Learning Objectives

- Understand the meaning of race and the dangers of the myth of racial superiority.
- Compare and contrast ethnicity and race.
- Identify the distinction between minority and dominant groups. Describe the concept of ethnic work.
- Differentiate between prejudice and discrimination and understand what is meant by the internalization of dominant norms.
- Analyze the psychological and sociological explanations of prejudice.
- Explore the six basic ways that dominant groups treat minority groups.
- Identify the major racial-ethnic groups in the United States. Discuss the reasons why racial-ethnic terms are problematic.
- Analyze the immigration debate and the impact of affirmative action.

Chapter Summary

With more than seven billion people on the planet, the world offers a fascinating array of human characteristics. **Race** refers to the inherited physical characteristics that distinguish one group from another. These distinguishing characteristics include a variety of complexions, colors, and shapes. Although there have been significant strides in the understanding of race and racial equality, two myths of race are still common. One is the perception that some races are superior to others; the other is that “pure” races exist. The idea of race remains a very real and powerful force throughout the world, shaping basic relationships between people in the United States and elsewhere.

The question of how many races inhabit the planet is a debatable topic among anthropologists and sociologists. The number of race classifications has ranged from two to two thousand. Ashley Montagu, has classified humans in forty “racial” groups.

While race refers to biological characteristics that distinguish one group of people from another, ethnicity refers to cultural characteristics that distinguish one group of people from another. Derived from the Greek word “ethnos,” meaning “people” or “nation,” ethnicity may center on nation of origin, distinctive foods, dress, language, music, religion, or family names and relationships. It is common for people to confuse the terms “race” and “ethnic group.” Jews, for example, are considered by many as being a race, but, in reality, are more accurately classified as an ethnic group. People often construct their racial and ethnic identity through a process referred to as “ethnic work.” **Ethnic work** refers to activities to discover, enhance, or maintain ethnic and racial identification. This includes clothing, food, language, celebrated holidays, and religion.

Along with race and ethnicity, the concept of a minority group is often misunderstood. Louis Wirth defined a minority group as a group of people who are singled out for unequal treatment.
and who regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination. A group becomes a minority in one of two ways: through the expansion of political boundaries, or by migration. Although often used interchangeably, prejudice and discrimination are not the same. Prejudice refers to an attitude, or prejudging, usually in a negative way. Discrimination is an act of unfair treatment directed against an individual or group. Discrimination comes in two forms: individual discrimination, consisting of the negative treatment of one person by another on the basis of that person’s perceived characteristics, and institutional discrimination, consisting of discriminatory practices embedded in and spread throughout society’s social institutions.

Psychological theories of prejudice include “scapegoating” (unfairly blaming another individual or group for one’s own frustrations and troubles) and authoritarian personalities (people that are more inclined to respect authority and submit to superiors).

Sociological theories of prejudice focus on the social environments that encourage or discourage prejudice. Functionalists examine the benefits and costs of discrimination; conflict theorists look at the way groups in power exploit racial and ethnic divisions; and symbolic interactionists explore how labels create prejudice and how racial and ethnic stereotypes become self-fulfilling prophecies.

Sociologists have identified six global patterns of intergroup relations between dominant and minority groups. They are genocide, population transfer, internal colonialism, segregation, assimilation, and multiculturalism. Each has been practiced in the United States at one time or another, and all are presently practiced somewhere in the world.

The major ethnic groups in the United States are, from the largest to the smallest, European Americans, Latinos (Hispanics), African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. Each minority group faces different concerns or obstacles. For many years, white Europeans from countries other than England were not welcomed in America. Referred to as “white ethnics,” these Caucasian Europeans had language and customs different from the earliest immigrants and were considered to be inferior. Latinos are divided by country of origin. African Americans are increasingly divided into middle and lower classes. The wellbeing of Asian Americans varies widely by country of origin. However, the success of Asian Americans is attributed to their traditional family structures, their higher levels of education, and their assimilation into the dominant culture. For Native Americans, the primary issues are poverty, nationhood, and settling treaty obligations. All minority groups are concerned with overcoming discrimination. Every group that has immigrated to America has faced this problem, including Caucasian Europeans. It has been argued that people of color have faced greater degrees of discrimination. Current issues dominating race-ethnic relations in the United States include immigration, affirmative action, and multiculturalism.
Chapter Outline

