CHAPTER OUTLINE

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WHAT WILL YOU LEARN?

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Ethnicity and Religion

The United States includes a multitude of ethnic and religious groups. Do they coexist in harmony or in conflict? How significant are they as sources of identity for their members? Because White is a race, significant attention has been given to the social construction of race as it applies to White people. Many White ethnic groups have transformed their ethnic status into Whiteness. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a resurgence of interest in White ethnicity, partly in response to the renewed pride in the ethnicity of Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans. We have an ethnic paradox in which White ethnics seem to enjoy their heritage but at the same time seek to assimilate into the larger society. This refers to the maintenance of one’s ethnic ties in a way that can assist with assimilation in larger societies. Major White ethnic groups such as German, Irish, Italian, and Polish Americans have experienced similar, yet distinctive, social circumstances in the United States. We can make some tentative comparisons from their experiences and what we could expect among today’s immigrants. Religious diversity continues and expands with immigration and growth in the followings of non-Christian faiths. Religious minorities experience intolerance in the present as they have in the past. Constitutional issues such as school prayer, secessionist minorities, creationism, and public religious displays are regularly taken to the Supreme Court.
The very complexity of relations between dominant and subordinate groups in the United States today is partly the result of its heterogeneous population. No one ethnic origin or religious faith encompasses all the inhabitants of the United States. Even though our largest period of sustained immigration is three generations past, an American today is surrounded by remnants of cultures and practitioners of religions whose origins are foreign to this country. Ethnicity and religion continue to be significant in defining a person’s identity.

New York City’s Little Italy would seem to be the quintessential example of ethnicity. One problem, where are the Italians? In 1950 most in the 20-square-block area of Lower Manhattan were Italian-born and by 2000 it was 6 percent. Then, in 2010, census takers could not find a single resident born in Italy. Yes, Italian residents and shops are obvious, but the residents are more likely to be Chinese American. To unite the two communities of Italian and Chinese cultures, an annual Marco Polo Day has begun to honor the explorer from Venice who journeyed in the thirteenth century through Central Asia to China (S. Roberts 2011).

It’s May, ready for the National Day of Prayer? Congress formalized this observance in 1952. While 83 percent of people in the United States indicate there is a God who answers prayers, the increasing diversity of believers makes even the observance of this event increasingly contentious. What kind of praying? Some more ecumenical prayers (no reference to Jesus Christ, for example, or even to a supreme being) affront many. Specific Biblical, Talmudic, or Qur’anic references have limited appeals across a nation tolerant of so many faiths. So are we too religious or not religious enough (C. Grossman 2010; J. Jones 2010)?

One’s religious or ethnic experience is unlikely to be identical to the next person, so it is this diversity that we consider in this chapter. Also we consider that with this diversity, how does one go about “fitting in” to a new society.

**Ethnic Diversity**

The ethnic diversity of the United States at the beginning of the twenty-first century is apparent to almost everyone. Passersby in New York City were undoubtedly surprised once when two street festivals met head-to-head. The procession of San Gennaro, the patron of New York City’s Little Italy, was underscored when the 2010 census showed not a single Italian-born person living in New York City’s Little Italy. While many people of Italian descent resided there, one was much more likely to find Chinese-born people than people of any other nationality.
saint of Naples, marched through Little Italy, only to run directly into a Chinese festival originating in Chinatown. Teachers in many public schools often encounter students who speak only one language, and it is not English. Students in Chicago are taught in Spanish, Greek, Italian, Polish, German, Creole, Japanese, Cantonese, or the language of a Native American tribe. In the Detroit metropolitan area, classroom instruction is conveyed in 21 languages, including Arabic, Portuguese, Ukrainian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Serbian. In many areas of the United States, you can refer to a special yellow pages and find a driving instructor who speaks Portuguese or a psychotherapist who will talk to you in Hebrew.

Germans are the largest ancestral group in the United States; the 2008 census showed about 17 percent of Americans saying they had at least some German ancestry. Although most German Americans are assimilated, it is possible to see the ethnic tradition in some areas, particularly in Milwaukee, whose population has 48 percent German ancestry. There, three Saturday schools teach German, and one can affiliate with 34 German American clubs and visit a German library that operates within the public library system. Just a bit to the south in River Forest, a Chicago suburb, *kinderwerkstatt* meets weekly to help parents and children alike to maintain German culture (American Community Survey 2009:Table B04003; Carvajal 1996; Johnson 1992; Usdansky 1992).

Germany is one of 20 European nations from which at least 1 million people claim to have ancestry. The numbers are striking when one considers the size of some of the sending countries. For example, there are more than 36 million Irish Americans, and the Republic of Ireland had a population of 4 million in 2008. Similarly, more than 4 million people claim Swedish ancestry, and 9 million people live in Sweden today. Of course, many Irish Americans and Swedish Americans are of mixed ancestry, but not everyone in Ireland is Irish, nor is everyone in Sweden Swedish.

**Why Don’t We Study Whiteness?**

Race is socially constructed, as we learned in Chapter 1. Sometimes we come to define race in a clear-cut manner. A descendant of a Pilgrim is White, for example. But sometimes race is more ambiguous: People who are the children of an African American and Vietnamese American union are biracial or “mixed,” or whatever they come to be seen by others. Our recognition that race is socially constructed has sparked a renewed interest in what it means to be White in the United States. Two aspects of White as a race are useful to consider: the historical creation of Whiteness and how contemporary White people reflect on their racial identity.

When the English immigrants established themselves as the political founders of the United States, they also came to define what it meant to be White. Other groups that today are regarded as White—such as Irish, Germans, Norwegians, or Swedes—were not always considered White in the eyes of the English. Differences in language and religious worship, as well as past allegiance to a king in Europe different from the English monarch, all caused these groups to be seen not so much as Whites in the Western Hemisphere but more as nationals of their home country who happened to be residing in North America.

The old distrust in Europe, where, for example, the Irish were viewed by the English as socially and culturally inferior, continued on this side of the Atlantic Ocean. Writing from England, Karl Marx reported that the average English worker looked down on the Irish the way poor Whites in the U.S. South looked down on Black people (Ignatiev 1994, 1995; Roediger 1994).

As European immigrants and their descendants assimilated to the English and distanced themselves from other oppressed groups such as American Indians and African Americans, they came to be viewed as White rather than as part of a particular culture. Writer Noel Ignatiev (1994:84), contrasting being White with being Polish, argues, “Whiteness is nothing but an expression of race privilege.” This strong statement argues that being White, as opposed to being Black or Asian, is characterized by being a member of the dominant group. Whiteness, although it may often be invisible, is aggressively embraced and defended (Giroux 1997).
White people do not think of themselves as a race or have a conscious racial identity. The only occasions when a White racial identity emerges is when filling out a form asking for self-designation of race or when they are culturally or socially surrounded by people who are not White.

Many immigrants who were not “White on arrival” had to “become White” in a process long forgotten by today’s White Americans. The long documented transparent racial divide that engulfed the South during slavery allowed us to ignore how Whiteness was constructed.

Therefore, contemporary White Americans generally give little thought to “being White.” Consequently, there is little interest in studying “Whiteness” or considering “being White” except that it is “not being Black.” Unlike non-Whites, who are much more likely to interact with Whites, take orders from Whites, and see Whites as leading figures in the mass media, Whites enjoy the privilege of not being reminded of their Whiteness.

Unlike racial minorities, Whites downplay the importance of their racial identity, although they are willing to receive the advantages that come from being White. This means that advocacy of a “color-blind” or “race-neutral” outlook permits the privilege of Whiteness to prevail (Bonilla-Silva 2002; Feagin and Cobas 2008; Yancey 2003).

The new scholarly interest seeks to look at Whiteness but not from the vantage point of a White supremacist. Rather, focusing on White people as a race or on what it means today to be White goes beyond any definition that implies superiority over non-Whites. It is also recognized that “being White” is not the same experience for all Whites any more than “being Asian American” or “being Black” is the same for all Asian Americans or all Blacks. Historian Noel Ignatiev observes that studying Whiteness is a necessary stage to the “abolition of whiteness”—just as, in Marxist analysis, class consciousness is a necessary stage to the abolition of class. By confronting Whiteness, society grasps the all-encompassing power that accompanies socially constructed race (Lewis 2004; McKinney 2003; Roediger 2006).

White privilege, introduced in Chapter 2, refers to the right granted as a benefit or favor of being White and can be an element of Whiteness. However, of course, many Whites consciously try to minimize the exercising of this privilege. Admittedly it is difficult when a White person is more likely than not to mostly see national leaders, celebrities, and role models who are also White. For every Barack Obama there are hundreds of movers and shakers that are White.

When race is articulated or emphasized for Whites, it is more likely to be seen as threatening to Whites than allowing them to embrace their own race or national roots with pride. Behavioral economists Michael Norton and Samuel Sommers (2011) found that Whites’ view race as a zero-sum game, that is, decreases in bias against African Americans over the last 60 years are associated with increases in what they perceived as bias against Whites. While still seeing anti-Black bias as greater today than anti-White feeling in society, their analysis shows the two coming very close together in the minds of the White respondents. Black respondents also saw a marked decline in anti-Black bias during the same period but perceived only a modest increase in anti-White feelings. While their research only deals with perception of reality, it does suggest that race and not just that of non-Whites influence one’s perception of society.

