The first African-American president, Barack Obama, and his appointment of the first Hispanic Supreme Court Justice, Sonia Sotomayor, represent an historic moment in the intersection of race, class, and ethnicity in the United States.

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THINKING POINT: While traveling in Malaysia I (Nanda) asked a friend to explain this exceptionally diverse society. He began by saying, "The Indians are the black people," referring to the dark skin color of the Indians in Malaysia who are mainly from South India. Joking with him a little, I asked, "If the Indians are the black people, who are the white people?" "Oh," he answered, without missing a beat, "the Portuguese used to be the white people but now the Chinese are the white people."

Stratification

In this chapter we look at how class, race, ethnicity, and caste are constructed and intersect in our own and other socially stratified societies. As our opening story makes clear, social stratification involves the intersection of culturally constructed categories that change over time within specific economic and historical contexts. **Social stratification** is the structure that results from unequal access to and distribution of goods and services in a society, and is related to the organization of production and cultural values. <<

Explaining Social Stratification

As we noted in Chapter 11, social stratification is related to social complexity and is one of the criteria by which states, the most socially complex type of society, are defined. No society has ever successfully organized a large and diverse population without stratification and inequalities.

Two basic perspectives on social stratification are functionalism and conflict theory. **Functionalism** holds that social stratification generally benefits the whole society, by rewarding people socially and economically for working harder, taking risks, doing difficult jobs, or spending more time in school or occupational training. For example, the rewards of prestige and high income motivate some people to become medical doctors, a profession that requires more than 10 years of higher education and is difficult to achieve but necessary for the well-being of the whole society.

But the inequality characteristic of social stratification does not always serve the general good. Not all of society's most difficult jobs are well rewarded. In the United States, for example, schoolteachers, nurses, and many others do difficult jobs that may require substantial training, yet are not that well compensated financially. Nor are many of the low-prestige "dirty jobs" that are nevertheless essential to the functioning of society well paid. Furthermore, social stratification does not necessarily result in recruiting the most able people to the most demanding positions, as those of us who have ever had an incompetent boss can attest!

A functionalist perspective emphasizes the functions of inequality in a stable social order, but this theory makes some faulty assumptions. For example, though it is obvious that in many contemporary societies wealth is a powerful motivating force, money's ability to motivate a person may have limits. A person making $25,000 a year would work harder for a salary of $50,000 a year, but would a person making $400,000 a year be motivated to work harder for $450,000 a year? Yet $50,000 is still a great deal of money.

Furthermore, beyond financial considerations is an issue of the human spirit. Although inequality seems inevitable in large-scale social systems, resentment, however repressed, always seems to accompany substantial inequalities (Scott 1992), especially when the inequalities are based on such ascribed factors as race, gender, caste, or other attributes an individual is born with and cannot

change (Berreman 1988). And no society, even the most theoretically open class system, actually offers everyone the same opportunities to achieve economic and social success. In all stratified societies, family background and social connections, gender, ethnicity, race, accumulated wealth, and other factors play important roles in determining the sorts of opportunities available to individuals. Resentment between people of different levels of wealth and power is particularly likely when inequalities between groups are large and are perceived to be unfair. Anthropologist Gerald Berreman attributes much of the conflict in modern societies—crime, terrorism, ethnic conflict, civil and international wars—to organized and systemic inequality (1981:4–5).

In **conflict theory,** social stratification results from the constant struggle for scarce goods and services. Inequalities exist because those individuals and groups who have acquired power, wealth, and prestige use their assets and their power to maintain control over the system of production and the apparatus of the state, as was described for the Asante kingdom (see the "Ethnography" section in Chapter 11). When these attempts to establish dominance falter or are challenged, elites may fall back on the threat of force or its actual use to maintain the status quo. This emphasis on conflict and change provides an essential dimension in the understanding of social stratification.

Conflict theory is central to the work of Karl Marx. For Karl Marx and those who follow his thinking, the economic system is the critical factor in explaining social stratification. Marx differentiated two main social classes in capitalist society on the basis of wealth: the capitalists, who own the means of production, and the workers, who must sell their labor in order to survive. According to Marx, the relationship of individuals to the means of production is critical in determining their wealth, power, and prestige. Marx viewed the conflict between the workers and the owners of the means of production as central to capitalism, and predicted this would eventually lead to capitalism's downfall. By asking, "cui bono," or who benefits economically, conflict theory enables us to understand some of the hidden motivations of social actors and to assess institutions by their economic and social consequences as well as by their articulated intentions. However, just as the functional view of inequality may lead theorists to ignore the possibility of structural conflict, conflict theorists may sometimes ignore the social mechanisms that promote solidarity across class, racial, ethnic, and caste lines.

social stratification A social hierarchy resulting from the relatively permanent unequal distribution of goods and services in a society.

functionalism (functionalist perspective) The anthropological theory that specific cultural institutions function to support the structure of a society or serve the needs of its people.

conflict theory A perspective on social stratification that focuses on economic inequality as a source of conflict and change.

Criteria of Stratification: Power, Wealth, and Prestige

The social stratification system of any society depends on the complex interaction of the three main dimensions of stratification: power, wealth, and prestige. Anthropolo-

gists analyze **power** (the ability to control resources in one's own interest) by examining its sources, the channels through which it is exercised, and the goals it is deployed to achieve (see Chapter 11). For example, in the United States, we might analyze the different sources, uses, and goals of power among corporate presidents, elected public officials, entertainment celebrities, or heads of organized crime families. From a cross-cultural perspective, we might compare the sources and uses of power of an American president, the prime minister of France, the chairman of the Communist party in the People's Republic of China, or the Ayatollah who is the supreme leader in an Islamic Republic like Iran.

Wealth is the accumulation of material resources or access to the means of producing these resources. Although wealth is not the sole criterion of social status even in capitalist societies, it can eventually translate into high social position and power. Wealth enables people to send their children to the most prestigious schools, buy homes in the best neighborhoods, and join the right social clubs. It enables people to gain access to important politicians by giving large campaign contributions. It may also allow them to run for political office themselves. Wealth can also translate into symbolic power, which in turn reinforces political power, as we described earlier for the Asante.

Prestige, or social honor, is the third dimension of social stratification. The cultural bases of prestige are different in different societies: they may be related to race and ethnicity, income, accumulated wealth, power, personal characteristics such as integrity, family history, and the display of material goods. Not all wealth, in and of itself, is a source of prestige. For example, people who earn their incomes illegally have less prestige than do those whose incomes are legally earned. The head of an illegal gambling syndicate, a drug czar, or a Somali pirate may make hundreds of millions of dollars but have little prestige. On the other hand, few winners of the Nobel Peace Prize make much money but they surely have great prestige. And committing oneself to poverty, as India's great leader Mahatma Gandhi did, may paradoxically be a source of greater prestige than the display of wealth.

A key source of prestige in all societies is occupation, both for its relation to income and the cultural values attached to it, though different societies rank occupations differently. In the Hindu caste system (see page 282), occupations are ranked according to their level of spiritual purity or pollution, a concept formally absent from occupational rankings in the United States. Americans do, however, make some connections between prestige—or lack of it—and the "dirt" involved in various occupations, though this is not always voiced aloud. Dirty jobs are generally not prestigious jobs.

As socioeconomic conditions change, the value system that supports a particular system of ranking occupa-
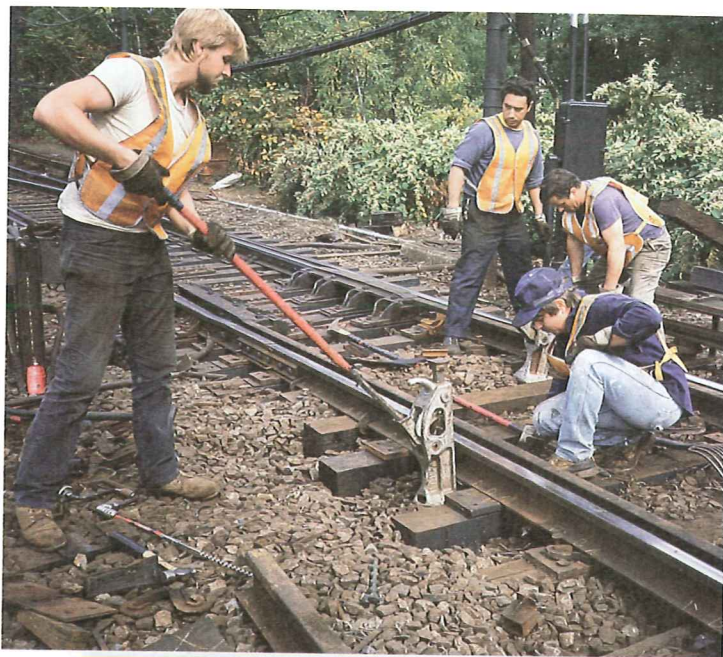
Repairing train lines is physically demanding and hazardous. A functional theory of social stratification holds that differential financial rewards are needed to attract people to dirty, dangerous, and difficult jobs.

tional prestige may also change. In 18th-century Europe, surgery was performed by barbers and was a lower-class occupation; in contemporary North America, surgeons rank very high in prestige, not only because they make a great deal of money but also because surgery requires great skill and training. In the People's Republic of China, the prestige and power associated with different occupations has almost completely reversed itself from traditional Chinese society. Before the Communist Revolution, China followed a Confucian value system, in which scholars had the highest honor. After the revolution, workers were honored and scholars often explicitly ridiculed and despised. Today, with China's growing free-market practices and increasing economic role in globalization, businesspeople, previously a target of socialist contempt and even violence, are highly regarded, though this has also changed with the 2008 global economic downturn.

Social scientists have long debated whether prestige or economic factors are more important in explaining the behavior of people in complex, stratified societies. Karl

power The ability to compel other individuals to do things that they would not choose to do of their own accord.

wealth The accumulation of material resources or access to the means of producing these resources.

prestige Social honor or respect.

Marx argued for the primacy of economic or class interests while Max Weber, a German sociologist of the late 19th century, argued for the importance of status rather than economic interests. Whereas Marx thought that people were (or should be) most conscious of their class membership (their economic status), Weber believed that people may value prestige and the symbolic aspects of status even more than their economic position. Weber further argued that political action can be motivated by a group's desire to defend its social position as well as, or even in opposition to, its economic self-interest, a position Marx called "false consciousness." In the American South, for example, poor whites did not join poor blacks in working to improve their common economic position because they were more committed to maintaining the prestige value based on color or race.

