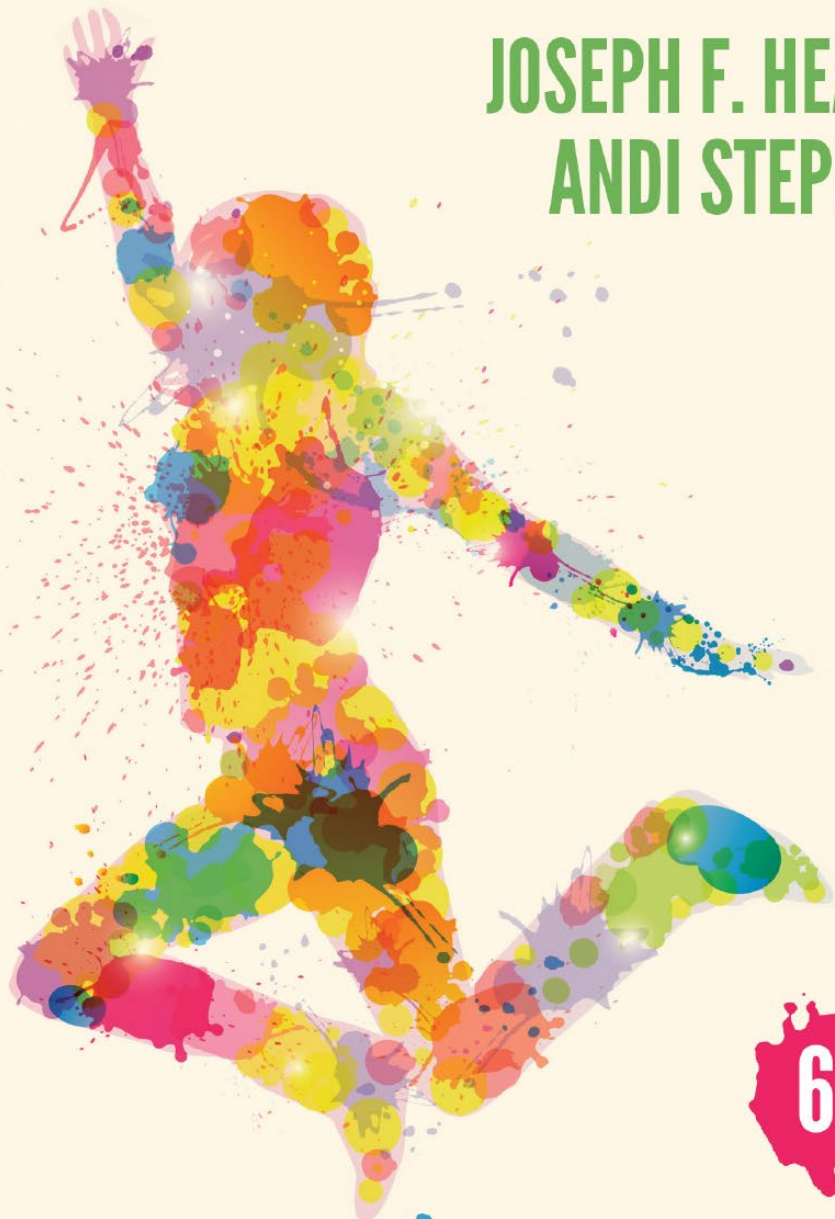


JOSEPH F. HEALEY  
ANDI STEPNICK



6e

# DIVERSITY & SOCIETY

*Race, Ethnicity, and Gender*



# **Diversity and Society**

**Sixth Edition**

*This book is dedicated to my mother, Alice T. Healey. May she rest in peace.*

—Joe

*To Shari, Catherine, Jennifer, and JT with deep gratitude for your unwavering love and companionship. To the undergraduates reading this book: Be open and curious, be critically skeptical, work hard, and have faith. You are our hope for the future.*

—Andi

# **Diversity and Society**

## **Race, Ethnicity, and Gender**

**Sixth Edition**

**Joseph F. Healey**

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**Andi Stepnick**

*Belmont University*



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# PREFACE

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Of the challenges confronting the United States today, those relating to diversity continue to be among the most urgent and the most daunting. Discrimination and the rejection of “others” are part of our national heritage. Along with equality, freedom, and justice, prejudice, racism, and sexism are some of our oldest values. Every part of our society, and virtually every item on the national agenda—welfare and health care reform, policing, crime and punishment, family, education, defense, foreign policy, and terrorism—have some connection with dominant–minority relations.

