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CHAPTER 1

An Intercultural Society

By the end of this chapter, students should:

- Be able to describe and discuss multicultural and intercultural approaches and understand the terms *assimilation* and *integration*.
- Be able to define culture and society and list the five components of culture in society.
- Be aware of Ireland's historic pattern of emigration.
- Be able to define *nationalism* and explore how it can be a barrier to accepting other cultures.
- Be able to discuss, using statistical examples, how culture changes over time.
- Be able to define *racism*, *race*, *ethnicity* and *xenophobia*.
- Understand the term *segregation* and discuss the effects of segregation under the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Multicultural and Intercultural Societies

The terms *multicultural* and *intercultural* both relate to approaches to how to build a society where there is a diversity of cultures. The key difference lies in the words themselves. *Multi* means 'many', so the term *multicultural* simply acknowledges the existence of more than one culture. *Inter* means 'between', so the word *intercultural* signifies communication and shared responsibility.

Until the 1940s, much of Europe was involved in global exploration and conquest, and there was little immigration to Europe itself. During this time 'it was widely assumed that all those who lived within a state boundary should assimilate to its predominant ethos, into which successive generations were socialised' (Council of Europe 2008:18). People of other cultures were expected to assimilate; that is, to forsake their own culture and become like the majority. Assimilation is defined as 'the blending of the culture and

structure of one racial or ethnic group with the culture and structure of society' (Curry *et al.* 2005:199). Assimilation will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

After 1945, in a post-war Europe, immigration became more common and government policy was often based on the concept of multiculturalism. This meant that recognition was given to the values of minority communities along with those of the 'host' majority, but little thought was given to integration.

Integration has been described as 'a two-sided process and as the capacity of people to live together with full respect for the dignity of each individual, the common good, pluralism and diversity, non-violence and solidarity, as well as their ability to participate in social, cultural, economic and political life' (Council of Europe 2008:11), while Jandt states that 'True integration is maintaining important parts of one's original culture as well as becoming an integral part of the new culture. Integration ensures a continuity of culture' (Jandt 2004:337).

Multiculturalism did encourage equality and tolerance for other cultures, but it emphasised lines of separation of minority and majority cultures, rather than promoting contact and understanding. People of other cultures were seen as separate communities and well-meaning but faulty attempts were made to cater for them as separate groups. Immigrants were often seen as having no cross-over with the majority and assumptions were made about their needs without consulting them. The majority 'host' society was encouraged to tolerate difference, but no efforts were made at finding common ground between the two. Lack of communication often resulted in stereotyping and discrimination. 'Whilst driven by benign intentions, multiculturalism is now seen by many as having fostered communal segregation and mutual incomprehension' (Council of Europe 2008:19). Thompson states that multiculturalism is insufficient, that cultural and religious pluralism are not enough, and calls for 'the state to be more actively involved in promoting a common citizenship and greater civic participation' (Thompson 2008:56). This point of view argues that racial and religious tolerance are not enough and that integration needs to be promoted through better educational and employment opportunities and greater civic engagement.

The policy of multiculturalism was increasingly seen as outdated, contributing to dividing people into rigid categories. A 2008 Council of Europe report, *Living Together as Equals in Dignity*, found that 'old approaches to the management of cultural diversity were no longer adequate to societies' (Council of Europe 2008:9). A new approach was needed for the twenty-first century and intercultural dialogue was seen to be the way forward. Intercultural societies involve people of different cultures not only living together but interacting and exchanging ideas. Through conversation, we can 'see where they are coming from' and develop respect for views other than our own. Recognition of the equal value of different cultures comes about by education and consultation. It is recommended that intercultural dialogue must not only be a policy at government level, but must take place in every area of life, 'be it the neighbourhood, the workplace,

the education system and associated institutions, civil society and particularly the youth sector, the media, the arts world or the political arena' (Council of Europe 2008:10).

An intercultural approach is concerned with the exchange of views between those of different cultures, in an effort to build trust, understanding and respect. Participation by all in society is a key aim – newcomers must feel able to participate in every area of society and not be 'boxed off' into special areas of interest. For example, many schools dedicate one day to celebrating the different nationalities of pupils, but efforts should be made to include them across the entire school year.

The ultimate aim of intercultural dialogue is for people 'to learn to live together peacefully and constructively in a multicultural world and to develop a sense of community and belonging' (Council of Europe website: 'The concept of intercultural dialogue'). Intercultural dialogue can also prevent or resolve conflict and promote respect for human rights and democracy. Some of the goals of intercultural dialogue are:

- To share different perspectives of the world and try to understand and learn from those with different views.
- To recognise similarities as well as differences between different cultures.
- To reach agreement that disputes should be resolved peacefully.
- To ensure that all cultures participate equally.
- To reassure those who view diversity as a threat.

  Summarised from Council of Europe website: 'The concept of intercultural dialogue'.

Some conditions that favour intercultural dialogue are that people bring open and curious minds to the process, are aware of the basic features of their own and other cultures and are willing to see similarities as well as differences between their own and other cultures.

Finding shared areas of concern results in increased integration. Rotimi Adebari, a former asylum seeker, was elected as a local government councillor in Portlaoise in 2004, became Ireland's first black mayor in 2007 and was re-elected in 2009. His success was based on focusing on local issues shared by all, such as childcare, hospital closures, public transport and employment initiatives, winning support not just among immigrants but in the wider society.

