Chapter 4

'Race', ethnicity and nationality

examined in the context of the international capitalist system.

They found that immigrants in the four countries studied had a number of similarities. These were a 'subordinate position on the labour market, concentration in run-down areas and poor housing, lack of educational opportunities, widespread prejudice, and discrimination from the subordinate populations and authorities'. Castles and Kosack argued that these similarities showed that the diverse immigrant groups 'had the same function and position in society, irrespective of their original backgrounds'.

Migration and the international economic system

Castles and Kosack regard migration as resulting from the development of the international economic system. According to them the richer European nations have exploited the poorer nations of the world causing their underdevelopment.

From colonial times onwards the Third World has been used as a source of cheap, easily exploited labour and cheap raw materials. The colonies were not allowed to develop, or in some cases even maintain, industries that competed with those of their European masters. Development has also been uneven in Europe, leaving potential migrants in some of the more impoverished rural areas of southern Europe. The poor in the Third World have then been used as a reserve army of labour by successful capitalist nations during periods of economic prosperity and high employment.

Migration tends to increase the inequalities between richer and poorer nations. Those who migrate are a valuable resource: they are usually young and vigorous. The society into which they were born has had to pay to maintain them during their childhood when they were not able to contribute to the wealth of their nation. Castles and Kosack therefore see 'migration as a form of development aid for the migration countries' which are able to take advantage of the labour which has cost them little or nothing to produce.

In the countries experiencing immigration the process of migration tends to benefit certain groups and to harm others. Although immigration to Western Europe has not been great enough to actually reduce wages, the extra supply of workers has helped to prevent wages rising as much as they might have done. The immigrants have increased competition for manual jobs. As a result:

> *workers are likely to lose from the tendency for immigration to restrain increases in the general wage rate. By the same token, capitalists gain, as profit rates are kept high.*
>
> Castles and Kosack, 1973

'Race prejudice' and the working class

As well as directly serving the interests of the ruling class by reducing its wage bills, immigration can also help to cement its power in capitalist societies. According to Castles and Kosack, prejudice against immigrants has three main functions:

1. First, it serves to 'conceal and legitimate the exploitation' of immigrant workers 'by alleging that they are congenitally inferior'. Injustice and discrimination that would otherwise be unacceptable are tolerated if they are directed at a supposedly inferior group.
2. Second, immigrant workers are often used as scapegoats for the problems created by the capitalist system. They are a convenient explanation for problems such as unemployment and housing shortages. In reality, though, such problems result from 'the deficiencies of capitalist society, which is unable to provide adequate living conditions and to guarantee security to the whole of the working population'.
3. Third, 'race prejudice' serves to divide the working class. Workers are persuaded to accept discriminatory measures against immigrant workers and this means that there is little prospect of the working class uniting to oppose capitalist power. Castles and Kosack argue:

> *The traditional class consciousness based on collective ideals and actions tends to be replaced by a sectional consciousness of the indigenous workers. Indeed, the change may go even further: the orientation towards collective action designed to improve the position of all workers may be replaced by aspirations for individual advancement, without any change in the non-egalitarian structure of society.*
>
> Castles and Kosack, 1973

Castles and Kosack conclude that immigration benefits the ruling class by reducing its labour costs and by preventing the working class from seeking to change the status quo which works to the advantage of the richest and most powerful members of society. (We discuss Marxist views on 'race' and ethnicity further on pp. 258–9.)

Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller – *The Age of Migration*

The increase in migration

In a more recent study published in 1993, Castles, writing with Mark Miller, has described the internationalization of migration since 1973. He was more optimistic in the later study about the effects of migration than he was in 1973.

Castles and Miller argue that migration has increased as Third World countries have become more and more involved in the world capitalist system. In Third World countries that are developing, there is considerable migration from rural to urban areas, and as this happens more people acquire 'the financial and cultural resources necessary for international migration'.

Rich capitalist countries have tried to restrict migration, but are unable to do so completely. There are considerable numbers of illegal immigrants to some richer countries, for example to the USA from Mexico. In any case most countries now have established ethnic minority populations so that 'even if migration were to stop tomorrow' cultural pluralism would affect the countries 'for generations'.

There are enormous pressures encouraging migration and, as a result, 'Most highly developed countries and many less-developed ones have become far more culturally diverse than they were even a generation ago.'

The consequences of cultural pluralism

Castles and Miller argue that many countries now have no choice but to come to terms with the existence of a variety of ethnic groups within their national boundaries. 'Marginalisation and isolation' of ethnic minority groups have served only to strengthen their ethnic identity and, for some minorities, their culture has become 'a mechanism of resistance'. Consequently, 'Even if serious attempts were made to end all forms of discrimination and racism, cultural and linguistic differences will persist for generations.'

Although the discrimination and exclusion of ethnic minority groups are undesirable in themselves, the cultural pluralism they engender opens up new possibilities. A new global culture develops, encouraged by the mass media, international travel and migration. People become more familiar with the cultures of different societies and ethnic groups. Therefore 'difference need no longer be a marker for strangeness and separation, but rather an opportunity for informed choice among a myriad of possibilities'. International migration might even, Castles and Miller suggest, 'give hope of increased unity in dealing with the pressing problems which beset our small planet'.

To Castles and Miller then, it is no longer possible for most countries to adopt the 'monocultural and assimilationist models' that were advocated by supporters of the immigrant-host theories.

However some countries have been relatively isolated from international migration for many years. With the break-up of the USSR and the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe, a number of countries have suddenly been exposed to enormous social changes. In such a situation 'narrow traditional cultures seem to offer a measure of defence' for those subject to these pressures. Hence exclusionary nationalism has led to civil war in areas such as the former Yugoslavia.

Ethnicity – the problem of classification

Like the immigrant-host model, sociological approaches based on the idea of ethnicity place great emphasis on culture. They distinguish human groups primarily according to the distinctiveness of their lifestyles. They tend to attach little importance to 'race' as a biological difference between humans, although they do recognize that it is important when groups of humans *believe* they belong to a particular 'race'.

However, unlike the immigrant-host model, approaches based around the idea of ethnicity do not assume that in the long term immigrant groups will assimilate by adopting the culture of the host society. The ethnicity approach implies that migrant groups will very often retain large elements of their original culture, although they may modify it in a new setting. In fact ethnicity studies are not just confined to migrant groups. Nation-states can contain distinctive ethnic groups without migration having taken place. These groups may or may not be thought of as 'races'.

In this section we will begin by discussing definitions of ethnicity and we will then examine a number of studies of ethnic groups in Britain. We will then evaluate the ethnicity approach.

Defining ethnicity

The origins of the term ethnicity

Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1993) points out that ethnicity derives from the Greek word *ethnos* which is itself derived from another Greek word *ethnikos*. This meant pagan or heathen. The term ethnic had this meaning in English until around the middle of the nineteenth century when it started being used as an alternative to 'race'. However, Eriksen argues that in modern anthropology and sociology an ethnic group is usually seen as being culturally rather than

physically distinctive. This is certainly reflected in the views of the next writer we will look at, J. Milton Yinger.

J. Milton Yinger – a definition of ethnicity

J. Milton Yinger (1981) argues that there is a difference between physically defined and socially defined 'races'. He argues that physically distinct 'races' may exist in theory but in practice the boundaries between physical 'races' have become so blurred that groups of humans with a distinct phenotype are difficult to distinguish.

Yinger says that biological 'races' are 'of relatively little interest to the social scientist', though they may be of some interest to 'the biologist and physical anthropologist'. Socially defined 'races' consist of ethnic groups who are seen by themselves or others as having distinct biological characteristics, whether or not they really do form a distinct biological group.

To Yinger an ethnic group (or as he calls it, an ethnie) exists in the 'fullest sense' when:

> *a segment of a larger society is seen by others to be different in some combination of the following characteristics – language, religion, race and ancestral homeland with its related culture; the members also perceive themselves in that way; and they participate in shared activities built around their (real or mythical) common origin or culture.*
>
> Yinger, 1981

Yinger's definition is a fairly broad one and essentially any group which believes itself to be an ethnic group and which acts in terms of that belief *is* an ethnic group.

Yinger says that 'phenomena on many different levels of generality' can be called ethnic groups. These can be of three main types:

1 First, he claims that an immigrant population sharing 'a common former citizenship' can be the basis for an ethnie. In America, Koreans, Filipinos and Vietnamese are examples of this type of ethnie.
2 Second, an ethnic group can also consist of 'a subsocietal group that clearly shares a common descent and cultural background'. He gives as examples native American groups such as the Oneida Indians and the Iroquois, Turkomans in Iran, and Albanians in the former Yugoslavia.
3 Third, an ethnie can be composed of:

> *pan-cultural groups of persons of widely different cultural and societal backgrounds who, however, can be identified as 'similar' on the basis of language, race or religion mixed with broadly similar statuses.*
>
> Yinger, 1981

In America, Hispanics from different Latin American countries are sometimes seen as forming one ethnic group. In Britain, Asians are sometimes seen in the same way, despite linguistic and religious differences and despite originating from different countries.

John Richardson – ethnicity and other classification systems

Richardson (1990) identifies three main classification systems:

1 'race'
2 black/white
3 ethnicity.

He argues that there are some advantages in using ethnicity rather than 'race' and black/white. Like most sociologists he disputes the existence of clearcut biological groups in the population. He therefore rejects the use of the concept of 'race'. He also raises a number of problems with using the term black. It can be a confusing term since sometimes it is used to refer only to those of Afro-Caribbean origin, and sometimes in countries like Britain it is used more broadly to refer to disadvantaged minorities. However, when it is used in the latter sense, it is still not usually seen as appropriate to apply it to groups such as the Chinese, Cypriots and people from the Middle East, even though they are sometimes as disadvantaged in Western industrialized societies as groups who are commonly referred to as black.

Another problem is that many Asians do not regard themselves as 'black'.

In some ways then, Richardson sees ethnic groups as a more acceptable term than the available alternatives. He sees ethnicity as based upon cultural differences between groups and says:

> *This classificatory approach is attractive in so far as it highlights socio-cultural criteria (unlike the conventional 'race' systems) and it accommodates a potentially wide range of groups (unlike the two-category black/white model).*
>
> Richardson, 1990

Nevertheless, Richardson believes that there are serious problems with the idea of ethnicity as well. In particular it can be very difficult to distinguish clearly between ethnic groups. Many groups are themselves subdivided and they may overlap with other groups. Ethnic groups can be distinguished in different ways leading to different classifications. Thus, for example, territorial origin could lead to distinctions between Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and

Indians, whereas religious affiliation would lead to a distinction between Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. Linguistic criteria could produce a third system of classification.

Conclusion

Whatever these problems, it can be argued that the idea of ethnic groups is the least unsatisfactory way of dealing with the problem of classification. It is more flexible and adaptable than other approaches, and can accommodate changes in people's perceptions about the groups to which they belong. Groups such as the Irish in England can be accommodated within the ethnicity framework whereas they cannot under the other alternatives.

This approach is not limited to describing immigrant groups and different facets of ethnicity (such as language, religion and territorial origin), and can be used as the basis of classification as appropriate to the sociological issue or issues under consideration. Above all it recognizes that social divisions between such groups are created, maintained, altered and challenged by humans and that they are not the inevitable product of supposed biological differences.

The idea of 'race', though, remains a useful term when ethnic groups are *thought* by themselves or by others to be distinguished by phenotype.

Studies of ethnicity

Studies of ethnicity often take the form of ethnographic studies, that is studies of the lifestyles of groups of people. Such studies do not always focus on migrants and their descendants, but in Britain the main focus has been on people of Caribbean and South Asian origin.

Migrants from the Caribbean and from South Asia were the subject of a number of early studies. These studies usually compared the lifestyles of Afro-Caribbeans or South Asians in Britain with their lifestyles in their native lands in order to evaluate the extent to which the British context had affected their cultures.

Later studies, which have taken place since a second generation (and then later generations) of British-born Afro-Caribbeans and South Asians has become established, have tended to examine the extent to which traditional cultures have changed across the generations.

The studies we will look at are only a small sample of the numerous studies that have been undertaken, but they are fairly typical of the genre.