The Rediscovery of Ethnicity

Robert Park (1950:205), a prominent early sociologist, wrote in 1913 that “a Pole, Lithuanian, or Norwegian cannot be distinguished, in the second generation, from an American, born of native parents.” At one time, sociologists saw the end of ethnicity as nearly a foregone conclusion. W. Lloyd Warner and Leo Srole (1945) wrote in their often-cited Yankee City series that the future of ethnic groups seemed to be limited in the United States and that they would be quickly absorbed. Oscar Handlin’s Uprooted (1951) told of the destruction of immigrant values and their replacement by American culture. Although
Handlin was among the pioneers in investigating ethnicity, assimilation was the dominant theme in his work.

Many writers have shown almost a fervent hope that ethnicity would vanish. The persistence of ethnicity was for some time treated by sociologists as dysfunctional because it meant a continuation of old values that interfered with the allegedly superior new values. For example, to hold on to one’s language delayed entry into the larger labor market and the upward social mobility it afforded. Ethnicity was expected to disappear not only because of assimilation but also because aspirations to higher social class and status demanded that it vanish. Somehow, it was assumed that one could not be ethnic and middle class, much less affluent.

The Third-Generation Principle

Historian Marcus Hansen’s (1952) principle of third-generation interest was an early exception to the assimilationist approach to White ethnic groups. Simply stated, Hansen maintained that in the third generation—the grandchildren of the original immigrants—ethnic interest and awareness would actually increase. According to Hansen, “What the son wishes to forget, the grandson wishes to remember.”

Hansen’s principle has been tested several times since it was first put forth. John Goering (1971), in interviewing Irish and Italian Catholics, found that ethnicity was more important to members of the third generation than it was to the immigrants themselves. Similarly, Mary Waters (1990)—in her interviews of White ethnics living in suburban San Jose, California, and suburban Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—observed that many grandchildren wanted to study their ancestors’ language, even though it would be a foreign language to them. They also expressed interest in learning more of their ethnic group’s history and a desire to visit their homeland.

Social scientists in the past were quick to minimize the ethnic awareness of blue-collar workers. In fact, ethnicity was viewed as merely another aspect of White ethnics’ alleged racist nature, an allegation that is examined later in this chapter. Curiously, the very same intellectuals and journalists who bent over backward to understand the growing solidarity of Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans refused to give White ethnics the academic attention they deserved (Kivisto 2008; Wrong 1972).
The new assertiveness of Blacks and other non-Whites of their rights in the 1960s unquestionably presented White ethnics with the opportunity to reexamine their own position. “If solidarity and unapologetic self-consciousness might hasten Blacks’ upward mobility, why not ours?” asked the White ethnics, who were often only a half-step above Blacks in social status. The African American movement pushed other groups to reflect on their past. The increased consciousness of Blacks and their positive attitude toward African culture and the contributions worldwide of African Americans are embraced in what we called the Afrocentric perspective (see Chapter 1). Therefore, the mood was set in the 1960s for the country to be receptive to ethnicity. By legitimizing Black cultural differences from White culture, along with those of Native Americans and Hispanics, the country’s opinion leaders legitimized other types of cultural diversity.

**Ethnic Paradox**

So, many nearly assimilated Whites are rediscovering their ethnicity (i.e., the principle of third-generation interest) while others are at least publicly acknowledging their ethnicity from time to time (i.e., symbolic ethnicity). Yet research confirms that preserving elements of one’s ethnicity may actually advance economic success and further societal acceptance.

**Ethnic paradox** refers to the maintenance of one’s ethnic ties in a manner that can assist with assimilation in larger society. Immigrant youth as well as adults who maintain their ethnicity tend to succeed better as indicated by health measures, educational attainment, and lower incidence of behavioral problems such as delinquency and truancy. In the Research Focus box in Chapter 4 (page 106) we considered how Puerto Rican immigrants to the mainland who preserved their ethnic ties were healthier.

Researchers typically measure ethnic maintenance by facility in the mother language (not just conversational or “street” use) and living with others of the same ethnic background. These clear ethnic ties are not an automatic recipe for success. For example, residing with co-ethnics can lead to exploitation such as in neighborhoods where people steer their countrymen into dead-end, poor-paying, and even unhealthy working conditions. Yet for many ethnics, enclaves do offer a refuge, sort of a halfway house, between two different cultures. Language maintenance, as noted in the previous chapter, is often critical to being truly literate and comfortable with English (Desmond and Kubrin 2009).

In Listen to Our Voices, pp.122–123, sociologist Tomás Jiménez at Stanford University considers the role that new people arriving has played in the United States in shaping the nation’s identity and how immigrants manage life in a new society.

**Symbolic Ethnicity**

Observers comment on both the evidence of assimilation and the signs of ethnic identity that seem to support a pluralistic view of society. How can both be possible?

First, there is the visible evidence of **symbolic ethnicity**, which may lead us to exaggerate the persistence of ethnic ties among White Americans. According to sociologist Herbert Gans (1979), ethnicity today increasingly involves the symbols of ethnicity, such as eating ethnic food, acknowledging ceremonial holidays such as St. Patrick’s Day, and supporting
specific political issues or the issues confronting the old country. One example was the push in 1998 by Irish Americans to convince state legislatures to make it compulsory in public schools to teach about the Irish potato famine, which was a significant factor in immigration to the United States. This symbolic ethnicity may be more visible, but this type of ethnic heritage does not interfere with what people do, read, or say, or even whom they befriend or marry.

The ethnicity of the twenty-first century, embraced by English-speaking Whites, is largely symbolic. It does not include active involvement in ethnic activities or participation in ethnic-related organizations. In fact, sizable proportions of White ethnics have gained large-scale entry into almost all clubs, cliques, and fraternal groups. Such acceptance is a key indicator of assimilation. Ethnicity has become increasingly peripheral to the lives of the members of the ethnic group. Although today’s White ethnics may not relinquish their ethnic identity, other identities become more important.

Second, the ethnicity that does exist may be more a result of living in the United States than actual importing of practices from the past or the old country. Many so-called ethnic foods or celebrations, for example, began in the United States. The persistence of ethnic consciousness, then, may not depend on foreign birth, a distinctive language, and a unique way of life. Instead, it may reflect the experiences in the United States of a unique group that developed a cultural tradition distinct from that of the mainstream. For example, in Poland, the szlachta, or landed gentry, rarely mixed socially with the peasant class. In the United States, however, even with those associations still fresh, szlachta and peasants interacted together in social organizations as they settled in concentrated communities segregated physically and socially from others (Lopata 1994; Winter 2008).

Third, maintaining ethnicity can be a critical step toward successful assimilation. This ethnicity paradox facilitates full entry into the dominant culture. The ethnic community may give its members not only a useful financial boost but also the psychological strength and positive self-esteem that will allow them to compete effectively in a larger society. Thus, we may witness people participating actively in their ethnic enclave while trying to cross the bridge into the wider community (Lal 1995).

Therefore, ethnicity gives continuity with the past in the form of an effective or emotional tie. The significance of this sense of belonging cannot be emphasized enough. Whether reinforced by distinctive behavior or by what Milton Gordon (1964) called a sense of peoplehood, ethnicity is an effective, functional source of cohesion. Proximity to fellow ethnics is not necessary for a person to maintain social cohesion and ingroup identity. Fraternal organizations or sports-related groups can preserve associations between ethnics who are separated geographically. Members of ethnic groups may even maintain their feelings of ingroup solidarity after leaving ethnic communities in the central cities for the suburban fringe.

The German Americans

Germany is the largest single source of ancestry of people in the United States today, even exceeding the continents of either Africa or Asia. Yet except in a few big-city neighborhood enclaves, the explicit presence of German culture seems largely relegated to bratwurst, pretzels, and Kris Kringle.
Chapter 5  Ethnicity and Religion

Settlement Patterns

In the late 1700s, the newly formed United States experienced the arrival of a number of religious dissenters from Germany (such as the Amish) who were attracted by the proclamation of religious freedom as well as prospects for economic advancement. At the time of the American Revolution, immigrants from Germany (as well as German-speaking Swill) accounted for about one in eight White residents. German colonial subjects split their loyalty between the revolutionaries and the British, but were united in their optimistic view of the opportunities the New World would present.

Although Pennsylvania was the center of early settlements, German Americans, like virtually all other Europeans, moved out west (Ohio, Michigan, and beyond), where land was abundant. In many isolated communities, they established churches and parochial schools, and, in some instances, ethnic enclaves that in selected areas spoke of creating “New Germanys.”

Beginning in the 1830s through 1890, Germans represented at least one-quarter of the immigration, ensuring their destiny in the settlement of the United States (see Figure 5.1). Their major urban presence was in Milwaukee, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, and Cincinnati.

Listen to our Voices

“The Next Americans

“How immigrants and their descendants see themselves will change over time, and they will simultaneously transform many aspects of what it means to be an American. This is undoubtedly an uncomfortable process, fraught with tension between newcomers and established Americans that can occasionally become explosive. But the real issue is whether the United States can provide opportunities for upward mobility so that immigrants can, in turn, fortify what is most essential to our nation’s identity.

History is instructive on whether immigrants will create a messy patchwork of ethnicities in the U.S. About a century ago, a tide of Southern and Eastern European immigrants arriving on our shores raised fears similar to those we hear today. Then, as now, Americans worried that the newcomers were destroying American identity. Many were certain that Catholic immigrants would help the pope rule the United States from Rome, and that immigrants from Southern Europe would contaminate the American gene pool.

None of this came to pass, of course. The pope has no political say in American affairs, the United States is still a capitalist democracy, and there is nothing wrong with the American gene pool. The fact that these fears never materialized are often cited as proof that European-origin immigrants and their descendants successfully assimilated into an American societal monolith.

