

AMERICAN MINORITY RELATIONS

fourth
edition

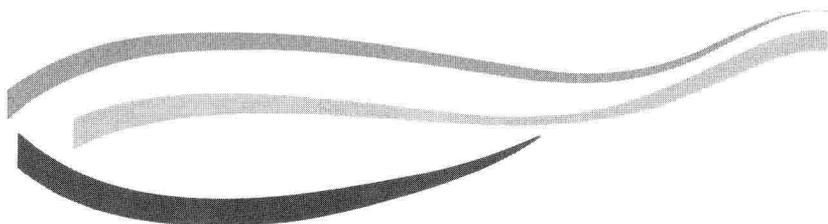


JAMES W. VANDER ZANDEN

American Minority Relations

Fourth Edition

James W. Vander Zanden



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American Minority Relations



Preface

This fourth edition of a widely-used and successful textbook is designed for the course in minority relations. In the past two decades a deluge of new materials treating American minority relations has appeared. Indeed, it has reached a point where many a specialist in the area feels overwhelmed. Although in truth a good deal of the material has had a journalistic and impressionistic quality, it nonetheless has generally contained useful insights into various facets of minority-dominant relations. In addition, there has been a significant proliferation of sophisticated empirical studies, often encompassing and cutting across several disciplines—sociology, psychology, biology, anthropology, political science, and history.

Students in race relations courses should have access to the newly available knowledge in some convenient, manageable form—and in a form that is relevant to the contemporary world in which they live. And that is the purpose of this text. It aims to be home base for the student, providing a solid, sound foundation for exploring the field. While thorough and comprehensive, it is intentionally compact so that instructors can additionally, if they so choose, select from the large array of current supplementary titles.

In treating the vast amount of data and theory within the field, I have attempted to strike a judicious balance between theory and description. This approach avoids the disadvantages of a mere descriptive rundown of each of the minority groups, on the one hand, and a too ambitious theoretical and conceptual approach, on the other. The former, it seems to me, fails to provide a firm grounding in theory or to give the reader an understanding of the considerable dimensions and processes involved in intergroup relations, while the latter strikes me as presumptuous and unsatisfactory in terms of our understanding of human behavior in general and of religious, ethnic, and race relations in particular.

Part I of the book sets the stage for the consideration of American minority relations in treating a number of key concepts and analyzing some of the facts and myths revolving about race. Part II examines the

sources of racism, considering a number of variables that typically come into play in the emergence and initial stabilization of racism. It shows how racism is maintained by becoming deeply embedded in the social and cultural fabric—indeed how it becomes institutionalized. The last chapter in Part II deals with the personality bulwarks of racism. Part III considers four processes of intergroup relations—conflict, stratification, segregation, and assimilation—particularly in terms of recent developments in these areas.

Part IV examines the reactions of minorities to their disadvantaged status. These are discussed primarily in terms of acceptance or aggression and avoidance or assimilation. This approach permits a study of assimilationist-oriented minorities and an extensive analytical consideration of the Black “Revolution,” including a treatment of Black Power. Finally, Part V examines that body of sociological literature dealing with means by which democratic goals may be advanced and racism combated.

Columbus, Ohio

James W. Vander Zanden



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Introduction

The Nature of Minority Relations

1



Divisions among people along racial and ethnic lines are a central feature of contemporary life. Throughout the world people are killing each other over differences of color, facial features, language, dress, food habits, and religious faith. Consider the appalling outpourings of blood in recent decades between Arabs and Jews in the Middle East, Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, Turks and Greeks in Cyprus, and among the Hausa, Yoruba, and Ibo in Nigeria, and the Laotians, Cambodians, and Vietnamese in Southeast Asia.

Likewise, anyone reading the newspapers or watching television today can hardly escape the conclusion that the United States confronts serious racial and ethnic difficulties. More than a decade ago a presidential panel formed to investigate racial outbreaks in American cities and known as the Kerner Commission (1968) warned: "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal." A decade later the *New York Times*, surveying racial progress in the nation, concluded: "The division between white and black Americans still exists, and the prospects of healing the rift may be more dismal today than they were 10 years ago" (Herbers, 1978). Examining public opinion polls, the *Times* found that most whites believe either that the battle for racial justice has been won or that the endeavor is too costly in terms of the sacrifices that white people must make. Yet the problems of ghetto blacks continue to mount. Chronically high unemployment in black neighborhoods has raised fears that the United States may have acquired a permanent underclass. All this has contributed to a badly divided society.

