

the fatherland, or of Mother Russia, or of the "children" of Africa. Ethnicity is family writ very large indeed. It typically involves the assertion of some ineffable bond among group members, a bond we think of as rooted ultimately in shared, distinctive origins (see Horowitz 1985, chap. 2).

This definition still casts the net fairly widely—variation in claim and assertion can be substantial—but it gives us a more distinctive universe of groups, and it classifies those groups according to the particular kinds of claims they make or the particular claims made about them. This last point is crucial. Although an ethnic group is self-consciously ethnic, its self-consciousness often has its source in outsiders. The identity that others assign to us can be a powerful force in shaping our own self-concepts. To say that ethnicity is subjective is not to say that it is unaffected by what others say or do. Indeed, outsiders' conceptions of us may be a major influence leading to our own self-consciousness as an ethnic population. Others may assign to us an ethnic identity, but what they establish by doing so is an ethnic category. It is our own claim to that identity that makes us an ethnic group. The ethnic category is externally defined, but the ethnic group is internally defined (Jenkins 1994).

It also should be apparent from this definition that what is ethnic about an ethnic group is the fact that it identifies itself in a particular way. Members of some ethnic groups may share a great deal more than that particular way of identifying themselves, including extensive cultural practices; others may share little more than the identity claim that they make. Groups that share a great deal and groups that share very little clearly are different but are equally ethnic. The mode or idiom of identification makes them so.

Finally, ethnicity is a matter of contrast. To claim an ethnic identity (or to attempt to assign one to someone else) is to distinguish ourselves from others; it is to draw a boundary between "us" and "them" on the basis of the claims we make about ourselves and them, that "we" share something that "they" do not. An ethnic group cannot exist in isolation. It has meaning only in a context that involves others—ultimately, in a collection of peoples of which it is only a part. An ethnic population, however, is not necessarily a minority population. An ethnic group may be politically or numerically dominant within a single state; it may dominate one state and at the same time be a minority in others. It is never conceptually an isolate.

Ethnicity, then, is identificative... in ethnic terms—that is, in the terms outlined above. An ethnic identity is an identity conceived in such terms. A population or social collectivity may be simply an ethnic category, assigned an ethnic identity by outsiders. Once that identity becomes sub-

jective—that is, once that population sees itself in ethnic terms, perhaps in response to the identity outsiders assign to it—it becomes an ethnic group.

Cornel, Hartman 198

The Definition of Race

What about race? Are races ethnic groups? Consider Black Americans. Certainly many people consider them a race or at least a part of one. How so? If they are a race, are they not an ethnic group? Could they be both?

Before we can answer these questions, we have to wrestle with the definition of a race. As with ethnicity, it is common in contemporary society to talk about races, race relations, and racial conflict as if we had a clear idea about what constitutes a race and where the boundary falls between one race and another. Race, however, is as slippery a concept as ethnic group, and its slipperiness has a long history.

Race as Biology

In technical terms, a race can be thought of as a genetically distinct subpopulation of a given species. This statement is of little use in thinking about human races, however, for the genetic differences among human groups that we commonly view as races are inconsistent and typically insignificant. This has made it difficult to figure out what a race, conceived in terms of human biology, actually is. In fact, biologists, physical anthropologists, and other students of human physiology and genetics have long disagreed about which, if any, genetic differences mark the boundaries between races and about how many human races there are. For several centuries, scholars of one stripe or another from various countries tried to specify the number of races in the world.

Linnaeus had found four human races; Blumenbach had five; Cuvier had three; John Hunter had seven; Burke had sixty-three; Pickering had eleven; Virey had two "species," each containing three races; Haeckel had thirty-six; Huxley had four; Topinard had nineteen under three headings; Desmoulins had sixteen "species"; Deniker had seventeen races and thirty types. (Gossett 1963:82)

Clearly, consensus regarding the nature and number of human races has been elusive.

The federal government of the United States has been anything but consistent in its own classifications. In 1870, according to historian Paul

Spickard (1992:18), the U.S. Bureau of the Census listed five races in the United States: "White, Colored (Blacks), Colored (Mulattoes), Chinese, and Indian. . . . In 1950, the census categories reflected a different social understanding: White, Black, and Other." By the 1990s, federal programs, responding more to the demands of various groups than to any biological theory, required various public and private entities to report racial data using, once again, five categories, but they were different from the 1870 ones: White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, and Indian.

