Ethnicity is identity with a group of people who share the cultural traditions of a particular homeland or hearth. Ethnicity comes from the Greek word *ethnikos*, which means “national.” Ethnicity is distinct from race, which is identity with a group of people who share a biological ancestor. Race comes from a middle-French word for generation.

Geographers are interested in where ethnicities are distributed across space, like other elements of culture. An ethnic group is tied to a particular place, because members of the group—or their ancestors—were born and raised there. The cultural traits displayed by an ethnicity derive from particular conditions and practices in the group’s homeland.

The reason why ethnicities have distinctive traits should by now be familiar. Like other cultural elements, ethnic identity derives from the interplay of connections with other groups and isolation from them.

Ethnicity is an especially important cultural element of local diversity because our ethnic identity is immutable. We can deny or suppress our ethnicity, but we cannot choose to change it in the same way we can choose to speak a different language or practice a different religion. If our parents come from two ethnic groups or our grandparents from four, our ethnic identity may be extremely diluted, but it never completely disappears.

The study of ethnicity lacks the tension in scale between preservation of local diversity and globalization observed in other cultural elements. Despite efforts to preserve local languages, it is not far-fetched to envision a world in which virtually all educated people speak English. And universalizing religions continue to gain adherents around the world. But no ethnicity is attempting or even aspiring to achieve global dominance, although ethnic groups are fighting with each other to control specific areas of the world.

Ethnicity is especially important to geographers because its characteristics derive from the distinctive features of particular places on Earth, such as rural eastern Kenya.

Features of race, such as skin color, hair type and color, blood traits, and shape of body, head, and facial features, were once thought to be scientifically classifiable. Contemporary geographers reject the entire biological basis of classifying humans into a handful of races because these features are not rooted in specific places.

However, one feature of race does matter to geographers—the color of skin. President Obama’s race is black because of the color of his skin. The distribution of persons of color matters to geographers because it is the fundamental basis by which people in many societies sort out where they reside, attend school, recreate, and perform many other activities of daily life.

### CASE STUDY / Ethnic Diversity in America

The United States is a country of ethnic diversity. The complexity of ethnic identity in the United States is clearly illustrated by Barack Obama: the country’s first black president, son of a white mother and black father.

- President Obama’s father, Barack Obama, Senior, was born in the village of Kanyadhiang, Kenya. He was a member of Kenya’s third-largest ethnic group, known as the Luo.
- President Obama’s mother, Ann Dunham, was born in Kansas. Most of her ancestors migrated to the United States from England in the nineteenth century.
- President Obama’s step-father—his mother’s second husband, Lolo Soetoro—was born in the village of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He was a member of Indonesia’s largest ethnic group, known as the Javanese.

Race and ethnicity are often confused. Ethnicity, such as the president’s Luo ancestry through his father, is important to geographers because its characteristics derive from the distinctive features of particular places on Earth, such as rural eastern Kenya.

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However, one feature of race does matter to geographers—the color of skin. President Obama’s race is black because of the color of his skin. The distribution of persons of color matters to geographers because it is the fundamental basis by which people in many societies sort out where they reside, attend school, recreate, and perform many other activities of daily life.

### KEY ISSUE 1

Where Are Ethnicities Distributed?

- Distribution of Ethnicities in the United States
- Differentiating Ethnicity and Race

An ethnicity may be clustered in specific areas within a country, or the area it inhabits may match closely the boundaries of a country. This section of the chapter examines the clustering of ethnicities within countries, and the next key issue looks at ethnicities on the national scale.

### Distribution of Ethnicities in the United States

The two most numerous ethnicities in the United States are Hispanics (or Latinos), at 15 percent of the total population, and African Americans, at 13 percent. In addition, about 4 percent are Asian American and 1 percent American Indian.
Clustering of Ethnicities

Within a country, clustering of ethnicities can occur on two scales. Ethnic groups may live in particular regions of the country, and they may live in particular neighborhoods within cities. Within the United States, ethnicities are clustered at both scales.

REGIONAL CONCENTRATIONS OF ETHNICITIES.

