

Cultural Identity: Race and Ethnicity

Beneath the armor of skin and bone and mind
most of our colors are amazingly the same.
Aberjhani

Cultural Identity: Race and Ethnicity

- culture groups

- may have few or many characteristics (language, religion, race, food, etc.)

- subculture of a larger culture

- race

- secondary biological characteristics

- humans are all a single species

- ethnic groups

- ethnocentrism - tendency to regard one's own culture and group as superior





What race
are these
people?

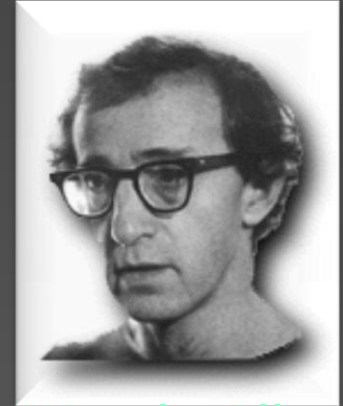


Race

- *Race* does not exist on a scientific level despite the influence of the idea.
- **Biological variation** is real; the order we impose on variation by using the concept of race is not. Race is a product of the human mind, not of nature.
- Based on a three category system developed in Europe in the 18th century – caucasians, mongoloids and blacks.
- The truth is that there is very little fundamental genetic variety between humans and no way to tell where one category stops and another begins. Race is literally skin deep. There has not been enough time for much genetic variation. We do not have distinct races or subspecies of humans.

Race in the US

Genetic mixing is so common and complete that most geographers dismiss race as a category since it cannot be clearly tied to place.