Much the same holds true with respect to ethnicity (*see* Table 1.1). The United States now finds itself experiencing an enormous influx of aliens, many of them illegal. Large numbers of immigrants from Latin America arrive in poverty, poorly educated, and knowing only a few simple phrases of English. Bilingualism has become a fact of life in the Southwest, New York City, and Miami. Some social scientists say that in the decades ahead the United States can expect to encounter some

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**TABLE 1.1 RACIAL AND ETHNIC CATEGORIES,
1980 CENSUS**

White	188,341,000
Black	26,488,000
Hispanics*	14,600,000
American Indian, Eskimo, Aleutian Islanders	1,418,177
Chinese	806,000
Filipino	775,000
Japanese	701,000
Asian Indian	362,000
Korean	355,000
Vietnamese	262,000
Hawaiian	167,000
Samoaan	42,000
Guamanian	32,000

*Due to a peculiarity of the 1980 Census form, many Hispanics were additionally counted in the "white" or "black" categories.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

of the same forces of disunity that Canada has experienced between its French- and English-speaking populations.

Population projections show California, the nation's most populous state, becoming the first "Third World" state by the 1990s as whites of European ancestry become a numerical minority there. As New York's Ellis Island was the gateway for the great trans-Atlantic tide of immigration in the past, California's proximity to Latin America and the Pacific has made it the gateway for the majority of contemporary immigrants. Refugees from Southeast Asia and uncounted legal and illegal aliens from Latin America, Taiwan, Korea, and the Philippines have gravitated to California. At least eighty-five languages are currently spoken in California, complicating the task of the state's schools.

The Scientific Study of Minority Relations

Foreign observers often comment that Americans think they ought to live in a society that does not entail many conflicts. People tend to believe that a society is good when things are harmonious and people do not express dissatisfaction. But this is not always true. Where there are injustices and inequalities, conflict can contribute to social change and social health. Of course, conflict can also be of a harmful sort. It can result in death, suffering, destruction, and devastation. These then are matters that warrant scientific interest and study.

The Pursuit of Objectivity

Sociology examines minority relations with a scientific orientation characterized by *a rigorous, disciplined pursuit of objectivity*. Underlying this approach is the assumption that there is a “real world”—that something exists “out there,” something that is divorced from individuals themselves, and that is knowable. Thus, whether calculated by an American, a Russian, or an Indonesian, or by a Communist, a Methodist, or a Hindu spiritualist, two plus two nonetheless equals four.

Put still another way, there are such things as *facts*—certain scientifically verifiable observations—and hence we can make reliable statements regarding what *is*. However, people do not necessarily regard “what is” as desirable, as the way things *ought* to be. Hence we find it useful to distinguish between facts and *values*. **Values** are conceptions regarding the desirability or undesirability of things, including their beauty, morality, merit, or worth—in brief, notions of what “ought” to be. Science, be it chemistry or sociology, can only ascertain facts. It cannot tell us whether these facts are good or bad—whether it is ethically desirable or undesirable that every chemical compound contains unvarying proportions of its constituent elements (the law of constant composition) or that black-white relations within the United States have been characterized by discrimination and segregation.

That science should concern itself only with “what is” is of course an ideal. In practice, things do not work out quite this way because science involves *human* activity. It is carried on by individual people and by groups of people. This element injects subjectivity into the picture. All human beings have values, and to the extent to which we are human, we cannot be completely objective. Even at our best, we find values subtly invading our work. Indeed, the very fact of studying human behavior reveals we have values that make us concerned about how people act, and the decision to focus upon social rather than biological, psychological, or other factors betrays an implicit belief that the social factor is somehow “more significant” than the others. Similarly, values shape our selection of research problems (i.e., race relations rather than the structure of business enterprise), our preference for certain hypotheses, and our neglect of others.

What we have been saying adds up to this. As a science, sociology is not characterized by the absolute absence of values but by *a rigorous, disciplined* attempt to look as objectively as is humanly possible upon the phenomena that it studies. As such, sociologists are enjoined to avoid such emotional involvement in their work that they cannot adopt a new approach or reject an old answer when their findings indicate that this is required. Further, sociologists are enjoined not to turn their backs on facts or to distort them simply because they do not like them (Shibutani and Kwan, 1965). Much of education in sociology beyond the bachelor’s degree is oriented toward fostering this kind of

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commitment and developing those skills whereby valid, reliable knowledge can be realized. And there is the additional check—indeed, social pressure—provided by scientists' peers. Once they publish their work in professional publications, scientists must expect other scientists, not necessarily sharing their biases, to scrutinize and criticize what they have done.