Summarised from Council of Europe (1995, 2008, website: 'The concept of intercultural dialogue'); Fanning (2012).

Activities

1   A local community centre offers mother and toddler groups for Polish women. Consider whether this is good intercultural practice. What arguments could be made for and against providing separate groups for different nationalities?

2   An Irish person moving to live in another country would probably be surprised if the locals assumed they ate only bacon, cabbage and potatoes, listened only to Irish music and followed only Gaelic games. What assumptions do you make about other cultures' interests?

3   What areas that are of interest and importance to you do you think immigrants might also think important?

4   Discuss what qualities and interests you would look for in a friend or colleague. Are these qualities and interests likely to be shared across cultures?

5   Discuss which of the following are most important in forming bonds with people: shared age group; shared taste in music, films, books; shared religion; shared personal circumstances (e.g. losing a loved one, having a toddler in the house, being divorced); shared heritage; shared hobbies; shared workplace or place of study; shared standard of living.

Culture

What is culture? We all use and hear the term regularly, but what do we mean by it? It has been defined as 'the values, customs and acceptable modes of behaviour that characterise a society or social groups within a society' (Marsh & Keating 2000:24). Simply put, culture involves the set of unwritten rules guiding how we live. We all live in a society and without being aware of it, we operate in a similar pattern to those about us.

'A society is a system of structured social relationships connecting people together according to a shared culture' (Giddens 2001:699). Society is dependent on culture and culture is dependent on society – neither can exist without the other.

We are individuals, but we share certain common beliefs and ways of behaving. This is more than a matter of choice: we must share a common code in order for society to function. This common code is our culture. For instance, we all know that it is bad manners for a guest to wear white at a wedding, we know what words are appropriate at a funeral, we recognise the difference between the distance required in a bank queue and a supermarket queue.

One of the things that culture reminds us of is that home is much more than a name we give to a dwelling place. It is also a whole set of connections and affections, the web of mutual recognition that we spin around ourselves and that gives us a place in the world. (O'Toole 1997:136)

Culture is a very broad term, so in order to examine it closely, sociologists have divided culture into five components: symbols, language, values, norms and material culture. These five components are common to all cultures and it is the variety of these components that makes each culture unique and distinct.

Symbols

Symbols are 'anything that carries a particular meaning recognised by people who share culture' (Macionis & Plummer 2002:100). Symbols are instantly recognisable. If we see a picture of a harp, Ireland immediately comes to mind. The colour red has become symbolic of danger or warning in our culture, for example the red card in football or a red light for 'stop'. Symbols can vary from one culture to another. In Arab culture, showing the sole of your shoe to a person is considered highly insulting, while in Ireland such an action would be merely puzzling.

Language

In order for us to communicate with each other we need a shared language. Apart from being the practical means of communication, language can have an emotional appeal. Also, apart from the actual language used, such as French or English, the variety of expression and even the use of slang will pinpoint a person's particular culture – words and phrases used in Ireland will differ from those in other English-speaking countries. Use of language also varies from generation to generation – for example, teenagers in Ireland often use Americanisms and abbreviations in texting and internet use that would be incomprehensible to an older person.

Values

'Fundamental to all cultures are the ideas which define what is considered important, worthwhile and desirable. These abstract ideas, or values, give meaning and provide guidance to humans as they interact with the social world' (Giddens 2001:22). We may think of our own values as being universal, but on closer inspection we can see that they are particular to a certain culture. For instance, a shared value in western society is monogamy within marriage, but other cultures allow a man to have many wives.

The values of Irish society were in the past often tied in with the Catholic faith. For example, sex outside marriage was not acceptable and any display of sexuality was frowned upon: 'Even students in Dublin would not dare to be seen holding hands, and

in the country to make love before marriage was to risk banishment' (David Thomson, quoted in Somerville-Large 2000:131).

Norms

Norms are the 'rules and expectations by which a society guides the behaviour of its members' (Macionis & Plummer 2002:107). Norms consist of what we should and shouldn't do to fit into society. Again, what is forbidden or rude in one culture may be completely acceptable in another. 'In China, people curious about how much money colleagues are paid readily ask about their salaries. In Europe, people consider such a question rude' (Macionis & Plummer 2002:107). In the extreme heat of Australia, women may go shopping in their bikinis without anyone being shocked, yet to do so in Ireland would probably result in a mention on the news.

The consequences of disobeying norms vary from mild disapproval to being cut off from society. Because of the wide range of norms, they can be divided into four sub-groups: mores; folkways; taboos; and laws. The terms 'mores' and 'folkways' were devised by the American sociologist William Graham Sumner.

Mores

Sumner used the term 'mores' to refer to a society's standards of proper moral behaviour. Because of their importance in maintaining a society's way of life, people develop an emotional attachment to mores and breaking them results in a strong reaction. Disobeying mores threatens the welfare of society and can cause serious offence. For example, public nudity and drug use go against the mores of society and carry heavy social punishment.