Ascription and Achievement

In comparing social stratification systems, anthropologists differentiate between systems where social position is based on **ascribed status,** or birth, with systems based on **achieved status,** that is, a person's individual efforts. Race, ethnicity, family of origin, and biological sex are ascribed statuses. Wife, college professor, criminal, and artist are achieved statuses. In open stratification systems, social position is primarily based on achievement; in closed stratification systems, social position is based on ascription. In fact, in most modern complex societies both achievement and ascription play a role in the social stratification system.

Class Systems

A **class** is a category of persons who all have about the same opportunity to obtain economic resources, power, and prestige and who are ranked high and low in relation to other class categories. In a **class system** there are possibilities for **social mobility,** or movement between the classes or social strata, which are (ideally) based on indi-

ascribed status A social position that a person is born into.

achieved status A social position that a person chooses or achieves on his or her own.

class A category of persons who all have about the same opportunity to obtain economic resources, power, and prestige and who are ranked relative to other categories.

class system A form of social stratification in which the different strata form a continuum and social mobility is possible.

social mobility Movement from one social strata to another.

vidual achievement rather than ascribed status. Even in the most open class systems, however, ascribed statuses always play a role in moving from one class to another. Closed stratification systems, in which there is little or no possibility of social mobility, are called caste systems and are discussed later in the chapter.

In class systems, the different strata (classes) are not sharply separated from one another but form a continuum. Social status is dependent on both achievement and ascription. Social mobility (upward) from one class to another—through various means such as education, marriage, good luck, hard work, taking risks—is a central cultural value and theoretically possible for all society's members. In the United States we call this opportunity for upward social mobility for all "the American Dream." Although belief in the American Dream and an open society is strong among all the diverse racial and ethnic groups in the United States (*New York Times* 2005), social science evidence demonstrates that educational achievement, levels of indebtedness, income, and wealth accumulation, including home ownership and home foreclosures, are significantly correlated not just with race, ethnicity, and gender, but also to an individual's class status (Haskins, Isaacs, and Sawhill 2008). Evidence is clear, for example, that (even before the recession of 2008), class-based differences are very significant in achievements in higher education: high school seniors who come from homes where neither parent attended college are less likely to get admitted to college, less likely to have a high grade point average, less likely to complete an undergraduate or graduate degree, and less represented on college faculties than those with at least one college-educated parent (Bialostok 2009).

The American Class System

In 2006, Gloria Castillo, 22, a child of undocumented immigrants, was married, with two children, and lived in a tough neighborhood in Dallas, Texas. She worked the night shift at the drive-through window at a highway Burger King, from 10:30 p.m. to 6:30 a.m., for $252 a week before taxes, and received no health care benefits. To help make ends meet, she worked a second job, earning $150 a night for the 1½ hours it took her to clean three bathrooms in a local bar. Her husband worked at an auto parts place during the day, so Gloria took the children, ages 7 and 8, for a fast food breakfast before dropping them at school, returned home, slept until 2, picked up the kids, prepared their frozen food dinners, put them to bed at 7, spent a few hours with her husband, and left for work. On Saturdays she attended a community college, working toward a degree as a paralegal. "I got dreams," she said (LeDuff 2006).

The American Dream, as expressed in the life of Gloria Castillo, is closely tied to other core American values such as individualism, meritocracy, the work ethic,

optimism, pragmatism, progress, and a belief in the ability of individuals to control the circumstances of their lives. One corollary of the American Dream is that economic failure and downward social mobility is largely viewed as a result of the individual failings as well as the behaviors, attitudes, and cultures of members of the lower classes, rather than as a systemic aspect of social structure.

Two decades ago, anthropologist Katherine Newman was prescient in revealing the significance and meaning of downward mobility in the American class system. In her book *Falling from Grace: Downward Mobility in the Age of Affluence* (1999), Newman defines downwardly mobile middle-class people as those who had secure jobs, comfortable homes, and reason to believe that the future would be one of continued prosperity for themselves and their children. Newman noted that downward mobility was almost institutionally invisible in the United States. The media most often focused on the lives of the rich and famous and those in the business world who made fantastic salaries, or on people like Gloria Castillo, who are inspired by the American Dream. American culture provides many rituals and symbols of upward mobility and success in the form of displays of wealth and status, but there are no such occasions to mark status deterioration. As Newman observes, "Downward mobility is a hidden dimension of our society's experience because it. . . . does not fit into our cultural universe."

Yet even prior to the 2008 financial crisis, downward mobility affected many Americans. Newman emphasizes that job loss entails not only economic decline but also a decline in prestige: individuals who lost their jobs lost their place in society and with it, their sense of honor and self-esteem. Many types of workers—factory employees, retail clerks, truck drivers, store managers, computer technicians, middle managers, engineers, architects, CEOs, and many others, have lost their place in what was once a secure middle, or even upper middle, class (Greenhouse 2008).With the 2008 recession, downward mobility has become a highly visible dimension of the American class system, increasingly making media headlines. It has now become clearer to many Americans that systemic aspects of our economic system outweigh individual factors in explaining failure and class inequality. Instead of reading stories like those about Gloria Castillo, we read about people like Mark Cooper, who lost his $70,000-a-year job as a security manager for a Fortune 500 company and is now working as a janitor for $12 an hour and feels lucky to have the job (Luo 2009).

The cultural emphasis on individualism central to the American Dream also represses the important role of government programs and policies—the G.I. Bill, Social Security, unemployment insurance, a progressive income tax, and federal mortgage assistance programs—that resulted in a growing middle class since World War II. After the Great Depression, from the 1930s until the 1970s, social mobility was significantly based on a cultural vi-

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This rally is aimed at protesting the increasingly inequitable aspects of the economic system of the United States, in which job loss and declining income have most affected the working and middle classes.

sion that held that government should provide a safety net and enable upward mobility for all Americans. By the 1980s, however, a new cultural ideology emerged as dominant: that government should be kept small, its spending restricted, and that success depended on individual achievement free of government help or interference. These two contrasting cultural visions have been central to the political differences between the two main political parties and again became a central issue with the 2008 economic crisis.

The Material Basis of Class in the United States There is no complete cultural consensus in the United States on the social class structure, how the social classes are defined, or even whether there are social classes at all (Durrenberger 2001). American optimism and the economic growth since the early 1980s enhanced the perception that the American stratification system was not one of deep divides but rather that it was like a ladder with lots of rungs, which could be climbed with ingenuity and hard work.

Recent—and growing—statistical and ethnographic evidence in several areas, however, makes the ladder image of class more problematic. If one defines the middle class as people who have a roof over their heads, television sets, computers, cell phones, air conditioners, and cars (even if all financed by debt, much of it beyond their current means to pay off), then one could say that Amer-

ica is indeed a "middle class" society. Others, however, cite the current decline in the economic position of much of the American middle class as people struggle with growing unemployment, loss of wealth in the form of stocks, lack of access to medical care that often accompanies unemployment, inability to pay one's mortgage and home foreclosures, the rising cost of college tuition and the high cost of student loans, and particularly the huge inequalities in wages and wealth between the rich and others, to raise questions about the American class system and, specifically, the reality of realizing the American Dream.

Central to questioning previous images of America as a middle-class society is the growing income and wealth inequality between the very rich and the rest. Despite ambiguities about the definitions of the American class system, most Americans would agree that the rungs on the ladder of social mobility are most significantly defined by income. Income is the gateway to a middle-class lifestyle and serves as the basis for family economic security. Over the long term, sufficient and steady income is essential toward saving and accumulating assets, especially home ownership.

The view that America is a middle-class society, and for many, even a classless society, is largely based on the perception that most Americans were in, or could reach, a middle-class income level. This was justified by many statistics, though it also willfully ignored the many Americans mired in poverty. This culturally engineered perception about class equality in America has become unhinged from reality over the past 30 years, which has seen an extraordinary jump in income inequality. During this period, the after-tax income of the top 1 percent of American households jumped 139 percent to more than $700,000; the income of the middle fifth of households rose only 17 percent, to $43,700; and the income of the poorest fifth rose only 9 percent. In 2004, the chief executives at the 100 largest companies in California took home a collective $1.1 billion, an increase of nearly 20 percent over the previous year. For most workers, only during the speculative bubble of the 1990s did income rise above inflation. Reductions in pensions have also increased the prospect of financial insecurity in retirement. Tax cuts for the wealthy under President George W. Bush greatly exacerbated this inequality: the 400 taxpayers with the highest incomes—over $87 million a year each—now pay income tax, and Medicare and Social Security taxes, amounting to the same percentage of their incomes as people making $50,000 to $75,000 a year. As Warren Buffett, one of the richest men in the world, has repeatedly emphasized, his 2006 tax rate on his $46 million income was 17.7 percent, while his secretary's tax rate was 30 percent (Brown 2009).

Income and accumulated wealth have a tremendous impact on people's lives: they are correlated with health, quality health care in illness, and the life span itself (J. Scott 2005). The high and rising cost of pharmaceuticals and medical care is merely one aspect of the different life chances available to the poor, the middle class, and the wealthy. People with higher education and income are less likely to have and die of heart disease, strokes, diabetes, and many types of cancer (Scott 2005). They are also more likely to benefit from advances in medicine, have more useful information about medicine, and be covered by health insurance. In addition, they are less likely to smoke, are less overweight, exercise more, and eat healthier food than people in the lower classes.
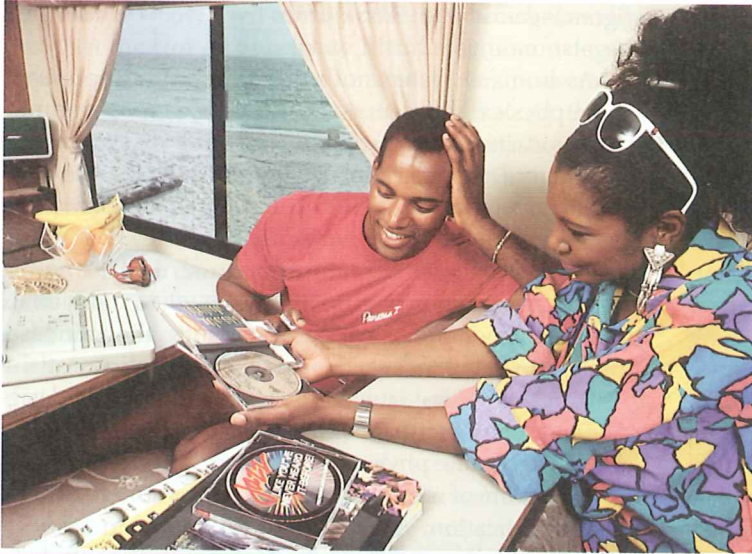
Life chances are the opportunities that people have to fulfill their potential in society. Sufficient and steady family income is the essential gateway to increasing life chances and social mobility: it is the basis of a decent standard of living including access to food, clothing, shelter, health care, a quality education, and the accumulation of some resources or equity as a safety net for emergencies. Conversely, insufficient and irregular income negatively affects not only one's own life chances but also those of one's children.

