

CHAPTER 1



ETHNIC DIVERSITY AND PSYCHOLOGY

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VIGNETTE

Learning About Ethnic Diversity in Psychology

Lee started his undergraduate studies in biology at a private university in Chicago. His parents were born in New York and his grandparents came from China in the early 20th century. They were all very proud of Lee's academic accomplishments. Lee's acceptance into college validated their years of sacrifice and hard work to provide Lee the best possible education. Moreover, his plan to later pursue

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a medical degree was a "dream come true" to his mother. Lee studied hard to obtain the best grades in his courses, but college seemed markedly different from his high school years. For one, he was living away from his home in Southern California. Two, he no longer had his group of friends—most of Asian descent—for hanging out and socializing. Indeed, he felt somewhat different from his peers since most of the students in his classes were White Americans. Nevertheless, he managed to pass his freshman year courses and was determined to pull his grades up higher during his second year. He also needed to take other courses to fulfill his core requirements. He decided that introductory psychology was a good choice since it dealt with the study of human behavior—and as a future doctor, it might have some relevance to his career. Although he aced the course, he was unhappy with the almost total absence of information about Asian Americans—it almost seemed as if he and other students of color were being ignored by psychology (at least the psychology described in the textbook and in lectures). He also thought that some of the psychological principles mentioned in class were not part of his experience as an Asian American—a feeling that was shared by his roommate Dwayne, an African American computer science major from St. Louis, Missouri. Looking for an elective to take, Lee chose a relatively new course in the curriculum, Psychology of Ethnic Groups in the United States. The title captured his attention because he hoped to hear about his culture and people like himself and like Dwayne. On the first day of class, the instructor, Dr. Gonzalez, introduced the course by saying, "The purpose of this course is to educate and sensitize you about the major psychological issues facing individuals from different ethnic or racial groups with special attention focused on African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and American Indians. We are going to explore what psychology says about this emerging majority in the country and also what psychology has failed to address." As Lee listened, he got more and more excited. He thought, "Finally, this is a course about me and Dr. Gonzalez is an Asian American like myself—the first Asian American professor I've seen here."

The United States can easily be defined as a rich and complex cultural and ethnic mosaic that is a work in progress. With each passing decade, residents and immigrants and their children and grandchildren add to its color and energy, sustaining our historical self-portrait as a diverse nation enriched by the contributions of many different peoples. Yet, this vision and its underlying beliefs of unlimited opportunity, equality, and freedom have been challenged by a long and complicated history centered on our difficulties in understanding and accepting people's differences. Ever since the founding of this country, skin color, national origin, and cultural differences have been used to restrict the rights and freedoms of certain groups or have been allowed to shape the nature of our personal interactions.

Psychologists have made important contributions to our understanding of ethnic and cultural differences but we are still struggling to find ways to cogently discuss and examine ethnicity and culture and their influences on

people's behavior. This book is an attempt to summarize the most significant knowledge and information we have about the psychology of ethnic minority groups, and in doing so we hope to contribute to the development of a new and respectful scientific language to discuss these concepts in an informed and balanced manner. Furthermore, the book should help you identify ways in which you can contribute to building an ethnically diverse country that respects differences and benefits from what people with different perspectives and experiences contribute.

At this point, it is important to briefly explain the use of certain key words throughout the book. As mentioned in greater detail in Chapter 2, the book uses the word “ethnicity” rather than race in order to avoid using a poorly defined term and to better reflect the differences across groups of individuals who have been exposed to varying cultures, traditions, and experiences. Furthermore, ethnicity has generally not been associated with faulty perceptions of superiority of one group over another as has been the case for race. Box 1.1 briefly defines key concepts such as **culture**, **ethnicity**, and **ancestry** that are mentioned in this and the other chapters of the book. The next chapter includes a comprehensive discussion of the various terms and their applicability in psychological research.

BOX 1.1

Some Basic Terms

Ancestry: A person's origin, heritage, or descent that is associated with birthplace of self or ancestors.

Culture: A set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and norms that are shared within a group and transmitted across generations.

Ethnicity: A social group's distinct sense of belongingness as a result of common culture and descent.

Nationality: A person's country of birth or descent.

Race: A socially constructed concept based on prevailing social and political attitudes. Often used to express ambiguous distinctions, promote dominance of certain privileged groups, and oppress groups that are deemed inferior.

The United States has a population that is quite diverse in a number of ways beyond ethnicity or culture. For example, we differ in terms of gender, sexuality, age, socioeconomic status, religious belief, physical ability, nationality, ancestry, educational level, employment, place of residence, and so on. All of these areas of diversity are important since they affect the way we think and act. For example, Mary, who was raised on a farm in rural Illinois, may exhibit attitudes or behaviors that are different from her cousin Samantha, who was raised in the heart of

Chicago, or from another cousin who lives on a farm in rural Northern California. This book is dedicated to exploring differences due to people's ethnicity and this emphasis on ethnicity does not negate the important role that the other diversity variables can have on people's attitudes and behaviors. Indeed, many psychology departments recognize this fact by offering not just a course on the Psychology of Ethnic Groups but also courses such as the Psychology of Women, the Psychology of Men, Poverty and Psychology, and so on.

THE UNITED STATES AS AN ETHNICALLY DIVERSE SOCIETY

The United States is, and has been since its creation, a country that frequently takes pride in its ethnic and cultural diversity. A short overview of our history shows how European immigrants joined the first Americans in sharing a bountiful land full of promise. Later years brought to our shores more Europeans, many of them fleeing poverty or political and religious persecution. Africans were forced to come to our land under inhumane conditions and to sacrifice their lives at the service of those whose families had arrived a few years before them. Other ethnic and cultural groups were brought together under one flag and one nation through land purchases (as in the case of the Cajuns in Louisiana) or through political agreements (as in the case of Mexicans living in what is now the southwestern United States).

In the 19th and 20th centuries, large groups of Italians, Jews, Irish, Chinese, and Mexicans, among others, came to the United States to contribute to the country's economic growth by performing manual and skilled labor jobs that few people wanted at the wages offered or under the conditions in which the jobs needed to be performed. The latter part of the 20th century and the beginnings of the 21st century have witnessed the continued arrival of individuals from all over the world who eagerly wish to contribute to the welfare of the nation and to enjoy its economic and educational opportunities and freedoms. The end result of these migrations over the course of three centuries is a distinctly diverse society that witnesses the presence on its shores of individuals with multiple cultural traditions and pursues the goal, in many respects unrealized, of considering all women and men as having been created equal.