On a regional scale, ethnicities have distinctive distributions within the United States:

- **Hispanic or Latino/Latina.** Clustered in the Southwest, Hispanics exceed one-third of the population of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, and one-quarter of California (Figure 7-1). California is home to one-third of all Hispanics, Texas one-fifth, and Florida and New York one-sixth each. 

  *Hispanic or Hispanic American* is a term that the U.S. government chose in 1973 to describe the group because it was an inoffensive label that could be applied to all people from Spanish-speaking countries. Some Americans of Latin American descent have instead adopted the terms *Latino* (males) and *Latina* (females). A 1995 U.S. Census Bureau survey found that 58 percent of Americans of Latin American descent preferred the term *Hispanic* and 12 percent *Latino/Latina*.

  Most Hispanics identify with a more specific ethnic or national origin. Around two-thirds come from Mexico and are sometimes called Chicanos (males) or Chicanas (females). Originally the term was considered insulting, but in the 1960s Mexican American youths in Los Angeles began to call themselves Chicanos and Chicanas with pride.

- **African Americans.** Clustered in the Southeast, African Americans comprise at least one-fourth of the population in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, and South Carolina, and more than one-third in Mississippi (Figure 7-2). Concentrations are even higher in selected counties. At the other extreme, nine states in upper New England and the West have less than 1 percent African Americans.

- **Asian Americans.** Clustered in the West, Asian Americans comprise more than 40 percent of the population of Hawaii (Figure 7-3). One-half of all Asian Americans live in California, where they comprise 12 percent of the population. Chinese account for one-fourth of Asian Americans, Indians and Filipinos one-fifth each, and Korean and Vietnamese one-tenth each.

- **American Indians and Alaska Natives.** Within the 48 continental United States, American Indians are most numerous in the Southwest and the Plains states (Figure 7-4).
CONCENTRATION OF ETHNICITIES IN CITIES.
African Americans and Hispanics are highly clustered in urban areas. Around 90 percent of these ethnicities live in metropolitan areas, compared to around 75 percent for all Americans.

The distinctive distribution of African Americans and Hispanics is especially noticeable at the levels of states and neighborhoods. At the state level, African Americans comprise 85 percent of the population in the city of Detroit and only 7 percent in the rest of Michigan. Otherwise stated, Detroit contains less than one-tenth of Michigan's total population, but more than one-half of the state's African American population. Similarly, Chicago is more than one-third African American, compared to one-twelfth in the rest of Illinois. Chicago has less than one-fourth of Illinois' total population and more than one-half of the state's African Americans.

The distribution of Hispanics is similar to that of African Americans in large northern cities. For example, New York City is more than one-fourth Hispanic, compared to one-sixteenth in the rest of New York State, and New York City contains two-fifths of the state's total population and three-fourths of its Hispanics.

In the states with the largest Hispanic populations—California and Texas—the distribution is mixed. In California, Hispanics comprise nearly half of Los Angeles' population, but the percentage of Hispanics in California's other large cities is less than or about equal to the overall state average. In Texas, El Paso and San Antonio—the two large cities closest to the Mexican border—are more than one-half Hispanic, but the state's other large cities have percentages below or about equal to the state's average of around one-third.

The clustering of ethnicities is especially pronounced on the scale of neighborhoods within cities. In the early twentieth century, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, and other Midwest cities attracted ethnic groups primarily from Southern and Eastern Europe to work in the rapidly growing steel, automotive, and related industries. For example, in 1910, when Detroit's auto production was expanding, three-fourths of the city's residents were immigrants and children of immigrants. Southern and Eastern European ethnic groups clustered in newly constructed neighborhoods that were often named for their predominant ethnicities, such as Detroit's Greektown and Poletown.

The children and grandchildren of European immigrants moved out of most of the original inner-city neighborhoods during the twentieth century. For descendants of European immigrants, ethnic identity is more likely to be retained through religion, food, and other cultural traditions rather than through location of residence. A visible remnant of early twentieth-century European ethnic neighborhoods is the clustering of restaurants in such areas as Little Italy and Greektown.

