



MARTIN N. MARGER

RACE AND **ETHNIC RELATIONS**

AMERICAN AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

SECOND EDITION

Race and Ethnic Relations

*American and
Global Perspectives*

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MARTIN N. MARGER
Michigan State University

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Preface

In the United States, the study of race and ethnic relations has traditionally focused on conditions and processes within American society. Consequently, comparable patterns in other societies have often been seriously neglected. In line with this general bias, few texts in this field, either current or past, have considered in more than an incidental manner cases of interethnic relations outside of the United States. Students, as a result, often come away from college courses titled "Race and Ethnic Relations" or "Minority Groups" with mistaken impressions that "race relations," "ethnicity," or "minority problems" are uniquely American phenomena.

Today, with an increasing awareness of the worldwide context of race and ethnic relations, a more cross-national approach appears to be gaining popularity in the field. Thus, most instructors and students will, I believe, welcome a text with a comparative bent that does not sacrifice a strong American component. The first edition of *Race and Ethnic Relations* was written with the intention of filling such a niche. In purpose and scope, the second edition remains unchanged. Its objective is to provide readers with an analysis of race and ethnic relations in contemporary multiethnic societies. If there is an overriding theme, it is the global nature of ethnicity and the prevalence of ethnic conflict in the modern world.

Adopting a comparative approach yields a somewhat paradoxical intellectual payoff. On the one hand, it enables Americans to better understand the uniqueness of their own society. It is sometimes naively assumed that "people are the same everywhere," and American racial and ethnic patterns are therefore typical of those of other multiethnic societies. This assumption, however, overlooks critical historical and sociological differences and often leads to invalid generalizations. On the other hand, a comparative approach makes us more sensitive to the common principles underlying much of intergroup relations. Not all of what occurs in the United States or any other society is necessarily exceptional. Issues of race and ethnicity abound in societies on every continent, and we are coming to realize that these issues increasingly defy national boundaries.

The theoretical approach I have adopted is what has been referred to as the "power-conflict" perspective, emphasizing the power dynamics among a society's ethnic groups. The major focus is upon the nature of dominance and subordination. Race and ethnic relations, therefore, are seen as manifestations of stratification and of the conflict that develops over societal rewards—power, wealth, and prestige. In accord with this perspective, I have emphasized the structural, or macrolevel, patterns of race and ethnic relations rather than the social psychological patterns, though the latter are interspersed throughout.

The arrangement of the book's contents has not been altered from the first edition. Part I is an introduction to the field of race and ethnic relations. Here, theoretical and conceptual issues are presented that set the organizational and analytic framework for descriptive cases in Parts II and III. Consonant with the book's comparative theme, terms, concepts, and theories are illustrated with examples drawn from many multiethnic societies in addition to the United States.

Part II focuses on American society. Following a description of the formation of the American ethnic hierarchy in Chapter 5, several major American ethnic groups are examined in detail. The decision to include a self-contained chapter dealing with Jewish Americans (Chapter 6), as well as substantial material on Italian Americans (Chapter 5), was based on the belief that analysis of white ethnic groups is essential if we are to more fully understand the changing forms and effects of ethnicity in the United States. As voluntary immigrants, these groups represent one of the basic ethnic-shaping experiences of American society. Today they are often treated as interesting sociological cases of the past but ones no longer meriting weighty investigation. This view, however, reflects an ahistorical bias that ignores the dynamic nature of race and ethnicity and the shifting structure of ethnic stratification in the United States.

Undeniably, however, the most critical aspects of the contemporary American ethnic system concern the relations of whites with African Americans and Hispanic Americans. These groups are therefore given extended coverage in Chapters 7 and 8. Asian Americans, a rapidly growing and significant element of the American ethnic configuration, are the focus of an entirely new chapter, Chapter 9. Although Native Americans have not been treated in a self-standing chapter, they have been discussed in appropriate sections of both Parts I and II. The breadth of coverage of specific American ethnic groups in a book that is not designed to focus exclusively on the United States must be selec-

tive, and one cannot expect a consensus among sociologists regarding which of those groups are most deserving of extensive analysis. I believe, however, that the groups covered in detail in Part II represent the core of race and ethnic relations in the United States today.