The cultural and ethnic diversity that characterizes the United States can easily be experienced in our large cities where people of all cultures interact with each other even if not with perfect comfort. Our traditions and our foods celebrate that diversity and our laws endeavor to support the richness it contributes. Indeed, many of us live in ethnically diverse settings where we feel comfortable eating foods from diverse cultures, dancing to a variety of rhythms, or playing or watching sports that come from many cultures.

Nevertheless, a truly culturally diverse country is defined by national policies that support, and individual behaviors that demonstrate, an understanding, appreciation, and respect of ethnic and cultural differences.

A truly diverse society is not created by the mere presence of individuals who look, act, or think differently from each other because of the color of their skin, the shape of their eyes, their national origin, or their fluency in speaking English. The mere presence of ethnically or culturally diverse individuals constitutes what can be called **facial diversity**, that is, variations in people's physical characteristics such as skin color, eye shape, national origin, or hair texture. But facial diversity by itself does not support the existence of a truly multicultural society. What is needed to develop a functioning multicultural society is the presence of positive interpersonal relationships among diverse individuals and the sharing of power and resources and mutual collaboration and dialogue. Facial diversity, for example, can be seen when politicians claim cultural diversity when a token number of ethnic minorities are appointed to government posts. Facial diversity can also be seen when university officials claim cultural diversity on their campuses yet students from different ethnic groups never have meaningful and shared experiences with one another such as collaborative classroom relationships or shared extracurricular activities.

A Multicultural Society

The words “multicultural” and “pluralistic” have often been used to mean different things by politicians, scholars, and the public. In this book, we argue that **multiculturalism** requires an abiding and respectful concern and interest in the lived experiences and human conditions of diverse groups of people. It involves “stepping into another person's shoes” to understand how she or he experiences and views the world. This understanding becomes possible when we delve into a group's psychosocial experiences and when we learn to appreciate and respect what makes us different and unique. Multiculturalism also requires a personal commitment to critically evaluate one's own **privilege** or preferential standing in the world, and one's own cultural biases and stereotypes. Lastly, multiculturalism rests on a fundamental belief in the common good and a willingness to contribute to it.

Going beyond facial diversity into building a functioning multicultural community allows individuals to benefit from interacting with people of diverse backgrounds and cultures. For example, research on ethnically diverse school settings has shown that classrooms where individuals of different ethnicities interact produce not only greater cultural awareness and interest in studying ethnic groups but also higher levels of academic development and satisfaction and an enhancement of student retention rates (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; G. E. Lopez, 2004).

Research conducted at the University of Michigan by Gurin and colleagues (2002) showed that ethnic diversity produced a number of positive results not only for ethnic minority students but also for Whites. Those students who experienced diversity in classroom settings and in informal interactions showed high levels of civic and interpersonal engagement with diverse others. Interestingly, the research showed that these effects continued well after the students graduated from the university. In an analysis of research findings on the effects of ethnically diverse environments, Gurin and colleagues (2002) found improvements in critical thinking, ability to manage complex and conflictual situations, and preparedness for participating in an ethnically diverse democracy by showing respect for differences across groups.

Furthermore, Antonio (2004) has found that diverse social groups enhance the intellectual self-confidence of their members, increase people's ability to integrate different perspectives, and help improve the educational aspirations of ethnic minority students. Indeed, Anthony Marsella (1998), a psychologist from Hawai'i, recently argued that "ethnocultural diversity is as important for human survival as is biological diversity because it provides social and psychological options and choices in the face of powerful unpredictable environmental demands" (p. 1288).

THE ETHNIC DIVERSITY OF THE UNITED STATES

The most recent national census (conducted in the year 2000) showed that a large percentage of the total population of the country considered themselves as belonging to at least one ethnic group regardless of the length of time they and their families had resided in the United States. For example, a substantial percentage of the country's population considered themselves to have German ancestry (15.2%), where ancestry is defined by the Census Bureau as "a person's ethnic origin, heritage, descent, or 'roots,' which may reflect [his or her] place of birth, place of birth of parents or ancestors, and ethnic identities that have evolved within the United States" (Brittingham & de la Cruz, 2004). As shown in Table 1.1, other ancestries claimed by large percentages of the population of the United States included Irish (10.8%), English (8.7%), Mexican (6.5%), Italian (5.6%), Polish (3.2%), and French (3.0%). While the actual numbers and their percentages in the total population will necessarily change during the 2010 census, the significance of a person's ancestry and the rank order of the major ancestries will probably not change radically from what is presented in Table 1.1.

This book summarizes the knowledge that psychologists have contributed to our understanding of the various ethnic or cultural groups in the United States. Particular attention is given to individuals who self-identify as African

Table 1.1 Ethnic Backgrounds of U.S. Population (selected ancestries), Census 2000

Ethnic Background	Number	Proportion of Total Population (%)
African American	24,903,412	8.8
American Indian	7,876,568	2.8
Arab	205,822	0.1
Asian Indian	1,546,703	0.5
Chinese	2,271,562	0.8
Cuban	1,097,594	0.4
English	24,509,692	8.7
Filipino	2,116,478	0.8
French	8,309,666	3.0
German	42,841,569	15.2
Irish	30,524,799	10.8
Italian	15,638,348	5.6
Japanese	1,103,325	0.4
Korean	1,190,353	0.4
Mexican	18,382,291	6.5
Norwegian	4,477,725	1.6
Polish	8,977,235	3.2
Portuguese	1,173,691	0.4
Puerto Rican	2,652,598	0.9
Russian	2,652,214	0.9
Scotch-Irish	4,319,232	1.5
Scottish	4,890,581	1.7
Swedish	3,998,310	1.4
Vietnamese	1,029,420	0.4
Welsh	1,753,794	0.6

SOURCE: Brittingham & de la Cruz (2004).

Americans or Blacks, American Indians or Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanics or Latinos (see Box 1.2 for definitions of various ethnic groups). This does not mean that other ethnic groups (e.g., Irish American, Italian American, German American, Polish American) are not important or have not been studied by psychologists. Instead, the emphasis on the four major groups is a way of making the discussion manageable and controlling the length of the book. Furthermore, many of the concepts mentioned in the book (e.g., acculturation, ethnic identity, family structure) are also applicable to other ethnic groups. The same is true of the analysis of the role of culture and ethnicity on people's attitudes and behaviors. As you read the book, reflect on how the concepts or ideas being presented are similar to or different from what has been your own experience.