Roger and Catherine Ballard – Sikhs in the Punjab and in Leeds

Phases of development of South Asian communities

Between 1971 and 1974 the Ballards conducted research into the lifestyles of Sikhs in Leeds and in the Jullundur Doab area of the Punjab (Ballard and Ballard, 1977). Although their research was confined to studying Sikhs, they claim to identify four phases of development which are common to most South Asian communities in Britain:

1 The pioneer phase took place before the Second World War and involved a small number of early migrants establishing the first South Asian communities in Britain.
2 The second phase involved mass migration mainly by males in the post-war era.
3 The third phase started around 1960. During this phase increasing numbers of wives came to Britain, the communities became more established and some South Asians began to move into better housing. The Ballards call this the phase of family reunions.
4 The fourth stage involved a further consolidation and improvement in housing for some and the development of a substantial British-born second generation. For Sikhs in Leeds this stage started around 1970, but in the early 1970s Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups in Leeds were only just entering the third phase.

Pioneers

Many of the very earliest Sikh migrants were pedlars and hawkers from the Bhatra caste who arrived in Britain in the early 1920s. By the 1930s there were small communities of Punjabis in most large British cities.

For example, Darshan Singh was an important early settler in Leeds. In 1938 he had accumulated enough money to buy a shop/warehouse. Like other successful pioneer settlers he then acted as a sponsor, encouraging relatives to come and settle and helping them once they arrived. Darshan Singh came from the Ramgarhia caste of craft workers and his influence resulted in most of Leeds's Sikhs belonging to the same caste.

Muslims and Gujaratis also became established in Leeds. Ex-sailors were the most important pioneers in these communities.

Mass migration

Mass migration started in the 1950s. The pioneers provided a foundation for new migrants, often offering them hospitality and accommodation while

they looked for work. The Sikh migrants in this period did not think of themselves as permanent settlers. They tended to come from neither the poorest nor the most prosperous sections of Punjabi society. The poorest could not afford the fare to Britain, and the most prosperous had no reason to leave.

Living standards are relatively good in the Punjab but as families grow larger land is divided out and some people end up with holdings that are too small to sustain a family. Misfortune or a shortage of land could prompt one or more men to go abroad in search of earnings to help sustain their families back in the Punjab.

The first post-war migrants were almost exclusively male. According to the Ballards they 'regarded their villages of origin as the only meaningful arena of social interaction and tended to view Britain as a social vacuum, a cultural no-man's land'. The migrants wanted to live as cheaply as possible in order to maximize the amount of the money they could send home.

This led to the formation of all-male households, usually with 'a single landlord who assumed a kind of patriarchal authority over its members'. The landlords bought their houses as a temporary investment with no intention of staying in Britain. Large, cheap houses which accommodated a considerable number of tenants could generate a substantial income, and when they were sold they could provide the ex-landlord with a large lump sum to take back to the Punjab.

Family reunions

The Ballards identify a number of reasons why South Asian immigrants were reluctant to bring their families to Britain.

The migrants' original intention had not been to settle in Britain and many were worried about the influence British culture would have on their families if they joined them in Britain: British culture was seen as 'morally degenerate'. In any case new immigration laws could make family reunions problematic.

Furthermore, separation of husbands and wives was not as traumatic as it might be for Westerners. Sikh families, and South Asian families generally, do not place as much emphasis on the bond between wives and husbands as Western families do. The wives in Asia 'were still part of the joint household, under the care of the father or brother of the absent husband'. There has been a long tradition in the Punjab of men leaving their families for long periods, sometimes to work as soldiers.

However, 'male migrants were constantly homesick for their families and despite the quasi family ties of the all male household, life for the settler was ascetic'. Sikhs put less emphasis on purdah, or the seclusion of women, than Muslims, so Sikhs tended to be less worried about their wives coming to Britain. By 1971 the vast majority of Sikh men in Leeds were living with their wives whereas Muslim and Hindu all-male households were still quite common.

Many of the earliest male migrants had made little attempt to preserve traditional Sikh culture and values. Few took part in religious rituals and many did not bother wearing turbans or growing long hair and beards. Seeing their stay as temporary, and without having to worry about their family being corrupted by Western culture, they felt little need to try to protect themselves from Western influences. However, once they were joined by their families, Sikhs in Leeds became more concerned to ensure that their traditional family life and religion were preserved.

Far from encouraging assimilation, the establishment of a more permanent Sikh community led to a more distinctive ethnic identity. The Ballards comment:

> *Throughout the 1960s, the Sikhs set about recreating as many of the institutions of Punjab society as possible. This was a strong contrast to the earlier period where they merely utilised those cultural values which eased their survival.*
>
> Ballard and Ballard, 1977

For example, liaisons with white women by Sikh men began to be condemned more strongly, and regular attendance at Sikh temples became the norm.

As the Sikh community became more established and less money was sent home to the villages, it also became more prosperous. Standards of housing improved and many Sikhs set up their own businesses. The Punjabi population created an 'elaborate infra-structure of services and businesses' including goldsmiths, travel agents, cinemas and grocers' shops.

Although the Sikh community became increasingly entrenched and the likelihood of returning to Asia decreased, the belief in an eventual return (which has been called the myth of return) persisted. According to the Ballards, this provided a valuable justification for preserving Sikh culture. After all, the preservation of the culture would make the eventual return smoother. It also offered some psychological protection against racism since it was believed it would only have to be tolerated on a temporary basis pending the return to Asia. Thus the Ballards say that 'The importance of return as a real goal has gradually faded and instead it has become

a central charter for the maintenance of Sikh ethnicity in Britain.'

The second generation

As a second generation born in Britain became a feature of more and more Sikh families, changes in lifestyle began to take place. Many moved out of the inner city and bought houses in suburban areas north of Leeds. Parents became increasingly concerned about their children's education and more eager for them to stay on at school and obtain higher qualifications. More wives, including those with children, started taking paid employment.

Although the Sikhs adopted some aspects of Western materialism and came to value individual educational achievement, this did not undermine traditional values within the family. Nor did it prevent strong family networks extending across different households.

The second generation of British-born and British-educated children 'have been exposed to socialisation in two very different cultures at home and at school'. The Ballards suggest that many people believe that this leads to very strong tensions between parents and children and long-lasting conflict between the generations. Their research, however, found that the conflict was often only temporary. Children would start wearing British-style clothes, following contemporary fashions, and some would start to argue about the need to visit relatives and worship at the temples. A few would contemplate running away from their family.

However, these behaviours often represented little more than a temporary period of teenage rebellion. The research found that even in the case of the runaways:

> *almost all young Sikhs, as well as members of other South Asian groups, do eventually return to seek solutions within the context of their families. They have all been socialised into a deep-rooted loyalty to the family and they find the outside world alien and unsympathetic in comparison.*
>
> Ballard and Ballard, 1977

Generally the second generation have modified their parents' values to make them more applicable to a British context, but they have not abandoned them. Many young Sikhs become skilled at multiple presentations of self, changing their behaviour between the family and the outside world of work or education. The experience of racism makes Sikhs believe that 'however much they try to conform, they can never really be British because of the colour of their skins'. This encourages a strong sense of ethnic identity and leads many young Sikhs to be determined to bring up their own children with a strong 'sense of Punjabi identity'.

Conclusion

The Ballards claim that their account of Sikhs in Leeds is applicable to most groups of immigrants to Britain from rural areas of south-east Asia. They argue, though, that well-qualified professionals from urban areas adopted Western values and tried to assimilate into British society. However, they suggest that, faced with discrimination, these groups too have developed a greater ethnic consciousness. The Ballards say 'peasants and professionals are coming closer together'.

Nevertheless, the Ballards are critical of approaches to the sociology of ethnicity that place too much emphasis on racism and other external constraints in explaining the behaviour of ethnic minorities. Such approaches ignore 'the culturally determined preferences of the group concerned'. Both internal preferences and external constraints are important in shaping the lifestyle of ethnic minorities and neither should be ignored.

For example, Sikhs and other Asian groups have not maintained a distinctive ethnic identity just because they have been the victims of racism. The first generation had no intention of adopting Western lifestyles and this has had a strong bearing on the development of the communities.

While the first generation was more divided according to such factors as kinship, religion and caste, the second generation was somewhat different. Born in Britain and having experienced racism throughout their lives, they felt a greater sense of identity with other South Asians, whatever the differences between them. Thus, according to the Ballards, the second generation was, in the 1970s, 'moving towards the establishment of an over-arching South Asian ethnic group'. This ethnic identity may have been prompted by external hostility but was still actively being created through the choices being made by young Asians in Britain.

Roger Ballard – Sikhs and Mirpuri Muslims

Divisions in the Asian community

In an article published in 1990, Roger Ballard updated his earlier work and described changes in Asian communities in the late 1970s and 1980s. In the earlier study, he and Catherine Ballard had suggested that South Asians in Britain were being drawn closer together. In his later article, Ballard stresses that there are strong divisions between South Asian groups in Britain. He argues:

As it becomes increasingly obvious that settlers of different backgrounds are following varied, and often sharply contrasting social trajectories, so it is becoming steadily more difficult, and increasingly inappropriate, to make generalisations which are valid for all 'Asians' in Britain.

Ballard, 1990

He notes that there are divisions according to class, caste, region of origin, religion and different experiences of migration. In order to try to explain these divisions he compares the Sikhs who originated in Jullundur Doab in India (who are discussed above) with Muslims from the Mirpur District in Kashmir, Pakistan.

Differences between the Sikhs and Muslims

Both the Jullunduris and Mirpuris migrated to Britain from predominantly rural areas, and in both groups the main aim of the early migrants was to earn money to send back to Asia. However, after arrival in Britain they followed different paths.

The Sikhs were reunited with their families earlier than the Muslims and enjoyed more economic success. As described above, many Sikhs set up their own businesses, and others aspired to – and succeeded in gaining – middle-class jobs and statuses. By 1990 most had moved away from inner cities and their children were enjoying educational success comparable with that of middle-class white children.

Most of the Mirpuri Muslims became 'international commuters' during their early years as migrants. They would work for a time in Britain before returning home to spend some time with their families. They would then return to Britain to earn more money. A few set up their own businesses, although they were not as numerous nor as successful as those of the Sikhs. However, most relied upon unskilled or semi-skilled work in industries such as textiles and engineering. Their wages were comparatively low and from the 1970s onwards they were more likely to be hit by unemployment.

Even after being joined by their families most were unable to afford to buy homes away from the inner cities. Their children enjoyed less academic success than their Sikh counterparts.

Economic reasons for the differences

Having described the differences, Ballard then sets out to explain them. One important reason for the greater success of the Sikhs was the greater prosperity of their region of origin. Jullundur Doab is a relatively affluent agricultural area with fertile land and a good infrastructure. Mirpur also has fertile land but it has a higher population density so landholdings tend to be small, it is difficult to irrigate and the infrastructure is poor.

As a consequence of these differences, migrants from Jullundur Doab tended to have more craft and business skills and higher educational qualifications than the Mirpuris. They also tended to be more literate.

Relying on unskilled and semi-skilled work in traditional manufacturing industries made the Mirpuris much more likely to lose their jobs once recession hit Britain. However, Ballard does not believe that such differences in economic situation can, on their own, account for the contrasting fortunes of the two groups. He argues that cultural differences may also be part of the explanation.

Cultural reasons for the differences

Ballard is very cautious about attributing too much importance to cultural factors. He expresses concern about the possibility of resorting to 'sweeping and inevitably stereotypical assertions about the allegedly "conservative" or "liberal" characteristics of the two religious traditions'. Nevertheless, he does believe that differences in religion and in community and family life could partly explain differences in the fortunes of South Asian groups. Ballard identifies three important cultural differences:

1 Muslims are allowed to marry close kin and often do so, whereas it is not permitted for Sikhs and Hindus. This means that kinship networks for Muslims tend to be more close-knit and geographically limited in scope.
2 The tradition of purdah is stronger in Islam than in Sikhism and it places greater restrictions on women in public places. As a result, Muslim women in Pakistan are less likely to travel long distances or to take up paid employment outside the home than Sikh women in India.
3 Sikhs and Hindus cremate their dead whereas Muslims bury them. Consequently Muslims tend to develop stronger ties to a particular village or region where their ancestors are buried.

Together these factors make Muslim families less geographically mobile and more close-knit and even inward looking. As a result, the male Mirpuri immigrants were rather more cautious about bringing their wives and children to Britain than the Sikh men. As international commuters, sometimes for up to 15 years, the Muslim men used up a lot of their money on travel. Furthermore, a higher proportion of their income was sent back to Asia to be spent or invested there. By the time the men decided that their families should settle in Britain the administrative obstacles had become greater, slowing down family reunions even more.

Muslim families have therefore had less time to become established in Britain and improve their living standards than some other groups of Asians. Once in Britain, Muslim wives were less likely to take paid employment, thus limiting the earning-power of the family. Thus, although the differences in the economic success of the two groups have been influenced by economic factors and the structural features of society, cultural factors such as religion and kinship patterns have had a part to play as well.