I. Laying the Sociological Foundation
   A. Race, a group of people with inherited physical characteristics that distinguish it from another group, is both a myth and a reality.
      1. It is a reality in the sense that humans come in different colors and shapes.
      2. It is a myth because there are no pure races; what we call “races” are social classifications, not biological categories. The mapping of the human genome shows that humans are strikingly homogenous.
      3. The classification of race is complex. Some scientists have classified humans into two “races” while others have found as many as two thousand.
      4. It is a myth that any race is superior to others. Throughout history, there are examples in which this myth was put into practice. For example, the Holocaust, the massacre in Rwanda, and the “ethnic cleansing” in Bosnia.
      5. The myth of race makes a difference for social life because people believe these ideas are real and they act on their beliefs.
   B. Race and ethnicity are often confused due to the cultural differences people see and the way they define race. The terms ethnicity and ethnic refer to cultural characteristics that distinguish a people.
   C. Minority groups are people singled out for unequal treatment and who regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination.
      1. They are not necessarily in the numerical minority. Sociologists refer to those who do the discriminating as the dominant group; they have greater power and privileges. The dominant group attributes its privileged position to its superiority, not to discrimination.
      2. A group becomes a minority through expansion of political boundaries by another group. Another way for a group to become a minority is by migration into a territory, either voluntarily or involuntarily.
   D. Some people feel an intense sense of ethnic identity while others feel very little.
      1. An individual’s sense of ethnic identity is influenced by the relative size and power of the ethnic group, its appearance, and the level of discrimination aimed at the group. If a group is relatively small, has little power, has a distinctive appearance, and is an object of discrimination, its members will have a heightened sense of ethnic identity.
      2. Ethnic work refers to how ethnicity is constructed and includes enhancing and maintaining a group’s distinctiveness or attempting to recover ethnic heritage. In the United States, millions of Americans are engaged in ethnic work, which has challenged the notion that our nation would be a melting pot, with most groups quietly blending into a sort of ethnic stew.

II. Prejudice and Discrimination
   A. Prejudice and discrimination exist in societies throughout the world.
      1. Discrimination is an action—unfair treatment directed against someone. When based on race, it is known as racism. It also can be based on many features such as weight, age, sex, sexual preference, disability, religion, or politics.
2. Prejudice is prejudging of some sort, usually in a negative way.
3. Sociologists found that some people learned prejudice after association with certain groups. Racism was not the cause for joining a racist group but the result of their membership in that group.
4. It has been found that prejudice against one racial-ethnic group leads to prejudice against others.
5. People can learn to be prejudiced against their own groups by internalizing the norms of the dominant group.
6. Psychologists found through the “Implicit Association Test” that we hold biased perceptions of racial groups through the ethnic maps that we have learned in our culture.

B. Sociologists distinguish between individual discrimination (negative treatment of one person by another) and institutional discrimination (negative treatment of a minority group that is built into society’s institutions).
1. Race-ethnicity is a significant factor in getting a mortgage or a car loan. Researchers found that even when two mortgage applicants were identical in terms of credit histories, African Americans and Latinos were 60 percent more likely than whites to be rejected. In the recent housing crisis, African Americans and Latinos were harder hit than whites; a major reason for this is that banks purposely targeted minorities to charge higher interest rates.
2. In terms of health care, researchers compared the age, sex, race, and income of patients and found that whites were more likely than minorities to be given coronary bypass surgery or receive knee replacements.

III. Theories of Prejudice
A. Psychological Perspectives
1. According to John Dollard, prejudice results from frustration; people unable to strike out at the real source of their frustration find scapegoats to unfairly blame.
2. According to Theodor Adorno, highly prejudiced people are insecure, intolerant people who long for the firm boundaries established by strong authority; he called this complex of personality traits the authoritarian personality.
3. Subsequent studies have generally concluded that people who are older, less educated, less intelligent, and from a lower social class are more likely to be authoritarian.