BOX 1.2

Definitions of Ethnic Groups (according to the U.S. Census Bureau)

African Americans or Blacks: "People having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa."

American Indians and Alaska Natives: Individuals "having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintain tribal affiliation or community attachment."

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders: "People having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent."

Hispanics or Latinos: "A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race."

Native Hawai'ian or Pacific Islander: "People having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawai'i, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands."

White [at times referred to as "non-Hispanic Whites"]: "People having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa."

SOURCE: Grieco & Cassidy (2001).

According to the 2000 decennial census, approximately 30.6% of the population of the United States belonged to one of the four major ethnic minority groups (see Table 1.2). These groups are expected to experience rapid growth rates in the next few years. Indeed, the 2006 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau showed that

Table 1.2 Proportional Representation of Ethnic Minority Groups

	2000 Census	2006 American Community Survey	Estimated for 2050
African Americans	12.7%	12.4%	14.6%
American Indians or Alaska Natives	1.5%	0.8%	1.1%
Asian Americans	3.8%	4.4%	8.0%
Hispanics	12.6%	14.8%	24.4%

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2008).

approximately 32.5% of the total population of the country belonged to one of the four major ethnic groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). By the year 2050, it is estimated that approximately half of the population of the country will be made up of individuals who identify wholly or partially as African American, American Indian, Asian American, or Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

Within-Group Diversity

It is important to remember that the labels used in the census reports (such as “Hispanics” or “Asian Americans”) as well as in this book and in much of research, are labels of convenience that mask or hide important **within-group differences**. These differences among the members of the group (“within-group”) are the product of variations in origin, socioeconomic status, educational level, employment, and many other variables that affect people’s behavior. As such, it is possible to see how Asian Americans differ in terms of ancestry since some trace their ancestry to Japan while others to China and others to Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Philippines, or one of the other nations of Asia.

Ancestry

National origin or ancestry has significant impact on the characteristics or behavior of members of a given group that may differentiate them from other closely related ethnic groups with whom they may share values, attitudes, or behaviors. For example, Hispanics or Latinos in the United States differ in terms of a number of variables, including national ancestry or origin and length of residence in the United States. Nevertheless, research

(Sabogal, Marín, Otero-Sabogal, Marín, & Pérez-Stable, 1987) shows that they tend to share, for example, the importance assigned to members of the family in making important decisions.

A fairly large number of Latinos, for example, trace their heritage to the early Californians or Mexicans who lived in New Mexico and California before their annexation to the United States. Many of them became part of this country as a result of the Guadalupe Hidalgo treaty in 1848 that ended the war between the United States and Mexico. Other Latinos are more recent immigrants who have come to the United States in search of better economic or educational opportunities. Some have come as immigrants, others as part of special visa agreements to work the fields or in specialized industries (e.g., information technology, farming, food processing), while others have arrived as undocumented residents (without a visa or a work permit). At the same time, Latinos have a variety of national heritages or ancestries with a large percentage tracing their family ancestry to Mexico (Mexican Americans), Puerto Rico, and Cuba, followed by those whose heritage can be traced to Central and South America.

Within-group variability in terms of national origin or ancestry is also found among the other major ethnic groups. For example, there are over 220 Native American nations in the United States (Champagne, 1994). Most of these Native nations differ significantly from each other in their history and traditions as well as in their current demographic and socioeconomic status. Likewise, the label “African American” denotes those who are descendants of the slave trade and whose families therefore have been in the United States for generations as well as more recent African or Caribbean immigrants. The label “Asian American” includes individuals who trace their family’s background to countries as diverse as China, India, Japan, Philippines, Korea, and Vietnam.

This heterogeneity or diversity in ancestry is just one of a number of variables that produce within-group variability. Aspects such as educational achievement, social class, civic incorporation, acculturation, and health status also affect the within-group variability in the various ethnic groups.

An important corollary of this within-group heterogeneity is the need to analyze information by breaking down the groups in terms of important or relevant variables or characteristics. This process is called **disaggregation** of information and it allows researchers to better understand the characteristics of a given group. While, at times, considering a group of Asian Americans of various national backgrounds can be informative, often it is more important to differentiate groups that are subsumed in these larger categories. For example, wide disparities exist in educational attainment, health status, and

employment between Chinese and Japanese Americans (two groups with long histories in the United States) and the relatively newer Southeast Asian immigrant and refugee groups, such as the Hmong and Mien. In general, Chinese and Japanese Americans show higher educational and income levels than the Hmong and the Mien. Additionally, the Hmong and the Mien show greater adjustment problems due to their exposure to severe wartime trauma and migration-related stress.

While disaggregation by national heritage or ancestry is important to better understand the characteristics of an ethnic group, few researchers carry it out in their studies because of the difficulties involved in gathering large enough representative samples from one national heritage. Indeed, this lack of appropriate disaggregation by national origin is probably one of the most important limitations of research on ethnic groups in the United States (see Chapter 3).

Multiracial or Multiple Ethnicities

It is also important to consider the role of dual or multiple ethnicities when studying minority ethnic groups in the United States. The 2000 census was the first to allow respondents to indicate if they identified with more than one “race.” The data showed that approximately 6.8 million people, or 2.4% of the total population, considered themselves to belong to two or more “races” (N. A. Jones & Smith, 2003). The majority of these multiracial individuals (40%) lived in the western part of the United States with an additional 27% living in the South. Overall, California, New York, Texas, Florida, Hawai’i, Illinois, New Jersey, Washington, Michigan, and Ohio showed the largest proportions of multiracial individuals.

The 2000 census (N. A. Jones & Smith, 2003) also showed that 39.9% of American Indians and Alaska Natives reported belonging to two or more races compared to 13.9% of Asian Americans, and 4.8% of African Americans. A very significant finding of the 2000 census is the fact that a large proportion of children under the age of 18 were reported to be multiracial. Overall, 7.7% of Latinos under the age of 18 were reported as belonging to two or more races. Among those not Hispanic or Latino, the equivalent proportion was 3.2%. Research with the 1980 and 1990 censuses has shown that the reporting of multiple ancestries tends to be more frequent among the young and the better educated. In general, therefore, younger generations are exhibiting a large proportion of multiple ethnicities, a factor that further enriches our country as a multicultural society and that places particular demands on service providers and policy-makers as well as educators.