Other societies have made other choices. For a long time, the South African government recognized four races: White, African, Colored, and Asian. In many parts of Brazil, the history of which includes widespread mixing among Europeans, Africans, and the indigenous Indians, people more or less gave up on the notion of distinct races and instead established a set of sometimes overlapping categories that recognize varying degrees of racial mixture, usually determined by an individual's appearance and ranging from the lightest complexions to the darkest.

If biologically distinct human races do exist, it seems odd that there is so little agreement on what they are. Indeed, the persistence of the idea of biologically distinct human races owes more to popular culture and pseudoscience than to science, and the idea's pedigree is not scientific but historical. It emerged originally in the extended encounter between European and non-European peoples that began in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. Discovering human beings in Asia, Africa, and the Americas who looked—and often acted—very different from themselves, Europeans concluded that these superficial differences were surely indicators of much more fundamental differences as well. This conclusion helped them justify their efforts to colonize, enslave, and even exterminate certain of those peoples. Europeans came to believe that races are in fact distinct and identifiable human (and some of them, in the extreme version, nonhuman) groups; that there are systematic, inherited, biological differences among races; and that the non-White races are innately inferior to Whites—that is, to Europeans (Jordan 1968).

Systematic physiological differences among many human groups are obvious. Skin color is only one example. Deciding which of these physiological differences should serve as a racial marker is a complicated process. Racial boundaries turn out to be messy. For one thing, the distribution of human physical characteristics, aided by millennia of mixing among human communities, is persistently irregular. Blood types, hair textures, skin colors, and body forms all vary, sometimes dramatically, not only between populations we often think of as racially distinct but within them as well. In fact, the extent of genetic variation among indi-

viduals within supposed racial groups typically exceeds the variation between the groups. We can speak of a group of persons as having, on average, a greater frequency of some set of genes than some other group has, but those genes seldom will be limited to that group; the differences in frequency will be differences of degree.

It would be easier to know how to mark racial boundaries if the supposed physical differences among races were consistently apparent, but they seldom are. It would be easier likewise if some set of characteristic physical distinctions were correlated consistently with some set of characteristic abilities or behaviors, but science has been unable to link such physical differences persuasively to differences in ability or intelligence or very much else. In other words, the scientific arguments for any particular way of dividing up and identifying races of human beings are at best modest. As geneticist Richard Lewontin and his colleagues point out (Lewontin, Rose, and Kamin 1984:126-27),

In practice, "racial" categories are established that correspond to major skin color groups, and all the borderline cases are distributed among these or made into new races according to the whim of the scientist. But . . . the differences between major "racial" categories, no matter how defined, turn out to be small. Human "racial" differentiation is, indeed, only skin deep.

As a result, most contemporary scholars dismiss the entire idea of race as a meaningful biological category that can be applied to separate groups of human beings (Gould 1981, 1994; King 1981; Lewontin et al. 1984; Smedley 1993).

The Social Construction of Race

Despite the lack of a biological basis for the conception of distinct human races, race still wields monumental power as a social category. In many societies, the idea of biologically distinct races remains a fixture in the popular mind, a basis of social action, a foundation of government policy, and often a justification for distinctive treatment of one group by another. Despite the paucity of scientific support, human beings tend to assume racial categories and to take them seriously. They do so for social, not biological, reasons.

Races, like ethnic groups, are not established by some set of natural forces but are products of human perception and classification. They are social constructs. As geneticist James King remarks (1981:156), "Both what constitutes a race and how one recognizes a racial difference are culturally determined." We decide that certain physical characteristics—

usually skin color, but perhaps also hair type, stature, or other bodily features—will be primary markers of group boundaries. We invent categories of persons marked by those characteristics. The categories become socially significant to the extent that we use them to organize and interpret experience, to form social relations, and to organize individual and collective action. In other words, the categories become important only when we decide they have particular meanings and act on those meanings. The characteristics that are the basis of the categories, however, have no inherent significance. We give them meaning, and in the process we create races.

We can define a race, then, as a human group defined by itself or others as distinct by virtue of perceived common physical characteristics that are held to be inherent. A race is a group of human beings socially defined on the basis of physical characteristics. Determining which characteristics constitute the race—the selection of markers and therefore the construction of the racial category itself—is a choice human beings make. Neither markers nor categories are predetermined by any biological factors.