However, as sociologists Richard Alba and Victor Nee point out, much of the American identity as we know it today was shaped by previous waves of immigrants. For instance, they note that the Christian tradition of the Christmas tree and the leisure Sunday made their way into the American mainstream because German immigrants and their descendants brought these traditions with them. Where religion was concerned, Protestantism was the clear marker of the nonsecular mainstream. But because of the assimilation of millions of Jews and Catholics, we today commonly refer to an American “Judeo-Christian tradition,” a far more encompassing notion of American religious identity than the one envisioned in the past.

Even in Los Angeles County, where 36% of the population is foreign-born and more than half speak a language other than English at home, English is not losing out in the long run. According to a recent study by social scientists Rubén Rumbaut, Douglas Massey, and Frank Bean, published in the Population and Development Review, the use of non-English languages...
virtually disappears among nearly all U.S.-born children of immigrants in the country. Spanish shows more staying power among the U.S.-born children and grandchildren of Mexican immigrants, which is not surprising given that the size of the Spanish-speaking population provides near-ubiquitous access to the language. But the survival of Spanish among U.S.-born descendants of Mexican immigrants does not come at the expense of their ability to speak English and, more strikingly, English overwhelms Spanish-language use among the grandchildren of these immigrants.

An equally telling sign of how much immigrants and their children are becoming “American” is how different they have become from those in their ethnic homelands. Virtually all of today’s immigrants stay connected to their countries of origin. They send money to family members who remain behind. Relatively inexpensive air, rail, and bus travel and the availability of cheap telecommunication and e-mail enable them to stay in constant contact, and dual citizenship allows their political voices to be heard from abroad. These enduring ties might lead to the conclusion that continuity between here and there threatens loyalty to the Stars and Stripes.

But ask any immigrant or their children about a recent visit to their country of origin, and they are likely to tell you how American they felt. The family and friends they visit quickly recognize the prodigal children’s tastes for American styles, their American accents and their declining cultural familiarity with life in the ethnic homeland—all telltale signs that they’ve Americanized. As sociologist David Fitzgerald puts it, their assimilation into American society entails a good deal of “dissimilation” from the countries the immigrants left behind.

American identity is absorbing something quite significant from immigrants and being changed by them. Language, food, entertainment and holiday traditions are palpable aspects of American culture on which immigrants today, as in the past, are leaving their mark. Our everyday lexicon is sprinkled with Spanish words. We are now just as likely to grab a burrito as a burger. Hip-hop is tinged with South Asian rhythms. And Chinese New Year and Cinco de Mayo are taking their places alongside St. Patrick’s Day as widely celebrated American ethnic holidays.

Source: Jiménez 2007.

FIGURE 5.1
Immigration from Germany, Ireland, Italy, and Poland

Note: Immigration after 1925 from Northern Ireland is not included. No separate data is included for Poland from 1900 to 1920.

Source: Office of Immigration Statistics 2009:Table 2.
Early in the history of America, German immigrant cultural influence was apparent. Although the new United States never voted on making German the national language, publications of the proceedings of the Continental Congress were published in German and English. Yet even in those early years, the fear of foreigners—that is, non-Anglos—prevented German, even temporarily, from ever getting equal footing with English.

German Americans, perhaps representing 10 percent of the population, established bilingual programs in many public schools, but the rise of Germany as a military foe in the twentieth century ended that movement (Harzig 2008; Nelsen 1973).

Twentieth-Century German America

In 1901, the German-American National Alliance (Deutsche-Amerikanischer National-Bund) was founded to speak for all Germans in the United States, especially urban Protestant middle-class German Americans. As time passed, it sought to commemorate the contributions to the nation’s development but also sought to block prohibition. With the rise of German military power, many German Americans sought to argue for U.S. neutrality. But these efforts ended quickly, and the organization actually disbanded after the United States declared war on Germany in 1917.

With World War I and especially the rise of the Nazi era and the war years of the 1930s and 1940s, most German Americans sought to distance themselves from the politics in their homeland. There were anti-German incidents of harassment and intimidation. About 11,000 German Americans (out of 5 million) were interned, but the stigmatization did not come close to that felt by Japanese Americans. By comparison, many more German Americans enlisted and played important roles (none more so than Dwight Eisenhower, whose ancestors immigrated to Pennsylvania from Germany in 1741).

German Americans made the group transition into core society. Indeed, Horace Kallen, who popularized the term pluralism, held up German America as a success in finding a place in the United States. With the end of wartime tensions, German Americans moved from having multiple identities that included being somewhat marginalized as “Germans” to an identity of “American” and, less explicitly, White (Carlson 2003; Kazal 2004; Krammer 1997).

By the latter half of the twentieth century, the animosity toward Germany seemed a part of the distant past. Germany and its people became emblematic of stalwart friends of the United States, as reflected with appearances beginning with John F. Kennedy in Berlin in 1963 and Ronald Reagan in 1987. Both spoke of the U.S. commitment to uniting Germany, and presidential candidate Barack Obama in 2008 spoke in Berlin of a united Europe.

In the last 10 years, immigration from Germany, a country of 82 million, has fluctuated between 8,000 and 22,000 annually. The steady immigration for decades placed Germany in the 2000 census as the 10th-largest source of foreign-born residents, with more than 700,000 (only about 170,000 behind Cuba and Korea). Yet the broad dispersion of these immigrants and their bilingual capability means the numbers are insufficient to create (or re-create) a German cultural presence. Rather, today’s German American community is characterized by postwar and historical ties that have long since overshadowed the lingering bitterness of World Wars I and II (Harzig 2008; Office of Immigration Statistics 2009).
Famous German Americans include industrialist John D. Rockefeller, General John Pershing, baseball players Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, and actors Clark Gable and Kirsten Dunst.

The Irish Americans

The Irish presence in the United States stretches back to the 1600s and reflects a diversity based on time of entry, settlement area, and religion. Irish Americans have been visible both in a positive way in terms of playing a central role in American life and in a negative way at certain historical periods, being victimized like so many other immigrant groups.

Irish Immigration

The Roman Catholics among the early immigrants were a diverse group. Some were extensions of the privileged classes seeking even greater prosperity. Protestant settlers of all national backgrounds including those coming from Ireland were united in their hatred of Catholicism. In most of the colonies, Catholics could not practice their faith openly and either struggled inwardly or converted to Anglicanism. Other Roman Catholics and some Protestants came from Europe as an alternative to prison or after signing articles of indenture and arriving bound to labor for periods of customarily three to five years and sometimes as long as seven years (Meagher 2005).

The American Revolution temporarily stopped the flow of immigration, but deteriorating economic conditions in Ireland soon spurred even greater movement to North America. British officials, by making passage to the newly formed republic of the United States expensive, diverted many immigrants to British North America (Canada). Yet the numbers to the United States remained significant and, although still primarily Protestant, drew from a broader spectrum of Ireland both economically and geographically.

Many people mistakenly overlook this early immigration and begin with Irish immigration during the Great Famine. Yet the Irish were the largest group after the English among immigrants during the colonial period. The historical emphasis on the famine immigrants is understandable, given the role it played in Ireland and its impetus for the massive transfer of population from Ireland to the United States.

In 1845, a fungus wiped out the potato crop of Ireland, as well as that of much of western Europe and even coastal America. Potatoes were particularly central to the lives of the Irish, and the devastating starvation did not begin to recede until 1851. Mortality was high, especially among the poor and in the more agricultural areas of the island. Predictably, to escape catastrophe, some 2 million Irish fled mostly to England, but then many continued on to the United States. From 1841 through 1890, more than 3.2 million Irish arrived in the United States (Figure 5.1).

This new migration fleeing the old country was much more likely to consist of families rather than single men. The arrival of entire households and extended kinship networks increased significantly the rapid formation of Irish social organizations in the United States. This large influx of immigrants led to the creation of ethnic neighborhoods, complete with parochial schools and parish churches serving as focal points. Fraternal organizations such as the Ancient Order of Hibernians, corner saloons, local political organizations, and Irish nationalist groups seeking the ouster of Britain from Ireland rounded out neighborhood social life.

Even in the best of times, the lives of the famine Irish would have been challenging in the United States, but they arrived at a very difficult time. Nativist—that is, anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant—movements were already emerging and being embraced by politicians. Antagonism was not limited to harsh words. From 1834 to 1854, mob violence against Catholics across the country led to death, the burning of a Boston convent, the destruction of a Catholic church and the homes of Catholics, and the use of Marines and state militia to bring peace to American cities as far west as St. Louis.

In retrospect, the reception given to the Irish is not difficult to understand. Many immigrated after the potato crop failure and famine in Ireland. They fled not so much...
to a better life as from almost certain death. The Irish Catholics brought with them a celibate clergy, who struck the New England aristocracy as strange and reawakened old religious hatreds. The Irish were worse than Blacks, according to the dominant Whites, because unlike the slaves and even the freed Blacks, who “knew their place,” the Irish did not suffer their maltreatment in silence. Employers balanced minorities by judiciously mixing immigrant groups to prevent unified action by the laborers. For the most part, nativist efforts only led the foreign born to emphasize their ties to Europe.

Mostly of peasant backgrounds, the Irish arriving were ill prepared to compete successfully for jobs in the city. Their children found it much easier to improve their occupational status over that of their fathers as well as experienced upward mobility in their own lifetimes.