Social mobility itself is a life chance that depends on where one already is in the class system. People born into positions of wealth, high status, and power use these resources to maintain their high class positions and often have the means to keep others from achieving upward mobility. Rich and powerful people have a better chance of maintaining their position over generations than people born into the middle class have of reaching these positions, and middle class people have a better chance of improving their own and their children's life chances than do those of working or poorer classes (Bowles et al. 2005; Corak 2004; Frank and Cook 1996; Lareau 2003; Neckerman 2004).

Social Classes as Subcultures In addition to material differences, and partly based on material differences, social classes have also been found to differ in attitudes, behavior, consumption patterns, lifestyle, values, and social connections. The members of a social class tend to share similar life experiences, occupational roles, values, educational backgrounds, affiliations, leisure activities, buying habits, religious affiliation, and political views. Not merely income, but how that income is spent, is an important dimension of class status (*New York Times* 2005).

On the surface, some cultural aspects of social class seemed to be blurring; even while income and wealth inequalities rose over the past 30 years, consumer-related lifestyles seemed to grow more similar. This was partly because, thanks to globalization, cheaper consumer goods

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life chances The opportunities that people have to fulfill their potential in society.

The consumer culture of the American middle class has largely been built on credit card debt. As this system has collapsed in the current recession, realizing the American Dream is no longer possible for many working-class and middle-class Americans.

and impacts on many other dimensions of life, such as safety, availability of high-quality schools, and, as we see later in the chapter, the chances of being affected by environmental pollution and disasters. The high standard of material comfort so widely spread across America clouds the importance of class divisions compared to the rest of the world, even if much of this material comfort was based on growing debt obligations, and even as, in the wake of growing unemployment and underemployment, many Americans are now restricting many of those purchases such as home improvements, new clothes, eating out, and taking vacations, which once seemed essential to their middle-class identities but now seem like nonessentials.

Although American class differences are less reliable in predicting political choice or religious affiliation than they once were, class status is still very significant in such things as family structure and educational achievement. The upper classes are more likely to be married before they have children, they have fewer children, and they have them later in life. All these factors are related to the possibilities of upward social mobility (*New York Times* 2005:125). As Katherine Newman notes, family circumstances are among the most important factors determining whether those in the category she calls the "near poor," who have household incomes between $20,000 and $40,000 a year for a family of four, can make it into the middle class (Newman and Chen 2006). "Women with children and no one to help them with those kids [are] much more likely to get trapped—they [can't] get more education which limit[s] their job options [and] their contact with the labor market [is] more fragile and episodic." (Newman quoted in Press 2007:23).

Beyond participating in shared patterns of spending, family structure, and educational achievement, members of a social class also tend to associate more with one another than with people in other classes. Thus, the cultural and interactional dimensions of social class reinforce one another. Through interaction based on common residence and schooling, religious participation, voluntary associations, and other social institutions, people learn the lifestyle of their social class. Because lifestyle is an important part of sociability, informal and intimate social relationships, such as friendship and marriage, also tend to bring together people from the same social class. This partly explains why social classes tend to be largely endogamous.

were more easily available; partly because credit was easy to get (this has now turned out to have a very high price); partly because more people within a household work, contributing to slightly increasing median household incomes; and partly because a "culture of consumption" meant spending on consumer goods rather than saving (*New York Times* 2005:135). For example, a middle-class family earning about $50,000 a year may own a flat screen TV, drive a BMW, buy expensive chocolates, take a Caribbean cruise, and will almost certainly have a cell phone.

But this accumulation of consumer goods that seems to blur class lines is only a small part of the story of class-differentiated lifestyles. Money does make a lifestyle. As luxury has gone down-market, the market produces ever more expensive luxury goods that are affordable only for those with great incomes and wealth: $4,000 handbags, $130,000 Hummer automobiles, and $12,000 mother/baby diamond bracelet sets. Even more than material goods, class differences are expressed in personal services and exclusive experiences: personal chefs and personal trainers, face lifts and other cosmetic surgery, $400-an-hour tutors for the children, who in any case will be attending private schools. And while the middle class may have taken group tours to Europe or Caribbean cruises, the rich are shelling out $50,000 for a 10-day, private jet tour of the seven most wonderful sights in the world sponsored by National Geographic (Newman and Chen 2007). But perhaps the most important lifestyle difference related to income is the ability of the wealthy to buy homes in residential areas restricted to those with a great deal of money; where people live reflects the American class structure in one of its most permanent aspects

Race: A Cultural Construction

As noted in the chapter opening story about Malaysian diversity, "race" is a cultural construction, based on specific histories and social structures. To make sense of the

conversation between Nanda and her friend, we need to understand Malaysia's history. Malaysia has three primary ethnic groups—Chinese, Indian, and Malay—as well as a small population of Portuguese descended from 16th-century traders who politically dominated Malay society for 100 years. The Portuguese were later defeated by the British, who colonized Malaysia (then called Malaya), and replaced the Portuguese in the most important political and economic positions. When the British left, after Malaysia's independence, the Chinese moved into many commercial and professional positions and now dominate the Malaysian economy. Having taken over the economic position formerly occupied by the Portuguese and then the British, the Chinese are now defined as having taken over their racial category as well.

The term **race** is used to define people based on *perceived* physical differences that imply hereditary differences. The conversation on Malaysia illustrates, however, that race is not a natural category, but one constructed by humans in specific cultural and historical contexts. But although race is a culturally constructed category, it becomes a significant social fact: it is used to justify differential treatment and discrimination and affects the lives of both the racial majority and racial minorities.

Even when there are no objective physical differences, such as skin color, between groups of people, other differences, such as class, ethnicity, and caste, are often conceptualized in racial terms. For example, the 19th-century English theologian Charles Kingsley described the Irish as "human chimpanzees. . . . a race of utter savages, truly barbarous and brutish. . .," noting unhappily, that "[their] skins are as white as ours" (in Curtis 1968:84). The idea of a "degenerate Irish race," differing also from the British by class and religion, was used by the British to justify their control over Ireland. As the Irish migrated to the United States, the notion of their cultural and biological inferiority was also commonly expressed in the language of race (Shanklin 1994:3–7).

Similarly, in Japan, the concept of race is applied to the Burakumin, a stigmatized and oppressed group perceived by the Japanese as innately physically and morally distinct from other Japanese, although there are in fact no physical differences between them. The Burakumin are thus an "invisible race," distinguished by differences in family name, occupation, and place of residence. Despite their official emancipation in 1871 and no cultural differences from other Japanese, however, the hereditary

stigma against the Burakumin lives on (De Vos and Wagatsuma 1966; Onishi 2009).

As in many systems of inherited stratification, even where physical differences do not define groups, ethnicity, class, caste, or other social distinctions are symbolized in biological or racial terms. These differences are then associated with traits of culture, character, morality, intelligence, personality, and purity that are seen as natural, inherited, and unalterable, in a word, ascribed. Although it is socially easier to distinguish a race when individuals differ in obvious physical characteristics, the Japanese-Burakumin relationship, the English perceptions of the Irish, and, as we see later in the chapter, the racial designation of many European immigrants demonstrate that a lack of observable physical differences does not prohibit the invention of racial categories or the emergence of racial stratification.

A Comparison of Race and Racial Stratification in the United States and Brazil

Racial stratification occurs in societies with different culturally constructed views of race. For example, in Brazil, race is viewed as a continuum. In the United States, race is largely defined as a binary opposition between black and white. In South Africa, under **apartheid,** multiple exclusive racial classifications—black, white, Coloured, and Asian—were formally recognized, treated differently in law and life, and occupied different and almost exclusive statuses within the society (Frederickson 2009; A. Marx 1998).

The Cultural Construction of Race and Racial Stratification in the United States

In the United States, race is culturally constructed largely on the basis of a few observable traits such as skin color and hair texture and presumed ancestry. Apart from a few regional variations on race—for example, the Anglo-Hispanic distinction in the American Southwest, the complex racial/ethnic system in Hawaii, and the place of Native Americans—historically, the North American system of racial stratification primarily divides people into blacks and whites. This dichotomy ignores two realities: first, that skin color actually forms a continuum; and second, that widespread racial mixing occurred historically and continues in the present (Basson 2008). Recent trends show, however, that a cultural view of race that includes a mixed racial identity is increasing. For the first time, the 2000 U.S. Census permitted people to self-identify as more than one race and 7 million people, almost half of whom were under 18, chose to do so

race A culturally constructed category based on *perceived* physical differences.

apartheid The South African system of exclusive racial groups—black, white, colored, and Asian—that were formally recognized, segregated, treated differently in law and life, and occupied different and almost exclusive statuses within the society.

(Boynton 2006; Nobles 2000). Indeed, some scholars suggest that the United States and Brazil may be converging in their racial formations, as multiraciality undermines the American "binary race project" (Daniel 2006), though other scholars find this unlikely, and indeed, hope for a post-racial American society rather than a "hyper-racial" one similar to Brazil.

The culturally constructed nature of the American binary of race is revealed in antebellum Southern court decisions. For the purposes of school segregation, courts held that the Chinese were white but that individuals with at least 1/32nd "Negro blood" were black, even if their skin color was indistinguishable from whites (Dominguez 1986:3; Loewen 1988). In an ironic comment on the American construction of race, Haitian dictator "Papa Doc" Duvalier once told an American reporter that 96 percent of Haitians were white. Surprised and puzzled, the reporter asked on what grounds he arrived at this percentage. Duvalier explained that Haiti used the same procedure for counting whites—a "drop" of white blood—that Americans used for counting blacks (Hirschfeld 1996).

In the United States, we think of race mainly in terms of African-, Hispanic/Latino, Asian-, or Native Americans—that is, minority races. But white is also a racial identity. Because white is a cultural norm in the United States, however, the privileges and advantages that go with it are unconsciously assumed and largely invisible (T. Allen 1997; Frankenburg 1993; Hartigan 1997; J. Hill 1998). For whites, ordinary experiences such as shopping, buying or renting a place to live, finding a hairdresser, or using a credit card, do not generally involve a reflection on their racial identity. But for Hispanic/Latino Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and particularly African Americans, these everyday activities cannot be taken for granted (McIntosh 1999).