These processes of selection and construction are seldom the work of a moment. Racial categories are historical products and are often contested. In one famous case from the early 1980s, a Louisiana woman went to court to dispute the state's conclusion that she was Black, claiming a White racial identity. The state's argument was that her ancestry was at least 1/32nd "Negro" which, according to state law, meant she was Black (Dominguez 1986). The law had roots in the long history of Black-White relations in Louisiana and in the American South more generally, in slavery and its legacy and in the enduring White effort to maintain the supposed "purity" of their race. It was a legal manifestation of what is known as hypodescent, or the "one-drop" rule, which in the United States holds that any degree of African ancestry at all is sufficient to classify a person as Black (see Davis 1991). This rule has a history. People have fought over it, and as the Louisiana case shows, it has been tested in the courts. It has been reserved largely for Blacks. Americans do not generally consider a person who is 1/32 Japanese or Dutch to be Japanese or Dutch, but "one drop" of Black blood has long been considered sufficient for racial categorization.

The woman in Louisiana lost her case (although the law eventually was changed), but her story underlines the point made by Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994) in their path-breaking study of race in the United States: Racial categories are not natural categories that human beings discover; on the contrary, they are "created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" by human action and are, therefore, preeminently social

products (p. 55). They change over time as people struggle to establish them, overcome them, assign other people to them, escape them, interpret them, and so on. The outcomes of those struggles often have enormous consequences for the individuals involved, but it is not biology that determines who will suffer and why. People determine what the categories will be, fill them up with human beings, and attach consequences to membership in those categories.

Ethnicity and Race

To pose again the question we raised some pages ago: Are races ethnic groups? The answer, which may not yet be obvious, is sometimes yes, sometimes no. Ethnicity and race are not the same, but they are not mutually exclusive categories either. They sometimes overlap. In short, races may be but are not necessarily ethnic groups. In the following two subsections, we first explore the ways that ethnicity and race are different and then the things they have in common.

Differences Between Ethnicity and Race

Most societies have treated races very differently from ethnic groups, and the differences have been crucial. In the United States, for example, although some ethnic groups have been privileged over others at various times in history, Whiteness—a racial category—consistently has been privileged over non-Whiteness, with persons of color consigned to the margins of American society and culture. In different ways at different times, race has been institutionalized in the organization of the society and ideologized in its culture.

Race has been the most powerful and persistent group boundary in American history, distinguishing, to varying degrees, the experiences of those classified as non-White from those classified as White, with often devastating consequences. The racial boundary that White society historically has drawn around itself has excluded different groups at different times. Along with Black, Asian, Latino, and Native Americans, both Jews and the Irish, among others, have been perceived as non-Whites at one time or another in the United States (Ignatiev 1995; Sacks 1994). Both struggled to alter the perception, knowing all too well the costs of being non-White in the eyes of Whites.

Designating a group of people as a distinct race has been sufficient in the United States to mark them off as more profoundly and distinctively

"other"—more radically different from "us"—than those ethnic groups who have not had to carry the burden of racial distinction. Where racial designations have been used, ethnic distinctions within racial categories have tended to be overshadowed by the racial designation. All of the commonly designated racial groups in American life are multiethnic: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans and others among Latinos, for example; West Indians and American-born Blacks, whose ethnicities operate at a less comprehensive level than the African American ethnicity they more generally share; various groups among Asian Americans; a multitude of tribal identities among American Indians; and various European-descent ethnicities among Whites. With the important exception of Whites, however, the society at large generally has either ignored or minimized these identities throughout much of its history, emphasizing more comprehensive racial distinctions.¹ Furthermore, it has been far more reluctant to allow movement across racial boundaries than across ethnic ones. For example, "a Cambodian American does not have to remain Cambodian, as far as non-Asian Americans are concerned, but only with great difficulty can this Cambodian American cease to be Asian American" (Hollinger 1995:28). This does not mean these ethnicities are unimportant. They are of great importance to the groups involved and a key to understanding much of what goes on among and within those groups. It does illustrate, however, the particular power of race, which has been a foundational feature of American life in a way that ethnicity has not: the ultimate boundary between "us" and "them." This pattern of racial categorization also illustrates the tendency in American life to recognize diversity among Whites but to ignore it among others.