This textbook contributes to our ongoing national discussion by presenting information, raising questions, and deeply examining relevant issues. Our intent is to help you increase your knowledge, improve your understanding of the issues, and clarify your thinking about social inequalities related to race, ethnicity, gender, and class. We’ve written for undergraduate students—sociology majors and nonmajors alike. We make few assumptions about students’ knowledge of history or sociological concepts, and we try to present the material in a way that you will find accessible and relevant.

For example, we use a unified set of themes and concepts throughout the text. Our analysis is consistent and continuous, even as we examine multiple sociological perspectives and different points of view. We introduce most of the conceptual framework in the first four chapters. Then, we apply these concepts and analytical themes to a series of case studies of racial and ethnic minority groups (e.g., African Americans, Native Americans). Finally, we review and summarize our main points and bring our analysis to a conclusion in the last chapter, where we also speculate about the future.

Our analysis is, generally, macro and comparative. That is, we focus on large groups and social structures—such as social institutions and stratification systems—and we systematically compare and contrast the experiences and situations of America’s many minority groups over time. The book follows in the tradition of conflict theory, but it is not a comprehensive statement of that tradition. We introduce and apply other perspectives, but we don’t attempt to give equal attention to all current sociological paradigms, explain everything, or include all possible analytical points of view. It couldn’t be done! Rather, our goals are (a) to present the sociology of minority group relations in a way that you’ll find understandable and intellectually challenging and (b) to address the issues (and tell the stories behind the issues) in a way that is highly readable and that demonstrates the power and importance of sociological thinking.

Although the text maintains a unified analytical perspective, we offer a wide variety of perspectives in our online resources. For example, we offer *Current Debates* for Chapters 1 through 9 (available at <http://edge.sagepub.com/diversity6e>). The debates focus on an issue taken from the chapter but present the views of scholars and analysts from a variety of disciplines and viewpoints. Without detracting from the continuity of the main analysis, these debates reinforce the idea that no one has all the answers

(or, for that matter, all the questions), and they can be used to stimulate discussion, bring additional perspectives to the classroom, and suggest topics for further research.

Additionally, every chapter (except the last) presents personal experiences that compellingly and dramatically foreshadow the material that follows. These introductions include the experiences and thoughts of a wide variety of people: immigrants, writers, politicians, racists, slaves, and “regular” people, among others. Also, each chapter (except the last) includes a section called *Focus on Contemporary Issues* that addresses a specific issue in American society that readers will find current and relevant.

In addition to examining diversity across minority groups (e.g., Native Americans and Hispanic Americans), we stress the diversity of experiences within each minority group (e.g., Puerto Ricans and Cubans). We use an intersectional perspective that explores the ways race, ethnicity, social class, and gender influence one another, creating ever-shifting constellations of dominance and subordination. We focus on American minority groups. However, we’ve included a considerable amount of comparative, cross-national material. For example, the *Comparative Focus* features explore group relations in other societies.

Finally, we stress the ways American minority groups are inseparable from the American experience—from the early days of colonial settlements to tomorrow’s headlines. The relative success of our society is due to the contributions of minority groups as well as those of the dominant group. The nature of the minority group experience has changed as society has changed. To understand America’s minority groups is to understand some elemental truths about America. To raise the issues of difference and diversity is to ask what it means, and what it has meant, to be an American.