Ethnic concentrations in U.S. cities increasingly consist of African Americans who migrate from the South or immigrants from Latin America and Asia. In cities such as Detroit, African Americans now comprise the majority and live in neighborhoods originally inhabited by European ethnic groups. Chicago has extensive African American neighborhoods on the south and west sides of the city, but the city also contains a mix of neighborhoods inhabited by European, Latin American, and Asian ethnicities (Figure 7-5).

In Los Angeles, which contains large percentages of African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans, the major ethnic
groups are clustered in different areas (Figure 7-6). African Americans are located in south-central Los Angeles and Hispanics in the east. Asian Americans are located to the south and west, contiguous to the African American and Hispanic areas.

African American Migration Patterns

The clustering of ethnicities within the United States is partly a function of the same process that helps geographers to explain the regular distribution of other cultural factors, such as language and religion—namely migration. The migration patterns of African Americans have been especially distinctive.

Three major migration flows have shaped the current distribution of African Americans within the United States:

- Forced migration from Africa to the American colonies in the eighteenth century.
- Immigration from the U.S. South to northern cities during the first half of the twentieth century.
- Immigration from inner-city ghettos to other urban neighborhoods during the second half of the twentieth and first decade of the twenty-first centuries.

FORCED MIGRATION FROM AFRICA. Most African Americans are descended from Africans forced to migrate to the Western Hemisphere as slaves. Slavery is a system whereby one person owns another person as a piece of property and can force that slave to work for the owner's benefit.

The first Africans brought to the American colonies as slaves arrived at Jamestown, Virginia, on a Dutch ship in 1619 (Figure 7-7). During the eighteenth century, the British shipped about 400,000 Africans to the 13 colonies that later formed the United States. In 1808, the United States banned bringing in additional Africans as slaves, but an estimated 250,000 were illegally imported during the next half-century.

Slavery was widespread during the time of the Roman Empire, about 2,000 years ago. During the Middle Ages, slavery was replaced in Europe by a feudal system, in which laborers working the land (known as serfs) were bound to the land and not free to migrate elsewhere. Serfs had to turn over a portion of their crops to the lord and provide other services as demanded by the lord.

Although slavery was rare in Europe, Europeans were responsible for diffusing the practice to the Western Hemisphere. Europeans who owned large plantations in the Americas turned to African slaves as an abundant source of labor that cost less than paying wages to other Europeans.

At the height of the slave trade between 1710 and 1810, at least 10 million Africans were uprooted from their homes and sent on European ships to the Western Hemisphere for sale in the slave market. During that period, the British and Portuguese each shipped about 2 million slaves to the Western Hemisphere, with most of the British slaves going to Caribbean islands and the Portuguese slaves to Brazil.

The forced migration began when people living along the east and west coasts of Africa, taking advantage of their superior weapons, captured members of other groups living farther
The large-scale forced migration of Africans obviously caused them unimaginable hardship, separating families and destroying villages. Traders generally seized the stronger and younger villagers, who could be sold as slaves for the highest price. The Africans were packed onto ships at extremely high density, kept in chains, and provided with minimal food and sanitary facilities. Approximately one-fourth died crossing the Atlantic.

In the 13 colonies that later formed the United States, most of the large plantations in need of labor were located in the South, primarily those growing cotton as well as tobacco. Consequently, nearly all Africans shipped to the 13 colonies ended up in the Southeast.

Attitudes toward slavery dominated U.S. politics during the nineteenth century. During the early 1800s, when new states were carved out of western territory, anti-slavery northeastern states and pro-slavery southeastern states bitterly debated whether to permit slavery in the new states. The Civil War (1861–1865) was fought to prevent 11 pro-slavery Southern states from seceding from the Union. In 1863, during the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing the slaves in the 11 Confederate states. The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, adopted 8 months after the South surrendered, outlawed slavery.