Part III consists primarily of case studies of four contemporary multiethnic societies. Although the choice here, too, is bound to be somewhat arbitrary, South Africa (Chapter 10), Brazil (Chapter 11), Canada (Chapter 12), and Northern Ireland (Chapter 13) are indisputably cases of major significance in the current study of race and ethnic relations. Ethnic issues in these societies have occupied much world attention during the past two decades and will surely continue to do so. Moreover, all four serve as excellent cases with which to compare the United States. Although ethnic conflict characterizes each, the nature of that conflict varies from South Africa, where it is extremely volatile, to Brazil, where it is relatively benign. In each chapter, patterns of race and ethnic relations are contrasted with current or past American patterns.

Chapter 14 ties together the United States and the four societies analyzed in Part III. In addition, the future course of race and ethnic relations, particularly in the United States, is discussed, focusing on issues of affirmative action, the new immigration, the increasingly pluralistic nature of the society, and the emerging global linkages of American issues of race and ethnicity.

While this, the second edition of *Race and Ethnic Relations*, has not been basically altered in structure and purpose from the first edition, it has been thoroughly revised to reflect changes that have occurred in the past six years and includes new material that concerns the salient issues of the field. All chapters have been updated with the most current data and the findings of important new studies have been incorporated throughout. In explaining new or significantly changed issues and policies, relevant sections of each chapter have been extensively rewritten.

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part I

The Nature of Ethnic Relations



The following four chapters will erect a framework for analyzing ethnic relations in the United States (in Part II) and four other societies (in Part III). Each chapter in Part I deals with a particular dimension of interethnic relations. Chapter 1 introduces some basic concepts and terminology of the field, in particular *ethnicity* and *race*, the latter an especially misunderstood term in everyday usage. Chapter 2 concerns the structure of inequality, which seems to be an inevitable outcome when diverse ethnic groups exist under a common political and economic system. Chapter 3 explains the techniques by which this system of inequality is maintained. Finally, in Chapter 4, the notion of conflict is introduced and is explained as an inherent characteristic of interethnic relations. There are differing degrees of

group inequality and differing levels of group conflict, however, and these variations create different types of multiethnic society; several of these types are described.

One objective of Part I is to explain the sociological approach to race and ethnic relations. This approach is fundamentally different from the manner in which relations among racial and ethnic groups are commonly viewed and interpreted. Sociologists see everyday social occurrences differently from lay persons, and they describe them differently as well. They go beneath the superficial to uncover the unseen and often unwitting workings of society, frequently exposing the erroneous nature of much of what is considered well-established knowledge. One sociologist, Peter Berger, has put it well: "It can be said that the first wisdom of sociology is this—things are not what they seem" (1963:23). This is particularly so in the study of race and ethnic relations.

As an example, most people, if asked, could attempt an explanation of why black-white relations in the United States have been customarily discordant, and they might even venture to explain why conflict is also so commonplace among ethnic groups in other parts of the world. They would probably explain that humans are belligerent "by nature" or that there are "inherent" differences among groups, creating unavoidable fear and distrust. Although these explanations are direct and apparently simple to comprehend, they do not necessarily stand up when subjected to sociological analysis. Groups with different cultural origins and physical traits may indeed clash quite commonly, but, as we will see, there are social factors more significant than any "innate" tendencies that account for that discord.

The subject matter of sociology—or any of the other social sciences—is not the abstruse world of physics or chemistry but the everyday life of people. Because the objects of their study are so much a part of common human experience, sociologists often seem to make unnecessarily complex what appears on the surface to be quite simple. But the application of rigorous theory and methods and the use of precise terminology are the chief distinguishing fea-