People’s feelings about these issues can be intense, and controversy, indifference, and bitterness can overshadow objective analysis and calm reason. We have little hope of resolving our nation’s dilemmas until we address them openly and honestly. This book explores topics that involve conflict between groups. That history is tinged with pain. We discuss topics that can be challenging to learn. And, at times, we quote directly from sources that use language that may be offensive or painful to hear. We have included these elements because we cannot understand (or change) the things we do not face.

## FEATURES

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- Chapters 1–4 provide a broad conceptual and historical overview of minority groups, dominant–minority group relations, and immigration to the United States.
- Chapters 5–8 focus on major U.S. racial and ethnic groups: African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans.
- Chapter 9 focuses on issues of diversity and inequality for “new Americans” from Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and the Caribbean.
- **Opening Vignettes** foreshadow the chapter content in a personal way to generate student interest.

- **Questions for Reflection** help students analyze the material, identify key points, and recognize areas needing additional study.
- **Applying Concepts** activities provide students opportunities to use key chapter ideas.
- **Comparative Focus** boxes look at group relations outside the United States.
- **Focus on Contemporary Issues** boxes address current and relevant issues (e.g., modern slavery, hate crimes).
- This book uses an **intersectional approach** that offers a more complex view of diversity within the U. S. and within each minority group. In particular, we focus on how race, ethnicity, social class, and gender statuses combine with each other to produce unique experiences and oppressions.
- **Main Points** summarize key ideas from each chapter and **Review Questions** give students a chance to assess their understanding.
- **Group Discussion** questions provide teachers and students with a way to collectively explore ideas and questions.

## CHANGES IN THIS EDITION

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- Chapter content has been thoroughly updated from more than 500 new sources, allowing students to learn about the latest research. Expanded content emphasizes current events and applicability of concepts and theories to contemporary social problems (e.g., racial bias in the criminal justice system, immigration issues), including international ones. New examples emphasize an intersectional approach and highlight dominance, oppression, and the distribution of power. Additionally, we emphasize historical trajectory and past-in-present discrimination as much as possible. For example, students can't understand what happened in Ferguson, Missouri without understanding the historical context (1992 Los Angeles riots, 1965 Watts Rebellion).
- More than 80 new and updated tables, maps, and figures
- Updates or additions to the *Comparative Focus* features in Chapters 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8
- Updates or additions to the *Focus on Contemporary Issues* features in Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, and 9
- New or revised *Opening Vignettes* in Chapters 3 and 5
- Revised or expanded *Questions for Reflection*, *Review Questions*, or *Group Discussion* questions in each chapter

- We've thoroughly revised the text to make it fresher, more relevant, more approachable, and even easier to understand. For example, we've simplified the writing and sentence structure. Additionally, we've taken steps to highlight social actors and processes by using active voice and by making other changes in language. For example, when possible, we use "enslaved people" instead of "slaves" because the former emphasizes that individuals, through the system of slavery, put humans in bondage. The latter is a social status that hides this important reality.

Some of the new and expanded topics in this edition include the following:

### Chapter 1

- The changing social construction of race in the U.S. census

### Chapter 2

- Theories of Assimilation (e.g., critiques of unidirectional models, intersectional and bidimensional models)
- The Holocaust (e.g., recent research about Americans' decreasing awareness, the role "everyday people" played, and documentation of more than 40,000 sites such as work "camps")
- Anti-Semitism (the relationship between the Old and New Worlds; European pogroms; and recent increases in anti-Semitic groups, attitudes, and hate crimes)

### Chapter 3

- The origins of slavery (e.g., indentured servitude, first laws, widespread acceptance, and ideology)
- Modern theories of acculturation (e.g., multi-directional models)
- Regional variations in the system of slavery (e.g., Deep South states and widespread ownership, use, or benefits for whites)
- The experiences of enslaved women (e.g., division of labor, ideologies of "true womanhood")