B. Sociological Perspectives
1. To functionalists, the social environment can be deliberately arranged to generate either positive or negative feelings about people. Prejudice is functional in that it creates in-group solidarity and out-group antagonism, but dysfunctional because it destroys human relationships. Functionalists do not justify what they discover but simply identify functions and dysfunctions of human action.
2. To conflict theorists, the ruling class systematically pits group against group; by splitting workers along racial ethnic lines they benefit, because solidarity among the workers is weakened. The higher unemployment rates of minorities create a reserve labor force from which owners can draw when they need to expand production temporarily. The existence of the reserve labor force is a constant
threat to white workers, who modify their demands rather than lose their jobs to unemployment. Racial-ethnic divisions at work are also encouraged and exploited. This weakens workers’ bargaining power.

3. To symbolic interactionists, the labels we learn color our perceptions, leading to selective perception—we see certain things and are blind to others. Racial and ethnic labels are especially powerful because they are shorthand for emotionally-laden stereotypes. Symbolic interactionists stress that we learn our prejudices in interactions with others. These stereotypes not only justify prejudice and discrimination, but they also lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy—stereotypical behavior in those who are stereotyped.

IV. Global Patterns of Intergroup Relations
A. Genocide is the actual or attempted systematic annihilation of a race or ethnic group that is labeled as less than fully human. The Holocaust and the U.S. government’s treatment of Native Americans are examples. Labels that dehumanize others help people compartmentalize; they can separate their acts from their sense of being good and moral people.
B. Population transfer is involuntary movement of a minority group. Indirect transfer involves making life so unbearable that members of a minority then leave; direct transfer occurs when a dominant group expels a minority.
C. Internal colonialism is a society’s policy of exploiting a minority by using social institutions to deny it access to full benefits. Slavery is an extreme example as well as South Africa’s system of apartheid.
D. Segregation is the formal separation of racial or ethnic groups that accompanies internal colonialism. Dominant groups maintain social distance from minorities yet still exploit their labor.
E. Assimilation is the process by which a minority is absorbed into the mainstream. Forced assimilation occurs when the dominant group prohibits the minority from using its own religion, language, or customs. Permissive assimilation is when the minority adopts the dominant group’s patterns in its own way and/or at its own speed.
F. Multiculturalism, also called pluralism, permits or encourages ethnic variation. Switzerland is an excellent example of multiculturalism. The French, Italians, Germans, and Romansh have kept their own languages and live in political and economic unity.

V. Racial-Ethnic Relations in the United States
A. Racial and ethnic terms that are used in the United States are controversial.
   1. White Americans comprise 65 percent of the U.S. population, minorities comprise 33 percent and between 1 and 2 percent claim membership in two or more racial-ethnic groups.
   2. Minority groups tend to be clustered in regions, so the distribution of dominant and minority groups among the states rarely comes close to the national average.
B. White Anglo Saxon Protestants (WASPs) established the basic social institutions in the United States when they settled the original colonies.
1. WASPs were very ethnocentric and viewed immigrants from other European countries as inferior. Subsequent immigrants were expected to speak English and adopt other Anglo Saxon ways of life.

2. White ethnics are white immigrants to the United States whose culture differs from that of WASPs. They include the Irish, Germans, Poles, Jews, and Italians. They were initially discriminated against by WASPs who felt that something was wrong with people with different customs.

3. The institutional and cultural dominance of Western Europeans set the stage for current ethnic relations.

C. The terms Latino and Hispanic do not refer to a race, but to different ethnic groups. Latinos may be black, white, or Native American.

1. When Europeans first arrived on this continent, Latinos had already established settlements in Florida and New Mexico.

2. Today, Latinos are the largest minority group in the United States. About 32 million people trace their origins to Mexico, four million to Puerto Rico, two million to Cuba, and about eight million to Central and South America. While most are legal residents, large numbers (9 million) have entered the United States illegally and avoid contact with public officials.

3. The migration of Mexicans across the U.S. border has become a major social issue. A civilian group—called the Minutemen—are volunteers who patrol the border unofficially.

