THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF RACE
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RACE IS SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED

- Race: category of people labeled and treated as similar because of some common biological traits, such as skin color, texture of hair, and shape of eyes (p. 379)
- These traits are culturally determined
- Race has no “scientific” basis, e.g., DNA
- Biological variability exists, but doesn’t conform to our “race” categories; racial characteristics aren’t transmitted as complexes
- Race was invented in the 18th Century
- Race and racism have always been connected

SOME RACIAL TAXONOMIES

- The ancients: us vs. “barbarians”
- Linnaeus’ taxonomy
- Nazis: important distinction was Aryan vs. Jew
- South African apartheid: four categories (white, black, colored, Indian)
- Brazil: wider range of fluid skin color designations
- United States
  - Most important distinction historically has been white vs. non-white
  - U.S. officially recognizes five races plus “other,” and multiple race combinations

THE FIRST “SCIENTIFIC” RACIAL TAXONOMY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linnaeus’ races</th>
<th>Alleged characteristics</th>
<th>Ruled by:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homo sapiens Americanus</td>
<td>Red, ill-tempered, subjugated</td>
<td>Custom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homo sapiens Asiaticus</td>
<td>Yellow, melancholy, greedy</td>
<td>Opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homo sapiens Afer</td>
<td>Black, impassive, lazy</td>
<td>Caprice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homo sapiens Europaeus</td>
<td>White, serious, strong</td>
<td>Laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homo sapiens Monstrosus</td>
<td>Includes coneheads, flatheads, troglodytes, dwarves &amp; other unusual variations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
U.S. RACIAL SYSTEM COMPLICATIONS

- The U.S. racial system has focused on the white-nonwhite dichotomy
- The one drop rule: one drop of black blood (i.e., any percentage of ancestry) makes someone black
- Until 1967, many states had laws against miscegenation (marriage or sexual relations between a man & a woman of different races)
- People and groups move from one racial category to another
- Because of the one-drop rule, many blacks throughout U.S. history have looked white enough to “pass” as white; this has resulted in a large percentage of whites with black ancestry
- New immigrant groups, e.g., Irish, Slavs, have been successful in becoming white
- Census categories
  - Races: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White, Some other race
  - Ethnic category: Hispanic or Latino

QUESTION 5—2000 CENSUS

5. Is this person Spanish/Hispanic/Latino? Mark the "No" box if not Spanish/Hispanic/Latino.
   - No, not Spanish/Hispanic/Latino
   - Yes, Puerto Rican
   - Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano
   - Yes, Cuban
   - Yes, other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino — Print group.

QUESTION 6-2000 CENSUS

6. What is this person’s race? Mark one or more races to indicate what this person considers himself/herself to be.
   - White
   - Black, African Am., or Negro
   - American Indian or Alaska Native — Print name of enrolled or principal tribe
   - Filipino
   - Vietnamese
   - Other Asian — Print race
   - Asian Indian
   - Japanese
   - Native Hawaiian
   - Guamanian or Chamorro
   - Samoan
   - Other Pacific Islander — Print race
   - Chinese
   - Korean
   - Some other race — Print race