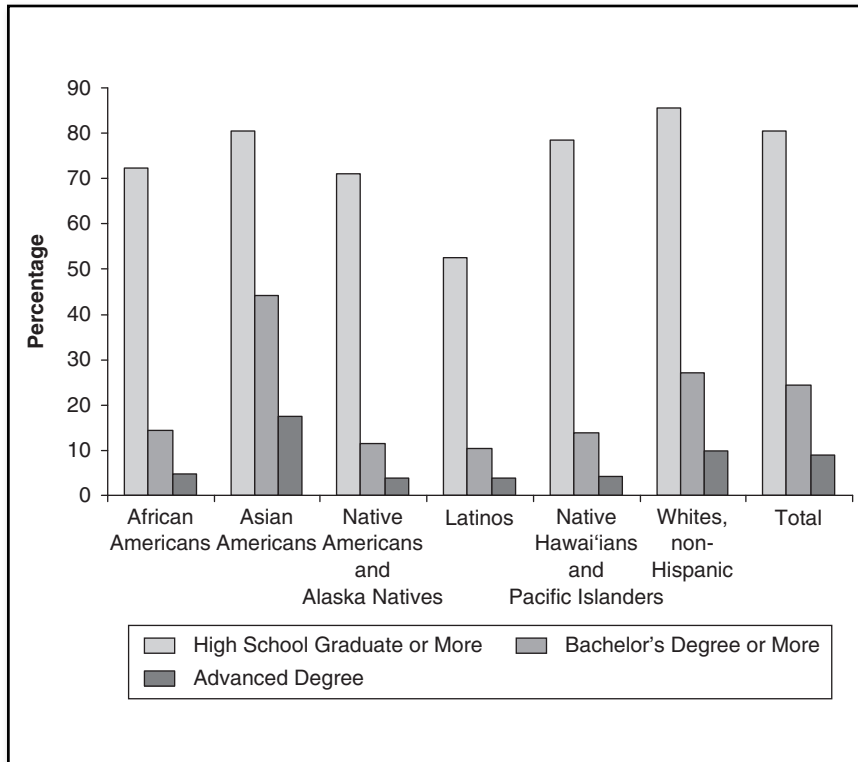
Language Use and Proficiency

Language proficiency is another characteristic that varies within ethnic groups. The 2000 census showed that approximately 18% of people age 5 years or older spoke a language other than English at home. The corresponding figure for the 1990 census was 14% and 11% for the 1980 census (Shin & Bruno, 2003). In the year 2000, approximately 28.1 million people spoke Spanish at home. Other frequently spoken languages, other than English and Spanish, are Chinese (2.0 million), French (1.6 million), German (1.4 million), Tagalog (language of Philippines; 1.2 million), Vietnamese (1.0 million), and Italian (1.0 million) (Shin & Bruno, 2003).

A phenomenon of particular importance among recent immigrants and particularly among Latinos is the level of language maintenance that occurs across extended periods of time of residence in the United States and even across generations. Research with Latinos has shown that immigrants maintain proficiency in Spanish even after 50 years of residence in the country and after having achieved proficiency in the use of English (Bahrick, Hall, Goggin, Bahrick, & Berger, 1994). An earlier study with Cuban American youths (Garcia & Diaz, 1992) showed that while Spanish was preferred by children in preschool, a mixture of English and Spanish was the preferred pattern during the last years of high school although the social setting (e.g., school, home) and the participants in the verbal exchange (e.g., among friends, siblings, parents) moderated which language was used.

Educational Attainment

Historically, the United States has been improving the level of educational attainment of its population by supporting compulsory education in primary and secondary schooling and helping to finance tertiary (college) education. The 2000 census showed that 80.4% of those individuals age 25 or older had at least finished secondary (high school) education and 24.4% had completed at least a bachelor's degree. Nevertheless, there are important differences in educational attainment across ethnic groups. As shown in Figure 1.1, among those individuals who are 25 years or older, Asian Americans show the highest levels of educational attainment in terms of achieving at least a bachelor's degree as well as an advanced degree. Latinos, on the other hand, show the lowest percentages in educational achievement. Educational attainment therefore is another variable that may be relevant to disaggregate in research being conducted among ethnic minority groups.

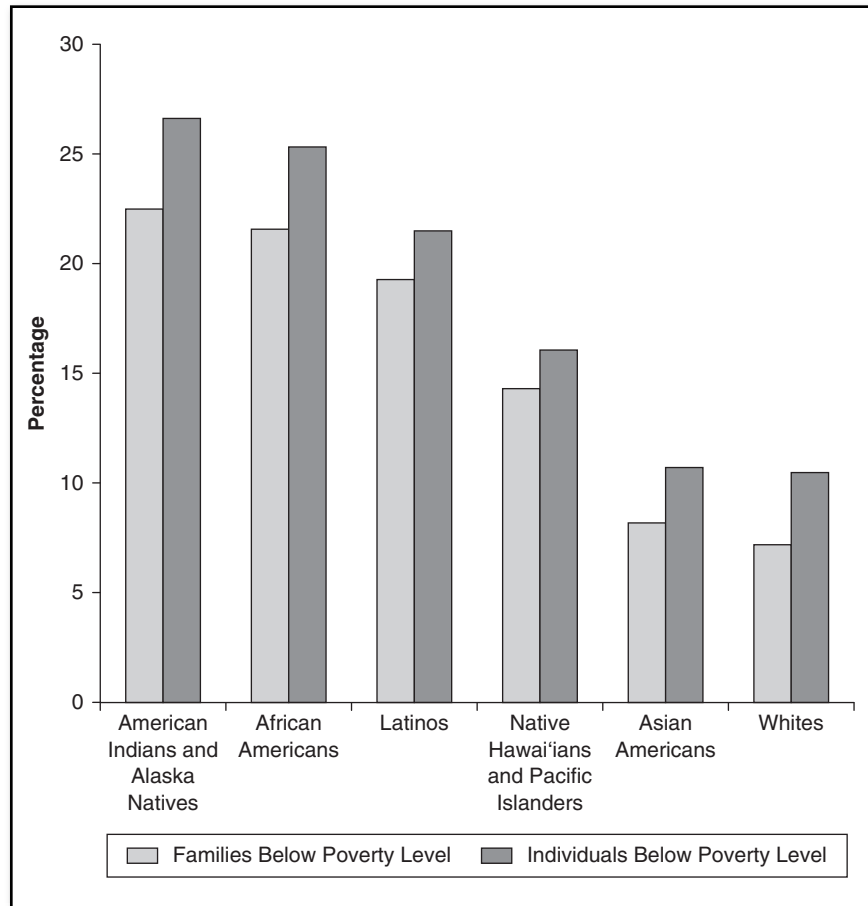
Figure 1.1 Educational Attainment, 2000 Census (adults 25 years or older)

SOURCE: Bauman & Graf (2003).