Conclusion

Ballard stresses at the end of his article that his account is rather over-simplified. He points out that 'Sikhs' and 'Mirpuris' are not homogeneous groups. For example, members of different Sikh castes such as the Jat (peasant-farmers) and the Ramgarhia (craft workers) have followed rather different paths. Furthermore, not all Jullunduris are Sikh and many British Pakistanis come from regions other than Mirpur.

Nevertheless, Ballard's work does show that it may only become possible to explain inequalities between ethnic groups if sociologists can develop a sophisticated understanding of cultural differences, as well as examining wider structural forces.

Ken Pryce – West Indians in Bristol

The study

Between 1969 and 1974 Ken Pryce conducted a study of West Indians in Bristol (Pryce, 1979). He relied mainly upon participant observation to collect his data but supplemented this with other methods including interviewing. His study was based mainly on St Paul's, a poor inner-city area of Bristol with a large West Indian community. Most of the population studied were, like Pryce himself, of Jamaican origin.

Like Ballard, Pryce compared the behaviour of the ethnic minority in Britain with the lifestyle in the country of origin. Although most of his study is descriptive, he does make use of some Marxist concepts in explaining the behaviour of West Indians in Britain. Like most ethnographers of South Asians in Britain, Pryce found the ethnic group he studied to be far from homogeneous. However, he found that West Indians were not divided according to such factors as nationality, religion, language or region of origin, but were differentiated according to the subcultures they had adopted in Britain.

All West Indians in Britain faced a series of problems in adapting to life there. They tried to solve these problems by forming a number of distinctive subcultures which helped them cope in different ways with their situation.

Jamaican origins

Most of the original immigrants to Britain who settled in Bristol were poor, working-class Jamaicans. Modern Jamaica was originally established as a plantation society, ruled by Britain, where African slaves were put to work in the service of British economic interests. According to Pryce, the culture of slaves was very much shaped by the experience of slavery and was influenced much more by Western culture than by African. He says:

> *Not only was the African culture of the slaves destroyed, but the plantation economies, being dependent parts of the larger metropolitan economy, had the effect of extending British capitalist modes and ways of thinking to the Caribbean.*
>
> Pryce, 1979

African slaves lost both their religion and their patterns of family life: most were converted to Christianity, and under slavery it was impossible to maintain stable families. The slaves adopted the British language of their masters and, in Pryce's view, they internalized European values. He believes that Jamaican culture came to value all things European, particularly those that were British, while African culture was rejected and even despised. He says 'In Jamaica, the closer symbols, mannerisms, appearances and institutions approximate and conform to British standards, the higher their value and prestige.'

In modern Jamaica, family life among the lower classes is characterized by instability and by the comparative rarity of formal marriage. Although the higher classes generally adopt the 'monogamous nuclear family and Christian marriage', the same is not true of the poor. When men and women become partners and decide to live together, they do not usually get married immediately. Indeed many never get married because they tend to split up, with the wife returning to her mother, taking any children with her. If the couple stay together long enough, they may get married eventually, but this may be years after they have had their children.

To Pryce, the instability of marriage in Jamaica stems 'directly from the institution of slavery'. Although Jamaica is very largely Protestant it has incorporated other elements into its religion. An important feature of Jamaican religion is 'its cultic diversity and the recrudescence of non-Christian features, typically confined to the masses'.

Thus Pentecostalism, which is popular in Jamaica, is based upon a literal interpretation of the Bible but it also emphasizes the importance of possession by the Holy Spirit.

Rastafarianism is based largely upon the Old Testament. Founded by Marcus Garvey in the early

decades of the twentieth century, it preaches that black Africans living outside Africa will eventually return to their continent of origin and will be freed from the oppression and exploitation they have suffered at the hands of whites.

When in the 1950s a considerable number of Jamaicans emigrated and settled in Bristol, they brought with them religious beliefs and patterns of family life that were to have a strong influence on their lives in Britain.

Orientations and subcultures

From his study of Bristol, Pryce found two main orientations to society within the West Indian community. These were the expressive-disreputable orientation and the stable law-abiding orientation. The main difference between them was that those adhering to the former were unwilling to earn a living through regular work, whereas those adhering to the latter did seek regular employment.

All West Indians in Britain faced difficulty in finding well-paid, secure jobs and in affording comfortable accommodation. All faced problems of discrimination and rejection by white society, yet they responded in different ways:

1 Those who adopted the expressive-disreputable orientation rejected the society which rejected them.
2 Those who adopted the stable law-abiding orientation were more willing to accept or at least tolerate their situation and some adopted the values of white society wholeheartedly.

Within the expressive-disreputable orientation Pryce distinguished two subcultures:

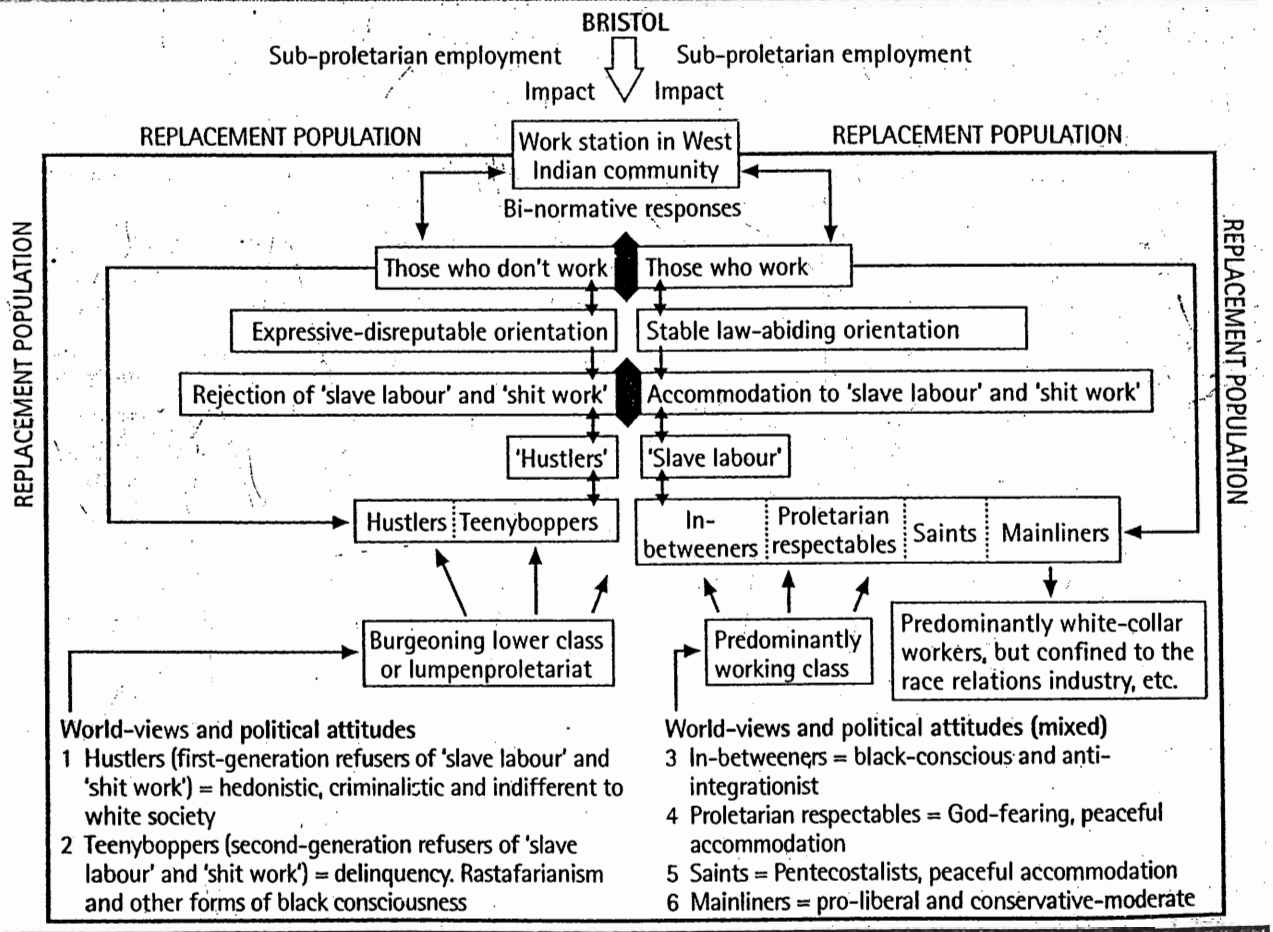
1 the hustlers
2 the teenyboppers.

Within the stable law-abiding orientation there were four subcultures:

1 the in-betweeners
2 the mainliners
3 the proletarian respectables
4 the saints.

We will now look at each of these subcultures. Pryce's overall theory is illustrated in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3 Ken Pryce's theory of subcultural adaptations amongst West Indians in Bristol



Source: K. Pryce (1979) *Endless Pressure*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, p. 271

Hustlers

Hustlers have conventional aspirations. They want to achieve material success. However, they have become disillusioned with trying to do so through conventional means. Many have experienced the 'humiliating effect of racial discrimination' and have become demoralized by the experience. Originally many of those who became hustlers wanted to work hard to earn enough to return home, but they found it impossible to get jobs doing anything other than 'white man's shit work'. They earned too little to save up money and they became increasingly resentful of their situation.

Pryce argues that slavery produced a strong antipathy amongst black Jamaicans to taking orders from white bosses. Being dominated by whites threatened the West Indian male's sense of masculinity. In Britain the response to discrimination has been to develop 'a dread of having to work as a menial' and 'abhorrence of having to take orders from a "cheeky white man" indifferent to him as an individual'.

Rejecting what they see as 'slave labour', they turn to hustles to earn a living. Most hustles are illegal. They involve selling drugs, acting as prostitutes' pimps, or 'conning others'. Some hustlers sell fake marijuana. Another earns a living by putting on dances, but he may sell tickets by claiming a famous reggae star is to appear when there is no chance of this happening. The odd hustler resorts to less subtle tactics by carrying out an armed robbery. Earning a living through hustles, rather than through more conventional means, 'restores the hustler's sense of pride and his feeling of mastery and autonomy'. He is reliant upon his own wits to make money and dependent on nobody.

Hustlers, and others of the expressive-disreputable orientation, believe it is very important to be strong and to be able to cope with pressure from difficult circumstances. Strength helps the hustler to avoid 'getting in a plight'. Pryce defines a plight as:

> *any form of misfortune or predicament involving loss of face – e.g. desertion by one's wife or husband, imprisonment, being crossed in a love affair, having the bailiff on one's front step, having to pawn one's clothes, going hungry, sexual impotence, losing a fight with one's friends watching.*
>
> Pryce, 1979

The pressure of avoiding these plights means that people have to let off steam. This often takes place at a 'blues dance' where hustlers gather with teenyboppers and others to listen to loud reggae and soul, drink, dance and smoke marijuana.

Teenyboppers

According to Pryce, a teenybopper is:

> *a West Indian youth in his teens or very early twenties, who is male, homeless, unemployed and who in the language of liberals and social workers, is 'at risk' in the community – that is, a young West Indian who is either already a delinquent or is in danger of becoming one.*
>
> Pryce, 1979

Teenyboppers are often a product of the unstable family life that is characteristic of lower classes in the West Indies, and which is also found in some families in Britain. During the early stages of migration to Britain, children were often left behind to be raised by relatives such as aunts or grandmothers, and this loosened attachments to parents. In Britain the frequent break-up of relationships, the absence of fathers in many homes, and the presence in some cases of the mother's new partner, combined with poverty, 'militate against family cohesion'.

Conflict between children and parents breaks out over issues such as how late children can stay out and who they choose as friends. The teenyboppers end up leaving home early in their lives. They find the outside world hostile, and experience racism when they try to find regular work. They suffer from drift and alienation and sooner or later come into conflict with the law.

Unlike hustlers, teenyboppers tend to be much more politically conscious. Some get involved with radical political organizations. The teenybopper has a 'schizoid orientation towards both his own Negro roots, which he despises, and the white bourgeois values which he had been indoctrinated to venerate as culturally and morally superior'. However, he is rejected by white society and he 'responds to rejection with rejection'. Some teenyboppers turn to Rastafarianism with its promise of salvation through a return to Africa, while others are influenced more by Marxism and 'a hodge-podge of the ideas and doctrines of all left-wing revolutionary positions'.