Woody Allen



© The Associated Press

Dogs Used to Control Protestors, 1957

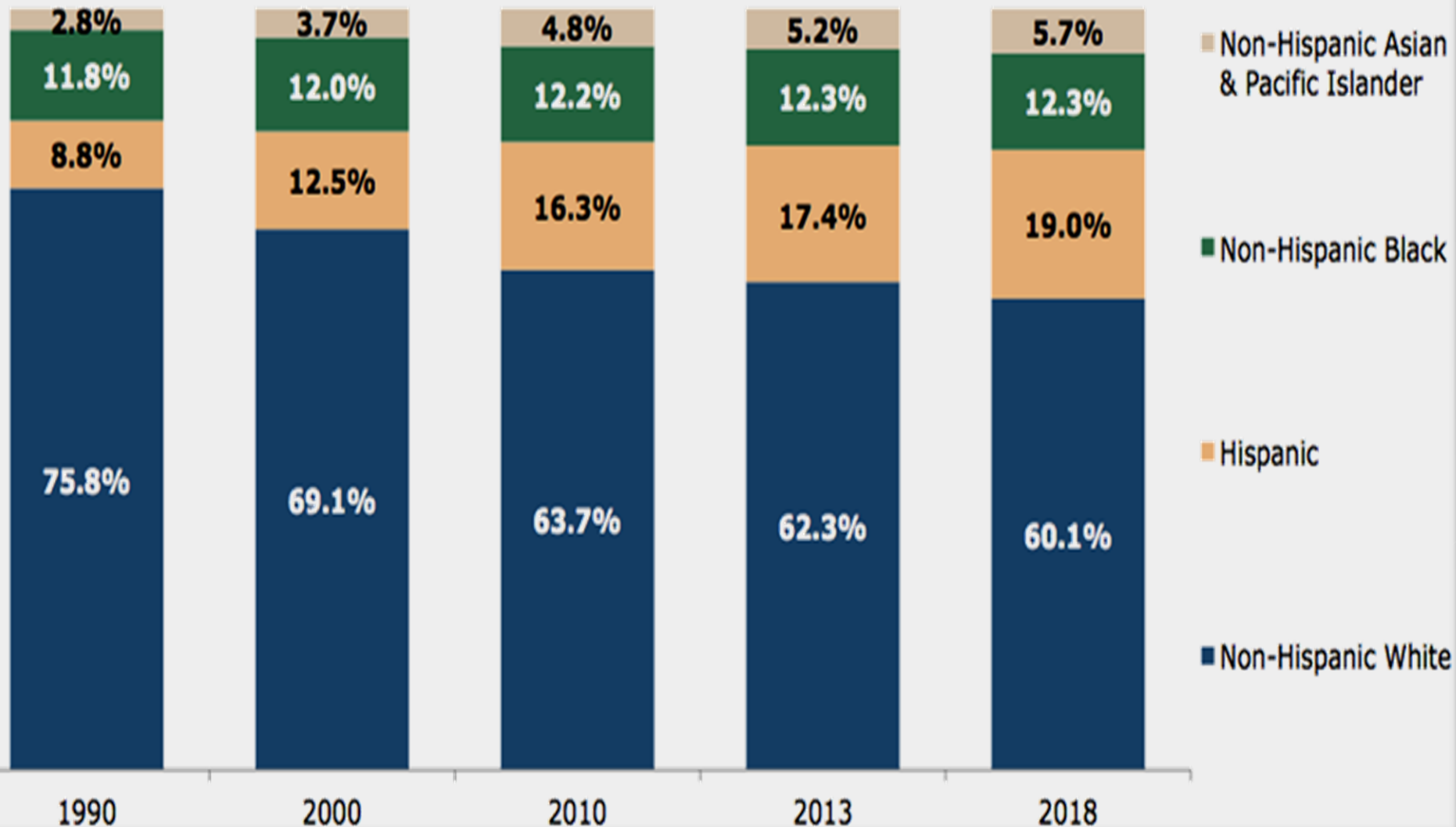


Rosa Parks



Japan Town, San Francisco, 1910

Distribution of US Population by Race/Ethnicity

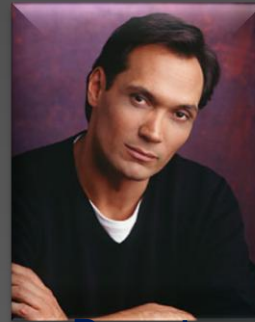


What is ethnicity?

How is it different than race?

1. ethnicity - identity with a group of people who share the cultural traditions of a particular homeland or hearth - customs, cultural characteristics, language, common history, homeland, etc

2. race - socially constructed system of rules about who belongs and who does not belong to a particular group based on actual or perceived commonality of origin, race, culture



Puerto Rican



Turkish



Armenian



Japanese



Thai



Chinese



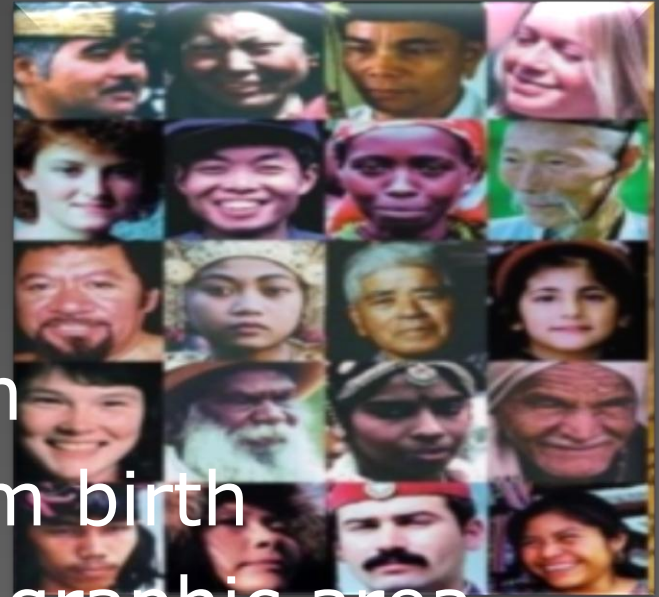
Kazakh



Mongolian

Characteristics of Ethnic Groups

- unique cultural traits
- a sense of community
- a feeling of ethnocentrism
- ascribed membership from birth
- tendency to occupy a geographic area
- Example: Irish Americans were historically united by a common faith (Catholicism), lived in ethnic enclaves in cities like NYC and Boston, preferred the folkways of Irish over the WASP culture, and remained in Irish neighborhoods due to discrimination.



Race vs Ethnicity

Race	Ethnicity
classification of humans according to physical characteristics	culturally defined differences between groups in a society

Both race and ethnicity are **socially constructed** concepts.

Sociological Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

Perspective	Approach to Race and Ethnicity	Case Study: Racial Inequality
STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALISM	Racial and ethnic difference is a necessary part of society. Even racial inequality has functions that help maintain social order.	The functions of racial inequality and conflict for society could include the creation of social cohesion within both the dominant and minority groups.
CONFLICT THEORY	Racial and ethnic differences create intergroup conflict—minority and majority groups have different interests and may find themselves at odds as they attempt to secure and protect them.	Some members of majority groups (whites and men in particular) object to affirmative action programs that assist underrepresented groups. This can create conflict between racial groups in society.
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM	Race and ethnicity are part of our presentation of self.	Some individuals—white ethnics and light-skinned non-whites in particular—have the option to conceal their race or ethnicity in situations where it might be advantageous to do so. This may allow them as individuals to escape the effects of racial inequality but does not erase it from the society at large.

Functionalist Perspective on Race and Ethnicity

- **Assimilation** - process by which members of subordinate racial and ethnic groups become absorbed into the dominant culture
- **Ethnic Pluralism** - coexistence of a variety of distinct racial and ethnic groups within one society
- Functionalists focus on unequal opportunities and achievement of subordinate groups, racism is merely a dysfunction (not an overt set of obstacles)

Functionalist Perspective on Race and Ethnicity

- The **Caste Perspective** views racial and ethnic inequality as a permanent feature of US society.
- **Class perspectives** emphasize the role of the capitalist class in racial exploitation. William Julius Wilson's *The Truly Disadvantaged* explain racism as limited life chances for inner city blacks.