Folkways

'Sumner used the term folkways to designate *a society's customs for routine, casual interaction* . . . In short, while mores distinguish between right and wrong, folkways draw a line between right and *rude*' (Macionis & Plummer 2002:108). Folkways involve less serious matters than mores, such as everyday courtesy and appropriate dress. Because they are less serious, there is more leeway around folkways and breaking them will result in mild disapproval rather than punishment. For example, a guest who turns up at a wedding wearing jeans will probably evoke disapproving comments or laughter but will not be punished or excluded in any way. A person who bumps into us and makes no apology will probably cause annoyance, but this will not be seen as a serious matter.

Taboos

These are rules that are so serious it is almost unthinkable to break them. A person who violates a taboo puts themselves outside society altogether and is regarded with horror.

The consequence of breaking a taboo is to be excluded from society altogether. 'Taboos are norms about things that are so serious as to be almost beyond comprehension . . . violating taboos typically will result in extreme punishment and ostracism' (Curry *et al.* 2005:36). Examples of taboos are incest, cannibalism and bestiality.

Laws

These are rules written and enforced by the state. Breaking taboos often involves breaking the law, but not every crime is taboo. Breaking laws results in more than disapproval: penalties, such as imprisonment or fines, result in most people complying with them.

Material culture

While symbols, values, language and norms are non-material concepts, material culture refers to the actual objects that surround us. The physical environment, which includes infrastructure, along with the range of objects we use and are familiar with, has an enormous impact on our culture. For example, mobile phones and the internet influence the way we interact with each other, creating huge changes in modern society. Material culture often changes at a faster pace than our ideas and values. 'William Ogburn (1964) observed that technology moves quickly, generating new elements of material culture (such as "test tube babies") faster than non-material culture (such as ideas about parenthood) can keep up with them.' (Macionis & Plummer 2002:110).

Culture sources: Curry *et al.* (2005); Giddens (2001); Macionis & Plummer (2002); Marsh *et al.* (2000); O'Toole (1997); Somerville-Large 2000.

Activities

1 Make a list of what makes Irish culture distinct. Try to include all five components of culture.

2 Compare your list with other classmates' and discuss what items you have in common. How many of the items listed do you believe in or practise yourself?

3 Working in pairs, take a country. Try to list what you know of this country's culture under each of the five headings.

4 Although in Ireland English is spoken more often than Irish, there is still a distinct difference in how the language is used. Make a list of certain words and phrases that are used only in Ireland or even only in your own locality. Discuss what other factors – for example speed, number and length of pauses, filler words – make Irish conversation unique.

Nationalism

Nationalism can be defined as 'a set of beliefs and symbols expressing identification with a given national community' (Giddens 2001:694).

These shared beliefs and symbols provide a sense of being part of a shared community, often giving people a sense of being connected to a larger group. Feelings of shared identity in a social group are very powerful because the need for identity is a central part of being human. However, although this sense of unity is largely a positive force, it can also create barriers to accepting other cultures.

National identity is often linked to political struggle, so Irish identity is often linked with the antagonistic relationship with Britain. Share, Tovey and Corcoran argue that Irish nationalism largely focused on what made us different from the English. 'The nation in Ireland was defined by prioritising those elements of culture where the contrast with the emerging English nation was greatest' (Share *et al.* 2007:349). We attach importance to elements in our culture that emphasise our difference and distinctiveness, so as the Irish language declined, other aspects such as religion became central to national identity.

Being Irish was often associated with being Catholic, and many famous figures of nationalism, such as Roger Casement, Maud Gonne and Constance Markiewicz, converted to Catholicism because 'to be Irish was to be Catholic' (Somerville-Large 2000:100). Seán O'Casey, the famous Irish playwright, was told as a child that his religion meant he was not Irish: 'One day, an' us playin', Kelly told me that us Catholics were really Irish; an' as we were Protestants, we couldn't anyway be near Irish' (O'Casey, quoted in Somerville-Large 2000:102).

Outside influences have often been seen as a threat to nationalism:

> The Gaelic League, launching a renewed anti-jazz campaign in 1934 declared that 'It is this music and verse that the Gaelic League is determined to crush . . . Its influence is denationalising in that its references are to things foreign to Irishmen.' (O'Toole 1997:133)

Douglas Hyde, the first president of Ireland, 'argued that Irish men should stop wearing trousers (an English dress custom) and return to the "traditional" dress of knee-breeches' (Share *et al.* 2007:350).

In this way, nationalism can become dependent on ideas of 'them' and 'us'. The danger is that in being over-protective of our own identity, we may be unwelcoming towards anyone from another culture. If we regard our culture as being fragile, immigrants will be regarded as a threat. 'Those for whom a nation is defined by a shared and distinctive culture often argue that maintenance of national difference depends on a degree of isolation from, or a barrier against, intercultural contact' (Share *et al.* 2007:343–4). However, trying to protect traditional ways of life through a policy of isolation is impossible in today's world. Modern trends towards internationalism and globalisation

already change society; they 'ultimately give rise to a shared "world culture" in which nationalism and national cultural barriers are no longer significant' (Share *et al.* 2007:344). It has been argued that forces of globalisation create a new 'borderless world' in which national identity is less important than previously (Kenichi Ohmae, quoted in Giddens 2001:446).