In-betweeners

As their name suggests, although Pryce sees members of this group as stable and law-abiding, he also sees them as having characteristics in common with the expressive-disreputable groups. In-betweeners are described as being aged 18–35 and ambitious for material success. They have steady jobs and are usually quite well educated and qualified. They have, or would like to have, a stable and conventional family life.

However, they want to achieve these things without abandoning their black roots. They believe in

the importance of 'black culture' and 'black pride'. They are against close integration with whites and many hope to return to the Caribbean to use their skills to improve society there. They mix with hustlers during their leisure time and may smoke marijuana, but generally they are not very involved in illegal activities.

Mainliners

Like in-betweeners, mainliners have conventional jobs, they aspire to material success and stable and conventional family lives. However, they have very different values. Mainliners are very law-abiding, politically conservative and in favour of integration with whites. Many work in jobs such as race relations officers, youth workers, and health visitors. A few have their own businesses or work as supervisors. They are 'mostly, literate, middle-aged, well established West Indian residents'. They have no desire to return to the West Indies, and they adapt to life in Britain by adopting the lifestyle and culture of the British middle class.

Mainliners are seen as traitors to blacks by in-betweeners, and are regarded with thinly disguised contempt by Pryce. He criticizes them for claiming to represent the West Indian community and becoming self-appointed leaders. He claims that they are 'not necessarily accepted as social equals by their white colleagues, who are almost always of a higher social class and better educated than they'. Pryce is particularly scathing when he says 'There is no doubt that many mainliners are nothing more than pretentious pen-pushers who are less concerned with achieving results than with gaining recognition for themselves as individuals.'

Proletarian respectables and saints

The final two groups, proletarian respectables and saints, are both working-class, hard-working, law-abiding and politically passive. Like other West Indians they suffer from discrimination but despite this they 'tenaciously pursue regular and stable employment'. The men usually have unskilled or semi-skilled manual jobs; the women have routine low-paid service jobs in areas such as catering or the NHS. Many of the first generation came to Britain with families, and their experience of work in the West Indies had led to them becoming accustomed to long hours, poor conditions and low pay. In Britain they may be slightly better off than they had been, so they struggle on despite hardship.

The saints are Pentecostalists. Their religion preaches that 'Sin is rebellion against the law of God' and that 'Salvation consists in deliverance from all sin and unrighteousness through faith and repentance, water baptisms, baptism of the spirit and continuance of a godly life.' These beliefs provide powerful sanctions against criminality and deviance, but the religion also offers comfort in a racist society. Saints devalue the significance of life in this world and look to salvation in life after death, making discrimination and hardship that much easier to bear.

Conclusion

Pryce concludes that all the subcultures are ways of dealing with the work situation that confronts West Indians in Britain. They are attempts to deal with or escape from 'pressures of poverty and race' which in turn have their origins in slavery and colonialism.

For centuries blacks have been exploited as a cheap 'reserve pool' of labour by British capitalism. In the West Indians, political consciousness resulted from the anti-colonial struggle for independence. Immigration to Britain resulted not only in the importation of the Westernized values adopted by the slaves, but also in the introduction of anti-colonial attitudes. This is reflected not only in the criminality of the hustlers, but also in the political consciousness of most teenyboppers and some in-betweeners.

Evaluation

Pryce's work demonstrates the value of ethnographic studies in revealing cultural differences within ethnic minority groups. However, like most studies, it is geographically limited. Although Pryce claims that his findings are probably applicable to most British towns and cities with a sizeable West Indian population, his study was confined to Bristol and wider generalizations may not be justified.

His study also concentrated very much on the men in the community. The cultures of West Indian women were discussed in much less detail and assumed much less significance in his overall theory.

Although Pryce tried to link his ethnographic study in Britain with a discussion of West Indian culture in the Caribbean, his attempt to do so has been criticized. Errol Lawrence (1982) argues that Pryce is quite wrong to claim that slavery destroyed African culture and that West Indians have almost completely adopted Western, European culture. Lawrence believes, for example, that African rituals and a belief in spirit possession have had a strong influence on West Indian culture, and that African languages have influenced the way West Indians speak English.

Furthermore, to Lawrence, slaves did not simply passively accept slavery and the attempt to destroy their culture. As well as maintaining African elements in their lifestyle some slaves rebelled or ran away from their owners.

All the studies examined in this section are somewhat dated. More recent studies of ethnicity in

Britain have tended to adopt a rather different approach. A number have argued that it is no longer possible to see sharp distinctions in the culture of ethnic minorities and the white majority in Britain. They stress that members of ethnic minorities are very diverse and that there is increasing overlap between different cultures. Many such studies are linked to new theoretical approaches in the study of 'race' and ethnicity, and some are linked to a new emphasis upon issues of identity. Most have drawn upon the insights provided by studies of racism. These newer approaches to British ethnicity will be examined later in the chapter, once some of the theoretical developments on which they are based have been considered.

James McKay – primordial and mobilizationist explanations of ethnicity

So far in this section we have examined how ethnicity can be defined and have considered some ethnographic studies of ethnicity. However, we have not yet dealt with explanations of how ethnic groups come to be formed in the first place. James McKay (1982) and others have identified two main types of explanation of how ethnic groups form: primordial and mobilizationist.

Primordial approaches

McKay notes that the primordial approach was first proposed by the American sociologist Shils in 1957. Shils claimed that people often had a primordial attachment to the territory in which they lived, or from which they originated, to their religion and to their kin. This attachment involved strong feelings of loyalty and, Shils said, 'a state of intense and comprehensive solidarity' (quoted in McKay, 1982).

Some writers see primordial attachments as a basic feature of social life and a natural and inevitable phenomenon in human groups. From this point of view humans always divide the world into groups of insiders and outsiders, 'us' and 'them', and have an emotional and intuitive bond with those who belong to their group. This comes either from socialization or from some basic psychocultural need for belonging.

Primordial ethnic attachments may persist for centuries or millennia, and can be the basis for intense conflict between ethnic groups over long periods.

McKay suggests that a strength of the primordial approach is that it can account for 'the emotional strength of ethnic bonds', but he is also critical of it. He claims that this approach tends to be 'deterministic and static':

1. It assumes that members of ethnic groups have little choice about their sense of attachment, whereas in reality ethnic attachments do vary in strength from individual to individual.
2. It tends to assume that all individuals will have an ethnic identity and thus offers no explanation for the existence of 'rootless cosmopolitans'.
3. The approach cannot easily deal with changes in ethnic identity amongst groups.
4. The primordial approach attaches so much importance to basic human emotions that it tends to 'talk as if ethnic and group identities existed in a political and economic vacuum'.

Mobilizationist perspectives

The mobilizationist approach suggests that there is nothing inevitable or natural about ethnicity. Ethnic identities are actively created, maintained and reinforced by individuals and groups 'in order to obtain access to social, political and material resources'. People use the symbols of ethnic identity to further their own ends, and ethnic groups tend to be formed when people believe they can gain some advantage by forming them.

For example, South Asians or Afro-Caribbeans in Britain might develop an ethnic identity because they believe that membership of an ethnic group offers practical and emotional support in a hostile, racist society. By forming ethnic groups it might be possible to achieve changes in the law or other political changes which strengthen their position.

McKay is perhaps slightly more sympathetic to this approach than the primordial model, but he still believes that it has its limitations. It tends to underestimate the emotional power of ethnic bonds and assumes that ethnicity is always related to common interests being pursued by the group. McKay argues that this is not always the case. He says 'the fact that some ethnic groups pursue political and economic interests does not mean that all ethnic groups have identical goals'.

Furthermore this approach sometimes confuses class and ethnic stratification, seeing the two as being little different. Ethnicity, though, involves more than class interests and can cut across class boundaries. In places such as Northern Ireland, South Africa and the Lebanon, ethnic conflicts have been stronger than conflict between classes and people have tended to identify with their ethnic group regardless of their social class.

Combining the approaches

McKay believes that the affective, emotional ties emphasized in the primordialist model and the instrumental ties stressed in the mobilizationist model tend to be interrelated and that both are 'manifestations' of

ethnicity. Rather than being irreconcilable opposites, the two theories can be combined. Ethnicity may be based primarily on mobilizationist, or primordialist, interests in different sets of circumstances. By producing a matrix based on combining the two, McKay is able to distinguish five types of ethnicity. These are illustrated in Figure 4.4.

Ethnic traditionalists

Groups of ethnic traditionalists are held together primarily by emotional ties. They often have a long history and their children are socialized to internalize their culture. They are not particularly concerned with pursuing social and economic interests but are more interested in maintaining a culture. They identify strongly with the ethnic group to which they belong. Examples include 'the Hutterite colonies of North America, and beleaguered minorities in the Middle East such as Armenians, Assyrians, Copts, Kurds, Shiites and Lebanese Christians'. These groups may have material interests but they have not been mobilized to pursue them collectively.

Ethnic militants

Both primordial and political and economic interests are strong amongst ethnic militants. For example, the Basques in Spain have their own language and their own cultural symbols such as flags. However, they also have a political movement which tries to gain greater autonomy or even independence from Spain.

Symbolic ethnics

Symbolic ethnics have quite weak ethnic attachments in terms of both primordial and political and economic factors. They have only token involvement in, or identification with, their ethnic group. In the USA, those of Scottish descent who sometimes attend a clan festival and the Irish who occasionally join a St Patrick's Day parade are examples of symbolic ethnics.

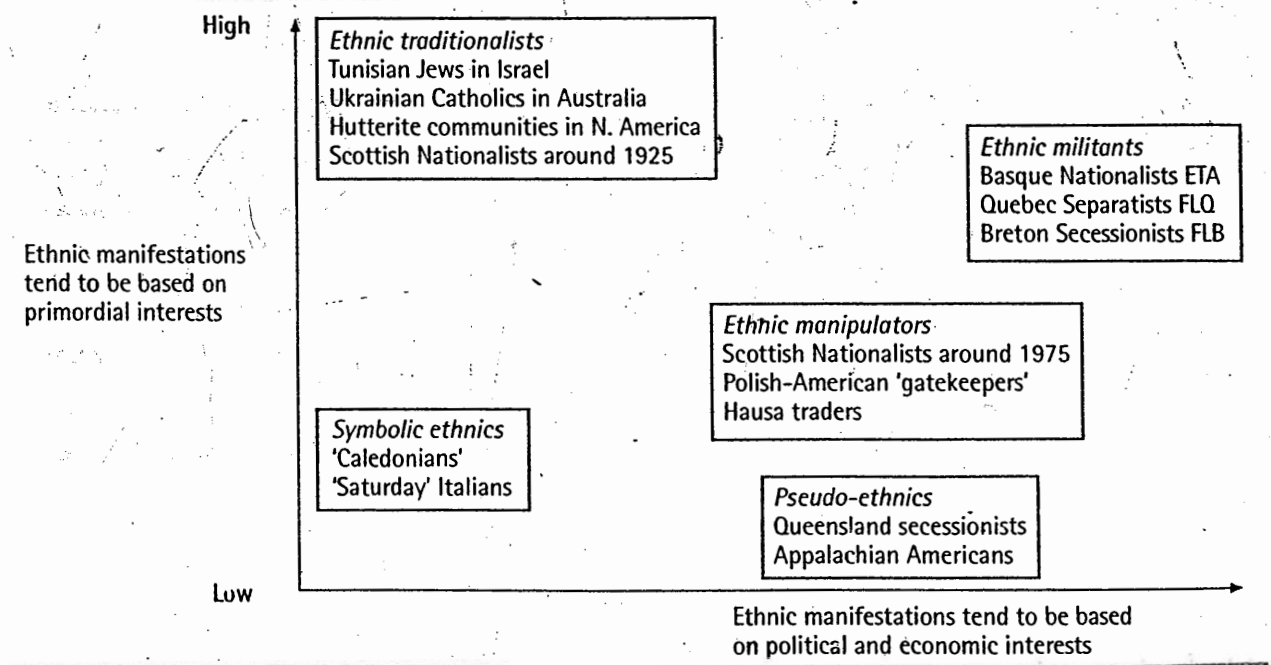
Ethnic manipulators

This type of group tries to promote its own political or economic interests but ethnic manipulators do not possess the same group solidarity and strong emotional ties as ethnic traditionalists and ethnic militants. Thus Scottish Nationalists in the 1970s were organized in a political party (the SNP), but its appeal was largely economic. It was not based upon an appeal to a distinctive Scottish culture but upon the claim that Scotland would be better off if it were ruled from Scotland rather than from Westminster.

