

# 7. Race and Ethnicity

## Objectives

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- Learn about racial and ethnic minorities
- Understand prejudice and discrimination
- Learn about minority groups in the United States

## Vocabulary

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assimilation	dominant group	institutional discrimination	prejudice	scapegoating
cultural pluralism	endogamy	minority group	race	segregation
discrimination	ethnic group		racism	

## Background

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Though most students are aware of America's race and ethnicity issues, their information might not be balanced and objective. Facts about the minority group experience in the U.S. probably are new to them, too. Material in this chapter can help students to question their assumptions, raise their awareness, and broaden their views in these areas.

Throughout history, students discover, one dominant group in a society has established the norms and social structure that minority groups have had to follow and struggle under. To gain a greater understanding of this social dynamic, students evaluate the origins of and differences between the racial and ethnic groups that make up the U.S. Students survey common characteristics shared by minority group members, including patterns of treatment and response to negative forms of treatment by dominant groups, such as forced removal, segregation, subjugation, and annihilation.

Students go on to discover the difference between the prejudice (an attitude) and discrimination (an action) that often underlies the behaviors of the dominant group. They then examine the psychological, cultural, and social roots of prejudice and the three types of discrimination: legal, nonlegal, and institutional.

Next, they closely examine major minority groups in the U.S.: African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. Students learn key historical facts and present-day statistics relating to each of these key ethnic groups. They also find out how each group compares to the dominant white majority in key economic and social areas of U.S. life. An important distinction is made, that minority group members have the opportunity to occupy all levels of the social hierarchy, since ethnicity does not predetermine class in the U.S. The chapter also examines America's "white ethnics"—minority immigrant groups—and the ethnic neighborhoods that, since the 19th century, have supported them and helped them to assimilate into mainstream society.

### Further Resources

Lelyveld, Joseph and New York Times

Correspondents. *How Race Is Lived in America: Pulling Together, Pulling Apart*. New York: Times Books, 2001.

Takaki, Ronald T. *A Larger Memory: A History of Our Diversity, with Voices*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1998.

## For Discussion

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### Review

1. According to the U.S. Census Bureau Report, what are the five categories of race?
2. What are the two roots of prejudice?
3. What are the three largest Latino groups in the U.S.?
4. From what countries do the six largest Asian-American groups come?

### Critical Thinking

1. Why do you think it is difficult for a minority group to live by rules set by the dominant group in a society?
2. Under what kinds of social circumstances does the feeling of “us versus them” intensify for minority groups? Offer examples from recent history.
3. In what ways has U.S. society encouraged most of its immigrant minority groups—particularly those who are white—to join mainstream society?
4. In what ways can prejudice be positive and negative? Offer examples.
5. Do you favor assimilation or cultural pluralism for American ethnic groups? Why?

## Activities

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### 1. Discrimination in America

Ask each student to present a short account of another American’s experience of discrimination because of race or ethnicity. Students should choose a race or ethnic background different from their own and find their accounts in books, magazines, and newspapers. Encourage class discussion.

### 2. Interviews: Ethnicity

Ask students to interview their parents and/or other family members about the family’s ethnic background, history, integration or lack of integration into American society, and other issues. Guide students in coming up with ten questions for the interviews. Compare results in class.

### 3. Internet: Race and Ethnicity across America

Divide students into groups and assign each group a different geographical area of the U.S. Have students use U.S. Census sources on the Internet to gather statistics about the main U.S. ethnic groups in each area. When finished, have students compare their findings. Encourage students to speculate about why populations are distributed in these ways.

### 4. Special Sources: Students’ Reactions

Ask each student to choose a topic related to race and ethnicity in the U.S. and suggested by this chapter. Have them research, write, and present short reports on their topics, using library resources.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Race and Ethnicity

As you read Chapter 7, write an answer to each question below.

1. What are the four characteristics that sociologists use to identify minority groups? Explain.

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2. In the past, what four forms has negative treatment of minorities taken? Explain.

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3. What are the three types of discrimination? Explain.

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4. What are the two largest groups of Asian Americans? In what ways have they been discriminated against?