Socioeconomic Status and Poverty

Poverty rates in the United States have been declining over the years although members of minority ethnic groups continue to exhibit higher rates of poverty than Whites. In the 2000 census, a total of 33.9 million people in the United States (12.4% of the total population) reported incomes that were below the poverty level. Ten years earlier (1990), 13.1% had been classified as living below the poverty line. As shown in Figure 1.2, the 2006 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau also showed that poverty rates differed across ethnic minority groups.

There are some social variables that differentiate poverty rates across individuals and families. Overall, the poverty rate of foreign-born individuals is higher (16.1%) than that of the native born (11.1%) while

Figure 1.2 Percentage Distribution of Poverty Levels Among Ethnic Groups

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2006).

naturalized foreign-born citizens show a lower poverty rate (9.9%) (Proctor & Dalaker, 2002). Also relevant is the fact that a significant number of ethnic minority households are multifamily or multi-generational in nature, which artificially influences average household income figures. Other factors that are relevant in analyzing the poverty levels of ethnic minorities include the fact that some ethnic groups (e.g., Latinos, African Americans) are relatively young and tend to have lower levels of educational attainment. In addition, large proportions of members of ethnic groups reside in costly areas of the country such as

California, New York, and large metropolitan areas such as Chicago, where costs are higher and home ownership is more difficult. Also important in the case of Latinos and Asian Americans is the fact that large amounts of income are sent as remittances to their country of origin in order to help house, feed, and educate children, parents, and other relatives. The Pew Hispanic Center (2006) estimates that remittances to Latin America exceeded \$30 billion per year or an average of \$2,500 per Latino household per year.

The fact that high levels of poverty exist among members of ethnic groups is a troubling finding not only because it implies that there is no disposable income for entertainment and savings but more important because it means that there are daily needs that are not being properly met (nutrition, educational stimulation, proper housing). Furthermore, experiences of poverty have significant effects on people's behavior (American Psychological Association Task Force on Socioeconomic Status, 2007) and particularly on a child's intellectual and emotional development (G. W. Evans, 2004). For example, a large-scale study on the effects of economic deprivation on early development (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994) showed that low family income and poverty status correlated with the levels of children's cognitive development and their social maturity. Furthermore, poverty can be related to a person's psychological well-being (Saéz-Santiago & Bernal, 2003), overall level of depression (Downey & Coyne, 1990), and inferior parenting skills (Rainwater, 1970). All of these are factors that significantly affect an individual's well-being and functioning in society.

WHY STUDY THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ETHNIC DIVERSITY?

This book is part of recent efforts in psychology where researchers and practitioners struggle to better understand and appreciate ethnic diversity and its effects on people's behavior. In a sense, the book tries to answer many of the questions that Lee and Dwayne (the two students in the vignette at the beginning of the chapter) had regarding what psychology has to say about their own experiences and their own culture. The information included in this book will also help students of all ethnic groups learn how psychology has tried to better understand the effects of a person's culture on behavior. As such, the book explores how being raised in one ethnic or cultural community influences such characteristics as the way individuals think about the world, or the value they place on family interactions, or the expectations people have of personal relationships.

Providing a Context

What is the relevance of our country's ethnic diversity to psychology? Simply, our knowledge of human behavior only makes sense when properly contextualized in terms of the characteristics of the population. As Trickett (1996) has argued, psychological theory, research, and interventions need to be located in the sociocultural context where individuals and communities reside. As a matter of fact, much research in ethnic psychology and in cross-cultural psychology suggests that what is appropriate or even valued in one culture may be rejected in others (Sternberg, 2004). For example, Okagaki and Sternberg (1993) found that Latino parents tended to define intelligence in their school-age children in terms of skills in social competence while Asian American and White parents tended to emphasize cognitive skills. At the same time, teachers, reflecting the values of the White parents, placed emphasis on cognitive skills and rewarded children in terms of the development of those skills rather than social competence. Not surprisingly, Latino children were ranked as less intelligent by those teachers since their conceptions of intelligence differed from what the culture of the parents valued the most. Indeed, many researchers argue that "the conceptualization, assessment, and development of intelligence [or any other psychological construct] cannot be fully or even meaningfully understood outside their cultural context" (Sternberg, 2004, p. 325). The same statement can be made regarding psychological research and theorizing with members of ethnic groups in a diverse society.

Improving the Validity of Psychology

One other important reason for studying the psychology of ethnic minority groups is contributing to its validity and usefulness. Ignoring cultural values and expectancies as well as using inappropriate methodological approaches to measurement can produce terribly false information and conclusions with limited external validity (Helms, 2006; S. Sue, 1999).

The area of intelligence measurement is one where psychology has frequently made embarrassingly erroneous statements based on improper conceptualization of the constructs, ignorance of group-specific values, or invalid measurements. It is widely known, for example, that during the infancy of intelligence measurement in the early part of the 20th century, intelligence tests were given to recently landed immigrants as a way of detecting would-be immigrants who showed mental deficiencies. Some immigrants were excluded by simple observation on the part of immigration officials or

through examinations and tests that suffered from untrained translators, elimination of items from the original version, or changes to the wording of questions. Not surprisingly, data showed that many immigrants with limited English abilities often scored fairly low in intelligence. For example, early researchers considered that the majority of Italian, Hungarian, and Russian immigrants who they tested should be considered as “morons” or “feeble-minded” although they failed to consider the fact that many of them did not speak English and had been asked to answer an intelligence test in a language they did not understand or speak. A more recent example is the argument of the heritability of intelligence as an explanation for lower IQ scores among African Americans (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994), where the effects of culture-specific definitions of intelligence and the pervasive influence of socioeconomic status were ignored while using measuring instruments that were not culturally appropriate since they were not normed or standardized for the populations tested. Proper attention to cultural and ethnic differences would have allowed those psychologists to properly contextualize their findings and to make scientifically valid observations.

Attention to ethnic variations in psychological theory and instrumentation, of course, does not imply an absolute relativism that would reject all that psychology has produced. It is indeed quite possible that some of the theories and behavioral principles that have evolved over the last 100 years or so of scientific psychology are generalizable or applicable to all ethnic populations and across cultures. In that sense, we should be able to use certain psychological principles to explain the behavior of people from different cultures and ethnicities. What is important is to question the *a priori* assumption of generalizability across ethnicities or cultures. That generalizability needs to be demonstrated. That goal becomes the guiding principle of ethnic psychology as presented throughout this book.