Pseudo-ethnics

Pseudo-ethnics have the potential to become strong ethnic groups but that potential has not been realized. Leaders struggle to mobilize a sense of ethnic identity. Members of the group are more loyal to the state than to their ethnic group or potential ethnic group. For example, South Island secessionists in New Zealand want their part of the country to become independent,

Figure 4.4 Five types of ethnicity



Source: J. McKay (1982) 'An exploratory synthesis of primordial and mobilizationist approaches to ethnic phenomena', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 5, no. 4, p. 404

but they have a difficult task because those who live there do not have a strong sense of primordial attachment to the island. McKay says:

> *It could be said that ethnic militants and manipulators possess an ethnic trait which they utilize in order to obtain access to societal resources, whereas pseudo-ethnics try to make their pursuit of political and economic goals more legitimate by finding an ethnic foundation on which they can be based.*
>
> McKay, 1982

Conclusion

McKay admits that his matrix model approach is not fully developed. It does not explain why ethnicity takes one form or another, but he believes that further research could help to develop causal theories based upon his matrix. He argues that the matrix can be used to examine how ethnic groups change over time and move from one part of the matrix to another. It can also be used to distinguish factions within ethnic groups. For example, McKay says 'Orthodox Jews, members of Jewish "defence" organizations, and militant Zionists have different types and degrees of ethnic organization and identification.'

Michael E. Brown – the causes of ethnic conflict

Ethnic conflict and the 'New World Order'

Although McKay's work has implications for understanding ethnic conflict, it does not directly address this issue. Michael E. Brown has drawn upon the work of a number of other writers in trying to explain the existence of ethnic conflict in the contemporary world (Brown, 1997, first published 1993). He starts by noting that in the early 1990s there was considerable optimism in many quarters about the prospects for ethnic relationships. With the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, it was hoped that different states in the international community could work together to prevent or resolve conflict. For example, some people claimed that the international cooperation during the Gulf War – in which the USA and other countries (including Britain) repelled the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait – heralded the arrival of a 'New World Order'.

In the New World Order, states and ethnic groups would be reluctant to act in repressive or violent ways towards other states or ethnic groups because they would fear the consequences of the reaction from the international community. However, far from ushering in a new and more harmonious era, the end of the Cold War seems to have been followed by widespread and intense ethnic conflict. Brown points out that:

> *The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina has received the most attention in the West because of the intense coverage it has received from the Western media, but equally if not more horrific conflicts are under way in Afghanistan, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Burma, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Liberia, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Tajikstan. Other trouble spots abound – Bangladesh, Belgium, Bhutan, Burundi, Estonia, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Iraq, Latvia, Lebanon, Mali, South Africa, Spain, and Turkey, for example – and the prospects for ethnic conflict in Russia and China cannot be dismissed.*
>
> Brown, 1997, p. 80

Defining ethnicity

Brown tries to explain why such conflict has become prevalent, but first he tries to define ethnicity. He believes that six criteria must be met for a group of people to qualify as an ethnic group:

1. They must have a name that identifies them as a group.
2. They must 'believe in common ancestry'. It is not essential that this common ancestry is real or that genetic ties exist – it is the belief that matters.
3. They need to have shared beliefs about their collective past. These beliefs often take the form of myths.
4. They must have some degree of shared culture which is 'generally passed on through a combination of language, religion, laws, customs, institutions, dress, music, crafts, architecture, even food'.
5. The group has to have a sense of attachment to a specific territory.
6. Finally, members of the group must believe that they constitute an ethnic group.

Conflict between such groups can take a wide variety of forms. The conflict may take place through political processes with no violence involved. An example is the campaign of some French-Canadians to win autonomy for Quebec. On the other hand, the conflict may be very violent, as in the civil war in Bosnia. However, not all civil wars qualify as ethnic conflict. For example, the war between the Khmer Rouge and other groups in Cambodia is a war between political groups rather than ethnic ones. Nevertheless ethnic conflict is widespread.

The causes of ethnic conflict

Brown distinguishes between three main types of explanation for ethnic conflict, the systemic, the domestic and the perceptual.

Systemic explanations suggest that ethnic conflict results from 'the nature of the security systems in which ethnic groups operate'. An obvious systemic requirement before conflict is likely to occur is that the groups live close to one another. Brown suggests

that fewer than 20 of the 180 or so states in the world are ethnically homogeneous. This creates the potential for an enormous amount of conflict, but, fortunately, not all ethnic neighbours end up in conflict. Using the ideas of the political scientist Posen, Brown suggests that conflict will not break out when national, regional or international authorities are strong enough to prevent it by controlling the potentially opposing groups. Without this control, conflict can occur when a particular group believes it is in their interests to resort to violence. This can happen if they believe they will be more secure by launching a pre-emptive strike rather than waiting to be attacked.

Conflict can also result when it is difficult to distinguish between the offensive and defensive forces of a potential adversary. When empires, such as the Soviet Union, break up, ethnic groups may have to provide for their own defence for the first time. Lacking sophisticated military equipment, they usually have to rely largely on infantry. Although infantry may be intended for defensive purposes, they can easily be seen as a potentially offensive force and encourage a pre-emptive strike. Furthermore, the break-up of empires often produces a situation in which ethnic groups are surrounded by other groups who are potentially hostile. Some groups develop state structures faster than others, and the faster-organizing group may seek to take advantage of the situation by seizing land. Many of these conditions existed in Bosnia, with Serbs trying to seize land from the Croats and from the Muslims, who were in the weakest position of all.

Where a newly independent ethnic state has nuclear weapons it is less vulnerable to external attack, and ethnic conflict between new nation-states is unlikely. Larger, newly independent, former Soviet states with nuclear weapons have tended to face less external threat than those without such weapons.

Domestic explanations of ethnic conflict relate to factors such as 'the effectiveness of states in addressing the concerns of their constituents, the impact of nationalism on inter-ethnic relations, and the impact of democratization on inter-ethnic relations'.

Using the ideas of Jack Snyder, Brown suggests that nationalistic sentiments are aroused in situations where people feel vulnerable because they feel they lack a strong state to protect them. In parts of Eastern Europe and the former USSR some groups have felt vulnerable because the state has been weak, or because they have found themselves in a state dominated by another, possibly hostile, ethnic group. Some ethnic minorities have been blamed for economic failures by the majority population and have responded by trying to establish their own states. Ethnic nationalism involves trying to establish a nation-state based around a particular ethnic group. Such a state may not respect the rights of minorities and ethnic conflict is likely to result.

Drawing on a range of theories, Brown goes on to suggest that processes of democratization can produce problems in multi-ethnic societies. When an old regime has collapsed, and new arrangements are being discussed, there can be major problems if there are ethnic groups who feel they were mistreated under the previous regime. They may seek retribution for past wrongs or they may feel unable to work with members of other ethnic groups in a democratic system. Problems will be particularly acute where a powerful majority ethnic group rides roughshod over the wishes and interests of less powerful smaller groups. Politicians may seek to exploit ethnic differences to increase their support, and in doing so they will heighten people's consciousness of those differences and increase the significance they attach to them.

Perceptual explanations are concerned with the way in which ethnic groups perceive one another. Hostility can be increased through myths and false histories which distort and demonize members of another group. Brown uses the example of Serbs and Croats. He says:

> *Serbs, for example, see themselves as heroic defenders of Europe and they see Croats as belligerent thugs; Croats see themselves as valiant victims of oppression and Serbs as congenital oppressors. Under such circumstances, the slightest provocation from either side simply confirms deeply held systems of belief and provides the justification for a retaliatory response.*
>
> Brown, 1997, p. 88

Myths about other ethnic groups are particularly likely to develop where an authoritarian regime has suppressed the histories of ethnic minorities for a long time. Such regimes tend to suppress the critical examination of past history leaving little opportunity for myths to be challenged. It is not surprising therefore that Eastern Europe and the former USSR have seen high levels of conflict.

Conclusion

Brown concludes that ethnic conflict is most likely where ethnic groups are living in close proximity in an area where there is no strong central authority, particularly if the groups have hostile perceptions of one another based upon beliefs that they have been mistreated in the past. The end of the Cold War created such a situation in a number of regions, and no New World Order capable of limiting ethnic conflict has yet emerged.

However, Brown is not completely pessimistic. Conflict may lead to ethnic reconciliation. For example in Spain there has been a degree of reconciliation between the Spanish state and the Basques, Catalans and Galicians, who have all achieved some degree of autonomy. Peaceful separation sometimes takes place, an example being the separation of Czechoslovakia into Slovakia and the Czech Republic. However, there are also many situations in which different groups cannot agree on a constitutional settlement and ethnic war ensues. This may involve the slaughter of civilians and the creation of large numbers of refugees. Ethnic wars can also have chain-reaction effects. As new states are formed, a new problem can be created as another ethnic group finds itself in a minority in a new state. For example, when Georgia became independent from Russia the Ossetian minority began to seek their own state with other Ossetians in Russia.

Brown succeeds in identifying a number of reasons for the increase in ethnic conflict in areas of the world which have become politically unstable. His arguments are perhaps less convincing in explaining the revival of ethnic conflict and nationalism in some parts of the world (such as Western Europe) which have not experienced high levels of instability. Some commentators have linked such phenomena to a general process of globalization (see Chapter 9). Other explanations for ethnic conflict can be found in later sections on racism and nationalism (see pp. 254–62 and 263–8).

Ethnicity – an evaluation

The ethnicity approach certainly has some advantages over biological theories of 'race' and the immigrant-host model. Unlike the former it does not base its arguments upon physical distinctions, which modern genetics has found to be of little significance. Unlike the host-immigrant model, it does not assume that minority groups will assimilate by adopting the culture of the majority.

The ethnicity approach tends to be sympathetic to cultural diversity and to support multiculturalism – the belief that ethnic or cultural groups can peacefully co-exist in a society showing respect for one another's cultures. At least in theory, ethnographic studies allow the development of an insider's view of different cultures, and therefore facilitate a greater understanding of those cultures than is likely from other sociological approaches. Such studies also have the strength of recognizing the role that ethnic minorities have in shaping their own lives. They are not presented as the helpless captives of biology or the passive victims of racism. Ethnographic studies can reveal subtle variations and divisions within ethnic groups which are often lost in other approaches.

However, the ethnicity approach is far from perfect. Critics tend to argue that it places too much emphasis on the culture of ethnic minorities. While emphasizing how ethnic minorities shape their own lives, it sometimes neglects the wider forces which constrain members of ethnic minority groups. Racism and structural features of society – both of which may cause inequality – tend to be neglected. Writers like Pryce do mention colonialism and refer to social classes, but their arguments still centre on the culture of the groups being studied.

Marxists and other conflict theorists believe that the analysis of racism and inequalities stemming from the structure of society should be the starting point for an understanding of ethnic difference and inequality, and not a subsidiary theme. The ethnicity approach is sometimes criticized for offering unconvincing explanations of why people form ethnic groups in the first place. The racism approach and conflict theories claim to have superior explanations. We will examine racism and conflict approaches in the next sections.

The ethnicity approach has theoretical links to symbolic interactionism. Both tend to use participant observation as a research method and both emphasize the importance of seeing the social world from the actor's point of view. It is not surprising, then, that the ethnicity approach shares many of the limitations of symbolic interactionism. Not only does it tend to neglect social structure, but it also relies upon research methods that can be seen as subjective. The findings of participant observation studies depend very much upon the observer's interpretations and they are liable to be questioned.

For example, some sociologists question the view of researchers such as Pryce that West Indian family life is unstable and produces delinquency. Errol Lawrence (1982) attacks Pryce saying that he 'absolves the racist structures of the English education system by defining the Afro-Caribbean child's struggle against its racism as "maladjusted behaviour"'. Clearly Lawrence interprets the same behaviour very differently.

The ethnicity approach is often associated with multiculturalism. However, multiculturalism is not accepted as politically desirable by all sociologists. We will discuss the values underpinning multiculturalism in the final part of this chapter (see pp. 287–9).

Recently developing approaches have tended to question the belief that there are sharp dividing lines between ethnic groups. They see ethnic groups as in a constant state of flux with the boundaries between them shifting and the cultures intermingling. Theories of globalization suggest that the

differences between cultures will become less marked as time progresses. Nevertheless, the widespread conflict between ethnic groups suggests that many people do believe they belong to an ethnic group. For this reason it still seems to be worthwhile to study the cultural similarities and differences between groups of humans who feel they share a common ethnicity.

