<th>Quintile &amp; Limit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Super Rich</td>
<td>$10 million plus</td>
<td>$100 million plus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich - 5 million including super rich</td>
<td>$1 - 10 million</td>
<td>$10-100 million</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Middle - 17 million</td>
<td>$75,000 - 1 million</td>
<td>$500,000 - 10 million</td>
<td>Top 5% $145,199 + Fifth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fourth $83,693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Third $56,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle - 34 million</td>
<td>$35,000-75,000</td>
<td>$55,000-500,000</td>
<td>Second $37,692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Middle - 29 million</td>
<td>$15,000-35,000</td>
<td>$10,000-55,000</td>
<td>First $21,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor - 20 million</td>
<td>$0 - 15,000</td>
<td>$0- 10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D’Souza argues that there have been dramatic changes in income and wealth since the 1980s – a
change that is amply documented. While his article does not talk about increasing inequality, he attempts to capture what is happening primarily in the top of the social class structure. This emphasis is pretty clear from his model, and that over half of those he has ranked as “lower middle” class are actually below the official federal poverty line. In his article “The Billionaire Next Door,” he notes that the net wealth of most of the population is their home – something that is not true for the “rich” and “super rich.” [See Box 4.1 for article excerpt]

So at this point we know that social class is not just income, but that it also includes wealth. We also know that the lifestyles and opportunities of the various social classes are not the same. However, even given these differences, there are other differences that distinguish the social classes from each other.

Think about your life, particularly your birth and childhood. One of the things that social class does is give us our initial social placement. That placement is based upon the social class of our family or origin. If we were adopted at birth, our placement is that of our adoptive or foster parents. If we are placed within a facility (or orphanage) our class is affected as well.


Feel like catering a small party at your apartment or leasing that new Lexus or flying first-class to Paris for your wedding anniversary? Being upper-middle-class means that you can do these things. But you cannot do them all at the same time. Money remains a constraint.

Even rich means being able to do, within reason, whatever you want. . .

Even rich folk have their limits, however. They can fly first class, but they cannot own their own Gulfstream. They can have two homes, but not five. They can eat in fine restaurants, but they can’t, as one Las Vegas tycoon reportedly did, fly in world-famous chef Wolfgang Puck and his staff to cook for a private party. In short, rich people can do whatever they want within reason, but they cannot do whatever they want, period.

That honor belongs to the super-rich, a category that scarcely existed in 1980. . .

Don't like the kind of music you hear on the radio? Then follow author Stephen King's example and buy the radio station. Worried about asteroids flying too close to earth? Pump in a hundred grand, like Infoseek founder Steven Kirsch reportedly did, to identify and track them. Looking for other similar thrills? Join the few dozen rich and intrepid souls, including software tycoon Richard Garriott, who paid a hefty deposit to sign up for the first commercial ride into space. Super rich people are limited in what they can do only by their imagination.

What kinds of things does the social class placement of our primary care giver(s) affect? We don’t have to think very long to realize that social class dramatically affects the environment and physical conditions that we live in. It affects where we live and the quality of housing and material possessions. It affects the kind and quality of food we eat and whether our physical environment is in an environmentally safe area. (Waste and toxic sites are almost universally located in economically poor areas.) It affects our access to healthcare and to educational resources. It affects who we know, the expectations that others have of us, and perhaps our expectations of ourselves. Our initial social class placement affects the access we have to both necessities of life and the amenities of the society. It affects our (and our care
givers) ability to address setbacks such as accident, injury, loss of a job, etc. In a very real and tangible way, our early social class placement dramatically affects the conditions of our lives.

There seems to be a common assumption in the U.S. mythology of social class, that none of these things are important. We are led to believe, or at least not think about, that the early conditions of our life have minimal affect on our ability to succeed and prosper as adults. Combined with our belief that class is primarily money, the assumption is that if we get more money that we start over - there are no long term affects. We don’t think very often about people moving down in social class, and when we do we assume it is a temporary setback which they will overcome. However, if we grow up in an environmentally hazardous area with little or no access to good health care could that have long term consequences for us? For example, if we grow up in an environment with dangerously high levels of lead it is highly likely that it will permanently impair our brain development. If we do not have adequate nutrition, it is unlikely that we will physically develop as we should. If we go to a school with inadequate resources (textbooks that are long out of date, no library, and little access to modern technology), it will most likely impair our academic performance and opportunities later.

While some people may overcome a “poor start,” many will have difficulty and for some it may be impossible. For those who get a “great start,” the odds are that they will keep it. While there is considerable income mobility of families over time, it is mostly at the borders – those at the top and bottom of each quintile (or social class) are the most likely to move either up or down. Gottschalk (1998) examined family income mobility from 1969-1994. Over that time period, except for the lowest quintile (41%) and the top quintile (39%), roughly 25% of families were in the same income quintile in 1994 as they were in 1969. Further, quintiles two through four were virtually equally likely to move up or down (roughly 25% either direction).

By this time you are probably wondering how something that is so commonly mentioned is so “fuzzy” and complicated. The truth is that there are many ways to look at social class, and what one includes, or excludes) makes a difference. In other words, there are a lot of different perspectives, and while there is a high degree of overlap across social class determinations there is also a lot of areas that don’t overlap. Some researchers use income, others, income and wealth, others income and wealth and occupational status, and still others the relationship to the means and products of production.

While there are disagreements about where and how to draw the lines in relationship to social class, there are also problems with how to determine which class a person is in. Various methods are used and they all have their problems. Three primary approaches are used - subjective, reputation, and objective.

**The subjective approach asks people to place themselves into a social class,** and might simply ask people “what social class are you in.” One of the major problems with this approach is that people, regardless of actual class standing, are likely to report that they are middle class. Some of the reasons
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for this are: middle class seems what most people are and folks don’t want to stand out; middle class is a safe response because there is very little animosity towards the middle class; and most people want to be seen as being “like everyone else.” Today even some people who have extreme wealth try to present a middle class image. For example, Bill Gates (currently the richest person on the planet) usually “dresses down,” and actress Julia Roberts wants to blend into the masses (D’Souza, 1999). Therefore, the subjective approach gives us an over-representation of the middle class.

The reputation approach asks people to rank other people’s social class. This is perhaps the most accurate method of determining social class, but has limited usefulness. The accuracy of this method relies on a relatively high level of familiarity with the person being ranked. Therefore, it is very accurate in areas where people are highly familiar with each other (such as small towns and communities) and virtually worthless in larger towns and cities.

The objective approach uses other data sources to group people into social classes. This is the most common way that researchers and analysts look at social class and usually depends on various data sources that are considered reliable such as census data. Analysts apply their assumptions to creating the class boundaries and then organize the data into those categories. This is considered a valid and reliable way of determining social classes.

There are other problems with determining social class. I noted earlier that the quintile method might mean different things if we included race as a variable. Likewise, there has been considerable problems with determining women’s social class. There are many reasons why women’s social class and mens might not only be the same thing, but actually work differently. One of the primary reasons was briefly discussed in Chapter 3 - women as a form of property. Historically and contemporarily, women’s social class is heavily tied to men. While in the past women were usually unable to own property or hold credit in their own names (or it transferred to their husbands upon marriage), social expectations of women’s role in the society still have a significant impact. Even with the majority of women in the labor force, most women are still somewhat dependent on men (especially) husbands for economic support. This is especially true when children enter the picture as, at least for a brief period of time, women generally leave the labor force for childbearing.

Another problem is that women’s wages are significantly lower than men’s for a variety of reasons, including institutionalized wage inequality. For the majority of married women in the United States (regardless of race or ethnicity) the dissolution of a marriage means a significant drop in household income and standards of living. This is true even among the relatively wealthy. In the early 1990s, 60 Minutes aired a report on the wives of Belair (an upper class neighborhood in California). The story focused on the situation of a number of Belair women who were divorced and living in their cars on the streets; depending on friends and associates to provide them with places to clean up, do their laundry etc. It was an odd picture that flew in the face of stereotypes about who is homeless, but it dramatically pointed out the relationship of women to social class.
A final problem with social class in relationship to women is that historically examinations of social class and social class mobility have focused almost exclusively on men. The assumptions were based on the realities of men’s lives within the society. Intergenerational mobility looked at son’s social class in relationship to father’s social class. Social class was largely determined by family and males were considered the sole (or at least primary) earners in the family. This perception of social class at best marginalized women’s relationship to it. Women’s incomes were seen as largely inconsequential - generally considered by society, researchers, and women themselves as “pin money” – a little extra to buy non-necessities. The problem of women and social class has not gone away with their broad scale participation in the paid labor force.

With all of the definitional problems and ambiguities, social class is a reality that we see at work in our lives and society. Social class however, is not just something that is applied to us and we (hopefully) move through. Social class is also something that we learn to be. The next component to examine is the socialization process and social class.

Socialization and Social Class
Like other forms of stratification systems, we are not just “in” a social class, but it is in us. As part of the socialization process, we learn about the social classes, how social class is supposed to work, the cultural values interrelating social class, the stereotypes of the various classes, and how to interact with those of our own and different social classes. We learn to expectations of our class and how we are supposed to succeed. We learn all this in the same ways, and at the same levels as any other form of socialization – deeply and unconsciously, specifically and consciously, and through the constant reinforcement of the people around us and the institutions and organizations with which we interact.

We receive specific socialization into our class as we receive specific socialization into sex and gender. While we have become more sensitive to and aware of sex and gender socialization, we generally don’t pay much attention to social class socialization. The glaring exception to this is the belief that the poor live in a culture of poverty that they pass on to their children. To some extent this is true, but it is no different than the “cultures” of the working, middle, or upper classes and the socialization they pass on to their children. The “culture” of the poor is part of the broader construction of social class in the society.

We have already examined in this chapter a number of the broad societal beliefs about social class. These broad beliefs provide the basic foundation in which specific class socialization occurs. Such beliefs include the following:

1. social class is individual
2. individual’s are in control of their own class placement
3. anyone can make it to the top
4. education is important to success
Let’s examine some of the beliefs and how social class works with the following diagram. For purposes of simplicity and clarity, I will focus on the lower, middle, and upper upper classes.

### Diagram 4.1 Social Class and Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Expectations / Means</th>
<th>U.S. Mainstream Ideal of Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper Upper</td>
<td>Work hard&lt;br&gt;Educational - Bachelor’s degree but few advanced degrees</td>
<td>- Own home in “good” neighborhood in excellent condition&lt;br&gt;- Have a “good” family with smart, obedient children&lt;br&gt;- Have “nice” or new car (or multiple new cars)&lt;br&gt;- Have quality and fashionable clothes and accessories&lt;br&gt;- Have the newest technological gizmos (computers, cell phones, entertainment centers)&lt;br&gt;- Not be concerned about money (have more than you need)&lt;br&gt;- Financial security etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Work hard&lt;br&gt;Educational - Bachelor’s and advanced degrees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Work hard&lt;br&gt;Educational - high school to technical or couple years of college</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ideal of material success is a broad societal image. It is the ideal that is presented pervasively in the society regardless of the class one belongs to. In other words, we are told this is what we are to aim for and judge ourselves against. As consumption is currently treated as a key feature in U.S. society, and social class is largely seen as the ability to consume, the ideal is not focused on happiness. The message is that these material things will give one happiness.

The expectations and “road” to success however varies in interesting ways across social classes. All classes get a clear message that education and hard work are the keys to success. However, that broad general message does not translate the same across social classes. For the working and lower classes, working hard generally means significant physical effort. Your effort is reflected in your sweat and your time. For the lower classes, these are generally menial positions and general laborer jobs. For the working class, it is generally skilled or semi-skilled trades. Likewise, education is geared to those expectations. The lower class (as a group) gets a high school education or the equivalent though post
high school education is becoming more common). The working class as a group generally have skilled training and/or an Associate’s degree, though Bachelor’s degrees are becoming more common.

The middle class also gets the message to “work hard.” However, working hard in this context is working in an occupation or profession. The middle class, by and large, do not have “jobs” - they have professions. Working hard means working smart – showing the boss you have the skill and commitment to be an exceptional employee. The goal is to be recognized and to be promoted. This will get one more respect and more money. The education required for these professions generally require at least a Bachelor’s degree and frequently an advanced degree. The middle class, like the lower and working classes, work for wages - though their wages are usually salaries rather than an hourly wage. Professions vary widely in this class from accountants to doctors and lawyers (and college professors).

The upper upper class gets the same emphasis on hard work and education. This class also stresses hard work, but it is hard work in a very different sense (generally) than other social classes. It is the hard work of managing people and wealth, maintaining and making contacts, and decision making. Education is generally not aimed towards a career or profession though Bachelor’s degrees are common and some advanced degrees. The purpose of higher education is primarily to make strong networks with others of one’s class, and to gain the skills to do the hard work required of this class.

The overall ideal of success is generally the same for all social classes, but their relationship to that ideal is very different. The upper upper class has already attained the ideal so their job is to hold on to and expand what they have. The rest of the population is trying to attain the ideal. For someone from the lower and working classes, the possibility of attaining “success” (or moving to the upper upper class is relatively slim (5.8% moved from the lowest quintile and 13% from the second quintile, to the top quintile from 1969-1994, Gottschalk,1998). Following the rules and expectations of one’s class is unlikely to move one - no matter how hard one works. For the lower and working class person to improve their financial position one has to work more jobs and there is a limit to how many jobs one can work. The odds are somewhat better for the middle class, especially for those at the upper end of that spectrum, because they may have adequate income to invest in property or stocks at a level that may move them up. Or they may have sufficient funds, and be seen as a good enough credit risk, to engage in entrepreneurial activities.

There are numerous behavioral, physical, and environmental components that go along with social class, and as mentioned earlier they are at least in part socialized. Socialization can make social class relatively durable. While people do change physical social class, more than money or neighborhood is involved. We carry our class with us to greater or lesser extent as we move through (or don’t) classes. Let me share a personal example. I originally came from the lower class and spent my childhood in lower and working class family and neighborhood environments. I now have a doctorate, teach at a community college, and earn a lower middle class wage. Most people assume that college faculty with doctorates are at least upper middle class. In fact, most people assume that advanced degrees are a symbol of
upper middle or upper class standing.

I have a difficult time seeing myself as even middle class. I carry my lower and working class socialization with me and it crops up in interesting ways. For example, several years ago I was unemployed. From my perspective, job one is survival. There I was going along with a doctorate in sociology, teaching experience, and thirteen years of experience in information systems. One would think that I could come up with endless possibilities for good employment with those credentials, but what jobs jumped out at me? Stocking shelves, fast food, production work, and lawn care.

I know it seems silly because with my education and background I should be able to find a job that makes in a day or a week what I would make in a month in a manual labor position. But that was not my first “instinct.” I “reverted” to looking for a “job” not a “professional” position. There are a couple of reasons for my reaction. First is the socialization I received through my childhood about surviving economically. The second was more of a structural barrier. Though I have advanced degrees, I was not socialized into the middle or upper middle classes. Bachelor’s programs, and certainly advanced degree programs assume that students are from the middle and upper middle classes. They assume you know how the social networks work, and that you or your family already have connections that will facilitate your use of your education. Therefore making these kinds of connections are not part of advanced degree programs. While I had a doctorate and should have been able to at least find consulting work that would have paid me in excess of $500 a day, I hadn’t a clue on how to make my education and skills work for me.

Another way my early class socialization frequently shows itself is that much of what I do has no visible “product.” I work very hard, but there is not a lot at the end of the day or the week to show for all that effort. I frequently don’t feel that I am “working” because what I do doesn’t fit the idea of work as I learned it. Deep inside I still have a conception of work as physical and directly related to survival. The middle class in particular is socialized to find a job that they like and enjoy. For most working and lower class people, enjoying what one is doing is at best a bonus – not a criteria of employment.

A fair amount of research has been done regarding the social class of parent’s and their relationship to their children and their children’s participation in education (in particular). It has been argued for example that working class parents are likely to prioritize work over education and to stress conformity and obedience, while middle class parents stress higher education and professions, and teach decision making and choice (Kohn, 1969; Rubin, 1994). This is reflected (perhaps) in different discipline strategies for lower and working class parents (who reportedly are more likely to use physical punishment) and middle class parents (who reportedly use reasoning, threats and guilt) to assure compliance (Hughes and Perry-Jenkins, 1996).

Some argue that the reason for this class difference is that working class parents see the chances of their children moving up in social class is limited and so stress work over education (Ogbu, 1978).
Others have argued that the socialization in these areas reflects what is experienced by parents in their working lives – working and lower class adults are in positions which require obedience and compliance, while middle class adults are in environments that have a greater stress on autonomy and decision making. A study by Gerris and Dekovic (1997) seems to indicate that parental perspective has more influence on child rearing than does parent’s values. What this means essentially is that their experience in the world carries more weight than values that they may have. Since social class dramatically affects experiences in the world (school, work, personal interactions, etc.) that is what parents are preparing their children for.

Socialization also includes behaviors such as communication and relationships. Michael Gos (1995) argues that working class families are characterized by informal communication styles and position orientation, while professional managerial families are characterized by formal communication and person-orientation. Drawing on the work of Bernstein (1971) Gos states that the working class is more likely to have high contact with extended family and community over long periods of time so that communication becomes focused on context and delivery (paralinguistics) than on what is actually said. Therefore, sentences are simpler and often incomplete because people know from interaction how to fill in the thoughts. The formal language used by professional/managerial families comes out of an environment of separation and distance and the meaning resides in what is said rather than how it is said. Since schools and work places use formal language, it can place working class individuals at a significant disadvantage.

Once again drawing on Bernstein, Gos discusses that working class families are position and role oriented. Authority and role derives from a person’s position (within the family, community, organization, etc). Statements are determined to be true or not depending on the position of the person making them. To challenge or question a statement becomes a direct challenge to the person making it. To elaborate on someone’s statement is rude because it usurps the authority of the speaker. On the other hand, professional/managerial families are person-oriented. Children (and others) are seen individually and can have significant role flexibility. Because of this orientation, children of this class are more likely (and more encouraged) to challenge statements and make their own. Once again, this can place those from the working class at a significant disadvantage in some situations.

It should be stated again that socialization into social classes is not just about how we are supposed to be as “classed” individuals, but our expectations of others. For example, colleges generally operate under the culture (if we want to call it that) of the upper middle class – what Gos referred to as the professional/managerial class. People within these institutions are expected to behave within the norms and rules of that class and are judged negatively for not doing so. The standard becomes the upper middle class standard. Those who succeed are generally those who follow those “rules;” however, if you don’t know those “rules” then it makes success much more difficult. People who “don’t fit” are seen as less intelligent (or even stupid), and possibly as rude. They are then going to be treated by others within the organization in a harsher manner which also has impacts on their success and comfort.
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within the organization.

One of the pervasive myths about social class in the United States is that anyone can move up the social class ladder. We are taught that the opportunities and possibility of movement is open to every one if they get the education and work hard. But is this a reality? What if all (or even a significant proportion) the people in the lower and working decided to move up? They went to college, got their degrees, and entered middle class professions. What would be the consequences of this? What assumption are we making? To believe that all we need is to get the prerequisite education and skills for those positions that are going to “move us up,” we also have to believe (or assume) that there are an unlimited number of jobs in those higher paying occupations. Reality tells us there are not unlimited positions. Therefore, such a move would dramatically increase the number of “qualified” people for a limited number of jobs. As the number of qualified people increases vis a vis jobs available, competition among prospective workers increases and employers lower pay – workers are a dime a dozen. As the pay decreases, certainly both the social class represented by those position as well as the status the positions hold, also decreases. In short, the social class system in the U.S. is not structured for the mass movement of people up the social ladder, and self-correcting mechanisms (such as the one discussed here) maintain the system (and the people in classes) largely in their places.

Social Structure and Social Class
Once we start thinking about social structure in relationship to social class, we start wondering how we missed it. The structural implications of class are all around us so pervasively that we learn to not see them for what they are. Our neighborhoods definitely reflect class (and race which is discussed in the next chapter) structuring through the types and quality of housing, as well as who lives in these neighborhoods. In part because of the class segregation of neighborhoods, our K-12 education system reflects social class structuring with higher class schools receiving more and better resources than lower class schools.

We see class structuring through occupations from ownership of corporations to jobs characterized by menial labor. This structuring both constitutes class in the public mind and reinforces it. We know that it is unlikely that a beautician in the corner “Happy Hair” is going to become the CEO of Super Cuts. We know that the person prepping the house across the street for painting is not likely to be a software engineer. We attach status to occupations, supposedly based upon the skill required and importance to society; however, these assignments frequently do not stand up to close examination. Some jobs have high status and corresponding high pay, but others do not. For example, the President of the United States receives about $300,000 a year which is less than even low paid CEOs of moderate sized corporations. On the other hand, professions morticians make an upper middle class wage (usually), but the status of the profession is considered very low by most people.

Maintaining Social Class Boundaries
We have discussed boundary maintenance processes several times throughout the previous chapters.
Boundaries are at work and enforced in the case of social class as well. We know, at least intuitively, at different social classes do different jobs. Let’s examine the relationship between socialization and social structure in the following example to see how the boundaries operate. We are constantly told, and statistics support, that there is a relationship between education, occupation, and income. We generally assume that if an individual increases their education he/she will increase their income (generally because we assume they will get a better paying job). Underlying that assumption is that there is a direct relationship between education and income. In other words, six units of education generally results in six units of income. I have had students who assume that because I have a Ph.D. that I must be upper class since a Ph.D. represents the most educational units it must also result in the highest pay units. Or conversely, that those in the highest social class must have the most doctorates (actually this distinction falls to the upper middle class). Keeping these things in mind, please examine Diagram 4.2.

Who are we, really? What is that other people think is important about us? Upon first meeting, we can usually categorize people by sex and race, but not necessarily by social class. Among the first questions asked when we are first introduced to someone is “what do you do.” This simple question, we presume tells us a tremendous amount about an individual. We think we know her or his social class, educational background, whether she/he is a hard worker or not, what kind of neighborhood she/he lives in – in short we assume we know a significant amount about the circumstances of a person’s life, likes and background from their response to a simple question.

The frightening thing is that, we are frequently pretty close to the mark. The reason we are is because of our unconscious knowledge of social class and how it works. I argue that it is unconscious, because generally when we challenge someone on whether people in social classes share anything other than income the response is “No. Everyone is an individual.” We have learned specific things about social class, and we also enforce them.

Let’s say that the person we meet has a Master’s degree in Public Policy and they are working as a maid at the Holiday Inn. We run this through our social class computations and all our information and myths about social class and come up with some interesting conclusions. We may assume that this individual a) may have a degree, but really isn’t good enough to get a job that fits his education; b) that he is essentially lazy and doesn’t want to work hard enough to do what he is capable of; or c) we may assume that there is something wrong with this person – drug or alcohol problems, psychiatric problems, or a criminal history.

What is also interesting is what we generally don’t assume. Why wouldn’t we assume that there were no jobs in Public Policy or related fields? We might not want to assume that because it would counter the belief that education directly corresponds to a particular type of position that directly corresponds to social class. We might not want to assume that because we are working very hard on our own education and want to believe that the only people that fail are people that choose to fail. We don’t assume that he prefers to be a maid, because who would want to be a maid. We don’t assume that his
father is the owner of Holiday Inn, Inc. and that he is being groomed to take over the company.
### Diagram 4.2 Class, Occupation, and Education Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Occupations</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>Owners of mid to large size corporations and financial institutions</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degrees and some advanced degrees - particularly in business and finance areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Top managers in large corporations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Top entertainers (music, sports, media)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inherited family wealth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Upper</td>
<td>Some entrepreneurs</td>
<td>Generally at least a Bachelor’s degree and frequently advanced degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some small business owners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Owners and managers of moderately successful businesses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some professionals - doctors, lawyers, media executives and some technical specialties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Considerable overlap with lower upper class</td>
<td>Usually advanced degrees for the professions and technical specialties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some middle management positions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical specialists such as engineering specialties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most professionals - doctors, lawyers, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Some skilled office and technical workers</td>
<td>Usually Bachelor’s degree, few advanced degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some supervisory positions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some sales and marketing positions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>Some support positions requiring specific skills</td>
<td>Usually Bachelor’s degree, some specialized training or schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some service positions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some professional positions such as medical technicians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Police</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>Skilled positions such as technical support, dental assistants, bank tellers, secretarial, etc</td>
<td>Some Bachelor’s degree, Associates degree, frequently specialized training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plumbers, electricians, construction workers ...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General sales</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>“Unskilled” positions in service areas (fast food and many chain restaurants, gas station attendants)</td>
<td>High school completion and increasingly some college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manual and day laborers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mass sales in stores and telephone solicitors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Day care workers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Off the books labor” domestic positions, lawn maintenance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Usually work pays at or below minimum wage and is not full time or is seasonal</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

How then do we interact with this guy? Most likely, based upon our assumptions we respond to his “maid” status and not his educational status. He is in a lower class position so we respond to him as a lower class person.