### Becoming White

Ireland had a long antislavery tradition, including practices that prohibited Irish trade in English slaves. Some 60,000 Irish signed an address in 1841, petitioning Irish Americans to join the abolitionist movement in the United States. Many Irish Americans already opposed to slavery applauded the appeal, but they were soon drowned out by fellow immigrants who denounced or questioned the authenticity of the petition.

The Irish immigrants, subjected to derision and menial jobs, sought to separate themselves from the even lower classes, particularly Black Americans and especially the slaves. It was not altogether clear that the Irish were “White” during the antebellum period. Irish character was rigidly cast in negative racial typology. Although the shared experiences of oppression could have led Irish Americans to ally with Black Americans, they grasped for Whiteness at the margins of their lives in the United States. Direct competition was not common between the two groups. For example, in 1855, Irish immigrants made up 87 percent of New York City’s unskilled laborers, whereas free Blacks accounted for only 3 percent (Greeley 1981; Ignatiev 1995; Roediger 1994).

As Irish immigration continued in the latter part of the nineteenth century until Irish independence in 1921, they began to see themselves favorably in comparison to the initial waves of Italian, Polish, and Slovak Roman Catholic immigrants. The Irish Americans began to assume more leadership positions in politics and labor unions. Loyalty to the church still played a major role. By 1910, the priesthood was the professional occupation of choice for second-generation men. Irish women were more likely than their German and English immigrant counterparts to become schoolteachers. In time, Irish Americans’ occupational profiles diversified, and they began to experience slow advancement and gradually were welcomed into the White working class as their identity as “White” overcame any status as “immigrant.”

With mobility came social class distinctions within Irish America. The immigrants and their children who began to move into the more affluent urban areas were derogatorily referred to as the “lace-curtain Irish.” The lower-class Irish immigrants they left behind, meanwhile, were referred to as the “shanty Irish.” But as immigration from Ireland slowed and upward mobility quickened, fewer and fewer Irish qualified as the poor cousins of their predecessors.

For the Irish American man, the priesthood was viewed as a desirable and respected occupation. Irish Americans furthermore played a leadership role in the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. The Irish dominance persisted long after other ethnic groups swelled the ranks of the faithful (Fallows 1979; Lee and Bean 2007; Lee and Casey 2006).
The Contemporary Picture

By 2009, 36.9 million people identified themselves as having Irish ancestry—second only to German ancestry and eight times the current population of Ireland itself. Massachusetts has the largest concentration of Irish Americans, with 24 percent of the state indicating Irish ancestry.

Irish immigration today is relatively slight, accounting for perhaps one out of 1,000 legal arrivals until because of tough economic times it climbed to 2,800 in 2010. About 122,000 people in the United States were born in Ireland. Today’s Irish American typically enjoys the symbolic ethnicity of food, dance, and music. Gaelic language instruction is limited to fewer than 30 colleges. Visibility as a collective ethnic group is greatest with the annual St. Patrick’s Day celebrations, when everyone seems to be Irish, or with the occasional fervent nationalism aimed at curtailing Great Britain’s role in Northern Ireland. Yet some stereotypes remain concerning excessive drinking despite available data indicating that alcoholism rates are no higher and sometimes lower among people of Irish ancestry compared to descendants of other European immigrant groups (Bureau of the Census 2011i; G. Chazan and Tomson 2011).

St. Patrick’s Day celebrations, as noted previously, offer an example of how ethnic identity evolves over time. The Feast of St. Patrick has a long history, but public celebrations with parties, concerts, and parades originated in the United States, which were then exported to Ireland in the latter part of the twentieth century. Even today, the large Irish American population often defined what is authentic Irish globally. For example, participants in Irish step dancing in the United States have developed such clout in international competitions that they have come to define many aspects of cultural expression, much to the consternation of the Irish in Ireland (Bureau of the Census 2009c; Hassrick 2007).

Well-known Irish Americans can be found in all arenas of American society, including celebrity chef Bobby Flay, actor Philip Seymour Hoffman, comedian Conan O’Brien, and author Frank McCourt as well as the political dynasties of the Kennedys in Massachusetts and the Daleys in Chicago. Reflecting growing rates of intermarriage, Irish America also includes singer Mariah Carey (her mother Irish and her father African American and Venezuelan).

The Irish were the first immigrant group to encounter prolonged organized resistance. However, strengthened by continued immigration, facility with the English language, building on strong community and family networks, and familiarity with representative politics, Irish Americans became an integral part of the United States.

The Italian Americans

Although each European country’s immigration to the United States has created its own social history, the case of Italians, though not typical of every nationality, offers insight into the White ethnic experience. Italians immigrated even during the colonial period, coming from what was a highly differentiated land, because Italian states did not unify as one nation and escaped foreign domination until 1848.

Early Immigration

From the beginning Italian Americans played prominent roles during the American Revolution and the early days of the republic. Mass immigration began in the 1880s, peaking in the first 20 years of the twentieth century, when Italians accounted for one-fourth of European immigration (refer to Figure 5.1).

Italian immigration was concentrated not only in time but also by geography. The majority of the immigrants were landless peasants from rural southern Italy, the Mezzogiorno. Although many people in the United States assume that Italians are a nationality with a single culture, this is not true either culturally or economically. The Italian people recognize multiple geographic divisions reflecting sharp cultural distinctions. These divisions were brought with the immigrants to the New World.
Many Italians, especially in the early years of mass immigration in the nineteenth century, received their jobs through an ethnic labor contractor, the padrone. Similar arrangements have been used by Asian, Hispanic, and Greek immigrants, where the labor contractors, most often immigrants, have mastered sufficient English to mediate for their compatriots. Exploitation was common within the padrone system through kickbacks, provision of inadequate housing, and withholding of wages. By World War I, 90 percent of Italian girls and 99 percent of Italian boys in New York City were leaving school at age 14 to work, but by that time, Italian Americans were sufficiently fluent in English to seek out work on their own, and the padrone system had disappeared. Still, by comparison to the Irish, the Italians in the United States were slower to accept formal schooling as essential to success (Sassler 2006).

Along with manual labor, the Catholic Church was a very important part of Italian Americans’ lives at that time. Yet they found little comfort in a Catholic Church dominated by an earlier immigrant group: the Irish. The traditions were different; weekly attendance for Italian Americans was overshadowed by the religious aspects of the feste (or festivals) held throughout the year in honor of saints (the Irish viewed the feste as practically a form of paganism). These initial adjustment problems were overcome with the establishment of ethnic parishes, a pattern repeated by other non-Irish immigrant groups. Thus, parishes would be staffed by Italian priests, sometimes imported for that purpose. Although the hierarchy of the Church adjusted more slowly, Italian Americans were increasingly able to feel at home in their local parish church. Today, more than 70 percent of Italian Americans identify themselves as Roman Catholics (Luconi 2001).

**Constructing Identity**

As assimilation proceeded, Italian Americans began to construct a social identity as a nationality group rather than viewing themselves in terms of their village or province. As shown in Figure 5.2, over time, Italian Americans shed old identities for new ones. As immigration from Italy declined, the descendants’ ties became more nationalistic. This move from local or regional to national identity was followed by Irish and Greek Americans. The changing identity of Italian Americans reflected the treatment they received in the United States, whereas non-Italians did not make those regional distinctions. However, they were not treated well. For example, in turn-of-the-century New Orleans, Italian Americans established special ties with the Black community because both groups were marginalized in Southern society. Gradually, Italian Americans became White and enjoyed all the privileges that came with it. Today, it would be inconceivable to imagine that Italian Americans of New Orleans would reach out to the African American community as their natural allies on social and political issues (Guglielmo and Salerno 2003; Luconi 2001; Steinberg 2007:126).

A controversial aspect of the Italian American experience involves organized crime, as typified by Al Capone (1899–1947). Arriving in U.S. society in the bottom layers, Italians lived in decaying, crime-ridden neighborhoods that became known as Little Italy. For a

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**FIGURE 5.2**

**Constructing Social Identity among Italian Immigrants**

Over time, Italian Americans moved from seeing themselves in terms of their provincial or village identity to their national identity, and then they successfully became indistinguishable from other Whites.
small segment of these immigrants, crime was a significant means of upward social mobility. In effect, entering and leading criminal activity was one aspect of assimilation, though not a positive one. Complaints linking ethnicity and crime actually began in colonial times with talk about the criminally inclined Irish and Germans, and they continue with contemporary stereotyping about groups such as Colombian drug dealers and Vietnamese street gangs. Yet the image of Italians as criminals has persisted from Prohibition-era gangsters to the view of mob families today. As noted earlier, it is not at all surprising that groups have been organized to counter such negative images.

The fact that Italians often are characterized as criminal, even in the mass media, is another example of what we have called respectable bigotry toward White ethnics. The persistence of linking Italians, or any other minority group, with crime probably is attributable to attempts to explain a problem by citing a single cause: the presence of perceived undesirables. Many Italian Americans still see their image tied to old stereotypes. A 2001 survey of Italian American teenagers found that 39 percent felt the media presented their ethnic group as criminal or gang members and 34 percent as restaurant workers (Girardelli 2004; IAAMS 2009; National Italian American Foundation 2006; Parrillo 2008).

The immigration of Italians was slowed by the national origins system, described in Chapter 4. As Italian Americans settled permanently, the mutual aid societies that had grown up in the 1920s to provide basic social services began to dissolve. More slowly, education came to be valued by Italian Americans as a means of upward mobility. Even becoming more educated did not ward off prejudice, however. In 1930, for example, President Herbert Hoover rebuked Fiorello La Guardia, then an Italian American member of Congress from New York City, stating that “the Italians are predominantly our murderers and bootleggers” and recommending that La Guardia “go back to where you belong” because, “like a lot of other foreign spawn, you do not appreciate this country which supports you and tolerates you” (Baltzell 1964, 30).