The binary form of American racial classification grew out of historical conditions of slavery. The racial stereotypes that were used to justify slavery and later segregation were, shamefully, supported by the then emerging biological and social sciences, which legitimized races as hierarchically arranged natural categories characterized by physical, cultural, intellectual, and moral differences (Smedley 1998), though such hypotheses today are roundly criticized by anthropologists (Nisbett 2009).

There is much academic debate over whether social class or race is more important in explaining the American stratification system. In fact, the two factors, along with ethnicity, interact in complex ways to produce the particular social stratification system of the United States. Race is misguided as a scientific concept, but race as a social fact is centrally implicated in the American social stratification system. Race, particularly as it intersects with class, impacts every aspect of life, indeed, it impacts the potential of life itself. This is demonstrated by statis-

tics on the higher mortality rate for both infants and mothers among African Americans (Chelala 2006; Stolberg 1999): a black male baby born in the United States today will live 7 years less than a white male baby (Calman et al. 2005:8). Racial disparities are also revealed in access to health care and health care outcomes. Cancer survival rates, death rates for heart disease and HIV/AIDS, and complications from diseases like diabetes, such as loss of a limb or kidney disease, are all substantially higher for African Americans than for whites. The causes of these and many other health disparities are clearly linked to unequal treatment and health care. And these are linked significantly to medical insurance. In New York City, for example, 30 percent of African Americans, Latinos, and members of other minority groups, are uninsured, compared to 17 percent of whites. Where people are covered by Medicaid, they are also treated differently by health care institutions, more likely, for example, to be seen by rotating medical students and interns, and thus less likely to receive coordinated medical care (Calman 2005:25).

Not only are race and racism highly correlated with industrial pollution (Akom 2008), as we see in this chapter's "Ethnography" section, but race compounded by class also affects the traumas caused and experienced in environmental disasters, as tragically demonstrated by Hurricane Katrina. In New Orleans, death came most often for the poor: those who had no private transportation, no credit cards, no wealthy relatives to rely on, no home insurance, and no resources to evacuate the young and the aged. As anthropologist Neil Smith notes, not just the effect of the hurricane, but the government's response to it, deepened the social grooves—of class and race—already built into New Orleans society (Paredes 2006; Smith 2005:9). In a sad confirmation of this view, a white vigilante caught shooting African Americans during the Katrina aftermath justified his action as a defender of his property and neighborhood, saying, "I'm not a racist. . . . I'm a classist. I want to live around people who want the same things as me" (Thompson 2009). Thus do race and class intersect!

Racial stratification also affects job and educational opportunities open to racial minorities; access to fair credit, salary levels, and accumulation of wealth, all of which affect social mobility; home ownership, mortgage rates, and housing foreclosures; use of public spaces; levels and types of violence; and interactions with law enforcement and the criminal justice system (Bajaj and Nixon 2006; *New York Times* 2005; Reed, Jr. 2006). As anthropologist Faye Harrison points out (2009), in spite of the election of the first African-American U.S. president, racism as a system is still embedded in American society, particularly in the forms of mass unemployment, mass incarceration, and mass disenfranchisement. Although African Americans and Latinos comprise only 25 percent of the national population, they are more than 60 percent

Anthropology Makes a Difference

The RACE Project

Am. Anthropological Assn.

This logo from the RACE: Are We So Different project emphasizes that race is not a sound biological concept but rather a social construction.

"Racism is not about how you look, it is about how people assign meaning to how you look." This idea underlies the *RACE: Are We So Different?* Project, an exhibit developed by the American Anthropological Association (AAA) aimed at educating the public about the reality—and the unreality—of race. The project was initiated by a group of anthropologists during the AAA presidency of Yolanda Moses and under the project leadership of Mary Margaret Overbey, an AAA senior staff member. Over 6 years in the making, the RACE Project is organized as a traveling museum exhibit, website, and program of educational materials, whose aim is to convey a comprehensive and understandable narrative about race and human variation.

The three main messages of the exhibit and its associated materials are that race is a recent human invention, that race is about culture, not biology, and that, despite the election of America's first African-American president, race and racism continue to be embedded in American culture, social institutions, and everyday life. The RACE Project uses the lens of history, science, and lived experience to explore the everyday experience of race, the contemporary science that is challenging commonly held ideas about race, and the history of the idea of race in the United States.

As Mary Margaret Overbey notes, "we like to think that America has moved beyond race but race remains a powerful, if unspoken, idea in the United States"

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of those in prison. Black women, too, are overrepresented in prison, convicted at rates 10 to 35 times higher than white women. The effect of these disparities on minority communities are also reflected in many state laws that disqualify ex-felons from employment, public housing, welfare benefits, college student loans, and voting.

The importance of the intersection of race with class is indicated by long-standing inequalities in income and wealth between blacks and whites: in 2005, the median per capita income for blacks was $16,629; for whites it was $28,946. This economic gap is even more obvious in asset accumulation: in 2004, African-American families' median net worth was $20,600, and that of Latinos $18,600, only 14.6 percent and 13.2 percent, respectively, of the $140,700 median net worth for whites (Muhammad 2008). And the current recession has made this gap even wider: the meltdown in Detroit particularly impacted African Americans because the auto industry was one of their most important routes to upward mobility into the middle class, and the chances for new employment among African Americans is reduced by their lack of college education compared to other groups (Chapman 2008).

Educational achievement is only one among the many social institutions that reflect the stratified nature of class, race, ethnicity, and indigenous status in the United States. Anthropologists differ in explaining the variation in educational achievements among different American minority groups. Anthropologist John Ogbu argued for the importance of culture: he believed that "voluntary minorities," those who came to the United States voluntarily in order to better their lives, are higher educational achievers than "involuntary minorities." Involuntary minorities include Native Americans; African Americans, who were brought here as slaves; and Mexican-Americans, who were incorporated through military policies of expansion (though their present population consists substantially of voluntary migrants and it is unclear how, or if, this has affected their educational achievement). Ogbu wrote that voluntary minorities believe in the possibilities for social mobility and thus emphasize education as a route to getting ahead (Gibson and Ogbu 1991:211–218), whereas involuntary minorities view the social hierarchy of the United States as unfair, permanent, and systemically discriminatory. They are less likely to believe that educational achievement will lead to success in life.

Ogbu (and others, see Patterson 2006) hold that many students from involuntary minorities cope with their subordinated social status by creating a secondary culture in which peer group values of cool behavior are more important than academic achievement. This "oppositional culture," characteristic of inner-city Latino and African-American ghettos, makes academic failure likely (see Smedley 1998a:697). Indeed, as anthropologist Philippe Bourgois (1996), in his study of East Harlem, New York, points out, the school itself is a significant place for learning this oppositional culture, which includes the necessary skills for surviving on the streets of inner cities—fist fighting, verbal jousting, and strategic cruelty at the expense of weaker classmates—all of which undermine effective learning.

(2007). Through videos, oral histories, visuals, and provocative interactive computer exercises, the RACE Project exhibit demonstrates that race is embedded in almost all areas of American life: home and neighborhood, health and medicine, and education and schools. Race and racism are not just inside our heads, but are built into American laws, culture, and social institutions.

The RACE Project has an historical perspective, underlining that racial and ethnic categories are made by humans and change over time. The exhibit draws on contemporary science to demonstrate that human beings are more genetically alike than they are different and that no one gene, or any set of genes, supports the idea of race. Race—or sorting people by physical differences—is a recent invention, not more than a few hundred years old. In the United States it is closely linked to the growth of the plantation economy, and in other countries is also linked to a specific set of political and economic histories.

The RACE Project is informed by extensive research interviews with high school students, community groups, museum visitors, and focus groups, as a way of discovering what people think about race and how they talk about it; the Project also involved collaboration with many scientific institutions and scholars from different disciplines. The interactive website (http://www.understandingrace.org) includes a virtual tour of the RACE exhibit, videos, historical timelines, and quizzes, as well as scholarly papers and a bibliography, and a family guide that helps parents talk to children about race. With its four-field holistic approach, anthropology was a natural to tackle this longstanding issue in American life. Check out the website: We know you'll agree that the RACE Project is an important contribution anthropology makes in its role of addressing significant issues in today's world.

Other anthropologists, while acknowledging the negative effect of the inner city oppositional culture, emphasize that these cultural patterns have their source in the poverty of inner-city neighborhoods; discriminatory educational policies such as low expectations of minority students; overcrowded and underfunded schools; and less-qualified teachers (Gibson 1997; Mateu-Gelabert and Lune 2003, 2007). They note that much social science research shows that most inner-city residents support mainstream cultural norms and behaviors, especially educational achievement (Anderson 1999; Mateu-Gelabert and Lune 2007).

Thus, where an oppositional cultural model puts the burden on inner-city students to change their culture, the model's critics emphasize that educational achievement among minorities depends on a fairer distribution of resources, more equitable educational policies, and the transformation of schools into safer, more disciplined environments. This approach emphasizes political economy, race, and class as more important than culture in explaining and maintaining the American system of racial, ethnic, and class stratification.

The Cultural Construction of Race and Racial Stratification in Brazil

As in the United States, Brazil had a plantation economy whose core labor force consisted of African slaves. After 1888, when Brazil abolished slavery, the Brazilian government followed a policy of "whitening" by encouraging immigration of Europeans. Brazil, however, did not translate racial distinctions into law and interracial marriage and sexual relations were not illegal (Goldstein 1999; Sheriff 2001). This is in contrast to the United States, where such laws, affecting not only the marriage of whites with African Americans, but also with Japanese, Filipinos, and Native Americans, became central ideological tools for constituting and reproducing white supremacy (Pascoe 2008).

Interracial sex and marriage was not uncommon in Brazil, which is reflected in Brazilian racial self-identity. Today, individuals of African descent account for about 45 percent of Brazil's population, yet only about 15 percent of these people identify themselves as *preta* (black) on the census forms. The rest self-identify as *parda* (brown, of partially African ancestry). This self-identification is tied to social stratification: Brazilian understandings of race may be flexible, but the distribution of wealth and education in Brazil is profoundly unequal and racially based: whites at the top, blacks at the bottom, and *parda* somewhere between the two.

