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# NEW DIRECTIONS IN THINKING ABOUT RACE IN AMERICA: AFRICAN AMERICANS IN A DIVERSIFYING NATION

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In July 1997, President Bill Clinton called to action a prestigious advisory panel to begin “an honest discussion about race in America.” While social scientists have long been aware of the imminent changes in racial and ethnic diversity facing the nation over the coming decades, the American public lags in its understanding of, and commitment to addressing, these complex realities. The national “Race Initiative” begun by President Clinton aims to celebrate and understand the racial and ethnic diversity of the United States, while finding common ground among all of us as Americans.

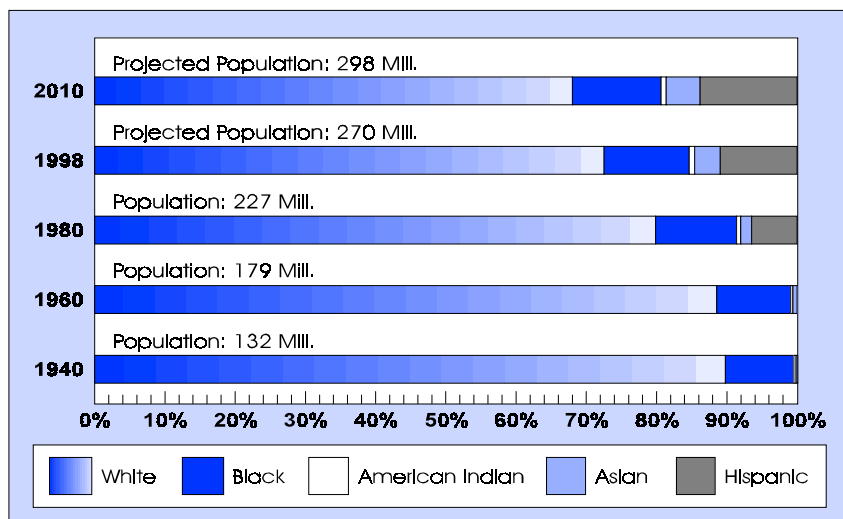
For better or worse “race” has perhaps been the most ongoing significant factor in the history of American society. This importance is reflected in doctrines, laws, policies, ideologies, relationships, and daily lives. The legacy of its overarching place in society is illustrated by the significant inequalities along racial lines that continue to plague the country.

What are the economic, social, community, educational, health, and political circumstances that characterized past differentials between Blacks and Whites in a largely dichotomous, polarized Black and White society? To examine this question, it is important to understand the context in which it is raised: namely the racial and ethnic realities of the past four decades. Figure 1 presents the actual and projected changes in racial composition of the United States from 1940 to 2010.\* Until about forty years ago, the United States was primarily a Black-White country. Now, however, as the figure shows, demographic changes have contributed

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\*Some of the figures in this article present historical and current data as well as projections through the first decade of the 21st century. These projections are based on current population data and trends, reflecting the best estimates of future racial and ethnic differences in the absence of any policy or program interventions. In cases where differences are diminishing, factors are identified in the text that contribute to these convergences. Policies and strategies are needed that strengthen these positive trends. In cases where inequalities are projected to stay the same or to increase, strategies and programs are needed that affirmatively address root causes of these differences.

**Figure 1**  
**Population of the United States by Race, 1940-2010**



Notes: Hispanics were not separately identified before the 1970 Census. Data for Black and White groups in 1998 and 2010 refer to non-Hispanics.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States Population: 1940*, Vol. II, Table 4; *Census of Population: 1960*, Vol. 1, Part 1, Table 44; *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1997*, Table 19; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P25, No. 1130 (February 1996).

to an increasingly multiracial, multiethnic country. Although ethnic conflict was a notable aspect of America’s past (Lieberson and Waters, 1988; Olzak, 1992), racial distinctions and dynamics were largely bifurcated into a Black-White divide, or “color-line” (DuBois, 1903; Kinder and Sanders, 1996).

The history of race relations between Blacks and Whites can be viewed in caste-like terms (Bell, 1993). The outcome of chattel slavery in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was complete racial stratification: Whites of all ethnicities and immigrant status were at the top of the social and economic hierarchy, and Blacks were at the bottom. Characterizing the Black-White situation in the period leading to World War II were large income gaps, differential earnings, employment segregation, residential segregation, separate schools and other public facilities, restrictive voting laws, overt de jure and Jim Crow discrimination, substantially higher infant mortality, and lower life expectancies.

At the beginning of World War II, almost 90 percent of the Black population

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lived in poverty. U.S. economic growth from 1940 through the early 1970s had a profound influence on the prosperity of Blacks. Inexpensive land, favorable housing policies, the G.I. Bill and related government policies and programs substantially reduced poverty among Blacks. Those same policies and programs also produced a favorable climate for large growth of the white middle class. By 1970, about 70 percent of the White population were classified as middle class, whereas only about 45 percent of Blacks were considered middle class.

Race relations in America's past can be summarized as dealing with the "dilemma" of the "Negro problem" (Myrdal, 1994). Established economically, politically, and socially as oppositional groups, Blacks and Whites lived virtually distinct lives and existed in separate worlds.

Few doubt the total domination and exploitation of Blacks prior to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, Farley and Harris (1998) note that within the current public debate about race, strong differences exist in academic circles concerning the nature of contemporary life for African Americans. One position holds that while some improvement has occurred, residential segregation, employment and housing discrimination continue to define racial inequalities (e.g., Yinger, 1995; Massey and Denton, 1993; Bobo, 1997). Another group of scholars contend that much has changed. They point to the narrowing Black-White gaps on selected status outcomes and growing variation in, for example, income, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status within the Black population as indicators that race is no longer the principal factor in determining life chances (e.g., Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997; Hernstein and Murray 1994).

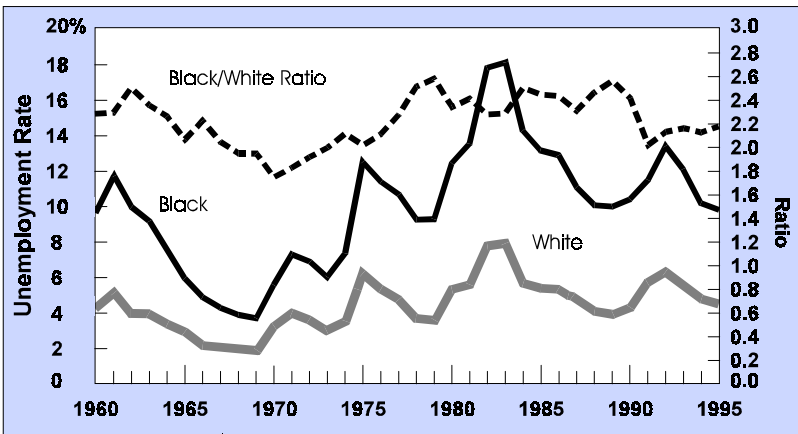
What are the economic, social, community, educational, health, and political circumstances that characterize current differentials between Blacks and Whites as the nation begins to experience unparalleled increases in racial and ethnic diversity? Again, the context in which this question is raised should be clarified. Race relations in the past forty years have largely been reverberations from the tremendous social changes of the civil rights movement (Bell, 1993; Clark, 1993). This period, the most dramatic social revolution in the country's history, witnessed the Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*, adoption of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, adoption of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, passage of a number of social policies often described together as the "Great Society" programs, and development of affirmative action policies and programs. The period has brought major political changes, such as the emergence of a more conservative voice in the electorate, of profound cynicism about the role of government in effecting social change, and of a public policy arena dominated by the constraints of large budget deficits. The period has also encompassed dramatic progress by African Americans in the political arena as their voting levels have

increased and the number and variety of elective offices they hold have soared (Bositis, 1994; McClain and Stewart, 1998). However, although there has been considerable progress in this period, many question whether it has been too little, given the anticipated potential of the era.

