

Race and Ethnicity in Health and Vital Statistics

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Why the confusion?

- ⊙ Scientific concepts used in everyday speech
- ⊙ Used interchangeably
- ⊙ Used without definition
- ⊙ Used a-theoretically
- ⊙ Difficulties in measurement

Race

© Race is the categorization of parts of a population based on physical appearance due to particular historical social and political forces

Race is not genetically defined

- © There are no racial genotypes to delineate boundaries among races.
- © Race is socially defined based on appearance.
- © Appearances *may/may not* represent historical breeding populations

Race is a socially constructed phenomenon.

© Determination of race is subjective

- Internal identification
- Expressed identification
- External identification

© There are no clearly agreed upon phenotypical criteria to delineate boundaries among groups

Race

- © Racial categories differ with different societies and nations.
- © Fluid and situationally variable
- © Contested by persons/populations involved

Cline

◎ Single trait genetic gradient over space and differing environments

- Example: skin color

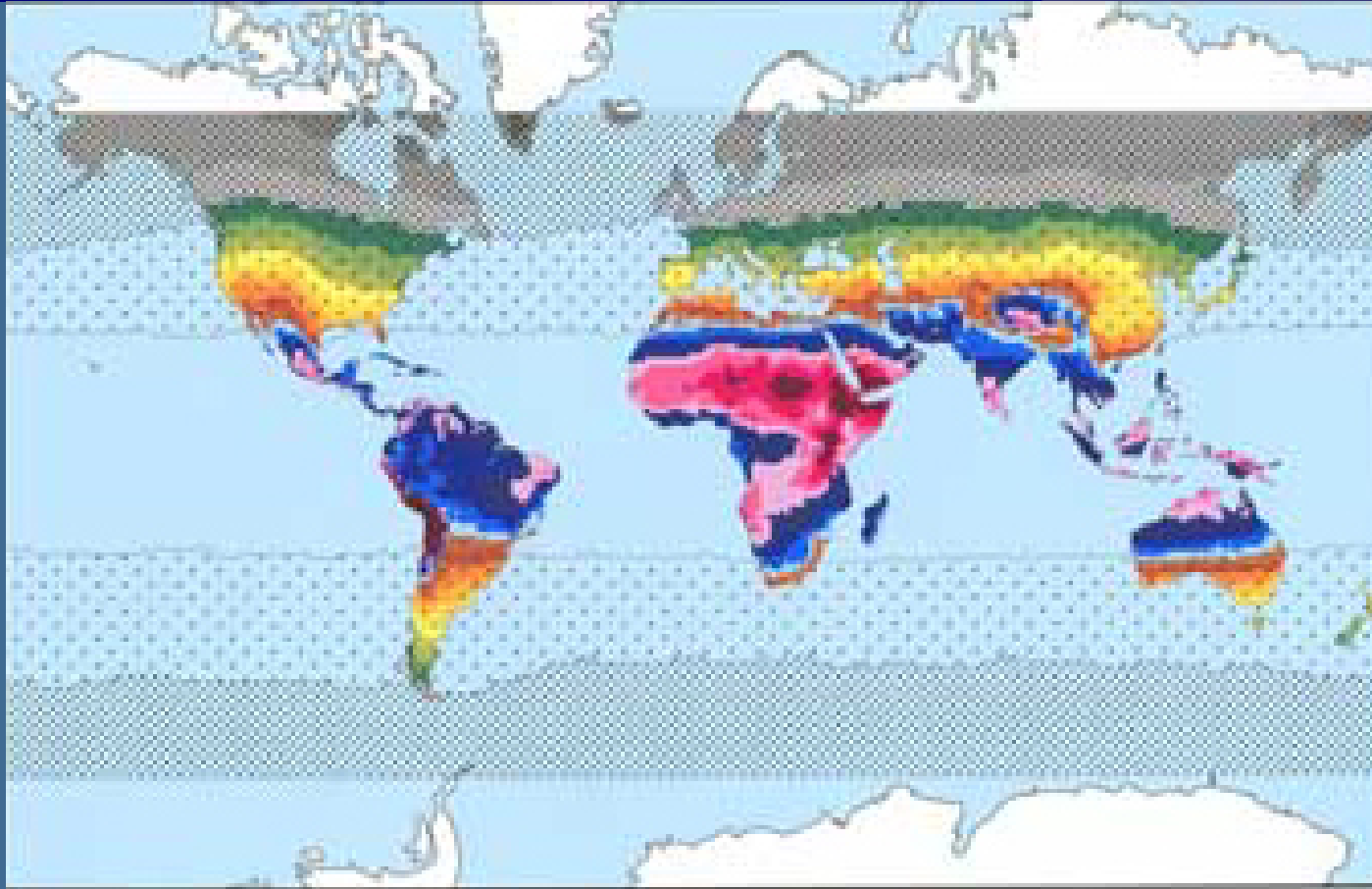
Site
A

Melanin in adjacent breeding populations

Site
N

Environmental variation: UV radiation

Cline for skin color



Jablonski, N and Chaplin, G. ,California Academy of Sciences
http://www.calacademy.org/science_now/archive/academy_research/nina_121900.htm

Ethnicity

- ◎ An ethnic group is a sub-cultural group of a multicultural society.
 - Usually based on a common national or tribal heritage.

Culture:

- ◎ Is learned
- ◎ Passed from generation to generation
- ◎ Shapes experience of the world around us
- ◎ Changes over time

Culture is comprised of:

- Environment
- Economy
- Technology
- Religion/World-view
- Language
- Social Structure/ society
- Beliefs and Values

Hammond, 1976

Ethnicity

- ◎ Based on heritage, experience, group membership?
- ◎ Not necessarily geographically delineated
- ◎ Situationally variable
- ◎ Contested by persons/populations involved

Race vs. Ethnicity

- © Race is a social category based on similar physical appearance.
- © Ethnicity is a social category based on shared culture or cultural heritage.