Advancing Culturally Diverse Societies

A number of issues are of relevance when we try to understand how culturally diverse societies can function better by supporting the incorporation of individuals of varying cultural and ethnic backgrounds and by respecting and celebrating those differences. As shown at the beginning of this chapter, a diverse environment helps individuals improve their learning and performance. For psychologists, therefore, a key concern is how our science can best contribute to those goals of understanding cultures and ethnic differences and promoting individual growth in ethnically and culturally diverse environments.

Unfortunately, much of psychological research has assumed that findings obtained in the United States (mostly among White college students) actually represent human behavior across all cultures (Fowers & Davidov, 2006). This assumption of universality is questionable and has done much damage to the science and profession by supporting a **Eurocentric bias**. Such bias refers to the overemphasis given by some individuals to the experiences and characteristics of White individuals who trace their ancestry to Europe and that are considered as “normal” or “ideal.” This bias has often been characterized as “cultural imperialism” (Jahoda, 1988; U. Kim & Berry 1993).

The overreliance on White college students in psychological research and the lack of non-White researchers have produced this Eurocentric science that may have limited generalizability or applicability when individuals from other ethnic groups are considered. Indeed, attention to ethnic psychology will help the development of diverse societies that respect and support the ethnic and cultural characteristics of its members and provides them with culturally appropriate services (Berry, 2003). Unfortunately, many individual members of ethnic minority groups, like Lee (the student mentioned at the beginning of the chapter), find that much of psychological research does not reflect their experiences because it has been based on research that for the most part has excluded non-Whites.

The proper understanding of contemporary ethnically and culturally diverse societies requires input from various disciplines to provide a more appropriate and comprehensive picture of a nation. Berry (2003) has argued that an understanding of diverse societies requires at a minimum the interaction of psychology, sociology, anthropology, and political science that together provide an understanding of three key aspects of a diverse society: (1) its sociocultural factors (e.g., discrimination, prejudice), (2) public policies (such as health care policy, social welfare policy), and (3) the behavior of individuals (e.g., psychological adjustment, coping behavior).

While the emphasis in this book is on psychological research, we have added at times findings and theories from sociology and other social sciences in order to provide a more comprehensive perspective. Indeed, a significant amount of research in the social sciences has helped psychologists develop better research with ethnic minority communities. Anthropologists, for example, have provided a nuanced understanding of culture functioning by researching how primary social units (such as the family) function and how they influence people’s values, beliefs, attitudes, and social behaviors. Sociologists have helped psychologists understand the role played by groups and other social entities in supporting an individual’s development of values and norms as well as expectations for the way they and others should behave.

Research with ethnic minority communities also helps scientists and service providers (such as counselors, therapists) to properly support the social, personal, and psychological development of members of ethnic communities as well as to prevent illness and other problems. To be useful to these communities, psychological research, as well as that of other social and behavioral sciences, must adhere to standards of scientific integrity and validity including external or ecological validity in research studies (D. W. Sue & Sue, 2008; S. Sue, 1999). Preventive and therapeutic services in psychology as well as in medicine and public health must likewise reflect the needs of those individuals being served rather than the characteristics of the providers (Rossa, Dumka, Gonzales, & Knight, 2002).

In short, understanding and contributing to a diverse society requires a comprehensive analysis of its members and institutions where issues such as ethnicity, minority status, class differences, cultural values, immigration experiences, acculturation, dominant group attitudes and policies, and other concepts need to be considered as the background against which societies function. These constructs and social characteristics are discussed in greater detail later on in the rest of the book, particularly in Chapter 2.

ETHNIC PSYCHOLOGY AS DIFFERENT FROM CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

It is important to differentiate between cross-cultural psychology and ethnic psychology. While both areas are concerned with the effects of culture and cultural differences on people's behavior, they differ in terms of their cultural or geographic area of emphasis. **Cross-cultural psychology** emphasizes differences in cultural influences across nations or regions of the world. **Ethnic psychology**, on the other hand, tends to focus on ethnic and cultural group differences within a single nation or community (Segall, Lonner, & Berry, 1998). As such, cross-cultural psychology would focus, for example, on studying differences and similarities in moral development in children in the United States and in Mexico while ethnic psychology would concentrate on studying moral development among Mexican Americans and/or African Americans. While both areas share some of the same methodological concerns (see Chapter 3) and areas of scientific interest (e.g., values, intergroup relations, cognition, psychopathology), they differ in their unit of analysis (who is studied) and location of research (within-country/nation for ethnic psychology or across countries or cultures for cross-cultural psychology).

As mentioned above, there are topical areas that overlap in cross-cultural and ethnic psychology and these similarities in interests actually enrich their

development by cross-fertilizing theoretical advances and empirical discoveries. Nevertheless, care should be taken not to make inappropriate generalizations. Indeed, findings from cross-cultural research must be carefully analyzed before they are generalized to an ethnic population and vice versa. For example, research on the development of a child's value structure among children in Beijing cannot be generalized to Chinese Americans in San Francisco since both groups of children have been exposed to a number of important differences in child rearing including family size (usually one child in Beijing), schooling (usually public, government subsidized schools in Beijing), and ethnic diversity of the social environment (greater in San Francisco).

Another important difference between cross-cultural psychology and ethnic psychology is the centrality of the recognition given to the role played by differences in culture learning (usually called "acculturation") on an individual's beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors. Research in ethnic psychology must take into consideration how acculturation affects people's behavior if not directly at least indirectly (see Chapter 4 for a more thorough discussion of acculturation and its effects).

Also essential to ethnic psychology is the recognition of the significance of certain social conditions that affect the attitudes and behaviors of ethnic groups such as often being part of statistical minorities and experiencing the results of social and economic stratification. At the same time, both cross-cultural psychology and ethnic psychology share the belief that in order for psychology to be valid and useful it must consider the mutual influences that exist between culture and people's behavior (Segall et al., 1998).