Freed as slaves, most African Americans remained in the rural South during the late nineteenth century working as sharecroppers (Figure 7-9). A **sharecropper** works fields rented from a landowner and pays the rent by turning over to the landowner a share of the crops. To obtain seed, tools, food, and living quarters, a sharecropper gets a line of credit from the landowner and repays the debt with yet more crops. The sharecropper system burdened poor African Americans with high interest rates and heavy debts. Instead of growing food that they could eat, sharecroppers were forced by landowners to plant extensive areas of crops such as cotton that could be sold for cash.

**IMMIGRATION TO THE NORTH.** Sharecropping became less common into the twentieth century as the introduction of farm machinery and a decline in land devoted to cotton reduced demand for labor. At the same time sharecroppers were being pushed off the farms, they were being pulled by the prospect of jobs in the booming industrial cities of the North.

African Americans migrated out of the South along several clearly defined channels (Figure 7-10). Most traveled by bus and car along the major two-lane long-distance U.S. roads that were paved and signposted in the early decades of the twentieth century and have since been replaced by interstate highways:

- East coast: From the Carolinas and other South Atlantic states north to Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and other northeastern cities, along U.S. Route 1 (parallel to present-day I-95).
• East central: From Alabama and eastern Tennessee north to either Detroit, along U.S. Route 25 (present-day I-75), or Cleveland, along U.S. Route 21 (present-day I-77).
• West central: From Mississippi and western Tennessee north to St. Louis and Chicago, along U.S. routes 61 and 66 (present-day I-55)
• Southwest: From Texas west to California, along U.S. routes 80 and 90 (present-day I-10 and I-20).

Southern African Americans migrated north and west in two main waves, the first in the 1910s and 1920s before and after World War I and the second in the 1940s and 1950s before and after World War II. The world wars stimulated expansion of factories in the 1910s and 1940s to produce war materiel, while the demands of the armed forces created shortages of factory workers. After the wars, during the 1920s and 1950s, factories produced steel, motor vehicles, and other goods demanded in civilian society.

In 1910, only 5,741 of Detroit’s 465,766 inhabitants were African American. With the expansion of the auto industry during the 1910s and 1920s, the African American population increased to 120,000 in 1930, 300,000 in 1950, and 500,000 in 1960.

EXPANSION OF THE GHETTO.
When they reached the big cities, African American immigrants clustered in the one or two neighborhoods where the small numbers who had arrived in the nineteenth century were already living. These areas became known as ghettos, after the term for neighborhoods in which Jews were forced to live in the Middle Ages (see Chapter 6).

In 1950, most of Baltimore’s quarter-million African Americans lived in a 3-square-kilometer (1-square-mile) neighborhood northwest of downtown (Figure 7-11). The remainder were clustered east of downtown or in a large isolated housing project on the south side built for black wartime workers in port industries. Densities in the ghettos were high, with 40,000 inhabitants per square kilometer (100,000 per square mile) common. Contrast that density with the current level found in typical American suburbs of 2,000 inhabitants per square kilometer (5,000 per square mile). Because of the shortage of housing in the ghettos, families were forced to live in one room. Many dwellings lacked bathrooms, kitchens, hot water, and heat.

African Americans moved from the tight ghettos into immediately adjacent neighborhoods during the 1950s and 1960s. In Baltimore, the west side African American area expanded from 3 square kilometers (1 square mile) in 1950 to 25 square kilometers (10 square miles) in 1970, and a 5-square-kilometer (2-square-mile) area on the east side became mainly populated by African Americans. Expansion of the ghetto continued to follow major avenues to the northwest and northeast in subsequent decades.

Differentiating Ethnicity and Race

Race and ethnicity are often confused. In the United States, consider three prominent ethnic groups—Asian Americans, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans. All three ethnicities display
In 1950, most African Americans in Baltimore lived in a small area northwest of downtown. During the 1950s and 1960s, the African American area expanded to the northwest, along major radial roads, and a second node opened on the east side. The south-side African American area was an isolated public housing complex built for wartime workers in the nearby port industries.