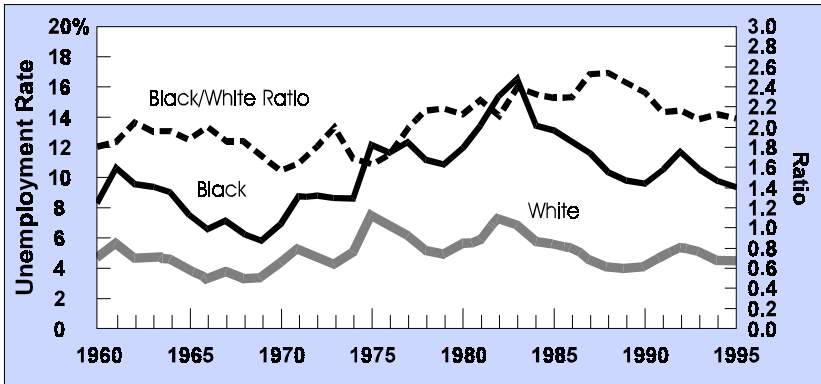
### Economic Conditions

Employment opportunities for minorities have increased because of affirmative action mandates and equal employment opportunity laws, but informal segregation/discrimination has not disappeared. Racial and ethnic groups in the United States show a consistent ranking on key indicators of school enrollment, educational attainment, employment, occupational achievement, and earnings (Farley and Harris, 1998). Whites and native-born Asians are consistently at the top of the list, while American Indians and Blacks are at the bottom. One argument is that disparate levels of education along with increases in employers' demands for skills lead to gaps in unemployment between Whites and Blacks (Holzer, 1996; Darity and Myers, 1998). Farley and Harris (1998) find that the Black-White gap in unemployment was as wide in the early 1990s as in 1970. Indeed, Darity and Myers (1998) find that among women the gap was even wider than in the past.

**Figure 2a**  
**Average Annual Unemployment Rates of Black and White Men**  
**Age 20 and Older, and Ratio of Black to White**  
**Unemployment Rates, 1960 to 1985**



**Figure 2b**  
**Average Annual Unemployment Rates of Black and White Women**  
**Age 20 and Older, and Ratio of Black to White**  
**Unemployment Rates, 1960 to 1985**



Note: Unemployment rates for years prior to 1972 refer to Whites and non-Whites.

Source: Council of Economic Advisers, 1996, Table B-41.

Figures 2a and 2b show the average annual unemployment rates of Black and White men and women, age 20 and over, from 1960 to 1995. The trend lines in Figures 2a and 2b show the expected unemployment rate increases during recessions and declines during business cycle upturns. However, for both genders, the ratio of the Black unemployment rate to that of Whites declined in the 1960s. Farley and Harris (1998) note that this change may be attributable to the beneficial effects of the Civil Rights Act and economic expansion. But Wilson (1987; 1996) reports that the unemployment rates of African Americans grew faster than those of Whites in subsequent decades. For example, Farley and Harris (1998) indicate that throughout the economic upturn of the mid-to-late 1980s, the unemployment rates of Black men and women were more than double those of Whites. Thus based upon the unemployment index as a central, summary indicator of economic well-being, there is no evidence of an improvement in the relative status of either Black men or Black women since the civil rights period of the 1960s and early 1970s (Darity and Myers, 1998).

Differential earnings and polarization of income distributions provide another measure of economic well-being. For both Black and White households, income

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inequality increased from 1970 to 1995 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996). Danziger and Gottschalk (1995) report a polarization of income distribution among Blacks, leading to a simultaneous increase in the number of Black millionaires and in the number of Black poor. Farley and Harris (1998) point out that the development of a larger economic elite among Blacks is not correlated with a large expansion of the Black middle class; as a proportion of the total population, the Black middle class is no larger today than it was a quarter century ago. As they document, “never in our history has there been a time when the majority of African-Americans were members of the middle economic class.”

Indeed, since the early 1970s, the growth of the middle class stopped for both Blacks and Whites. It is not that poverty has greatly increased; rather, the beneficial era, when many more people joined the middle class each year than left it, came to an end. To be sure, as Black and White populations grow, the number of middle class individuals increases slowly from one year to the next. But as a share of the total population, the middle class has not changed since the end of the Nixon administration in 1974 (Farley and Harris, 1998).

Using additional economic indicators, Farley and Harris (1998) report only modest improvements for Blacks from 1940 through the early 1970s, and little change since then. Examining the median income beginning in 1940 of men and women who reported any cash income, they find steady and substantial growth of male income in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. During those three decades, the median income of Black men increased from \$4,000 to \$14,000, and the median income of White men increased from \$10,000 to \$27,000. But between 1973 and 1990, the median income of men was largely stagnant. Thus, at the start of the 1990s, the ratio of Black to White median income of men was almost the same as it was in the 1970s.

In more recent years, there has been a modest departure from the trends of the 1970s and 1980s. Between 1990 and 1995, the median income of Black men increased, while that of White men remained the same. Farley and Harris (1998) point out that this divergence contributed to the first substantial closing of the Black-White gap in median income among men in more than 30 years. Yet they also warn that despite this improvement, it is not at all clear that the gap will continue to close. In 1996, Black men lost some of the gains they had made with respect to the income of White men, and if trends in median income from 1975 to 1996 continue, the Black-White ratio will only approach .70 by 2010.

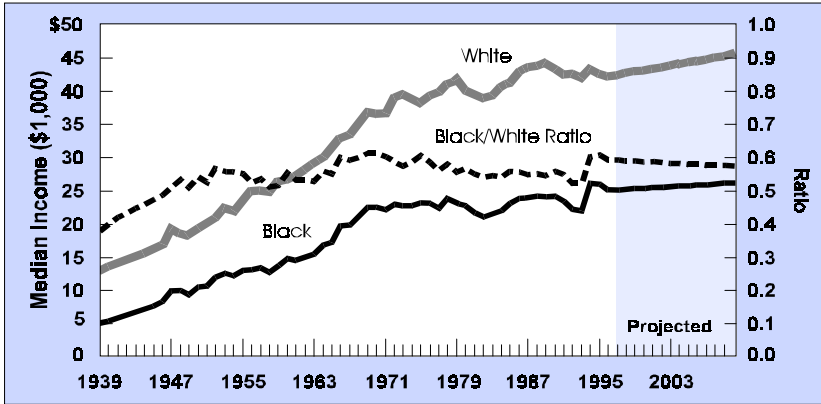
While male incomes have largely stagnated since the early 1970s, female incomes have continued to grow (Farley and Harris, 1998). Reflecting educational gains, increased time at work, and decreases in the gender pay gap, women in the

mid-1990s had higher median incomes than ever before (Spain and Bianchi, 1996). From 1940 through 1970, the median income of Black women increased more rapidly than that of White women, but since then the rates of increase have been about the same for both groups. Farley and Harris (1998) note that in both 1970 and 1996, Black women had median incomes reaching 90 percent of those of White women. Unless trends change dramatically, that 10 percent gap will remain fairly constant into the next decade.

Figure 3 shows the historical changes since 1939 in the median income of Black and White families. As with personal income, there were relative gains for Blacks in the three decades after World War II, followed by a period of relative stagnation. According to Farley and Harris (1998), even though a sharp increase occurred in 1994 and 1995 in Black median income relative to that of Whites, the Black-White gap in median family income in 2010 will be about the same as it was in the mid-1960s.

An additional basis for comparing economic well-being is the economic condition of children. In 1990, Black children were the most likely group of children to be living in impoverished households, followed by American Indian and foreign-

**Figure 3**  
**Median Income of Families and Ratio of Black to White Median Income, 1939 to 2010**



Notes: Income is in 1994 dollars. Data for Whites before 1971 include Hispanics. Data for income in 1939 are restricted wage and salary earnings. Authors' projections for 1997-2010 assume linear continuations of 1969-96 trends.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series 60, No. 197 (1997).

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born Hispanic children (Farley and Harris, 1998). In all three groups at least 60 percent of the children lived in households with annual incomes below twice the poverty line. White and native-born Asian children enjoyed the highest levels of affluence. Only 30 percent of each group were below twice the poverty line, and at least 17 percent were in households with incomes greater than five times the poverty line. It is clear that Black and American Indian children are especially disadvantaged compared with Asian and White children and, as pointed out by Duncan and Brooks-Gunn (1997), this childhood disadvantage will most likely result in poorer adult outcomes.

Thus, while large income gaps between Blacks and Whites have narrowed over the decades, significant differentials persist. In addition, as Farley and Harris (1998) point out, greater within-group disparities are occurring, i.e., growth of the haves versus the have-nots. Based on a number of different social and economic indicators — income, education, victimization by violence, occupational status, and participation in electoral politics — there is greater disparity for African Americans than for Whites between the top fifth and the bottom fifth of the population.

