

SOCI 101
INTRODUCTION TO
SOCIOLOGY

RACE &
ETHNICITY

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J. Race and Ethnicity

What is Race? What is Ethnicity?

a. Race
Shared biological traits deemed "socially significant" – they are *genetically inherited*

- **Primary** (significant) "racial" traits:
skin color, hair texture, eye shape
- **Secondary** (insignificant) traits of difference:
sickle-cells, enzymes, lactase enzyme

b. Ethnicity
Shared cultural traits deemed "socially significant" – they are *culturally inherited*

- **Material** ethnic traits:
food, clothing, speech, behaviors
- **Non-material** ethnic traits:
common ancestry (stories), religion, beliefs and attitudes

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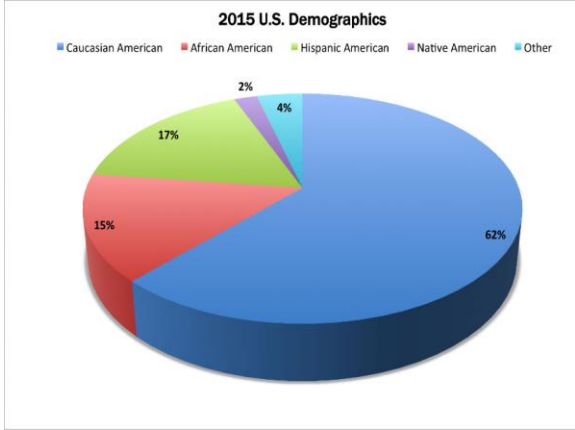
J. Race and Ethnicity

1. Structural Theory:
The Distribution of Race

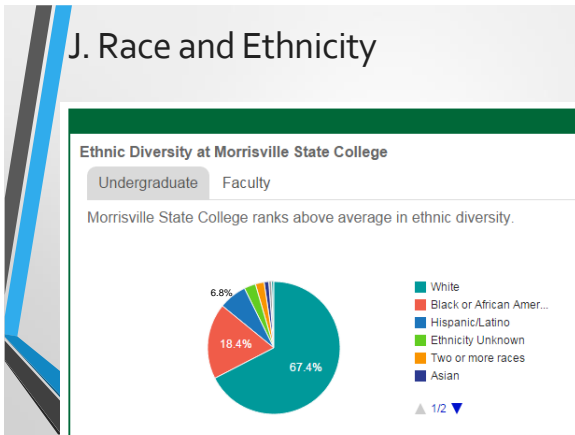
a. What are the relative concentrations of the races within America?

Let's look at some statistics...

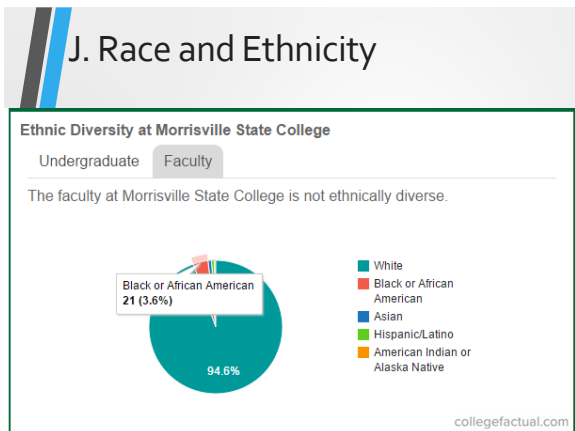
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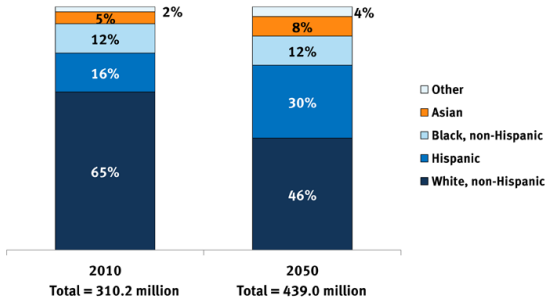


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Distribution of U.S. Population by Race/Ethnicity, 2010 and 2050



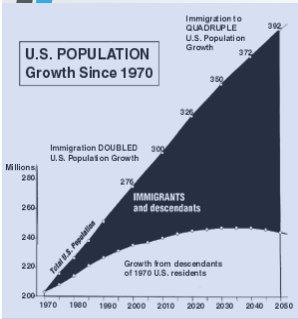
NOTES: All racial groups non-Hispanic. Other includes Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, Native Americans/Alaska Natives, and individuals with two or more races. Data do not include residents of Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, or the Northern Mariana Islands.
 SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008, Projected Population by Single Year of Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: July 1, 2000 to July 1, 2050. <http://www.census.gov/population/www/proj/files/c2kbr08br01.pdf>



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b. Projected demographics of the United States



2050 projected

- WHITE 45%
- HISPANIC 30%
- BLACK 15%
- ASIAN 10%

What effects will these projected changes have on our society?

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c. The Distribution of Race by Place

i. Where are minorities concentrated today in the U.S.?

Largely in the south and west, although urban populations generally are likely to have greater minority representation.

ii. Why are minorities concentrated together?

1. Self-segregation: The tendency of races and ethnicities to concentrate into groups (called "enclaves")

Reasons:

- group conformity/comfort of "sameness"
- family links (social network)
- employment (economic)

2. Social-segregation and the forces of discrimination



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d. Diversity and Immigration:

The population of the United States is becoming increasingly diverse. In recent

years, Hispanics and minority racial groups—non-Hispanic blacks, Asians, and American Indians—have each grown faster than the population as a whole.