Sociological Controversy

During the past few decades considerable controversy has been generated within sociological circles over the questions of “knowledge for what?” and “sociology for whom?” Let us consider these matters.

Knowledge for What? A good many nineteenth-century American sociologists were personally interested in social reform, and viewed sociology as a potentially powerful instrument for relieving human suffering and guiding people in the search for a better future. A surprising number launched their careers as Protestant ministers. In succeeding decades, despite changes in the philosophical and social climate, sociology has secured many of its recruits from among highly idealistic youth, those who hope for the solution of human problems in the scientific study of society.

During its formative years sociology struggled to gain respectability and acceptance within the scientific community (Harvard University, for instance, did not establish a department of sociology until 1930 and Princeton University did not have one until 1960). Partly as a response to this, a countertheme arose that asserted sociology should remain aloof from involvement with social problems and concern itself strictly with the enlargement of sociological knowledge. This was the dominant position of the profession during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. It was associated with such individuals as Talcott Parsons and George A. Lundberg who advocated a neutral, amoral sociology—one in which sociologists were bound to the tenet “Thou shall not commit a value judgment.” Robert Bierstedt (1963:12–13), a prominent sociologist of this period, expresses the view as follows:

Sociology is a pure science, not an applied science. The immediate goal of sociology is the acquisition of knowledge about human society, not the utilization of that knowledge. Physicists do not build bridges, physiologists do not treat people afflicted with pneumonia, and chemists do not fill prescriptions at the corner drugstore. Similarly, sociologists do not determine questions of public policy, do not tell legislators what laws should be passed or repealed, and do not dispense relief to the ill, the lame, the blind, or the poor. . . . Sociology . . . stands in the same relation to administration, legislation, diplomacy, teaching, supervision, social work,

and citizenship, as physics does to engineering, physiology to medicine, jurisprudence to law, astronomy to navigation, chemistry to pharmacy, and biology to plant and animal husbandry.

Bierstedt concedes that sociological knowledge can be used for solving some of the world's problems, but insists that this application is not the job of sociologists. Rather, he maintains, a division of labor operates in which the individuals who acquire sociological knowledge are not necessarily the ones who undertake to apply it.

Brewton Berry outlines a somewhat similar position for the study of race relations. Responding to those who accuse sociologists of "fiddling about leisurely" studying race problems in the face of urgent calls for remedial social engineering, Berry (1965:18) writes:

We fully appreciate the seriousness and urgency of the situation, but we believe that knowledge and understanding are prerequisites for wise and effective action. We are sympathetic, for instance, with the medical research scientists who work away in their laboratories while an epidemic rages in the community. Why, some will say, do they not do something immediately useful? Why not put into practical use such knowledge and skill as they have, imperfect though it be? Why waste their efforts on research when the times demand action? It is our opinion that, in the long run, the research scientists will relieve more suffering by their investigations than by abandoning their study and devoting themselves to therapy.

During the 1960s and 1970s a group of "new-breed" sociologists emerged who challenged the position advanced by Bierstedt and Berry. For these younger Ph.D.s, many of whom were student-power, civil-rights, and peace activists during the 1960s and early 1970s, the notion of a value-free and unbiased sociology is a myth. They stress that sociologists ought to concern themselves with the task of restructuring society so that all people, unimpeded by racism, can lead fuller, richer, and more fruitful lives. Indeed, these critics of the Bierstedt-Berry stance argue that the apostles of sociological "neutrality" are remiss in their public and civic responsibilities, that they come to champion moral insensitivity—a crass disregard for such things as the suffering of the poor and minority groups, the destructiveness of war, and the high social costs of crime and delinquency. To ignore values, they maintain, is to usher in an era of spiritless technicians, individuals capable of crippling mankind with a sociological atomic bomb—not a groundless fear in a world where already prisoners of war are systematically brainwashed and homemakers' buying habits are systematically molded through sophisticated advertising campaigns. Before Hiroshima, physicists also liked to talk about their value-free science but today many of them are no longer quite sure that this can or should be the case.