We do not have to regard immigration as a threat to our national identity, but instead can choose to allow new experiences to enrich us and help create new identities. Intercultural dialogue can be important in holding on to the important aspects of our identity while being open to new ideas and new voices. Such an approach is:

> . . . a mechanism to constantly achieve a new identity balance, responding to new openings and experiences and adding new layers to identity without relinquishing one's roots. . . . Identities that partly overlap are no contradiction: they are a source of strength and point to the possibility of common ground. (Council of Europe 2008:19)

Nationalism summarised from: Council of Europe 2008; Giddens 2002; Somerville-Large 2000; Share *et al.* 2007.

Activities

1 Consider this statement: 'In imagining it as a community, nationalists assert that those within the nation share a deep sense of solidarity with even those fellow-nationals they never meet and with past generations' (Share *et al.* 2007:349).

    Discuss whether a shared nationality gives a sense of oneness that crosses all boundaries. For instance, would an Irish farmer have more in common with an Irish factory worker than a Greek farmer? Would a teenage Irish student have more in common with an Irish pensioner than a Polish student who is studying the same subject and has a similar family background?

2 Has technology, such as mobile phones and the internet, had a significant impact on the idea of a national identity? Split the class into two halves: half the class will argue for and half against this notion. Vote on which reasons are the most convincing.

3 'Daniel Corkery's famous definition of Irishness as characterised by Land, Nationality and Catholicism remained ideologically potent well into the 1970s. The idea that authentic Irishness was both rural and Catholic was perhaps a way of making the best of a bad job' (O'Toole 1997:15).

    Do you consider the above traits as being central to Irish identity today? What other core beliefs do you have about being Irish – e.g. being born here, being white, etc. – and do they exclude anyone? Can a person from another country ever become Irish? How many generations would it take, in your opinion, for a person of foreign

ancestry to become Irish? Reflect on these things in private and then discuss them in class.

4   There are some aspects of Irish culture that are relatively new or did not originate in Ireland, although we think of them as core symbols of identity. Research the Irish flag, the national anthem, the harp as a symbol of Ireland and the first St Patrick's Day parade. Share your results and discuss whether you found any them surprising.
Try the following websites:
www.askaboutireland.ie/learning-zone/secondary-students/music/special%20study-turlough-ocarolan/the-harp-a-symbol-of-irel/
www.history.com/topics/st-patricks-day-facts
www.historyireland.com/volumes/volume4/issue1/features/?id=113150
www.taoiseach.gov.ie/upload/publications/1104.pdf

5   Education is an important tool for building a shared national identity. 'In a national education system, new generations of students can be socialised into a common culture, language and values and thus increase their sense of national belonging' (Share *et al.* 2007:351). How much impact did your school have on your sense of nationality?

Ireland Past and Present

Ireland has historically been a land of emigrants. During the famine of 1845 to 1849, one and a half million people are estimated to have emigrated, largely to the USA, Canada, Australia and Britain (Ruckenstein & O'Malley 2004:129). By 1851, the population was reduced to 6.1 million and this fell again to 4.4 million by 1911 (Ruckenstein & O'Malley 2004:130). After World War I, immigration restrictions to the USA ruled out that destination, but the outward flow continued, mainly to Britain. 'Between 1924 and 1928 130,000 emigrated, of whom eighty per cent were aged between fifteen and thirty-five. Whole hurling teams would leave' (Somerville-Large 2000:124). In the decade from 1951 to 1961, the population fell by 142,252 (CSO 2011b:9). Money sent from abroad was essential to keep those at home afloat: 'As late as 1958 American money constituted approximately two and a half per cent of the national income' (Somerville-Large 2000:125). From the 1960s onwards, emigration slowed and the population at last began to climb, with births outnumbering emigration and deaths. The trend has continued upwards, except for the late 1980s, when the population dipped by just under 15,000 (www.cso.ie).

The Census of 2011 lists 4,588,252 as the latest population figure (CSO 2011b). Results from the 2011 Census show that 12 per cent (544,357) of the current population is of non-Irish nationality. The top ten non-Irish nationalities represented

are Polish, British, Lithuanian, Latvian, Nigerian, Romanian, Indian, Filipino, German and American (USA) (CSO 2011b:33). Immigration to Ireland is a new experience and, to some people, not a welcome one:

> One of the great paradoxes of Irish history after the foundation of the State is the complete contradiction between the expectation, on the one hand, that Irish people had a right to emigrate to wherever they could, and on the other, the great reluctance to allow immigration into Ireland. (O'Toole 1997:131)

People are comfortable with the familiar and may feel threatened by change. Many people view immigrants with suspicion, afraid that these newcomers will alter the familiar culture. 'Some of the concern currently being expressed about immigration to Ireland springs from a fear that this will dilute Irish cultural distinctiveness' (Share *et al.* 2007:344).

However, no culture remains the same, even without newcomers. Change is inevitable, but not without resistance; there is 'an endless cultural war between tradition and change' (O'Toole 1997:233). The term 'generation gap' highlights the changes that take place in a society over time.