### Chapter 4

- Hate crimes (expanded explanation and examples such as the Tree of Life synagogue shooting as well as data about LGBTQIA and Muslim Americans)
- Social control of African Americans (e.g., sharecropping and Black Codes during de jure segregation)
- Educational inequalities (e.g., racially segregated, underfunded K–12 public schools) and their influence on college preparedness and competitiveness in the workforce

Chapter 5

- The perception of African Americans as “other” (e.g., “Living While Black”—police being called about African Americans doing “everyday things” in “white spaces”)
- Rosa Parks and other pioneers of the civil rights movement
- The War on Drugs and inequalities in the criminal justice system (e.g., disparate sentencing)
- Police-related shootings of African Americans
- Increasing white supremacy, including the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, VA
- Debates about Confederate monuments and confederate-era symbols (including the “battle flag” and its history)

Chapter 6

- Native Americans’ views on nature and land ownership
- Native Americans’ views on gender (including two-spirit people and gender fluidity) and how gender organized social life
- The 2016 Dakota Access Pipeline protest
- Similarities with Aboriginal people from Australia

Chapter 7

- Changes in immigration patterns (e.g., increases in unaccompanied minors and people from Central America)
- Changes to immigration policy (e.g., ICE, Homeland Security budgets, family separation)
- Hispanic American immigrant women workers
- DREAMers
- Historical information about Cuba and Puerto Rico
- Measuring the effects of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico
- Chicanas in El Movimiento (Dolores Huerta, Lopez De La Cruz, Maria Luisa Rangel Juanita Valdez)

Chapter 8

- The role of labor unions in the 19th-century Anti-Chinese movement (e.g., Dennis Kearney of the Workingman’s Party, Anti-Coolie Act)
- WWII detention centers for Japanese (and other) Americans as well as the demand for meaningful redress and National Day of Remembrance

- Japan's "invisible" minority: The Barakumin
- The model minority myth and its effects

## ANCILLARIES

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- **Learning objectives** reinforce the most important material.
- **Internet Activities** encourage students to apply chapter concepts to the "real world" via oral history archives, online art exhibits, YouTube videos, TED Talks, and more.
- Carefully selected chapter-by-chapter **video links** and **multimedia content** enhance classroom-based explorations of key topics.
- The **Current Debates** resource presents two or more opposing statements from scholars and analysts on controversial questions raised in the chapters (Are Indian sports team mascots offensive?).
- **Public sociology assignments** encourage students to go beyond the classroom and engage with people, organizations, and resources in their local communities to learn more about minority groups and issues.
- **For further reading** lists useful books and articles for additional study on minority groups and intergroup relations.
- Exclusive access to full-text **SAGE journal articles** provides students with carefully selected articles designed to support and expand on the concepts presented in each chapter.

## SAGE edge for Instructors

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—Joseph F. Healey

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—Andi Stepnick

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*Only when lions have historians will hunters cease to be heroes.*

—African Proverb

*Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed  
until it is faced.*

—James Baldwin

# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF MINORITY GROUPS IN THE UNITED STATES

**Chapter 1. Diversity in the United States: Questions and Concepts**

**Chapter 2. Assimilation and Pluralism: From Immigrants to White  
Ethnics**

The United States is a nation of groups as well as individuals. These groups vary in many ways, including their size, wealth, education, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, and language. Some groups have been part of American<sup>1</sup> society since colonial days, while others have formed recently.

Questions of unity and diversity are among the most pressing issues facing the United States today. How should these groups relate to one another? Who should be considered American? Should we stress our diversity and preserve the many cultural heritages and languages that currently exist? Should we encourage everyone to adopt Anglo American culture and strive to become more similar? Or should we celebrate our differences? Is it possible to do both?

We begin to address these questions and other related issues in Chapters 1 and 2. Our goal is to help you develop a broader, more informed understanding of the past and present forces that have created and sustained the groups that make up American society. We'll sustain this focus throughout this book.