Brazilian racial classification is extremely complex, particularly among those who self-identify as African descended. In a community studied by anthropologist Conrad Kottak (1992:67), almost everyone had slave ancestry and most would have been considered black in the United States. However, almost half identified themselves as mulatto, an intermediate category between black and white. Again in contrast to the American racial determination by ancestry, in this village brothers and sisters were often classified as belonging to different races, using multiple physical criteria such as skin color,

Polluted Promises: Race, Health, and the Environment

The relationship between pollution and health and racial and class stratification in the United States is well documented. A new ethnography of a small Southern community, by anthropologist Melissa Checker, documents the vulnerability of African Americans to industrial pollution and the ways in which a community response is shaped by racial stratification in both its successes and its failures. Checker's study of environmental injustice in Hyde Park, a black community on the outskirts of Augusta, Georgia, explores how racism shapes the very notion of "the environment." For middle-class and upper-middle-class professionally oriented environmentalists, the environment is defined as wild spaces and their conservationist movement is aimed at protecting these spaces from human intervention. The African Americans of Hyde Park, on the other hand, see the environment as something poisonous that they need to be protected from and as another example of racial discrimination. Checker's ethnography demonstrated that, when it comes to the environment, race trumps class. She found that middle-class Hispanics and African Americans suffered greater exposure to lead, dioxin, and mercury poisoning than lower-class whites (Checker 2005:14). Race is particularly potent in predicting where hazardous waste facilities are located. Environmental pollution is 500

People flee their homes with their belongings after Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans. The African-American community was hit particularly hard by this disaster, demonstrating how environmental issues are affected by racial stratification.

percent higher in African-American communities than in white communities, and in the Environmental Protection Agency southeastern region, three-quarters of the largest hazardous waste landfills sit in majority black areas.

Checker calls the environmentalist movement that grew out of Hyde Park's attempts to deal with contamination an environmental justice movement. It aims to redress the disproportionate incidence of environmental contamination in com-

munities of color and communities of the poor and enable them to live unthreatened by the risks posed by environmental degradation and contamination. She demonstrates that mainstream American culture, which views black urban communities as isolated, apathetic enclaves of violence and crime, engenders public policies that dismiss the voices of these communities and leads to the proliferation of toxic waste sites in their midst.

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nose length and shape, eye color and shape, hair type and color, and shape of the lips. The village used more than 10 different racial categories to describe people; these included mulatto, *mulatto claro* (light mulatto), or *sarara,* meaning a person with reddish skin and light curly hair. The terms were applied inconsistently, and there was wide disagreement among the villagers in placing themselves and others in racially defined categories. These placements were frequently mediated by social and economic class standings.

Although Brazilian culture has in the past emphasized its Euro-Brazilian history, Brazil, like many nations throughout Latin America today, promotes its mixed racial/ethnic heritage as a central aspect of its national

identity and progressive ideology. In the 1940s, the influential Brazilian anthropologist and politician Gilberto Freyre promoted the idea that Brazilian national identity resulted from mixing people of European, African, and indigenous ancestry (Bailey and Telles 2006; Freyre 1946). Freyre, a student of Franz Boas at Columbia, adopted many of Boas's understandings of race and racial equality (Sánchez-Eppler 1992). His influence gave race mixing in Brazil a positive connotation, compared to the United States, where it has been generally repressed among both whites and blacks.

Freyre's work was used to promote the notion among politicians, academics, and in the culture at large, that Brazil was a racial democracy. The 1970 census, for ex-

The residents of Hyde Park were mainly sharecroppers from rural Georgia who used their savings to buy plots of land in a swampy area on the outskirts of Augusta after World War II. Beginning around 1970, Hyde Park residents began noticing the environmental and health problems besetting the community: T cell lymphoma, children fainting in school, children with asthma, fruit trees and vegetables rotting in previously healthy gardens. Their growing awareness that local people were getting sick and dying at an alarming rate paralleled the growth of industrial plants. A power plant, a ceramics factory, a junkyard, a wood treatment plant, and more than 35 chemical plants were all built near middle- and low-income black subdivisions, including Hyde Park, under low environmental standards and ineffective enforcement of environmental laws. "This positioned Hyde Park residents [and the residents of other African-American communities] on the front line of toxic hazards. . . . [the] ceramic factory left white dust on cars; its smokestack penetrated the skyline, pyramids of tires from the junkyards were higher than the houses; odiferous water filled the ditches in heavy rains; and the chemical companies contaminated the air, water, and soil." (Checker 2005:64). By 1990, the community noticed residents falling ill with mysterious or uncommon forms of cancer

and skin diseases, and discovered one possible reason, a nearby wood-preserving factory. The factory had been sued by a nearby white community, but the black community was not informed either about the findings of contamination or the lawsuit. They were thus not eligible for compensation, so they decided to investigate on their own and found many other sources of pollution.

In 1991 the University of Georgia analyzed produce and soil from Hyde Park gardens and found elevated levels of arsenic and chromium; there were also well-founded fears that the groundwater serving Hyde Park was contaminated. In the absence of gas lines, which were not installed until 1970, community residents cooked on leftover creosote-treated wood chips from the wood factory, not knowing at that time that creosote was a cancer-causing agent. The noise pollution in the community was also an unbearable source of stress: release sirens from the ceramics plant sometimes blared for 8 hours straight. As information about the poisoned land in Hyde Park spread, it became impossible for residents to sell their property. The Hyde Park inhabitants were caught in a deadly bind: too poor to move, they were tied to an environment dangerous to their health and for many their poverty made health care unavailable.

As Hyde Park now became identified with decline and destruction, many residents ceased investing in their homes and the neighborhood became rundown, leading to a vicious downward cycle from which they had tried to escape in search of the American Dream. Checker's ethnography documented not only the racism of environmental injustice but also the ways in which the environmental movement in Hyde Park was shaped by the past history of racism and its continuation into the present. Ultimately, the movement achieved some successes, both by joining with mainstream environmentalists and by continuing its own culturally unique processes of political and civil rights activism. In her ethnographic study of one small community, Checker illustrates the many issues at stake in the fight for environmental justice.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. How does racism impact the health and life chances of African Americans?
2. How does the intersection of race and class impact environmental pollution?
3. What are some of the official and informal factors that have become built into America's racial stratification system?

Source: Melissa Checker, 2005. *Polluted Promises: Environmental Racism and the Search for Justice in a Southern Town.* New York: New York University Press.

ample, did not ask people's race; the government argued that because there was no race issue in Brazil, there was no need to ask the question (Bailey and Telles 2006:77). The public denial of race in Brazil has had both positive and negative effects. On the one hand, the linkage between Brazilian identity and mixed ancestry has probably made it easier for many Brazilians to negotiate their identity. It has also led to a society where, at least in theory, opportunity is open to people of diverse physical characteristics and ancestry. On the other hand, the persistent denial that race is a social issue has led to a widespread refusal to take discrimination and racial stratification seriously (Reichman 1995), in spite of the many studies that show that racial inequality exacts a high toll.

On every measure of social and economic well-being, Brazilians who self-identify as having African ancestry are far worse off than those who self-identify as white. Their illiteracy rates are far higher and their wages are far lower. Higher education is almost exclusively the domain of white Brazilians. In the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) for all nations in 2000, which measures national quality of life, Brazil ranked 74th in the world. However, by the same criteria ranking white and African-descended populations separately, the white population would rank 48th and the African-descended population 108th (Roland 2001).

In Brazil, the educational disparities between whites and nonwhites are much greater than in the United

Unlike the American system of two races, white and black, in Brazil, the construction of race allows for a wide spectrum of physical characteristics. However, both cultures are characterized by racially based stratification.

States, a difference based partly on different traditions of public education (Andrews 1992:243). In the United States, providing education is a major obligation of the state and local government, but in Brazil, governments have assumed that responsibility only since World War II. Thus the general level of education in Brazil for both whites and nonwhites is much lower than in the United States; Brazil has a high rate of illiteracy, and higher education is almost entirely the province of white elites (Danaher and Shellenberger 1995:91). In contrast, most Americans, white and black, are literate, and most are high-school graduates, though black education levels lag far behind whites.

The comparison of Brazil and the United States clearly shows that racial stratification can occur in societies with very different cultural constructions of race.

Ethnicity and Ethnic Stratification in the United States

In Chapter 11, "Political Organization," we emphasized the dominant anthropological perspective that ethnicity, like race, is a cultural construction that changes over time (page 253). As anthropologist Fredrik Barth (1998/1969) argued, ethnicity has important cultural content, but ethnic identity is constructed by groups to differentiate themselves from other similar groups. Barth further argued that ethnicity must be viewed as an aspect of rela-

tionships among groups in a society which may be competitive, conflictual, cooperative, or a combination of these. Barth's approach led anthropologists to ask new questions about how ethnicity works as a vehicle for association, collective action, and personal identity; and how ethnic groups and ethnic identities emerge, change, and disappear in responses to economic and social environments. Especially important for these processes are the contexts of political or economic inequality, competition between groups for resources, and more recently, globalization.

The continuous process of constructing ethnicity in the United States, and the many debates over ethnic diversity, largely focuses on the narrative of America as a nation of immigrants, who come to this country to pursue freedom from fear and the vision of the American Dream. This narrative takes place simultaneously with the ongoing project of creating an American national identity—a process that began with the American Revolution (A. Wallace 1999). From the beginning, ethnicity has been implicated in America's system of social stratification: the early, idealistic visions of America as a land of economic opportunity, upward mobility, and political freedom were largely restricted to immigrants from northern and western Europe. The American Constitution limited citizenship to those who were "free and white (and male)," which early on excluded Native Americans, Mexican Americans, and African Americans, and later excluded Asians and others from Latin America, southern and eastern Europe, and the Middle East.

Immigrants to America were identified by their national origins—the countries they came from and the cultures they brought with them—what today we call their ethnicity. But between 1880 and 1920, the era of the largest and most varied immigration to the United States, immigrants also came to be defined in racial terms. Southern and eastern Europeans, such as Greeks and Poles, were racially distinguished from the "Nordic" races of northern and western Europe. By the 1920s restrictive immigration laws effectively limited immigration to these Nordic groups, who were viewed as culturally, physically, and politically similar to members of the groups who held political power in the United States. Proponents of restrictive immigration claimed that members of the southern and eastern European "races" could never become good American citizens and that the United States would degenerate if it tried to incorporate them. Immigration of people from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America was all but completely halted. The nexus between national origin and race in this period led to several legal cases in which the Supreme Court grappled with the definition of "white" as immigrants from India, Lebanon, and other places appealed

emerged, with competition for jobs and political power again at the heart of the conflicts, though the rhetoric of "culture clash" persists.