Let’s take another example. The overwhelming majority of us are going to spend much of our lives
working, and for most of us that will be within the context of some organization or business. Our position will dramatically affect our lives and the ways that others in the organization see us. Let’s say that you have a B.A. in Computer Science, are a certified Network Engineer, and you are working as a file clerk in MegaCorp’s accounting department. Do you think that people (and the organization) are going to see you as a person with valuable technical skills or as a file clerk? When MegaCorp decides to set up a committee to plan for expanding their network their newly acquired Whoopie Technologies, are they going to put you on that committee? Are they even going to ask you to transfer to the expanded CIS Corporate Network (CISCN) department so that the company can utilize your valuable education and expertise? Probably not. Let’s say that you want to transfer to a position that is opening in CISCN. There is a strong possibility that you will not be accepted for transfer, because after all you are a file clerk. If you had been any good as a Network Engineer you would never have ended up as a file clerk.

So you get fed up with MegaCorp. They won’t acknowledge, or let you use your skills and education. They denied you a transfer and promotion on what you believe are totally bogus reasons. Therefore you apply for a Network Engineer position with Quantum Corporation. You work up your resume and apply but you don’t get the job. Is it because they have better qualified applicants or because they wonder why someone with your qualifications would have been working as a file clerk? However, they do see you have some technical skill so they ask if you are interested in working on their tech support line.

Unfortunately, the above examples are not a “worse case scenario,” but a typical scenario. They are making the same assumptions, and coming to the same conclusions that most people do - because that is the “formula” and the stereotypes that we work with.

The boundaries are maintained in yet another way. If we look back at Diagram 4.2, it is clear that there are educational components to occupations. We assume that education is readily accessible so that if someone wants to “move up” all they need to do is go to school. There are a variety of problems with this assumption, and many of them are grounded in social and personal reality, and these realities are not especially separable from each other.

If you are from the lower or working class, the odds are that the grade school and high school you went to were not the equivalent of a middle or upper middle class school and almost certainly not the equivalent of a private school. For all the effort to put computers in every school in the nation, we have thousands of poorer schools that have libraries that haven’t bought new books for fifteen years, or that are closing entirely. We have schools that haven’t been able to purchase text books in almost as long. If that is the quality of your K-12 education, how likely is it that you will be well prepared for college (all other family and community and school environments aside)?

Let’s say that you are from a middle class family and you make it into a state college. You work hard
and get your education, get your degree, even graduate at the top of your class. Do you believe that your degree from your state college is the equivalent (in the labor market) as if you had gone to Harvard, Yale or Brown? Most likely it is not.

Assuming that you did get an excellent education in your school that others view as less than excellent, will people judge your graduate school or job application based upon your completion of a course of education or on the reputation of your school? Most likely on the reputation or assumptions about your school. Is this fair? No, it isn’t fair, but it is unfortunately real. Most employers are not looking at how well you did, but where you went to school and whether you got your degree. Most colleges do look at how well you did in high school, but a 4.0 average from a school with a poor reputation is generally not judged as the same as a 4.0 average from a high school with a reputation for academic excellence. The differences are real, and the consequences of people’s perceptions are real, whether we want to admit them or not. For all that we want to believe that we are being judged on our “individual merit,” whether than merit is seen or not is heavily biased.

So you are from the lower or working class and you decide you are going to college. No problem many would say, because you most likely qualify for financial aid. With the lowest college costs running somewhere around $5000 a year and state colleges averaging somewhere over $10,000 a year, you are looking at owing a minimum of $20,000 for your Bachelor’s degree (and most likely significantly more than that). For many people from these classes that is more (sometimes many times more) than the yearly income of their families. From personal experience, I can tell you that just the thought of that much debt on an education is enough to stop some in their tracks. The families themselves may see that as a daunting expense. While valuing an education, they also are faced with day to day survival. In that struggle, investing in the future takes a back seat over paying the rent. Hard physical realities with social and emotional consequences. But also with consequences that apply to entire classes of people - not just an individual here and there. That is the reality of social class. Further, there are hard realities to each social class.

Institutionalizing the Social Class System

My intent here is not to provide a comprehensive examination of the institutionalization of social class, but to give you a broad sweep of some of the processes and effects of that institutionalization. Like other forms of social stratification, the social class system has a long history in the United States. From the intrusion of Europeans into the Americas as conquerors and colonists, to present day divisions, social class has been a presence. Certainly there has been increasing complexity in looking at social class over time as more factors and social change has intervened. From the early colonists onward there has been an evolution of both the composition of the classes and the mechanisms for their operation. By now, most of you know that the Constitution of the United States was not originally intended for everyone. The statement “All men are created equal” applied to white male land owners as they were the only ones who had the right (or privilege in you prefer) to participate in the political life of the nation. Certainly that has expanded over time, with generations of struggle on the parts of millions of
people.

Originally restricting political participation to a select group was an institutionalization of a class boundary which was enforced by law. Even as political participation expanded beyond property owners, their original advantage was maintained – both through law and through other social institutions such as education and the economy. Those with privilege had access to education, including university education, prior to public education was instituted. Even after broad public education started, there were restrictions for non-white groups, and in higher education the almost universal exclusion of women and people of color. These historic restrictions have eroded very slowly and it wasn’t until relatively recently that most formal barriers to higher education have been removed by law.

While the classes have evolved over time, they build upon each other. Earlier in this chapter we looked at what impacts the social class of our families have on us. If we take that and stretch it back over generations, we begin to get a sense of the cumulative effects of social class. Ability to own property, get an education, and accumulate wealth in one generation passes on to the next. A change in laws or access in 2000, does not create a “level playing field” though it broadens possibilities. One example would be home ownership. There has been a tremendous broadening of home loans to those below middle class standing. However, generally speaking, the loans that the working class are getting are not the same as the loans the middle class are getting. A typical program to get low income and first time home buyers into the market provides a competitive interest rate and allows closing costs to be “rolled into” the loan. There is also generally a stipulation that the homeowner must keep there home for a minimum amount of time (usually 5 - 7 years). If they sell the home before that time, they lose all equity that they had in the home and the excess reverts to the lender or sponsoring program. They may also need to take a home ownership course and pass a test before they are approved for the loan.

If low income homeowners get a loan through “conventional” means they are likely to pay a significantly higher interest rates (or increased points) to obtain the loan. In this era of home equity loans, middle class and above homeowners are more likely to get low interest, revolving credit loans, while those in lower income brackets get significantly higher interest and lump sum loans. This places low income homeowners at significant risk of losing their homes and many of them are.

Higher class has its advantages. Over the last decade we have seen a wave of gentrification sweeping the nation. Gentrification is the purchasing and revamping of lower income areas for middle class (and above) home ownership. It may occur in downtown areas where older hotels, and business are converted or torn down and new structures built such as condominiums for upper middle class (usually younger) professionals. It may be the transformation of working and lower class neighborhoods into upper middle class neighborhoods. Developers and those with financial resources purchase homes and “rejuvenate” them. This increases the property values which increases the taxes which drives lower income homeowners and renters out of the neighborhood. Gentrification can be seen as a reverse process of ghettoization. The primary difference being that white middle class (neighborhoods) are seen
as being devalued because of the nature of people moving in (generally people of color). Gentrification is driven by financial resources, but ghettoization is driven by perception and stereotype. Gentrification removes lower income neighborhoods driving the residents into the margins, while ghettoization transforms neighborhoods, but middle class homeowners move to other middle class neighborhoods (or newer housing developments (generally)).

The above reflects forms social class differences and institutionalization. Another in a related vein would be the decision to create the suburbs which was largely funded by the federal government in two ways - financing of roads and financing of home ownership. Starting largely after World War II, the government essentially created the suburbs by offering low interest loans to returning soldiers. New housing developments outside the city (also frequently federally subsidized) went up and were filled by white veterans and their families. At the time another form of institutionalization barred relations from even showing property in “white” neighborhoods to people of color. This left those without the financial resources (or institutional support) in the cities, and largely outside the loop of property attainment.

**Maintenance of the Social Class System**

By now you are familiar with the Maintenance of Stratification Systems model. Based upon your readings, research and experiences complete the model for social class below. For simplicity’s sake I have just included three classes Upper, Middle, and Lower classes. The rewards for the Lower class do not seem to fit the model. Why, at this point in time, does there seem to be an exception? What is happening in the social construction of the Lower class that would seem to work differently than for other groups?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Class</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Lower</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Punishments</td>
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</table>
Putting it Together
This chapter has given you a broad overview of social class socialization and structure. While we can (and frequently do) talk about social class holistically, it has different implications for women and people of color. Social class is constructed, but it is constructed within the larger context of the total stratification system. Broad general discussions of social class minimize, or make invisible, that there are significant sex and race differences in both what social class is and how it is experienced.

You should have a good grasp at this point of how cultural and structural issues shape social class and our experience of it. My hope is that you have an awareness that social class is not simply a terrain over which we travel, but how it is integrated into our lives.

Looking Forward
We will look at race and ethnicity in the next chapter in a fashion similar to what we have done thus far with sex and class. At the end of that chapter, there is a discussion of how these three constructs interact with each other.

Suggested Reading and Resources

Allyn & Bacon's Sociology Links: Social Class and Poverty
http://www.abacon.com/sociology/soclinks/sclass.html


Social Class Home Page  http://www.src.uchicago.edu/SocialClass/

Veblen, Thorstein. The Leisure Class.

Key Concepts and Terms
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>capitalist</th>
<th>quintile</th>
<th>social class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>income</td>
<td>reputation approach</td>
<td>subjective approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>objective approach</td>
<td>social class mobility</td>
<td>wealth</td>
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Chapter Five

CONSTRUCTING
AND
DECONSTRUCTING
RACE
Chapter 5: Constructing and Deconstructing Race

What is Race?
Asking the question “What is race?” almost seems to be a rhetorical question (one which everyone knows the answer to and no response is expected). We “know” what race is. We can see it in each person we encounter – no matter how casually. Race is skin color . . . but is it? Race is physical features and skin color . . . but is it? Race is type of hair and physical features and skin color . . . but is it? If the physical cues that we learn to mark the distinction between races were simply what we see, then race wouldn’t be a discussion item. Not only do we learn the intricate physical coding of race, we learn what the code means and how to act and think within that meaning.

After years of study, reflection, and discussion, I have come to the following definition of race. **Race is a socially constructed artifact that categorizes people based on visual differences which are imputed to indicate invisible differences. These categorizations are amorphous and fluid over time which reflects their social rather than physical basis.** We have already discussed social construction and ascribed status. Similar to our discussion of sex and gender, race is an ascribed status based on visual cues that are assumed to reflect things that are internal to the individual – intelligence, emotional nature, moral characteristics etc. We can call these the “meanings” of racial coding. Like other social constructions, they change over time as society changes. However, because of their integration into the social stratification system they tend to persist in maintaining racial statuses. As a social construct race is created and maintained through social processes and social structure. The social processes include the broad areas of socialization and the cultural “story,” and social structuring is reflected in such things as laws and legislation, education, and the stratification system itself.

In mainstream U.S. society, race and ethnicity are defined as essentially synonymous. In fact, most forms one fills out today asks one’s ethnicity rather than one’s race even though the responses are racial categories. Ethnicity, however can have little to do with race and it is not appropriate to use them interchangeably. **Ethnicity reflects cultural differences, and an ethnic group is a people who share a historical and cultural heritage (and frequently have a sense of group identity).** Being part of an ethnic group is more than a blood relationship or a national origin relationship. It means that we, personally, have been raised in (or socialized in) the tradition of a specific culture.

The current use of the term ethnicity is generally inappropriate for a number of reasons. First is the synonymous usage for race. Second is that it is being used to not reflect cultural identity, but national history or national ancestry (potentially a very different thing). Third, for someone to say that their ethnicity is German/French/Dutch for example may be totally meaningless for the individual because for many there is no sense of “belongingness” to those cultural groups. Fourth, US ethnic identities are shaped within the context of the processes of US society and are not synonymous with those holding those ethnic ties in other areas of the world. For example, people in the U.S. who consider themselves “ethnically Italian” have a different culture and identity than Italians in Italy who are also ethnically Italian.
Race, ethnicity, ancestry, and national origin have gotten all lumped together through various mechanisms. (The concept of nations and dominant cultures was discussed in Chapter 1, so I will not repeat that here). Essentially what has happened in the United States is that ethnicity is coded to race. For example - there is really no ethnicity that is “Hispanic,” but rather numerous groups who have cultural links to Spain (which is what “Hispanic” means). While some cultural characteristics may overlap from one “Hispanic” group to another, ethnically they are distinct. Further, “Hispanics” can be of any racial group. For example, the general use of the term Hispanic in most of the U.S. (inaccurately) conjures the image of “Mexican” and more specifically Mestizo – people who are a combined racial ancestry of Spanish army and subsequent (largely European) immigration, and the original indigenous population. “Mestizo” literally means mixed blood. In the United States we call someone “mixed blood” if they have the combined racial ancestry of European American and one or Native American tribes, and more generically “mixed race” or “multiracial” for racial combinations. (See the discussion later in this chapter concerning multiracial individuals.)

I generally use the term “racialized ethnics” when people use the term ethnicity because of the way that we link race to ethnicity. Ethnic groups, by and large, fit within the context of the racial structure of the United States and not the reverse. This is as true for European Americans as it is for any other racial or ethnic group.

Let’s take a minute to think about this. When we hear or think about African Americans, do we think of people who are generically from Africa (which is a continent of many nations, many “races” and thousands of cultures), or do we think of Black Americans? If we think that African American is a cultural designation, what does that mean? Is it affected by our racial assumptions? If we have a person whose parents immigrated to the U.S. from Africa are they African American? Are they African American if they and their parents are “white?” People in the U.S., regardless of race, generally assume that African American means “black” and that African American culture means “Black culture.” We can argue that African Americans started this by “changing their name,” but this has been coopted by the mainstream society – morphed into the racial ethnic paradigm. From a cultural standpoint, we assume that someone who is “African American” (Black) comes from ancestors who were forcibly brought to this country as slaves, lived through legal segregation and Jim Crow laws, etc. What then do most people assume when the see a “black” person? They certainly don’t think they are Apache or Jamaican or Puerto Rican or Brazilian, or Spanish or English. To extend this further, if this “black” individual actually is from Africa, are they “the same” as African Americans? Do all African Americans in the popular sense of the word share a culture?

As is true with most social constructs, once we start asking questions and analyzing them they seem to not make sense any more. We ask “How in the world did we come up with that?”

So how did we come up with this odd blend of race, ethnicity and national origin? In some ways we inherited it, and in others we created it. It is a combination of “science,” myth, and law. As evolution as
an explanation for species differentiation became accepted among the educated, it was applied (not surprisingly) to people. The theory was that cultural capacity went hand in hand with race. In other words, that certain races were exclusively physically capable of certain levels of culture. Since it was Western Europeans who were coming up with this theory, their civilization and race were of course at the top of this human evolutionary schema. Other peoples were seen as “less than” in a variety of ways – less civilized, less intelligent, less capable. However, this “less than” status was not something that could be changed as it was physically tied to people’s physical inheritance (race). Some races (or cultures) were determined to be so low in the evolutionary scheme as to not really be “people” at all. This was handy for countries wanting to claim territory as “animals” could not own land. Therefore, if it was decided by the (discoverer, explorer, trader, or conquistador) that the inhabitants of a territory were not human then they could freely claim the land for their country.

We can see this thinking in the labeling of some populations as savages, heathens, pagans, primitives and barbarians. We can see it in labeling of some “more advanced” groups as infidels. None of these are new terms. Even today the images these words evoke are heavily racial. The “less than” thought processes and images endure for a variety of reasons such as socialization, stories, and the media. They endure because of the persistence of segregation and its implication in inequality. In part they persist because it is profitable for them to persist: profitable in the acquisition of resources that other peoples control whether that is oil in Iraq or oil under the lands held by the U’wa in South America, or gold along the east coast of the African continent, or some place to put our chemical and nuclear waste.

Race is persistent because it involves more than labeling – even by the scientific thought of the day. It filtered down to the general European origin population and gained strength and acceptability. It was institutionalized as an acceptable justification for conquest and colonization. And it came with the early colonists to the “new world” where it took on its own special forms. We can easily see racism present in the early relations between “colonists” and “Indians.” We can see the racism of importing black slaves, and a thousand other examples. However, our focus here is not just racism, but the social construction of race. The social construction of race certainly includes ideology, but it also includes how that ideology shapes our social environment.

How did the conceptualizations of race shape races in the United States? The simple answer is by shaping the social structure and institutions. For example, a Supreme Court Judge stated in 1913 (ex parte Shantid as Syrian suing for citizenship and losing) that “a white person was a person the average well informed white American knew to be white (Lopez, 1996).” [I strongly recommend all students of race read *White by Law* by Ian Haney Lopez which is an excellent discussion of race in relationship to citizenship law.] In this statement, the judge is drawing on two sources of race information. One source is the scientific thought of the day (largely anthropological), and the other is upon informed (meaning familiar with the racial discussions) whites understanding of race. It also implies an understanding by the “informed” public of white racial identity and privilege. In this case, what would be seen as “fitting” to those who counted determined whether Syrians would be “white” and therefore eligible for citizenship.
Chapter 5: Constructing and Deconstructing Race

This may seem unethical today, but it still underlies much of the meaning and structuring of race in the United States. The inescapable fact is that “race” and racial inequality is systemized and institutionalized within U.S. society. We still have a racial issue of “who counts” and who does not; who are “good citizens” and who are not; who are “productive members of society” and who are not. I can hear the cries of “It isn’t like that” or “I don’t think that” across the space that separates you as a reader of this book to me going about my life in Portland, Oregon. But think for a moment about the society that surrounds us. Are most of us moved to action or concern by the constant presentation of people of color as welfare recipients and criminals? Do most of us stop to question why grief counselors are sent into white schools when a student is killed in a car accident? Do most of us wonder why the nation is mobilized by school violence when it strikes white middle class schools? Do most of us notice that virtually the entire visual media is white, or that the “bad guys” in video games are generally not white? Do most of us ask the question when a white person gets a job whether they were “qualified” for the job? Do most of us question whether there might be specific racial impacts of storing toxic and nuclear waste on or near Indian Reservations? Do most of us question the strengthening of our border with Mexico and the tremendous increase in deaths that is a result of this action?

Honestly, the answers are “no,” and the reason whites especially do not notice is because the underlying message of mainstream society is “white” is better. While it is generally not stated explicitly, racial perceptions shape the world around us and “white’s” privileges and position are still being protected socially, economically, politically, and culturally – just as they were at the beginning of this nation. Ideology shapes social meanings and structure. And conversely politicians and media and any one or organization depending on “public” approval, play to the sentiments that are going to arouse support. However, it is not everyone’s support that is being solicited. It is the support of “those who count,” and usually those who count are “white.”

Socialization and Race

The same forces are at work in race socialization that are present in any other form of socialization – family, peers, schools, media, workplaces, etc. I doubt if many would argue that race is not a central feature of life in the United States. As with sex and social class it forms one of the axes around which our lives revolve. Because it is a central component in our lives it would be foolish to assume that race socialization does not exist.

Race socialization and racial identity are areas that have not been thoroughly examined, and the bulk of theory and research in this area has focused on groups of color, most especially African Americans. Hopefully, this area will expand in the near future to include other groups of color and whites. To some extent we see similar assumptions being made in the study of racial socialization and racial identity formation as are present in the society at large. Namely, that race largely means people of color, and that it is primarily a black/white issue. This focus may alternatively be explained by the predominance of African American scholars studying in this area. The emphasis of racial socialization in relationship to people of color is echoed in Stevenson and Reed’s (1996:498) definition of it: “Racial socialization is a
process that encourages the teaching of cultural pride and perception for race discrimination to family members of all ages.”

Racial socialization and racial identity are not confined to groups of color, but include “whites” as well. This means that the reasons behind specific racial group socialization may vary between the races (and especially for whites) as the reality of racism and racial structuring is different for dominant and non-dominant groups. While “people of color” in general are defined by the society as having a race and that it is significant, many parts of white racial socialization seem to downplay whites as a race.

Boykin and Toms (1985) argued that three types of African American racial socialization exist - Eurocentric that stressed “white” values and beliefs, socialization as minorities that stressed passivity and accommodation, and Afrocentric that stressed African and African American cultural values and pride. We could generalize their categorization to other groups of color by labeling these as assimilation, submission, and resistance/cultural integrity classifications of types of racial socialization. An assimilation-focused socialization would focus on teaching dominant group values and ways of being in the world. A submission-focused approach would focus on taking ones assigned place and role, and a resistance/cultural integrity approach would focus on self and racial group pride and struggling against the racial system.

Let’s take these classifications and see how they might be different for dominant and non-dominant group members. This will be a broad conceptual examination rather than a specific fact-based or formal theory examination. A note is needed here that different socio-historical periods are going to effect what is seen as appropriate racial socialization as, in part, racial socialization is about coping with the current meanings and structurings of race.

Assimilation
The assimilation approach for non-dominant groups would entail socializing group members as if they were dominant group members. This essentially requires that group members overlook their race (which can be difficult in a racial stratification system.) On the other hand, dominant group members would be socialized into their place as it is defined within current social context. Contemporarily, it would also generally require minimizing specific dominant race messages. Supremacist socialization would be at the far end of this spectrum for whites.

Submission
The submission approach for non-dominant groups would be seen as “natural” within a racist system as it is aimed at non-dominant groups taking their places and assigned roles within that system. The submission model for dominant group members would be rare as it would require them taking a lower status position than the racial system requires. Or they might be socialized that there is nothing they can do about (or they are not responsible for) the current system so they have to “go along.”
Chapter 5: Constructing and Deconstructing Race

Resistance/Cultural Integrity
The resistance/cultural integrity approach stresses resisting the racial system for both dominant and non-dominant groups. For non-dominant groups it would most likely stress positive racial and cultural orientation. For dominant group members, socialization would most likely stress human and social equality, positive interactions within and between racial group relations and intimate sensitivity to racial dominance. At the far end of this approach would be other cultural dominance approaches by non-dominant groups.

In reality, most people and parents do not socialize totally within one of these approaches. For non-dominant group members to survive with esteem, they may choose an external assimilation or submission approach, but teach and act within a resistance/cultural integrity approach. The social and historical context within communities and the nation most likely does affect socialization strategies (as discussed in Box 5.1 to the right).

Families and communities are not the only socialization agents, but also have a significant affect on our identity. The strategies above occur within the context of a racially unequal society that is systematized and pervasive. Regardless of parental and community messages to the contrary, the system as a whole presents and structures itself to maintain white status and power. Socialization within the family is drawn from both parent’s socialization and their experiences in the world. All parents want their children to survive and thrive. Racial socialization occurs within this context as well as the large system context.

Parents of color experience the power and effects of racism and struggle to at once provide realistic information and coping strategies, and a sense of self-worth and pride in their children. The racial socialization of most whites is generally much less explicit, but no less impactful. Whites are socialized...
into a system that is structured to be theirs by right, while (at least contemporarily) presented as a society that is equal to all and where racial differences don’t matter (except perhaps in the eyes of people of color). Where we might see the assimilation strategy most used with people of color would be when a European American family adopts a child who is racially and culturally different from themselves. This is because the adoptive family generally hasn’t had the socialization to pass anything else on to their child.

Certainly one of the influences on socialization has to do with the structure surrounding racial dynamics. While we may argue that the patterns presented in Box 5.1 are open to interpretation, they do highlight that broad social structure may affect the relationship between the races. However, for all of our progress from the 1880s to today, we are almost as segregated today as before desegregation started in the 1950s. This segregation has differing impacts on the races. While European Americans can with relative ease (in most situations) structure their lives to be primarily among others of their kind and in institutions and organizations organized with their values and experiences reflected, this is not the case for other racial and ethnic groups. Most “people of color” must interact on a daily basis with European Americans in institutions designed by and for European Americans. Because of pervasive personal, cultural, and institutional racism in this country, non-dominant racial groups are perpetual “others” living in at least two worlds. European Americans generally have the choice to live in one world. It helps that the social organization facilitates this so that most of the time active choice on the part of “whites” is not required. The example below is not uncharacteristic of the early experience of many European Americans. The quote is from an anonymous student in an introductory sociology class.