# 1

## DIVERSITY IN THE UNITED STATES

### Questions and Concepts

*Who am I? . . . Where do I fit into American society? . . . For most of my 47 years, I have struggled to find answers to these questions. I am an American of multiracial descent and culture [Native American, African American, Italian American, and Puerto Rican]. In this aspect, I am not very different from many Americans [but] I have always felt an urge to feel and live the intermingling of blood that runs through my veins. American society has a way of forcing multiracial and biracial people to choose one race over the other. I personally feel this pressure every time I have to complete an application form with instructions to check just one box for race category.*

—Butch, a 47-year-old man<sup>2</sup>

*Actually, I don't feel comfortable being around Asians except for my family . . . I couldn't relate to . . . other Asians [because] they grew up in [wealthier neighborhoods]. I couldn't relate to the whole "I live in a mansion" [attitude]. This summer, I worked in a media company and it was kind of hard to relate to them [other Asians] because we all grew up in a different place . . . the look I would get when I say "Yeah, I'm from [a less affluent neighborhood]" they're like, "Oh, oh" like, "That's unfortunate for your parents, I'm sorry they didn't make it."*

—Rebecca, a 19-year-old Macanese-Chinese-  
Portuguese woman<sup>3</sup>

*Yeah, my people came from all over—Italy, Ireland, Poland, and others too. I don't really know when they got here or why they came and, really, it doesn't matter much to me. I mean, I'm just an American. . . . I'm from everywhere . . . I'm from here!*

—Jennifer, a 25-year-old white American woman<sup>4</sup>

What do Butch, Rebecca, and Jennifer have in common? How do they differ? They think about their place in American society in very different ways. All are connected to a multitude of groups and traditions but not all find this fact interesting or important. One feels alienated from the more affluent members of her group, one seeks to embrace his multiple memberships, and one dismisses the issue of ancestry as irrelevant and is comfortable and at ease being “just an American.”

Today, the United States is growing more diverse in culture, race, religion, and language. The number of Americans who identify as multiracial or who can connect themselves to different cultural traditions is increasing. Where will this increasing diversity lead us? Will our nation fragment? Could we dissolve into warring enclaves—the fate of more than one modern nation? Or can we find connection and commonality? Could we develop tolerance, respect, or even admiration for one another? Can we overcome the legacies of inequality established in colonial days? Can Americans embrace our nation's increasing diversity and live out our motto, *E Pluribus Unum* (out of many, one)?

This book raises many questions about the past, present, and future of group relationships in America. For example, what historical, social, political, and economic forces shaped those relationships historically and how are they shaping contemporary group relations? How do racial and ethnic groups relate to each other today? What kind of society are we becoming because of immigration? What does it mean to be an American? What kind of society do we want to become and how can we move in that direction?

---

**A**merica is a nation of immigrants and groups. Today, about 13.5% of the U.S. population was born in some other nation. The population of some states is more than one fifth foreign-born (e.g., California is 28% foreign-born), and some cities are more than one third foreign-born (e.g., New York is 37% foreign-born; U.S. Census Bureau, 2017c). Since the infancy of our society, Americans have been arguing, often passionately, about inclusion and exclusion and about unity and diversity. Every member of our society is,

in some sense, an immigrant or the descendant of immigrants. Even Native Americans migrated to this continent, albeit thousands of years ago. We are all from somewhere else, with roots in other parts of the world. Some Americans came here in chains; others came on ocean liners, on planes, on busses, and even on foot. Some arrived last week, while others have had family here for centuries. Each wave of newcomers has altered our social landscape. As many have observed, our society is continually under construction and seems permanently unfinished.

Today, America is remaking itself yet again. Large numbers of immigrants are arriving from around the world, and their presence has raised questions about what it means to be an American, who should be granted U.S. citizenship, and how much diversity is best for society. How do immigrants affect America? Are they bringing new energy and revitalizing the economy? Are they draining resources such as school budgets, health care, and jobs? Both? How do they affect African Americans, Native Americans, and other groups? Are they changing what it means to be an American? If so, how?