Models of Immigrant Adaptation

Until the mid-20th century, the dominant American ideology regarding immigrants was **assimilation,** a process through which immigrants were expected to abandon their distinctive cultures and become "mainstream" Americans. Settlement houses, public schools, and citizenship classes were formed to teach immigrants "American" ways and motivate them to assimilate. The famous "melting pot" analogy compared American society to a stew in which all ethnicities were blended to produce an American identity (see Glazer and Moynihan 1970). To some extent this was true and by the 1950s much of the cultural distinctiveness of many ethnic groups had been lost in the so-called melting pot. However, the melting pot analogy referred primarily to ethnic groups descended from European populations. The pot excluded the racially defined minorities—Mexican, African American, and Native American—as well as the very small numbers of Asians or people from the Middle East. Additionally, although European ethnic groups lost much of their identity, they persisted and tended to organize around political goals and mobilize to gain access to economic resources (Glazer and Moynihan 1970).

A policy of assimilation was also imposed on Native Americans, though even those such as the Cherokee, who had adopted many "American" cultural patterns, were subject to removal from and appropriation of their land by whites (Norgren 1996; Wallace 1999), indicating the importance of economic motivations by the majority population. By the mid-19th century, Native Americans had been largely forced onto reservations and become a captive audience for the teaching of the American values of individualism, Christianity, privately owned land, and the English language by missionaries and Indian agents of the U.S. government. Native Americans were also forced to send their children to American boarding schools, often hundreds of miles from their local communities. Such schooling was intended to permanently alienate native children from their cultures and languages.

Multiculturalism highlights the cultural contributions different immigrant groups make to the American nation. One element of highlighting ethnic diversity is through ethnically focused parades, as in this St. Patrick's Day parade in New York City.

their denial of entry into the United States based on their "nonwhite" racial status (Lopez 2006; Moore 2002).

Race remains a salient category in the definition of Native Americans and African Americans, whereas Latinos, including Mexican Americans, are less likely to identify themselves—and be identified by others—in racial terms now than they were 50 years ago (Strum and Selee 2004). Latinos are now more likely to figure importantly in the American narrative of ethnic diversity. For many ethnic groups of European ancestry the most obvious cultural differences, particularly language, have faded, but more subtle ethnic patterns, such as food preferences; verbal and nonverbal means of communication; the experience of health, illness, and pain; occupational choices; and voting patterns continue to exist (Cerroni Long 1993; Schensul 1997).

Although the dominant American national narrative is that it is "a nation of immigrants," in fact, debates over immigration have a very long history in this country. These debates were often couched in cultural terms: whether or not a particular group of immigrants brought with them cultural values and practices—republicanism, individualism, hard work, thrift, a commitment to freedom, and reason—that were consistent with or in opposition to American culture. But economic and political considerations were always present. At the height of immigration during the mid to late 19th century, for example, some widely expressed concerns were that an influx of immigrants would result in lower urban wages, or that immigrants would flood and then dominate the western part of the country, or that they would form voting blocs subject to political manipulation. Passionate debate over immigration—both legal and illegal—has currently re-

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assimilation The view that immigrants should abandon their cultural distinctiveness and become mainstream Americans.

Although these assimilationist policies largely failed to persuade Native Americans to adopt mainstream culture, the policies did result in loss of culture and land, and an increase in social problems such as alcoholism and poverty. By the 1930s, under the directorship of John Collier, an anthropologist who headed the Bureau of Indian Affairs, these government policies were reversed to support the strengthening of Indian cultures and societies (Norgren and Nanda 2006). In the 1960s, with the emergence of the civil rights movement, Native Americans again mounted a struggle, which continues, to reclaim their cultures and their land. These were only partially successful, however, and their position on the lower rungs of the social stratification system has hardly changed (Perry 2008).

After the civil rights movement of the 1960s, concepts of ethnicity and its relation to American nationhood changed again. Multiculturalism, which embraces cultural diversity as a positive value that adds richness to the whole society, emerged to contest older, assimilationist views and to challenge the theory of the melting pot. Most important, a new Immigration and Nationality Act, passed in 1965, explicitly aimed at reversing the discriminatory basis of earlier immigration laws. This act greatly expanded the number of people permitted to immigrate from previously discriminated against nations; abolished immigration quotas; gave high priority to the social goal of family unification; and put refugee immigration on a more structured basis (Fix and Passel 1994; Lamphere 1992: Introduction). As a significant result of this law, immigration increased substantially, particularly from China and Korea, the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, the Caribbean, parts of Central and South America, including Mexico, and Africa, groups that were previously restricted by earlier immigration laws.

As anthropologists study these new immigrants, they take into account the variety of changing contexts of immigration as these are shaped by changes in local, national, and global economies and political conditions (Brettell 2003; di Leonardo 1984; Foner 2003; Lamphere 1992). Such conditions include the rise of international terrorism; the cyclical nature of global, national, and regional economies; the increase of illegal immigration; transnationalism (see page 186); and the events of 9/11.

## Muslim Immigrants after 9/11 in the United States and Europe

For more than 200 years, Muslims lived in almost near invisibility in the United States, blending into an ethnically diverse landscape. From 1870 to World War I, there was an increase in Christian immigration from Muslim-dominated countries such as Syria and Lebanon. In the effort to establish national organizations to facilitate their integration into American society, however, these immigrants constructed a common ethnic identity as Arab (Ewing 2008).

The 1965 immigration laws opened the United States to skilled, highly educated Muslim immigrants, from South Asia as well as from the Middle East. As the numbers and diverse origins of Muslims increased, the new immigrants began organizing as Muslims, focusing on maintaining Islamic religious practices rather than identifying themselves with their distinctive nationally based ethnicities. In the United States this is reflected in a more public presence for Islam, with expanded construction of mosques and Islamic schools (Abdo 2006), the expansion of a Koranically acceptable banking system that rejects charging interest on loans (*New York Times* 2009), and particularly after 9/11, the emergence of Muslim institutions providing information about Islam to the American public.

This new emphasis on Muslim religious identity is particularly strong among the younger generation, who frequently adopt public expressions of Islam, for example, young men wearing beards and young women wear-
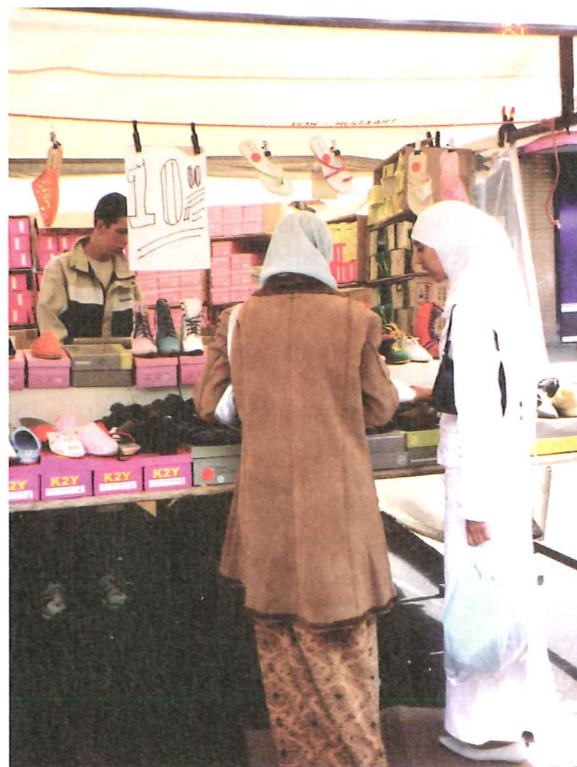
American Muslims are generally well educated and are found in all walks of American economic life. Ethnically, they are a very diverse community, but today outward expressions of Islamic identity, such as modest dress for women, are becoming more widely adopted, especially among young people.

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multiculturalism The view that cultural diversity is a positive value that should be incorporated into national identity and public policy.

ing head scarves. This generation also expresses a greater interest in an intellectual understanding of Islam than their parents, along with a greater commitment to Islamic practice (Goodstein 2009). The religious orientation of younger Muslims has resulted in closer ties between Muslim immigrants with the many African Americans who have converted to Islam (Strum 2005).

Previous to 9/11, there was little ethnography or social science research on immigrant Muslim communities, but this is changing (Abdo 2006; Ewing 2008; see also Strum 2005, 2006; Strum and Tarantolo 2003). Particularly since 9/11, Muslims, like many other groups of immigrants, have faced considerable hostility in the United States (Nguyen 2005). The historically widespread American concerns about the incompatibility of various immigrant cultures—for example, Catholics; Japanese and other Asian Americans; Latinos; German anarchists; Mormons; among others (Norgren and Nanda 2006)—provide a broader context in which to analyze Muslim immigration (Moore 2002; Shryock 2002). However, recent surveys indicate that although Americans have both little knowledge of and a strong hostility toward Islam, American Muslims express almost as much satisfaction with their lives as other Americans, and on many socioeconomic indicators, such as annual income, compare favorably with non-Muslims (Pew Research 2007). Fifty percent of American foreign-born Muslims have attended college and most believe that with hard work they can fulfill their American Dream; this is a higher percentage than among African-American Muslims. Sixty-three percent of American foreign-born Muslims see no conflict between being a devout Muslim and living in a modern society, although some younger Muslims do identify with extreme fundamentalism. The title of a Pew Research Report, "Muslims: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," reflects the report's conclusion that American Muslims are highly assimilated and believe in adopting American customs (2007).

This picture contrasts in many ways with the experiences of Muslims in European countries (Goodstein 2009). Although after 9/11 young American Muslims increasingly express feelings of alienation from other Americans, the Muslim presence in America has engendered little of the extreme conflict and violence that has occurred in Europe. This is partly because European nations tend to be far more culturally homogenous than the United States and their Muslim populations make up a far greater percentage of their populations; in France, for example, Muslims are 10 percent of the population. European Muslims are also far less economically integrated into their societies. In France, for example, their widespread poverty, discrimination in employment, and spatial segregation in huge housing projects at the margins of big cities has been a cause of much conflict and frequent violent interaction with the police (Ireland 2005).