“In my own family I grew up in a white, middle class Catholic, predominantly female family. My family consists of my father who comes from a white westernized culture ... My mother came from an all white, strong Catholic background ... Growing up I was raised in a white suburban neighborhood. My mother took me and my three sisters to the Catholic church. At church we were taught to accept all people regardless of race. This was a strong belief in my family as well and something my parents passed down to me. Because of my parent’s beliefs I never looked upon different cultures in a negative way - because of my childhood experiences and values I learned.”

I share this example because it represents so starkly the reality of segregation. “Whites” are generally raised in a sea of white both personally in terms of family and community, and socially in terms of institutions such as churches and schools, and the stories and media they encounter. In this white surround, they learn that “everyone is equal.” Imagine yourself as a “white” child in this kind of environment. Who is “everyone?” Does “everyone” include just the people around you, or is it truly everyone? Does the question come to mind that if “everyone is equal” why aren’t people different from yourself there? The idea of equality gets linked to “whites” because it occurs largely in the absence of anyone else.

The essence of “everybody” is reflected in both written and spoken speech. We learn very early that if
Chapter 5: Constructing and Deconstructing Race

no racial designator is given then it is understood that the person or people being discussed are “white.” In this sense, “white” becomes the generic. Much as there were long arguments over “he” and “man” being generic terms that included “everyone.” In the case of generic “male” including everyone, the consensus has largely become that it does not. With the designation of race in communication, the assumption is that an absence of designator is the generic “anyone” of any race when what is actually meant is “white.” We are socialized to indicate the race of someone if they are not “white.” This is a process that is more innocuous and invisible than “sexed” communication, but it is no less present. The examples of this are everywhere around us. The pervasiveness of the assumption that the absence of a racial designator equals white carries over to other encompassing terms such as “human,” “everybody,” and “American.”

Segregation persists even in places that appear to have a relatively equal racial population. For example, a NY Times article (Lewin, 2000) focuses on Maplewood, New Jersey which has a roughly 50-50 split in “Black” and “White” population. The schools are highly integrated, but one of the students featured in the article “lives in a mostly black section of Maplewood with her mother.” The concern addressed in the article is why interracial friendships do not generally last in the face of so much integration. Obviously, there are pressures at work that reinforce separation of the races. These pressures seem to include issues of “development.” The following quote is striking in what is not being said:

Box 5.2 Excerpt from “Best of Friends - Worlds Apart” (Ojito, 2000)

The two men live only four miles apart, not even 15 minutes by car. Yet they are separated by a far greater distance, one they say they never envisioned back in Cuba.

In ways that are obvious to the black man but far less so to the white one, they have grown apart in the United States because of race. For the first time, they inhabit a place where the color of their skin defines the outlines of their lives -- where they live, the friends they make, how they speak, what they wear, even what they eat.

"It's like I am here and he is over there," Mr. Ruiz said. "And we can't cross over to the other's world." ...

Here in America, Mr. Ruiz still feels Cuban. But above all he feels black. His world is a black world, and to live there is to be constantly conscious of race. He works in a black-owned bar, dates black women, goes to an African-American barber. White barbers, he says, "don't understand black hair." He generally avoids white neighborhoods, and when his world and the white world intersect, he feels always watched, and he is always watchful.

Mr. Valdés, who is 29, a year younger than his childhood friend, is simply, comfortably Cuban, an upwardly mobile citizen of the Miami mainstream. He lives in an all-white neighborhood, hangs out with white Cuban friends and goes to black neighborhoods only when his job, as a deliveryman for Restonic mattresses, forces him to. When he thinks about race, which is not very often, it is in terms learned from other white Cubans: American blacks, he now believes, are to be avoided because they are delinquent and
“It happens everywhere, in the confusions of adolescence and the yearning for identity, when the most important thing in life is choosing a group and fitting in: Black children and white children come apart. They move into separate worlds. Friendships ebb and end.” (Lewin, 2000).

While not stated, it is obvious that the identity adolescents are struggling for is a racial identity; the groups they want to fit into are racial groups. But one has to wonder if these adolescents know what or how they are choosing, or if there are processes at work that are forcing the selections. In another article in the same NY Times series (see Box 5.2), two Cuban refugees who had been good friends through school and sports in Cuba come to the United States. One is “black” and one is “white.”

Here we have adults who have been friends since childhood and should have formed their identities by now, but their experience is strikingly similar to the high school students in Maplewood (and elsewhere). What has happened to these two men from another culture is that they have come into a society where race and racial identity aren’t just noticeable differences, but critical differences. They are socialized into the U.S. racial system – obviously very quickly – just as the adolescents are socialized. The power of this system is demonstrated, though not discussed, in the article. Can we reasonably expect youths to resist this power? Once again we might ask if the young people in Maplewood (and across the country) are really choosing to “stick with their own.”

The discussion here focuses in more inclusive terms on race socialization and race identity. Race socialization is a concept with various components. Certainly part of race socialization is intimate familiarity with the social components that make up racial stratification. In other words, the beliefs, expectations, stories, and structures of the society that make up “race.” Everyone is impacted by the social structuring and applied meanings of race whether they are socialized into this system or not. In other words, a casual visitor or immigrant to the United States is placed within our racial system regardless of their own personal and cultural beliefs and experience (as is demonstrated in the experience of Joel Ruiz and Achmed Valdés in Box 5.2 Ojito, 2000).

Within this broad context of “how it works” and “what it means” we live our lives as racialized beings. In order to live our lives within the racialized system we must learn to take our places as racialized people. This means that we are socialized to be “white” or “black” or “Indian” etc. How present or important that racial identity is in our lives can vary tremendously based upon variables such as social class, gender, immigrant status or generations since immigration, cultural priorities and presence, family/community history, and the times in which we are raised and live. We tacitly acknowledge that this socialization occurs in populations of color as we accept there is African American culture, Hispanic culture, Asian culture, Arab culture, Indian tribal cultures, etc.; however, we assume that there is no socialization to be “white” or socialization into European American culture.

Here lies two of the myths of racial socialization. One, is that “white” is not a race except in very
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In general terms, and two that there is no “white” culture. Most European Americans that I come into contact with have a hard time identifying that there even is an “American” culture, and believe that they aren’t part of it if there is one. This is in part because the dominant culture is the culture that most reflects European Americans experiences and beliefs and so is “invisible” in a way. This is reinforced by the perception that “we are all individuals” and therefore individually “choose” our beliefs, traditions, and ways of being in the world. The lie within this second perception is an equally strong belief that “people of color” in the United States do have cultures. At the heart of this lies a foundation that “whites” are individuals free to choose their lives, but that everyone else is bound to some culture and therefore not individuals (or not individuals in the same sense). This latter is reflected in a pervasive perception that an individual of color represents his/her race/culture and can speak for all of his/her group, while an individual “white” person represents his/her own opinions, and no one can represent the “white” race or “white” culture. These beliefs lead to a perception that “whites” are unencumbered by racial identity or socialization. These beliefs are in fact part of white race socialization.

Since family is a primary socialization agent for children, patterns that occur in child rearing may also be part of racial socialization and racial identity formation. A fair amount of research has been done on parenting across racial groups. Much of the race socialization research has focused (not surprisingly) on people of color (especially children and youths), and parenting styles of parents of color, with a frequent comparison point is to “whites.” From this we get a glimpse of childhood socialization for a range of racial groups. African Americans are the most consistent focus of both race socialization and racial identity issues, followed by Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans (particularly Chinese and Japanese Americans). There is virtually no inclusion of Native American tribes, Middle Eastern and Arab Americans, or even of more recent European immigrant populations.

There are patterns of racial differences that are demonstrated through these studies. Parents of color are more likely to stress education as a priority and a practice than white parents (Wagemaar and Coates, 1999; Hill and Sprague, 1999). African American children are more likely to be able to read earlier on their own and watch more educational children’s programs than either white or Latino children (2.5 hours a week, 2.1, 2.2). They are more likely than white children to have been taught letters, numbers, or words at home than white children (67% to 37%). In grades K-6, 52% of African American parents have contact with teachers three or more times a week, compared to 42% of white parents, and 38% of Hispanic parents (Wagemaar and Coates, 1999).

Certainly one consideration here is the effect of social class on the priority of education. The common assumption is that white middle class parents stress education more than other races and classes. However, African Americans regardless of social class hold education and work as a top priority. This is true for lower class whites as well, but as social class increases for whites the emphasis shifts to happiness and self-esteem (Hill and Sprague, 1999).

African American and Latino children are considerably more likely to live in families with three or more
generations and extended family members than are European American children regardless of social class (Wagemaar and Coates, 1999; Phinney and Chavira, 1995). While the trend crosses all races, African American children are more likely to have an unmarried mother than white or Latino children, and African American mothers are more likely to be in the workforce and for longer periods of time than European and Hispanic Americans (African American 67%, 3.1 years; European American 56%, 2.3 years; Hispanic American 54%, 2.6 years; Wagemaar and Coates, 1999).

Asian American parents expect their children to become independent at a later age than European and African Americans, and the teenage crises that are posited as “normal human development” do not occur in Asian American families until college age or later (Stewart and Bond, 1999).

While we could go on with this kind of discussion, the data and articles are readily available for you to look at on your own. Suffice it to say that there are some significant differences in child rearing and parenting across racial groups. These differences certainly influence socialization, and reflect racial differences, but are they racial socialization? Yes they are because parents are trying to prepare their children for the world as they experience it. What is interesting in looking at these kinds of studies is that parents of color seem to be operating on broad dominant cultural messages of what it takes to succeed, but whites (while receiving the same cultural messages) have largely different priorities in their child rearing. Further, that despite the dominant cultural messages that education and hard work will lead to success, most classes of whites don’t have to stress those to have their children be successful. Instead, they are stressing happiness and self-esteem and putting less emphasis and energy into personal involvement in their children’s education than other racial groups.

Race socialization also deals more directly with race. The messages and lessons that we all receive about our specific racialized group are sometimes subtle and sometimes overt. Thomas and Speight (1999) conducted a study of racial socialization involving 175, largely middle class and college educated, African American households from three cities. They examined not only racial socialization but difference in gender in that socialization. They found that 96% of the parents in the study thought that it was important to teach their children about racial attitudes. They found that these parents socialized their daughters and sons differently around race. For daughters, information about negative stereotypes, racial and self pride, achievement and coping skills, value of the family, reality of racism, moral values, and premarital sex were stressed. For sons, they received stronger messages about negative stereotypes and societal messages, more information about coping skills, but were not given messages about premarital sex.

Certainly one of the central issues in the constructing of racial meanings and of racial socialization is the experience of multiracial individuals. This has been brought to public attention by the 2000 Census which for the first time allowed people to indicate multiracial origins. The Department of the Census and the federal government made this step because of the activism of multiracial people. Much like the situation of bisexuals under the two-gender system of the United States, multiracial and multiethnic
people “did not exist” in the structuring of race. On the public level, one’s race depends on what one looks like, and on the legal level it has historically depended on the racial mixture of your parents. If you had one white and one non-white parent you generally were not considered “white.”

The racial socialization of multiracial and multiethnic children has not received a lot of attention. In fact, I found no reports or inclusions in my review of racial socialization literature. We can speculate that the racial socialization of multiracial children varies to some extent upon circumstances of the parents and the physical appearance of the child. What has happened over the past decade or so is that multiracial people have not wanted to have to choose a racial identity. Given the activism which resulted in changes to the census, we can assume that parents of multiracial children have largely encouraged children to have pride in all of their ancestry (at least over the last generation).

Within the context of racial structuring in the U.S., claiming a multiracial identity is not clear cut. First, it doesn’t exist in any culturally coherent or socially coherent way – it is still being created and re-created by individuals. Second, it flies in the face of our “pure race” socialization. At this point in time, people are generally going to respond to the race they identify you as and not as to how you perceive yourself. This can, and does, cause tremendous amounts of pain and anger for multiracial individuals. In my personal experience as a multiracial person, regardless of how I see myself, people overwhelmingly respond to me as “white.” I therefore have the benefits of white privilege, and also the consistent experience of whites saying things and having conversations they would most likely not have if a “person of color” was present. Since I do look white, and was raised in white foster homes, I also am not particularly accepted and embraced by either members of the “other” part of my ancestry, nor by “people of color” in general. In my discussions with other multiracial people, my experience is not unique.

Multiethnic people are in somewhat the same situation as the only officially recognized ethnicity in the United States is “Hispanic.” For those people who are of multiple ethnic backgrounds, socialization depends on parent’s identification with their own ethnicity. If parents have taken an assimilation approach, then while the child is multiethnic, the socialization will be largely within the context of dominant mainstream values. If the cultures represented in the family have importance to the family, then multiple cultural socialization may occur. While we generally think of this as an “immigrant” issue, that is not necessarily the case. Immigrants certainly are resocialized into mainstream U.S. values thereby having (at least) two cultural socialization experiences. Multiethnic individuals may struggle between contradictory expectations (i.e. in this group you are and act one way while in other group you are and act a different way).

Certainly one’s perceived race is going to interact significantly with other’s expectations of you as the paradigm in the U.S. links race and ethnicity. For example, if your mother is Mexican American and your father is Korean American but you “look” Mexican American, people are going to expect you to “act” “Hispanic” regardless of your ability (or desire) to do so.
From such studies as those cited here and the earlier discussion, race touches all areas of our socialization and all areas of our lives. We all have racial identities. These identities may be more central to some individuals than others or ebb and flow over our lifetimes, but they are a consequence of our racial system and socialization.

**Race Socialization and the Media**

As discussed in Chapter 3, the media plays a powerful role in socialization. It influences our perceptions and judgements of the world and of ourselves. This power is no less evident in the case of race than it is in the case of sex, and perhaps even more important given the lack of personal experience that many European Americans have with other Americans. The media paints a picture of the world, but it is not necessarily an accurate picture. It is a picture filtered through the lens of culture and contains the biases and ideals of that culture regardless of whether the category is entertainment or informational, aimed at children or adults.

Given the tremendous amount of television that we watch in the United States, and especially that young children and youths watch, the media has a shaping effect on our ideas of the races and our perceptions of ourselves. An example of how young this starts was shared by an African American mother at a diversity workshop I was running. She shared an experience of fixing lunch while her four year old daughter was watching TV in the other room. She heard her daughter crying and ran in to see what the problem was. Her daughter was rubbing and scratching vigorously at her skin and crying. The mother asked her what was the matter. The little girl, through her tears and sobs, said “I don’t want this skin. I want skin like the pretty white lady on TV.”

There has been considerable discussion about the effects of beauty images on women. We have probably all heard by now how the ultra thinness of female models and actresses conveys an unrealistic body image for women. Or that Barbie is unrealistically proportioned. What is not stated is that these models and actors, and most people in the media, are “white.” That it is “white” images (realistic or not), and “white” perceptions of the world (accurate or not) that are bombarding us. These images and perceptions do not only affect children.

In Chapter 3, I mentioned the ABC Nightline (2/5/99) segment called “Erasing Race” that focused on “people of color” who were undergoing plastic surgery so they could look better. “Looking better” meant looking more “white.” Dr. Harold Clavin, interviewed on the program, stated that about forty percent of his patients are trying to modify some “ethnic” feature. He also stated later in the interview that he had never had a patient who was “trying to look more ethnic.” The surgeries here were not just aimed at “beauty,” but at fitting in, being more accepted, and being more successful. Below is an excerpt from one of the interviews done for the program.

PERRI PELTZ, ABC News: (voice-over) Caleb Iida (ph), a 23-year-old flight attendant, was born in Japan. He felt like he fit in until he moved to the United States when he was 12. Now,
most of his friends are not Asian, and he wishes he looked more like them. 

(on camera) Caleb, but you look so good the way you are.

CALEB IIDA: No.
PERRI PELTZ: Describe the look that you want.
CALEB IIDA: I just want to look more Caucasian.
PERRI PELTZ: What’s wrong with looking Japanese?
CALEB IIDA: I feel that I would fit in more if I looked more like everyone, you know? And I just -- I’m surrounded by all these people that look gorgeous to me, and I feel like I’m like the only one that’s not, you know?

Lisa DeJohn, another interviewee seeking plastic surgery, replied when asked why she was seeking cosmetic surgery: “I don’t feel attractive, I don’t feel pretty. I don’t – I feel ugly inside.”

The use of plastic surgery in this manner is not new and it is not limited to racial minorities. Elizabeth Haiken, author of a book on the history of cosmetic surgery, noted on the program that this has been going on since shortly after World War II. She notes: “There was a huge influx in immigrants to the United States - a lot of Jews, Italians, Turks, Greeks. And they began to see cosmetic surgery as a way to fit in. That’s certainly very troubling for a society that styles itself as the melting pot. You know, we welcome you in. But then once you get here, you have to cut your body open to fit in. It’s not exactly the image of America that most of us like to think about.”

However, the media, and society, don’t just affect the way we look at ourselves, but also create and reinforce perceptions of others. There is a strong perception in the dominant culture that “people of color” are not only experts on “race” and their “race” in particular, but that it is their primary concern. Jeremy Zilber (2000) examined news coverage of African American congressional representatives, and compared them against their participation in floor discussion and other sources such as congressional web sites. He found that while African American congress people discussed and actively participated in the full range of congressional issues, they were portrayed in the news media almost exclusively on issues of race. This portrayal not only reinforces public perceptions, it can have dramatic implications for politicians of color. It may decrease their likelihood of being elected or re-elected because “whites” may fear their issues and concerns will not be represented.

Domke and McCoy (1999) examined how systematically changing a news piece on immigration altered people’s perception of the issue. They found strong support for the “perspective that news coverage of issues, by priming subjects to focus on some considerations and relationships and not others, influences the strength of the associations between individuals' racial cognitions and their political evaluations (570).” Certainly the opinions that are formed have real life implications for people’s and group’s lives as community and political actions in identifying and resolving issues largely depends on public’s perception and opinion. Entman’s (1997) examination of the role of the media in shaping opinions about Affirmative Action supports the findings of Domke and McCoy.
Grandy and Baron’s (1998) research on the significant differences in racial(ized) issues reinforces this connection between media and opinion. They argue that under conditions of limited personal exposure people rely more on other information sources to form their opinions. Since society is structured in such a way as to minimize the amount and type of contact that most “whites” have with “people of color,” outside sources such as the media play a primary role in shaping (or reinforcing) opinions. This is not to mention that the media, and those with a political agenda, may play upon the stereotypical cultural information to move people to act or support certain actions or legislation.

Domke and McCoy (2000), and to a somewhat lesser extent Grandy and Baron (1998), point to the importance of “priming” (setting a pre-viewing context) in interpretation of the message and opinion formation (or strengthening). Given the general presentation of races in the media, and socialization regarding race and races from other sources, consumers of media are already “primed” to have opinions shaped or reinforced in specific ways.

Try an experiment. Consciously watch the media (entertainment and “informational”) for a while and see how the races (and ethnic groups) are generally depicted. One glaring thing you may notice is that non-whites and non-Americans are overwhelmingly negatively portrayed. In shows where there is a “person of color” (usually male) who is a “good guy” or on the “good team” he/she will often be killed off early in the show. This happens so consistently that the message of the expendability of males of color is unmistakable. “People of color” are frequently portrayed as “undesirable” in a number of ways. Women are frequently depicted as poor, prostitutes, drug addicts, and sexual companions. Men are frequently depicted as criminals - generally dangerous criminals – and as members of gangs or organized crime. This places into dominant cultural stereotypes that non-whites are dangerous and undesirable. It also “primes” audiences (particularly “white” audiences) to support legislation to control or penalize “people of color,” or not support legislation that would equalize social structural inequalities between the races. For example, affirmative action efforts are frequently depicted as “reverse” discrimination against “whites,” or creating an unfair advantage for “people of color” (especially African Americans).

The Institutionalization of the Race System
Perhaps more so than with sex or class, race has been physically shaped by law and legislation. Racial structuring in the United States was important from early in the history of the nation. This structuring affected not only “people of color,” but whites as well. In fact, of utmost concern was “whites.” We are going to examine three examples below that were critical in shaping the races both physically and socially – citizenship, immigration, and anti-miscegenation.

We treat race as a natural category, and in the general operation of our lives most rarely question it. However, social institutions such as legislation and law, which formally structure social relations and boundaries, can have a huge affect on the physical composition of races by drawing the boundaries of racial categories. They also directly and indirectly assist in supplying the meaning content of races.
Law, especially in the United States is critical in another relationship to race – bringing the past into the present. It works this feat of magic through the use of precedent. Judgements that have been made previously are brought forward to influence judgements made today. For example, in the case of Thind (Oregon 1920) an Asian Indian suing for citizenship, “judge Smith ruled that ‘white persons’ would mean such persons who were in 1790 known as white Europeans” (Lopez, 1996:73). Interestingly, “Caucasian” and “white” were not considered the same thing. Asian Indians had been categorized by anthropologists as Caucasian, however, the courts (and presumably the public) did not see them as “white.” In this example we have a racial definition from 130 years previous being used as a basis for determining citizenship.

Citizenship
There are two ways to become a citizen of a country – by being born there or by being naturalized. In the United States both types of citizenship have been restricted at some point. In 1790, the U.S. Congress restricted the right to become a naturalized citizen to “any alien being a free white person who shall have resided within the limits and jurisdiction of the United States for a term of two years.” This restriction restricted the naturalization of various populations until 1952 (Lopez, 1996). Birthright citizenship (jus soli) was racially restricted until 1940, when Native Americans finally received this privilege.

Simple, historical, fact. Other than as a demonstration of racism, why would who could become a citizen be important in the construction of race? In the United States, citizenship gives people access to voice and representation. Earlier in the history of the nation it also determined the right to education; whether one could testify in court and serve on a jury; the rights and consequences of marriage; whether one could own property (or whether one was property). The limiting of citizenship gave a tremendous amount of privilege and power to “whites” that was denied to anyone else. Starting early in the foundation of this nation, and continuing until today, there are cumulative affects (materially and socially) to this restriction.

While the above is critically important, perhaps more important was defining and giving meaning to the races. If citizenship is restricted to “whites,” then who is “white?” Or conversely, who is “not white.” It was the determination of this crucial distinction that shaped not only the social construction of race, but its physical component.

Immigration Legislation
Immigration legislation was critical to shaping the physical nature of race in the United States. Through direct means such as setting quotas, to indirect means such as setting quotas based on foreign born population in an earlier period, to mandating restrictions on character or education, the United States was crafted to be a “white” nation. Certainly, a number of “non-white” people came or were brought to
this country, but they were controlled (in part) by restricting them from citizenship, or specific legislation restricting virtually every aspect of their lives (where they could live and sometimes work, whether they had any rights under law, access to education or other social services, whether they could marry or bring their families etc.) The intent of legislation was clear and it established and embedded a perception that is still with us today – namely that “American” means “white.”

It is not unusual for “whites” to deny this perception. A student in one of my diversity classes responded to the question of “Why might people of color not feel fully American?” in the following way:

“Those who first settled these lands were the white Anglo Saxons who left their homeland due to religious persecution. They brought slaves to help work the lands. After the (Civil) war slaves were given their citizenship and made just as much a part of America as whites.”

“From there we see immigration pick up due to the American Dream. Being of another cultural origin made immigrants feel as though they were not the same as the white American standard. Many times it seems as though people play upon the fears of others. So when they feel as though they (people of color) are less, they act and are treated so.”

I saved this example because it captures so much misinformation, but it is “misinformation” that I see over and over again. It is misinformation that is dredged up to explain the world around us. It is what most of us learned in our K-12 education in the U.S. pitched together in an explanatory framework. The conclusion the student final comes to above is that people of color don’t feel like they are fully “American” because of their own perceived “inadequacies.” Therefore, whites accommodate that perception by treating people of color as if they were less. As you will see below, the swarm of immigrants coming to this country until relatively recently were overwhelmingly Europeans who were perceived (or eventually accepted) as “white.”