Although U.S. troops, including 500,000 Italian Americans, battled Italy during World War II, some hatred and sporadic violence emerged against Italian Americans and their property. However, they were not limited to actions against individuals. Italian Americans were even confined by the federal government in specific areas of California by virtue of their ethnicity alone, and 10,000 were relocated from coastal areas. In addition, 1,800 Italian Americans who were citizens of Italy were placed in an internment camp in Montana. The internees were eventually freed on Columbus Day 1942 as President Roosevelt lobbied the Italian American community to gain full support for the impending land invasion of Italy (Department of Justice 2001; Fox 1990).

In Research Focus we consider how social scientists examine the economic experience of these early Italian immigrants and their children in the United States and compare it to how Mexican immigrants are faring today.

The Contemporary Picture

In politics, Italian Americans have been more successful, at least at the local level, where family and community ties can be translated into votes. However, political success did not come easily because many Italian immigrants anticipated returning to their homeland and did not always take neighborhood politics seriously. It was even more difficult for Italian Americans to break into national politics.

Not until 1962 was an Italian American named to a cabinet-level position. Geraldine Ferraro’s nomination as the Democratic vice presidential candidate in 1984 was every bit as much an achievement for Italian Americans as it was for women. The opposition to the nomination of Judge Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court in 2006 struck many as bordering on anti-Iranian American sentiments in the manner the opposition was advanced. Numerous critics used the phrase “Judge Scalito” in obvious reference to the sitting Italian American on the Court, Justice Antonia Scalia (Cornacchia and Nelson 1992).

While as a group Italian Americans are firmly a part of middle America, they frequently continue to be associated with crime. In 2009, three New Jersey mayors were indicted for corruption and not all of them were Italian. At the core of the scandal were five Syrian American rabbis, newspapers quickly dubbing it “New Jersey’s ‘Italian’ Problem.” MTV’s successful reality show *Jersey Shore*, which seems to focus on drinking, hot tubbing, and brawling stars,
Anyone thinking about the future of today’s immigrants might reflect back on the experiences of those who came a century ago. It is widely agreed that, despite difficult times and often harsh treatment by those already here, the immigrants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century ultimately fared well. Certainly their descendants are doing well today. So can we generalize from this experience to today’s immigrants?

Sociologist Joel Perlmann and other scholars have considered the experience of immigrants from southern, central, and eastern Europe who were predominantly low-skilled workers. A significant component were Italian and Poles. Based on his analysis and that of other sociologists, we find that these earlier immigrant workers earned typically only between 60 and 88 percent in wages as that of nonimmigrant Whites in the same occupational groups.

Contrary to an often commonly held belief, these immigrants did not end up in well-paying jobs in manufacturing that led them into the middle class in their own lifetimes. Rather, they firmly remained working class until after World War II. Upward mobility occurred across generations typically, not within the lifetimes of the arriving Italian, Polish, and other southern, central, and eastern European immigrants. This would mean economic parity took about three or four generations and not a decade as some writers have romantically portrayed it.

Taking these data, Perlmann looks at contemporary Mexican immigrants. In many ways, the deck is stacked against this current immigrant group, which is by far the largest. Unlike their European counterparts of a century ago, many arrivals from Mexico (about 55 percent) are having to labor as illegal immigrants, which obviously curtails the opportunities available to them and their family members. Today’s second-generation Mexicans in the United States are lagging further behind in education compared to the general population than were the comparable generation of the turn-of-the century European immigrants.

The education gap among today’s Latinos does not facilitate upward mobility. This is particularly challenging given the much greater importance that formal schooling has today for economic success compared to a century ago.

Language acquisition does not appear to be an issue, even given the large concentrations of Spanish-speaking neighborhoods that might seem to work against Hispanics becoming fluent English speakers. Although 23 percent of Hispanic immigrants as a group speak English very well, the percentage of these immigrants who are fluent in English rises to 88 percent among their U.S.-born children and then to 94 percent in the third generation.

It is early to make firm direct comparisons because the second-generation Mexican American is just coming of age, much less having full labor force experience and creating their own families. Although the complete entry of today’s immigrants into economy is likely to come based on analysis of the situation today, comparisons to White ethnics suggests that it may take the immigrants longer by at least an additional generation.

Sources: Bean and Stevens 2003; Camarota 2007a; Dickson 2006; Hakimzadeh and Cohn 2007; Katz et al. 2007; Perlmann 2005; Portes 2006; Portes and Rumbaut 2006.

did not help. Stereotypes and labeling do not go away and truth is no antidote (P. Cohen 2010a; McGurn 2009).

There is no paucity of famous Italian Americans. They include athletes such as Joe DiMaggio and Joe Paterno, politician Rudolph Giuliani, film director Francis Ford Coppola, singer Madonna, comedian Jay Leno, writer Mario Puzo, actor Nicholas Cage, chef Rachel Ray, and auto racing legend Mario Andretti.

Italian Americans still remain the seventh-largest immigrant group. Just how ethnically conscious is the Italian American community? Although the number is declining, 800,000 Americans speak Italian at home; only eight languages are spoken more frequently at home: Spanish, French, Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, Tagalog (Philippines), German, and Japanese. For another 14-plus million Italian Americans, however, the language tie
to their culture is absent, and, depending on their degree of assimilation, only traces of symbolic ethnicity may remain. In a later section, we look at the role that language plays for many immigrants and their children (Shin and Kominski 2010).

**The Polish Americans**

Immigrants from Poland have had experiences similar to those of the Irish and Italians. They had to overcome economic problems and personal hardships just to make the journey. Once in the United States, they found themselves often assigned to the jobs many citizens had not wanted to do. They had to adjust to a new language and a familiar yet different culture. And always they were looking back to the family members left behind who either wanted to join them in the United States or, in contrast, never wanted them to leave in the first place.

Like other arrivals, many Poles sought improvement in their lives, a migration that was known as Za Chlebem (For Bread). The Poles who came were, at different times, more likely than many other European immigrants to see themselves as forced immigrants and were often described by, and themselves adopted, the terminology directly reflecting their social roles—exiles, refugees, displaced persons, or émigrés. The primary force for this exodus was the changing political status of Poland through most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which was as turbulent as the lives of the new arrivals.

**Early Immigration**

Polish immigrants were among the settlers at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1608, to help develop the colony’s timber industry, but it was the Poles who came later in that century who made a lasting mark. The successful exploits of Polish immigrants such as cavalry officer Casimir Pulaski and military engineer Thaddeus Kosciuszko are still commemorated today in communities with large Polish American populations. As we can see in Figure 5.1, it was not until the 1890s that Polish immigration was significant in comparison to some other European arrivals. Admittedly, it is difficult to exactly document the size of this immigration because at various historical periods Poland or parts of the country became part of Austria-Hungary, Germany (Prussia), and the Soviet Union so that the migrants were not officially coming from a nation called “Poland.”

Many of the Polish immigrants were adjusting not only to a new culture but also to a more urban way of life. Sociologists William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, in their classic study *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* ([1918] 1996), traced the path from rural Poland to urban America. Many of the peasants did not necessarily come directly to the United States but first traveled through other European countries. This pattern is not unique and reminds us that, even today, many immigrants have crossed several countries, sometimes establishing themselves for a period of time before finally settling in the United States (Abbott and Egloff 2008).

Like the Germans, Italians, and Irish, Poles arrived at the large port cities of the East Coast but, unlike the other immigrant groups, these were more likely to settle in cities further inland or work in mines in Pennsylvania. In such areas, they would join kinfolk or acquaintances through the process of chain migration (described in the previous chapter).

The reference to coal mining as an occupation reflects the continuing tendency of immigrants to work in jobs avoided by most U.S. citizens because they paid little, were dangerous, or both.

Richie Sambora, a guitarist with the rock group Bon Jovi, is one of many well-known Polish Americans.
For example, in September 1897, a group of miners in Lattimer, Pennsylvania, marched to demand safer working conditions and an end to special taxes placed only on foreign-born workers. In the ensuing confrontation with local officials, police officers shot at the protesters, killing 19 people, most of who were Polish, the others Lithuanians and Slovaks (Duszak 1997).

Polonia

With growing numbers, the emergence of Polonia (meaning Polish communities outside of Poland) became more common in cities throughout the Midwest. Male immigrants who came alone often took shelter through a system of inexpensive boarding houses called tryznanie borńkow (brother keeping), which allowed the new arrival to save money and send it back to Poland to support his family. These funds eventually provided the financial means necessary to bring family members over, adding to the size of Polonia in cities such as Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, and, above all, Chicago, where the population of Poles was second only to Warsaw, Poland.

Religion has played an important role among Polish immigrants and their descendants. Most of the Polish immigrants who came to the United States before World War I were Roman Catholic. They quickly established their own parishes where new arrivals could feel welcome. Although religious services at that time were in the Latin language, as they had been in Poland, the many service organizations around the parish, not to mention the Catholic schools, kept the immigrants steeped in the Polish language and the latest happenings back home. Jewish Poles began immigrating during the first part of the twentieth century to escape the growing hostility they felt in Europe, which culminated in the Holocaust. Their numbers swelled greatly until movement from Poland stopped with the invasion of Poland by Germany in 1939; it resumed after the war.