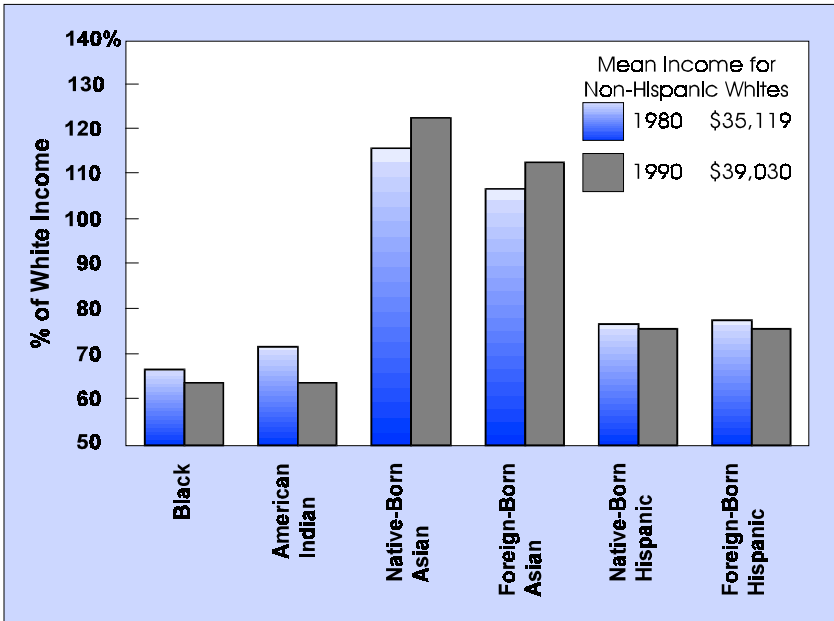
Hochschild and Rogers (1998) indicate that well-off Blacks and Whites had income gains of about 15 percent between 1983 and 1992. However, poor Whites had gains of only 5 percent; and poor Blacks actually lost 12 percent. A similar income dispersion existed among Latinos. Overall about 30 percent of Hispanics were classified as poor in 1995. Indicating the wide diversity within large ethnic categories, Samoans and other Southeast Asians and Pacific Islander groups had a poverty rate of 30 percent in 1990, while the aggregate poverty rate for Asians was 14 percent (Hochschild and Rogers, 1998).

A major question that these findings raise is whether Blacks are uniquely disadvantaged compared with other groups (Patterson, 1997). Farley and Harris (1998) examined how Blacks, Whites, Asians, and Hispanics compare on three indicators of income. Figures 4 and 5 show the average income of minority households as a percentage of that of White households in 1980 and 1990 for total households and for female-headed families.

As shown in the figures, households headed by native-born Asians had the largest incomes while Black and American Indian households had the lowest. As Figure 4 shows, in 1990, households headed by native-born Asians had incomes approximately 25 percent above those of Whites, while households headed by Blacks or American Indians had, on average, about 35 percent less cash income than White households. Hispanic households were slightly better-off than Black and American Indian households. In fact, Darity and Myers (1998) calculate



**Figure 4**  
**Income of Minority Households as a Percentage of**  
**White Household Income, Total Households, 1980 and 1990**



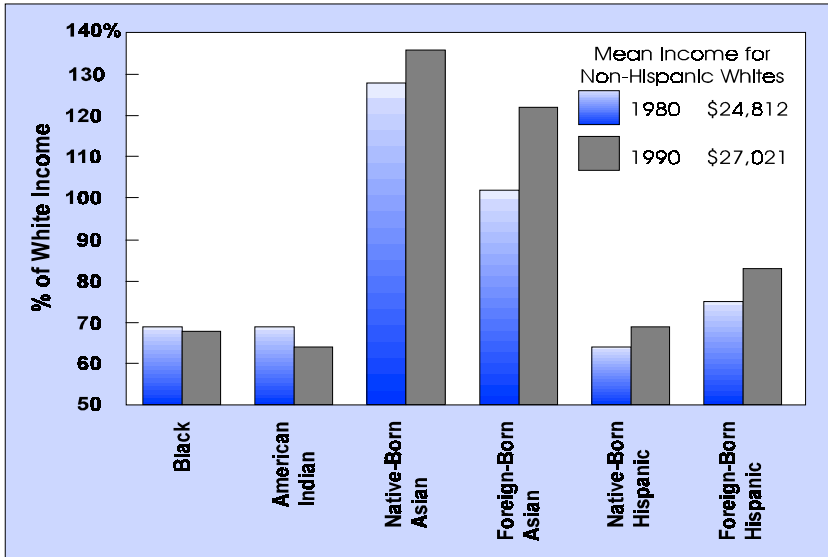
Note: All incomes are measured in constant 1993 dollars.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing: 1980 and 1990*, Public Use Microdata Samples.

that based on the rate of change between 1970 and 1996, it would take 13 generations, or 300 years, for the gap in Black-White earnings to close.

Farley and Harris (1998) suggest that demographic factors, such as a large proportion of husband-wife couples, may help account for the high incomes of Asian households. However, even when family type is considered, the findings are similar - Asian households, especially those headed by native-born Asians, have larger incomes than White households, while Black, American Indian, and Hispanic households trail White households. Several factors in addition to demography may account for the higher income of Asian households, including the unusual investment in education of this group, the many hours that Asian women work, and the high earnings of Asian women. Finally, Asian households, perhaps for cultural reasons, include more adult workers, on average, than other house-

**Figure 5**  
**Income of Minority Households as a Percentage of**  
**White Household Income, Female-Headed Family**  
**Households, 1980 and 1990**



Note: All incomes are measured in constant 1993 dollars.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing: 1980 and 1990*, Public Use Microdata Samples.

holds (Farley, 1996).

### Social Conditions

Residential segregation plays a defining role in inequality between Blacks and Whites. Housing discrimination leads to a gap between White-Black home ownership, which denies Blacks access to an economic benefit in terms of resale value and wealth (Oliver and Shapiro, 1995). Just as does wealth accumulation, home ownership has tremendous social and psychological value to families and individuals. Numerous reports (e.g. Darity and Myers, 1998) document that while opportunities to purchase homes are now more equal than they were in the past, audit testings by paired Black and White testers continue to show that potential Black buyers are often treated differently than Whites. They are shown fewer homes, commonly steered to Black or only moderately integrated neighborhoods,

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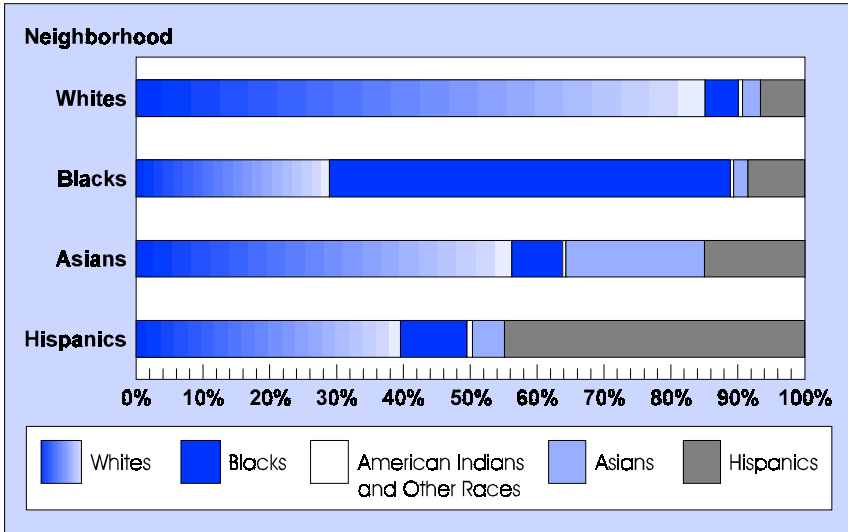
and provided with less information about financing. A recent study by the Boston Federal Reserve Bank found that Blacks who applied for federal mortgages in that area were more likely to be turned down than White applicants of similar backgrounds (Munnell, Browne, McEneaney and Tootel, 1992; Yinger, 1995).

Since the end of World War II, the majority of White households have owned their homes, whereas the majority of Blacks have not yet attained this level (Farley and Harris, 1998). The gap in home ownership rates shows Blacks making slight gains between 1940 and 1970 and the Black-White ratio increasing from .52 to .64. However, since 1970, Blacks have consistently owned homes at a rate that is about 64 percent of the White rate. Unless substantial changes occur in wealth, income, or housing-market discrimination, Blacks will continue to achieve home ownership much less frequently than Whites. Darity and Myers (1998) suggest that home ownership is the most important component of wealth in the United States. The difference in both the rates and value of Black home ownership as compared to White home ownership is the main reason for the sixfold difference between the groups in wealth (Oliver and Shapiro, 1995).