Many European Muslims, like the Turks in Germany, or the North Africans and West Africans in France, were recruited into the economy under conditions of economic growth. With economic contractions, they are now not only viewed as an economic burden, but often as a social problem and a source of cultural disturbance as well (Ireland 2005). Flashpoints between Muslims and Europeans include issues such as the building of mosques or the wearing of head scarves by Muslim women (Bowen 2007; Buruma 2006). So far, attempts to address these conflicts with the larger society by various European governments have been only partly successful (Laurence and Strum 2008).

Latino Immigrants and Social Stratification in the United States

Latinos in the United States are a large and diverse ethnic group, sharing a common cultural heritage of the Spanish language (see page 115). The approximately 21 million Latino immigrants and their descendants include approximately 13 million Mexican Americans; 3 million Puerto Ricans; 1 million Cuban Americans; and 4 million other Latin Americans, mostly from Central America. Legal immigration of Latinos sharply increased subsequent to the 1965 immigration law, so a larger proportion
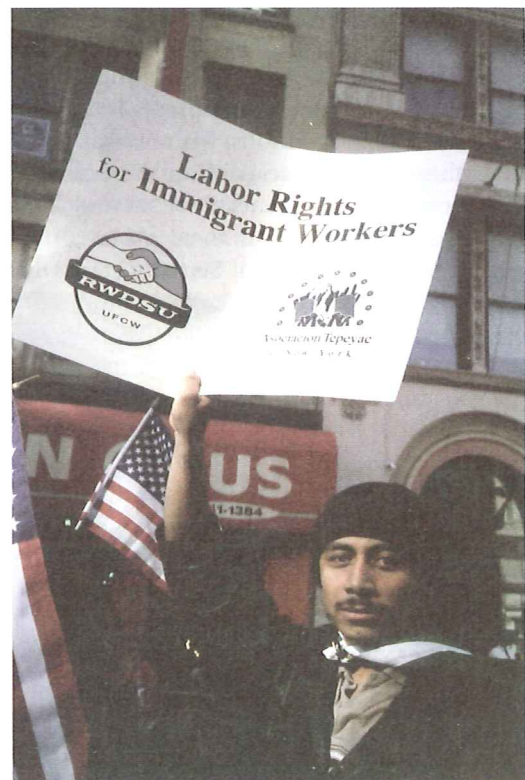
Latinos, who make up the largest number of immigrants in the United States, are often economically exploited by employers. In recent years they have become active in immigrant associations aimed at immigration reform and ensuring fair labor practices for their workers.

of Latinos, particularly Mexican Americans, are first-generation immigrants. As of 2002, Mexicans accounted for about 20 percent of the total legal immigration to the United States. It is also estimated that they constitute approximately three-fifths of the almost 12 million undocumented immigrant population (*New York Times* 2009; Strum and Selee 2004).

Much of the Mexican-American population of the United States originated in the populations of the southwest and California, whose settlement predated the 1846–1848 Mexican–American War. Originally rural agricultural workers, since the 1950s, Mexican Americans have become about 90 percent urban, concentrated in California, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. Puerto Ricans and Cubans, in contrast, initially migrated to urban areas, especially East Coast cities, whereas Cubans are mainly concentrated in South Florida. Political upheavals in Central America led to increasing numbers of both documented and undocumented immigrants from Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, and since the 1960s there has been large-scale immigration from the Dominican Republic.

Although Mexican immigrants are still largely concentrated in the Southwest, since 1990, they have been drawn, primarily by low-wage meatpacking factory and construction employment, to other parts of the country that had not previously experienced Latino immigration, such as Arkansas, Georgia, Colorado, and North Carolina. Much of the work performed by Latino immigrants, as we noted for the meat-processing plants in the Midwest, is difficult, dirty, and hazardous, with no vacation pay or health benefits (Preston 2009). With the current downturn in the economy and a crackdown on undocumented immigrants through raids on their places of employment, stricter scrutiny of Social Security cards, the withdrawal of social services, local laws prohibiting driving licenses, and greater cooperation between local police forces and federal immigration agents, the already low economic position of Latinos is under increasing threat. And whereas many Americans losing their jobs can turn to the government for a safety net of unemployment insurance and job assistance, this is not available to undocumented immigrants, who are working longer hours for less pay, at any job they can get. As one sociologist pointed out, many factories in rural parts of the country are only able to hang on because of immigrant workers taking jobs other Americans will not take. As wages fall, employers tend to move from white employees, to black employees, to Latino employees and, in many cases, ultimately to closing their doors (Preston 2009).

> **caste system** Social stratification based on birth or ascribed status in which social mobility between castes is not possible.

Caste

In contrast to open class systems, characterized, at least theoretically, by individual social mobility, a **caste system** is based on birth, or ascribed status, and movement of an individual from one caste to another is not possible. Also, in class systems, people may marry outside their class. Castes, on the other hand, are hereditary and endogamous. Because caste membership is determined by birth and cannot be changed, caste systems are called closed stratification systems. Castes are ranked in relation to one another and characteristically associated with traditional occupations. A caste system, then, consists of ranked, culturally distinct, interdependent, endogamous groups, with rigidly maintained boundaries between the castes.

Caste systems exist in various cultures; in many West African societies blacksmiths, praise-singers, and leather workers function as endogamous castes. In traditional European society peasants and nobility were endogamous castes and in Japan the Burakumin people, who were set apart based on their participation in "unclean" occupations, represented a caste, although they were defined in racial terms. Indeed, before the 1950s era of expanding civil rights, black/white relations in the American South also incorporated many elements of a caste system. The ascribed status of race prohibited people from intermarrying, eating together, and interacting with each other in ways very similar to those of a caste system (Dollard 1937). Most frequently however, caste is identified with India, where it is deeply and historically embedded in culture and plays a central role in social stratification.

The Caste System in India

The unique elements of the Indian caste system are its complexity, its relation to Hindu religious beliefs and rituals, and the degree to which the castes (or, more accurately, subcastes) are cohesive and self-regulating groups. The Hindu caste system contains four main categories, called *varna,* ranked according to their ritual purity, which is largely based on traditional occupations. The highest ranked varna, the Brahmins, are priests and scholars; next highest is the Kshatriyas, the ruling and warrior caste; third ranked are the Vaisyas, or merchants; and fourth are the Shudras, or menial workers and artisans. Below these four varnas is a fifth group, previously called untouchables, now called Dalits, who perform spiritually polluting work such as cleaning latrines or tanning leather. They are considered so ritually impure that their mere touch, or even shadow, contaminates the purity of the higher castes. A person's birth into any one of these caste categories is believed to be a reward or punishment for his or her actions in a previous life. Strict

social rules maintain caste boundaries: inter-caste marriage and eating together is prohibited and a higher-caste person will not accept most kinds of food or drink from a lower-caste person. In Indian villages, the lowest castes are spatially and socially segregated, and prohibited from using high caste wells and temples.

In its rural setting, the Indian caste system involved traditional exchanges of goods and services between higher and lower castes. Families of various artisan and serving castes—such as carpenters, potters, blacksmiths, water carriers, and leather workers—perform their services for high-caste landowning families and in return receive food, grain, clothing, fodder for animals, butter, milk, small amounts of cash, and many other things. These relationships, which may continue over several generations, are viewed by the higher castes as of social benefit to all: landowners have a steady supply of available workers while the serving castes gain a relatively reliable source of subsistence. The lower castes, however, emphasize their exploitation in the system rather than its mutual benefits.

Although Indian castes are ranked on the basis of prestige rather than wealth, the gains of high caste position are not merely symbolic. The higher castes benefit materially as well as symbolically from their higher status; they use their considerable political power to maintain these material benefits and resist any efforts by lower castes to attempt to change the system. Although, on the surface, the lower castes appear to accept their low position, their conformity largely hinges on their awareness that economic sanctions and physical force will be used against them if they try to resist the system or rise above it. And indeed, in both local and regional arenas, violent conflict between castes has been frequent in rural India.

The traditional Hindu religious belief that individuals occupy a social position based on the virtue of their actions in a previous life is used to justify elite caste hegemony: the upper castes benefit from the widely shared Hindu belief that social position reflects an individual's spiritual achievement. Just as in the American class system, political and economic power furthers the interests of some social strata over others, a conflict obscured by widespread cultural consensus.

Changes in the Caste System

The caste system in India, like any social stratification system, is not static. An important change occurred at Indian independence when "Untouchability" was outlawed by the new constitution and affirmative action programs for lower castes and untouchables were initiated. In addition to government action, groups may try to change their own caste status. Unlike a class system, change in the Indian caste system relies primarily on group rather than individual mobility. A caste that has been economically successful in some new occupation may try to raise its prestige by adopting the customs of a higher caste, claiming a new rank for itself. These new behavior patterns are formulated by caste councils, and nonconforming members will be publicly censured or even cast out of the group, a serious sanction where caste membership controls so much of a person's life. As part of its attempt to increase its caste ranking, a lower caste may also invent a new origin myth, claiming it originally belonged to a higher-ranked varna than it is presently assigned.

These dynamics are illustrated by the Camars of Agra, a previously untouchable caste of leather workers and shoemakers, who became fairly wealthy due to an increased domestic and global demand for leather shoes. As their wealth increased, the Camars claimed they were actually Kshatriyas (the warrior caste), outlawed the eating of beef and buffalo among their members, and adopted some high-caste rituals. This attempt to raise their caste status was rejected by the high castes, however, who maintained the traditional caste boundaries limiting social interaction, including marriage. Subsequently, the Camars tried a different strategy, that of conversion to Buddhism, which put them outside the Hindu caste system altogether (Lynch 1969).

In addition to legal changes regarding caste in the past 50 years, other changes have also occurred (Fuller 1995). In rural as well as urban India, caste ranking appears to be less sharply defined than formerly, at least within the higher caste categories. This is partly the result of the increasing differentiation of wealth, prestige, and power *within* each caste. A very significant change is a weakening in the traditional connection between caste

In India, the upper-caste view that the lowest castes are content in their socio-economic position is contradicted by the many protests of Dalits against the unfairness of the caste system.

and occupation. New occupations, such as factory work, government service, information technology, and the professions, which are not caste related, have opened opportunities, especially for the middle and lower level castes. At the same time, many low-caste occupations, such as potter and drummer, have declined as sources of income. Still, a connection between caste status and economic success continues, as the higher castes have primarily benefited by new economic opportunities through their previous accumulation of capital, their higher education, their business and social contacts, and their ability to speak English (Beteille 1998).