Although the Jewish–Catholic distinction may be the most obvious distinguishing factor among Polish Americans, there are other divisions as well. Regional subgroups such as the Kashubes, the Górali, and the Mazurians have often carried great significance. Some Poles emigrated from areas where German was actually the language of origin.

As with other immigrant groups, Polish Americans could make use of a rich structure of voluntary self-help associations that was already well established by the 1890s. Not all organizations smoothly cut across different generations of Polish immigrants. For example, the Poles who came immediately after World War II as political refugees fleeing Soviet domination were quite different in their outlook than the descendants of the economic refugees from the turn of the century. These kinds of tensions in an immigrant community are not unusual, even if they go unnoticed by the casual observer who lumps all immigrants of the same nationality together (Jaroszyn’ska-Kirchmann 2004).

Like many other newcomers, Poles have been stigmatized as outsiders and also stereotyped as simple and uncultured—the typical biased view of working-class White ethnics. Their struggles in manual occupations placed them in direct competition with other White ethnics and African Americans, which occasionally led to labor disputes and longer-term tense and emotional rivalries. “Polish jokes” continue now to have a remarkable shelf life in casual conversation well into the twenty-first century. Jewish Poles suffer the added indignities of anti-Semitism (Dolan and Stotsky 1997).

The Contemporary Picture

Today, Polonia in the United States is nearly 10 million. Although this may not seem significant in a country of more than 300 million, we need to recall that today Poland itself has a population of only about 39 million. Whether it was to support the efforts of Lech Walesa, the Solidarity movement leader who confronted the Soviet Union in the 1980s, or to celebrate the elevation of Karol Józef Wojtyla as Pope John Paul II in 1978, Polish Americans are a central part of the global Polish community.

Many Polish Americans have retained little of their rich cultural traditions and may barely acknowledge even symbolic ethnicity. Data released in 2010, show about 690,000 whose primary language is Polish, with 31 percent in Chicago and another 23 percent in...
New York City. Others are still immersed in Polonia, and their lives still revolve around many of the same religious and social institutions that were the center of Polonia a century ago. For example, 54 Roman Catholic churches in the metropolitan Chicago area still offer Polish-language masses. Although in many of these parishes there may be only one service in Polish serving a declining number of celebrants, a few traditional “Polish” churches actually still have Polish-speaking priests in residence. Even with the decline in Polish-language service, Pole seminarians are actively recruited by the Roman Catholic Church, although now English-language training is often emphasized.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, some of the voluntary associations relocated or built satellite centers to serve the outlying Polish American populations. To sustain their activities financially, these social organizations also reached out of the central cities in order to tap into the financial resources of suburban Poles. Increasingly, people of Polish descent also have now made their way into the same social networks populated by German, Irish, Italian, and other ethnic Americans (Bukowcyk 2007; Erdmans 1998, 2006; Lopata 1994; Mocha 1998; Polzin 1973; Shin and Kominski 2010; Stone 2006).

Except for immigrants who fled persecution in their homelands, immigration typically has back-and-forth movement. In the early years of the twenty-first century, there was an identifiable movement of Polish Americans from Polonia to Poland, especially as economic opportunity improved in the home country. One estimate of returnees places it at 50,000 from 2004 to 2009, which is a significant number in absolute numbers but is relatively small given the magnitude of the Polish American community (Hundley 2009).

Among the many Polish Americans well known or remembered today are actor Adrien Brody, home designer Martha (Kostyra) Stewart, comedian Jack Benny (Benjamin Kubelsky), guitarist Richie Sambora of the rock group Bon Jovi, actress Jane Kaczmarek of Malcolm in the Middle, entertainer Liberace, Wheel of Fortune host Pat Sajak, baseball star Stan Musial, football star Mike Ditka, novelist Joseph Conrad (Józef Korzeniowski), singer Bobby Vinton (Stanley Ventula, Jr.), polio vaccine pioneer Albert Sabin, and motion picture director Stanley Kubrick.

Religious Pluralism

Religion plays a fundamental role in society, even affecting those who do not practice or even believe in organized religion. Religion refers to a unified system of sacred beliefs and practices that encompass elements beyond everyday life that inspire awe, respect, and even fear (Durkheim [1912] 2001).

In popular speech, the term pluralism has often been used in the United States to refer explicitly to religion. Although certain faiths figure more prominently in the worship scene, there has been a history of greater religious tolerance in the United States than...
in most other nations. Today there are more than 1,500 religious bodies in the United States, ranging from the more than 66 million members of the Roman Catholic Church to sects with fewer than 1,000 adherents. In virtually every region of the country, religion is being expressed in greater variety, whether it be the Latinization of Catholicism and some Christian faiths or the de-Europeanizing of some established Protestant faiths as with Asian Americans or the de-Christianizing of the overall religious landscape with Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, and others (Roof 2007).

How do we view the United States in terms of religion? There is an increasingly non-Christian presence in the United States. In 1900, an estimated 96 percent of the nation was Christian; slightly more than 1 percent was nonreligious, and approximately 3 percent held other faiths. In 2010, it was estimated that the nation was 74 percent Christian, 14 percent nonreligious, and another 12 percent all other faiths. The United States has a long Jewish tradition, and Muslims number close to 5 million. A smaller but also growing number of people adhere to such Eastern faiths as Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism (Gallup 2010).

Sociologists use the word **denomination** for a large, organized religion that is not officially linked with the state or government. By far, the largest denomination in the United States is Catholicism; yet at least 26 other Christian religious denominations have 1 million or more members as of 2011 (Table 5.1).
There are also at least four non-Christian religious groups in the United States whose numbers are comparable to any of these large denominations: Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus. In the United States each numbers more than 1 million members. Within each of these groups are branches or sects that distinguish themselves from each other. For example, as we examine in greater detail later in this chapter, in the United States and the rest of the world, some Muslims are Sunni and others Shia. There are further divisions within these groups, just as there are among Protestants, and, in turn, among Baptists.

Islam in the United States has a long history stretching back to Muslim Africans who came as slaves to today’s Muslim community, which includes immigrants and native-born Americans. President Obama, the son of a practicing Muslim and who lived for years in Indonesia, the country with the largest population, never sought to hide his roots. However, reflecting the prejudices of many toward non-Christians, his Christian upbringing was stressed throughout the campaign. Little wonder that a national survey showed that 55 percent believe the U.S. Constitution establishes the country as a “Christian nation” (Cose 2008; O. Thomas 2007).

Even if religious faiths have broad representation, they tend to be fairly homogeneous at the local church level. This is especially ironic, given that many faiths have played critical roles in resisting racism and in trying to bring together the nation in the name of racial and ethnic harmony.

Broadly defined faiths represent a variety of ethnic and racial groups. In Figure 5.3, we consider the interaction of White, Black, and Hispanic races with religions. Muslims, Pentecostals, and Jehovah’s Witnesses are much more diverse than Presbyterians or Lutherans. Religion plays an even more central role for Blacks and Latinos than Whites. A national survey indicated that 65 percent of African Americans and 51 percent of Latinos attend a religious service every week, compared to 44 percent of White non-Hispanics (Winseman 2004).

It would also be mistaken to focus only on older religious organizations. Local churches that developed into national faiths in the 1990s, such as the Calvary Chapel, Vineyard, and Hope Chapel, have created a following among Pentecostal believers, who embrace a more charismatic form of worship devoid of many traditional ornaments, with pastors and congregations alike favoring informal attire. New faiths develop with increasing rapidity in what can only be called a very competitive market for individual religious faith. In addition, many people, with or without religious affiliation, become fascinated with spiritual concepts such as angels or become a part of loose-knit fellowships such as the Promise Keepers, an all-male movement of evangelical Christians founded in 1990. Religion in the United States is an ever-changing social phenomenon. Other nonmainstream faiths emerge in new arenas, as evidenced by the campaign of Mitt Romney, a Mormon, to win the Republican nomination for president in 2008 or the visible role of celebrities promoting the Church of Scientology (Dudley and Roozen 2001; Schaefer and Zellner 2011).

Divisive conflicts along religious lines are muted in the United States compared with those in, say, the Middle East. Although not entirely absent, conflicts about religion in the United States seem to be overshadowed by civil religion. Civil religion is the religious dimension in the United States that merges public life with sacred beliefs. It also reflects that no single faith is privileged over all others.

Sociologist Robert Bellah (1967) borrowed the phrase civil religion from eighteenth-century French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau to describe a significant phenomenon in the contemporary United States. Civil religion exists alongside established religious faiths, and it embodies a belief system that incorporates all religions but is not associated specifically with any one. It is the type of faith to which presidents refer in inaugural speeches and to which American Legion posts and Girl Scout troops swear allegiance. In 1954, Congress added the phrase under God to the pledge of allegiance as a legislative recognition of religion’s significance. Elected officials in the United States, beginning with Ronald Reagan, often concluded even their most straightforward speeches with “God bless the United States of America,” which in effect evokes the civil religion of the nation.

Functionalists see civil religion as reinforcing central American values that may be more expressly patriotic than sacred in nature. Often, the mass media, following major societal upheavals, from the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing to the 2001 terrorist attacks, show church services with clergy praying and asking for national healing. Bellah (1967)
FIGURE 5.3
Racial and Ethnic Makeup of Selected Religions in the United States

Note: “Other” includes self-identified mixed race. Evangelical includes Baptist, Lutheran (Missouri and Wisconsin Synods), and Pentecostal, among others. Mainline Protestant includes Methodist, Lutheran (ELCA), Presbyterian, Episcopal, and United Church of Christ, among others, but excludes historically Black churches. Based on a national survey of 35,556 adults conducted in August 2007.