In Ireland, we have seen massive changes in our culture in the last century. Material culture has altered hugely, our rates of wealth have gone from recession to boom and back to recession again, but despite our current economic woes we still take for granted material comforts that were once unthinkable. In 1932 barely eight per cent of children received a secondary education; and 'In 1938 there were over 60,000 tenements in Dublin, "human piggeries", rat infested and without basic amenities' (Somerville-Large 2000:171, 124). The census of 1946 revealed that 310,265 houses had no toilet, and there were 55,052 houses in Dublin alone with no bath (Somerville-Large 2000:247). The Rural Electrification Scheme started in 1946 but uptake was slow due to the cost, so it was not until the late 1970s that 98% of homes had electricity (Delaney n.d.).

In contrast, the 2011 Census showed that 1.36 million Irish households had at least one car, and 28 per cent of third-level students had their own car; 65.3 per cent of households had broadband (CSO 2011c); and fewer than one household in every 50 had no central heating (CSO 2011b:46).

Society has also seen a massive shift from rural to urban, with the number of farms declining: in 1961, 46.4 per cent of the population lived in urban areas; by 2011, this figure had increased to 62 per cent (CSO 2011b:13).

The average family has also changed hugely. In the past, most families were very large, which was an indicator of social values. Mothers did not go out to work and religious beliefs prevented family planning. In 2011 there were only 1,592 families with seven or more children (CSO 2011b:26), while statistics from 1911 show a pattern of very large families –147,407 women had between seven and 15 children (National Archives).

Attitudes have changed massively in the last century. A good example is the attitude to having children outside marriage. In the recent past, giving birth to a child outside marriage was a great scandal. Unmarried mothers could be sent to Magdalene laundries, and even if this was not the outcome, society would frown on not only the parent but the child itself:

> An illegitimate child . . . could not be a priest . . . That rule reflected a wider prejudice in an overwhelmingly Catholic society obsessed with sexual purity. The playwright Hugh Leonard, who grew up illegitimate in the Dublin of the 1930s and 1940s, 'knew that to be what they called illegitimate was an occasion for deep shame. There had been a sin of some kind and because of it you were not the same as children who had parents' . . . Even in the early 1960s, an American Jesuit researching attitudes in Ireland found that the general belief was that 'Illegitimate babies are bad, bad, bad.' (O'Toole 1997:37)

This cultural attitude was reflected in the law. Under the Legitimacy Act of 1931 an illegitimate child could have no claim on its father's estate. Not until 1964 did Irish law recognise the right of an unmarried mother to be the guardian of her own child. 'As late as 1985, the Irish Supreme Court ruled that children born out of wedlock had no rights of succession to their father's estate. Not until 1987 was the legal concept of illegitimacy abolished in Ireland' (O'Toole 1997:38). Nowadays children born outside marriage have the same rights as those born within marriage. Apart from the law, attitudes have also seen a dramatic shift. In 2010 33.7 per cent of births were outside marriage (CSO 2011d:64). This percentage indicates a huge cultural change.

Summarised from CSO (2011b,c,d); Delaney; National Archives; O'Toole (1997); Ruckenstein & O'Malley (2004); Somerville-Large (2000).

Activities

1   A famous quote from L. P. Hartley's novel *The Go Between* is, 'The past is a foreign country, they do things differently there.' Discuss what he means by this.

2   Talk to a person at least 20 years older than yourself and note differences between the society they grew up in and the society of today. Areas of interest would include living standards, education, moral attitudes, family life, work, religion and socialising.

3   Statistics show that in the past we were poorer, less urban, more religious and more likely to emigrate. What problems do we face today that previous generations did not have to cope with?

4 One example of cultural change is the change in gender roles. Ireland has had two female presidents and a female Olympic boxer. What other examples of changing cultural attitudes regarding gender can you think of?

5 Reflect on your attitude to change in society. Why do you think people are frightened of change?

Race

Race is defined as 'A socially constructed term used to refer to the division of human beings into distinct "types" recognisable through reference to physical characteristics (e.g. skin colour)' (Marsh & Keating 2000:785). The belief that humans are separated into biologically distinct races was often used to justify colonialism. Soldiers, slavers and settlers did not have to feel guilty when they regarded natives as beings entirely different from themselves.

Count Joseph Arthur de Gobineau (1816–1882) divided people into three races: white (Caucasian); black (Negroid); and yellow (Mongoloid). He believed white people to be highly intelligent, yellow people to be cunning and black people to be stupid and animal-like. 'The ideas of de Gobineau and fellow proponents of scientific racism later influenced Adolf Hitler, who transformed them into the ideology of the Nazi party, and other white supremacist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan in the United States and the architects of apartheid in South Africa' (Giddens 2001:245–6).

Dividing the human race into categories often leads to associating certain qualities with certain groups. The belief that biology, rather than socialisation, moulds a person's character is outdated. Modern genetic science shows the lack of basis for assuming major differences in people of different backgrounds. 'The overall genetic differences between "races" – Africans and Europeans, say – is no greater than that between different countries within Europe or within Africa' (Jones (1991), cited in Marsh & Keating 2000:381).

Some sociologists argue that the term 'race' should only be used with inverted commas to show its lack of scientific basis. Yet, because of its everyday usage and social meaning, others see the term as important in any attempt to examine society: 'Others . . . argue that the term "race" has a social relevance, with very real consequences, and therefore should be retained without commas' (Marsh & Keating 2000:785).