In 2008, Americans elected Barack Obama to become our nation's first African American president. To some, this victory suggested that the United States has finally become what people often claim it to be: a truly open, "color-blind" society where one succeeds based on merit. In 2016, Donald Trump became our country's 45th president. Some see the rise of racist and xenophobic speech and actions that emerged during our most recent election season as a kind of backlash—not just against Democrats or the political system, but against the diversity initiatives that expanded under the Obama administration.

Even as we debate the implications of immigration, other long-standing issues about belonging, fairness, and justice remain unresolved. Native Americans and African Americans have been a part of this society since its start, but they've existed largely as outsiders—as slaves, servants, laborers, or even enemies—to the mainstream, dominant group. In many ways, they haven't been treated as "true Americans" or full citizens, either by law or custom. The legacies of racism and exclusion continue to affect these groups today and, as you'll see in future chapters, they and other American minority groups continue to suffer from inequality, discrimination, and marginalization.

Even a casual glance at our schools, courts, neighborhoods, churches, or corporate boardrooms—indeed, at any nook or cranny of our society—reveals pervasive patterns of inequality, injustice, and unfairness and different opportunities. So, which is the "real"<sup>5</sup> America: the land of acceptance and opportunity or the one of insularity and inequity?

Some of us feel intensely connected to people with similar backgrounds and identify closely with a specific heritage. Others embrace multiracial or multiethnic identities. Some people feel no particular connection with any group or homeland. Others are unsure where they fit in the social landscape. Group membership, including our race or ethnicity, gender, class, and sexual orientation, shape our experiences and, therefore, how we think about American society, the world, and ourselves. Additionally, group membership shapes the opportunities available to us and to others.

How do we understand these contrasts and divisions? Should we celebrate our diversity or stress the need for similarity? How can we incorporate all groups while avoiding fragmentation and division? What can hold us together as a nation? The U. S. may be at a crossroads concerning these issues. Throughout this book, you'll have an opportunity



to reexamine the fundamental questions of citizenship and inclusion in our society. This chapter reviews the basic themes to help you do that effectively.

## MINORITY GROUPS: TRENDS AND QUESTIONS

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Because our group memberships shape our experiences and worldviews, they also affect the choices we make, including those in the voting booth. People in different groups may view decisions in different ways due to their divergent group histories, experiences, and current situations. Without some knowledge of the many ways someone can be an American, the debates over which direction our society should take are likely to be unmeaningful or even misunderstood.

### Increasing Diversity

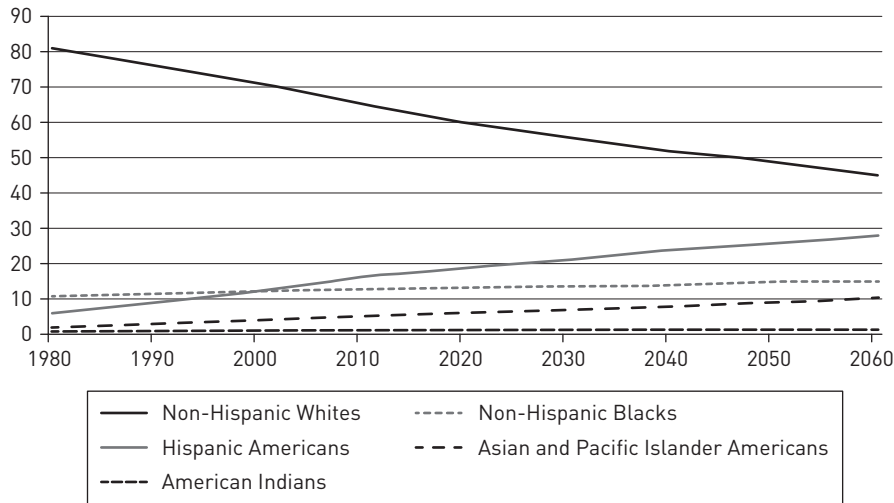
The choices about our society's future may feel especially urgent because the diversity of American society is increasing dramatically, largely due to high rates of immigration. Since the 1960s, the number of immigrants arriving in America each year has more than tripled and includes groups from around the world.