4. Concentrated in four states (California, Texas, New York, and Florida), Mexican immigrants are causing major demographic shifts.

5. The Spanish language distinguishes most Latinos from other U.S. ethnic groups; perhaps half are unable to speak English without difficulty. This is a major obstacle to getting well-paid jobs. Some Anglos perceive the growing use of Spanish as a threat and have initiated an “English only” movement and have succeeded in getting states to consider making English their official language.

6. Divisions of social class and country of national origin prevent political unity.

7. Compared with white Americans and Asian Americans, Latinos are worse off on all indicators of well-being. The country of origin is significant, with Cuban Americans scoring much higher on indicators of well-being and Puerto Rican Americans scoring the lowest.

D. African Americans face a legacy of racism.

1. In 1955, African Americans in Montgomery, Alabama, using civil disobedience tactics advocated by Martin Luther King, Jr., protested laws believed to be unjust. This led to the civil rights movement that challenged existing patterns of racial segregation throughout the South.

2. The 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act heightened expectations for African Americans that better social conditions would follow these gains. Frustration over the pace of change led to urban riots and passage of the 1968 Civil Rights Act.

3. Since then, African Americans have made political and economic progress. For example, African Americans have increased their membership in the U.S. House of Representatives in the past 30 years, and enrollment in colleges continues to
increase. Forty percent of all African American families make more than $50,000 a year. African Americans have become prominent in politics, most notably with the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States in 2008.

4. Despite these gains, however, African Americans continue to lag behind in politics, economics, and education. Currently, African Americans average only 59 percent of white incomes, experience much more unemployment and poverty, and are less likely to own their own homes or to have college educations.

5. According to William Julius Wilson, social class (not race) is the major determinant of quality of life. The African American community today is composed of a middle-class who took advantage of the opportunities created by civil rights legislation and advanced economically, living in good housing, having well-paid jobs, and sending their children to good schools, as well as a large group of poorly educated and unskilled African Americans who were left behind as opportunities for unskilled labor declined and now find themselves living in poverty, facing violent crime and dead-end jobs, and sending their children to lesser schools.

6. Others argue that discrimination on the basis of race persists, despite gains made by some African Americans. African Americans are still paid less than white Americans for the same job.

7. Racism still continues to be a part of life. Researchers found that resumes that had white sounding names received 50 percent more callbacks than those having more black sounding names.

8. For those on the receiving end, racism can be an everyday burden.

E. Asian Americans have long faced discrimination in the United States.

1. Chinese immigrants were drawn here by the gold strikes in the West and the need for unskilled workers to build the railroads. In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, suspending all Chinese immigration for 10 years.

2. When the Japanese arrived, they met spillover bigotry, a stereotype that lumped all Asians together, depicting them negatively. After the attack on Pearl Harbor in World War II, hostilities toward Japanese Americans increased, with many being imprisoned in detention centers called “interment camps.”

3. On the average, Asian Americans have a higher annual income and lower unemployment rates than other racial-ethnic groups. Those most likely to be in poverty, though, come from Southeast Asia.

4. The success of Asian Americans can be traced to three factors: (1) a close family life, (2) educational achievement, and (3) assimilation into the mainstream culture.

5. Asian American children are the most likely to grow up with two parents. They have very high rates of college graduation. The high intermarriage rate of Japanese Americans has enabled them to assimilate into mainstream culture.

6. Asian Americans are becoming more prominent in politics. Hawaii has elected several Asian American governors and sent several Asian American senators to Washington. Gary Locke served from 1997 to 2005 as governor of Washington and in 2008 in Louisiana, Piyush Jindal became the first Indian American governor.
F. Due to the influence of old movie westerns, many Americans tend to hold stereotypes of Native Americans as uncivilized savages, as a single group of people subdivided into separate bands.

1. In reality, however, Native Americans represent a diverse group of people with a variety of cultures and languages. Although originally numbering about ten million, their numbers were reduced to a low of 250,000 in 1890 due to a lack of immunity to European diseases and warfare. Today there are about three million Native Americans who speak about 150 different languages.