Prior to 1790, the individual states determined their own immigration policies. The federal government passed a series of acts and statues standardizing and controlling immigration. Since most states had statutes requiring a two year residency before naturalization, that is where the federal statutes started. Then it was changed to five years, and for a period of time fourteen years (Naturalization Act of June 18, 1798). This changed with the Naturalization Act of April 14, 1802 which reduced residency back to five years and set a number of standards for naturalization including that persons be of “good moral character.”

In order to see the implications of immigration policy, it is important to know what the demographics of the population were. In Tables 5.1 and 5.2 below, only whites and blacks are enumerated separately with all other groups combined. The reasons for this are 1) Native Americans were not included until 1960 in most counts of the population, and 2) the representation of other racial and ethnic groups (other than “Hispanic”) were minimal or no data was available. Also the purpose of these tables is to show the
impact of immigration legislation on shaping the population. While Federal legislation of immigration began in 1790, there are no comparable census data before the 1850 census. I am making the assumption that in terms of percentage of representation, the white population of what was to become the United States was similar in 1790 or even 1590.

Table 5.1 depicts the U.S. population by race and whether they were born in the U.S. or were immigrants. So, in the 1850 census, 88.5% of whites were born here and 11.7% were immigrants. For blacks, 99.9% were born here and .1% were born outside the country. There were no countable number of “other” races in 1850 (Native Americans were not counted). It should also be noted that Chinese were frequently counted as “black.” Recall that from the discussion above, that in 1850 the only people eligible for either birthright or naturalized citizenship were whites.

Not only was the population heavily white, so was immigration (as reflected in Table 5.2). Between 1830 and 1930, 18,331,892 Northern and Western Europeans immigrated. For the same period, 13,944,454 Southern and Eastern Europeans came though 91% of that total came from 1891 to 1930. From 1820 to 1970 79% of all immigration was from Europe with the percentage not dropping below 60% until after 1951. (Kivisto, 1995: 84, 86). This European immigration was significant because while today people from these nations are generally considered “white,” at the time that was not necessarily the case. This was especially true for Southern and Eastern Europeans, but also for the second wave of Irish immigration which was heavily Catholic and poor (Ignatiev, 1995).

Table 5.1 Population by Race and Nativity from 1850-1990 in Percents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>1850</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1990</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>88.3</td>
<td>85.5</td>
<td>94.1</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black - U.S.</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>99.6</td>
<td>99.3</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>95.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Other” - U.S.</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>98.1</td>
<td>80.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within this demographic context, we have the Quota Law of May 19, 1921. This law limited the number of immigrants into the country as three percent of each nationality’s foreign born population in 1910. If we look at Table 5.2 for 1910, this means that European immigrants would have a much higher quota because they represented 87.4% of the immigrants in 1910. Asia, specifically Chinese immigration was not subject to these quotas because the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was still in
effect. The only other sizable group representation would have been from North America (primarily Canada).

Apparently the 1921 legislation was not having the desired affect, so in 1924 the law was changed to two percent of the foreign born population present in 1890. At that time the white foreign born population represented 16.6% of the white population and roughly 90% of immigrants, (Gibson and Lennon, 1999) and those whites were heavily of Northern and Western European origin. This remained in effect until 1929 when the two percent limit fixed on the 1920 percentages when 85.7% of the immigrants were from Europe. This quota remained essentially in affect until 1952 when the quota was revised to 1/6th of one percent of the 1920 foreign born population.

Table 5.2 Foreign Born Population 1850-1990 By Race and Region of Birth in Percents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>1850</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1990</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>99.8%</td>
<td>98.7%</td>
<td>98.5%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>.2%</td>
<td>.3%</td>
<td>.7%</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Other”</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.9%</td>
<td>.8%</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region of Birth</th>
<th>1850</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1990</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
<td>87.4%</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>.1%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.1%</td>
<td>.4%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.1%</td>
<td>.1%</td>
<td>.4%</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>.9%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As alluded to above, not all European immigrants were equal and a series of requirements were instituted to weed out the “undesirable.” Those immigrants on the exclusion list included: criminals and prostitutes (1875), persons likely to become a public charge (1882), those convicted of misdemeanors (1887), polygamists, and those whose passage was paid by others (1891), anarchists and others with undesirable opinions (1903); imbeciles, “feeble-minded,” and those with bad morals (1907), illiterate (1917), and any alien ineligible for citizenship (1924) [All data from the Immigration and Naturalization Legislation from the Statistic Yearbook]. While we are told that the ideal was “send us your poor, your tired, your hungry,” it is clear that is not who was wanted, and everybody need not apply.

So far we have two components working in conjunction – immigration and citizenship. Immigration
“stacked the deck” with a particular “racial” population (“white”) to have numerical and cultural dominance, and citizenship laws created special privileges for that group to give them economic and political dominance. Those European populations that were originally considered “undesirable” because of wealth, position, religion or national politics were systematically disadvantaged both in terms of immigration and citizenship. Ultimately they were “assimilated” into the definition of whiteness, though not necessarily as equally “white.” Use of race as a distinguisher of opportunity and power focused on whites.

Anti-miscegenation
The concern of those with power at the time was not just to assure a “white” nation, but to assure the purity of the white race. While a variety of social and political mechanisms were used the anti-miscegenation laws were the most direct attempt at ensuring and protecting the integrity of white racial purity. Miscegenation is a term that was coined in 1863 and comes from the Latin miscre for mix and genus meaning race (Webster’s New World Dictionary and Thesaurus). Therefore miscegenation literally means “mixed race.” The anti-miscegenation legislation made intermarriage between whites and other races illegal.

Anti-miscegenation laws were in effect from the mid 1600’s until the last was struck down as unconstitutional in 1967 (Loving v. State of Virginia). While the common perception is that anti-miscegenation laws applied solely to blacks, this is not the case. Who the laws were aimed at depended on who was seen as a dominant minority in the area. Therefore, slave states frequently specified blacks or slaves, while in California they specified Chinese and “Orientals.” Other laws were less specific and generally applied to non-whites. Even the laws that specified blacks were more general than we would make them today as other groups besides black Africans were included (specifically the Chinese), and most laws used “colored” a term that was applied to more than blacks.

Under the anti-miscegenation laws, white-non-white marriages were prohibited, or if they were recognized, the children of such marriages would be considered non-white, and in some states, illegitimate. Some states had penalties for these interracial marriage such as fines and imprisonment.

With the anti-miscegenation laws we see two processes working simultaneously. One process aimed at maintaining white racial purity, and one aimed at maintaining white social and economic power. There is no documentation that I can find of laws barring “non-whites” from marrying within their race or to someone of another non-white race. However, there were specific legal barriers to marriage and family for some groups (particularly slaves and Chinese workers). Part of the reason that anti-miscegenation legislation may not have extended beyond whites is that there were few rights for those who were not white. The determination that mixed race (white/non-white) were non-white, and hence for much of the time not eligible for citizenship or other privileges, removed them from social, economic and political competition with whites. It also assured white hegemony.
These three processes – immigration and citizenship and anti-miscegenation – were surrounded by beliefs about the “races.” In fact, we could say that the perceptions of race and white racial identity were at the core of the social structuring of race which these processes reflect. We see here an integration of three examples of social structuring, but these integrated not only with each other but with hundreds of other structural components. Further, this is not something that was left in the distant past. Even with the changes in immigration law, the removal of some barriers to citizenship, and the ending of anti-miscegenation legislation, the impacts remain today. We have arguments in California, for example, that children of illegal immigrants born in the United States should not have birthright citizenship. Or that English should be made the official language. Or that American Indian tribes should not have sovereignty. Or that civil rights and affirmative action are “special rights.” Both legally and culturally, the United States is still a nation that maintains and reinforces those racial concerns it has had from the beginning - namely that the white race have dominance within this domain.
### Maintenance of the Race System

You should have a pretty good idea at this point to examine how the race-based system of stratification is maintained. Using the Maintenance of Stratification Systems model complete it based on race. I have included a table only for “whites” and “people of color” generically. I would encourage you to expand it to specific racialized groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>“Whites”</th>
<th>“People of Color”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penalties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is an interesting dynamic occurring within the context of race in that there is clearly in-group processes at work. In other words, racial socialization and identity do not occur simply within the framework of the broader system, but within specific racialized groups. Therefore, there may be other rewards, penalties, and costs going on within a specific group. While the mainstream perception may be that all “people of color,” or all African American (for example) think the same way, the reality is that these are not homogenous populations socially or politically. So for an individual person of color their actions and behaviors “in the world” are going to be judged and sanctioned by different sources with
Within this context, assume that there is a high degree of racial group identity and cohesion or a low to moderate degree of cohesion. The rules of boundary formation are going to apply here as they do within any societal context. In this instance the racial groups are enforcing a system through the utilization of rewards and penalties. Previously the assumption has been that the dominant social structure and forces are maintaining the boundaries and system. To utilize the model in this way, “rewards” would be those benefits, privileges, etc. that group members receive for maintaining the high identity group’s norms. Penalties would be for going against the high identity group’s norms. The comparison is to those people who are of the racial group, but do not have a high sense of group identity. They would most likely see some degree of compliance with the “white” system as more appropriate. Try playing with the model in this way and see what you come up with. Then compare it to the dominant - non-dominant group model you completed earlier.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In-Group</th>
<th>Group has high group identity</th>
<th>Group has low to moderate group identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penalties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Putting it Together
Race in and of itself is complex as your work with the models above has demonstrated. The forces at work occur both within the context of the dominant culture and social structure and within communities (racial and ethnic). Socialization into the race system as well as specific racial and identity socialization interact with, and in some cases determine social structure. Interaction with others reinforces patterns through our expectations of each other based upon the meaning of race. The patterns are also reinforced and extended through social structure and institutions which dramatically affect the reality of our lived conditions. Neither stands alone and there is constant reinforcement and reiteration (a feedback loop of sorts).

To add to the complexity, racial groups are not unified groups on the whole. There are variations and subtleties that occur within the group that also help shape individual (and sometimes collective) experiences. For example, the activism of some “whites” to protect their property interests has a residual benefit for most whites even if they did not personally advocate for the protection. Likewise the activism of millions of primarily African Americans gained Civil Rights that help to assure all of us equal protection, even though we may not personally have been involved. In these examples, surely not all “whites” had property to protect, or were supportive of such racial property right protection, and not all African Americans felt that the activism of the 1950s and 60s was wise or prudent.

Racial identity in and of itself is complex and frequently hard to isolate. “Whites,” on the whole, feel that they do not have a racial identity, but white identity has been called on and responded to over and over again historically and contemporarily. The current feeling of “whites” being disadvantaged is certainly symptomatic of white racial identity. On the other hand, “people of color” are all assumed to place preeminent importance on their racial identity, but this is not true.

As the examination of the role of whiteness has increased as part of the examination of both the construction of race, and of racial stratification, there has also been stated by some that there is a need for a positive white identity. In looking at the broad picture, whites already have a highly positive identity. This contradiction is also part of social construction. White racial identity has been linked to organized white supremacy. It is permeated through the mainstream culture that they are the only ones with a white identity. This serves nicely to maintain the fiction that whites do not receive racial socialization, and that whiteness as a racial category doesn’t “mean” anything. White identity does exist and is pervasive. Even a cursory look at historical or contemporary events can demonstrate its existence – and utilization.

Race, socially constructed and structurally entwined, is a part of virtually every interaction whether we are aware of it or not – it impacts and structures our lives, and often is as invisible as air. Our job is to make it visible so we know what we are dealing with. Understanding how race is constructed and
perpetuated through our interactions and social systems allows us to know how to change it.

**Looking Forward**
Chapter Six examine social history and mythology in the United States – particularly in relationship to race. It covers historical events both familiar and unfamiliar and how they have shaped race in the United States. It is not intended as an exhaustive coverage of U.S. history. The discussion however, should give solid examples of many of the processes that have been discussed up to this point.

**Suggested Readings and Resources**


Immigration and Naturalization Services.  


**Key Concepts and Terms**
- anti-miscegenation
- citizenship
- ethnicity
- immigration
- privilege
- race
- racial identity
- racial socialization
- racialized ethnics
Chapter Six

MYTH
AND
HISTORY
Social History and Mythology

Many forces worked to shape the United States we live in today. Racism in the United States did not start with Black slavery and it did not end with Civil Rights. From “first contact” of Europeans and the Peoples of the Americas, racism has been present and used as a tool. It is still present today.

I am including this chapter because I firmly believe that what we deal with today in terms of social stratification is built upon the foundation of the past. I see these as direct connections in at least two ways. First, in shaping the culture in the United States – shaping our beliefs, values, the ways we see ourselves, and the current forms and impacts of our social institutions. Second, that the issues and rhetoric that we experience today are strikingly similar to the issues and rhetoric of earlier times. We are indeed repeating ourselves - endlessly it seems. My experience personally and as a teacher inform me that there is a lot that we were not taught. Further, that what we don’t know keeps us from understanding our current environment.

I am not going to give an exhaustive review of U.S. history here, though I do offer sources at the end of the chapter for you to explore further for yourself. What I am going to share are those things that have helped me to best understand the construction of race in the United States today. Sex and social class were (and are) included in this shaping. We will be examining myth making and social history; what we are taught and what is real. We will be examining nativism in several guises. **Nativism is a general term that refers primarily to social movements and public sentiment that is nationalistic, ethnocentric, and frequently racist.** It has played a repeating role in shaping our environment and serves to pull together a number of disparate events in U.S. history.

The terms “nativism” and “nativist” in the social context are also somewhat confusing because the native peoples of this land are generically referred to as Native American. However, in the context of U.S. social history, these terms apply to primarily white colonizers who saw this land as their’s. “Immigration” of Europeans was encouraged to occupy this land – displacing its original population. While the exact time is unclear, at some point European colonizers saw themselves as the “native” people of the Americas, and those Europeans who followed them as “immigrants.” The more accurate statement would be that European colonizers encouraged more colonization and imported non-white labor (i.e. African, Chinese, Mexican, and Japanese) to help claim and control the land against its rightful “owners.” (I place “owners” in quotation marks in this context because most tribes did not have the concept of owning the land.) Because of the nature and use of the term “immigrant,” I have used the phrasing of “immigrants (colonizers),” or “immigrants” in quotes to show the questionable nature of this concept.

The myth of “American” ownership of Native American tribal lands is pervasive. There is a general belief today that Indians own relatively small tracts of lands called “reservations;” however, this is not the case. Please see the map on the following page which is from the U.S. government’s own records of what lands currently belong to various tribes (Churchill, 1994).
The white areas are lands that legally belong to the indicated tribes. The diagonally-hashed lands are lands still being legally contested, and the cross-hatched areas are those that were given up through recognized treaties between the U.S. government and tribes. Most people are surprised how vast the tribal holdings are. The map also raises the question of what the implications might be if the tribes reclaimed the land that the U.S. government says is legally theirs.

While we have discussed various components of identity formation in previous chapters, the purpose here is to examine the broader social and historical processes that have created the society we live in today. With the arrival/invasion of Europeans to this hemisphere a number of processes were set in motion. Europeans were looking for trade goods and to control trade routes and those goods. The ultimate focus was power and wealth, and securing the control of trade and territory.

Western Europeans and their descendants were and are continuously “discovering” things. Columbus “discovered” “America” and researchers are continuously “discovering” flora and fauna from around the world. In 1999, scientists “discovered” a new species of pygmy deer in the remote mountains of Vietnam. When we hear the word discover the first thing that comes to mind is the one that is most common: “to be the first to find out, see, or know about” (Webster’s New World Dictionary). Let’s look briefly at how “discover” is actually defined:

1. to be the first to find out, see, or know about
2. to find out; learn of the existence of; realize
3. to be the first nonnative person to find, come to, or see (a continent, river, etc.)
4. to bring to prominence; make famous
5a) [Now Rare] to reveal; disclose; expose  
   b) [Archaic] to uncover

(Webster’s New World Dictionary and Thesaurus)

If we look at the “discoveries” above, it is clear that the “discoverers” were not the first to find out. There were already people in the “New World” and the mountain people of Vietnam certainly knew about the pygmy deer roaming their forests. Meaning number two might work. Meaning number three, is what is actually meant, and meaning number four ties directly to three. In the context of both historical and contemporary empire building, “non-native” essentially means “white,” and “making prominent and famous” refers to those same “non-native” people. We do not have to be told this. It is unconsciously assumed, and the general acceptance of it shows how deep the race ideology goes. Personally, I like the fifth meaning that is no longer in use - “to reveal; disclose; expose” as that is the intent of this text.

We are told that history is written by the victor. Perhaps in the context of this chapter, it would be more appropriate to say that history is written by those with power to support their power. History is not simply a series of events, though my experience with history throughout my 1st grade through my Bachelors degree was one long string of “we went, we saw, we conquered.” Who was this “we?” It
was “white” Americans and their ancestors. I’m sure I was taught this history with the belief that it was an accurate and complete narration, and certainly with an eye towards generating national pride. It was a depiction that was primarily “white,” overwhelmingly male (except for Betsy Ross and Florence Nightingale) and where the primary people were of an upper class, with lots of drudges like soldiers, and pioneers doing the foot work of their betters, and bravely scratching a life from a hostile land.

No, history is not simply a series of events. Formal history is also not simply a retelling of a series of events. Formal history occurs within a social framework and becomes the seeds of public perception. It shapes the lens through which we see the present. It may include us (race, sex, class, national origin) or it may not. It may include us, but not accurately. Whether and how we are included becomes the stuff of story, song, and the idealized cultural story. This story may be presented so pervasively within our culture that it becomes people’s belief that what we see in film and story and song must be what actually happened. In believing that what is portrayed is truth, it shapes our perceptions today. Over 100 years of stories about the “Old West” lead us to assume that cowboys were the primary characters, made a living wage, and were at the forefront of fighting Indians, protecting innocent settlers, spending their lives riding around after cows. Cowboys were the (white) “action figure” heroes with wild Indians their arch enemy. And like heroes of myth, they always won.

The reality is that cowboys were of most of the races present in the country at the time and the first cowboys were Mexican Vaqueros as the Spanish first introduced cattle to the “new” world (Library of Congress, 2000). They were not free agents “roaming the range,” but workers for hire -- workers who were paid little, and frequently not paid at all. In today’s world they would be called “tramps.” In 1881 President Chester A. Arthur sought congressional authority to go after “desperadoes calling themselves Cowboys.” By 1888 Theodore Roosevelt entered the presidency on his Cowboy image (Papanikolas, 1995:74). Writers and artists of the time painted a romantic image of the West that captured the imagination of the reading public -- and has held it ever since.

Even something as simple and captivating as Johnny Appleseed struggling across the country planting his beloved apple seeds reinforces the image of taming an untamed and unpopulated land. The sub-text which goes without notice is one of conquest and colonialism. Johnny Appleseed: man against nature; civilizing it, subduing it with a sweet crop. Paul Bunyan with Babe, clearing the virgin forests for white settlers and white farms, breaking his back (and Babe’s) in the spirit of a rapidly expanding “nation.” We do not need to be told that Johnny and Paul are “white.”

But before cowboys, before pioneers and settlers, before Johnny and Paul, we have not myth but history mythologized.

Columbus “Discovers” America
We can argue whether the Vikings or the Spanish got here first. What is inarguable is that the Spanish incursion marked the beginning of European empire building in the Western Hemisphere and in the
Americas. The history we are generally taught is that Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492. He was looking for a trade route to the Orient, but top on his list was to find gold. Instead, he landed in what are now the Bahamas and found the Taino’s (Arawaks). Like most of the early European contact with the people of the Americas, the “explorers” were met in a friendly fashion and given hospitality (Zinn, 1995:1) Columbus noted in his log, as quoted by Zinn:

“They ... brought us parrots and balls of cotton and spears and many other things, which they exchanged for the glass beads and hawks’ bells. They willingly traded everything they owned.” ... “With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want.”

Columbus responded to this hospitality in a less than hospitable way. Columbus noted in his personal diary as quoted by Zinn (1995:1):

“As soon as I arrived in the Indies, on the first Island which I found, I took some of the natives by force in order that they might learn and might give me information of whatever there is in these parts.”

Columbus wanted to believe that there were significant amounts of gold in what he named “Espanola,” and when he returned to Spain he convinced Isabella and Ferdinand that this was the case. They made him Viceroy and Governor of the Caribbean Islands and mainland and sent him back. Upon arriving back in the Americas in 1493, he built a fort and enslaved the Tainos and murdered those who did not meet the tributes he set (Churchill, 1994). While he did not find large amounts of gold, he did send a number of enslaved Tainos to Spain. “In the year 1495, they went on a great slave raid, rounded up fifteen hundred Arawak men, women, and children, put them in pens guarded by Spaniards and dogs, then picked the five hundred best specimens to load onto the ships” (Zinn, 1995:4). Only three hundred were to survive the trip. Columbus wrote later “Let us in the name of the Holy Trinity go on sending all the slaves that can be sold (Zinn, 1995:4).”

In the eight years that Columbus was the Viceroy and Governor, the Taino population went from (an estimated) eight million people to less than 100,000 (Churchill, 1994). Some died by suicide, but the majority were brutally murdered by the Spanish. As noted by Churchill (1994:32):

“There are numerous eyewitness accounts of the treatment of the natives by ‘Spanish colonists (hidalgos) hanging Tainos en masse, roasting them on spits or burning them at the stake (often a dozen or more at a time), hacking their children into pieces to be used as dog feed and so forth, all of it to instill in the natives a “proper attitude of respect” toward their Spanish “superiors”.’”

Columbus is officially and publicly honored in the United States. We learn the myth of Columbus in grade school and this myth impacts us today. The myth is reinvigorated each year while Native Americans and others protest that celebrating Columbus is celebrating genocide (Churchill, 1994). Meanwhile many in the United States, including the press, think that the “Indians” are being “sore
losers.” Some would ask what difference it makes at this time whether Columbus was a valiant explorer or a murderous despot. Others would argue that it is critically important. The magazine “Rethinking Columbus” published for the 500th anniversary of Columbus’ arrival (1991:3) makes the following argument:

“The Columbus myth is basic to children’s beliefs about society. For many youngsters the tale of Columbus introduces them to the history of this country, even to history itself. The ‘discovery’ of America is children’s first curricular exposure to the encounter between two cultures and to the encounter between two races. As such, a study of Columbus is really a study about us – how we think about each other, our country, and our relations with people around the world.”

“The Columbus myth teaches children which voices to listen for as they go out into the world – and whose to ignore. Pick up a children’s book on Columbus: See Chris; see Chris talk; see Chris grow up, have ideas, have feelings. In these volumes, the native peoples of the Caribbean, the ‘discovered,’ don’t think or feel. And thus children begin a scholastic journey that encourages them to disregard the perspectives, the very humanity, of people of color.”

Columbus set the tenor of what was to come for the native peoples of the Americas. The myths that pass themselves off as history still underpin the structure of race today, and fuel tensions between races.

The myth runs that Western Europeans originally came to this land to escape religious persecution. They met a few friendly “Indians,” but for the most part were in a hostile land surrounded by hostile savages. While there were not many Indians, they did pose a threat to these innocent, God fearing immigrants (colonizers). Dealing with the hostile natives required “killing a few” and “moving a few.” However, even “friendly Indians” proved traitorous and had to be dealt with.

Hence, we have the kind Indians that fed the poor pilgrims through their first winter at Plymouth Rock. When the colonists got on their feet they returned the favor, inviting all the Indians to a sumptuous feast – replete with turkey and all the trimmings -- and a good time was had by all.

The reality is not as simple and straightforward. There were not very many “Indians” left around Plymouth Rock. While the Pilgrims landed in 1620, they had been preceded by a British expedition in 1614 who took 24 people as slaves and left smallpox behind. By 1617, the population of the coastal tribes had been reduced by over 90%.

“John Winthrop, a founder of the Massachusetts Bay colony considered this wave of illness and death to be a divine miracle. He wrote to a friend in England, “But for the natives in these parts, God hath so pursued them, as for 300 miles space the greatest part of them are swept away by smallpox which still continues among them. So as God hath thereby cleared our title to this place, those who remain in these parts, being in all not 50, have put themselves under our
Chapter 6: Myth and History

One of the slaves taken in 1614 was Squanto who returned with the Plymouth Pilgrims. They established the Plymouth Plantation on the remains of the Wamponoag village Pawtuxet. Squanto helped the Pilgrims make a treaty with chief Masasoit of the Wamponoags.