Not all societies have experienced race in this same way. Relative to ethnicity, race has played an even greater and more obvious role in the organization of society and culture in South Africa, for example, than it has in the United States. Race was a fundamental organizing principle in most colonial societies around the world, remains a significant dimension of social organization in various societies of the Middle East and Latin America, and is of rapidly growing significance in much of contemporary Europe. In Canada, on the other hand, as the case of French-speaking Quebec indicates, ethnicity has been fully as important a fault line as race. In Belgium, ethnicity has considerably overshadowed race as a dimension of social organization and politics.

Despite the varying prominence of racial categories across societies, race everywhere has taken on a distinctive set of meanings and uses. Some of these are apparent in remarks made by a British gold and tin

miner in colonial Malaya, in Southeast Asia, in the early part of the 1900s. Malaya was a British colony, populated by an ethnically diverse indigenous population known to the British as Malays, along with significant numbers of Chinese and Asian Indians (Tamils), brought in both before and during British colonial rule to meet growing labor needs. Writing of the situation in Malaya, the miner remarked,

From a labour point of view, there are practically three races, the Malays (including the Javanese), the Chinese, and the Tamils (who are generally known as Klings). By nature the Malay is an idler, the Chinaman is a thief, and the Kling is a drunkard, yet each in his own class of work is both cheap and efficient, when properly supervised." (quoted in Hirschman 1986:356-57)

A good deal of importance about race is apparent or hinted at in these remarks, and we can use them to further elaborate the differences between race and ethnicity. First, race typically has its origins in assignment, in the classifications that outsiders make. Ethnicity often has similar origins, but it frequently originates in the assertions of group members themselves. The ethnically diverse Malays did not see themselves originally as a single people, much less as a distinctive "race"; this conception seems to have been largely a European inspiration (Nagata 1981). There are exceptions to the rule of racial assignment. For example, some groups in the United States, Germany, and elsewhere have more and more forcefully asserted Whiteness as a self-conscious racial identity in recent years. Most racial categories, however, have been constructed first by those who wished to assign them to someone else; race has been first and foremost a way of describing "others," of making clear that "they" are not "us."

Second, race first took on its distinctive contemporary meanings and uses as part of a monumental historical meeting of peoples. It is a product of the global era, with roots in European colonialism in places such as Malaya and elsewhere in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Beginning late in the 15th century, in an enduring burst of expansive energy, certain European nations—in particular Spain, Portugal, England, France, and the Netherlands—sent explorers, exploiters, missionaries, and settlers across the world, most of which was previously unknown to them. Human beings have long noted the physical differences among themselves, but the magnitude of the differences that Europeans encountered over the next two centuries was unprecedented in their experience. Entire continents entered European consciousness for the first time, with populations that differed dramatically both physically and culturally from the

peoples of Europe. These differences prompted classifications that were unprecedented in their comprehensiveness, a grand division of the world into Europeans, on one hand, and racially distinct others.

Third, this meeting of peoples and the ideas that came out of it were aspects of power relations. The designation of race is, in and of itself, an assertion of the power to define the "other" and in doing so to create it as a specific object. Europe exerted such power in its racial classification of the world's peoples, inventing the contemporary idea of race in the process. Racial designation also has been linked to power in more material ways. It was not idle curiosity that drove Europe's captains and missionaries across the globe, but a massive quest for wealth, political clout, and souls. They found justification for their activities in part in the idea of race, in the belief that human groups are inherently different and that those differences constitute "natural" physical and moral hierarchies that are replicated in social organization, with Caucasians in dominant social positions and various "others" ranging downward from there (Spickard 1992). "From a labour point of view," wrote the miner in Malaya—the only point of view that mattered to colonialists—"there are practically three races," and each of those three, "in its own class of work," is cheap and efficient "when properly supervised" (quoted in Hirschman 1986: 356-57). The place these races occupied in the European conception is clear in these remarks: They are a resource to be exploited. Such beliefs both nourished and were nourished by colonialism, but they have been among the more durable products of human intellectual ingenuity, and not only in the hands of Europeans. From the slaughter of indigenous peoples in the Americas to the racial exclusionism of Japan, from Europe's exploitation of colonial labor to the extermination campaigns that Hutus and Tutsis have repeatedly waged against each other in Rwanda and Burundi, the domination of one group by another has turned repeatedly to race for its dubious legitimacy. Thus, race and power, historically and today, have been tightly intertwined.