2. At first, relations between European settlers and the Native Americans were peaceful. However, as the number of settlers increased, tension increased. Because they stood in the way of expansion, many were slaughtered. Government policy shifted to population transfer, with Native Americans confined to reservations.

3. Today, they are an invisible minority. One-third live in three states: Oklahoma, California, and Arizona; most other Americans are hardly aware of them. They have the highest rates of suicide and the lowest life expectancy of any U.S. minority. These negative conditions are the result of Anglo domination.

4. In the 1960s, Native Americans won a series of legal victories that restored their control over the land and their right to determine economic policy. Many Native Americans have opened businesses on their land, ranging from industrial parks to casinos. Today many Native Americans are interested in recovering and honoring their own traditions.

5. Pan-Indianism emphasizes elements that run through all Native American cultures in order to develop self-identification that goes beyond any particular tribe.

VI. Looking Toward the Future

A. Central to this country’s history, immigration and the fear of its consequences is once again an issue facing the United States as it moves into the next century. The concern has been that “too many” immigrants will alter the character of the United States, undermining basic institutions and contributing to the breakdown of society.

1. In some states, such as California, the racial-ethnic minorities constitute a majority.

2. There is fear that Spanish speakers will threaten the primacy of the English language and that immigrants will take jobs away from native-born Americans.

B. Another central concern is the role of affirmative action. Liberals argue that this policy is the most direct way in which to level the playing field of economic opportunity, while conservatives believe that such practices result in reverse discrimination.

1. One of the most controversial rulings was Proposition 209. This amendment to the California state constitution banned preferences to minorities and women in hiring, promotion, and college admission.

2. A ruling by the court in a case about the University of Michigan admission process has continued to make this a challenging topic about the role of affirmative action.
C. In order for the United States to become a multicultural society, people must respect differences and be willing to work together without any one group dominating others and racial categories need to be seen as an irrelevant system of categorization.

**KEY TERMS**

*After studying the chapter, review the definition for each of the following terms.*

**assimilation:** the process by which a minority group is absorbed into the mainstream culture (p. 255)

**authoritarian personality:** Theodor Adorno’s term for people who are prejudiced and rank high on scales of conformity, intolerance, insecurity, respect for authority, and submissiveness to superiors (p. 250)

**compartmentalize:** to separate acts from feelings or attitudes (p. 254)

**discrimination:** an act of unfair treatment directed against an individual or a group (p. 245)

**dominant group:** the group with the most power and greatest privileges (p. 244)

**ethnic cleansing:** a policy of eliminating a population; includes forcible expulsion and genocide (p. 242)

**ethnicity (and ethnic):** having distinctive cultural characteristics (p. 242)

**ethnic work:** activities designed to discover, enhance, or maintain ethnic and racial identity (p. 244)

**genocide:** the systematic annihilation or attempted annihilation of people because of their presumed race or ethnicity (p. 242)

**individual discrimination:** the negative treatment of one person by another (p. 247)

**institutional discrimination:** negative treatment of a minority group that is built into a society’s institutions (p. 247)

**internal colonialism:** the policy of exploiting minority groups for economic gain (p. 255)

**melting pot:** the view that Americans of various backgrounds would blend into a sort of ethnic stew (p. 244)

**minority group:** people who are singled out for unequal treatment and who regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination (p. 243)

**multiculturalism (also called pluralism):** a philosophy or political policy that permits or encourages ethnic differences (p. 255)

**pan-Indianism:** a movement that focuses on common elements in the cultures of Native Americans in order to develop a cross-tribal self-identity and to work toward the welfare of all Native Americans (p. 268)

**pluralism:** minority groups have the ability to maintain their separate identities, yet participate freely in the country’s social institutions, from education to politics. (p. 255)
population transfer: the forced movement of a minority group (p. 254)
prejudice: an attitude or prejudging, usually in a negative way (p. 245)
race: a group whose inherited physical characteristics distinguish it from other groups (p. 240)
racism: discrimination on the basis of race (p. 245)
reserve labor force: the unemployed; unemployed workers are thought of as being “in reserve”—capitalists take them “out of reserve” (put them back to work) during times of high production and then put them back “in reserve” (lay them off) when they are no longer needed (p. 252)
rising expectations: the sense that better conditions are soon to follow, which, if unfulfilled, increases frustration (p. 262)
scapegoat: an individual or group unfairly blamed for someone else’s troubles (p. 250)
segregation: separation of racial or ethnic groups (p. 255)
selective perception: seeing certain features of an object or situation, but remaining blind to others (p. 252)
split labor market: the division of workers along racial-ethnic and gender lines (p. 251)
WASP: a white Anglo Saxon Protestant (p. 257)
white ethnics: white immigrants, from Europe to the United States whose cultures differ from WASP culture (p. 257)