The Puritans survived and were followed by many other Puritans, and villages and farms expanded, encroaching on the remaining tribal villages. The question arose as to land ownership. Those who argued that the land belonged to the Indians were excommunicated and exiled from the towns. Governor Winthrop determined that the Indians had not subdued the land (put it under cultivation) and so the land was public domain. This meant that land ownership went through the British crown (and the Governor who was crown’s representative) rather than through the Tribes already on the land.

The first Thanksgiving was in 1621 when the Governor declared a three day feast because the colony survived the winter. The next Thanksgiving was in 1637 [See Box 6.1]. Most of the “Thanksgiving Days” for the next 100 years were declared to celebrate victories against various Native American tribes. “The first national celebration of Thanksgiving was called for by George Washington. And the celebration was made a regular legal holiday by Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War (right as he sent troops to suppress the Sioux of Minnesota) (Revolutionary Worker)

More innocent immigrants (colonizers) came and settled in, eventually expanding across the “unexplored” (by “whites”) country: a land that was empty of all but space and natural resources (and a few hostile Indians). Word of the possibility of empty land ripe for the taking spread across the sea and people of Europe flocked to the opportunity.

Another prevalent myth about Native Americans in the years after first contact was that the dramatic decline in population was accidental. While there were accidents involved in the early spread of small pox and other diseases among the tribes, white politicians and military men certainly saw disease as a weapon. As noted by Churchill (1994:34) “... in 1763 history’s first documentable case of biological warfare occurred against Pontiac’s Algonkian Confederacy. Sir Jeffrey Amherst (a general) ordered a
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subordinate to infect the Indians with blankets contaminated with smallpox. “You will be well advised to infect the Indians with sheets upon which small pox patients have been lying or by other means which may serve to exterminate this accursed race (Amott and Matthaei, 1996:39.)” His subordinate reported back ‘... we gave them two blankets and a handkerchief out of the smallpox hospital. I hope it will have the desired affect (Churchill, 1994:34).’”

The Early Years

During the 1600s (prior to slavery) Black Africans came to these shores as indentured servants. They were not the only servants however. Black and white indentured servants shared jobs, quarters and lives. Children were a consequence of these conditions and were part of what prompted anti-miscegenation and other laws (See Box 6.2).

While history conveys to us that many people, especially in the south, owned slaves, almost 6% of slaves were held in northern states. We have the image of huge plantations with hundreds of slaves. In fact, there is a perception that the south was one huge blanket of plantations. While about 75% of white southern families owned slaves, by 1860 only twenty-five percent of slave owner owned more than fifty slaves (Amott and Matthaei, 1996: 145).

We have a belief that only African Americans were slaves and only whites owned slaves. Before the institution of the slave trade, many Native Americans were enslaved, and after the institution of slavery in the United States, some Native nations owned black slaves. Not all African Americans were slaves and some had black slaves.

There was a lot of traffic in slaves, and a lot of slaves. Somewhere between one-half and two-thirds of slaves who were brought from West Africa died in passage – mostly of starvation and disease. Even given the number who died, over 400,000 arrived between 1741 and 1810 (Ammott and Matthaei, 1996: 145). By this time Blacks made up almost 20% of the entire U.S. population (excluding Native Americans) and almost 50% in slave holding states.

Box 6.2 Excerpt from Amott and Matthaesi,
1996:143

“Creating separate and unequal white and Black castes through changes in laws and social practices took time. Some changes addressed the employment status of whites and Blacks. Masters were heavily taxed for using white women for agricultural work, although they were free to employ Black women in the fields, and field work became the norm for Black women. Other changes addressed intermarriage. In the late 1600s, white women commonly lived with Black men and had children by them; in seventeenth century Virginia, between one-fourth and one-third of the children born to unmarried white women were of mixed race. Although these children were not white, they were not legally classified as slaves, even if their father was a slave. To discourage these interracial relationships, Virginia passed a law forcing any free Englishwoman who had a ‘bastard child by a Negro’ to pay a fine of fifteen pounds, or be indentured to the church wardens for five years. Marriages between white servant women and Black men met with banishment and some states actually tried to enslave
In 1836 white colonists in Texas declared independence from Mexico. They had been drawn there, in part because Mexico allowed slavery, and declared independence in part because Mexico banned slavery. In 1843, the U.S. declared war on Mexico and in 1848 that war was ended with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo which gave the United States all Mexican territories north of the Rio Grande River. Texas entered the Union as a slave state. Mexicans and Indian nations in the former Mexican territories came under the jurisdiction of the United States. As a part of the treaty, Mexicans in the now U.S. territory retained their rights to their land and customs. We will return to the implications of this later in this chapter.

Around the same time waves of immigrants (colonizers) (primarily English, German, and Irish) were arriving. Wave after wave of “immigrants,” were landing primarily in the northeastern ports and very few went south after landing. Cities were dirty and crowded. Job competition was high. The north was abolishing slavery and the south was not. There was expansion to the west: an ever expanding sea of migration decimating land, game, and Indian nations. The south and slavery were powerful primarily because northern states kept electing pro-slavery candidates (Holt, 1973).

There was an increasing sense of government corruption. Some looked at the election of Franklin Pierce in 1852 with the help of naturalized voters, and his selection of foreign born to various government and diplomatic posts, as a clear sign of the influence of outsiders. Prices and taxes were going through the roof (Billington, 1952). By 1855 “immigrants” outnumbered American born citizens in Chicago, Detroit, and Milwaukee, and would soon surpass the American born “natives” in NY, Brooklyn, Buffalo, Cleveland, and Cincinnati. More than a third of the population of Boston, Pittsburgh, Albany, Rochester and Troy were immigrants (colonizers), and the levels were nearly that in Philadelphia and Newark. From 1845 to 1854, 2,900,000 Europeans came to the U.S. This was more “immigrants” than the previous 70 years combined (Anbinder, 1992). Feagin (1997: 19-20) characterizes this period as follows:

“In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the ‘white race’ emerged as a constructed social group for the first time in history.” ... “Early English invaders and their descendants saw themselves as culturally and physically different from Native and African Americans, the stereotyped ‘uncivilized savages.’ Moreover, by the early 1800s the importance of Southern cotton plantations for the U.S. economy had brought a growing demand for Native American land and African and African American slaves. Slavery was being abolished in the North, and the number of free black men and women was growing. In this period, the Anglo-Protestant ruling elite developed the ideology of a superior ‘white race’ as one way of providing racial privileges for poorer European Americans and keeping the latter from joining with black Americans in worker organizations. By the mid-nineteenth century, not only later English “immigrants” but also “immigrants” from Scotland, Ireland, and Germany had come to accept a place in this socially constructed ‘white race’ whose special racial privileges included the rights of personal liberty, travel and voting.”
Out of this climate of chaos came a third political party known as the “Know Nothings.” They arose out of a collection of citizen groups and clubs, but were tagged Know Nothings because whenever they were interviewed that was their response. At that time the two party system contained the Whigs (primarily northern) and the Democrats (primarily southern). The Whigs lost most of their credibility and popular support with the passage of the Kansas Nebraska Act. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 had said that states that lay north of latitude 36°30' were to be free states (slavery was not allowed). At the time of the Kansas Nebraska Act (1854) Stephen A. Douglas wanted to secure a northern route for the Transcontinental Railroad, and wanted to bring in Nebraska as a state. This would have upset the balance between free and slave states. Therefore, the territory was divided into two states and Nebraska came in as a free state and Kansas as a slave state.

The Know Nothings grew out of a secret society called the Order of the Star Spangled Banner. They were formally known as the American Party. They were anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic and claimed to be champion of the rights of American male Protestant voters. The northern part of the party being anti-slavery and the southern part being pro-slavery (Anbinder, 1992; Billington, 1952). They took political control of many state and city governments from 1855 to 1860. They supported Millard Fillmore in the 1856 Presidential election and he took 21% of the popular vote and eight votes from the electoral college.

The American Party platform included the following:
1. Only native-born Americans could hold public office;
2. A 21 year waiting period before foreign-born could vote;
3. Restrict public schooling to Protestants and have the Protestant bible read daily in classrooms.
   (Anbinder, 1992)

So called “native” Americans, those white descendants of primarily western Europeans who had been born here, saw the “immigrant” influx as a threat in a number of regards. They saw them as racially and culturally different and inferior to themselves. Samuel Busey (1856) wrote a book called “Immigration and its Evils” in which he presented a detailed discussion of the inferiority of the “immigrants.” In the following passage he compares the illiterate American born to the illiterate foreigner.

“The ignorant natives who speak our language have been reared under our institutions, and are acquainted with the practical workings of our government; the ignorant foreigner is totally unacquainted with the language; has not enjoyed the advantages of experience and practical observation of the complex machinery of our government, and is consequently far inferior, intellectually, to the uneducated native. He cannot understand the theory of a free government, because he is destitute of the knowledge sufficient to comprehend its objects, purposes and blessings. He cannot acquaint himself with its practical operation and direct and immediate advantages to himself, because he wants the experience and observation, which birth and habits have taught; besides he is totally unacquainted with our language, and has been reared
under institutions hostile to personal liberty, to free institutions, and to a Republican government; hence it is that foreigners are so prone to congregate together, to organize themselves into clubs, societies and even communities, occupying entire sections of a county, State, and of a country. These foreign organizations are dangerous to our established institutions; because, wherever they have been in our country, they have repudiated the fundamental principles of our government. (Bussey, 1856: 127-129).”

The anti-Catholic sentiment was in part a reflection that many of these “immigrants” (Irish and German, and later Italians) were Catholic. Rhetoric and name calling using terms like papist, pope-ridden, and popery, were common. Catholic churches and tenement houses were burned. The death toll is unknown. Not only were these “immigrants” largely Catholic, they were also largely supportive of slavery – possibly because that was the official political stand at the time and they wanted to fit in. That support was also most likely buttressed by job competition with freed slaves.

Men, respected then and now, were supportive of the basic anti-immigrant (Catholic and European) sentiment from the early 1800s into the mid 1900s. Men such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thomas Edison, Millard Fillmore, Samuel Morse, and Henry Ford. Samuel Morse (the inventor of the telegraph) printed his own treatise on immigration and naturalization. See Box 6.3 for a brief excerpt.

To add to the confusion and politics of the time, gold was “discovered” in California in 1848 (which had just been acquired from Mexico.) This began the gold rush of 1849 with further political ramifications as the slave state/free state debate continued. A series of compromises ensued to keep the south in the Union. They included:

1. Repudiation of the Wilmot Proviso (which sought to exclude slavery from all territories during the Mexican American War)
2. A continuance of slavery in the District of Columbia;
3. A strengthening of the fugitive slave law

Box 6.3 - Excerpted from Samuel Morse 1835 treatise against immigration and Catholics.

“O there is no danger to the Democracy; for those most devoted to the Pope, the Roman Catholics, especially the Irish Catholics, are all on the side of Democracy. Yes; to be sure they are on the side of Democracy. They are just where I would look for them. ... They would not startle our slumbering fears, by bolting out of their monarchial designs directly in our teeth, and by joining the opposing ranks, except so far as to cover their designs. ... Let every real Democrat guard against this common Jesuitical artifice of tyrants, an artifice which if not heeded will surely ruin the Democracy:”

“I have shown what are the Foreign materials (sic immigrants) imported into the country, with which the Jesuits can work to accomplish their designs (sic taking over the U.S.). Let us examine this point a little more minutely. These materials are the varieties of Foreigners of the same Creed, the Roman Catholic, over all of whom the Bishops or Vicars General hold, as a matter of course, ecclesiastical rule, – it is the double refined spirit of despotism, which after arrogating to itself the prerogatives of Deity, and so claiming to bind or loose the soul eternally, makes it, in the comparison, but a mere trifle to exercise absolute
requiring Northerners to return escaped slaves to their masters. None of these actions set well with Northerners, but they were the conditions required to have California become a “free” state.

With the “discovery” of gold, massive numbers of workers were needed and the U.S. government made an agreement with China for contract workers. Very specific conditions were placed on “coolies” (a word meaning “bitter labor”) including restricting them from bringing their families, or settling in the United States. The Chinese and China were not held in high regard in the U.S. even before the gold rush as is noted in the following quotations.

Ralph Waldo Emerson 1824 journal entry (Daniels 1976:212):

The closer contemplation we condescend to bestow, the more disgustful is that booby nation. The Chinese Empire enjoys precisely a Mummy’s reputation, that of having persevered to a hair for 3 or 4,000 years the ugliest features in the world. I have no gift to see a meaning in the venerable vegetation of this extraordinary (nation) people. They are tools for other nations to use. Even miserable Africa can say I have hewn wood and drawn water to promote the civilization of other lands. But China, reverend dullest hoary ideot!, all she can say at the convocation of nations must be – “I made the tea.”

Or from Samuel Goodrich a children’s textbook writer who wrote in 1833 (Daniels 1976:212):

“Few nations, it is now agreed, have so little honor, or feeling, or so much duplicity and mendacity. Their affected gravity is as far from wisdom, as their ceremonies are from politeness.”

The anti-Chinese sentiment is also captured in the following quote from Caleb Cushing who was the American commissioner to China in the 1840s (as quoted in Daniels, 1997:7):

“[We belong] to the excellent white race, the consummate impersonation of intelligent man and loveliness in woman, whose power and privilege it is, wherever they may go ... to Christianize and civilize, to command and be obeyed, to conquer and to reign. I admit to an equality with me ... the white man – my blood and race, whether he be a Saxon of England, or the Celtic of Ireland. But I do not admit as by equals wither the red man of America, the yellow man of Asia, or the black man of Africa.”

It did not take long for a more generalized antagonism against the Chinese to take hold. By 1854, the Supreme Court (People v Hall) ruled that Chinese could not give testimony in court. Because of the restrictions on Chinese workers entering the country, there was a tremendous sex imbalance which continued until 1920s. Over 90% of the Chinese population in the continental United States was male (Daniels, 1976). It did not take long for them to be seen as competitors in the white labor market. They were paid significantly less than white workers and were much more controllable because of their
standing and visibility in the population. In 1865, they were recruited to complete the Transcontinental Railroad where they worked under incredibly harsh conditions that went beyond the physical labor. They also worked in agriculture and as domestics in places such as San Francisco. As the economy crashed in the 1870s the Chinese became prime targets in the West for the hostility of whites who saw the Chinese as taking jobs “their” jobs.

Rural areas in the West organized against Chinese in agriculture and mining and many were run out of towns. A Montana Journalist wrote “We don’t mind hearing of a Chinaman being killed now and then ... Don’t kill them unless they deserve it, but when they do - why kill em lots” Amott and Matthaei (1995:203). In the white Workingman’s Party an anti-Chinese campaign characterized the Chinese as “the most debased order of humanity known to the civilized world” (Amott and Matthaei, 1995:203). Western states, especially California, passed numerous laws barring Chinese from access to public services, property ownership, and equal treatment under the law.

In 1880, the U.S. and China agreed to significantly limit the number of Chinese workers allowed into the U.S., and California passed an anti-miscegenation law aimed at the Chinese. By 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was signed which prohibited all Chinese entry into the U.S. and this was largely in effect until the 1965 Immigration Act.

As sentiments worsened for the Chinese and they were excluded from the country, the United States turned to Japan for workers. By the early 1900s there were approximately 70,000 Japanese workers in the United States. They were overwhelmingly male and worked primarily in agriculture and as domestics. They were preferred as agricultural workers because they were seen as more docile and controllable than Mexican and Mexican American workers. Many of the restrictions instituted against the Chinese were applied to the Japanese. However, because of the “Gentlemans Agreement” between Japan and the U.S., the entry of Japanese women as wives was allowed. The practice of “Picture Brides” where families in Japan would select a wife for their son and a ceremony involving the pictures of the bride and groom were performed. The wives then came to the U.S. to join their husbands. Since the picture marriages were not honored in the U.S. group weddings occurred on the docks upon the women’s arrival to the U.S. (Amott and Matthaei, 1995).

For Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos, Hawaii was a primary destination, as they were recruited to work on the sugar plantations. Hawaii had a plantation economy, not dissimilar to the South. While imported workers were not slaves, conditions were established to maintain control. Different nationalities were kept on different plantations to discourage workers from uniting and striking against working and living conditions. Plantations paid in plantation scrip which was not easily convertible into money. Even given these precautions by plantation owners, workers were able to successfully strike several times in the early 1900s to improve their conditions (Amott and Matthaei, 1995).

Meanwhile, there were the Mexicans inherited after the Mexican - American War (mentioned earlier).
White settlers flooded into the new territory displacing the Mexican population. While the Mexicans’ rights were purportedly protected under the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, the U.S. made little effort to protect those rights. Most of the Mexicans were reduced to working for the “settlers.”

“By 1856, a massive change in land ownership had been effected. As a result of force, armed conflict, legislative manipulation, and outright purchase of much of the land was now in Yankee hands ... by the 1870s, Chicanos found themselves at the bottom of the socioeconomic order. Thus they went from being an elite ranchero class to being a source of cheap and dependent labor within the working class.” (Mirande in Amott and Matthaei, 1995:72-73).

With all of this “expansion,” the Native American tribal nations were also being decimated and displaced. The period between 1850 and 1880 saw the creation of the majority of the reservations. By force and by treaty, Nations were moved from their lands to reservation lands. Nations were mixed, sometimes with traditional enemies on the same reservation. Once on the reservations, they were barred from practicing their cultures or religions. While they were supposed to be supplied with food and necessities, this was frequently not the case as Indian Agents diverted much of the goods for their own economic benefit.

As noted earlier, horrific actions against the Indian nations were the norm, not the exception. George Washington, upon coming into office, referred to the Indians as “wolves” and ordered their extermination in 1783: “those remaining within the areas of the original thirteen states to be ‘hunted like beasts’ (Churchill, 1994:312).” The process of extermination, removal, and genocide continued to be the official policy of the United States well into the 1970s, and many would argue to the present day.

Therefore, it is not surprising that Andrew Jackson, who boasted of his personal involvement in the murder of Indian peoples, found wide white support for becoming the seventh President of the U.S. He was personally involved in the removal of several Eastern nations and the death toll of the removals is estimated to been over 55% of the peoples “removed.” It is worth noting how these actions were reported to Congress. In his first annual address to Congress on December 9, 1830, he stated:

“It gives me pleasure to announce to Congress that the benevolent policy of the Government, steadily pursued for nearly thirty years, in relation to the removal of the Indians beyond the white settlements is approaching to a happy consummation. Two important tribes have accepted the provision made for their removal at the last session of Congress, and it is believed that their example will induce the remaining tribes also to seek the same obvious advantages.”

“Toward the aborigines of the country no one can indulge a more friendly feeling than myself, or would go further in attempting to reclaim them from their wandering habits and make them a happy, prosperous people. I have endeavored to impress upon them
my own solemn convictions of the duties and powers of the General Government in
relation to the State authorities. For the justice of the laws passed by the States within
the scope of their reserved powers they are not responsible to this Government. As
individuals we may entertain and express our opinions of their acts, but as a
Government we have as little right to control them as we have to prescribe laws for
other nations.”

“Humanity has often wept over the fate of the aborigines of this country, and
Philanthropy has been long busily employed in devising means to avert it, but its
progress has never for a moment been arrested, and one by one have many powerful
tribes disappeared from the earth. To follow to the tomb the last of his race and to
tread on the graves of extinct nations excite melancholy reflections. But true
philanthropy reconciles the mind to these vicissitudes as it does to the extinction of one
generation to make room for another. In the monuments and fortresses of an unknown
people, spread over the extensive regions of the West, we behold the memorials of a
once powerful race, which was exterminated or has disappeared to make room for the
existing savage tribes. Nor is there anything in this which, upon a comprehensive view
of the general interests of the human race, is to be regretted. Philanthropy could not
wish to see this continent restored to the conditions in which it was found by our
forefathers. What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and ranged by
a few thousand savages to our extensive Republic, studded with cities, towns, and
prosperous farms, embellished with all the improvements which art can devise or
industry execute, occupied by more than 12,000,000 happy people, and filled with all
the blessings of liberty, civilization, and religion?”

I must admit that given the realities of what was happening to the Indian Nations, the positive tone and
image of the above address leaves me speechless. It is an excellent example of one view of the events
of the times. The view of government policy towards the nations as “benevolent” perhaps points to the
popular opinion at the time. The address also clearly outlines which “civilization” was overwhelmingly
considered superior. However, the “benevolent” treatment of Indian nations did not end with Jackson.

The Homestead Act of 1862 opened lands, including some reservation lands, to white settlers. Citizens
and aliens who had filed for citizenship could claim 160 acres for a $10 fee. Since Native Americans
were neither citizens nor aliens eligible for citizenship they were excluded from this windfall. This
however was not enough. As western expansion and “benevolent” government policies continued, the
General Allotment Act (Dawes Act) was passed in 1867.

Most of the nations did not have a tradition of private ownership of the land. The Dawes Act was a tool
to break up the reservations and force private ownership on Native peoples. It broke the reservations
into tracts of 160 acres and divided them among the families. Lands that were not claimed were then
sold to whites. Families were expected to farm and support themselves, so the level of material support from the federal government decreased. This forced many Native American families to sell their “allotment” in order to survive. This allowed further purchases of those lands by Anglos and reduced the area of the reservations by over fifty percent.

The Know Nothings lost popular support to the Republicans on their inability to resolve the “slave” issue. The Civil War ensued. Reconstruction of the South was initiated and dropped. African Americans were left with the semblance of equality, but the reality of massive inequality. The one-drop rule for determination of whether one was black or white persisted. African Americans in the South were still largely left without the vote because of voting restriction laws, and when pushed, instituted 3/5th laws. This meant that a vote by an African American only counted as 3/5ths of a white vote. This allowed Southern whites to maintain political control.

And They Came
And through it all they came – the (European) immigrants (colonizers). Through the 1800s and into the 1900s. Flowing across the land like a sea of army ants – “taming the land for the glory of God and Nation.” As has been noted earlier, even European “immigrants” were not well received.

And the story continues. “Immigrants” from all over the world come to these shores. The land of opportunity basically free for the taking, or the federal government offering land free (upon meeting certain criteria), or for a song (homesteaders).

For all the explicit and legislated racism of the period from the 1500s to the 1900s, Roger Daniels (1997:142) states:

“It is difficult to overstate the prejudice against immigrants and other minorities that flowered in the 1930s among all classes in the United States. When the liberal Supreme Court justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. spoke for the court majority in the case upholding the state’s right to sterilize women regarded as mentally defective, his elegant decision argued that ‘the principle that sustains compulsory vaccination is broad enough to cover cutting the Fallopian tubes ... Three generations of imbeciles are enough.’ Although the three generations referred to a now-discredited study of poor white families, the overwhelming majority of such forced sterilizations were inflicted on minority women, African Americans and immigrants.”

It is indeed hard to believe that given the history of the U.S. prior to the 1900s that it could “flower” even more in the 1900s.

The early 1900s also saw the initiation of the Americanization Movement. This movement was characterized by a government supported push to strip European “immigrants” of their culture and “assimilate” them into “American” society. Forced educational curriculums, counseling in personal
habits, and discipline to enforce compliance. Henry Ford was one of the most noticeable supporters of Americanization:

“The nation’s most famous capitalist, Henry Ford, pressed strongly for immigrant Americanization. Working with his firm’s executives, Henry Ford recruited southern and eastern European immigrants for his auto plants. The company set up a ‘Sociological Department’ with investigators who visited workers’ homes, providing strong advice on family matters and personal morality. In addition, the immigrant workers had to attend ‘melting pot school,’ where they learned English and a certain Anglo-Protestant values of great concern to men like Ford. Remarkably, during graduation ceremonies Ford’s employees, at first dressed as in their native countries, walked through a big pot labeled ‘melting pot’ and emerged in business suits holding American flags.” (Feagin, 1997: 25-26)

Coben (1964) argues that the “Americanism” following WWI was a reflection of a national loss of ‘equilibrium.’

“Runaway prices, a brief but sharp stock market crash and business depression, revolutions throughout Europe, widespread fear of domestic revolt, bomb explosions, and an outpouring of radical literature were disruptive enough. These sudden difficulties, moreover, served to exaggerate the disruptive effects already produced by the social and intellectual ravages of the World War and the preceding reform era, and by the arrival before the war of millions of immigrants. This added stress intensified the hostility of Americans strongly antagonistic to minority groups, and brought new converts to blatant nativism from among those who were not overtly hostile toward radicals or recent immigrants.” (Coben, 1964:59)

It was in this environment of asserting the supremacy of “Americans” that in 1919, Senator Kenyon of Iowa stated “The time has come to make this a one-language nation” (Coben, 1964:71).