More than 50 years ago, Myrdal (1944) described the deleterious consequences of residential racial segregation for Blacks. Not only did segregation deny Blacks access to schools, parks, and facilities available to Whites, it allowed prejudiced White officials to provide Blacks with second-class services without harming their White constituents. Massey and Denton (1993) suggest that a system of hyper-residential segregation provides the major infrastructure for continuing Black-White racial stratification. Racial segregation denies education and employment opportunities for Blacks and contributes, in the words of many, to a “ghetto culture” that is dysfunctional in the larger achievement-oriented society (Ogbu, 1978; Wilson, 1987).

Farley and Harris (1998) show that the neighborhoods that Blacks typically live in are different than those of other minority groups and Whites. Figure 6 displays the racial composition of the typical neighborhoods of Blacks, Whites, Asians, and Hispanics in the 318 metropolitan areas of the 1990 Census. As shown, Asians live in neighborhoods where well over 50 percent of the population is non-Hispanic White, while Hispanics live in neighborhoods with about 40 percent White residents. Blacks live in neighborhoods where the White population is relatively small. Given the economic gaps, White neighborhoods have better schools, better city services, safer streets, and access to more effective political power than most Black neighborhoods (Massey and Denton, 1993; Morenoff and Sampson, 1997; Kozol, 1991). Thus, the potential for educational and social interaction with their prosperous White neighbors is much greater for Hispanics and Asians than for Blacks.

**Figure 6**  
**Racial Composition of Neighborhoods of Blacks, Whites, Asians, and Hispanics in Metropolitan Areas, 1990**



Notes: Data refer to block groups in the 318 metropolitan areas defined for the 1990 Census. In 1990, the average black group contained 210 occupied dwelling units.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing: 1990*, Summary Tape File A.

There are some indications that residential segregation is fading slowly. Farley and Frey’s 1994 analysis of Census data shows persistent and extensive patterns of small declines in Black-White residential segregation throughout the country. They find that reductions are larger in metropolises that are now attracting Black migrants, e.g., Orlando and Dallas in the South, Minneapolis in the Midwest, Las Vegas, San Diego, Phoenix, Sacramento and San Bernadino in the West. More recent findings indicate that Blacks are migrating away from older metropolises, where lengthy and extensive residential segregation exists, and moving to areas where residential segregation is less entrenched and economic opportunities may be greater (Frey, 1998).

A major sign of growing equality is the rate of intermarriage between majority and minority groups. Interracial marriages were illegal in 29 states in 1953 and

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in 16 states as recently as 1967 (Farley, 1996). It was not until 1967 that the Supreme Court struck down miscegenation laws as unconstitutional. In 1960, there were about 150,000 interracial couples in the United States. In 1990, when marriages with Hispanics are added, the number of intergroup marriages totaled about 1.6 million. Despite this increase, interracial couples still represented only about 2 percent, and intergroup couples of any type about 4 percent, of the 51 million married couples in the United States in 1990.

The two most striking features of interracial marriage in the United States are that Blacks and Whites are proportionately least likely to marry outside their groups and that Whites are several times more likely to marry a member of groups other than Blacks (Harrison, 1998). Only one in five intermarriages involved a Black and a White in the 1990 Census (Harrison, 1998). More than 93 percent of Blacks and Whites marry within their own group compared with about 80 percent of Asians and Hispanics and only 40 percent of American Indians.

In the 1990 Census, about one-fourth of the 2.4 million children with at least one Asian or Pacific Islander parent and one-fourth of the 7.4 million children with at least one Hispanic parent live in interracial households with one non-Hispanic White parent or stepparent. More than one-half (52 percent) of the children with at least one American Indian, Eskimo or Aleut parent lived in such interracial households. Thus, a substantial percentage of Hispanics, Asians, and American Indians have children with a spouse from another group.

Because self-identification is important not only for the Census count but for social relations, how children identify themselves can have a substantial impact on the projected size of these populations. For example, in households where one parent was Black and the other White, those who identified themselves as Black (126,000) represented less than 2 percent of all Black children, and the 100,000 who identified themselves as White, less than 1 percent of all White children (Harrison, 1998). The potential effect appears to be largest for the Hispanic population. In fact, Fix and Passel (1994) note that if all the offspring from marriages involving a Hispanic and a non-Hispanic were to identify themselves as non-Hispanic in future Censuses, the Hispanic population would reach only 51 million, or 14 percent of the total population, in 2040. If all identified themselves as Hispanic, this group's population could grow to 78 million, or 22 percent of the total population. Corresponding projections for Asians range from a low of 30 million (8 percent) to 39 million (11 percent) in 2040. Complicating this picture even further are recent developments in the self and other definitions of children of interracial unions. Some data suggest that these children do not self-identify along solely traditional racial or ethnic lines, but in a variety of new and different ways, including biracial, mixed, multiracial, Euro-Asian, and Black-

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White (Jones, 1998). The meaning of these new, and more complex, forms of self-identity is only recently being examined.

For example, many Hispanics identify themselves not only in ethnic terms but also as White, Black, Asian, or American Indian. It is possible that subsequent generations may be more inclined to identify with the latter racial groups. In a recent test of alternative questions on race and ethnicity for the 2000 Census, on the race question that listed “Hispanic” as one of the options, almost 20 percent of Hispanics, and about 50 percent of Cubans, identified themselves as White rather than Hispanic (Harrison, 1998).

It is highly unlikely that these populations will follow the path of complete assimilation experienced by most European immigrants (Farley, 1996; Harrison, 1998; Lieberman and Waters, 1988). Intermarriage rates of Hispanics and Asians, though high compared with the rates of Whites and Blacks, remain far below the levels of European immigrants. The residential segregation of those earlier immigrants seems to have declined more rapidly than the segregation of Hispanics and Asians. Residential segregation increased for Hispanics and Asians between the 1980 and 1990 Censuses in patterns consistent with new immigrants locating in or near existing Hispanic and Asian neighborhoods (Farley, 1996). These intermarriage and segregation patterns suggest possible higher social boundaries than Europeans experienced. Along with continued immigration of these groups, the patterns of marriage and residential segregation might indeed help maintain distinct Hispanic and Asian neighborhoods for the foreseeable future (Harrison, 1998; Portes, 1996).

### **Family and Community Conditions**

Another important social factor involves the living arrangements of families and marriage rates. Farley and Harris (1998) and Tucker (1998) point out that Blacks and Whites differ substantially in age at marriage, the proportion of children born outside of marriage, and divorce and remarriage rates. During the period 1950 to the present, the percentage of Whites who are married has fallen from 67 percent to 58 percent. By contrast, marriage among Blacks has declined precipitously. In 1950, 63 percent of Black adults were married; by 1990 the proportion had fallen to about 45 percent, and by 2010, the married proportion is estimated to be only 32 percent. There has been no closing of the Black-White gap in marriage rates; instead, it has steadily widened.

Using Census and recent survey data, Tucker (1998) highlights the complexities in understanding the nature of American family formation. Regardless of the ideological position taken, the reality is that Black families suffer extraordinary

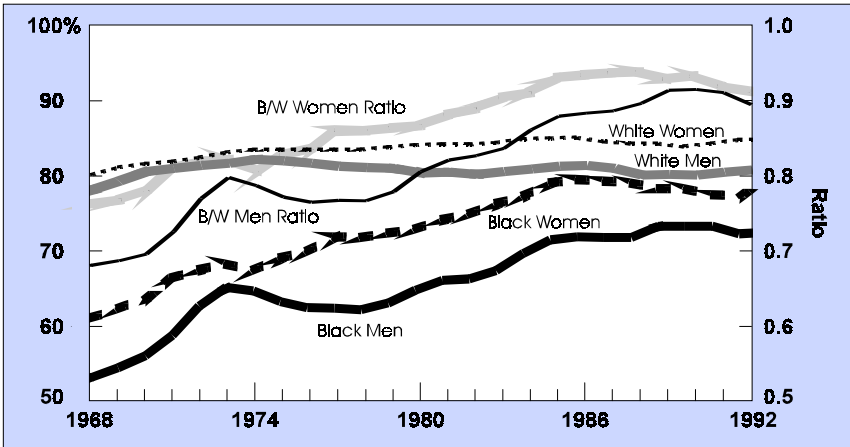
difficulties in child impoverishment, poor economic circumstances of single women households, lack of father involvement in child rearing, and the need for additional material resources to assist in maintaining families (Franklin, 1997; Maynard, 1997; Tucker, 1998). It is clear that policies and strategies need to be formulated that facilitate the development of skills and resources so that families can form and survive. While as a viable public policy cannot be dictated, policies and strategies can be developed that provide incentives and reasonable options for strong social and economic family units (Franklin, 1997; Maynard, 1997; Tucker, 1998). This is perhaps one of the greatest domestic policy challenges facing American society today.