FIGURE 7-11 Expansion of African American ghetto in Baltimore, Maryland. In 1950, most African Americans in Baltimore lived in a small area northwest of downtown. During the 1950s and 1960s, the African American area expanded to the northwest, along major radial roads, and a second node opened on the east side. The south-side African American area was an isolated public housing complex built for wartime workers in the nearby port industries.

distinct cultural traditions that originate at particular hearths, but the three are regarded in different ways:

- Asian is recognized as a distinct race by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, so Asian as a race and Asian American as an ethnicity encompass basically the same group of people. However, the Asian American ethnicity lumps together people with ties to many countries in Asia.
- African American and black are different groups, although the 2000 census combined the two. Most black Americans are descended from African immigrants and therefore also belong to an African American ethnicity. Some American blacks, however, trace their cultural heritage to regions other than Africa, including Latin America, Asia, and Pacific islands.
- The term African American identifies a group with an extensive cultural tradition, whereas the term black in principle denotes nothing more than dark skin. Because many Americans make judgments about the values and behavior of others simply by observing skin color, black is substituted for African American in daily language.
- Hispanic or Latino is not considered a race, so on the census form members of the Hispanic or Latino ethnicity select any race they wish—white, black, or other.

The traits that characterize race are those that can be transmitted genetically from parents to children. For example, lactose intolerance affects 95 percent of Asian Americans, 65 percent of African Americans and Native Americans, and 50 percent of Hispanics, compared to only 15 percent of Americans of European ancestry. Nearly everyone is born with the ability to produce lactase, which enables infants to digest the large amount of lactose in milk. Lactase production typically slackens during childhood, leaving some with difficulty in absorbing a large amount of lactose as adults. A large percentage of persons of Northern European descent have a genetic mutation that results in lifelong production of lactase.

At best, biological features are so highly variable among members of a race that any prejudged classification is meaningless. Perhaps many tens or hundreds of thousands of years ago, early “humans” (however they emerged as a distinct species) lived in such isolation from other early “humans” that they were truly distinct genetically. But the degree of isolation needed to keep biological features distinct genetically vanished when the first human crossed a river or climbed a hill.

At worst, biological classification by race is the basis for racism, which is the belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race. A racist is a person who subscribes to the beliefs of racism.

Race in the United States

Every 10 years, the U.S. Bureau of the Census asks people to classify themselves according to the race with which they most closely identify. Americans are asked to identify themselves by checking the box next to one of the following fourteen races:

- White
- Black, African American, or Negro
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian Indian
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Japanese
- Korean
- Vietnamese
- Other Asian
- Native Hawaiian
- Guamanian or Chamorro
- Samoan
- Other Pacific Islander
- Other race

If American Indian, Other Pacific Islander, Other Asian, or Other race is selected, the respondent is asked to write in the specific name.

In 2000 about 75 percent of Americans checked that they were white, 12 percent black, 4 percent Asian (Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, or Vietnamese), 1 percent American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.1 percent Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (including Guamanian and Samoan), and 6 percent some other race. The census permits people to check more than one box, and 7 million Americans (2 percent) of the respondents did that in 2000. President Obama is an example of an American of more than one race. His father was a black native of Africa and his mother was white.
“SEPARATE BUT EQUAL” DOCTRINE. In explaining spatial regularities, geographers look for patterns of spatial interaction. A distinctive feature of race relations in the United States has been the strong discouragement of spatial interaction—in the past through legal means, today through cultural preferences or discrimination.

The U.S. Supreme Court in 1896 upheld a Louisiana law that required black and white passengers to ride in separate railway cars. In *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court stated that Louisiana’s law was constitutional because it provided separate, but equal, treatment of blacks and whites, and equality did not mean that whites had to mix socially with blacks.

Once the Supreme Court permitted “separate but equal” treatment of the races, southern states enacted a comprehensive set of laws to segregate blacks from whites as much as possible (Figure 7-12). These were called “Jim Crow” laws, named for a nineteenth-century song-and-dance act that depicted blacks offensively. Blacks had to sit in the back of buses, and shops, restaurants, and hotels could choose to serve only whites. Separate schools were established for blacks and whites. After all, white southerners argued, the bus got blacks sitting in the rear to the destination at the same time as the whites in the front, some commercial establishments served only blacks, and all of the schools had teachers and classrooms.