Much of the “immigrant” surge at this time was from Eastern Europe, and with those “immigrants” came Eastern European Jews. While Jews had a relatively small population in North America from first contact onward, they had rarely come in for special attention until the late 1800s and early 1900s. With the increased number of Jews and Jewish “immigrants” in the United States, they were seen as a threat to the Anglo-Protestant majority. From 1877 onward, Jews were routinely denied entrance into clubs and college fraternities (Marger, 1996). This accelerated in the early 1900s with the “Red Scare” of the 1920’s and the resurgence of such groups as the Ku Klux Klan who was not solely racist, but anti-Catholic and Anti-Jewish as well.

A massive labor shortage was created by WWI and Mexican workers were recruited to fill the gap. The southern border at this time was primarily held against Chinese and Japanese, not Mexicans, and
Mexicans were not considered immigrants. Mexicans regularly crossed freely back and forth across the border for work and to visit family. The influence of the United States was also heavily felt in Mexico. By 1910, three-fourths of Mexico’s mines and half of its oil fields were owned by capitalists from the U.S. (Gonzalez, 1982). In the period from 1910 to 1920 migration went from roughly 10,000 to approximately 50,000 Mexican migrants a year, and by 1930, roughly one-twelfth of the Mexican population had moved to the United States (Gonzalez, 1982).

The Great Depression struck in the 1930s with unsurprising consequences for the Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the United States. Whites blamed the country’s economic problems on Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Migration restrictions were placed for the first time on Mexicans crossing the border. Mexicans, who for generations had crossed the border freely, were suddenly felons.

Nativist sentiment drove a movement to deport Mexicans and Chicanos from the United States. By the mid 1930s approximately 500,000 Mexicans and Mexican Americans were rounded up and shipped via train and truck to Mexico (regardless of whether they were U.S. citizens or not). In a argument that we have heard much more recently, Los Angeles argued that it would be cheaper to deport a trainload of Mexicans ($77,800) than to keep them on welfare ($271,000) Social workers and caseworkers at relief agencies harassed and coerced both Chicanos and Mexicans to return to Mexico with their families (Gonzalez, 1982).”

The expulsion of and negative response to Mexican origin people was short lived as the labor shortages due to World War II soon increased the demand for cheap labor once again. The Bracero Program started in 1944 and through a number of extensions lasted until 1964. This program gave hundreds of thousands of Mexican workers temporary visas so they could enter the U.S. as manual laborers. Throughout this period Mexicans were drawn into the U.S. labor as needed and expelled when they were not. With the end of the war and labor shortages, Mexicans were once again targeted as “undesirable,” and mass expulsions began again under the name of “Operation Wetback” and millions of Mexicans and Chicanos were deported.

World War II was a traumatic time for many groups in the United States. Both German and Italian Americans came under intense scrutiny, and for a period of time Italian American men (especially in California) were detained for questioning. It was the Japanese Americans however, who bore the brunt of public suspicion and government infringement.

With the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, the U.S. government immediately froze the assets of Japanese Americans and rounded up community leaders. There was a rumor of a “fifth column” in the United States. This “fifth column” was presumed to be Japanese Americans organized to support by subversion Japan in the War. There has never been any proof that such an organization ever existed, and no act of espionage or sabotage by Japanese Americans occurred during the war to the best of our
knowledge. As is well known, President Roosevelt signed an executive order in 1942 authorizing the evacuation of the Japanese American population from what was termed the “Western Defense Command” which was made up of the coastal areas of Washington, Oregon, and California. They were given one week to dispose of their possessions, close their businesses and homes, and report to temporary assembly areas. At the assembly areas they were transported to 10 permanent relocation camps in Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Idaho, Utah and Wyoming. The camps were isolated, fenced, and surrounded by armed guards. In most camps the detainees built their own shelter from materials provided and multiple families were housed in the barracks they built. Adults worked for low wages with professionals earning $19 and other workers $16 a week (Amott and Matthaei, 1995:228).

The camps began closing in 1945 after the Supreme Court ruled that it was unconstitutional to detain loyal American citizens (Mitsuye Endo v. U.S. Government). Though they were released from the camps, they were not welcomed back into society. There was a high level of distrust and hostility towards Japanese Americans. It is estimated that the Detainees lost over $400 million in property through the actions of the U.S. government. While $38 million in reparations was granted to the detainees in 1948 this was small compensation for their loss. In 1988, then President Reagan, signed a reparation bill of $20,000 for each internee, but payment has dragged our with little actual funds being dispersed. Benefits were not authorized for descendants, only detainees and the longer payment can be withheld, the fewer detainees remain alive to receive reparations (Amott and Matthaei, 1995).

After release from the camps, many Japanese found there was nothing for them to return to and they spread out across the country, ending their concentration in the Pacific Northwest. This dispersal resulted in economic decline initially, and one of the highest rates of intermarriage with whites of any racial/ethnic group.

The ban on immigration from Japan was lifted in 1952, but only allowed 100 Japanese a year to immigrate. However, those who immigrated were now eligible for naturalization. This did not change until the 1965 Immigration Act, that opened Asian immigration by eliminating the quota system. Unlike other groups, there has not been a second large wave of immigration from Japan.

For all of the glorification of the United State’s entrance into WWII and our role in Germany that ended the Nazi reign and freed Holocaust victims, the government chose not to act on reports of the rounding up of Jews (and gypsies, and homosexuals, and Catholics) by Hitler’s army. The United States wanted to stay out of the war and probably would have if not for the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Even prior to the war anti-semitism in the United States was high. Henry Ford was very vocal in his sentiments against Jews (Marger, 1996: 214) going so far as to place anti-Jewish and anti-Communist flyers in the glove boxes of all new cars from his plants. It could be argued that the United States was not really distressed by Hitler’s actions. The U.S. was the only other Western nation with a government sanctioned eugenics program, and certainly our actions of detaining Japanese and Italian Americans
was seen as prudent. Why would we be concerned about Germany doing the same?

As Leonard Dinnerstein notes (1981: 140-141) in his article about the period 1945-1950 there was little support for bringing the victims of Hitler’s reign to the United States – especially Jews. Efforts to change immigration laws to allow an increase in Displaced Persons (D.P.) met with little public or government support. This is reflected in an excerpt from a letter to a Congress person: “I’d admit all of the Displaced Persons except the Jewish D.P.s. I’d let in the Catholics, the Protestants, and those in between – but no more Jewish boys.” Instead, the U.S. and Britain tried to come to an agreement to resettle the displaced Jews in Palestine.

In 1945, Truman sent Earl Harrison to examine conditions in the Displaced Persons Camps in Germany. He reported the following back to the President:

“As matters stand, we appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them except that we do not exterminate them. They are in concentration camps in large numbers under our military guard instead of S.S. troops. One is led to wonder whether the German people, seeing this, are not supposing that we are following or at least condoning Nazi policy (Dinnerstein, 1978: 12).

The Displaced Persons Act was passed in 1948. However it was structured to minimize the number of Jews who could enter the United States (Dinnerstein, 1981: 142). The bill was revised in 1950 to remove explicit and implicit barriers to European Jews. The public perception of Jews in the United States from the early 1900s onward was that they had too much power and influence. This has been a pervasive stereotype of Jews from the late 1800s onward. In 1938, forty-one percent of Americans polled felt that Jews were too influential, by 1945, that percentage had increased to 58% (Marger, 1996). These perceptions became less prevalent in the late 1960s and onwards, but are still at the forefront of militant right propaganda.

The return of soldiers ended the labor shortage in the United States that had drawn millions into the workforce including the welcoming of Mexicans, Chicanos, African Americans, and women. Many of these “auxiliary” workers lost their positions upon the return of WWII veterans who were primarily white (the armed forces still being segregated at that time). In the 1950s focus shifted to communism and the long hostility with Russia began. This birthed yet another “red scare” in the United States and ushered in what has been called the “McCarthy Era.” Anti-Jewish sentiment resurged, partially because of many Jews affiliation with labor organizing which was seen (as it had been in the 1920s) as a “communist plot.”

In the 1960s, Mexican migrant workers were prevalent, especially in California. They organized to improve wages and living conditions. In an effort to thwart the unionization efforts, many growers started switching to Asian agricultural workers because they were seen as less likely to “cause
problems.” The union was successful in forming, partially due to the boycotting by people in the U.S. of those grocery chains that continued to purchase non-union harvested crops (particularly grapes). There was a resurgence in anti-Latino prejudice in the 1990s and continues into the present which is reflected in a number of anti-immigrant and anti-Latino legislation which will be discussed in Chapter 13.

The 1960s were a time of tremendous activism for various disadvantaged groups in the United States. We saw the pressures for equality and justice from women, African Americans, Chicanos, and Native Americans. Because these activities and resulting social change link so closely to current policy and perception, they will be discussed in more length in the chapters that follow.

Summary
What we see over and over in the history of the United States (and before the founding of the nation) is a series of themes. We could characterize this period of almost 500 years as being both racist and classist. We see recurring cycles of nativism whose underpinnings seem to vary little across the history of this nation. That lack of variance points to key aspects of both the historic and contemporary structure of social stratification in the United States.

First, is the belief in the “right” of “whites” as they were variously defined, to set the rules and protect their interests. At most times (historical and contemporary) it is a “right” so taken for granted that it is not even spoken. It is a “right” that is assumed over and over again until it is invisible.

Second is denial that anything untoward, unethical, or wrong is going on. This is frequently covered by what might be justifications, or more frighteningly, the accepted world view. For me, Andrew Jackson’s speech to Congress reflects this most clearly and chillingly. Jackson became President largely because of his reputation as an “Indian Killer.” He was outspoken about his “conquests” and the “scalps” he kept of every Indian he killed. Yet he characterized the actions of the government as “benevolent.” His vision of a country of cities and farms and the inferiority of Native nation’s ways of life I’m sure struck a common chord at that time in history.

Third is the myth-building of popular history and public perception. Whether those myths are of the Crown-hounded Puritans, the struggling pioneers, the rough and ready cowboys, the hardy miners, the entrepreneurs, or the hapless “immigrants” coming to our shores, they are glamorized to the point of unrecognizability. Their “foes” are painted universally negatively, or made virtually invisible.

Contemporarily, we have the myth that “We are all immigrants.” But who is an immigrant? The term “immigrant” conjures up the image of people journeying by choice to set up a home in a new land. While this was the case for many European “immigrants,” others need not apply. The Chinese and Japanese came to the United States as contract laborers with specific restrictions on their ability to “settle,” and under the Chinese Exclusion Act (discussed in Chapter 5) were barred even from contract labor. The Mexicans were invited in and booted out as employers demanded. The Africans were brought here in bondage. Every attempt was made to totally eliminate the indigenous peoples of this
land. “Immigrants” who did not fit the Anglo-Protestant mold were excluded, discriminated against, and/or literally “forged” to fit that model.

Related to this myth-building is the effort to exclude a more inclusive (and realistic) depiction of history. Multicultural education is under attack both politically and by “white” parents. Teachers who attempt to include the true events of the past have an “agenda.” It is interesting that those who wish to maintain the “official” version of history do not have an “agenda.”

The fourth theme is the response to perceived threats to those “white” entitlements – nativism. Threat is perceived (or scape goats found) whenever the times become insecure – politically, socially, or economically. Threat is perceived whenever numbers of “others” (whether of race or religion, or social class) become too “numerous.” Looking historically, that number seems to be when there is somewhere under a ratio of 80% to 20%. In other words, if a minority group (except for women) nears the 20% mark in population, they are seen as “being everywhere,” being a “problem,” or being a “threat.”

This seems to indicate an on-going low threshold for perceived threat. It is a perception that is reflected in current concerns about “whites” becoming a “minority” and the increase in anti-immigrant, anti-equality, and anti-welfare movements. It is also reflected in the perception that “others” are getting special rights, and the increase in both individual and organized hate activity. English as the “official” language and the shutting down of not just bi-lingual education, but the removal of foreign language classes from the public schools, also reflect responses to perceived threats to the dominant group.

My guess is that for many of you this chapter was emotionally very difficult to get through. I know that it was emotionally wrenching for me to write. It was not meant to be an exhaustive historical examination of the United States, or even of all of the events that might be included. There are literally thousands of pages written on each event brought forward in this chapter, and more that were not even touched upon. I included the chapter, not to make people uncomfortable, but because in my experience many people are never even introduced to what has been presented here. I firmly believe that it is impossible to grasp where we are today without looking at the foundations of where we have been. This lack of knowledge leads to the perception that “people of color” are “hanging onto” the past, while “whites are “creating the world.” each day. This is hardly the case, but we seem to have an ongoing struggle with different images of history. There is one history that is taught and that is carried forward in what is important within most “white” families, and there is the history that has largely been carried forward through family and community. While there is considerable documentation of the “real” events of U.S. history, it has remained real only to those “others” because of its exclusion from the “official” version and the belief that it’s not “important.” I feel that this difference of perception underlies much of the inability to resolve racial issues in the United States.

Looking Forward
This completes the Foundation Section. At this point you should have a good understanding of concepts
related to social stratification in general, and sex, class, and race in particular. You have examined socialization and social structure and how they interact with each other. You have worked with the model of Maintenance of Stratification Systems for each of the components and should be fairly comfortable with it at this point. The idea of boundaries and how we enforce them on each other and more systematically through social structure should be relatively clear at this point.

By this time you may be feeling a bit overwhelmed at how big and deep inequality is. You may be looking at yourself and the world around you with a new perception, and perhaps not liking what you see. By this point, many of my students are asking how to fix the system, and I imagine many of you are as well. It is my belief that it is impossible to fix something that we don’t understand. There are so many interrelationships between components of the stratification system and how pervasive it is. I encourage you to start thinking about what kinds of changes you would make and what the consequences of those changes might be. Keep in mind what you have learned so far, and the more specific information you will encounter as you go through this text and your course. I firmly believe we can change, so hang in there.

In Section 2 we will examine social institutions as they interact with and maintain social stratification. As we move through the discussions of specific social institutions, add to the models you have already built in Chapters 3 - 5. By the end of Section 2 you should have a fairly detailed picture on the specific actions and functions of how social institutions help maintain and reproduce inequality in the current day and the future.

Suggested Reading and Resources


Chapter 6: Myth and History

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Section 2 : Maintenance of Stratification Systems - Privilege and Discrimination

Section two examines the structural workings of various institutions in relationship to sex, race and class

Preface to Section 2

The discussion in this section is hampered by the data collection and reporting strategies of the federal government and other agencies. The major problems are lack of reporting consistency across agencies, and lack of reporting on some populations. The first problem is characterized by different groupings from agency to agency. For example, the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) keeps quite good data on occupations by race and sex, however, it does not keep wage information. The categories that are reported by the EEOC are different from those used by the Bureau of Labor and Census Bureau. The second problem occurs in the form of lack of consistent reporting for various groups. For example, Asian and Pacific Islanders and Native Americans are consistently not reported in population, income, or poverty reports; the Hispanic population is rarely broken out into national origin or racial groups, and the Asian / Pacific Island population is never broken out period; the data available on Native Americans is only reported on the ten year cycle which puts it out of date with all other data. Another problem is that information for some groups is rarely if ever reported, and never in comparison to other groups. This is true for both Arab and Middle Eastern American and immigrant groups. Further, Eastern European, Arab, and African immigrants are never discussed at all.

I have made every effort in the information presented in this section to obtain consistent data. This has meant the combining of information from different sources which can lead to lack of perfect accuracy. However, my effort has been to get as consistent and current data that is available. While the reporting may be off by a small amount, the trends reflect “reality.”
Introduction

In Chapter 4, we examined social class and economic class divisions. In this chapter, we will look at the world of work in relationship to social stratification. In sociological terms, we are examining the social institution of the economy. While work and wealth are integrally related to social class, they also reflect the structuring of race and sex stratification. This chapter examines both broad factors such as national economic transition and specific processes and policies that affect social inequality.

There are patterns within patterns that occur within the area of inequality in the economy. There are large forces and trends that affect all of the population, though not necessarily in the same way or to the same degree. The economic base and form of our society – postindustrial capitalism – and the movement from a manufacturing to a service economy and globalization fall into the large scale forces. Inside the patterns and trends are consistent differences along race, class, and gender lines such as occupational and wage inequality. It is generally assumed that wage inequality is the essence of monetary inequality in the United States; however, non-wage income has dramatic effects on economic inequality and also is rooted in historical processes of privilege and disadvantage. This chapter attempts to illuminate these various patterns and their interrelationships, while giving you “hard data” that reflects those patterns.

Wage Inequality and Economic Transition

Certainly one of the pervasive components of economic inequality is the distribution of money through wages. On the broad scale, we all know that some people get a lot of money for what their work, and others get very little. This reflects the distribution of jobs across the wage spectrum that we discussed in Chapter 4. This distribution can reflect inequality in a broad sense if some occupations are extremely underpaid for their efforts and others are extremely overpaid. The most common example of this is that CEOs (Chief Executive Officers) are paid disproportionately more than the average worker in their companies. Anderson et al (1999) note that over the 1990s (1990-1998) CEO pay rose 443% (not adjusted for inflation) while workers’ pay increased 28%. If the average worker had had the same pay increases as corporate executives, the average pay would be more than $110,000 rather than roughly $30,000, and the minimum wage would be approximately $22.00 an hour. The Economic Policy Institute (1999) found that the adjusted executive pay increased 116 times the rate of workers (adjusted for inflation).

The median earnings of workers were 3.1% lower in 1997 than in 1989 (Mishel, et al, 1999), though government news briefings in August 2000 note that income has finally moved above the 1989 level. It should be noted that this is with families working an average of approximately 250 hours more per year than in 1989. Over that same period, hourly wages stayed the same or fell for the bottom three quintiles of workers (Mishel, et al, 1999). Further, while we may have purportedly returned to the 1989 levels
of wages, we are still below the 1973 levels. In 1998, the weekly wages average was twelve percent below the 1973 average weekly wage. The State of Working America (Mishel, et al, 1999) notes: “The typical middle-class family had nearly 3 percent less wealth in 1997 than in 1989, despite the stock market boom. This is because the richest 10 percent of households in the U.S. have reaped 85.8 percent of growth in the stock market since 1989.”

What we have seen since the mid 1980s is a dramatic increase in income inequality - especially between the top twenty percent of families (primarily the top 5%) and the remaining eighty percent of earners. There are a number of reasons for this decline and it is reflected in numerous ways. Among the reasons for the decline that the overwhelming majority of the population is economically less well off than in the 1960s and 70s are: economic transition from a manufacturing to a service economy; decline in the real value of the minimum wage; changes in tax laws; decreased union representation; increases in temporary and part time work replacing full time employment; and globalization.

**Economic transition and globalization**

It is estimated that the change from a manufacturing to a service economy has resulted in a loss of roughly twenty-three percent for male workers. That is 23 cents out of each dollar of wages. Added to this, the downsizing and efficiency moves of business have hit the middle management level very hard. This transition has also been marked by a movement from full time to part time and temporary employment. Because of downsizing and the use of less than full time employees, job security has decreased and wages and benefits have been reduced. Most of the jobs created in this new economy have been in the lower levels of the labor market (low and mid level service positions) – not in the higher salary levels. The manufacturing jobs lost have not been replaced with equal positions in the new economy.

Let’s look at NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) as an example. Table 7.3 reflects the jobs lost due to NAFTA from 1993 to 1996. There was a net total of 394,835 jobs lost (after new job creation from the agreement), most impacted were males (64%), whites (80%), and medium wage earners (45%). This is also the population that was most likely to be unionized; hence, much of this was the loss not just of good wage jobs, but unionized jobs.

At least two processes are coupled with the transition from a manufacturing to a service economy - a transition to a technology economy, and globalization. In the midst of, or as a part of, the manufacturing to service economy is a revolution in technology – particularly in computers and biology. Much like the transition from an agriculturally based economy to an industrial economy in the eighteen through early nineteen hundreds, we are transitioning from an industrial to what we might broadly call a post industrial economy. There is some question as to whether we have actually gone through two recent transitions. One was a transition from an industrial to a service economy (roughly 1950s to 1980s), and one from a service economy to an “information” economy (roughly 1980s through the 1990s). There is even some
discussion that we are at the beginning of yet another transition to a biotechnology revolution (Rifkin, 1999).
Table 7.2 Job Losses Due to NAFTA from 1993-1996
Source EPI, 1997 analyses of BLS data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Changes Due to Net Exports</th>
<th>Share of Whole Labor Force</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>-263,000</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>-141,000</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>-316,000</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>-37,000</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic American</td>
<td>-23,000</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Race</td>
<td>-19,000</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Grads</td>
<td>-56,000</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>-101,000</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Grads</td>
<td>-144,000</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than HS</td>
<td>-95,000</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000-$99,000 yr</td>
<td>-92,000</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$21,000-$75,000 yr</td>
<td>-178,000</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$0-$20,000 yr</td>
<td>-125,000</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>-38,000</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>-283,000</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>-89,000</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Industries</td>
<td>-4,000</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Economic transitions are one of the things that cause rapid change and disruption. They can cause a shifting of the distribution of resources within a society and affect people’s participation in survival activities. One of the hallmarks of economic transition is that portions of the population may not have the skills required to participate in the new economic structure. In our current transition, for example, many youths are more comfortable and knowledgeable about computer technology that many adults are. There are not many parents who can consistently compete against their children at computer games and win. Obviously computer games are not “work,” but they do represent the current technology.
Many youth’s sense of comfort and competence with that technology (and the world it represents) far exceeds many adults.

The economic transitions of the last thirty to forty years have been dramatic in their speed and scope. We went from the relatively prosperous times of the 1950s and 60s to an oil crisis and a recession. Our manufacturing economy started deteriorating at a rapid rate making us more dependent on imports to sustain our lifestyle. We transitioned into what has broadly been called a “service” economy. A service economy is one where people are “making their living” providing services to others rather than material products. Services include everything from domestic services and lawn care, to banking, medicine, and information. We are still a service-based economy; however, yet another transition began in the mid 1980s with rapid advances in computer technology and the advent of the personal computer. Now computers in one form or another are pervasive throughout our society, and led to the concern about the “Millennium Bug” or Y2K. We are now virtually dependent on computers for the basic operation of our society.

Jeremy Rifkin, in his book The Biotech Century (1999) highlights what he considers to be the most sweeping revolution of human history. He argues that the merging of biological and medical technology (specifically genetic) and computer technology will transform the basic stuff of life into a gold rush of unimaginable proportions. In this revolution, genetic material becomes a resource to be mined. This revolution is made possible by the advances in computer technology and in some areas may blend totally with it. Researchers are already trying to use DNA as a computer because of its remarkable data storage and processing capabilities. Others are working on nano-technology where self-replicating machines smaller than a virus can do innumerable tasks at a cellular or atomic level.

The point here is not to paint a picture of the technological world at our door step, but to highlight the huge shifts that are occurring because of this. These shifts already include seeing humans and even their cells and property. Certainly seeing humans as property is not something new. But this is considering humans as private property as a silver mine is private property – to be mined, manipulated, transformed, and discarded. It is certain that in the near future, the medical advances promised by genetic research and development are not going to be available to everyone. They will be yet another social resource within the stratification system. With all the advances in medicine and health care prior to the biotechnology age, we still cannot provide access and adequate healthcare to our entire population. There is little reason to assume that the new advances will be distributed any more equitably.

Economic transitions and cycles of the past have been directly linked to the way we deal with other people and groups. In times of insecurity and economic downturn there has been mobilization of sentiments, movements and legislation against “others.” In times of relative security and prosperity we
have seen trends toward social and economic equalization. While it is boasted that we are currently in a period of “unprecedented prosperity,” that prosperity has not extended to all (or even most) and many people feel highly insecure. The movements that we currently see happening in the United States are not dissimilar to what we saw in the mid 1800s. There is a generally high distrust of government; there are anti-taxation movements; anti-welfare, anti-immigrant, and anti-social service sentiments and policies. The schools are seen as inadequate and unsafe and those who can afford to do so (primarily white middle class and above) are removing their children to private schools - hoping to leave the “negative element” behind. To support this, there is a political push for school vouchers which are inadequate for many families to actually send their children to other than private schools. We have anti-affirmative action, and a perception of “white disadvantage.”