Fourth, as this history suggests, racial designation typically implies inferiority. Sometimes it is physical or biological inferiority, as in the notions prevalent at certain times in various societies—that some races are inherently less intelligent than others or have attained only a lower stage of evolution. It also is, most importantly and almost invariably, an inferiority in moral worth. "By nature the Malay is an idler, the Chinaman is a thief, and the Kling is a drunkard" (Hirschman 1986:357). The history of race is a history of moral judgments, a division of the world into more or less worthy categories of persons. The ways in which some persons fail to meet the standard of worthiness may vary, but the idea of failure usu-

ally is implicit in the racial designation. The primary exception is the designation White. This designation commonly occurs as the unspoken flip side of the assignment of some other group to a racial category. In assigning another group to a racial category, Whites inevitably—if only implicitly—assign themselves to a different racial category. Historically, the category White has been the moral opposite of non-White categories. There is nothing inherent in Whiteness that produces such a difference; other groups may make racial assignments that simultaneously define and positively value their own race. The simple fact is that in much of the world's recent history, Whites have been more likely than others to have the power to make racial assignments, to organize social life in racial terms, and to define and value the categories as they saw fit.

Finally, there is a further implication: The unworthiness attached to race is inherent. The miner's characterization of Malaya's races claimed they were so "by nature."

Thus, in the European conception, Whites represented the norm, and others were just that—Other. The norm was taken for granted; "the white Western self as a racial being has for the most part remained unexamined and unnamed" (Frankenberg 1993:17). Its normality has been assumed. Otherness, thanks to the power that Europeans exercised, was racially marked and defined, which is characteristic of racial classification systems. Others are uncivilized or pagan or incapable; perhaps more physical and less intellectual or less cultured; and closer to nature, less fully realized in their humanness than those more fortunate in their racial makeup. Of course, in defining others we implicitly define ourselves, if only through unspoken contrast. If "they" are evil, "we" must be good; if "they" are notable for their laziness or dim-wittedness or violence, it goes without saying that "we" are notable for the opposites. At the heart of racial identification lie the claims we wish to make about "them," and about how different "they" are from "us."

Ethnicity usually escapes these burdens, although it is by no means immune to them. Like race, ethnicity may be an assigned identity. That is, it may have its origins in the claims others make about us or we make about them. For example, Italian immigrants to the United States came not, in their own minds, as Italians but as carriers of narrower regional identities: Neapolitans or Sicilians or Lucanians or something else. U.S. immigration officials and the larger public, however, saw them as Italians and so classified them. Over time, Italian immigrants came to see themselves the same way and subsequently as Italian Americans (Alba 1985). At that point, they moved from an ethnic category (assigned an identity as Italian) to an ethnic group (asserting an identity as Italian American).

Assignment thus may sow the seed of ethnicity by creating an ethnic category, but an ethnic group emerges only when that identity becomes part of the group's own self-concept.

Assignment, however, is not necessary to ethnicity, which often has its origins in assertion, in the claims groups make about themselves instead of the claims others make about them. The people known for a long time as Eskimos in Alaska and northern Canada have joined hands with others of the northernmost peoples around the globe and call themselves Inuit. They assert their own commonality, rooted in history, culture, and kinship, transcending national borders. As this case suggests, ethnicity's primary concern is as often identifying ourselves as identifying and classifying others.

In fact, this process of self-construction—"self" in this case referring to the collective or group—not only is a common characteristic of ethnicity but also is part of what makes some races at one and the same time ethnic groups. Ethnic and racial categories may be delineated first by others, but when groups begin to fill those categories with their own content, telling their own histories in their own ways and putting forth their own claims to what their identities signify, then they are engaged in a classical process of constructing ethnicity. When a racial group sets out to construct its own version of its identity, it makes itself both race and ethnic group at once.

Such typically ethnic activities are usually bound up in power relations. Ethnicity, like race, often is linked to power. Subsequent chapters will show that the origins of both ethnic and racial identities frequently are to be found in conflicts of various kinds, in struggles over scarce resources such as land or jobs or status or power. Ethnic identities also emerge or become important sometimes in an effort—unattached to concrete material interests or assertions of power—simply to make sense of the differences among persons in complex situations. They also may emerge during people's search for identities that can provide them with meaning, that can make them feel a part of some manageable community of sentiment and cultural heritage. The links between ethnicity and power, therefore, are more context dependent than are those between power and race. Power is almost invariably an aspect of race; it may or may not be an aspect of ethnicity.