Racism

Introduction

Many of the ethnicity approaches discussed in the last section recognize the existence of racism and accept that racism influences the behaviour of ethnic minority groups. However, they place more emphasis on the choices made by members of ethnic minority groups than on the constraints that can result from the hostility and discrimination of the ethnic majority.

Sociological approaches that attach particular importance to racism emphasize the limitations imposed on ethnic minorities by such hostility and discrimination. The focus of attention is not the ethnic minority itself, but the wider society in which it is a minority group. There is more concern with the inequalities between ethnic groups than with cultural differences, and racism is therefore a particularly important concept in conflict approaches to 'race' and ethnicity.

In this section we will start by considering definitions of racism and related terms, before discussing the extent of racism. We will then examine explanations for the existence of racism.

Definitions

Prejudice and discrimination

The terms prejudice and discrimination are general ones that can be applied to many issues other than those to do with 'race' and ethnicity. For example, people may be prejudiced against people who are very short, or discriminate against other people because they are women.

In the *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations* (1984) E.E. Cashmore defines prejudice as 'learned beliefs and values that lead an individual or group of individuals to be biased for or against members of particular groups'. Prejudice is therefore about what people think and is not necessarily translated into actions.

Discrimination, on the other hand, is about actions. Cashmore defines it as 'the unfavourable treatment of all persons socially assigned to a particular category'.

Both prejudice and discrimination are often based on stereotypes about particular groups of people. Stereotypes are over-simplified or untrue generalizations about social groups. For example, short people might be stereotyped as being unusually aggressive, and women as being weak and passive. When stereotypes imply negative or positive evaluations of social groups, they become a form of prejudice, and when they are acted on they become discrimination.

Early sociologists of 'race' and ethnicity often use the terms racial prejudice and racial discrimination to describe prejudice or discrimination directed at groups by virtue of their membership of a supposed racial or ethnic group. However, the use of these terms has become less common and racism has largely replaced them as the most widely used term.

Racism

Racism is a controversial term with no single, generally accepted definition. Robert Miles has discussed the origins of the term and identified a number of different ways in which it has been used (Miles, 1989, 1993).

According to Miles racism is a relatively new word. There was no entry for it in the *Oxford English Dictionary* of 1910. Its first use in English seems to date from the 1930s. At that time it was used as a description of the nineteenth-century theories which claimed that there were distinct, biologically differentiated 'races'. As scientists began to reject this view some termed their nineteenth-century counterparts who advocated it racists. Racism also came into use in the 1930s as a description of the beliefs of Hitler and the Nazi party in Germany.

This definition was an extremely narrow one. It meant that racism did not exist so long as it was not based upon a belief that there were biologically distinct races. The view that racism was a mistaken view about biological divisions between human groups was reflected in a definition used by UNESCO. During the 1950s and 1960s this organization arranged four conferences where experts from different countries came together to produce agreed

statements about 'race' that could be issued by the UN. The fourth statement defined racism for the first time saying, 'Racism falsely claims that there is a scientific basis for arranging groups hierarchically in terms of psychological and cultural characteristics that are immutable and innate' (quoted in Miles, 1989). While broadening the definition to include beliefs about psychological and cultural differences, this still retained the idea that racism had to be based upon supposedly scientific theories.

This view was rejected by the British Weberian sociologist John Rex. Rex specifically stated that racist theories did not have to be based upon a scientific justification. He defined racism as 'deterministic belief systems about the differences between the various ethnic groups, segments or strata'. Racist theories attributed characteristics to human groups which were determined by factors beyond their control, and which could not be changed. Rex said:

> *It doesn't really matter whether this is because of men's genes, because of the history to which their ancestors have been exposed, because of the nature of their culture or because of divine decree. Whichever is the case it might be argued that this man is an X and that, being an X, he is bound to have particular undesirable qualities.*
>
> Rex, 1986

Rex's description of racism retains the idea that the word refers to theories about the differences between groups and the desirability or undesirability of these differences. Many contemporary definitions of racism do not limit the meaning of the term so that it refers only to theories and beliefs. Some also use racism to refer to behaviour which is based upon such theories and beliefs.

John Solomos, for example, defines it as 'those ideologies and social processes which discriminate against others on the basis of their putatively different racial membership' (Solomos, 1993). It need not be based upon any specific theory about biological or cultural superiority because, to Solomos, 'racism is not a static phenomenon'. People may hold stereotypical views about those from different supposed racial groups and may discriminate against them without necessarily believing the group to be inferior.

Some sociologists have described a new racism which does not involve clearly articulated beliefs about the superiority or inferiority of particular groups (see p. 260 for details).

A broad definition such as Solomos's perhaps comes closest to the meaning attached to racism in everyday language. People may be described as racist when they discriminate against members of other 'races' or express derogatory or stereotypical beliefs about them, regardless of what sort of theory, if any, underlies their actions or beliefs.

Precise definitions of racism continue to vary between contemporary sociologists. We will examine these differences as this section of the chapter develops.

Cultural racism

Richardson defines cultural racism as 'a whole cluster of cultural ideas, beliefs and arguments which transmit mistaken notions about the attributes and capabilities of "racial groups"' (Richardson, 1990). This definition is in line with many definitions of racism – for example it has much in common with Rex's definition. However, cultural racism always refers to the attributes of a society's culture rather than the beliefs held by individuals. An individual might hold racist beliefs, but it would only be an example of cultural racism if those beliefs were widely shared.

The idea of cultural racism is similar to some definitions of institutional racism which we will discuss later.

Racialism

To add to the confusion, some sociologists distinguish between racism and racialism. John Rex, for example, describes racialism as 'unequal treatment of various racial groups', as opposed to racism which involves beliefs about racial groups. In other words racialism involves actions, whereas racism does not; it is only concerned with what people think.

This distinction is not usually made in everyday language and has not been adopted by all sociologists.

Institutional racism

The term institutional racism is perhaps even more controversial than racism. Not only is it used in widely varying ways, but some have questioned whether institutional racism actually exists.

According to Miles, the idea of institutional racism originated in the work of American Black Power activists in the 1960s. In 1968 Carmichael and Hamilton defined racism as 'the predication of decisions and policies on considerations of race for the purpose of *subordinating* a racial group and maintaining control over that group'. Racism could be individual and overt, where people consciously and openly discriminated against blacks. However, it could also take the form of institutional racism. This was often covert or hidden. It did not require conscious discrimination since it took place as a result of 'the active and pervasive operation of anti-black attitudes' (quoted in Miles, 1989).

the celebration of ethnic diversity and of new ethnicities is a positive and progressive development that allows the sociology of 'race' and ethnicity to move beyond the rather tired debates of the past.

Kenan Malik – a critique of postmodern theories

Kenan Malik is highly critical of postmodern approaches to 'race' and denies that modernity can be seen as responsible for racism. He does not deny that racism has been a powerful and corrosive force in modern societies, but he does not see racism as a product of modernity itself. Furthermore, he does not believe that the celebration of difference, which he sees as a key feature of postmodern thinking, is the way to undermine racism. Instead, he argues that racism can best be tackled by reviving some of the principles on which modernity is based. In particular he believes that the application of universal principles is preferable to acknowledging and celebrating variety in human groups. Before examining Malik's own viewpoint though, we will discuss his comments on the sorts of postmodern theories we have looked at in this section.

Criticisms of other theories

First, Malik criticizes Bauman's claim that the Holocaust was a product of modernity. For Malik, the Holocaust arose in specific historical circumstances rather than being a product of modernity in general. If blame for the Holocaust can be attributed to anything, it should be to capitalism rather than reason. Modernity involves a belief in reason and the application of science, while capitalism involves economic relationships based upon the pursuit of profit. The two are not the same; indeed, capitalism may make it difficult to achieve the equality that was the objective of many modern thinkers. The inequalities produced by capitalism may encourage people to think of other 'races' as inferior, but this is not the same as saying that racism is produced by science and reason. As Malik says, 'By conflating the social relations of capitalism with the intellectual and technical progress of 'modernity', the product of the former can be laid at the door of the latter.'

Malik is also critical of the claim that the Holocaust can be blamed on modernity simply because modernity provides the technological means to accomplish mass extermination. Modern technology has also been used to alleviate problems such as famine and material poverty. The existence of advanced technology in itself cannot be held responsible for the political decision to use technology to exterminate people by gassing. Malik says:

> *I find it odious that scholars can in all seriousness equate mass extermination with the production of McDonald's hamburgers or of Ford Escorts, or make a comparison between technology aimed at improving the material abundance of society and political decisions which annihilate whole peoples and destroy entire societies.*
>
> Malik, 1996, p. 244

Second, Malik also criticizes the work of Goldberg. He agrees with Goldberg that racism was not present in premodern societies, but does not believe that it developed as an inevitable consequence of modern rationalism. There was no necessary connection between a scientific method and belief in rationality and the categorization of people by 'race'. Malik says:

> *Belief in reason, espousal of the scientific method and a universalistic conviction do not of themselves imply a racial viewpoint. That in the nineteenth century science, reason and universalism came to be harnessed to a discourse of race is a development that has to be explained through historical analysis; it is not logically given by the nature of scientific or rational thought.*
>
> Malik, 1996, p. 41

In reality, Malik claims, Enlightenment philosophy introduced the idea that humans could be equal and, in theory at least, its aims were 'to set all human beings free'. To Malik, what needs to be explained is why such philosophies changed to accept the idea of different races. Malik's explanation for this will be examined shortly.

Third, Malik criticizes the claims of writers such as Goldberg and Said that racism can be understood in terms of the concept of the 'Other'. Malik does not believe that modernity causes people automatically to compare themselves to other people, and that as a result racism develops. Malik suggests that such claims are so sweeping as be seriously misleading. In his view, it cannot be assumed that, over many centuries, Westerners have seen all non-Westerners as the 'Other' in the same way. Western views of other people have been related to specific contexts and circumstances. For example, different meanings have been given to the possession of a black skin at different times and at different places in modern history. At one time most Westerners thought that is was acceptable to enslave people with black skins. That is no longer the case. The meaning of 'otherness' is often disputed and contentious, and not all modern, post-Enlightenment thinkers have been persuaded of the truth of racist beliefs.

The origins of racism

Malik himself explains racism in terms of a clash between Enlightenment ideas and the social relations

produced by capitalism. In the eighteenth century the universalistic Enlightenment idea that all humans were equal was widely held. For example, the French philosopher Rousseau, writing in 1770, distinguished between physical inequality (such as strength) and moral or political inequality. While the first type of inequality came from nature, the second type was created by humans and reflected both privilege and prejudice. In Rousseau's thinking – which was very much in line with the Enlightenment thinking from which modernity developed – there was no room for racism. There was prejudice against 'racial' groups in the eighteenth century, but liberals influenced by Enlightenment ideas were opposed, for example, to slavery.

Furthermore, a supposedly 'scientific' theory of racism only developed in the nineteenth century. Malik argues that this resulted from inequality within Western, capitalist society. While the Enlightenment had taught that people could be equal, people's experiences of society had shown them the development of a disadvantaged working class. These disadvantages seemed to be passed down from generation to generation, and this encouraged advantaged groups to believe that members of the working class were biologically inferior to themselves. This tendency was further encouraged by concern amongst the elite about the pace of social change, the apparent breakdown of traditional moral values and the danger of working-class unrest. In these circumstances it was the working class rather than non-Western others who were first seen as part of an inferior 'race'. Malik comments:

> *For the Victorians race was a description of social distinctions, not of colour differences. Indeed, as I have already argued, the view of non-Europeans as an inferior race was but an extension of the already existing view of the working class at home.*
>
> Malik, 1996, p. 91

A good example is the widespread view amongst the Victorian elite that the working-class Irish in the country were a biologically inferior group. It was the inability of capitalism to deliver the equality that modernity had promised that led to 'scientific' thinking becoming racist. It was only after the working class had begun to be thought of in racist terms that racial thinking began to be applied to non-European groups.

If Malik is right, then postmodernists have, at the very least, been too critical of modernity. There is no reason why rational modern thought cannot be turned against racism. It may be possible to combat racism in a more positive way than simply encouraging an acceptance of human diversity. For Malik, postmodernists have abandoned the struggle to produce greater equality in favour of unequal diversity. Malik regards this as an undesirable and unnecessary admission of defeat (see pp. 287–9 for a discussion of values in theories of 'race', ethnicity and nationality).