Source: Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2008b:120.
sees no sign that the importance of civil religion has diminished in promoting collective identity, but he does acknowledge that it is more conservative than during the 1970s.

Beginning with the Clinton administration, the federal government has made explicit effort to include religious organizations. The 1996 welfare reform act President Clinton signed provided that religious groups could compete for grants. President George W. Bush created a White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives to provide for a significant expansion of charitable choice. President Barack Obama has continued the office, naming a Pentecostal minister to oversee it (Jacoby 2009).

In the following sections, we explore the diversity among the major Christian groups in the United States, such as Roman Catholics and Protestants, as well as how Islam has emerged as a significant religious force in the United States and can no longer be regarded as a marginal faith in terms of followers (P. Gorski 2010).

**Diversity among Roman Catholics**

Social scientists have persistently tended to ignore the diversity within the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. Recent research has not sustained the conclusions that Roman Catholics are melding into a single group, following the traditions of the American Irish Catholic model, or even that parishioners are attending English-language churches. Religious behavior has been different for each ethnic group within the Roman Catholic Church. The Irish and French Canadians left societies that were highly competitive both culturally and socially. Their religious involvement in the United States is more relaxed than it was in Ireland and Quebec. However, the influence of life in the United States has increased German and Polish involvement in the Roman Catholic Church, whereas Italians have remained largely inactive. Variations by ethnic background continue to emerge in studies of contemporary religious involvement in the Roman Catholic Church (Eckstrom 2001).

Since the mid-1970s, the Roman Catholic Church in America has received a significant number of new members from the Philippines, Southeast Asia, and particularly Latin America. Although these new members have been a stabilizing force offsetting the loss of White ethnics, they have also challenged a church that for generations was dominated by Irish, Italian, and Polish parishes. Perhaps the most prominent subgroup in the Roman Catholic Church is the Latinos, who now account for one-third of all Roman Catholic parishioners. Some Los Angeles churches in or near Latino neighborhoods must schedule 14 masses each Sunday to accommodate the crowds of worshipers. In 2010, the Pope selected a Latino, Mexican-born archbishop, Jose H. Gomez, to lead the Los Angeles Archdiocese (Goodstein and Steinhauer 2010; Navarro-Rivera et al. 2010).

The Roman Catholic Church, despite its ethnic diversity, has clearly been a powerful force in reducing the ethnic ties of its members, making it also a significant assimilating force. The irony in this role of Catholicism is that so many nineteenth-century Americans heaped abuse on Catholics in this country for allegedly being un-American and having a dual allegiance. The history of the Catholic Church in the United States may be portrayed as a struggle within the membership between the Americanizers and the anti-Americanizers, with the former ultimately winning. Unlike the various Protestant churches that accommodated immigrants of a single nationality, the Roman Catholic Church had to Americanize a variety of linguistic and ethnic groups. The Catholic Church may have been the most potent assimilating force after the public school system. Comparing the assimilationist goal of the Catholic Church and the current diversity in it leads us to the conclusion that ethnic diversity has continued in the Roman Catholic Church despite, not because of, this religious institution.
Ethnicity and Religion

Protestantism, like Catholicism, often is portrayed as a monolithic entity. Little attention is given to the doctrinal and attitudinal differences that sharply divide the various denominations in both laity and clergy. However, several studies document the diversity. Unfortunately, many opinion polls and surveys are content to learn whether a respondent is a Catholic, a Protestant, or a Jew. Stark and Glock (1968) found sharp differences in religious attitudes within Protestant churches. For example, 99 percent of Southern Baptists had no doubt that Jesus was the divine Son of God as contrasted to only 40 percent of Congregationalists. We can identify four “generic theological camps”:

1. **Liberals**: United Church of Christ (Congregationalists) and Episcopalians
2. **Moderates**: Disciples of Christ, Methodists, and Presbyterians
3. **Conservatives**: American Lutherans and American Baptists
4. **Fundamentalists**: Missouri Synod Lutherans, Southern Baptists, and Assembly of God

Roman Catholics generally hold religious beliefs similar to those of conservative Protestants, except on essentially Catholic issues such as papal infallibility (the authority of the spiritual role in all decisions regarding faith and morals). Whether or not there are four distinct camps is not important: the point is that the familiar practice of contrasting Roman Catholics and Protestants is clearly not productive. Some differences between Roman Catholics and Protestants are inconsequential compared with the differences between Protestant sects.

Secular criteria as well as doctrinal issues may distinguish religious faiths. Research has consistently shown that denominations can be arranged in a hierarchy based on social class. As Figure 5.4 reveals, members of certain faiths, such as Episcopalians, Jews, and Presbyterians, have a higher proportion of affluent members. Members of other faiths, including Baptists, tend to be poorer. Of course, all Protestant groups draw members from each social stratum. Nonetheless, the social significance of these class differences is that religion becomes a mechanism for signaling social mobility. A person who is moving up in wealth and power may seek out a faith associated with a higher social ranking. Similar contrasts are shown in formal schooling in Figure 5.5.

Protestant faiths have been diversifying, and many of their members have been leaving them for churches that follow strict codes of behavior or fundamental interpretations.

**FIGURE 5.4**
Income and Denominations

Denominations attract different income groups. All groups have both affluent and poor members, yet some have a higher proportion of members with high incomes whereas others are comparatively poor.

Source: Based on interviews with a representative sample of 35,000 adults conducted May–August and reproduced in the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2008b: 78–79, 84–85.

**Diversity among Protestants**

Roman Catholics generally hold religious beliefs similar to those of conservative Protestants, except on essentially Catholic issues such as papal infallibility (the authority of the spiritual role in all decisions regarding faith and morals). Whether or not there are four distinct camps is not important: the point is that the familiar practice of contrasting Roman Catholics and Protestants is clearly not productive. Some differences between Roman Catholics and Protestants are inconsequential compared with the differences between Protestant sects.

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of biblical teachings. This trend is reflected in the gradual decline of the five mainline churches: Baptist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian. In 2006, these faiths accounted for about 58 percent of total Protestant membership, compared with 65 percent in the 1970s. With a broader acceptance of new faiths and continuing immigration, it is unlikely that these mainline churches will regain their dominance in the near future (Davis, Smith, and Marsden 2007:171–172).

Although Protestants may seem to define the civil religion and the accepted dominant orientation, some Christian faiths feel they, too, experience the discrimination usually associated with non-Christians such as Jews and Muslims. For example, representatives of the liberal and moderate faiths dominate the leadership of the military’s chaplain corps. There are 16 Presbyterian soldiers for every Presbyterian chaplain, 121 Full Gospel worshippers for every Full Gospel chaplain, and 339 Muslim soldiers for every Muslim chaplain (Cooperman 2005).

As another example of denominational discrimination, in 1998, the Southern Baptist Convention amended its basic theological statements of beliefs to include a strong statement on family life. However, the statement included a declaration that a woman should “submit herself graciously” to her husband’s leadership. There were widespread attacks on this position, which many Baptists felt was inappropriate because they were offering guidance for their denomination’s members. In some respects, Baptists felt this was a form of respectable bigotry. It was acceptable to attack them for their views on social issues even though such criticism would be much more muted for many more liberal faiths that seem free to tolerate abortion (Bowman 1998; Niebuhr 1998).

**Religion and the Courts**

Religious pluralism owes its existence in the United States to the First Amendment declaration that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” The U.S. Supreme Court has consistently interpreted this wording to mean not that government should ignore religion but that it should follow a policy of neutrality to maximize religious freedom. For example, the government may not help religion by financing a new church building, but it also may not obstruct religion by denying a church adequate police and fire protection. We examine four issues that continue to require clarification: school prayer, secessionist minorities and their rituals, creationism (including intelligent design), and the public display of religious (or sacred) symbols.

**School Prayer**

Among the most controversial and continuing disputes has been whether prayer has a role in the schools. Many people were disturbed by the 1962 Supreme Court decision in *Engel v. Vitale*, which disallowed a purportedly nondenominational prayer drafted for use in the New York public schools. The prayer was “Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers, and our country.” Subsequent decisions overturned state laws requiring Bible reading in public schools, laws requiring recitation of the Lord’s Prayer, and laws permitting a daily one-minute period of silent meditation or prayer. Despite such judicial pronouncements, children in many public schools in the United States are led in regular prayer recitation or Bible reading.

What about prayers at public gatherings? In 1992, the Supreme Court ruled 5–4 in *Lee v. Weisman* that prayer at a junior high school graduation in Providence, Rhode Island, violated the U.S. Constitution’s mandate of separation of church and state. A rabbi had given thanks to God in his invocation. The district court suggested that the invocation would have been acceptable without that reference. The Supreme Court did not agree with the school board that a prayer at a graduation was not coercive. The Court did say in its opinion that it was acceptable for a student speaker voluntarily to say a prayer at such a program (Marshall 2001).
Public schools and even states have mandated a “moment of silence” at the start of the school day in what critics contend is a transparent attempt to get around *Lee v. Weisman*. The Supreme Court had struck down such actions earlier, but then prayer was clearly intended by legislators when they created these “moments.”

**Secessionist Minorities**

Several religious groups have been in legal and social conflict with the rest of society. Some can be called **secessionist minorities** in that they reject both assimilation and coexistence in some form of cultural pluralism. The Amish are one such group that comes into conflict with outside society because of its beliefs and way of life. The Old Order Amish shun most modern conveniences and maintain a lifestyle dramatically different from that of larger society.