As for moral worth, ethnicity certainly makes such claims often enough. Ethnocentrism—a belief in the normality and superiority of one's own people and their ways of doing things—is a common aspect of ethnic identity, but ethnocentrism is generally less virulent than is the assumption of inherent, biologically based inferiority and superiority

typically attached to race. This difference may be one reason why the older and broader usage of the term *race* in the social sciences—as in Robert Park's use of the term to refer to Slavs or Portuguese or Jews or Puerto Ricans as well as Africans or Asians—gradually was displaced by *ethnic group*, which carries less implication than race does of some essential, unchangeable difference.

Commonalities of Ethnicity and Race

If these two forms of collective identity—race and ethnicity—are so different, why do we link them in this book? In fact, they share a great deal. For one thing, common usage—both among scholars and in the society at large—tends to link them and often to confuse them. They are indeed linked, but they should not be confused.

Second, both ethnicity and race are products of interaction between diverse populations. Such situations pose certain questions for the populations involved, questions that typically include the conceptual (What are the important differences between us and them, and what is the significance of this interaction?), the material (What are the implications of this encounter for the welfare of the group, and how can it be turned to our material advantage?), and the political (How can we control the situation in which we find ourselves?). Ethnicity and race both are products of the efforts groups make to effectively answer these questions.

Third, both ethnicity and race are commonly held to be "natural" categories—based on common descent or origin, on one hand, and on systematic physical differences, on the other. In fact, both are elastic. Both depend far more on the claims people make about one another or themselves than on any physical or genealogical difference. We say "held to be" natural because, although characteristics such as kinship or physiology appear to be natural or inherent, their uses in defining groups are fundamentally arbitrary. How many generations back must we go to find a connection before descent ceases to be "common"? To what does "common origin" refer—the same county or province? The same country? The same region of the world? How much physical diversity can one race contain before the category ceases to make any sense at all?

The answers people make to these questions in any particular situation are social conventions, driven by culture and social circumstance, not by any inherent attribute of the groups involved. They may refer to classes of "natural" characteristics—blood ties or biology or place of origin—but the specific identities they describe—Kurd or Afrikaner or Croat or Mexican American or Black—are not in any meaningful sense

"natural," for the boundaries that mark them are arbitrarily chosen. Both ethnicity and race, in other words, are social constructions.

Fourth and most important, race and ethnicity often overlap. Ethnicity refers to perceived common ancestry, the perception of a shared history of some sort, and shared symbols of peoplehood. Race refers to a group of human beings socially defined on the basis of physical characteristics. A human group might well meet both sets of criteria at once. The identification of common physical characteristics often also involves a claim to some form of shared ancestry; groups making such a claim typically claim a distinctive history as well and may signify their peoplehood in culturally distinctive ways. Likewise, numerous ethnic groups have been described at times as physically distinct and explicitly as races: as short, dark, swarthy, stupid-looking, primitive, noble, animal-like, and so on. At such times, they fit the definition of racial groups. Definitionally, in other words, there is nothing that says that a race cannot be an ethnic group, or vice versa.

What is more, a group may move from one category to another over time. To the English of the 18th and much of the 19th centuries, the Irish, although the same color as the English, were a distinctly inferior race. A Cambridge University historian of the period (quoted in Hechter 1975) captured the assigned racial inferiority of the Irish perfectly, writing of his visit to Ireland:

I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country. . . . I believe there are not only many more of them than of old, but they are happier, better, more comfortably fed and lodged under our rule than they ever were. But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours. (p. xvi)

The racial status of early Irish immigrants to the United States was a matter of debate. "In the early years, Irish were frequently referred to as 'niggers turned inside out'; the Negroes, for their part, were sometimes called 'smoked Irish,' an appellation they must have found no more flattering than it was intended to be" (Ignatiev 1995:41). In the United States today, the Irish are no longer assigned a distinct racial identity but are clustered with other European Americans in the racial category "White." At the same time, in standard ethnic fashion, they have laid claim to an Irish American identity that fits easily within the definition of ethnicity.