Immigration has played a major role in increasing diversity of the population by contributing to the rapid growth of the Asian and Hispanic populations since the 1960s.

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d. History of U.S. Immigration - Three Waves

i. **1600s-1700s** – Western European Colonization: English settlers, Dutch, some French and German; also forced immigration of African slaves.

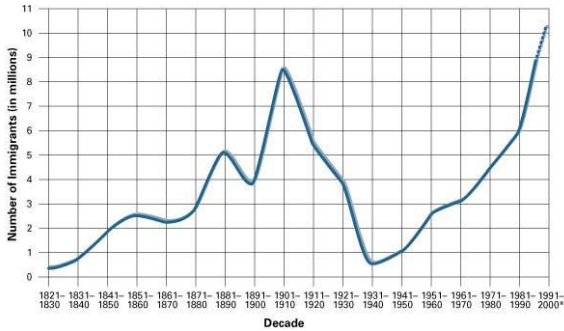
ii. **1880-1910** - Eastern European immigrant wave and Irish immigration - strong discrimination against these immigrants - put to work in factories in the North where African Americans did not exist. In 1911, quota laws were established.



iii. **1970-present**: third wave – Latin American/Asian; slowly coming to an end today (in 2002 INS became part of Homeland Security / ICE).

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2. Is race a socially constructed reality? Is it merely a *symbolic interaction*?

If it is defined simply as *biological differences*, can't we claim that everyone is different and unique? *Race is categorical* – it is an attempt to place order on reality, but one that doesn't represent the fundamental truth that humans are, in fact, remarkably *similar*.

Is race just another *social agreement* so widely taken for granted that we don't question it?



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2. Symbolic Interaction Theory:

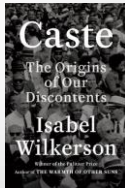
Although Race and Ethnicity are *socially constructed categories*, they nonetheless they have *real repercussions*.

Remember the words of sociologist W.I. Thomas:

"A situation defined as real is real in its consequences."

Author Isabel Wilkerson outlines exactly how problematic *racial construction* has been in American society in her book *"Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents"* (2020)

Listen to an interview [here](#).



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3. The Power of Race: *Social Conflict Theory*

a. "Minority" Groups

(or "Out Groups" vs. the "In Group" majority)

Group size not important

- Women in America outnumber men
- Blacks in South Africa outnumber whites



General characteristics:

i. Share a "distinct identity"

- Race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, the poor, etc

ii. Subordination

- Often faced with lower social status, and thus *stereotypes, stigma, and labeling*

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3. *Social Conflict Analysis:*

The Power of Race

b. What effects does subordination have?

They can be measured:

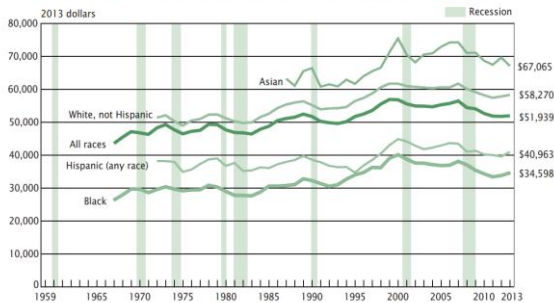
- Economically**, by social class standing and income;
- Politically**, by representation within local, state and national government; and
- Culturally**, by the expressions of prejudice and discrimination within a society.



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Figure 1.
Real Median Household Income by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1967 to 2013



Note: Median household income data are not available prior to 1967. For more information on recessions, see Appendix A. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see <ftp://ftp2.census.gov

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Racial Composition of the 112th Congress (Including Delegates in the House)

	U.S. House	U.S. Senate
White	361	96
Black	44	0
Hispanic	25	2
Asian	7	2
American Indian	1	0

SOURCE: Congress.org

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4. Discrimination

It's a matter of action, not attitude (prejudice)

Wide range of discriminatory acts:

Verbalizations, Exclusion, Avoidance, Abuse, Eugenics, Genocide

a. Levels of Discrimination

1. **Individual discrimination** – rooted in feelings of personal superiority (*ethnocentricity*)
2. **Institutional discrimination**
ex: slavery, "separate but equal", "redlining", real estate "steering",

b. Cycles of Discrimination

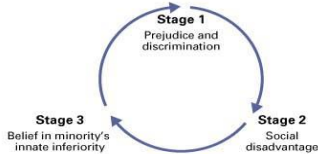
Prejudice reinforces discrimination which in turn reinforces prejudice.



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4. THE CYCLE OF PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION



Stage 1: Prejudice and discrimination begin, often as an expression of ethnocentrism or an attempt to justify economic exploitation.

Stage 2: As a result of prejudice and discrimination, a minority is socially disadvantaged, occupying a low position in the system of social stratification.

Stage 3: This social disadvantage is then interpreted not as the result of earlier prejudice and discrimination, but as evidence that the minority is innately inferior, unleashing renewed prejudice and discrimination by which the cycle repeats itself.

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5. Improving Race/Ethnic Relations

Two key areas:

a. Enhance the educational process

- Multicultural education
- Learn to appreciate diversity
- [Blue Eyes / Brown Eyes 1968 schoolyard experiment](#)

b. Increase meaningful social contact

- Demonstrative diversity
- Honest, self-critique of lifestyle
- Expand social networks