Are there limits to the free exercise of religious rituals by secessionist minorities? Today, tens of thousands of members of Native American religions believe that ingesting the powerful drug peyote is a sacrament and that those who partake of peyote will enter into direct contact with God. In 1990, the Supreme Court ruled that prosecuting people who use illegal drugs as part of a religious ritual is not a violation of the First Amendment guarantee of religious freedom. The case arose because Native Americans were dismissed from their jobs for the religious use of peyote and were then refused unemployment benefits by the state of Oregon’s employment division. In 1991, however, Oregon enacted a new law permitting the sacramental use of peyote by Native Americans (*New York Times* 1991).

In another ruling on religious rituals, in 1993, the Supreme Court unanimously overturned a local ordinance in Florida that banned ritual animal sacrifice. The High Court held that this law violated the free-exercise rights of adherents of the Santeria religion, in which the sacrifice of animals (including goats, chickens, and other birds) plays a central role. The same year, Congress passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which said the government may not enforce laws that “substantially burden” the exercise of religion. Presumably, this action will give religious groups more flexibility in practicing their faiths. However, many local and state officials are concerned that the law has led to unintended consequences, such as forcing states to accommodate prisoners’ requests for questionable religious activities or to permit a church to expand into a historic district in defiance of local laws (Greenhouse 1996).

The legal acceptance of different faiths has been illustrated in numerous decisions. For example, the courts have allowed Wiccan organizations to enjoy nonprofit status. In addition, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs approval of the pentacle symbol for use on the cemetery markers of fallen soldiers buried in any of the national cemeteries who self-identify as Witches.
Creationism and Intelligent Design

The third area of contention has been whether the biblical account of creation should be or must be presented in school curricula and whether this account should receive the same emphasis as scientific theories. In the famous “monkey trial” of 1925, Tennessee schoolteacher John Scopes was found guilty of teaching the scientific theory of evolution in public schools. Since then, however, Darwin’s evolutionary theories have been presented in public schools with little reference to the biblical account in Genesis. People who support the literal interpretation of the Bible, commonly known as creationists, have formed various organizations to crusade for creationist treatment in U.S. public schools and universities.

In a 1987 Louisiana case, *Edwards v. Aguillard*, the Supreme Court ruled that states may not require the teaching of creationism alongside evolution in public schools if the primary purpose of such legislation is to promote a religious viewpoint. Nevertheless, the teaching of evolution and creationism has remained a controversial issue in many communities across the United States (Applebome 1996).

Beginning in the 1980s, those who believe in a divine hand in the creation of life have advanced intelligent design (ID), the idea that life is so complex it could only have been created by a higher intelligence. Although not explicitly drawn on the biblical account, creationists feel comfortable with ID and advocate that it is a more accurate account than Darwinism or, at the very least, that it be taught as an alternative alongside the theory of evolution. In 2005, a federal judge in *Kitsmiller v. Dover Area School District* ended a Pennsylvania school district intention to require the presentation of ID. In essence, the judge found ID to be “a religious belief” that was only a subtler way of finding God’s fingerprints in nature than traditional creationism. Because the issue continues to be hotly debated, future court cases are certain to come (Clemmitt 2005; Goodstein 2005).

Public Displays

The fourth area of contention has been a battle over public displays that depict symbols of religion or appear to others to be sacred representations. Can manger scenes be erected on public property? Do people have a right to be protected from large displays such as a cross or a star atop a water tower overlooking an entire town? In a series of decisions in the 1980s through 1995, the Supreme Court ruled that tax-supported religious displays on public government property may be successfully challenged but may be permissible if made more secular. Displays that combine a crèche, the Christmas manger scene depicting the birth of Jesus, or the Hanukkah menorah and also include Frosty the Snowman or even Christmas trees have been ruled secular. These decisions have been dubbed “the plastic reindeer rules.” In 1995, the Court clarified the issue by stating that privately sponsored religious displays may be allowed on public property if other forms of expression are permitted in the same location.

The final judicial word has not been heard, and all these rulings should be viewed as tentative because the Court cases have been decided by close votes. Changes in the Supreme Court’s composition in the next few years also may alter the outcome of future cases (Bork 1995; Hirsley 1991; Mauro 1995).
**Conclusion**

Considering ethnicity and religion reinforces our understanding of the spectrum of intergroup relations first presented in Chapter 1. The Spectrum of Intergroup Relations figure shows the rich variety of relationships as defined by people’s ethnic and religious identities. The profiles of German, Irish, Italian, and Polish Americans reflect the variety of White ethnic experiences.

Any study of life in the United States, especially one that focuses on dominant and subordinate groups, cannot ignore religion and ethnicity. The two are closely related, as certain religious faiths predominate in certain nationalities. Both religious activity and interest by White ethnics in their heritage continue to be prominent features of the contemporary scene. People have been and continue to be ridiculed or deprived of opportunities solely because of their ethnic or religious affiliation. To get a true picture of people’s place in society, we need to consider both ethnicity and social class in association with their religious identification.

Religion is changing in the United States. As one commercial recognition of this fact, Hallmark created its first greeting card in 2003 for the Muslim holiday Eid-al-fitr, which marks the end of the month-long fast of Ramadan. The issue of the persistence of ethnicity is an intriguing one. Some people may only casually exhibit their ethnicity and practice what has been called symbolic ethnicity. However, can people immerse themselves in their ethnic culture without society punishing them for their will to be different? The tendency to put down White ethnics through respectable bigotry continues. Despite this intolerance, ethnicity remains a viable source of identity for many citizens today. There is also the ethnic paradox, which finds that practicing one’s ethnic heritage often strengthens people and allows them to move successfully into the larger society.

The issue of religious expression in all its forms also raises a variety of intriguing questions. How can a country that is increasingly populated by diverse and often non-Christian faiths maintain religious tolerance? How might this change in the decades ahead? How will the courts and society resolve the issues of religious freedom? This is a particularly important issue in areas such as school prayer, secessionist minorities, creationism, intelligent design, and public religious displays. Some examination of religious ties is fundamental to completing an accurate picture of a person’s social identity.

Ethnicity and religion are a basic part of today’s social reality and of each individual’s identity. The emotions, disputes, and debate over religion and ethnicity in the United States are powerful indeed.
Summary

1. While considering race and ethnicity in the United States, we often ignore how White people come to see themselves as a group and in relationship to others.

2. Feelings of ethnicity may be fading among the descendants of Europeans, but it may reemerge as reflected in either the third-generation principle or, in a more limited fashion, through symbolic ethnicity.

3. Maintaining or remaining networked to one’s ethnic roots can actually facilitate success and eventually assimilation, as has been documented in the study of the ethnic paradox.

4. Even though the historical circumstances and settlement patterns differ, there are definite similarities in the experiences of German, Irish, Italian, and Polish Americans.

5. Research shows that historically, at least, a generation passes before immigrants experienced upward mobility. Contemporary immigrants seem to follow the same pattern, with most speaking English fluently by the second generation and virtually all third-generation members doing so.

6. The ethnic diversity of the United States is matched by the many denominations among Christians as well as the sizable Jewish and Muslim presence.

7. In its interpretation of the First Amendment, the Supreme Court has tried to preserve religious freedom, but critics have argued that the Court has served to stifle religious expression.

Key Terms

civil religion / 135
the religious dimension in American life that merges the state with sacred beliefs

creationists / 141
people who support a literal interpretation of the biblical book of Genesis on the origins of the universe and argue that evolution should not be presented as established scientific thought

denomination / 134
a large, organized religion not officially linked with the state or government

ethnic paradox / 120
the maintenance of one’s ethnic ties in a way that can assist with assimilation in larger society

intelligent design / 141
the view that life is so complex that it must have been created by a higher intelligence

principle of third-generation interest / 119
Marcus Hansen’s contention that ethnic interest and awareness increase in the third generation, among the grandchildren of immigrants

secessionist minority / 140
groups that reject assimilation and promote coexistence and pluralism

symbolic ethnicity / 120
Herbert Gans’s term that describes emphasis on ethnic food and ethnically associated political issues rather than deeper ties to one’s heritage
Review Questions

1. In what respects are ethnic and religious diversity in the United States related to each other?

2. Is assimilation automatic within any given ethnic group?

3. Apply “Whiteness” to German, Irish, Italian, and Polish Americans.

4. To what extent has a non-Christian tradition been developing in the United States?

5. How have court rulings affected religious expression?

Critical Thinking

1. When do you see ethnicity becoming more apparent? When does it appear to occur only in response to other people’s advancing their own ethnicity? From these situations, how can ethnic identity be both positive and perhaps counterproductive or even destructive?

2. Why do you think we are so often reluctant to show our religion to others? Why might people of certain faiths be more hesitant than others?

3. How does religion reflect conservative and liberal positions on social issues? Consider services for the homeless, the need for childcare, the acceptance or rejection of gay men and lesbians, and a woman’s right to terminate a pregnancy versus the fetus’s right to survive.
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Here are a few activities you will find for this chapter:

- **Watch on mysoclab.com** Video clips feature sociologists in action, exploring important concepts in the study of Ethnicity. Watch:
  - History of Religion in America

- **Explore on mysoclab.com** Social Explorer is an interactive application that allows you to explore Census data through interactivemaps. Explore the Social Explorer Report:
  - Social Explorer Activity: Religion Across the U.S.

- **Read on mysoclab.com** MySocLibrary includes primary source readings from various noted sociologists from around the world. Read:
  - Abiding Faith