THE GROWTH OF ETHNIC PSYCHOLOGY

The overlap between ethnic psychology and cross-cultural psychology will be seen throughout this book as principles, and even authors and research findings, from cross-cultural psychology are mentioned. Nevertheless, an examination of cross-cultural psychology and of ethnic psychology textbooks or even research articles will easily show the differences in perspective, individuals studied, and theories or hypotheses. Indeed, the last few years have seen a significant growth in ethnic psychology publications including the *Handbook of Ethnic & Minority Psychology* (Bernal, Trimble, Burlew, & Leong, 2003), the collection of articles in *Readings in Ethnic Psychology* (Balls Organista, Chun, & Marín, 1998), handbooks or texts directed at practitioners or clinicians such as the *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling* (Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki, & Alexander, 2001), as well

as the recently published *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society* (Schaefer, 2008). These publications join a number of textbooks (e.g., Organista, 2007; D. W. Sue & Sue, 2008) as well as books dealing with methodological concerns in social science research with ethnic populations such as *Research With Hispanic Populations* (Marín & VanOss Marín, 1991) and *Race and Ethnicity in Research Methods* (Stanfield & Dennis, 1993). There are also a number of journals that emphasize ethnic psychological research (see Box 1.3). In addition, most scientific journals in the social and behavioral sciences are now publishing an increasing number of articles dealing with ethnic psychology.

BOX 1.3

Examples of Journals Publishing Ethnic Psychology

Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology
Equity and Excellence in Education
Ethnic and Racial Studies
Ethnicities
Ethnicity & Health
Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences
Identities
Identity
International Journal of Intercultural Relations
International Migration Review
The Journal of Black Psychology
The Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students
Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health
Minority Health

The field of ethnic psychology is rapidly growing in significance and scientific importance as a result of the realization that a psychology based on members of one group alone (usually Whites) does not validly represent the variety and richness of the country. Indeed, significant advances in ethnic psychology have been made in other diverse societies such as Canada and Israel as well as in francophone countries (France, Belgium) where the field is often called *psychologie interculturelle* (intercultural psychology).

Nevertheless, attention to ethnic psychology in the United States is a somewhat recent phenomenon. Only as recently as 2002, the American

Psychological Association (APA) issued a series of guidelines for the training and professional practice of psychologists (see Box 1.4). These principles respond to the need for psychologists to be knowledgeable and proficient in understanding the members of various ethnic groups and to be culturally competent in their professional practice whether teaching, conducting research, or applying psychological knowledge. The guidelines are fairly broad but are based on the belief that as social beings we all have attitudes and expectancies that can affect how we treat other individuals, particularly those who differ from ourselves. Furthermore, the guidelines support the notion that much of psychological research may be limited in its usefulness and appropriateness by the monocultural perspectives of researchers and the lack of diversity (ethnic, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, etc.) in subject pools, research teams, and peer reviewers. According to the APA (2002), the guidelines “reflect the continuing evolution of the study of psychology, changes in society-at-large, and emerging data about the different needs for particular individuals and groups historically marginalized or disenfranchised within and by psychology based on their ethnic/racial heritage and social group identity or membership” (p. 1).

BOX 1.4**A Selection of APA Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists**

- Psychologists are encouraged to recognize that, as cultural beings, they may hold attitudes and beliefs that can detrimentally influence their perceptions of and interactions with individuals who are ethnically and racially different from themselves
- Psychologists are encouraged to recognize the importance of multicultural sensitivity/responsiveness, knowledge, and understanding about ethnically and racially different individuals
- As educators, psychologists are encouraged to employ the constructs of multiculturalism and diversity in psychological education
- Culturally sensitive psychological researchers are encouraged to recognize the importance of conducting culture-centered and ethical psychological research among persons from ethnic, linguistic, and racial minority backgrounds
- Psychologists strive to apply culturally appropriate skills in clinical and other applied psychological practices
- Psychologists are encouraged to use organizational change processes to support culturally informed organizational (policy) development and practices

SOURCE: American Psychological Association (2002).

The achievements and developments we currently witness in ethnic psychology are the result of the efforts of a number of individuals who for decades advocated the development of a psychology that reflected the social realities of the country. This history of slow but certain achievements is well documented by B. G. Holliday and Holmes (2003), and Box 1.5 highlights some of those key developments as identified by both psychologists.

BOX 1.5

Some Key Moments in the Development of Ethnic Psychology

- 1885 Opening of first mental hospital for the exclusive treatment of African Americans near Petersburg, Virginia
- 1899 Howard University in Washington, D.C., offers its first psychology course
- 1920 Francis C. Sumner is first African American awarded a Ph.D. in Psychology (Clark University)
- 1920 J. Henry Alston is first African American to publish a psychological research article
- 1928 Howard University establishes a Department of Psychology
- 1937 Alberta B. Turner is first African American woman to receive a Ph.D. in Psychology (Ohio State University)
- 1943 Robert Chin is first Chinese American to receive a Ph.D. in Psychology (Columbia University)
- 1951 Efrain Sanchez-Hidalgo is first Puerto Rican to receive a Ph.D. in Psychology (Columbia University)
- 1962 Martha Bernal is first Mexican American woman to be awarded a Ph.D. in Psychology (Indiana University)
- 1963 The APA establishes a committee to analyze problems in training and employment due to race (Ad Hoc Committee on Equality of Opportunity in Psychology)
- 1968 The Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi) is founded
- 1970 The Association of Psychologists Por La Raza is founded
- 1970 Kenneth B. Clark becomes the first person of color to be president of the APA
- 1971 The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) establishes the Center for Minority Group Mental Health Programs
- 1972 The Asian American Psychological Association is founded
- 1974 The APA Minority Fellowship Program is founded
- 1974 Founding of the *Journal of Black Psychology*
- 1975 The Society of Indian Psychologists is founded
- 1978 The APA establishes an Ad Hoc Committee on Minority Affairs
- 1979 The APA founds the Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs with Esteban Olmedo as its first director
- 1979 Founding of the National Hispanic Psychological Association
- 1979 Amado Padilla founds the *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*
- 1979 The first issue of the *Journal of the Asian American Psychological Association* is published

(Continued)

(Continued)

- 1980 The APA establishes the Board of Ethnic Minority Affairs
- 1985 First convention of the Asian American Psychological Association
- 1986 The APA's Division 45 (The Society for the Psychological Study of Ethnic Minority Issues) is established
- 1986 Logan Wright is the first individual of American Indian heritage to become president of the APA
- 1999 First issue of the journal *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*
- 1999 The APA passes a resolution supporting affirmative action and equal opportunity
- 1999 Richard M. Suinn is first Asian American to be elected APA president
- 2002 Norman B. Anderson becomes first African American to serve as APA's chief executive officer
- 2002 The APA issues its "Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists"
- 2003 Publication of the *Handbook of Racial & Ethnic Minority Psychology*

SOURCE: Based on a chapter by B. G. Holliday & Holmes (2003).