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5. What happened to the Native Americans after the Europeans arrived in North America?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Race and Ethnicity

Find the best answer for each item. Then circle the correct answer.

1. What is a "dominant group"?
  - a. group in a society that sets the values and norms and creates a social structure that operates in its favor
  - b. group in a society that makes only the major economic decisions
  - c. group that has the most people in it
  - d. group in society with the most political power, but little social power
2. What is the term for recognizable groups of people who suffer disadvantages due to prejudice or discrimination by the dominant group?
  - a. ethnic groups
  - b. minority groups
  - c. segregated groups
  - d. assimilated groups
3. What is the term for a major division of the world's population based on biologically inherited physical characteristics?
  - a. ethnic group
  - b. dominant group
  - c. cultural pluralism
  - d. race
4. What are groups of people identified by their common cultural backgrounds, like national origin, religion, and language?
  - a. ethnic groups
  - b. minority groups
  - c. segregated groups
  - d. dominant groups
5. What is the physical separation of racial and/or ethnic groups within a culture?
  - a. institutional discrimination
  - b. assimilation
  - c. segregation
  - d. scapegoating
6. What is prejudice?
  - a. negative attitude toward an entire category of people, often an ethnic or racial minority
  - b. negative action toward an ethnic or racial minority
  - c. attitude of indifference
  - d. judgment based on legal research
7. What is the term for denial of opportunities and equal rights to people based on their group membership?
  - a. institutional racism
  - b. prejudice
  - c. discrimination
  - d. segregation
8. What occurs when someone places the blame for troubles on an innocent individual or group?
  - a. endogamy
  - b. institutional discrimination
  - c. scapegoating
  - d. cultural pluralism
9. What is the belief that one race is supreme and all others are inferior?
  - a. institutional discrimination
  - b. racism
  - c. moral prerogative
  - d. scapegoating
10. What is the denial of opportunities and equal rights to individuals and groups that results from the normal operations of a society?
  - a. racism
  - b. discrimination
  - c. endogamy
  - d. institutional discrimination

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Race and Ethnicity

Read each description, and write the letter of the correct term on the line.

1. The group of people who have the power, whose members include the \_\_\_\_\_, is the dominant group.
  - a. teachers, coaches, and heads of corporations
  - b. rulers, lawgivers, and religious, military, and educational leaders
  - c. sports figures, professionals, and heads of household
  - d. celebrities, public figures, and academics
2. A common misconception about minority groups is that they are always \_\_\_\_\_ than the majority group in a society.
  - a. less educated
  - b. numerically smaller
  - c. numerically bigger
  - d. less ambitious
3. Race divides people into groups based on \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. ethnicity/language
  - b. skin color/language
  - c. skin color/ancestral origin
  - d. ethnicity/education
4. In the United States, about \_\_\_\_\_ percent of the population is non-white.
 

a. 50	c. 63
b. 65	d. 30
5. Jews, although they are racially diverse and live in many countries around the world, are bound together by their common \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. religious beliefs, customs, and values
  - b. memory
  - c. attitudes
  - d. social elements
6. Members of a minority generally marry others from the same group, a practice known as \_\_\_\_\_.
 

a. assimilation	c. polygamy
b. endogamy	d. monogamy
7. The Latin roots of the word prejudice mean \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ before knowing.
  - a. harassing/insulting
  - b. deciding/insinuating
  - c. prejudging/judging
  - d. ignoring/disregarding
8. The percentage of African Americans completing four or more years of college is about \_\_\_\_\_ that of whites, and the percentages are \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. half/decreasing
  - b. one-third/decreasing
  - c. half/increasing
  - d. two-thirds/increasing
9. The suicide rate among Native Americans is almost \_\_\_\_\_ as high as in the general population.
 

a. three times	c. twice
b. four times	d. half
10. \_\_\_\_\_ are still more likely to be CEOs of large corporations and major political leaders.
  - a. Roman Catholics
  - b. Jews
  - c. "White Ethnics"
  - d. White Anglo-Saxon Protestants

### Essay Question

How would you describe the racial and ethnic climate in your school? If relations are poor, what could be done to improve them?