### Education Conditions

Integrated schools were mandated in the early 1970s, but racial disparities in test scores, achievement, and educational attainment continue to persist (Nettles and Orfield, 1998). Today, there are frequent examples of these indicators of “differential schooling” between haves and the have-nots. It is even more striking that the disparities often fall along the color line.

As noted in the discussion on “Economic Conditions,” when key indicators of school

**Figure 7**  
**Percentage of High School Graduates by Gender, Age 18 to 24,**  
**and Ratio of Black to White Graduates, 1968 to 1992**  
**(Three-Year Moving Average)**



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series 20, No. 479 (1994).

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enrollment, educational attainment, employment, occupational achievement, and earnings are examined, there is a consistent ranking of racial groups. Whites and native-born Asians are at the top of the list, while American Indians and Blacks are at the bottom (Farley and Harris, 1998). Gender differences are important, however; based on some key measures of earnings, income, and education, Black women fare as well as White women.

Figure 7 shows the percentage of Black and White young men and women age 18 to 24 who were high school graduates (diplomas and high school equivalency - GED) from 1968 to 1992. Racial progress has occurred, as seen in the fairly consistent decline in the Black-White gap in high school attainment (Nettles and Orfield, 1998). Again, gender plays an important role, because the racial gap is smaller among women than among men.

Notably, Farley and Harris (1998) report that if the trends over the past 30 years continue, Blacks and Whites will earn high school degrees at nearly identical rates by early in the next century. On the other hand, Nettles and Orfield (1998) point to a disturbing trend in which Black high school graduation rates are increasingly contributed to by GEDs, a credential that may be viewed as inferior by potential employers and colleges (Holzer, 1995; Wilson, 1996).

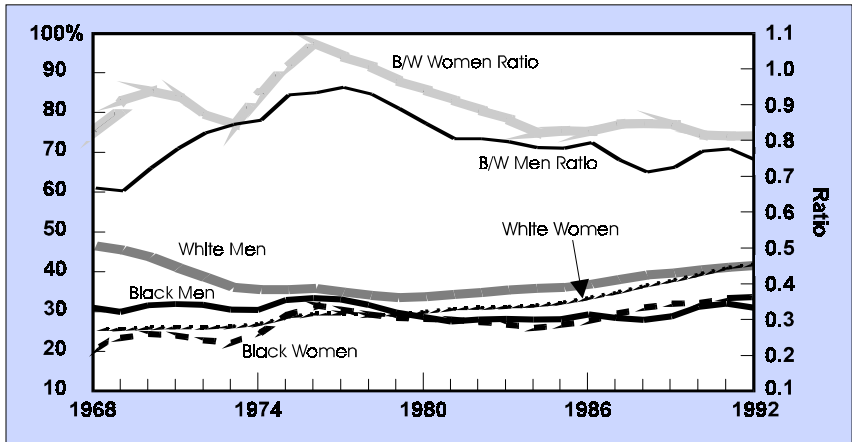
As shown in Figure 8, the trends in college enrollment are somewhat different than those of high school achievement. In the early 1970s, there was near racial parity in college enrollment. Although there was no fall-off in the college enrollment of Black men in the 1980s, the enrollment rates of White men increased steadily, leading to a widening of the racial gap and a declining ratio of Black to White enrollment (Farley and Harris, 1998; Nettles and Orfield, 1998).

Among women, record high proportions of Blacks and Whites were pursuing college degrees in the early 1990s. In the late 1970s, the percentage of high school graduates enrolled in college was higher for Black women than for White women. However, from 1976 to 1984, enrollment rates increased more rapidly for White than for Black women. Since the mid-1980s, it is estimated that the proportion of Black women high school graduates attending college has been about 80 percent that of White women, a trend that is likely to continue for at least the next 10 years (Farley and Harris, 1998).

Farley and Harris (1998) suggest that the large proportion of Asian immigrants to the United States came to earn advanced degrees. Even though the Asian and Pacific Islander populations are socially and economically diverse, Asians in the aggregate, as noted earlier, invest heavily in education and long hours of work and are more likely than Whites or other racial minorities to live in husband-wife



**Figure 8**  
**Percentage of High School Graduates by Gender, Age 18 to 24,**  
**Enrolled In College, and Ratio of Black to White, 1968 to 1992**  
**(Three-Year Moving Average)**



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series 20, No. 479 (1994).

families. Farley and Harris (1998) indicate that the next generation of Asians will likely excel in the future technologically sophisticated U.S. job market.

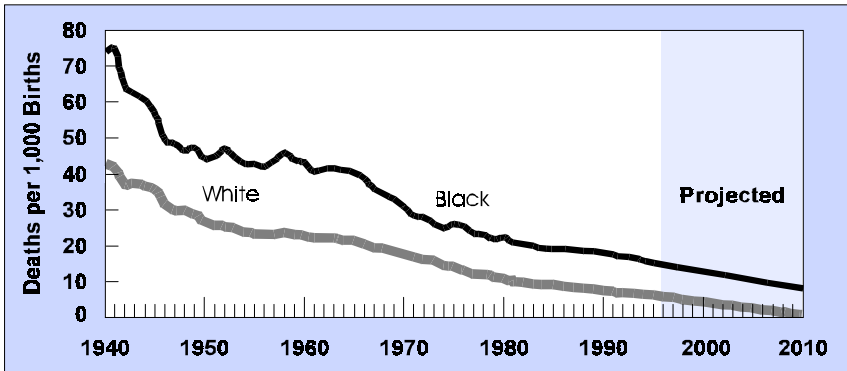
Hispanic immigrants, on average, report exceptionally low educational attainments. Given the link between the education of parents and that of their children, a high proportion of Hispanics entering the labor force in the next few decades is expected to have limited attainments, probably even inferior to those of young Blacks. Bean and Tienda (1987) suggest that Hispanic youth will be at a disadvantage in the increasingly technologically oriented economy of the future.

### Health Conditions

A major indicator of health is the mortality rate of populations. Death rates are higher for Blacks than Whites at almost every age group until extreme old age. The most frequently used index of mortality conditions is the total number of years a person could expect to live if he or she experienced the death rates of a given year. Women live, on average, seven years longer than men.

The life expectancy of men increased from the end of the Depression through the

**Figure 9**  
**Infant Mortality Rates for Blacks and Whites, 1940-2010**



Notes: Data for years prior to 1970 refer to non-Whites and Whites. Authors' projections for 1996-2010 assume linear continuations of the 1975-1995 trends in infant mortality rates.

Sources: U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, 1984; *Vital Statistics of the United States, 1980*, Vol. II, Part A, Table 2.1; U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, *Monthly Vital Statistics Reports*, Vol. 43, No. 6 (1994) (Supplement), Table 24.

mid-1950s, then stagnated until about 1965. More than five years were added to the life expectancy of White men after 1970, and by the early 1990s, they could expect to live more than 73 years — the highest life span ever recorded for men in the United States. Mortality rates for Black men also fell after 1970, but this trend ended in the mid-1980s. For almost a decade now, death rates have been slowly decreasing for older Black men but rising among younger Black men age 15 to 34. Much of this increase has been due to greater deaths by violence and AIDS. The net outcome has been a stagnation in the life expectancy of African American men. According to Census Bureau estimates, this stagnation will likely continue into the next century.

Currently, White men have a life expectancy nine years longer than Black men. By 2010, that gap is predicted to be just over ten years, comparable to the Black-White difference for men in 1940 (Farley and Harris, 1998).

Between 1940 and 1970, racial change in life expectancy was much the same for women as for men. Mortality rates fell for both races but slightly faster among Black women, leading to a modest closing of the Black-White gap. However, the racial gap among women has changed little in the past 20 years, and it is predicted to remain at about six years throughout the next decade. Unlike Black men, the death rates of Black women continued to fall in the 1980s, leading to a life expectancy of 74.5 years in 1995 (Farley and Harris, 1998).