The Irish were not the only group whose racial status changed over time. Different portions of U.S. society have viewed Jews, Italians, and Latinos as both White and non-White at different times (Frankenberg

1993; Sacks 1994). Certainly Jewish and Italian Americans are generally viewed today as ethnic groups; Latinos straddle the divide, being both a race, in some common understandings, and an ethnic group.

American Blacks also fit both definitions. They are held by others and often by themselves to be members of a distinct race, identified primarily by skin color and other bodily features. At the same time, they also have become an ethnic group, a self-conscious population that defines itself in part in terms of common descent (Africa as homeland), a distinctive history (slavery in particular), and a broad set of cultural symbols (from language to expressive culture) that are held to capture much of the essence of their peoplehood. When they lay claim to an identity of their own making and meaning, and when they act on the basis of that identity, they are acting as an ethnic group.

The case of African Americans draws attention to two different but similar processes: racialization and ethnicization. Racialization is the process by which groups of persons come to be classified as races. Put more precisely, it is the process by which certain bodily features or assumed biological characteristics are used systematically to mark certain persons for differential status or treatment. U.S. society has racialized Blacks, American Indians, Asians, and Latinos to one degree or another; South African society has racialized Blacks, Coloureds, and Asian Indians. Each case has a history that traces the establishment of the category, the assignment of certain persons to it, the development of codes of behavior for dealing with those persons, and a set of statuses assigned to them. Throughout much of the history of the American South since slavery, for example, Blacks continued to be assigned low status in the social order and were systematically disadvantaged in jobs, social resources, and politics. A code of racial etiquette directed Whites to treat Blacks as inferiors and directed Blacks to act deferentially toward Whites. All of these are aspects of racialization.

Less obvious is the less explicit racialization of Whites. In establishing the category non-White, U.S. society also established the category White, assigned certain persons to it, and assigned a distinct set of statuses to that category and its occupants. At first, prior to the founding of the United States, the English, Dutch, and a few others were virtually alone in the category, but as other peoples came to America, the dominant society included many of them in the category White. Some European groups, such as the Irish, Italians, and some Jews, were not classified as Whites at first, but that changed. Even some Hispanics were classified as Whites for a time.

Ethnicization is the making of an ethnic group. It is the process by which a group of persons comes to see itself as a distinct group linked by

bonds of kinship or their equivalents, by a shared history, and by cultural symbols that represent, in Schermerhorn's terms, the "epitome" of their peoplehood. It is a coming to consciousness of particular kinds of bonds: the making of a people.

Racialization and ethnicization yield different products, but they are similar in that they both organize society into distinctive kinds of groups. They also are at times related. It is in part the racialization of Blacks in the United States that led to their ethnicization: By categorizing them as different and treating them as such, U.S. society laid the foundations for a sense of peoplehood that cut across the diverse origins of the African American population and led eventually to Black assertions of a distinct identity. Not all cases of racialization lead to ethnicization, and not all ethnic groups originate in racialization, but the two processes are often linked, and the products they yield may overlap.

Figure 2.1 depicts this overlap. It indicates that some groups may be ethnic groups, best described by the list on the left; others may be races, best described by the list on the right. Some may fit both descriptions, being races and ethnic groups at once.

Nationalism and Ethnicity

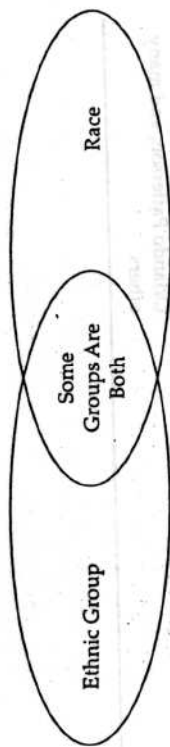
Nationalism refers to the expressed desire of a people to establish and maintain a self-governing political entity. It has proven to be one of the most powerful forces in the contemporary world, both a creator and a destroyer of modern states and a source of both pride and anguish. Consider, for example, the experience of Yugoslavia.

At the end of World War I, a number of independent Slavic states emerged from the ruins of the Habsburg Empire and other portions of southern Europe. Among them was the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, which in 1929 became the state of Yugoslavia. That state united a number of regionally concentrated groups—not only Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, but also Macedonians, Bosnian Muslims, and others—who shared a language and a great deal of cultural practice but also carried distinct national and sometimes religious histories. These groups, nevertheless, "were much more different from any of the nations neighboring Yugoslavia than from each other. The idea of Yugoslav unity was strong" (Djilas 1991:E3).