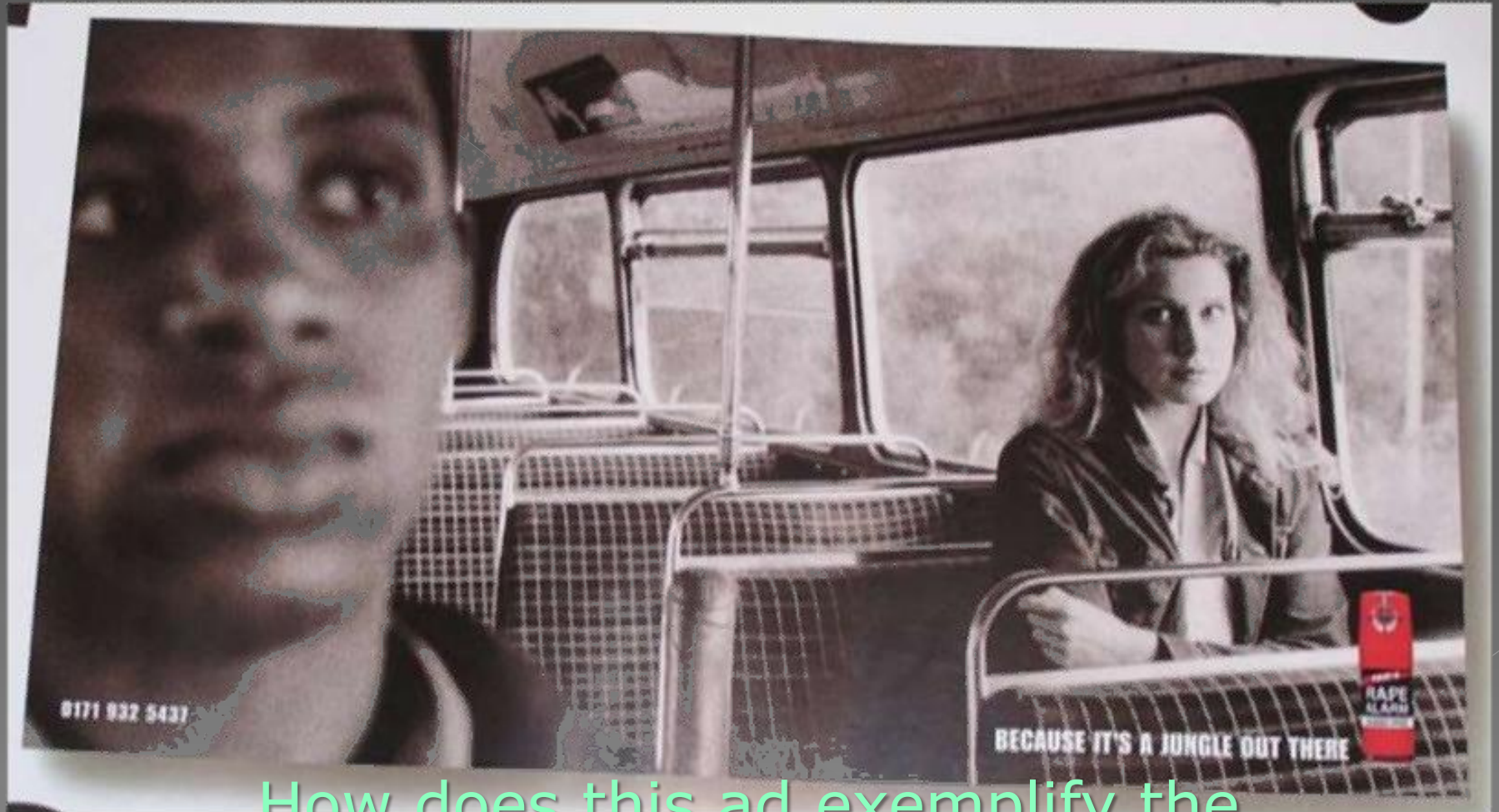
Conflict Perspective on Race and Ethnicity

- **Internal Colonialism** occurs when members of a racial or ethnic group are forcibly placed under the control of the dominant group.
- **Split Labor Market** - division of the economy into a primary sector composed of higher paid workers in more secure jobs and a secondary sector of lower-paid workers in jobs with little security

Symbolic Interaction Perspective on Race and Ethnicity

- **Contact theory** - Contact between divergent groups should, in theory, reduce racism.
- Interactionists study how people define themselves along racial and ethnic lines and how they perceive people of other races.
- Interactionists also study the daily encounters between people of different races.

Symbolic Interaction Perspective on Race and Ethnicity



How does this ad exemplify the interactionist perspective?

Nationality

One final term...

- **Nationality** – legally, a term encompassing all the citizens of a state, but most definitions refer now to an identity with a group of people who generally occupy a specific territory and are bound together by a sense of unity arising from shared ethnicity, customs, belief or legal status (nationalism). Such unity rarely exists today within a state.
- **State** - a politically organized territory that is administered by a sovereign government (the correct term for a country)

Nationalism



- helps create national unity
- can be very dangerous if it breeds intolerance of differences and of others



What race do you
identify yourself as?

- ☐ Asian
- ☐ White
- ☐ African American
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Native American

☒ Human