The specific death rate most closely examined as the key index of the nation's health is the infant mortality rate, that is, the number of infants who die before their first birthday per thousand births occurring in a year. As Figure 9 shows, one notable feature of Black-White differentials in health has been the higher Black infant mortality rate (LaVeist, 1998; Tucker, 1998). Farley (1996) notes that the death rates of

**Table 1**  
**Expectation of Life at Birth, Infant Mortality Rate, and GNP per Capita for the United States and Selected Countries, 1995**

	<b>Expectation of Life at Birth (Years)</b>	<b>Infant Mortality Rate (Deaths per 1,000 Births)</b>	<b>GNP per Capita* (1995 US\$)</b>
Japan	79.4	4.3	41,160
Sweden	78.4	5.6	24,730
Canada	78.3	6.8	19,000
Israel	78.1	8.4	17,070
Greece	77.9	8.3	8,696
Australia	77.8	7.1	18,920
Belgium	77.2	7.0	26,550
Cuba	77.1	8.1	2,068
Austria	76.9	6.9	28,860
<b>United States, Whites</b>	<b>76.5</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>NA</b>
Finland	76.2	5.2	23,410
Portugal	75.5	9.1	10,430
Taiwan	75.5	5.6	12,390
Chile	74.9	14.3	4,173
Bulgaria	73.7	11.4	4,394
Mexico	73.3	26.0	2,521
Poland	73.1	12.4	5,404
Sri Lanka	72.1	21.3	699
Hungary	71.9	11.9	6,519
<b>United States, Blacks</b>	<b>69.8</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>NA</b>

\*GNP per capita for the U.S. was not available by race. Total 1995 GNP for U.S. = \$27,550

Sources: *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1995*, Table 1363; *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1997*, Table 1347; U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, *Monthly Vital Statistics Reports*, Vol. 45, No. 11 (1997) (Supplement), Tables 5

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Black and White babies have been declining, but in a parallel fashion, so that Blacks continue to die during their first year of life at a rate more than double that of Whites. Many recent public health efforts have been directed at reducing this mortality disparity. In addition, because of new developments in neonatal care, infants have survived who, in the recent past, would have died shortly after birth. As a result, the infant death rate has steadily declined (see Figure 9). By 1992, record low proportions of Black and White babies were dying before their first birthdays. The Black-White gap in infant mortality, however, was just as large in the early 1990s, as in the early 1970s, and it is likely to decline little in future years without significant intervention.

Farley and Harris (1998) report that despite the investment of a large share of the U.S. gross national product (GNP) in health care, the United States has relatively high death rates compared to other developed countries (LaVeist, 1998). The expectation of life at birth and the infant mortality rate may be used as summary indicators. Table 1 shows 1995 data for life expectancy at birth, infant mortality rates, and GNP for selected countries.

Death rates in the United States are generally low compared with those in eastern Europe and developing countries, but higher than those in western Europe, Canada, and the highly developed countries of Asia. For example, the life span in Japan is about three years longer than that of Whites in the United States, while the life span in Israel, Greece, and a number of western European countries is more than one year longer. The infant mortality rate of Whites in the United States is similar to the rates of some western European nations, but it is higher than those in Japan, Sweden, Finland, and Taiwan. Most striking in Table 1 is the ranking of African Americans. Black life expectancy is lower than in any country on the list, and Black infant mortality is higher than in all but two countries. The situation for African-Americans is illuminated by the fact that a Black baby born in the United States has a lower chance of surviving the first year of life than infants in Cuba, Chile, Bulgaria, and Poland (Farley and Harris, 1998).

## **THE DIVERSIFIED AMERICA OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

What are the projected economic, social, community, educational, health, and political circumstances that will characterize future relations between Blacks and Whites in the 21<sup>st</sup> century when America will be a vastly different, multiracial country? Hochschild and Rogers (1998) note that the process of population diversification will be the basis for understanding racial and ethnic relations in the United States over the next few decades. They suggest that the most basic diversification in contemporary politics is that of racial and ethnic background

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and the identification of Americans.

### **Defining Who Is an “American”**

Two main factors have affected the growing diversity of the nation. The first is immigration. During the 1980s, 8.3 million legal immigrants, mostly from Asia and Latin America, entered the United States. Another 4.3 million immigrants entered the country from 1990 to 1994. The second factor is the declining birth rates of Blacks and Whites, the two historically prominent racial groups in society. There is consensus that Hispanics will replace African-Americans as the single largest non-White minority group in the United States in about 2010 (Farley, 1996; Farley and Harris, 1998; Harrison, 1998). By 2020, it is expected that about one-third of the residents of the United States will be Asian, Black, Latino, or American Indian. But these broad distinctions do not speak to the layers of complexity that will exist in the multicultural society. According to Hochschild and Rogers (1998), within each of the pan-ethnic groups are vast differences in language, religion, history, culture, and economic status. Thus, not only must the variety of groups that are emerging be considered, but the range of differences within the groups.

Although throughout history new peoples from across the globe have contributed to the racial and ethnic composition of the United States, some have suggested that America is experiencing an unprecedented widespread “demographic balkanization” (Hochschild and Rogers, 1998). Major population centers are becoming increasingly diverse, as new immigrants, both documented and undocumented, account for more and more demographic growth and change.

One of the country’s strongest ideologies has been the nation’s ability to transform people of many nationalities and backgrounds into “Americans” (Lieberson and Waters, 1988; Lipsett, 1996). However, two different legacies exist - one for European immigrants and one for immigrants of color. In stark relief to the assimilation of European immigrants, systematic and sustained de jure exclusion of minority peoples of color from full and equal participation generally characterized the United States until the major civil rights legislation in the 1960s (Farley, 1996; Harrison, 1998; Hochschild, 1995; Kinder and Sanders, 1996).

In many ways, the poor treatment of minorities reflected, and was often sanctioned by, government policies and laws. For example, the institution of Jim Crow segregation was fully sanctioned by the Supreme Court in a landmark 1896 ruling, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, that upheld Louisiana’s provision of separate railway carriages for Blacks, as well as separate facilities in schools and other important areas of daily life. Congress denied citizenship to Asians until 1952, long after the 14th

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Amendment had extended that right to Blacks. Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Guamanians, and other Pacific Islanders were never subject to legal subordination as were Blacks and Asians, but became American citizens through conquest, e.g., the annexation of the southwestern states from Mexico in 1848.

The nation began removing the de jure impositions of subordinate status only after World War II when the U.S. Armed Forces were desegregated in 1948. In 1954, the Supreme Court in *Brown v. the Board of Education* declared that separate facilities were inherently unequal, and that the caste-like segregation of Blacks was not constitutional. The Civil Rights Acts of the 1960s in employment, voting, and housing discrimination established that the nation would no longer recognize legal status distinctions based on race, color, creed, sexual preference, or national origin. Later laws added age, gender, and disability to the groups protected from discrimination. In 1965, the Immigration Act removed the national origins quota system that essentially restricted immigration to Europeans. This change resulted in new waves of immigrants from Mexico, Latin America, and Asia that in a few short decades changed the nation (Farley, 1996; Harrison, 1998).

In sum, U.S. history has reflected a difficult struggle with defining who is and who is not to be incorporated as part of the nation. This continues to be an arduous process. The United States stands poised to become the most diverse nation in the world (Farley, 1996; Jones, 1998). As Harrison (1998) states:

We remain a nation that, at best, is still working to include groups of all races and colors in its dream of full opportunity and equality. To a great extent, our fears that a more racially diverse America must also be a more racially divided America reflect our fears that we will fall short of the challenge that full inclusion poses, and that visible differences of race, color, and perhaps culture and mores, will continue to carry the stigma of being, in some way, not fully American (p. 5).

### **Today's Composition of "Americans"**

Today, America is composed of people from all racial and ethnic backgrounds and nationalities. As a result of the ever increasing influx of Asians and Hispanics in the last half of the 20th century, America now faces, and will face even more in the next century many new issues. It is clear that framing race and ethnicity simply in Black-White terms will not be sufficient to address issues of incorporation, democratic participation, economic equality, opportunity, and equity among groups and individuals (Hochschild and Rogers, 1998).