People's concerns about increasing diversity are compounded by other unresolved issues and grievances. For example, in Part 3, we document continuing gaps in income, poverty rates, and other measures of affluence and equality between minority and dominant groups. In many ways, the problems currently facing African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and other minority groups are as formidable as they were a generation (or more) ago. Given these realities, how can America better live out its promise of equality for all?

Let's consider the changing makeup of America. Figure 1.1 presents the percentage of the total U.S. population in each of the five largest racial and ethnic groups. First, we'll consider this information at face value and analyze some of its implications. Then, we'll consider (and question) the framing of this information, such as group names and why they matter.

Figure 1.1 shows the groups' relative sizes from 1980 through 2010 (when the government last conducted the census) and it offers the projected relative sizes of each group through 2060. The declining numbers of non-Hispanic whites reflect the increasing diversity in the United States. As recently as 1980, more than 8 out of 10 Americans were non-Hispanic whites, but by the middle of this century, non-Hispanic whites will become a numerical minority. Several states (Texas, California, Hawaii, and New Mexico) already have "majority minority" populations. And for the first time in history, most babies born in the U. S. (50.4%) are members of minority groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b).

Researchers predict that African American and Native American populations will increase in absolute numbers but will remain similar in relative size. However, Hispanic American, Asian American, and Pacific Islander populations will grow dramatically. Asian American and Pacific Islander groups together constituted only 2% of the population in 1980, but that will grow to 10% by midcentury. The most dramatic growth,

**FIGURE 1.1 ■ U.S. Population by Race and Ethnicity, 1980–2060**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2017a). National Population Projections. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2017/demo/popproj/2017-summary-tables.html>

Note: Hispanics may be of any race.

however, will be among Hispanic Americans. In 2002, this group surpassed African Americans as the largest minority group. Researchers expect it will be almost 30% of the U. S. population by 2060.

Projections about the future are educated guesses based on documented trends, but they suggest significant change. Our society will grow more diverse racially and culturally, becoming less white and less European—and more like the world as a whole. Some people see these changes as threats to traditional white, middle-class American values and lifestyles. Other people view these demographic changes as part of the ebb and flow of social life. That is, society has changed ever since it began; this is merely another phase in the great American experiment. Which viewpoints are most in line with your own and why?

### What's in a Name?

The group names we used in Figure 1.1 are arbitrary, and no group has clear or definite boundaries. We use these terms because they are familiar and consistent with the labels used in census reports, much of the sociological research literature, and other sources of information. Although such group names are convenient, this doesn't mean that they are “real” in any absolute sense or equally useful in all circumstances. These group names have some serious shortcomings. For example, they reflect social conventions whose meanings change over time and location. To underscore the social construction of racial and ethnic groups, we use group names interchangeably (e.g., blacks and African Americans; Hispanic Americans and Latinos). Nevertheless, issues remain.

First, the race/ethnic labels suggest groups are homogeneous. While it's true that people within one group may share some general, superficial physical or cultural traits (e.g., language), they also vary by social class, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and in many other ways. People within the Asian American and Pacific Islander group, for example, represent scores of different national backgrounds (Japanese, Pakistanis, Samoans, Vietnamese), and the categories of Native American or Alaska Native include people from hundreds of different tribal groups. If we consider people's other social statuses such as age and religious affiliation, that diversity becomes even more pronounced. Any two people within one group (e.g., Hispanics) might be quite different from each other in some respects and similar to people from "different" racial/ethnic groups (e.g., whites).