Giddens argues that although race has no biological foundation, it is important to examine it and question why and how certain differences – such as eye colour – hold no importance for society, yet other differences are of major importance. This arbitrary choice of what differences are meaningful have to do with maintaining command of wealth and power resources:

Differences in skin colour for example are treated as significant, whereas differences in colour of hair are not . . . Racial distinctions are more than ways of describing human differences – they are also important factors in the reproduction of patterns of power and inequality within society. (Giddens 2001:246)

Having a different skin colour from that of the majority population may also mean that children or even grandchildren of immigrants may be permanently excluded from majority society, because the belief that they are of a different race dominates perception of them. Studies of the Chinese population in Ireland show that recent Chinese immigrants and second-generation Chinese, whose parents came to Ireland in the 1980s, are two distinct groups but are often lumped together. 'Even though second-generation Chinese are Irish Born Chinese (IBC), they are still limited in their abilities to claim "Irishness" because of race' (King-O'Riain 2008:77). Irish-born Chinese may feel an Irish national identity but remain branded 'other' – 'The Irish label equated with white and the uncertainty of accepting an Irish identity was further communicated' (Yau (2007), cited in King-O'Riain 2008:77).

Summarised from Giddens (2001); King-O'Riain (2008); Marsh & Keating (2007).

Ethnicity

The notion of race assumes biological differences, while the notion of ethnicity is completely based on a shared culture. Ethnicity may often be defined by a nation, but it is also a fluid identity that can be recreated, given new circumstances: 'Black slaves in the USA developed a common identity as black people despite coming from different parts of Africa, where there were different cultures and languages' (Haralambos & Holborn 2004:181).

As discussed earlier in the section on nationalism, groups or even whole nations define themselves by their shared cultural identity and their differences from others. 'Ethnicity refers to the cultural practices and outlooks of a given community of people that set them apart from others . . . Different characteristics may serve to distinguish ethnic groups . . . [the] most usual are language, history or ancestry, religion, style of dress' (Giddens 2001:246–7).

However, in the modern world, where globalisation ensures a blurring of obvious differences, more subtle markers of ethnicity come into play:

Membership in the 'Irish Nation' . . . may relate to quite minor aspects of interaction, such as how close a person stands to another, how they pitch their voice or the sort of jokes they make . . . a 'real Irish person' ought to recognise Cromwell's phrase 'to hell or to Connaught' or know who Seán Óg Ó hAilpín is. (Share *et al.* 2007:343)

The term 'ethnic' applies to all cultures, but has come to be regarded as applying mainly to minority groups. For example, 'Chinatown' in New York would be perceived as ethnic, because it is surrounded by a different culture. However, we would probably not think of the surrounding American society as being ethnic. Ethnicity has come to be seen as signifying difference from the norm.

Every society has its own cultural values, but there may be smaller groups within the society who do not share the same identity. Those of the dominant ethnic group may feel threatened by those who do not share their way of life. Being too attached to our own culture can cause problems. 'Issues of common identity and cultural difference are mobilised to account for the fear and hostility of the host population towards the ethnic other' (Marsh & Keating 2000:391). Feeling threatened in this way often results in excluding and isolating those who are different. Exclusion does not just take place on a social level but results in disadvantage on a wider scale. 'In virtually all societies, ethnic differences are associated with variations in power and material wealth' (Giddens 2001:688).

Summarised from Giddens (2001); Haralambos & Holborn (2004); Marsh & Keating (2000); Share *et al.* (2007).

Xenophobia

Xenophobia literally means 'a fear of strangers'. 'It is generally used to denote negative attitudes towards immigrant groups on account of their cultural differences' (Marsh & Keating 2000:790).

Activities

1 Discuss as a class what ideas you hold about race and where those ideas come from.

2 Research the way in which theories of race have been used to justify unfair treatment. Present your findings to the class.

3 Irish people speak English, wear similar clothes and share a similar lifestyle to people in the UK. Discuss ways in which you think our ethnicity differs from theirs.

4 Reflect on reasons why a society might feel threatened by another ethnicity.

5 King-O'Riain's research found that 'The Irish label equated with white.' Reflect on your own beliefs about skin colour and nationality.

6 Seán Óg Ó hAilpín, the GAA star, was born in Fiji. He has an Irish father and Fijian mother but his status of 'Irish' is never in question. Discuss why barriers to being accepted remain for some but are not a problem for others.

7   The New Zealand All Blacks, a team composed of both Maoris and players of European descent, perform the Haka before each match. The Haka was originally a Maori ceremonial dance but now has a new meaning beyond one ethnicity. Discuss how something that was traditional for one group only can fuse with another culture in a way that benefits both groups.

Stereotypes and Cultural Myths

Stereotypes are 'rigid and inaccurate images that summarise a belief' (Curry *et al.* 2005:198). They categorise people in a very narrow and limited way, not allowing for the huge variety of behaviour and ability in people. Examples of stereotypes are 'dizzy blonde', 'drunken Irish' and 'loud American'. Stereotypes are mental 'shortcuts' that we often use to try to simplify the world.

> A bewildering array of identity role models are offered by the global media. Faced with such complexity, applying to 'the other' a simplifying stereotype – on to which all the ills of the world can be projected – can be insidiously seductive. (Council of Europe 2008:34)

Stereotypes will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 2.