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Based on the Middle-Series Census Bureau projections, by about 2020, the United States will have a total population of about 323 million. Approximately 64 percent will be White, a drop of 10 percentage points from 1990. Hispanics will be the next largest group, with 16 percent of the total population, followed by Blacks with 13 percent. Hispanics currently add more people to the population annually than any other group and will take the place of Blacks as the largest minority no later than 2010. Asians have an annual growth rate of over 2.5 percent and will remain the nation's fastest growing group through 2020, when they will represent about 6 percent of the population. The American Indian population will grow from about 2.2 million in 1995 to 3.1 million in 2020, remaining about 1 percent of the population.

Approximately 50 years from now, Whites are estimated to represent only a slight majority (53 percent) of the population. Projections suggest that at that time the population of 394 million will be nearly 25 percent Hispanic, 14 percent Black, about 9 percent Asian, and 1 percent American Indian (Harrison, 1998).

In addition to the sheer demography of projected ethnic change, the estimated geographic dispersion of various racial and ethnic groups will be important (Hochschild and Rogers, 1998). A few cities and states already have achieved racial and ethnic compositions not expected in the larger nation for decades. California, New York, Texas, and Illinois are among the six states with the largest Black, Asian and Hispanic populations. New Jersey is among the six largest for Asians and Hispanics, and Florida, for Blacks and Hispanics. Three metropolitan areas, Miami, New York, and Chicago, account for some of the greatest diversity. In addition, American Indians and Blacks in Oklahoma and Hispanics in Arizona and New Mexico give these states distinctive racial and ethnic compositions.

Hochschild and Rogers (1998) note that the geographic areas where immigrants account for most of the demographic change will become increasingly multicultural, younger, and more bifurcated in their race and class structures. Other parts of the country whose growth is more dependent on internal migration flows will become less multicultural and will also differ in other social and political dimensions. Thus, if Blacks continue to be concentrated in areas that have been historically poor (e.g. the South), they will be subject to greater poverty. In addition, the southern states where Blacks are predominantly located are not heavily populated by other ethnicities. Therefore, Blacks may not be privileged to the same extent as other groups to changes in education (e.g., learning about other cultures), intermarriage (changing the face of ethnicity), social and job interactions, and other exposures that contribute to increasingly diverse life experiences.

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## AMERICA'S FUTURE CANVAS

As discussed, demographic projections forecast a racially and ethnically diverse America, in which no group will be a clear numerical majority. It is likely that net immigration will continue throughout the next century and, in fact, may increase during some periods. The future may also differ because of unanticipated high intermarriage rates among many racial and ethnic groups and the attendant changing identities or assimilation of descendants. Further, the future may differ because the perception and meaning of race and ethnicity in the United States are undergoing change (Harrison, 1998).

As a result, America can no longer be conceived along a Black-White continuum. The nature of our existence as an American people is moving toward a level of complexity and size never before seen in the world. The new American canvas will be painted with colors from every conceivable shade of the earth: Black, White, Brown, Red, Orange, Yellow, and all mixtures in between (Jones, 1998). The increasing racial and ethnic complexity assures that relationships among all groups will change. The only questions are how, how much, and to what consequence.

Many analysts are concerned that assimilation will prove more difficult across the color line (Farley and Harris, 1998; Hochschild and Rogers, 1998; Harrison, 1998). As noted, current intermarriage rates and continuing and projected residential segregation patterns make it unlikely that the European experience of assimilation will be repeated. A new pluralism, involving considerable interaction, not unlike that in many of the new geographic high diversity areas, may be possible throughout the country (Gordon, 1994). On the other hand, the greatest likely source of racial isolation may continue to be the lower intermarriage rates of Blacks and higher social and geographic segregation from Whites and other groups (Farley, 1996; Farley and Harris, 1998; Harrison, 1998).

### **The Politics of Race in a Diversified American Society**

The demographic, geographic, economic, social, and political realities of life among racial and ethnic groups suggest consideration of a range of possible race relationships in the future. While, as discussed, it is clear that America will no longer function within a Black-White context, it is uncertain what issues and conundrums will take its place in a new ethnic and racial paradigm. How will the new demographic changes and realities translate to our racial ideologies and thinking of race? What do they mean for race relations among all groups? There are several possibilities for the future.



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One way to think about possible trajectories of the new ethnic and racial diversity, in which no group has a distinct majority, is directly tied to the position of minority groups. Corporate or balkanization approaches suggest that resources be allocated to minority groups according to their relative proportions in the population. Competitive approaches view minority groups fighting over whatever social, economic, and political resources may be available. Finally, cooperative approaches envision minority groups coming together in a unified voice to further the position of all in social, economic and political arenas. It is possible that the elimination of race as a dividing status may bring about the embracing of ethnicities as social categories, rather than as the basis for haggling over power and resources (Gordon, 1994).

### **Three Visions for Future Race Relationships**

These various approaches to relationships among ethnic and racial groups lead to several visions of future society. The first is a truly “color-blind civil society” that ignores racial and ethnic differences and tries to exist as “one people.” This vision may be too utopian because even the assimilative experience of European immigration took many generations. The vast scope of continuing and future immigration and the broad diversity of the demographic mix make this alternative unlikely.

“Multiracial conflict” is the second, and more dire, vision, entailing combative struggles among racial and ethnic groups to further the interests of individual groups rather than the larger society (Gordon, 1994). This vision is also unlikely because current patterns of geographical dispersion and intermarriage rates suggest that, at least among non-Black ethnic and racial groups, considerable assimilation will occur over the next several generations. However, because of many historical and contemporary reasons of geographical dispersion, housing and social segregation, and the relatively low levels of intermarriage with all other groups, Blacks may find themselves “odd men out” among coalitions of other ethnic and racial groups (Hochschild and Rogers, 1998).

The third vision is a “multiracial civil society,” in which pluralistic existence is the hallmark of life. This situation seems the most likely. A multiracial civil society views racial and ethnic differences as cherished and embraced, as groups work together to further the common good of society. This model is not necessarily predicated on assimilation, either geographical or through intermarriage. It is a vision in which education and public understanding become the main routes of achievement.

For example, in 1997, public schools already had a racial and ethnic composi-

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tion roughly comparable to that projected for the nation in 2020. Because of higher fertility rates and the younger age distributions in the minority and immigrant populations, the school age population in 1997 was 66 percent White, 15 percent Black, 14 percent Hispanic, 4 percent Asian and about 1 percent American Indian. It is expected that by the mid-21st century, the majority of school age population will be ethnic and racial minorities. Some research notes that current high school students have much greater social interaction across racial and ethnic lines than their parents, suggesting a reduction of social distance with increased racial and ethnic diversity (Harrison, 1998).

The future of racial diversity, division, and harmony in the country will depend heavily on how issues are addressed concerning the full and equal inclusion in American society of all ethnicities and races (Farley and Harris, 1998; Harrison, 1998; Kinder and Sanders, 1996; Patterson, 1997). Events over the past 40 years have clearly shown that simply removing legal barriers does not necessarily result in complete and equal participation (Clark, 1993). As pointed out in this article, large and abiding inequalities in work, income, education, and family life produce forces that act against the full incorporation of identifiable ethnic and racial groups (Darity and Myers, 1998; Farley and Harris, 1998; Kaus, 1992; Tucker, 1998).

Deeply held feelings remain that some amount of assimilation and amalgamation is necessary to maintain a strong, united country. Many see the veritable explosion of new immigration and the change in the nature of the ethnic mix as threatening basic values (Hochschild and Rogers, 1998). We argue for a more pluralistic vision in which equality of opportunity is not bounded by race or ethnicity. This pluralistic vision need not encroach in any way on the view of a strong, united America, with a continuing and renewed commitment to democratic values and industry and individual success (Gordon, 1994; Harrison, 1998; Hochschild, 1995; Kinder and Sanders, 1996).

The growth of racial and ethnic diversity may result in a greater role for economic interests in supplanting racial and ethnic group identification (Wilson, 1978). While this may be a fruitful outcome at the national level, some experiences at the neighborhood levels indicate otherwise. Hochschild and Rogers (1998) suggest that although many racial and ethnic groups may not perceive common interests, they in fact share common political and economic agendas. The recognition of these commonalities could result in the development of coalitions around specific material or policy interests, such as poverty, poor schools, inadequate housing, or joblessness.