Sixty years later, in the late 1980s, with rapid changes under way in the Soviet Union and much of Eastern Europe on the verge of dramatic change, simmering nationalist movements began to raise their voices in

FIGURE 2.1

Ethnic Groups and Races



- Identity is based on putative common descent, claims of shared history, and symbols of peoplehood
- Identity may originate in either assignment by others or assertion by selves
- Identity may or may not reflect power relations
- Identity may or may not imply inherent differences in worth
- Identity usually constructed by both selves and others
- Identity is based on perceived physical differences
- Identity typically originates in assignment by others
- Identity typically reflects power relations
- Identity implies inherent differences in worth
- Identity is constructed by others (at point of self-construction, group becomes ethnic group as well as race)

Yugoslavia. By the start of 1990, Croats and Slovenes were planning formal secession from the country; Serbs were pushing for a new state, a "Greater Serbia," embracing all the Serbian people of the region; and in Bosnia, Croatia, and elsewhere—all regions of Yugoslavia—various groups were preparing for war. Macedonia, Croatia, and Slovenia eventually seceded from Yugoslavia, and by June of 1991, war had come to Croatia as Serbs resisted the establishment of the new Croatian state. When Bosnia seceded in 1992, the Bosnian Serbs, with assistance from neighboring Serbia, went to war against the Bosnian Croats and Muslims. The term *ethnic cleansing* subsequently entered the vocabulary of modern warfare, and the world watched the ethnic mosaic of former Yugoslavia disintegrate in nationalism, hatred, and violence.

Nationalism commonly is based on ethnic ties, but nationalism and ethnicity are not the same. At the core of nationalism lie three themes:

FIGURE 3.1

Circumstantial and Primordial Models of Ethnicity

	Circumstantial	Primordial
Rationale for group formation	Either utility (access to political power, economic resources, status) or organizational experience (conditions sustain interactions)	Blood, kin, family; cultural connections rooted in circumstances of birth
Orientation of ethnic identities	Toward political, economic, and status interests	Toward local community interests, often not material but ideal
Key explanatory variables or terms	Circumstances, history, structured inequality	Nature, biology, culture, socialization
Nature of the ethnic tie	Instrumental, expedient, convenient—a matter of circumstance and choice	"Given," deeply rooted, not a matter of choice but of circumstantial inheritance
Relationship to history	Product of history, changing, variable	Rooted in history and tradition, stable, permanent
Relationship to circumstance	Product of circumstance	Unaffected by circumstance
Relationship between ethnicity and class	Often serves class interest	Prior to and preemptive of class interests
Role as social scientific variable	Dependent	Independent

We began this chapter with a brief account of genocidal conflict between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda. That account raised the question we have arrived at here: Is ethnicity fixed and unchanging, as both Hutus and Tutsis seem to assume, or fluid and contingent, as history seems to suggest? In fact, the Rwandan case is quite clear. As primary bases of organization and action, Hutu and Tutsi identities are relatively recent historical products. Both have very old roots, but until the second half of

FIGURE 3.2

A Genealogical Summary of Scholarly Views of Ethnic Differences to the 1970s

Period	Fixed	Fluid
1880s	Social Darwinism (1880s-1920s) - rooted in biology - Herbert Spencer, early sociologists	
1920s		Assimilationism (1920s-1960s) - rooted in culture, changed via social influence, opportunity W. I. Thomas, Robert Park, Franz Boas, Milton Gordon (1964), etc.
1950s		Modernization (1950s-1970s) - rooted in "tradition," changed via nation-building - Karl Deutsch, Lucian Pye, etc. (the Western model of development)
1960s	Primordialists (1960s-) Sociocultural view - rooted in socialization, group ties (changes, but slowly via incremental cultural change) - Edward Shils, Clifford Geertz	
1970s	Sociobiological view - rooted in biological circumstances, nature - Harold Isaacs, Pierre van den Berghe, Milton Gordon (1978), etc.	Circumstantialists (c. 1970s-) - rooted in context, history, material interests; changed via rational action - instrumental - Fredrik Barth, Abner Cohen, Orlando Patterson, and many others

ETHNICITY, VIEWS OF ETHNICITY AND RACE