Another similarity to the mid 1800s is our relationship to a global workforce. The U.S. has always been dependent on a global labor force. From its colonial beginnings, we have brought in a labor force to fill our needs – to do those jobs that are difficult and dangerous for as cheaply as possible. Whether it was the immigrant rush, the encouragement of Mexicans and others south of the border, Asian contract workers, or slavery, we have brought people expected to be expendable to fill our labor needs. Today we have a different scenario, but perhaps not so dissimilar. We are actively engaged in globalization. We have often found it more profitable to utilize this workforce of “others” in their countries of origin rather than bringing them to the United States. To facilitate this utilization of people and resources we have entered into a number of agreements such as NAFTA (North American Free Trade Act) and GATT (General Agreement on Tariff and Trade). However, we still need some cheap labor domestically, and while we put an anti-immigrant policy into affect primarily at our southern border, we do virtually nothing about the U.S. businesses that are recruiting “illegal” workers.

**Decline in the real value of minimum wage**

The minimum wage sets the bottom of the pay scale for most workers. It does not set the bottom for everyone. The federal minimum wage does not cover everyone. It primarily applies to employers who generate over $500,000 a year, or engage in interstate commerce (Department of Labor). For example, many workers who receive tips get less than minimum wage, agricultural and piecework laborers frequently do not get minimum wages (or receive a reduced minimum wage), and many who work on commission do not get minimum wages. Even workers who are salaried may not receive a minimum wage. For example, some retail chains hire workers on a salary (usually a low salary) and then require them to work far more than forty hours per week. Salaried workers do not receive overtime pay so this can be cost effective for the employer. Workers, especially young workers, are excited by the status of being a salaried employee. The additional time required of them drives down their actual hourly wage. If you give someone a salary of $18,000 a year that is an hourly wage of $8.65. If you then require them to work sixty-five hours a week, their salary stays the same, but their hourly pay goes to $5.32 an hour. The company has just saved $324.38 a week on labor costs (or almost a week’s
Some sort of benefits generally accompany salaried positions. Most employers require at least a three month waiting period before benefits start, but most young workers in this situation don’t last long enough to ever receive benefits, which also saves the employer money.

The minimum wage was first enacted in 1938 and was set at 25 cents an hour for those workers it covered. It was increased slowly over time and farm workers were added in 1967 with a minimum wage of $1.00. In 1981 it changed to $3.35 an hour and remained at that level until 1989 when it went to $3.80 an hour. The last congressional legislation was enacted in March of 2000 and raised the minimum wage to $6.15 an hour (up one dollar from the last change in 9/97). A sub-minimum wage of $4.25 an hour may be paid to workers under 20 for the first 90 days of their employment. The minimum wage is not tied to inflation, and so it is worth less over time without adjustment. Under current law, it can only be changed by an act of Congress. States may set their own minimum wage laws as long as they do not fall below the federal level. (The information above is from the Department of Labor).

There have been extensive arguments over the benefits and disadvantages of having a minimum wage. Those who argue against having a minimum wage say that it raises costs of labor to employers who then pass that on to customers. Related to this they argue that it creates a significant hardship for small employers. Another argument against a minimum wage is that it disadvantages young workers – particularly young workers of color. Opponents of a minimum wage feel that the market should drive wages at the low end of the job ladder. They argue that if there were no minimum wage, then “less desirable workers” (those with few skills, low educational achievement, and the poor) would be able to compete if they could work below the minimum wage. Personally, I find this last argument offensive. What is actually being said is that “more desirable” workers wouldn’t work for below minimum wage, and “less desirable” workers aren’t worth minimum wage. In other words, it would open up low end jobs now held by workers who are more attractive to employers.

The reality is that increases in the minimum wage have not significantly increased costs to consumers, and savings on wages have not reduced costs to consumers. Many of the products purchased in the U.S. are made by laborers outside the country who receive nowhere close to U.S. minimum wage. Global workers making tennis shoes at a dollar an hour or less does not reduce the $150.00 price tag paid in the U.S. for those shoes. What it has done for large corporations is to dramatically increase their profit margin. Another problem with the arguments against minimum wage (and raising it) is that it is already incredibly low given the cost of living in the United States.

**Changes in tax laws**

Taxes involve more than the rate of taxation by income bracket. What counts as income and what counts as a deduction from income have differential effects on how much tax is actually paid. The
largest deduction that most families have is home mortgage interest. This benefits those who own homes and is the single biggest tax moderator that the middle class has. Those who do not (or cannot) afford to own their own homes cannot take this deduction. Most changes to tax laws are promoted for broad appeal, but the effects are not necessarily equal for all. For example, there is currently a proposal in Congress to remove the inheritance tax. It is argued that this will save family farms and allow the passing on of family businesses. Obviously, the larger the estate or business or stock portfolio one has the larger the savings on this proposal. Since most of the population does not have large amounts to pass on (and some have nothing other than personal items) this proposed change dramatically affects the wealthiest. If the true intent was to save family farms, specific tax changes could be made.

While the tax rates for individuals have not changed dramatically since 1979, the taxes paid have. Changes in the tax law have reduced the tax payments of the wealthiest and burdened the rest. Between 1977 and 1985 tax changes reduced the average tax bill of the wealthiest one percent of families decreased by $97,250 and increased payments by the bottom eighty percent of families by an average of $221 (Mishel, et al, 1999). These advantages were reduced somewhat by tax law changes in 1986 and 1993, so that the average savings for the wealthiest one percent were only $36,710 from 1977 to 1998 (Mishel, et al, 1999).

Part of a larger trend has helped corporations reduce their tax burden. The tax rate on corporations is 35% of net income. As with personal taxes, corporations also have deductions. Corporations also benefit through subsidies. Between 1993 and 1995, the top ten corporations in terms of worker layoffs received $8.3 billion in federal tax subsidies that dropped them well below the 35% tax level. For example, industry specific subsidies for oil, gas, and energy companies will receive $22 billion in special tax breaks over a seven year period (Citizens for Tax Justice, 1996). Practices that negatively affect workers (such as downsizing and mergers) also have had positive tax affects for companies. Mergers frequently lead to layoffs and closures, but the interest on debt used to finance mergers is tax deductible. Congress passed and “accelerated depreciation” option for business that allow them to deduct the cost of equipment faster than it wears out. This save corporations over $39 billion a year (Citizens for Tax Justice, 1996). With runaway compensation for top executives, Congress moved to curb the excess in corporate executive pay increases. However, if those pay wages are tied “performance based” improvements, they are deductible. Since downsizing is generally tied to at least a short term increase in profits, and the stock market generally responds positively to news of downsizing, it improves the “performance of the company. Therefore, executive raises in the face of worker layoffs remains largely tax deductible (Citizens for Tax Justice, 1996).

**Decreased union representation**

People have a wide range of feelings about unions. Many feel that we don’t need unions any more. However, one thing that unions do is to improve the bargaining power of workers. This is true in the
case of benefits and working conditions as well as wages. Union representation has decreased over time. In 1979, 24.1% of the workforce was unionized; in 1997 it had fallen to 14.1% (EPI, Union Coverage in the United States, 1979-1997). The weakening of unions has specific and general affects. In specific effects it relates to specific industries or worker groups. In the broader context it is somewhat similar to the minimum wage. Broad unionization affects the “going rate” for workers and the conditions workers expect to receive. The attacks on unions and the decrease in union representation has effectively contributed to lower rates of pay and other compensation for the majority of workers (in my opinion). Let me offer you a couple of examples.

In my state, Oregon, state workers are unionized while much of private industry no longer has broad union representation. State workers have a retirement program which previously was part of our compensation - our specific employers made contributions to our retirement fund. This came under attack by a tax cutting special interest group. The argument presented was that we (non-state) employees had to pay for our own retirement funds so it wasn’t fair to have state employees get theirs without paying for it. The special interest group won the day and most state employees lost all or part of their state contributed retirement contribution. However, we are still required to pay into the retirement program at the same rate. For many state employees this has led to an effective 10% decrease in their pay. The issue here is that workers (at least in Oregon) see union workers as having an “unfair advantage.” It also demonstrates the losses that workers in general have experienced under lack of a collective voice.

Another example --also from Oregon. Like most states, Oregon contracts out a tremendous amount of work rather than maintaining a state paid workforce to do it. For years, private contracting bids were based upon the union rate for labor. However, in 1998 that changed. A friend of mine works for a small company doing fencing (i.e. along highways and overpasses, state parks, etc) and the company has done a lot of business with the state. The effect of the state moving to a non-union rate effectively decreased the workers salaries by over 30%.

Many of the working conditions that we have come to expect as characteristic of a “good job” are a consequence of decades of union struggle and peoples lives. Things such as the 40 hour week, fair pay, overtime pay, sick leave, medical and vacation pay, are consequences of broad union action and the power of worker collective bargaining. With the weakening of a collective worker’s voice, these “standards” are also eroding. They play a part in the broader inequality picture.

It must be stated that for decades unions were not beneficial for everyone. Many unions excluded non-whites and women and added even mobilized white male workers against specific groups of workers. They played a part in the historical creation of white male advantage in the workforce. However, over the last forty years most unions have been much more inclusive and broad based.
Replacing full time workers with non-full time workers

The temporary job market has grown dramatically since 1979. In fact, temporary labor supply businesses have grown faster since 1979 than all other industries combined. Of the nearly 14.3 million jobs added between 1988 and 1996, twenty-two percent were in the business services area (Clinton, 1997:3). Clinton’s (1997:13) examination of the shift to hiring contingent workers was clear in the following industry sectors: personnel supply services, computer services, mailing and related services, services to businesses, engineering and architectural services, management and public relations services, and research, development and testing services. Tilly (1991) in his report on part-time workers notes that most of the growth in part-time employment came from full-time workers involuntarily taking part-time positions. This trend had not changed by 1999 where the Report on the American Workforce (Department of Labor, 1999) found that at least part of the increase in non-standard work situations came from the “just in time” practices of employers. Non-standard labor practices includes all wage and salaried labor which is not full-time, long term employment (e.g. part-time, temporary, day, and contract labor).

In her 1999 study of compensation differentials, Pierce (1999) found that in most job categories part time workers have significantly less non-wage compensation than their full time counterparts. This was consistent with Lettau’s (1991) compensation study that demonstrated that part-time workers receive not only lower pay, but significantly lower non-wage compensation than their full-time counterparts.

The nonstandard workforce made up almost thirty percent on the total non-agricultural labor force in 1997 (Hudson, 2000). This was not a substantive change from 1995 when 29.4% of jobs fell in this category (Kalleberg, et all, 1997). Table 7.4 (below) indicates that females are more likely than males to be in nonstandard employment. It also shows that 30 percent of Whites are in this employment type which is a very high percentage of the total White workforce. However, even though the number of White workers in nonstandard employment is very high, the likelihood of other racial/ethnic groups is proportionately much higher. As a proportion of population, African Americans are 138 times more likely to be in nonstandard employment arrangements than Whites, Hispanic Americans 183 times more likely, and “other” groups (i.e. Asian and Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Alaskan Eskimos and Aleuts) 484 times more likely.

Table 7.4 Non-agricultural Workers, by work arrangement 1997 (in percents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Arrangement</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Nonstandard</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Full-time</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>78.7</td>
<td>75.9</td>
<td>72.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Percent of Population | 51.1 | 48.8 | 82.7 | 12.7 | 10.9 | 4.7

While we would like to think that workers are voluntarily choosing less than full-time employment, the reality is that many are involuntary members of the nonstandard workforce.

“While it is true that many workers prefer the flexibility provided by some kinds of nonstandard jobs, large numbers of workers feel compelled to accept these arrangements for economic and personal reasons beyond their control. Unfortunately, given current labor market policies, nonstandard employment has the potential to become a mechanism for providing substandard wages and benefits. Responsible public policies should endeavor to ensure that workers are not penalized in terms of pay and benefits because of their work arrangements.” (Hudson, 2000:2)

Workers in the contingent labor force are disadvantaged not only by lower wages (except in the areas of highly skilled medical professionals and some high technology contractors), but also by reduced non-wage compensation. Nonstandard workers generally have reduced benefits such as sick leave, medical insurance, educational benefits, stock sharing, and vacation leave. They also may suffer over the long term in reduced retirement benefits (retirement funds, social security, and long term savings). The important point is that employers are utilizing nonstandard employment, not necessarily workers choosing nonstandard employment. While this utilization has dramatic effects on people’s lives and our overall economy, it also further disadvantages groups that are already seeing unequal returns on the education, skills, and work. By replacing full-time workers with nonstandard workers, employers are able to not only manage their personnel costs, but to maintain a lowered ceiling on full-time wages and compensation.

Why don’t we see that the work environment has shifted dramatically?
The information above is frequently met with surprise and disbelief. People don’t feel like they are worse off economically now than they were in the 1970s and 1980s. If things have changed so much how come we don’t notice. There are three primary reasons why some people feel they are not doing as badly as the statistics reflect: 1) married women’s entry into the workforce; 2) willingness to accept debt; 3) declines in personal savings.

The entrance of wives, particularly middle class wives, into the workforce has helped stabilize family incomes. Between 1979 and 1996 wives work contributed the following percentage to family income (starting with the lowest quintile and going to the highest): 5.2%, 10.2%, 12.1%, 12.8%, and 14.5% (EPI, 1). For most families this contribution was not adequate to entirely make up for the decline in men’s wages, but it kept income deterioration from being as extreme. Between 1977 and 1999 the percentage change in after tax income for each quintile (starting with the lowest) was as follows: -9%, 1%, 8%, 14%, 43% (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 1999). Table 7.3 illustrates the average
change in hourly wages by educational level. Between 1973 and 1997 the only group that experienced a modest increase in wages was the advanced degree group. They had an increase of $1.04 (in 1997 constant dollars) over the 24 year period. However, wages are not the only thing that have stagnated or decreased. Workers have also lost non-wage compensation such as health insurance, sick leave, pensions, and vacation time (Pierce, 1999). Brooks Pierce (1999) notes, that the inequality in compensation increased even more dramatically than the increase in wage inequality. Workers in the lower levels of the labor market lost almost 50% of non-wage compensation between 1982 and 1999. While benefits are not income, they certainly impact families cost of living and quality of life, and also lead to increased cost of living. For example, if an individual or family loses employer paid health care, then they must cover health care costs, and if sick leave is lost income is lost when one is too ill to work.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Less than H.S.</th>
<th>H.S.</th>
<th>Some College</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Advanced Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>$11.21</td>
<td>$12.82</td>
<td>$14.16</td>
<td>$18.60</td>
<td>$22.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>$10.80</td>
<td>$12.07</td>
<td>$13.34</td>
<td>$17.16</td>
<td>$20.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>$9.15</td>
<td>$11.18</td>
<td>$13.19</td>
<td>$18.00</td>
<td>$23.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>$8.22</td>
<td>$11.02</td>
<td>$12.43</td>
<td>$18.38</td>
<td>$24.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wages for workers with one to five years of experience (entry level workers) has fallen for college and high school graduates and both sexes. In 1973, males entering the workforce earned an average of $14.82 per hour with a college degree and $11.10 with a high school diploma; women earned $12.95 and $8.36 respectively (in constant 1997 dollars). In 1997 those wages changed to $13.65 and $7.95 for males and $12.20 and $6.81 for females (EPI, 1999, Entry Level Wages, 1973-1997). This is a real wage decline of 7.9 percent for male and 5.6 percent for female college graduates, and a decline of 28.4 percent for male and 20.9 percent for female high school graduates. Over that same period, inflation increased roughly forty percent.

Family savings have fallen and family debt has dramatically increased. Between 1959 and 1984 personal savings ran between 7% and 11% of income, but from 1984 to 1999 it has declined to roughly 2% (Collins, Hartman, Sklar, 1999). Savings are critically important because it provides people with a buffer in times of emergency, or increasingly, in times of unemployment. The dramatic decline in average savings removes that buffer and makes individuals and families much more economically vulnerable. We have been encouraged to make up the deficit in earnings by turning to credit. From 1989 to 1999 revolving credit increased from just under two billion dollars to almost six billion dollars nationally. The number of personal bankruptcies went from just over 600,000 in 1989 to approximately
1.4 million in 1999; meanwhile, business bankruptcies decreased thirty-six percent over that same period (Collins, Hartman, Sklar, 1999).

Most of the discussion above has addressed broad aspects of wage inequality. These issues reflect social class implications of wage structure and the effects of economic transition on various social classes. However, another process is involved in economic inequality in relationship to wages, and that is occupational segregation.

**Occupational Segregation**

**Occupational segregation is the disproportionate representation in different occupations by various groups within the population.** Essentially this means that different groups hold different positions. For example, there are jobs that are held primarily by males and others by females. A considerable amount of research has been done on sex-based occupational segregation, and much less on race-based occupational segregation. This discussion will attempt to cover both types.

As we all know, different occupations have different rates of pay. If different groups are more likely to be found in different occupations, it is likely that there are going to be income differences between the groups. Occupational segregation is part of the structural issues related to economic inequality. Let’s start with a discussion of Table 7.4. It depicts the representation of workers in different occupational categories by sex and race for 1998. Within each occupational category (i.e. Officials and managers, professionals, etc) are hundreds, sometimes thousands of specific job categories. There is a range of wages and groupings by sex and race within these jobs as there are within the occupations. The data in Table 7.5 is summarized to occupational group (which comes from information from the EEOC) and the median income for each category comes from the BLS (Bureau of Labor Statistics).

Haggerty and Johnson, (1995:112) in their report “The Hidden Barriers of Occupational Segregation,” state that while African Americans comprised 10 percent of workers, that “30 percent of nursing aides are black; 29 percent of domestic servants are black; 25 percent of vehicle washers are black; and 21 percent of janitors are black. Conversely, 0.7 percent of geologists are black; 1.5 percent of dentists are black; 2.1 percent of architects are black; and 2.6 percent of lawyers are black.” They are discussing the patterns that are reflected in Tables 7.5 and 7.6 which show clearly that different racial and sex groups are doing different jobs. This is the reality of occupational segregation.

A number of things show up in Table 7.5. The table has summarized occupational breakdowns for all workers, all minorities, four racial groups and one ethnic group. It is clear from looking at the table that using the summarized data may actually misrepresent what is happening in specific race and sex groups (or both). An excellent example of this is that 15.7% of workers are in the “Professional” grouping, and within that we see that more females are in this grouping than males. This seems to not make sense, but
when you look through the rest of that column, you see that 28.4% of Asian and Pacific Islander Females are in this occupational grouping. This is more than two times the number of females from any other group for this category, and exceeds most males except White and Asian and Pacific Island males. Likewise, while Office and Clerical makes up 14.4% of the workforce, roughly 23% of women are in this occupational grouping.

Being in an occupational group has economic consequences. The 1998 median wage for the Officials and Managers group was $48,902 while for Unskilled Laborers it was $13,915. We can see in Table 7.5 that there is not equal representation across occupations.
Table 7.5  Occupational Employment in Private Industry by Race/ethnic group/sex and by Industry, United States, 1998 (in percents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnic Group/ Sex</th>
<th>Officials and managers</th>
<th>Professional and Tech workers</th>
<th>Sales and Clerical workers</th>
<th>Craft and Operative Workers s (Skilled)</th>
<th>Laborers and Service Workers (unskilled)</th>
<th>Median Wage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/PI</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amer. Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.6 (based upon Table 7.5) depicts over-representation by various groups in different occupational categories. The attempt here is to give a more visual representation of who is in the occupational categories. We can clearly see that Whites, and specifically White males are the only group over-represented in the Officials and Managers group. They are also under-represented in the lowest paid occupational categories. Likewise, while females are over-represented in the Office and Clerical category. White females are also the only minority group under-represented in the Service Worker category. While both White and Black females are over-represented in the Office and Clerical group, it is unlikely that they are sharing the same jobs within that group. In other words, White women are more likely to be personal secretaries, administrative assistants and receptionists, while Black women are more likely to be file clerks and data entry operators (all of which fall within this occupational category). Interestingly, males of color are also over-represented in this occupational group.
Perhaps one of the biggest anomalies is the over-representation of Asian and Pacific Islanders in both the Professional and Technicians group. This over-representation accounts for the improved earnings compared to other minority groups (including white women); however, they are also over-represented groupings at the lower paying end of the occupational spectrum (i.e. unskilled labor and service workers). This reflects the reality that Asians are not a single group. This is discussed in some depth by Darity et al (1996) who notes that Japanese, East Indian, and Chinese ancestry are higher in income and occupational ranking than other Asian groups. However, Vietnamese, Other Southeast Asians and Filipino ancestry groups face similar experiences as other groups of color within the United States. Those of Korean ancestry fall between the two with those who are self-employed doing much better than the rest of the Korean American group generally.

Table 7.6 1998 Occupational Groups by Race and Within Sex Groupings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race Groups Compared to All Groups</th>
<th>Officials and managers</th>
<th>Professionals</th>
<th>Technicians</th>
<th>Sales</th>
<th>Office and Clerical</th>
<th>Craft Workers (Skilled)</th>
<th>Operatives (semi-skilled)</th>
<th>Laborers (unskilled)</th>
<th>Service Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islands</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian / Alaskan Native</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Males by Race

| White                              | X          | X          | X          | X      | X                   | X                      |                        |                     |                 |
| Black                              |            |            |            | X      | X                   | X                      |                        |                     |                 |
| Hispanic                           |            |            | X          |       |                     |                        |                        |                     |                 |
| Asian/Pacific Islands              | X          | X          | X          | X      | X                   | X                      |                        |                     |                 |
| American Indian / Alaskan Native   |            |            | X          | X      | X                   | X                      |                        |                     |                 |

Females by Race

| White                              | X          | X          |           |       |                     |                        |                        |                     |                 |
| Black                              |            |            | X          |       | X                   |                        |                        |                     |                 |
| Hispanic                           |            |            | X          | X      | X                   | X                      |                        |                     |                 |
| Asian/Pacific Islands              | X          | X          | X          | X      | X                   | X                      |                        |                     |                 |
| American Indian / Alaskan Native   |            |            | X          |       | X                   | X                      |                        |                     |                 |

As we can see from the two tables above, occupational segregation is not necessarily total segregation but sometimes it comes close to that. Bergmann’s (1999:760) study of North Carolina state employees found that in jobs that were sex segregated accounted for seventy percent of all jobs. Further that another sixteen percent were heavily over-represented by females or males, and that only in 14% of
jobs was there nearly equal representation of the sexes. She also found racial segregation, though not to the extent of sex-based segregation. In relationship to race, only 55% of state workers were in positions that were totally race segregated, thirty percent were in jobs that were mostly segregated, and 15% were in positions that had approximately equal racial representation.

The persistence of occupational segregation is clear, as are the effects that it has on wages. While the data here is based on measuring individuals’ labor force experience, those individuals are bound to families and communities. The kinds of groupings we see in occupational segregation are therefore reflected in broad economic and opportunity inequalities in our society. These patterns were even more present prior to the initiation of Civil Rights legislation, and in fact formed part of the justification for those laws and programs. Though occupational segregation has decreased, it has hardly disappeared.

**Social Policy - “Affirmative Action”**

“Affirmative Action” is one of the most hotly debated and least understood of social policies. The assumption is that “affirmative action” is one law. The reality is that it is a number of laws and executive orders aimed at ending various forms of discrimination in U.S. society including: education, hiring, promotion, housing, services, and harassment in various forms. Affirmative Action had its official beginning with President Kennedy’s Executive Order 10,925 which required government contractors to take action which ensured hiring based on race would not take place. This was reinforced by the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act – particularly Title VI and Title VII. Title VI prohibited discrimination based on race, color, or national origin for any program or agency receiving federal aid. Title VII made it unlawful for employers (excluding small businesses and others) and government agencies to discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin (Brody, 1997). Title VII also created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to monitor and enforce the Act. The Civil Rights Act of 1991 amended Title VII to include the Glass Ceiling Act of 1991 which extended protection to promotions as well as hiring; however, overall it weakened the original Act by placing the burden of proof on the person alleging discrimination rather than on the employer (Brody 1997).

President Lyndon Johnson issued Executive Order 11246 in 1965 which required employers to include non-discrimination policies as part of their employment practices. It was actually President Nixon in 1969 who issued Executive Order 11478 which required affirmative action programs in federal agencies. The in 1978 President Carter issued Executive Order 11250 which required non-discrimination in federal financial assistance programs(Brody 1997).