There is also a significant change in public discourse about castes, which are now commonly referred to in public as culturally differentiated communities or associations, rather than *jatis* (which literally means species) (Fuller 1995). In public, the strict maintenance of caste boundaries such as inter-dining, has weakened, particularly in cities. However, in private and in rural areas, many caste-related boundaries remain, particularly regarding arranged marriages. Affirmative action in education and employment, based on (low) caste status, which is incorporated into the Indian constitution, keeps caste

alive for more pragmatic reasons. Even with the rise of a new Indian class system, caste remains an important structural element in Indian society and is unlikely to disappear in the near future.

Both India's caste and class systems are changing under the impact of the global economy. India's current economic growth has greatly expanded the urban middle class while its newly expanded free-market ideology has meant cutbacks in government-supported education and medical care. This has disproportionately affected the poor: millions of cotton farmers are impoverished by a global system of trade in which the agricultural products of heavily subsidized farmers in the United States and Europe depress international prices. Because the Indian government does not provide much of a social support network and financial aid for farmers, they are forced to rely on the informal sector moneylenders, which often leads them into extreme and permanent debt. These conditions have contributed to the suicide of thousands of cotton farmers (Mishra 2006:50). India's new economic growth has meant that class, with its expression in luxury consumerism, as well as caste, is now a significant factor in the Indian system of social stratification (Luce 2007).

The Global and the Local: The Global Economy and the Changing Class System in China

Globalization, neoliberal economic policies, and the rise of multinational corporations have led to increasing prosperity for some nations but also increasing economic inequality between and within nations (Schneider 2002). China is a good example of how the global economy impacts local systems of social stratification. In the Maoist period, people lived very harsh lives and certain social classes, such as rich peasants and merchants, were targets of harassment and violence, although the reigning ideology was one of egalitarianism and significant attempts were made to reduce inequalities in wealth and provide supports for poor farmers and workers. Today, many in China live more prosperous lives but this has come at the expense of increasing social differentiation, contrary to the Maoist ideology.

In just one generation China's exploding participation in the global economy has produced a rising inequality of social classes. As capitalism has moved forward those who have made it in the new society live side by side with the have-nots, and particularly large inequalities exist between rural and urban areas. This widening income gap is potentially subversive to China's official socialist ideology and the antigovernment protests arising from this inequality are a source of great concern to the government. The Chinese motto of the new economy,

"to get rich is glorious," has not fulfilled its promise to all sectors of society equally.

The People's Republic of China is ideologically committed to a society in which opportunity and wealth are widespread. Traditionally, China's social stratification system contained rigidly defined social classes: peasants, a small trading and artisan class, a legal and governing bureaucracy appointed through rigorous written examinations, and an emperor, his court, and his relatives. Intellectuals and administrators were highly regarded; merchants and soldiers were disrespected, and peasants had no status beyond the produce they contributed to the state.

In 1947, with the success of Mao Zedong's Communist revolution, the new state, the People's Republic of China (PRC), attempted to create a "classless" Marxist society. But after Mao's death in 1976, the PRC adopted a program of rapid liberalization and has since steadily moved toward capitalist relations of production, with its attendant increase in economic inequality. Millions of villagers migrated to urban areas in order to find wage-earning jobs to help support their families in the countryside. Because peasants must now pay for schooling, health care, and other basic services, agriculture alone frequently provides inadequate income. In many fami-

This skyline and grand avenue of the Pudong New Area in Shanghai was built on the recent economic prosperity of China, which led to growing inequalities between urban and rural areas. Currently hit by the closing of thousands of urban factories resulting from the global recession, millions of unemployed rural migrants are returning to their villages.

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lies, both parents migrated to send money back home to their household, which typically consists of their child and the grandparents, and rural families are split up for years at a time. One peasant mourned, "... where rich city people call their one child 'little sun,' we call ours 'left behind, growing up without their parents'" (Yardley 2004).

Although some rural migrants have succeeded in the cities, few of the rural poor have the skills to meet the demands of urban living. They are cut off from the privileges of urban life, such as universal education, high-quality health care, and individual family housing, and often do not know how to negotiate for proper wages or how to redress grievances when they are cheated. Although some farmers have benefitted by selling their produce under new free-market prices and some villages formed farming cooperatives that were more economically viable than individual farming, rural/urban economic inequality remains large.

With the global economic meltdown of 2008, however, urban as well as rural populations are now suffering. As exports dropped, thousands of factories closed, sending the millions of rural migrants who worked in them heading back to their villages with their dreams unfulfilled (Wong 2008). Whole villages and industries that depended on American consumerism are now finding themselves out of business and the Chinese government is under pressure, similar to that in the United States, to invest in infrastructure spending in order to put people back to work.

Social stratification systems, whether in the United States or in China, may be justified by cultural norms, but the global economy has local effects that may undermine the cultural bases of social stratification and eventually lead to significant changes in a stratification system.

Key Questions

1. How has the traditional Chinese social stratification system changed over time?
2. What are some impacts of the global economy on China's social stratification system?

Summary

1. **What are the differences between functionalist and conflict theories of social stratification?** Functionalist theory holds that social stratification benefits the whole society because it motivates people to undertake all the jobs necessary for the society to survive. Conflict theory emphasizes the conflicts that occur within stratified societies as different social strata, with opposing interests, clash with one another over goals and resources.

2. **What are the major dimensions of social stratification and how do they relate to other aspects of culture and society?** The major dimensions of social stratification are power, wealth, and prestige, which are closely tied to occupation. The particular value system of a culture determines how these factors interact to determine where a person is placed in the stratification system.

3. **What are the core elements of a social class system?** In a class system, social position is ideally achieved, rather than ascribed, although in reality class status is also ascribed. People can move between the social classes. Classes are largely based on differences of income and wealth, but also characterized by different lifestyles and cultural differences.

4. **Is there a class system in the United States? What are its main features?** The culture of the United States emphasizes "the American Dream," the idea that one can and should improve one's life chances and material wealth. Although many Americans dismiss the importance of class in the United States, there are important material and life change differences in the different social classes. Inequality between social classes is increasing, as is downward social mobility.

5. **What is the purpose of the RACE Project? How is it based on an anthropological definition of race?** Anthropologists define race as a culturally constructed category that refers to groups of people *perceived* as sharing similar physical and other characteristics transmitted by heredity. The RACE Project, a traveling museum exhibit, demonstrates that although race is a scientifically invalid concept, racial categories are important in many systems of social stratification.

6. **What are the differences between the racial systems and racial stratification system of the United States and Brazil?** The United States racial system divides people primarily into two races: black and white. Brazil has a multiracial system that divides people into many different categories. However, both systems incorporate racism and racial inequalities, as evidenced by racial differences in wealth, education, health status, and occupation.

7. **What is the major narrative of America's story of cultural diversity? How has this changed over time?** The cultural diversity of the United States has largely been framed in terms of ethnicity based on the national origins of immigrants, largely ignoring the presence of African Americans, Native Americans, and Mexican Americans. Previously committed to the assimilation of cultural minorities, multiculturalism has now supplanted the concept of the melting pot and cultural differences among immigrants and other minorities are now viewed in a more positive light.

8. **What are some important characteristics of Muslim immigrants in the United States?** After the new immigration laws of 1965, Muslim immigration both increased and diversified. Their ethnic differences have become less important than their religious identity as Muslims, which is expressed in the expansion of Muslim institutions and practices, particularly among the younger generation. American Muslims are mostly middle class, in contrast to European Muslims, who are largely economically disenfranchised.

9. **What is the position of Latino immigrants in the American social stratification system?** The majority of Latino immigrants are from Mexico and half of these immigrants are undocumented. Latino immigrants are mainly engaged in low-wage agricultural and factory work and both legal and undocumented immigrants are vulnerable to the current hostility toward immigrants in the larger society, which centers on language issues and the strain on social services.

10. **What are the main characteristics of the Indian caste system and how is it changing?** In the Indian caste system, based on Hindu ideas of ritual purity, social position (caste) is largely ascribed (based on birth). Caste boundaries are sharply defined by prohibitions on inter-caste marriage and inter-caste sharing of food, as well as by some cultural differences. Although caste boundaries may weaken, especially in cities, a caste-based social system is partly maintained by low-caste benefits of affirmative action. As economic and occupational opportunities expand, the relationship between caste and class becomes less strong, especially in urban India.

11. **What has been the effect of globalization and the new economy on the social stratification system in China?** The People's Republic of China has moved from its official ideology of a classless socialist society under Mao Zedong to one in which the pursuit of wealth is encouraged and business entrepreneurs are honored. This has resulted in steep and increasing inequalities, particularly between rural and urban populations. Such inequalities were intensified by the 2008 global recession.

Key Terms

achieved status
apartheid
ascribed status
assimilation
caste system
class

class system
conflict theory
functionalism
life chances
multiculturalism
power

prestige
race
social mobility
social stratification
wealth

Suggested Readings

Davila, Arlene. 2008. *Latino Spin: Public Image and the White-washing of Race.* New York: New York University Press. An anthropologist with previous works on Latino culture and identities examines the shifting place Latinos have in the popular and political culture of the United States and their impact on U.S. national identity. A provocative look at the diversity of the Hispanic/Latino population in America and their integration into the nation, based on exposing the realities in contrast to the stereotypes of this substantial ethnic group.

Fredrickson, George M. 2009. *Diverse Nations: Explorations in the History of Racial and Ethnic Pluralism.* New York: Paradigm. A collection of essays written by one of America's foremost historians of race and ethnicity from a comparative perspective. Fredrickson's jargon-free writing style, deep research, insightful understandings of American history, and meaningful cross-cultural comparisons make his work of great interest to scholars from many disciplines as well as to the general public.

Jadhav, Narendra. 2005. *Untouchables: My Family's Triumphant Escape from India's Caste System.* Berkeley: University of California Press. A moving story about a Dalit and his family that introduces Western readers to this relatively unknown segment of Indian society.

Nguyen, Tram. 2005. *We Are All Suspect Now: Untold Stories from Immigrant Communities after 9/11.* Boston: Beacon Press. A highly readable account of the many ways different immigrant groups in different places in the United States were affected by the increased, and often misdirected, security operations by the government after 9/11, resulting in a climate of fear and growing intolerance.

Sharman, Russell, and Cheryl Harris Sharman. 2008. *Nightshift, NYC.* Berkeley: University of California Press. This ethnography is set in the context of the shift from manufacturing to the service sector of New York City after the 1980s, a sector that employs large numbers of immigrants. Using a storytelling ethnographic style, the Sharmans movingly reveal the commitment of these immigrants to the education of their children as the route to achieving the American dream.