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## Racial and Ethnic Commonalities and Disparities

Over the past few years, a number of national and regional surveys and reports on minority groups and Whites have examined similarities and differences in their views on critical issues (National Conference of Christians and Jews, 1994; Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 1997). The findings have been similar. On a wide array of social and political issues, people of all racial and ethnic groups concur on what the problems are, how serious they are, and some of the solutions. Often the dividing line is one of ideology, social class, or rural/urban rather than race or ethnicity. For example, except for abortion and affirmative action, similar levels of support have been found among all groups for reforming the welfare system, balancing the budget, not giving business tax breaks, cutting income taxes, and changing Medicare. Whites are somewhat more conservative, and Blacks more liberal, in their spending preferences than Latinos and Asians.

Across the various surveys, the four groups converge in agreeing that education is the most important issue facing their communities. All groups generally agree that drugs, crime, and gang violence are the next most important set of issues. Perhaps more surprising, the groups mostly concur on how to solve the problems of crime and schooling. Between 80 percent and 90 percent of Black, White, and "other" Americans agree that it is "extremely important" to spend tax dollars on reducing crime and illegal drug use among youth. Since 1982, non-Whites have been slightly more likely to agree that the country spends too little money on dealing with rising crime rates and drug addiction. But three-fourths of both Blacks and Whites agree that the penalties for powdered and crack cocaine should be the same. Blacks, Whites, and Hispanics agree that juveniles committing serious crimes should be charged as adults, and all identify three-strike and life sentences, increased money for youth programs, and hiring 100,000 more police officers as the most effective proposals for reducing crime (Hawkings and Herring, 1998). Blacks and Whites are similarly split in their views on school vouchers, and Blacks, Whites, and Latinos are almost equally supportive of a constitutional amendment to allow prayer in schools. Hochschild and Rogers (1998) report that non-Whites differ dramatically from Whites only in the hope that prisons can rehabilitate and especially on support for the death penalty.

However, a direct test of beliefs about the nature of racial and ethnic life produces shows wide disparities among the groups. In recent surveys, Blacks and Whites strongly disagree about whether Blacks continue to experience racism and discriminatory treatment in jobs, housing, the media, and the criminal justice system (Hochschild and Rogers, 1998). Whites are consistently more likely to see progress than regression in racial equality. It is noteworthy that these differences are diverging over time. The proportion of Blacks who see increasing racial equality

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declined from between 50 percent and 80 percent in the mid-1960s to between 20 percent and 45 percent in the 1980s. Whites generally believe that African Americans are as well off or better off than Whites in terms of jobs and access to health care and education, and almost one-half of Whites say the same regarding income and housing. Again, African Americans disagree. Latinos typically fall between Blacks and Whites on questions of racial identity and race relations. Asians also fall between Blacks and Whites, although they frequently resemble Whites.

In general, then, there appears to be little disagreement in support of broad policies, but much disagreement on the nature and sources of inequalities among groups.

Perhaps the question that has been most discussed addresses the nature of *perceived* commonalities among the four groups. In 1994, Whites reported feeling most in common with Blacks, who felt little in common with Whites. Blacks felt most in common with Latinos, who felt least in common with Blacks. Latinos felt most in common with Whites, who felt little in common with them. Asians felt most in common with Whites, who felt least in common with them (Hochschild and Rogers, 1998).

Other factors not fully tied to race or ethnicity can contribute to either division or coalition building. Religion, gender, age, recency or timing of immigration, and political ideology are among a list of factors that can either diminish or contribute to racial, geographic, or economic circumstances (Hochschild and Rogers, 1998).

### **Two Coalition Possibilities**

It should be clear that we see the role of coalitions and cooperation among racial and ethnic groups as a major key to the future stability and flourishing of the country. The greatly increased demographic heterogeneity in the United States will result in ethnic and racial diversity as the hallmark of this society at least through the 21st century. Hochschild and Rogers (1998) note that two broad coalitions are possible. The first encompasses shared racial interests and a strong antidiscrimination agenda among groups. Some have argued for a large coalition of all groups, like the Rainbow Party of the Reverend Jesse Jackson. This approach is consistent with a civil rights agenda and activism, with a belief in common social conditions and political imperatives.

The second broad coalition views the distance between blacks and other groups as a divide too large to overcome. In this model, Blacks must rely on family and internal group institutions to achieve success rather than joining in grand civil rights coalitions. As suggested by Hochschild and Rogers (1998), the new racial divide in urban

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politics may come to be defined in Black/non-Black instead of White/non-White terms. Thus, the nature of diversity in different local communities may result in the formation of grand ethnic coalitions or largely Black initiated actions, or specific strategies in the communities may oscillate between the two large classes of approaches.

### **CONCLUSIONS: THINKING ABOUT RACE IN THE FUTURE NEW AMERICA**

In looking to the future, it is important to begin by recognizing that the country has not been fully successful in addressing the issues of racial and ethnic incorporation, even framed simply as a Black-White issue. While circumstances of African Americans and the nature of Black-White relationships at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are clearly better than they were under slavery, reconstruction, Jim Crow, and the pre-civil rights era, there is much room for improvement. Thus, how can we deal with the new problems that are sure to face the nation in an extremely ethnically and racially diverse future? On the one hand, we certainly cannot continue to employ the same strategies and policies utilized in the past or present. Nor can we depend on the same narrow conceptualizations and thinking. On the other hand, we must not be lulled into believing or trusting that somehow the answers will come by themselves. For the nation to prosper and move forward, the positions of all people must be considered in developing new solutions that will bring us together to achieve the multiracial civil society that we envision.

The analyses of the authors in the forthcoming study on *New Directions: African Americans in a Diversifying Nation* lead to a wide range of recommendations for new policies and strategies. The problems of racial justice and equity are multifaceted in our diversifying society, and the points of view expressed in the data and conclusions are diverse, but not inconsistent. They encompass the varying points of view in the nation and offer Americans the opportunity to make critical judgments over time that reflect the values and interests of a democratic society.

In thinking about the broad policies that might be possible, the study's authors range far in their suggestions, addressing, for example, the controversial problems of economic reparations (Darity and Myers, 1998); school vouchers (Farley and Harris, 1998; Nettles and Orfield, 1998); affirmative action (Darity and Myers, 1998; Hochschild and Rogers, 1998); universal health insurance (LaVeist, 1998); differential sentencing (Hawkins and Herring, 1998); welfare reform (Tucker, 1998); and race-relevant versus race-neutral public policies (Darity and Myers, 1998; McLain and Stewart, 1998).

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These issues clearly need to be addressed. The authors also acknowledge that in a vastly more diversified America, politics, strategies and policies cannot be formulated merely in Black-White terms; new approaches will be necessary. The most common theme in these suggested new approaches involves the imperative of coalition formation among racial and ethnic groups that until the present have not been good coalition partners. Survey data (Hochschild and Rogers, 1998) and voting patterns (McLain and Stewart, 1998) suggest that the new racial and ethnic groups have much in common. There are also differences. The key will be how the differences can be minimized and how the common interests can be maximized within a united democratic framework.

One of the unique features of America is its capacity to struggle endlessly with its problems, devising a wide range of strategies, altering them when they lose favor or cease to be effective, and perhaps not ever being completely satisfied with the progress. In this fashion, we seek solutions to a vast array of social and economic problems, never seeing closure but never giving up in the search for a society that matches our ideals and principles. The search for racial justice has followed this pattern. *New Directions* chronicles the uneven progress that the nation has made as well as a range of scholarly opinion about what has been achieved and what remains to be accomplished. Our efforts to develop a culture that offers challenges, opportunities, and compassion to an increasingly diverse population is a work in process.

There is no doubt that tremendous racial progress has been made in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, it is not clear that the national consensus that slowly evolved into the civil rights milestones of the 20<sup>th</sup> century exists in the same manner today for the establishment of social, political, and economic equality among all racial and ethnic groups. Farley and Harris (1998) find only modest support among younger Whites for policies that bring about racial equality. Indeed, most observers are not optimistic about a rapid narrowing of Black-White economic and social gaps (Darity and Myers, 1998; Farley and Harris, 1998; Hochschild and Rogers, 1998; McLain and Stewart, 1998). Many believe that the lack of macro trends to insure greater equality and the strong consensus in the country to reduce transfer programs will result in the reproduction of racial inequalities for the foreseeable future (Danziger and Gottschalk, 1995; Hamilton and Hamilton, 1997).

A new national consensus is needed that builds on the coalition of groups in a uniquely diversified America. Unlike the consensus of the 1960s that coalesced around the fundamental rights of citizenship (Smith 1997), the consensus that is needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must build on the democratic ideals of full participation, hard work, fairness, justice and an abiding commitment to providing equal

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opportunity for all.

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