So what is affirmative action? Affirmative action is a body of executive orders, legislation, and supreme court decisions that ban discrimination in a wide array of activities based on race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age and veterans status. These actions affect hiring, employment, and service provision in federal, state, and local governments activities, and for government contractors with over
$50,000 in contracts. It can and has been extended to certain private businesses and agencies where patterns of discrimination have been legally proven. Many companies – especially large companies – have voluntary affirmative action programs. This means that while these organizations are not required by law to have affirmative actions programs, they have chosen to do so for their own reasons.

Affirmative action programs utilize one or more of four types of activities (Coalition Against Bigotry and Bias): expanding recruiting efforts to expand applicant pools, reviewing and modifying job criteria for job relevance, evaluating merit standards for job relevance, and establishing goals for a more diverse environment. It is this last activity that has been labeled as “quota systems,” leading to the claim that affirmative action is a quota system. However, the supreme court has ruled numerous times that goals and quotas are two different things, and in those cases where organizations treated goals as quotas they were acting illegally.

What are affirmative action goals and how are they set? Affirmative action goals are based upon the demographics of the population served. For recruiting and hiring purposes, goals are set based on each position or job category. Let’s look at an example.

Example of an Affirmative Action Plan for one job category

**Job Category - Manager**

**Number of positions at the organization - 50**

**Usual recruitment area - state wide**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manager Demographics</th>
<th>Current Workforce</th>
<th>Representation in area workforce (%)</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European American</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic American</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/ Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian / Aleut/ Alaskan Eskimo</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the example above, this organization has fifty managers. Their characteristics are reflected in the “Current Workforce” column. The organization generally recruits for management openings on a state-wide basis. Therefore, they use state-wide data on the distribution of the workforce in the normal recruitment area for this position. In other words, what are the characteristics of the people who have
the qualifications for the job. Organizations generally utilize federal or state collected data for this information. These percentages are reflected in the “Representation in area workforce (%)” column. Finally, “goals” are created based upon the number of positions and the representation (this is reflected in the “Goals” column). The “Goals” column reflects what the demographics of the companies managers would be if management reflected the available qualified workforce.

The above information would tell the organization where it need to expand its recruiting activities for future positions. Give the heavy imbalance towards white males, it might want to examine job qualifications and criteria, and hiring practices, for relevance and unintended bias. As positions came open, it would make increased outreach efforts to populations under-represented in its workforce. It might do this by expanding how it advertises positions.

The goal of having managers who reflected the demographics would be worked towards over time as normal attrition occurred through managers leaving the organization. Affirmative Action would dictate equal consideration - not mandatory hiring.

There is a widespread belief that people of color in general and African Americans in particular, have been overwhelmingly benefitted by Affirmative Action policies. However, various studies seem to indicate this has not been the case. Bispring and Fain’s (2000) study of the impacts of affirmative action show that white females benefitted the most followed by nonwhite females and non-white males respectively. A Washington state analysis tends to support Bispring and Fain’s study. The Coalition Against Bigotry and Bias (1995) analysis of data from the Washington Department of Personnel on classified employees (classified reflects a contract category) showed that among classified (refers to contract type) state employees white women made up 59.6% of those affected. White male Vietnam Veterans made up another 18.7% and people of color were 21.7 (7% African American) percent of hires.

There is also widespread belief that we are now all equal and that the need for affirmative action policies is passed. Patrick Mason (1998) argues convincingly that while progress was made through the 1960s and 70s, the progress of African American males in particular essentially stopped in 1979. He points explicitly to continued occupational segregation as the primary source of the wage differences, and differential returns on education and training, for African and European American males. The table below shows the 1998 median earnings differentials for both sex and race.

Table 7.7 Comparison of 1998 Median Earnings by Race and Sex
Source: Money Income in the United States 1998 US Census Bureau
Table 7.7 clearly demonstrates wage inequities both across and within race and sex groups. The comparison is between groups of workers not controlling for education or position. Because it does not control (take into consideration) these variables, it shows the composite effect of wage inequalities, occupational segregation, and differential work arrangements (e.g. full time versus part time). Therefore the data reflect the outcomes of the sum of differences between groups of workers.

Scanning down the table are divisions by race and sex within each race. Scanning across the table the table are the comparisons between specific groups of workers. If we look at the first two rows of data, we see that men’s median earnings in 1998 were $26,942 compared to women’s earnings of $14,430. This means that women earned 54% of what men earned (column 3). All men of color and Hispanic males earned 89% of what white males earned, and all females earned 48% of what White non-Hispanic males earned. All females earned 95% of what White non-Hispanic females earned. Essentially, this means that males earn significantly more than females, and White non-Hispanics earn more than Hispanics and other racial groups. Further that these earnings differences are greater for sex than they are for race.

Looking at the table as a whole, we see that the patterns of earnings difference reflect that males earn more than females in every racial and Latino group. Further, that within race non-Hispanic males and females have the greatest difference (51%), and that Asian and Pacific Islander are the closest (68%).

While the categories do not match exactly, we can see the relationship of earnings to work arrangements by comparing to Table 7.4. In Table 7.4 we see that women are over-represented in nonstandard jobs (33.7%) and that Whites in general are also over-represented in this work arrangement. It should be noted that Whites in Table 7.4 include White Hispanics. On the other hand, all people of color and Hispanics have larger percentages of workers in regular full time employment than do whites, yet Whites still earn more (Table 7.7, 104% for males and 100% for females).
Table 7.7 also reflects the occupational segregation shown in Tables 7.5 and 7.6. All females and males of color are over-represented in Office and Clerical and in Service Workers (median wages of $24,450 and $14,268 respectively from Table 7.5). White males are over-represented in Management ($48,902), Professional ($46,988), Technicians ($36,703), Sales ($30,332) and Craft Workers ($28,600). We see this pattern reflected in Table 7.7 with White non-Hispanics males earning 113% more than all other workers.

While there seems to be a public sentiment (“Euro-American Public) to end affirmative action, the data clearly shows we still have a long way to go both in terms of occupational segregation and wages. The inequalities persist – general perceptions to the contrary. Whether we continue Affirmative Action or not, we still have structural issues that need addressing.

Social Policy - Welfare Then and Now

While the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) has been in place since 1996, many people do not realize that “welfare” has changed dramatically. PRWORA, (also referred to as “welfare reform”) rewrote social welfare policy almost entirely. To compound the confusion, most people thought that “welfare” was the same thing as AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) and now think that its current policy corollary TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) is the entirety of “welfare. Neither of these beliefs are accurate, and “welfare” covers a wide array of both “means tested” (have economic requirements) and “non-means tested” programs. Under means tested programs, we have such things as TANF, Food Stamps, and Medicaid, for people of varying statuses (citizen, immigrant, refugee, individual, child, etc). Under non-means tested programs, we have programs such as social security, supplemental social security, and Medicare (those over 65), also for people of varying statuses. All of these programs, and numerous others, fall under “welfare” policy.

The purpose of this discussion is to offer an overview of changes between the “old” and the “new” welfare. This is timely as the current funding for PRWORA is being reauthorized in 2002, and these policies reflect social inequality, institutionalization of inequality, and popular perceptions at the same time. It is also important to understand the realities of the current state of poverty as it relates to social welfare policies. First, let’s look at the three year averages of poverty by race and Hispanic Origin.

Table 7.8 Three Year Average (1998-2000) Poverty Rate Percentage by Race and Hispanic Origin (Delaker, 2001: 7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>1998-2000 Average %</th>
<th>1998-2000 Nbr.x1000</th>
<th>2000 Poverty Rate of Female-Headed Household *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen from Table 7.8, “whites” (including “white Hispanics) have lower poverty rates than all people of color. In fact, the poverty rate for Non-Hispanic Whites is almost three times less than for any other group. However, Non-Hispanic Whites still make up 46.2 percent of those in poverty. The last column shows the additional differences of the poverty rates for female-headed households. While the trends follow those by race and ethnicity, Non-Hispanic White women are much more likely to be in poverty (3.3 times more than for two-parent families). However, African American and Hispanic American single mothers make up a larger share of their respective groups’ poverty rate (38.7% and 36.5% respectively).

Table 7.9 Old and New Welfare Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal guidelines set the “floor” of eligibility</td>
<td>Federal guidelines set the “ceiling” of eligibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding “ear-marked” for welfare programs</td>
<td>Funding in the form of “block grants”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New children covered</td>
<td>New children not covered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No time limitations</td>
<td>Five year lifetime aid limitation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few work or training requirements</td>
<td>Mandatory work requirements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen from Table 7.9 above, there are significant differences between the “old” and “new” welfare. It is not unusual to hear that welfare has changed from a “war on poverty” (named by President Lyndon Johnson) to a “war on the poor.”

Let’s take a look at the implication of these changes. The old welfare set a “floor” on eligibility and benefits. This means that the federal requirements set the minimum standards that states had to follow in determining eligibility to receive aid. States were able to exceed the minimum guidelines set by federal policy. The new welfare sets a ceiling. This means that states cannot exceed the guidelines set by federal policy, but may certainly go below those guidelines. The difference here is significant when we look at the funding and bonus differences between the two policies.

The old welfare ear-marked funding for welfare programs. States that did not expend their funding either had the remaining amount returned to the federal government, or it was subtracted from the next year’s allotment. Under current policy, states receive their allotment in the form of “block grants” which allows them considerably more flexibility in the use of those funds, and what is not expended for welfare programs can go back into the state budget. This creates an incentive to not expend the money on welfare programs. Additionally, states receive “bonuses” for decreasing the number of recipients, and for decreasing the number of children born to unmarried mothers. These bonuses are up to the discretion of the state in terms of how the money will be used. One of the immediate effects of these changes was to create a “race to the bottom” in terms of state welfare programs. No state wanted to be a “welfare magnet” – someplace that was “attractive” to those in need.

It is therefore not surprising that welfare rolls have dropped by approximately 50 percent. This does not mean that poverty has dropped by half, only that half as many people are receiving benefits. This decrease has been the result of a variety of strategies by the states from tightening requirements, to increasing the difficulty of applying and complying with requirements. Failure to “comply” results in immediate refusal of aid, or reduction in benefits. According to the John Hopkins Three City Study (Cherlin, et al, 2001), three times as many families lost their benefits for non-compliance as did for reaching the time limits benefits. Refusing to comply encompasses a variety of trespasses such as being late for, or missing, an appointment; not providing required documentation (i.e. birth certificates, school or work attendance documentation, vaccination records, father(s) of children information, etc.). The last of these examples may be particularly frightening for some women who may not want to provide the father’s information because of rape, incest, domestic violence, etc. However, there are no exclusions from this requirement. It is estimated that between 20 and 40 percent of the drop in number of recipients is due to “failure to comply” issues.

Another major change has been the status of children born after a parent (or parents) enter TANF. Under the old welfare, such children would be covered. Under the new welfare they are not. This
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creates an interesting scenario, and one that may result in the entire family losing benefits. Welfare recipients have to prove that the new child (who is not covered) is not benefitting from the aid provided to the family. This can entail keeping detailed records of expenditures (clothing, food, etc.) showing that the uncovered child was cared for out of non-benefit funds. You can imagine how difficult such proof might be to provide.

The old welfare had no time limitations. Leading to concerns that people on welfare were receiving aid from one generation to the next - creating what has been termed a “culture of poverty” which more accurately might have been termed a “culture of welfare.” The new welfare has a federal ceiling of a life time limit of five years. There was some validity to concerns about a lifetime on welfare; however, this did not represent the situation for most. The average length of time on welfare for African American families was roughly eight years, and approximately 5 years for European American families - not generations on welfare, though we certainly have generations in poverty.

Finally, most old welfare programs did not have stringent work requirements whereas the reformed welfare has stringent work requirements. Generally, at least 20 hours must be spent in work, work related search, or work related training to qualify not only for TANF, but for food stamps. There are also requirements on the states for the percentage of TANF recipients who must be engaged in work or work related activities. That percentage started with 25% in 1997 and went to 50% by 2002 (Welfare Information Network).

It is important to understand the intent of PRWORA. Below is the statement directly from the Act.

SEC. 401. PURPOSE.
(a) In General.—The purpose of this part is to increase the flexibility of States in operating a program designed to--
(1) provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives;
(2) end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
(3) prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and
(4) encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Some people are struck by the moral issues embedded in the act such as encouraging marriage and two-parent families, and reducing out-of-wedlock births. The tenor of the bill, seems to assume that marriage and two-parent families should be enforced regardless of the situation. Since roughly half of the single mothers receiving aid are victims of domestic violence (see Congressional findings below),
this enforcement seems particularly inappropriate. However, the current legislation offers states bonuses for reducing both the number of people on TANF, and the number of births to unwed mothers (as mentioned above).

The welfare reform act specifically identifies specific populations such as services for disabled children, the rights of legal immigrants to benefits earned, and excludes from benefits children born after entering aid programs. It also allows the states to “transfer grants to private and religious organizations to run programs for those on “welfare,” and to run monitoring, payment, etc.” (From the PRWORA). This last has raised considerable concern about the separation of church and state, and the pressure to participate in religious activities in order to receive aid. This concern has only strengthened under President George W. Bush’s initiatives to increase faith-based funding opportunities.

Given that reauthorization is required this year, it is important to determine whether PRWORA has been effective. Since the intent seems to have been to reduce the number of people receiving aid, we would have to say “yes.” If the intent however, is to not only reduce welfare rolls, but to move former recipients out of poverty, we would have to say “no.” Below are the findings quoted from the proposed congressional bill H.R. 3113 (10/12/01, 4-11):

“SEC. 3. FINDINGS.
The Congress finds the following:
(1) Welfare reform has reduced the welfare caseload but has failed to move families out of poverty. More than 40 percent of former welfare recipients continued to live below the poverty line in 1999. Employed former recipients earn a median hourly wage of $7.15. Because challenges to economic opportunity and well-being are not adequately addressed by current welfare programs, existing law must be changed to ensure that welfare policy effectively promotes the reduction of poverty.

(2) Between 1995 and 1999, a strong economy reduced poverty by about 2 percent. Reductions in Government transfer payments during this period, however, eliminated almost all of the anti-poverty effectiveness of economic growth. Prior to welfare reform, between 1993 and 1995, Government transfer payments had produced the opposite effect, reducing poverty among American families.

(3) About 1/3 of people who have left welfare say they have had to cut the size of meals or skip meals because they did not have enough food in the house.

(4) Over 40 percent of welfare leavers report that they have had trouble paying housing and utility bills since leaving welfare.

(5) Since welfare reform was enacted in 1996, and despite a strong economy, there have been sharp increases in the rates at which single mothers with children have had to rely on food pantries and homeless shelters.

(6) An estimated 1/3 to 1/2 of all families leaving welfare for work do not receive medical assistance, food stamps, or child care to which they are entitled.
(7) Only 1,500,000 of the 9,900,000 children who are eligible for child care subsides under their States’ eligibility guidelines receive child care assistance.

(8) Between 1997 and 1999, over 500,000 families were sanctioned off welfare and these families have been more likely to experience poverty than have other families leaving welfare. On a variety of measures, families who have been sanctioned off welfare tend to fare worse than other leavers.

(9) States in which African Americans make up a higher proportion of recipients are statistically more likely to adopt full-family sanctions. African American recipients are statistically more likely than white recipients to participate in a TANF program that employs full-family sanctions. African-American families have in fact, been sanctioned more frequently than their white counterparts.

(10) States in which African Americans make up a higher proportion of recipients are statistically more likely to adopt family cap policies. African American recipients are statistically more likely than white recipients to participate in a TANF program that employs a family cap policy.

(11) States in which African Americans make up a higher proportion of recipients are statistically more likely to adopt time limits shorter than the Federal Government requires. Approximately 2/3 of all families that will exhaust their allowable time on welfare are families of color.

(12) Overall, 78 percent of children with immigrant parents are themselves born in the United States and are therefore eligible for services if poor. Nearly 1/4 of all children of immigrants live in poor families and 23 percent of all poor children in the United States are either first- or second-generation immigrants. Immigrants whose children are eligible for public benefits often don’t know about the services, are afraid to access them, or are incorrectly turned away.

(13) About 25 percent of former welfare recipients have no paid employment and have either no partner or a partner who is unemployed.

(14) Under welfare reform, single mothers have been forced to work at unsafe and hazardous job sites and to be subject to sexual harassment and racial discrimination.

(15) Most single mothers who leave welfare for work do not earn enough in wages to lift their families out of poverty, even several years after leaving welfare. 55 percent remain poor 1 year after leaving welfare; 49 percent 3 years after and 42 percent 5 years after. Only about 1/3 of all leavers have incomes above 150 percent of the poverty line years after going off welfare.

(16) Adolescent children of single mothers who have left welfare for work have school performance rates below those of other low-income children. Early studies of families in welfare-to-work programs in Florida, Minnesota, and Canada have found unexpected evidence that their adolescent children have lower academic achievement and more behavioral problems than the children of other welfare households. The researchers hypothesized that parents in the programs might have less time and energy to monitor their adolescents’ behavior once they were employed; that under the stress of working, they might adopt harsher parenting styles; or that the adolescents’ assuming more responsibilities at home when parents got jobs was creating too great a burden.

(17) Under welfare reform, when families lost income regardless of the reason, children were more likely to experience bad outcomes such as increased school suspensions, behavior and mental health problems.
including symptoms of depression, an increase in the number of children removed from their mother’s care, increased enrollment in special classes for behavioral or emotional depression, a health problems such as increased trips to the emergency room. In programs where both employment and income were increased, the impact on children was more positive.

(18) Most single mothers on welfare who are eligible for the exemption from cooperating in establishing paternity are not made aware of this option.

(19) 35 percent of low-income families reported mental health problems according to a 1999 study. Similar rates of mental health problems have been found among welfare recipients. Among California welfare program participants, more than 1/3 had at least 1 diagnosable mental health problem in the previous 12 months, and about 20 percent had 2 or more. Nationally, between 70 and 90 percent of working-age adults with serious mental health problems are unemployed. According to a 2001 study, major depression significantly decreases the likelihood that a woman receiving welfare will be employed and the presence of 1 or more of 4 psychiatric disorders increases the likelihood of receiving cash assistance by 32 percent.

(20) Over half of women receiving welfare have been victims of domestic violence as adults. According to several studies, a quarter to a third of welfare recipients report having been abused within the last year. Abusive partners often interfere with women’s attempts to work or to obtain education.”

The findings can be summarized by saying that Welfare Reform has not only been ineffective in reducing poverty, but that it has placed families and children in more precarious and harmful situations. The 2% reduction in poverty is credited to a strong economy (which is now crashing so poverty will most likely go up), not to Welfare Reform. The pressures applied to recipients under PRWORA have increased levels of stress within families at the same time that access to benefits have been reduced resulting in increased physical and mental health problems, and behavioral problems among children of recipients. Women have been forced into harmful and abusive employment relationships, and racism seems to be a pervasive finding in the application of sanctions for non-compliance. All in all, we could say that from the Congresses own fact finding, that Welfare Reform has been a failure.

Under the proposed reauthorization, efforts are made to address some of the issues raised in the findings. Namely, an increased focus on various types of support to remove or address barriers, encouragement of living wage jobs over any employment placement, and bonuses for states reducing child poverty. While the changes proposed seem generally positive, it is highly unlikely that H.R. 3113 will be the final form of the bill. In terms of funding, the proposed bill does not extend funding, but simply maintains the current formula and extends that to 2008. Given that in many ways this bill requires more of the states, it is unlikely that the program will be successful under the current funding plan.

Putting It Together
This chapter demonstrates the interconnections within the economic system of the United States that create manifestation of inequality. We have seen that the broad transitions, such as movement into a
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Post industrial economy and globalization, have broad implications for all members of our society. Even though these are drastic changes, there persists the allocation of jobs and wages along familiar lines of difference. In other words, while the picture has changed, the organization of the picture has remained remarkably consistent. This reflects the persistence of stratification as an organizing framework for social organization.

Even policies such as “affirmative action” have not erased the inequalities of the system. However, they have drawn increasing criticism and attack from groups (primarily white, male, and many political leaders) that they are a form of “reverse discrimination.” It is interesting to note that what positive changes have been made are seen as a threat to the groups that benefit the most from the current social organization. However, it also points to how beliefs and rhetoric reinforce each other. For example, we are raised with the belief that “all people are equal,” and that our movement in the class system is solely based upon our own efforts and abilities.

Underlying this is the belief that the structure is fair and equal to all participants. Therefore, policies and actions which attempt to address inequality of opportunity are “unfair.” However, as progress has been made it is seen as encroaching on the “turf” of higher status groups. Certainly it increases the competition for reserved spaces and privileges. These advances have also occurred most significantly at the lower levels of the white class boundaries, and much less significantly at the upper levels. Since lower and middle class whites (and males) are less likely to see themselves as “privileged” or “protected” by the system, they are also most likely to see the movement of “outsiders” into their areas of livelihood as a threat and unfair. Representatives of higher status groups can then mobilize whites along class lines to protect “their” interests which reinforces racial and sexual divisions while hardening class divisions.

White women and people of color also get sucked into this process in at least two different ways. First is by being perceived as the recipients of things they haven’t “earned,” and secondly by efforts to break racial (and sexual) distinctions through class separation for people of color. Women of all races and people of color are frequently treated as if the only reason they have gotten a “non-traditional” (read outside their socially assigned occupational category) is because they received special consideration. In other words, they do not have the skill or ability to have the positions they hold. This results in pressure to argue that they are different from others of their group and therefore have competed fairly and earned their positions through personal effort. The reality is that no one receives their positions solely through their personal merit.

This pressure to deny the realities of structural and cultural barriers leads to struggles against those policies that help break down those barriers. They are encouraged to see themselves as winning because of their own efforts (the message of class). This encouragement is at once both macro-social in
terms of media and society, and micro-social in terms of their occupational peers and self-esteem. Therefore you see some white women and people of color actively arguing against affirmative action (Ward Connerly and Clarence Thomas for example).

On the poverty side of the equation, we have welfare and welfare reform. The “old” welfare was initially relatively successful in decreasing poverty from roughly 23 percent in 1959 to 11 percent in 1979, and while going up and down since then, is currently at over 11 percent (Delaker, 2001: 9). It should be noted that during the 1980s and 90s, welfare became more and more restrictive, and then increasingly punitive under PRWORA. The old welfare mirrored the institutionalized racism and sexism of our society, and congressional findings seem to indicate that has not changed. Therefore, systems of advantage and disadvantage continue both in programs aimed at social support (i.e. PRWORA) and in programs aimed at addressing institutionalized discrimination (i.e. affirmative action).

No one, least of all welfare recipients, would argue against changing the social welfare system. The issue becomes how it should be changed. It is also relatively clear that economics plays a huge part in poverty. Actually eliminating poverty, and eliminating discrimination, is going to require a hard look at the structure and operation of our economic and stratification system – not simply programs. It is unlikely that any program aimed at truly assisting those excluded from (or ghettoized in) the labor market are suddenly going to be able to access living wage jobs if such jobs do not exist. We could raise the minimum wage to a living wage, but this is politically unpopular, and flies in the face of the corporate search for cheap globalized labor. It also does not address the basic issues of inequities in skill training or educational access.

The discussion and examples utilized in this chapter are aimed at demonstrating the systematic nature of stratification, and the broad forces (purportedly neutral forces) that impact the economy as a social institution in the United States. The themes of race, sex, and class are evident at every level, from wages, to occupational segregation, to systematic discrimination, to programs purportedly aimed at alleviating these deep rooted issues.

Expanding the model
Given the information in this chapter, look at the information in the models for sex, class, and race you have created. How would you modify the information you have listed there? How does the actual workings of the class structure link across stratification system components?

Looking Forward
Because of the strong linkage between education and occupation / social class, education will be the next social institution examined. While education is undeniably linked to linked to occupation and social class, this institution plays a number of critical roles within our society. Not the least of which is as a
socialization agent. We will examine how education as an institution works within our systems of stratification.

**Key Concepts and Terms**

- Affirmative Action
- Civil Rights Act
- economic transition
- EEOC
- Executive Order 11478
- globalization
- minimum wage
- occupational segregation
- NAFTA
- PRWORA
- quota
- NAFTA
- TANF
- Title V11
- Welfare Reform
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Suggested Readings


Chapter 1


Chapter 2
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Chapter 3


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Chapter 4


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Chapter 5


Chapter 6


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