Cultural myths are everyday shared ideas that often support stereotyping, such as 'women are bad drivers' and 'boys don't cry'. 'Cultural myths gain such enormous power over us by insinuating themselves into our thinking before we're aware of them. Most are learned at a deep, even unconscious level' (Colombo *et al.* 2001:4). These commonly held beliefs reflect and uphold the standards of society. They are so ingrained that we think of them as 'common sense' and natural truths. However, when we consider some of these 'truths' from the past, such as 'children should be seen and not heard', 'spare the rod and spoil the child' and 'a woman's place is in the home', we may not be so sure of our own assumptions.

Summarised from Colombo *et al.* (2001); Curry *et al.* (2005);
Council of Europe (2008).

Labelling

'Labelling is a process by which individuals or groups categorize certain types of behaviour and certain individuals' (Marsh & Keating 2000:663). Society may fix labels on certain groups and then treat them in such a way as to produce the type of behaviour they have been labelled with. Thus, if a group is labelled as 'troublemakers', society will react to them in a way that confirms this behaviour. The education system, social services, police and legal system will be more likely to come down heavily on groups

that are labelled in a negative way: 'Rules tend to be applied more to some persons than others . . . The middle class boy is less likely, when picked up by the police, to be taken to the station; less likely when taken to the station to be booked; and it is extremely unlikely that he will be convicted and sentenced' (Becker (1963), cited in Marsh & Keating 2000:664–5). Labelling children in the classroom as 'disruptive' or 'difficult' may result in them being treated differently from other pupils. Similarly, labelling ethnic groups in a negative way causes people to react to them unfavourably and may even produce the very behaviour they were labelled with.

Summarised from Bilton *et al.* (2002); Marsh & Keating (2000).

Activities

1   Have you ever been labelled? Discuss how difficult it is to break free from a label once it has been applied.

2   Consider the old sayings, 'Give a dog a bad name and hang him' and 'Get the name of an early riser and you can sleep all day.' Discuss ways in which they may apply to labelling.

3   If all students agree, they can investigate the process of labelling. Ten students can be the 'guinea pigs'. The rest of the class will be told that five of them are labelled negatively as 'unco-operative', 'lazy', 'stupid', 'aggressive', etc. while the other five are given positive labels such as 'willing', 'positive attitude', 'diligent', etc. The 'guinea pigs' will not know which labels they have been given and will behave as normal. Over a week, the class will try to find evidence to support these labels and will present this 'evidence' at the end of the week. The purpose of this activity is to demonstrate how once a label has been applied, people will often find proof to justify it. (Note: make an effort to respect the sensitivities of the 'guinea pigs'!)

Racism

Racism has been defined as 'The attributing of characteristics of superiority or inferiority to a population sharing certain physically inherited characteristics. Racism is one specific form of prejudice, focusing on physical variations between people' (Giddens 2001:696). Racist beliefs hold that all the members of one particular group are either superior or inferior. No regard is given to individuality – a decision has already been made based on a person's origin. A racist view sees a person defined only by their race and destined to act only in stereotypical ways – 'to display genetically determined patterns of social, cultural, political and economic behaviour' (Marsh & Keating 2000:790).

The Irish have often been victims of racism. In 1860 Charles Kingsley described the Irish as 'human chimpanzees' (quoted by Fanning 2012:13). Fanning also states that in

2000, the Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (the 'Parekh Report') included Irish people, along with Jews, Muslims and black people, as being targets of racism, and 'argued that anti-Irish racism has many of the same features as most racisms' (Fanning 2012:13).

Institutional Racism

The idea of institutional racism 'was developed in the United States in the late 1960s by civil rights campaigners who believed that racism underpins the very fabric of society, rather than merely representing the opinions of a small minority' (Giddens 2001:252). The belief is that racism exists not only in individuals but also within key powerful institutions, such as the courts, the police force, government bodies, the health service and schools. A study done on 'stop and search' police practice in the UK found that black people were 7.5 times more likely to be stopped than white people (Statewatch (1999) cited in Bilton *et al.* 2002:390).

The television and film industry, along with the print media, are also seen as guilty of institutional racism because of their negative or limited portrayal of ethnicities.

Biological racism is now outdated, but a more subtle and sophisticated version has replaced it, a version that 'uses the idea of cultural differences to exclude certain groups' (Giddens 2001:252). Ethnicity, not only skin colour, is often a target for racist beliefs. The most obvious displays of racism are those that involve violence, taunts and discrimination, but more subtle forms of racism exist. People who are different from mainstream culture 'have to cope with a society in which they are portrayed as "other", as inferior, different, threatening' (Marsh & Keating 2000:382).

Summarised from Bilton *et al.* (2002),Fanning (2012); Giddens (2001); Marsh & Keating (2000).

Project ideas

1 One of the most famous examples of institutional racism is the Tuskegee Study. Research this case and present your findings.

2 Marsh and Keating point out how European history focuses only on the achievements of white people, and they compare the fame of Florence Nightingale with the relative obscurity of Mary Seacole, who also nursed in the Crimea. Research the life of Mary Seacole and discuss why she is not well known.

3 'As Miles (1993) has reminded us, racism against black people has long coexisted with racism against Irish and Jewish people' (Marsh & Keating 2000:384). Research racist attitudes towards Irish people.