Ethnic minorities in the labour market and stratification system

There is considerable evidence that ethnic minorities are disadvantaged in the British labour market. As we will see elsewhere in the book, ethnic minorities are more likely to suffer from unemployment (see Chapter 10). Furthermore, earlier in this chapter we saw that in general terms those from ethnic minorities tend to get paid lower wages and have lower-status jobs (see pp. 249–50). Although there are differences between ethnic groups, most groups continue to suffer from disadvantages even when factors such as fluency in English and educational qualifications are taken into account.

Discrimination in the labour market

The most straightforward explanation of disadvantage suffered by ethnic minorities in employment is that it results from the racism and prejudice of employers. In other words, employers discriminate against ethnic minority groups by either refusing to employ them, employing them only in low-status and low-paid jobs, or refusing to promote them.

Evidence to support this point of view is provided from a study by Colin Brown and Pat Gay (1985) carried out in 1984–5. They conducted research in London, Birmingham and Manchester, in which bogus applications were made for a variety of jobs by letter and by telephone. The supposed applicants were identified as being from ethnic minorities by the use of Hindu names for 'Asian' applicants and a Jamaican educational background for 'West Indian' applicants. In telephone applications ethnic accents were used to differentiate ethnic minority applicants from 'white' applicants.

Brown and Gay found that positive responses were significantly less common to applications from those who were identified as being from ethnic minorities. Some 90 per cent of white applicants, but only 63

per cent of Asian and 63 per cent of West Indian applicants, received positive responses.

Brown and Gay compared their results with those of similar studies carried out in 1973–4 and 1977–9. They found that the level of discrimination had remained about the same in all three studies. They concluded that 'there is no evidence here to suggest that racial discrimination in job recruitment has fallen over the period covered by these studies'. Similar studies have been repeated during the 1990s in local areas. Reporting on the findings of such studies, Modood comments that 'Objective tests suggest that the proportion of white people who are likely to carry out the most basic acts of discrimination has been stable at about a third for several decades' (Modood, 1997).

In the Policy Studies Institute's *Third National Survey* Brown tried to measure the experience of racial discrimination by ethnic minorities (Brown, 1984). Of those who were currently in the job market or who had worked in the last ten years, 26 per cent of West Indian men and 23 per cent of West Indian women claimed they had been refused a job for racial reasons. For Asians the corresponding figures were 10 per cent for men and 8 per cent for women. There was less evidence of racism affecting promotion. Only 11 per cent of West Indian men and 3 per cent of women claimed they had been refused a better job because of their 'race' or colour.

In the PSI's *Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities* conducted in 1994, similar questions were repeated. The study found that 28 per cent of Caribbean people, 19 per cent of African Asians, 15 per cent of Indians, 7 per cent of Chinese, and 5 per cent of Pakistani/Bangladeshi people believed they had been refused a job for religious or racial reasons (Modood, 1997). Modood found a slight increase in reported discrimination of this type amongst Caribbeans, compared with the previous survey, but a slight decrease amongst South Asians.

These figures must be used with some caution. They rely upon the subjective beliefs of the respondents to the survey who might not be in a position to assess accurately whether they had been the victims of racial discrimination. Discrimination could be more common or less so than the figures indicate. However, the figures do suggest that at least some of the disadvantages experienced by ethnic minorities in the labour market could be the result of racism.

Ethnic minorities as an underclass

Some sociologists have tried to develop a more theoretical approach to explaining the position of ethnic minorities in the labour market and in society as a whole. Both British and American sociologists have suggested that ethnic minorities form an underclass. While some have defined an underclass in cultural terms, others have seen the underclass as a structural feature of society. The idea of an underclass is discussed in detail in other chapters (see pp. 91–6 for a discussion of the underclass in relation to stratification, and pp. 323–34 for a discussion of the underclass and poverty). In this section we will concentrate on the relationship between the concepts of underclass and ethnicity.

Charles Murray – *Losing Ground*

In his 1984 book, *Losing Ground*, Charles Murray argued that the USA had developed a black underclass. This underclass was distinguished by its behaviour. He claimed that increasing numbers of young blacks were withdrawing from the labour market: they were unwilling to work. At the same time there were increasing numbers of black single parents who had never been married.

Murray denied that such changes were the result of poverty and lack of opportunity. He argued that in the 1950s participation by blacks in the labour market was higher than in the 1960s, yet there was greater economic prosperity and lower unemployment in the 1960s than the 1950s.

To Murray the real reason for the changes in behaviour lay in welfare benefits. In his view Aid to Families with Dependent Children removed many of the incentives for men to work to support their families, and it enabled mothers to bring up their children on their own. The stigma of relying upon benefits had been reduced as more and more benefits were introduced for people with low incomes.

American critics of Murray have pointed out that the Aid to Families with Dependent Children was introduced some twenty years before the number of single-parent black families began to rise rapidly. Lydia Morris criticizes Murray for failing to explain the withdrawal of black youth from the labour market. The young unemployed have no automatic entitlement to benefit in the USA, so their behaviour cannot be explained in terms of the welfare system.

Some American sociologists have agreed with Murray that the USA has developed a black or ethnic minority underclass, but they have not agreed about the causes. They have attributed its development to structural forces rather than to the operation of the welfare system and the behaviour of welfare claimants. The most influential alternative view of the American underclass has been advanced by William Julius Wilson.

William Julius Wilson – *The Truly Disadvantaged*

In his 1987 book, *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987), Wilson argues that blacks and Hispanics living in inner-city areas have come to form an underclass because of forces beyond their control. The disadvantages faced by urban blacks and Hispanics have historical roots and have created problems that continue to make it difficult to escape from the ghetto.

When poor blacks migrated from the rural south of the USA to the cities of the north, they faced the obstacle of racism when they tried to find work. The migrants had few skills and little prospect of career advancement. Their low levels of economic success encouraged whites to develop crude racial stereotypes which produced further problems for the ghetto poor. What work the blacks could find was largely unskilled and in manufacturing industry.

In the 1970s manufacturing industry began to decline, and the industry which survived the recession moved away from city centres. Service sector work increased but much of it required qualifications which ethnic minorities in the inner cities did not possess. Some blacks and Hispanics had enjoyed success, gained qualifications and secured well-paid jobs. However, these individuals moved out of the city centres to the suburbs, leaving behind the most disadvantaged. The poor had become trapped in areas where there were few opportunities to improve their lot. Wilson says:

> *the underclass exists mainly because of large scale and harmful changes in the labor market and its resulting spatial concentration as well as the isolation of such areas from the most affluent parts of the black community.*
>
> Wilson, 1987

In 1990, in an address to the American Sociological Association, Wilson abandoned the use of the term underclass (Wilson, 1991). Although he stuck by his analysis of the problems faced by ethnic minorities in the inner cities of the USA, he argued that the term underclass had become a liability. It had been adopted by right-wing commentators who had used it to indicate that the problems of the poor were of their own making. To Wilson the problems resulted more from impersonal economic forces, and the connotations the term had taken on were unfortunate. He therefore suggested that the groups he was describing should be called the ghetto poor rather than the underclass.

Some American critics have argued that Wilson underestimates the effects produced by racism. Their view is that the black middle class is small and that even those blacks with good jobs do less well than their white counterparts with similar qualifications. Problems for American blacks in the labour market are not confined to the poor.

The underclass in Britain

Some sociologists have argued that there is a British underclass composed mainly or exclusively of ethnic minorities. They have followed Wilson in arguing that the underclass has been created by structural forces, and have tended to be critical of sociologists such as Murray who see the underclass in cultural terms.

One of the most influential views of this type was advanced by Anthony Giddens (1973). Giddens argued that the underclass is composed of those with a disadvantaged position in the labour market. As well as lacking skills and qualifications, they may also have to face prejudice and discrimination. Women and ethnic minorities are most likely to suffer from these problems and are therefore most likely to be found in the underclass. As we saw in Chapter 2 (see p. 93), Giddens believes that migrants are very likely to end up in the underclass.

To Giddens, when ethnic minorities such as Asians and West Indians in Britain and Algerians in France are heavily concentrated in the lowest-paid jobs or are unemployed, then an underclass exists. When members of the underclass do have jobs they are mainly in the secondary labour market. (We discuss the concept of a secondary labour market in the next section.)

John Rex and Sally Tomlinson – the underclass in Birmingham

Giddens's ideas were further developed in a study of the Handsworth area of Birmingham conducted by John Rex and Sally Tomlinson and published in 1979. They argued that New Commonwealth immigrants to Britain largely went to Britain 'to fill the gaps in the less skilled and the less attractive jobs in manufacturing industry as well as in the less skilled jobs in the service industries'. During the 1950s and 1960s Britain experienced a shortage of labour, and immigration was encouraged to overcome the problem. The shortage was particularly acute in jobs requiring little skill, and immigrants were often employed in such jobs.

Rex and Tomlinson believe that there is not one but rather two distinctive labour markets in Britain. They support the dual labour market theory. This sees the primary labour market as consisting of jobs with high wages, good working conditions, job security and opportunities for on-the-job training and promotion. In contrast, the secondary labour market consists of jobs with low wages, poor working conditions, little job security and few

opportunities for on-the-job training and promotion. Highly skilled jobs are usually located in the primary sector of the labour market, and less skilled jobs in the secondary. Skilled workers are usually more crucial to a company's success than workers with few skills, and so their loyalty to their employer is encouraged with high wages and opportunities for promotion.

Asian and West Indian immigrants were usually recruited to jobs in the secondary labour market. Because such jobs offer few promotion prospects or opportunities for training, they have tended to remain in a disadvantaged position in the labour market. For this reason ethnic minorities form an underclass in Britain.

Rex and Tomlinson acknowledge that not all members of ethnic minorities work in the secondary labour market but they offer evidence to show that they are disproportionately represented in such jobs. For example, using data from the 1971 census they found that in the West Midlands only 1 in 8 West Indian men, 1 in 6 Pakistanis, and 1 in 20 Indians were employed in vehicle manufacture, an industry which paid high wages. On the other hand, 33 per cent of West Indian men, more than 50 per cent of Indians, nearly 50 per cent of Pakistanis and 30 per cent of East African Asians worked in metal or metal goods manufacture; jobs in the metal industries tended to be poorly paid and offered few promotion prospects.

Rex and Tomlinson also found differences in the employment of women in the West Midlands in different ethnic groups. They say 'whereas the white woman typically becomes a secretary or a shopworker the immigrant woman works in a factory, or in a hospital and rather less frequently in service industries'.

In 1976 Rex and Tomlinson carried out a survey in Handsworth, Birmingham, in which structured interviews were conducted with a sample of 1,100 people. They found that 30 per cent of whites in Handsworth had white-collar jobs but only 9.5 per cent of West Indians and 5.1 per cent of Asians; 27.4 per cent of whites were in unskilled or semi-skilled manual work compared to 38.7 per cent of Asians and 44.1 per cent of West Indians. On the basis of their research, Rex and Tomlinson argued that ethnic minority groups:

> *were systematically at a disadvantage compared with working-class whites and that, instead of identifying with working-class culture, community and politics, they formed their own organisations and became in effect a separate underprivileged class.*
>
> Rex and Tomlinson, 1979

In short, they formed an underclass which was perpetuated by the predominance of ethnic minorities in the secondary labour market.

Marxist approaches

Marxist sociologists agree with writers such as Giddens and Rex and Tomlinson (who use a broadly Weberian approach) that ethnic minorities are disadvantaged in capitalist societies. However, they do not agree that they form an underclass in Britain. They reject the importance attached to status in underclass theories and place more emphasis on the workings of the economy and the role of ethnic minorities in the economic system.

Stephen Castles and Godula Kosack – a reserve army of labour

In a study of immigrant workers in France, Germany, Switzerland and Britain, Stephen Castles and Godula Kosack found that the immigrants faced similar problems in the labour market to those identified in Handsworth by Rex and Tomlinson (Castles and Kosak, 1973). In these four European countries immigrants were found to be concentrated in low-paid jobs or in jobs with poor working conditions. Most were manual workers in unskilled or semi-skilled work and they suffered high rates of unemployment. Castles and Kosack claim that in Britain this situation is mainly due to discrimination. In France, Germany and Switzerland the migrant workers are foreigners in the country in which they are working and restrictive laws and regulations prevent them from gaining employment in the more desirable jobs.

Discrimination and restrictive regulations are, however, only the immediate causes of the plight of immigrants. The poor treatment of immigrants ultimately derives from the need in capitalist societies for a reserve army of labour: it is necessary to have a surplus of labour in order to keep wage costs down, since the greater the overall supply of labour, the weaker the bargaining position of workers. Furthermore, as Marxists, Castles and Kosack believe that capitalist economies are inherently unstable. They go through periods of boom and slump, and a reserve army of labour needs to be available to be hired and fired as the fluctuating fortunes of the economy dictate. After the Second World War capitalist societies exhausted their indigenous reserve army of labour; women, for example, were increasingly taking paid employment. Capitalist countries in Europe therefore turned to migrant labour and immigration to provide a reserve pool of cheap labour which could be profitably exploited.