Second, people don't necessarily use these labels when they think about their own identity. In this sense, the labels aren't "real" or important for all the people in these racial/ethnic groups. For example, many whites in the U. S. (like Jennifer, quoted in the chapter opening) think of themselves as "just American." Many Hispanic Americans think of themselves in relation to ethnic origin, such as Mexican or Cuban (see Chapter 7). Or they may identify with a particular region or village in their homeland. For LGBTQIA<sup>6</sup> group members, sexual orientation may be more important to their identity than their race or ethnicity. Thus, the labels don't always reflect the ways people think about themselves, their families, or where they come from. The categories are statistical classifications created by researchers and census takers to help them organize information and clarify their analyses. They don't grow out of or always reflect people's everyday realities.

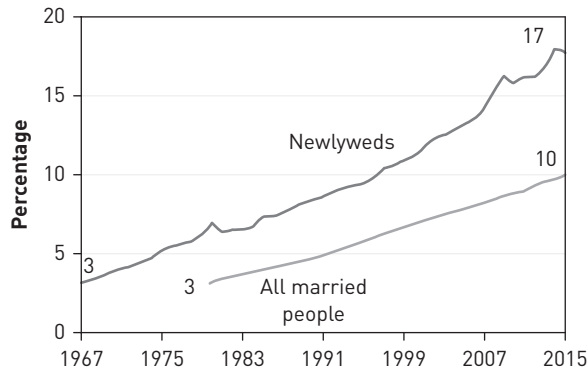
Third, although the categories in Figure 1.1 are broad, several groups don't neatly fit into them. For example, where should we place Arab Americans and recent immigrants from Africa? These groups are relatively small (about 1 million people each), but there is no clear place for them in the current categories. Should we consider Arab Americans as "Asian," as some argue? Should recent immigrants from Africa be in the same category as African Americans? Should we create a new group for people of Middle Eastern or North African descent? The point is that such classification schemes have somewhat ambiguous boundaries.

Further, we can't neatly categorize people who identify with more than one racial or ethnic group (like Butch, quoted in the chapter opening). The number of "mixed-group" Americans is relatively small today—about 3% of the total population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2015a). However, between 2000 and 2016, the number of people who chose more than one racial or ethnic category on the U.S. census increased by 33% (from 2.4% to 3.2% of the total population) (Jones & Bullock, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2017b). This trend is likely to continue increasing rapidly because of the growth in interracial marriage.

To illustrate, Figure 1.2 shows dramatic increases in the percentage of "new" marriages (couples that got married in the year prior to the survey date) and all marriages that unite members of different racial or ethnic groups (Livingston & Brown, 2017). Obviously, the greater the number of mixed racial or ethnic marriages, the greater the number of mixed Americans who will be born of such partnerships. One study estimates that the percentage of Americans who identify with two or more races will more than double between 2014 (when it was 2.5%) and 2060 (when it will be 6.2%; Colby & Ortman, 2015, p. 9).

Finally, we should note that group names are **social constructions**,<sup>7</sup> or ideas and perceptions that people create in specific historical circumstances and that reflect particular power relationships. For example, the group "Native Americans" didn't exist before

**FIGURE 1.2 ■ Interracial and Interethnic Marriages in the United States, 1967–2015**



Source: Livingston and Brown (2017).

the European exploration and colonization of North America. Before then, hundreds of separate indigenous societies, each with its own language and culture, lived across North America. Native Americans thought of themselves primarily in terms of their tribe and had little awareness of the many other groups spread across the vast expanse of the North American continent. However, European conquerors constructed them as one group: the enemy. Today, many Americans see Native Americans as one group. This reflects their historical defeat and domination by white European colonists, which led to Native Americans' current status as a minority group in a largely white society.

Likewise (although through different processes), African, Hispanic, and Asian Americans came to be seen as separate groups as the result of their unequal interactions with white Americans. These group labels have become real because people *believe* they are real. We use these familiar group labels to facilitate our discussion of complex topics, but they don't reflect some unchangeable truth or reality regarding racial or ethnic groups.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. If asked about your group membership, which of the groups in Figure 1.1 would you choose, if any? Do you feel that you belong to one group or several? How much does your group membership shape your circle of friends, your experiences, and your worldview? How important is your group membership to your self-identity?

*(Continued)*