Throughout the country, not just in the South, house deeds contained restrictive covenants that prevented the owners from selling to blacks, as well as to Roman Catholics or Jews in some places. Restrictive covenants kept blacks from moving into an all-white neighborhood. And because schools, especially at the elementary level, were located to serve individual neighborhoods, most were segregated in practice, even if not legally mandated.

“WHITE FLIGHT.” Segregation laws were eliminated during the 1950s and 1960s. The landmark Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, in 1954, found that having separate schools for blacks and whites was unconstitutional, because no matter how equivalent the facilities, racial separation branded minority children as inferior and therefore was inherently unequal. A year later, the Supreme Court further ruled that schools had to be desegregated “with all deliberate speed.”

Rather than integrate, whites fled. The expansion of the black ghettos in American cities was made possible by “white flight,” the emigration of whites from an area in anticipation of blacks immigrating into the area. Detroit provides a clear example. Black immigration into Detroit from the South subsided during the 1950s, but as legal barriers to integration crumbled, whites began to emigrate out of Detroit. Detroit’s white population dropped by about 1 million between 1950 and 1975 and by another half million between 1975 and 2000. While whites fled, Detroit’s black population continued to grow, but at a more modest rate, as a result of natural increase. In sum, Detroit in 1950 contained about 1.7 million whites and 300,000 blacks. The black population increased to 500,000 in 1960, 700,000 in 1970, and 800,000 in both 1990 and 2000, while the white population declined from 1.7 million in 1950 to 1.3 million in 1960, 900,000 in 1970, 500,000 in 1980, 300,000 in 1990, and 200,000 in 2000.

White flight was encouraged by unscrupulous real estate practices, especially blockbusting. Under blockbusting, real estate agents convinced white homeowners living near a black area to sell their houses at low prices, preying on their fears that black families would soon move into the neighborhood and cause property values to decline. The agents then sold the houses at much higher prices to black families desperate to escape the overcrowded ghettos. Through blockbusting, a neighborhood could change from all-white to all-black in a matter of months, and real estate agents could start the process all over again in the next white area.

The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, known as the Kerner Commission, wrote in 1968 that U.S. cities were divided into two separate and unequal societies, one black and one white. Four decades later, despite serious efforts to integrate and equalize the two, segregation and inequality persist.

Division by Race in South Africa

Discrimination by race reached its peak in the late twentieth century in South Africa. While the United States was repealing laws that segregated people by race, South Africa was enacting them. The cornerstone of the South African policy was the creation of a legal system called apartheid (Figure 7-13). Apartheid was the physical separation of different races into different
Although South Africa’s apartheid laws were repealed during the 1990s, it will take many years to erase the impact of past policies.

In South Africa, under apartheid, a newborn baby was classified as being one of four races—black, white, colored (mixed white and black), or Asian. Under apartheid, each of the four races had a different legal status in South Africa. The apartheid laws determined where different races could live, attend school, work, shop, and own land. Blacks were restricted to certain occupations and were paid far lower wages than were whites for similar work. Blacks could not vote or run for political office in national elections. The apartheid system was created by descendants of whites who arrived in South Africa from Holland in 1652 and settled in Cape Town, at the southern tip of the territory. They were known either as Boers, from the Dutch word for “farmer,” or Afrikaners, from the word “Afrikaans,” the name of their language, which is a dialect of Dutch.

The British seized the Dutch colony in 1795, and controlled South Africa’s government until 1948, when the Afrikaner-dominated Nationalist Party won elections. The Afrikaners gained power at a time when colonial rule was being replaced in the rest of Africa by a collection of independent states run by the local black population. The Afrikaners vowed to resist pressures to turn over South Africa’s government to blacks, and the Nationalist Party created the apartheid laws in the next few years to perpetuate white dominance of the country. To ensure geographic isolation of different races, the South African government designated ten so-called homelands for blacks (Figure 7-14). The white minority
government expected every black to become a citizen of one of the homelands and to move there. More than 99 percent of the population in the ten homelands was black.