Castles and Kosack do not believe that such workers form an underclass outside and below the main class structure. They regard them as being part of the working class. Like other workers they do not own the means of production and so share with them an interest in changing society. However, Castles and Kosack believe that immigrant and migrant workers are the most disadvantaged groups within the working class and as such they form a distinctive stratum. Thus Castles and Kosack believe that the working class is divided into two, with ethnic minorities constituting one working-class grouping and the indigenous white population the other.

This situation is beneficial to the ruling class in capitalist societies. Ethnic minorities are blamed for problems such as unemployment and housing shortages. Attention is diverted from the failings of the capitalist system. The working class is divided and cannot unite, develop class consciousness and challenge ruling-class dominance.

Annie Phizaklea and Robert Miles – class factions

Annie Phizaklea and Robert Miles (1980) have also advanced a Marxist analysis of the position of ethnic minorities in the labour market and class structure. On the basis of a study in South Brent, London, carried out in the mid-1970s, they agree with Castles and Kosack that migrant ethnic minority workers form a distinctive stratum within the working class. However, they deny that immigration and migrant labour have actually created divisions within the working class. They point out that the working class can also be seen as divided by gender and level of skill. Working-class women sell their labour for a wage in the same way as working-class men, but unlike working-class men they have unpaid domestic responsibilities. Skilled manual workers have always tried to defend their own interests and ensure that they enjoy higher wages than other manual workers.

To Phizaklea and Miles, the working class is not divided into two, but is split between a considerable number of class factions based upon gender, skill and ethnicity. Immigration did not divide a united working class; it added an extra dimension to existing divisions.

Andrew Pilkington – the underclass reconsidered

Despite the differences between the theories on ethnicity and employment examined so far, they share a good deal in common. Andrew Pilkington suggests:

> *there is agreement that black workers are employed in predominantly nonskilled work, that they are locked into such work with few chances of escape and that this tends to segregate them from the indigenous workforce.*
>
> Pilkington, 1993

Pilkington believes that the underclass and Marxist theories are not supported by empirical evidence. He quotes figures from the *Labour Force Survey* for 1989–91. These showed that:

1 among West Indians and Guyanese, 32 per cent of men and 63 per cent of women were in non-manual occupations;
2 among Indians the figures were 59 per cent for men and 62 per cent for women;
3 among Pakistanis/Bangladeshis they were 40 per cent for men and 64 per cent for women.

Thus for women there was little difference in the proportions of ethnic minority groups in non-manual jobs. Amongst men, Indians were more likely than whites to have non-manual work and very substantial minorities of men in the other ethnic groups did not have working-class jobs. Pilkington therefore rejects the view that ethnic minorities are overwhelmingly trapped in jobs offering few prospects.

Pilkington also denies that ethnic minorities are segregated from the white workforce. He quotes a study of the labour market in Peterborough, conducted by Blackburn and Mann, in which it was found that 'the majority of immigrants are sharing jobs with the nativeborn', and that 'although immigrants receive less on average their conditions overlap very considerably with that of British workers' (quoted in Pilkington, 1984).

Pilkington fully accepts that ethnic minorities are disadvantaged in the labour market, but he does not agree that they are so disadvantaged that they constitute an underclass or subordinate stratum or faction of the working class. On the other hand, he believes that the situation is different for migrant workers in some other European countries. In France and Germany, for example, migrant workers can be seen to occupy a distinctive group at the bottom of the stratification system because 'they are predominantly located in nonskilled work with relatively few political rights'.

Conclusion

Recent figures confirm Pilkington's claim that ethnic minorities are not overwhelmingly concentrated in an underclass. (See, for example, the findings of the PSI's *Fourth National Survey* reported above, pp. 249–51.) Indeed, certain ethnic groups such as the Chinese and African Asians have been extremely successful in the labour market. Writers such as Heidi

Mirza warn of the dangers of labelling ethnic minorities in the labour market and elsewhere. Mirza points out that women of Caribbean origin have enjoyed considerable success in British society (see Chapter 11). That does not mean that the relatively successful groups are immune from discrimination – they might have been even more successful if discrimination had been absent. However, any full explanation of inequalities in the labour market would need to take account of a range of factors other than discrimination. These would include gender, class, age and cultural differences.

Sociology, values and 'race' and ethnicity

Sociologists, like other members of society, are a product of their time and place. While sociologists may try to study society without being influenced by the commonsense beliefs of other members of society, they may find it difficult or even impossible to be completely objective. This was certainly true in the nineteenth century. Sociologists generally accepted the view of scientists and others that humanity was divided into distinct biological 'races', some of which were superior to others. Not surprisingly they tended to see themselves and their own 'race' as being at the top of the hierarchy.

Thus, to sociologists like Herbert Spencer (1971), white Europeans generally belonged to the most evolved 'races'. His beliefs did not stem from individual arrogance or ignorance. Colonialism undoubtedly contributed to persuading most Victorian English people that their 'race' was superior to the other 'races' that they and other European powers had conquered and ruled.

As large-scale migration between and within countries became more common, people from different 'races' increasingly lived close together. Sociologists supporting the immigrant-host model became less likely to claim that certain 'races' were superior to others. To them the problems of race relations were created by the difficulties encountered when immigrants or strangers settled in an established host society.

However, these views were still strongly influenced by the values of the sociologists who expressed them: it was always the 'immigrants' who were the problem, disrupting the harmony of the host society. The hosts were largely tolerant and some were even welcoming. Any fault lay with those who would not adapt to their new surroundings. From this point of view the hosts were generally willing to accept the strangers; they were not filled with racism or hatred.

The views associated with the immigrant-host model seem to remain common amongst British whites today. For example, as we saw earlier, Ellis Cashmore (1987) found that some people in Birmingham and the Midlands criticized 'immigrants' for not fitting in with British ways. They resented it when 'immigrants' wanted to preserve their traditional cultures.

However, sociologists had begun to reject the idea that the culture of ethnic minorities was inferior to that of the white majority, and no longer assumed that 'immigrants' needed to change their cultures. Scientists had already discredited the idea that distinct 'races' existed. The mood of the times was moving in favour of greater tolerance of diverse cultures. In the USA the civil rights and Black Power movements encouraged ethnic minorities to take pride in their distinctiveness. In Britain legislation outlawed discrimination and made open racism less respectable and acceptable. Rather than just expecting 'immigrants' to integrate, new approaches to issues of 'race' and ethnicity seemed necessary.

One approach was to emphasize the desirability of ethnic pluralism. This suggested that the cultures of ethnic minorities should not necessarily change to allow integration, but rather they should remain distinctive and separate. Studies of ethnicity were carried out to develop a greater understanding of the diverse ways of life of different ethnic groups.

This approach produced policies of multiculturalism. From this viewpoint, schools, for example, should accommodate all ethnic groups: the diet, religious practices, clothing, beliefs and values of different ethnic groups should all be catered for in the education system.

Radical critics of this approach tended to dismiss it. James Donald and Ali Rattansi call it the 'saris, samosas and steel-bands syndrome'. It focused on the 'superficial manifestations of culture' and did not really address the underlying problems faced by ethnic minorities. Donald and Rattansi argue that multiculturalism ignores the 'continuing hierarchies of power and legitimacy'. If ethnic minorities are allowed or encouraged to wear saris, eat samosas and play in steel bands, that does not necessarily mean that their cultures have the same power and legitimacy as white culture. Donald and Rattansi argue that the 'limits to this approach were cruelly exposed by intellectual as well as political responses to *The*

Satanic Verses affair in the late 1980s'. Politicians and writers alike tended to side with Salman Rushdie against the British Muslim community who called for the book to be banned for blasphemy.

According to some sociologists, the emphasis on culture in multiculturalism has its own dangers. The new racism identified by Solomos *et al.* (1982) (see p. 259) and the ethnic absolutism described by Gilroy (1987) are based on the idea that ethnic groups are incompatible because their cultures are incompatible. Repatriation, which used to be justified on the grounds of biological difference, was supported by politicians like Enoch Powell on cultural grounds. Rivers of blood would flow simply because very different cultures could not mix.

Sociologists who stress the importance of racism suggest that the problems of 'race' and ethnicity cannot be solved by encouraging tolerance of different cultures. To some, racism is deeply ingrained in the minds, culture and institutions of whites. Whites possess most of the power in the USA, Britain and similar countries, and racism ensures they keep their power. From this point of view ethnic minorities have to fight to gain power rather than relying on the tolerance of well-meaning liberals. The policies associated with this approach are often called anti-racism. They involve seeking out, exposing and destroying the open or hidden racism present in society and its institutions.

Burnage High School in South Manchester became a notorious example of anti-racism in 1986 when Ahmed Iqbal Ullah was murdered by a white boy in the school playground, despite the school's vigorous anti-racist policy. Children in the school were taught about the evils of racism but that did not prevent the murder. The school banned white children from attending the funeral.

While nearly all sociologists today condemn racism, some disagree with some of the policies of anti-racism. Paul Gilroy argues that anti-racism has sometimes practised moralistic excesses. It has 'drifted towards a belief in the absolute nature of ethnic categories' and has therefore fallen into the trap of emphasizing 'race' to the exclusion of everything else. It sees the world in terms of black and white. Whites are the oppressors, blacks are the oppressed. All whites are racist, as are their institutions. Gilroy says:

> *The anti-racism I am criticizing trivializes the struggle against racism and isolates it from other political antagonisms – from the contradiction between capital and labour, from the battle between men and women. It suggests that racism can be eliminated on its own because it is readily extricable from everything else.*
>
> Gilroy, 1987

To Gilroy the views of some anti-racists are no longer plausible. Not only are issues of 'race' and ethnicity bound up with other issues, but racial and ethnic identities and cultures themselves cannot be separated into distinct and neat categories. Like Stuart Hall (1992) Gilroy believes that in the modern world there has been so much intermingling of different cultures that it is no longer appropriate to treat different 'races' as discrete groups. He says:

> *The outcomes of this cultural and political interaction reconstruct and rework tradition as they pursue their particular utopia. A vision of a world in which 'race' will no longer be a meaningful device for the categorization of human beings, where work will no longer be servitude and law will be disassociated from domination.*
>
> Gilroy, 1987

Postmodernists tend to share Gilroy's view that new types of ethnic identity are developing as the cultures of different ethnic groups are mixed. However, postmodernists tend to support a type of radical multiculturalism rather than hoping for the virtual disappearance of 'racial' differences. For example, Goldberg advocates a 'shift from the fundamental public commitment to ignore difference and particularity in the name of universality to a public celebration of diversity and an openly acknowledged and constantly recreated politics of difference' (Goldberg, 1993). Rather than treating everybody the same and pretending that there are no differences, we should acknowledge the differences. We should create space for different voices to be heard. For example, black lesbian females should have as much chance to express their views as white heterosexual males. Different religions, age groups, classes, ethnic groups, and people with different sexualities must all have a voice in contemporary society. They all need to record their own history, to express how they experience society and to celebrate their own identities. Their differences should not be suppressed under an Enlightenment philosophy that all people are fundamentally the same.

Kenan Malik (1996) strongly opposes this approach. He says 'The philosophy of difference is the politics of defeat, born out of defeat. It is the product of disillusionment with the possibilities of social change and the acceptance of the inevitability of an unequal, fragmented world.' He accuses postmodern thinkers of accepting and even encouraging the oppression of ethnic minority groups. From Malik's point of view, postmodernists sometimes seem to want such groups to remain oppressed. This is so that they can articulate their experiences and maintain their distinctive identities which are partly based on their oppression. Malik believes that a

'social revolution' is necessary. What is needed is a revolution in which people refuse to accept defeat and start to believe again that it is possible to intervene to make society better. Racism can be defeated by an active struggle against it.

Most postmodernists would not accept that their views are based upon accepting racism. They see the acceptance of diversity as liberating. Whatever the differences between postmodernists and writers such as Malik, their views are clearly very different from those of nineteenth-century sociologists. The same is true of multicultural and anti-racist views. All of these approaches would have been almost unthinkable in the nineteenth century, when the doctrine that some 'races' were superior to others dominated beliefs in sociology and society alike. That in itself suggests that sociology can contribute to the constructive development of social thought.