A value-free sociology, the critics assert, is a sterile, irrelevant sociology and they point an accusing finger at the established sociological journals for the "inconsequential trivia" that allegedly appear within

their pages. They insist that the strong ethic of social concern that characterized many early sociologists must be resurrected and that sociology must concern itself with human suffering and its alleviation. They criticize as “inward-looking” those sociologists who relegate social betterment to a secondary place and accuse them of being more concerned with the betterment of their occupational group than with the larger society that they ultimately serve. Moreover, these “new-breed” sociologists ask why any sociologists’ professional status should set them aside from other human beings. Accordingly, these sociologists seek to establish bridges between sociology and what they view as the larger hopes, aspirations, and purposes of humankind.

Sociology for Whom? Another question increasingly being raised, especially by younger sociologists, is: “Sociology for whom?” Those asking this question generally note that sociologists are as much social beings as the people they study, and they are not free of the social demands of colleagues, research organizations and government granting agencies, political systems, university administrators, students, or friends. In brief, a variety of individuals and groups act as influences on sociologists’ conduct. Moreover, values do not exist in a vacuum or in the abstract. Values are found within groups and serve the interests of groups. Since a conflict of values and interests often characterizes differing groups, it is argued that the choice for sociologists becomes a choice of whose interests shall be served by their work.

Critics of contemporary American sociology contend that the ideology of ethical neutrality actually serves to mask a very definite commitment: “. . . the choice that has generally been made by sociologists is to put their skills at the service of the ‘establishment,’ that is to say, of groups who wield a great deal of economic and political power in the society” (Biblarz, 1969:4). They insist that a “noncommitted” sociology is the handmaiden of the status quo—“a gentleman’s promise that boats will not be rocked.” Indeed, “to do *nothing* in today’s world is as political in its effect as to do something; to assent is as political as to dissent” (Berreman, 1971:19). Hence proponents of this view argue that the alternatives are not “neutrality” and “advocacy”; rather, “to be uncommitted is not to be neutral but to be committed—consciously or not—to the *status quo*” (Dowd, 1964:63). Accordingly, sociologists are increasingly being asked, “Which side are you on?”—the implication being, for example, that one stands either for or against a racist society.

Is a Resolution of the Divergent Views Possible? Much of the controversy that we have considered revolves about the uses of science, and in particular of sociology. Traditionally many scientists have assessed scientific work in terms of its contribution to knowledge, as opposed to its usefulness, on grounds that only in this manner can science remain fairly autonomous and free. Conversely, they argue, if

practical utility becomes the sole measure of significance, then science becomes only a handmaiden—of business, the church, the state, the party, or the “movement.” In truth there is a basic duality in science: It can provide greater understanding of how things operate and occur, and it can also provide understanding that enables people to change things and to move toward chosen goals. And as with most dualities in life, this one has given rise to ambivalent attitudes. Further, since people generally find ambivalence difficult to tolerate, scientists have historically dealt with their indecision by periodically swinging violently to one extreme position or the other—in the process tending to deny the worth of the other alternative.

Perhaps we can be a little more relaxed about these matters if we realize that we need not be addicted to either position—that sociology is *nothing but* self-contained knowledge, entirely insulated from the world of social action, or that sociology is *nothing but* a guide to action (Merton and Nisbet, 1976). In truth, sociology is both. Some sociologists no doubt—by temperament or capacity—are more comfortable or better suited in one or the other paths of inquiry, and some move back and forth between paths. In brief, then, we need not see a hard-and-fast boundary separating pure from applied science.

Finally, it needs to be understood that science does not call upon sociologists to give up their moral convictions or biases; indeed, such a demand would be humanly unrealistic and impossible. But by the same token our discussion should not be taken as a recommendation for license to offer value judgments at random, resulting in a “this I believe”-type sociology. Rather, regardless of the path sociologists take—either in the direction of pure or applied science—it is nonetheless incumbent upon them to cultivate rigorously a disciplined approach to the phenomena that they study so that they may determine facts as they are and not as they might wish them to be.

Minorities

We hear a good deal nowadays about **minority groups** (or simply *minorities*). In some respects the term is an unfortunate one for it has numerical connotations. Yet despite its literal meaning, a minority is *not* a statistical category. Although minority groups may be smaller in size than dominant groups, this need not be the case. Within the Union of South Africa and some areas of our southern states, blacks constitute a numerical majority of the population. Moreover, at least until recently, a limited number of Europeans dominated “minority” peoples in a colonial arrangement within Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Yet despite the fact that they are a numerical majority in such settings, members of minority groups occupy a disadvantaged position within