The white-dominated government of South Africa repealed the apartheid laws in 1991. The principal antiapartheid organization, the African National Congress, was legalized, and its leader, Nelson Mandela, was released from jail after more than 27 years of imprisonment. When all South Africans were permitted to vote in national elections for the first time, in 1994, Mandela was overwhelmingly elected the country's first black president.

Now that South Africa's apartheid laws have been dismantled and the country is governed by its black majority, other countries have reestablished economic and cultural ties. However, the legacy of apartheid will linger for many years: South Africa's blacks have achieved political equality, but they are much poorer than white South Africans. Average income among white South Africans is about ten times higher than that of blacks.

**KEY ISSUE 2**

**Why Have Ethnicities Been Transformed into Nationalities?**

- **Rise of Nationalities**
- **Multinational States**
- **Revival of Ethnic Identity**

Ethnicity and race are distinct from nationality, another term commonly used to describe a group of people with shared traits. **Nationality** is identity with a group of people who share legal attachment and personal allegiance to a particular country. It comes from the Latin word nasci, which means “to have been born.”

Nationality and ethnicity are similar concepts in that membership in both is defined through shared cultural values. In principle, the cultural values shared with others of the same ethnicity derive from religion, language, and material culture, whereas those shared with others of the same nationality derive from voting, obtaining a passport, and performing civic duties.

**Rise of Nationalities**

In the United States, nationality is generally kept reasonably distinct from ethnicity and race in common usage:

- **Nationality** identifies citizens of the United States of America, including those born in the country and those who immigrated and became citizens.
- **Ethnicity** identifies groups with distinct ancestry and cultural traditions, such as African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Chinese Americans, or Polish Americans.

- **Race** distinguishes blacks and other persons of color from whites.

The United States forged a nationality in the late eighteenth century out of a collection of ethnic groups gathered primarily from Europe and Africa, not through traditional means of issuing passports (African Americans weren't considered citizens then) or voting (women and African Americans couldn't vote then), but through sharing the values expressed in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. To be an American meant believing in the “unalienable rights” of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

In Canada, the Québécois are clearly distinct from other Canadians in language, religion, and other cultural traditions. But do the Québécois form a distinct ethnicity within the Canadian nationality or a second nationality separate altogether from Anglo-Canadian? The distinction is critical, because if Québécois is recognized as a separate nationality from Anglo-Canadian, the Quebec government would have a much stronger justification for breaking away from Canada to form an independent country (refer to Figure 5-27).

Outside North America, distinctions between ethnicity and nationality are even muddier. We have already seen in this chapter that identification with ethnicity and race can lead to discrimination and segregation. Confusion between ethnicity and nationality can lead to violent conflicts.

**Nation-States**

To preserve and enhance distinctive cultural characteristics, ethnicities seek to govern themselves without interference. A **nation-state** is a state whose territory corresponds to that occupied by a particular ethnicity that has been transformed into a nationality.

Ethnic groups have been transformed into nationalities because desire for self-rule is a very important shared attitude for many of them. The concept that ethnicities have the right to govern themselves is known as **self-determination**.

**DENMARK: THERE ARE NO PERFECT NATION-STATES.** Denmark is a fairly good example of a nation-state, because the territory occupied by the Danish ethnicity closely corresponds to the state of Denmark. The Danes have a strong sense of unity that derives from shared cultural characteristics and attitudes and a recorded history that extends back more than 1,000 years. Nearly all Danes speak the same language—Danish—and nearly all the world’s speakers of Danish live in Denmark.

But even Denmark is not a perfect example of a nation-state. Ten percent of Denmark’s population consists of ethnic minorities. The two largest groups are guest workers from Turkey and refugees from ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia (see Chapter 3).

To dilute the concept of a nation-state further, Denmark controls two territories in the Atlantic Ocean that do not share Danish cultural characteristics. One is the Faeroe Islands, a group of 21 islands ruled by Denmark for more than 600 years. The nearly 50,000 inhabitants of the Faeroe Islands speak...