The growth of ethnic psychology also supported the exploration of ethnic identity and culture and their psychological implications among individuals commonly considered as White (the study of **Whiteness**). This research recognizes that individuals whose skin color is light ("White") share experiences and attitudes that differentiate them from others whose skin color is darker. These shared experiences go beyond the social and economic privileges that historically have been awarded to lighter-skinned individuals in this country. Hattam (2001) argues that research on Whiteness has produced some important results that allow for a more complete understanding of the major ethnic groups "of color" (African Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives, Asian Americans, and Latinos). In particular, Hattam argues that research on Whiteness has allowed U.S. social scientists to validate the role of class and social privilege in people's ethnic identification. Chapter 2 presents a more comprehensive discussion of the study of Whiteness in the United States and its implications for ethnic psychology.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has briefly presented an overview of the field of ethnic psychology and its importance in contemporary American society. While there are many other very diverse societies in the world (Canada, Belgium, Hong Kong, Singapore, Israel), the historical, demographic, political, and economic characteristics of the United States require the development of a unique or, at least, distinctive body of knowledge that addresses the conditions of ethnic groups in this country. Ethnic psychology contributes to the development of psychology as a science and as a profession by properly contextualizing theories and findings in terms of ethnicity. Furthermore, the work of ethnic psychologists, as reflected in this book, allows all psychologists to understand the limits in the generalizability of our findings and, in doing so, improve the validity of scientific research. While most of the literature reviewed in this book emphasizes four ethnic groups (African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, and Latinos), the overall findings can be applicable to other ethnic groups in the country. In this sense, ethnic psychology supports the development of scientific behavioral knowledge about the diverse society that is the United States.

Key Terms

Ancestry (page 7)

Cross-Cultural Psychology (page 23)

Culture (page 7)

Disaggregation (page 14)

Ethnicity (page 7)

Ethnic Psychology (page 23)

Eurocentric Bias (page 22)

Facial Diversity (page 9)

Multiculturalism (page 9)

Nationality (page 7)

Privilege (page 9)

Race (page 7)

Whiteness (page 28)

Within-Group Differences (page 13)

Learning by Doing

- Interview, if possible, your parents, guardians, or caregivers, uncles and aunts, and grandparents and ask them to self-identify in terms of their ethnic background. Then draw a diagram or family tree where you indicate the relationship (who is a parent to whom, for example) and the ethnic label that they apply to themselves (use the Census Bureau terms in Box 1.2 as well as the label actually used by the individuals). Then, analyze how labels or ethnicities have changed over time, how some people prefer very specific labels rather than those used by the Census Bureau, and indicate how you would define yourself.
- Interview your parents' or caregivers' siblings (your aunts and uncles) and your grandparents and identify their highest academic achievement and that of their children (your aunts and uncles and your cousins). Indicate, for example, if they have graduated from high school, or have completed two years of college, a master's degree, or a doctorate. Note how academic achievement may have changed over generations and identify how many college graduates have children who also have gone to college.
- Talk to various members of your family (e.g., parents, guardians, and/or their siblings) and draw a diagram that traces who migrated to the United States and from where. Use this information to identify how many generations removed you are from the various cultural groups represented in your family.

Suggested Further Readings

Balls Organista, P., Chun, K. M., & Marín, G. (Eds.). (1998). *Readings in ethnic psychology*. New York: Routledge.

A collection of classic and contemporary research reports on ethnic psychology. The book covers methodological areas as well as topics related to applied fields including risk behaviors, identity, and psychological interventions.

Belgrave, F. Z., & Allison, K. W. (2006). *African American psychology: From Africa to America*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

An excellent overview of psychological research with African Americans that incorporates the migration experience of early and recent ancestors.

Bernal, G., Trimble, J. E., Burlew, A. K., & Leong, F. T. L. (Eds.). (2003). *Handbook of racial & ethnic minority psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

A comprehensive book analyzing most areas of research and practice with ethnic minority groups. The authors represent many leaders in the field and the various chapters are excellent overviews of theories and research findings.

Bolaffi, G., Bracalenti, R., Braham, P., & Gindro, S. (2003). *Dictionary of race, ethnicity & culture*. London: Sage.

A very complete dictionary of terms, topics, and issues related to the study of ethnicity and culture. The majority of the writers are European and contribute perspectives often ignored or unknown in the United States.

Fong, T. P., & Shinagawa, L. H. (2000). *Asian Americans: Experiences and perspectives*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

This book was one of the first to summarize major areas of research with Asian Americans. It is a very important source of early material on the topic.

Franklin, J. H., & Moss, A. A. (2003). *From slavery to freedom: A history of African Americans* (8th ed.). New York: Knopf.

An important resource on the history of African Americans. This book is a comprehensive overview of what has characterized the experiences of African Americans from the early times in the Americas up to their recent more contemporary history.

Ifekwunigwe, J. O. (Ed.). (2004). *'Mixed race' studies: A reader*. London: Routledge.

An important overview of research with biracial and multiethnic individuals, including European perspectives. This is an excellent companion to Root's book (see below).

Jackson, Y. K. (Ed.). (2006). *Encyclopedia of multicultural psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

A useful compilation of research in ethnic psychology with emphasis on all ethnic groups and helpful in gaining a perspective on the types of research psychologists have conducted among ethnic groups.

Neville, H. A., Tynes, B. M., & Utsey, S. O. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook of African American psychology* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

A very well researched summary of research among African Americans by some of the best known and active psychologists in the field. An essential resource for students and professionals.

Padilla, A. M. (Ed.). (1995). *Hispanic psychology: Critical issues in theory and research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

A compilation of key articles from the *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* by one of the pioneers in the field.

Root, M. P. P. (Ed.). (1996). *The multiracial experience: Racial borders as the new frontier*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

This book summarizes basic and applied psychological and sociological research on multiracial individuals. Very useful for understanding early research on the topic.

Schaefer, R. T. (Ed.). (2008). *Encyclopedia of race, ethnicity, and society* (Vols. 1–3). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

A recently published encyclopedia that addresses research with ethnic minority groups from the perspectives of the various social sciences. An excellent resource for students and researchers.

Velasquez, R. J., Arellano, L. M., & McNeill, B. W. (Eds.). (2004). *The handbook of Chicana/o psychology and mental health*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

The book is a collection of chapters analyzing psychological issues among Mexican Americans and serves as an introduction to the study of all Latinos.