**KEY PEOPLE**

*Review the major theoretical contributions or findings of these people.*

**Theodor Adorno:** Adorno identified the authoritarian personality type. (p. 250)

**Kathleen Blee:** She interviewed women who were members of the KKK and Aryan Nation. She found that their racism was not the cause of their joining, but the result of their membership in those groups. (p. 245)

**Ashley Doane:** Doane identified four factors that affect an individual’s sense of ethnic identity. (p. 244)

**John Dollard:** This psychologist first suggested that prejudice is the result of frustration and scapegoats become the targets for their frustration. (p. 250)

**Raphael Ezekiel:** This sociologist did participant observation of neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan in order to examine racism from inside racist organizations. (pp. 247, 249)

**Anthony Greenwald and Mahzarin Banaji:** These psychologists created the “Implicit Association Test.” They found that we learn the ethnic maps of our culture and a route to biased perception. (p. 247)
Eugene Hartley: His study found that prejudice does not depend on negative experiences with others. Those who are prejudiced against racial-ethnic groups are likely to be prejudiced against others. (p. 247)

Ashley Montagu: This physical anthropologist pointed out that some scientists have classified humans into only two races while others have identified as many as two thousand. (p. 240)

Alejandro Portés and Rubén Rumbaut: These sociologists looked at the impact that immigration has had on our country, pointing out that there has always been an anti-immigrant sentiment present. (p. 270)

Muzafer and Carolyn Sherif: The Sherifs researched the functions of prejudice and found that it builds in-group solidarity. (p. 251)

W. I. and D.S. Thomas: The Thomases observed that once people define a situation as real, it is real in its consequences. (p. 242)

William Julius Wilson: Wilson is known for his work on racial discrimination, in which he argues that class is a more important factor than race in explaining patterns of inequality. (pp. 263-264)

Louis Wirth: Wirth offered a sociological definition of minority group. (p. 243)

**Discussion Topics to Encourage Student Participation**

- Discuss how race is more a sociological classification than a biological one. Ask the students to provide situations in which an individual’s race may be mistaken or taken for granted. If this situation ever occurred for any of the students, ask them to identify the background assumptions that led to this mistaken identity. How did it affect the relationship between the individuals involved? Why was race an issue in the first place?

- Shelby Steele, an African American and psychologist, as well as other recognized black scholars such as Walter E. Williams and Thomas Sowell, and African American celebrities such as Bill Cosby, have argued that blacks should move beyond “thinking of ourselves as victims” in an effort to build a positive identity. What do you think of this position? Explain.

- The lyrics of a patriotic ballad made by actor John Wayne discusses how any American who uses a hyphen to describe his or her heritage, such as African-American, Jewish-American, or Italian-American, is a “divided American” with split loyalties. Do you agree or disagree with this assessment? Have you ever faced a situation in which your loyalties were divided between your racial or ethnic identity and your loyalty as an American? If so, explain the situation and its outcome.

- Considering the history of racism and racial tensions in the United States, ask your students why it is so difficult for many people to publicly express their feelings about race relations, particularly in mixed-race settings. Focusing on the “college experience,” ask your students how comfortable they are talking about race relations in their classes. Do they tend to express
their feelings openly in class when the subject comes up? If not, why not? Why might white students, in general, be reluctant to express their views on race in classes that contain black students? Why might black students be reluctant to express their views on race in classes in which they are the minority?