Segregation

Segregation is defined as 'the physical and social separation of categories of people' (Macionis & Plummer 2002:678). Under such a system, groups of people remain entirely separate and are treated differently instead of being treated as equals. The apartheid regime in South Africa was an example of a segregated society. Sadly, there are still many examples of segregated societies, for example the caste system in India.
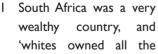
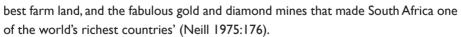## Case study: Apartheid in South Africa

Apartheid is defined as 'The official system of racial segregation established in South Africa in 1948 and practised until 1994' (Giddens 2001:688).
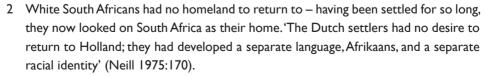
During the colonial era, Africa was largely under European control, but many African states gained independence during the 1960s. An exception to this was South Africa, whose population included three million South Africans of English and Dutch descent. The white minority adopted a policy of forced racial segregation known as apartheid.

People were divided into four categories – white, coloured (mixed race), Asian and black – and the social system was organised to favour the whites.

The non-white majority (15 million people) wanted independence and change but the white South Africans were determined not to let go, for three reasons:

1   South Africa was a very wealthy country, and 'whites owned all the best farm land, and the fabulous gold and diamond mines that made South Africa one of the world's richest countries' (Neill 1975:176).
2   White South Africans had no homeland to return to – having been settled for so long, they now looked on South Africa as their home. 'The Dutch settlers had no desire to return to Holland; they had developed a separate language, Afrikaans, and a separate racial identity' (Neill 1975:170).
3   They were unwilling to surrender the advantages that they had ensured for themselves, such as top jobs being given only to whites, while white and black workers were paid

different wages for doing exactly the same job. 'The average weekly wage of a white miner in 1961 was £115, but the wage of his black counterpart was only £9' (Neill 1975:170).

The system of separation called 'apartheid' had been encoded in law in 1948 and was enforced brutally. Non-whites had no vote, no representatives at government level, and segregation existed at every level of society: separate schools, hospitals, neighbourhoods, public transport and even different sides of the street were designated for whites and non-whites. Brutal force was used to keep this system in place and any opposition parties, such as the African National Congress (ANC) were banned and their leaders imprisoned. For example, Nelson Mandela was imprisoned in 1962. Torture during imprisonment was common.

Any resistance, such as protest marches, was brutally supressed. In the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, protesters were shot at by police and 70 people died.

Over the years, resistance continued and much international pressure was put on the South African government. Economic sanctions were used, foreign investments were withdrawn and trade restrictions put in place. Global campaigns encouraged boycotts of South Africa, South African athletes were banned from competing at the Olympics, the South African football team was suspended from FIFA, and many musicians would not tour there.

In 1990, President F. W. de Klerk lifted the ban on the ANC and Nelson Mandela was freed after 27 years of imprisonment. In 1994, the first election was held in which non-whites could vote. The ANC got 62 per cent of the vote, Mandela became president and remained in office until 1999.

The new constitution outlawed all forms of discrimination, but much damage had been done during the apartheid regime. Of a population of 38 million, nine million lived in poverty, 20 million were without electricity, half the black population was illiterate and infant mortality rates were ten times higher among blacks than whites. There was also massive political and racial tension.

During his term as president, Mandela sought to reconcile and unite black and white under the common goal of improving South Africa; he aimed to address the past and move forward. An effort was made to bring dissenters, such as the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party, into parliament in order to promote unity and ease tension.

From 1996 to 1998, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), headed by Desmond Tutu, heard and examined cases of human rights abuses under the apartheid system. The sessions were open to the public and were widely covered in the media. These sessions were not trials, no punishments were given; instead the commission focused on uncovering the results of living under such a system. They hoped to deal with the past and start afresh. Those who had been in charge – government officials

and policemen – were given amnesty from prosecution for their crimes in return for openness and truth.

The TRC published a 3,500-page report in 1998. Some criticised it for simply cataloguing events, while others argued that the testimonials from both abused and abusers served to highlight the massive injustices of such a system. 'The TRC forced attention to be paid to the dangerous consequences of racial hatred and … demonstrated the power of communication and dialogue in the process of reconciliation' (Giddens 2001:243).

South Africa today still struggles with its past, yet there is huge effort being made in overcoming racial divisions.

Summarised from Giddens (2001); Neill (1975).

Project ideas

1 In Ireland in the mid-1980s, 12 Dunnes workers went on strike after a cashier was suspended for refusing to check out South African goods (RTÉ 2005). Find out what happened and what the outcomes were. A useful web link to start with is www. historyireland.com/volumes/volume14/issue4/features/?id=330.

2 'A caste society is a closed society, with no social mobility possible from one caste to another' (Browne 1992:12). Research the caste system in India.

Revision questions

 1 Compare multicultural and intercultural approaches to diversity.

 2 Describe what integration means.

 3 List the five components of culture.

 4 Describe how nationalism can be a barrier to accepting other cultures.

 5 Outline briefly some ways in which Ireland has changed in the last century.

 6 Explain how the concept of 'race' is different from 'ethnicity'.

 7 Explain the term 'institutional racism'.

 8 Describe the effects of 'labelling'.

 9 Describe what segregation means.

10 Outline how outside pressure helped end the apartheid regime.