- Annually, more than 1.6 million illegal immigrants are apprehended in the United States either at the Mexican border or within the United States. The problem has existed for decades as the Federal government pays less attention to it and hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants successfully cross over unguarded borders. Estimates suggest that in excess of eight million illegal immigrants live in the U.S. Previous presidents have all but ignored the problem. President Bush, in his attempt to develop economic relations with Mexican President Fox, has also done little to address the problem. As a result, ranchers and citizens along the border have decided to protect their own property and formed the Minutemen. What do you think of the Minutemen’s efforts since drug smugglers and potential terrorists are among the illegal immigrants? Or, do you think we should allow illegal immigration into the United States?

- Ask your students to discuss the following: Is there too much attention given to black–white issues in the United States, or is the current amount of attention given to these issues needed to ensure that racial discrimination against African Americans does not get “swept under the rug?” Either way, how might other racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S., such as Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, be getting “left out of the picture,” and what can be done to ensure their needs and/or grievances are equally addressed?

**Classroom Activities and Student Projects**

- Have students complete a short essay about how they construct their ethnic work. Have them include the racial and/or ethnic heritage they share, the holidays they celebrate, the significance of religion to their ethnicity, foods they identify with, and the ways they dress. For students who do not have a distinct concept of their ethnic background, have them research this with their parents, grandparents, or other relatives who may be knowledgeable of their family background.

- Collect a list of various definitions of racism compiled from dictionaries and social science textbooks, then point out the differences in the definitions. Ask your students to define racism in their own terms, while discussing the following issues: Can members of racial minority groups also be racist themselves? If so, do these ideas tend to perpetuate a racial divide in America? How? Finally, what role does politics play in defining what constitutes racism and/or determining its consequences?

- Affirmative action has been the center of national debate in recent history with liberals, both black and white, arguing that affirmative action levels the playing field and makes up for historical discrimination. In contrast, conservatives, both black and white, argue that opportunities in education and employment should be on merit, the individual’s talents and abilities, and that giving preferential treatment based on race or gender is reverse
discrimination. Ask your students to discuss affirmative action policies in education and employment. Where do they stand on the issue? Ask students if they know their own political ideologies. Are student’s attitudes towards affirmative action consistent with their political ideologies?

- As an assignment, ask your students to surf the Internet for racist propaganda, noting as many examples of racist material as they can from websites and chat rooms. Afterward, have them meet in small groups to share what they found, while addressing the following points: How easy or difficult is it to find racist material on the Internet? Which particular hate groups are currently using cyberspace? How widespread are they, and how organized do they appear to be? Which minority groups are the most frequent targets of racist material on the Internet, and what are some of the common racist themes being used against them? Finally, which psychological and/or sociological theories seem to best address the prejudices of the individuals and groups that are currently disseminating racist material on the Internet?

**Service Learning Projects and Field Trips**

- Have the students make a list of all the organizations and programs on campus that can be identified by racial or ethnic affiliation, such as a black student union, a Latino student union, and so on. Ask them to see if any of these organization are white only, black only, Latino only, and so on. For each organization identified, collect a pamphlet or description of the organization. Some of these organizations may have websites. Next, have the students similarly identify racially- and ethnically-affiliated organizations in either their hometown, the city in which the university is located, or an adjacent city. Again, try to get information on each agency identified. How does the university community compare to the city in terms of the number and types of diverse organizations?

- Organize an ethnic festival on campus with students from different racial and ethnic groups celebrating and sharing their heritages. The festival can include, for example, ethnic food, music, fashion, art, sports, and games, as well as information about the various groups’ countries of origin. As an interesting side note, ask your students to think about and discuss how “white culture” might be represented at the ethnic festival, if at all. Is there such a thing as “white culture”? If so, what constitutes “white” food, music, fashion, art, sports, and games?

**Suggested Films**

*Gangs of New York.* 2002. 166 min. (movie)

This movie dramatizes the prejudice and discrimination that existed between Irish-Americans with “real” Americans.

A sociohistoric account of the KKK, how and why it was founded and its evolution to its present form.

Follows four years in the lives of a diverse group of contemporary immigrants and refugees—from India, Mexico, Nigeria, the Dominican Republic and Palestine—as they journey to start new lives in America.

Bill Moyers interviews prominent Arab Americans.