Race ≠ Ethnicity

◎ Racial Group ≠ Ethnic Group

- Any given racial group is not necessarily all the same ethnicity
 - Example: Whites

◎ Ethnic Group ≠ Racial Group

- Any given ethnic group not necessarily all the same race
 - Example: Cubans

“White Race”

Georgian

Italian

Finn

French

Greek

Moroccan

Iraqi

Swedish

Spanish

Slide adapted from a presentation by M. Kagawa Singer (UCLA), at the NCI, 2004.

Cuban Ethnicity

Includes at least:

“Black”

“Mestizo”

“White”

Multiracial persons

<u>Reported</u>	<u>number</u>	<u>%</u>
One race	274,595,678	97.6
Two or more races	6,826,228	2.4

Source: Table DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics
U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.

Multiracial persons

© How to measure?

- Primary race
- Self identification
- Other identification
- What about contextual changes?

Some problems measuring race/ethnicity

- ◎ Both are subjective and contested
 - Self report?
 - ID by others?
- ◎ Context dependent/vary situationally
 - One identity is emphasized over another according to context
 - Can change from birth to death records
- ◎ No clear boundaries

What's my race?



Harris, David R. 2002. "In the Eye of the Beholder: Observed Race and Observer Characteristics," Population Studies Center Research Report 02-522., University of Michigan

Some problems: measuring race/ethnicity

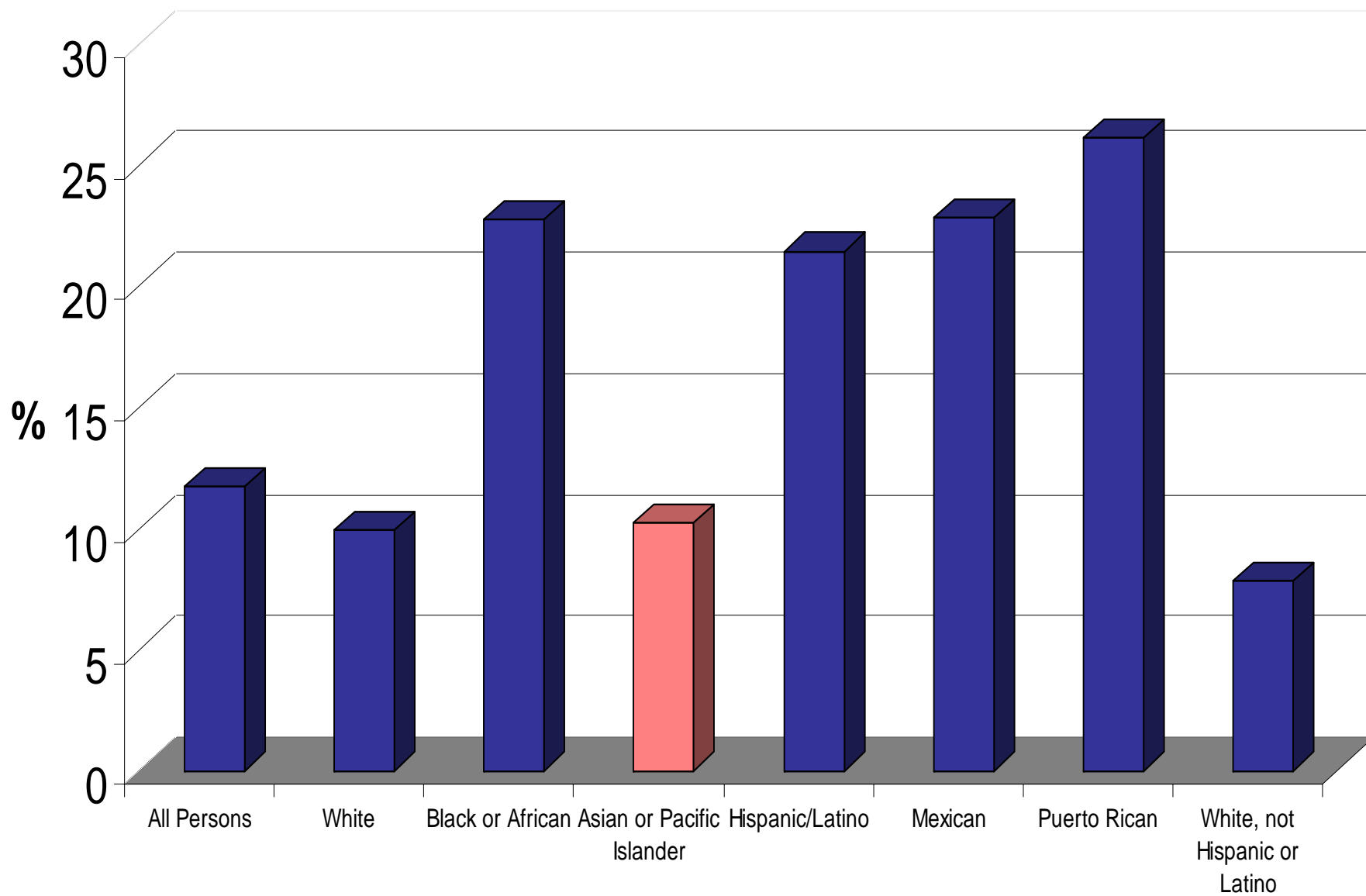
© “Lumping” vs “Splitting”

OMB Directive 15 categories

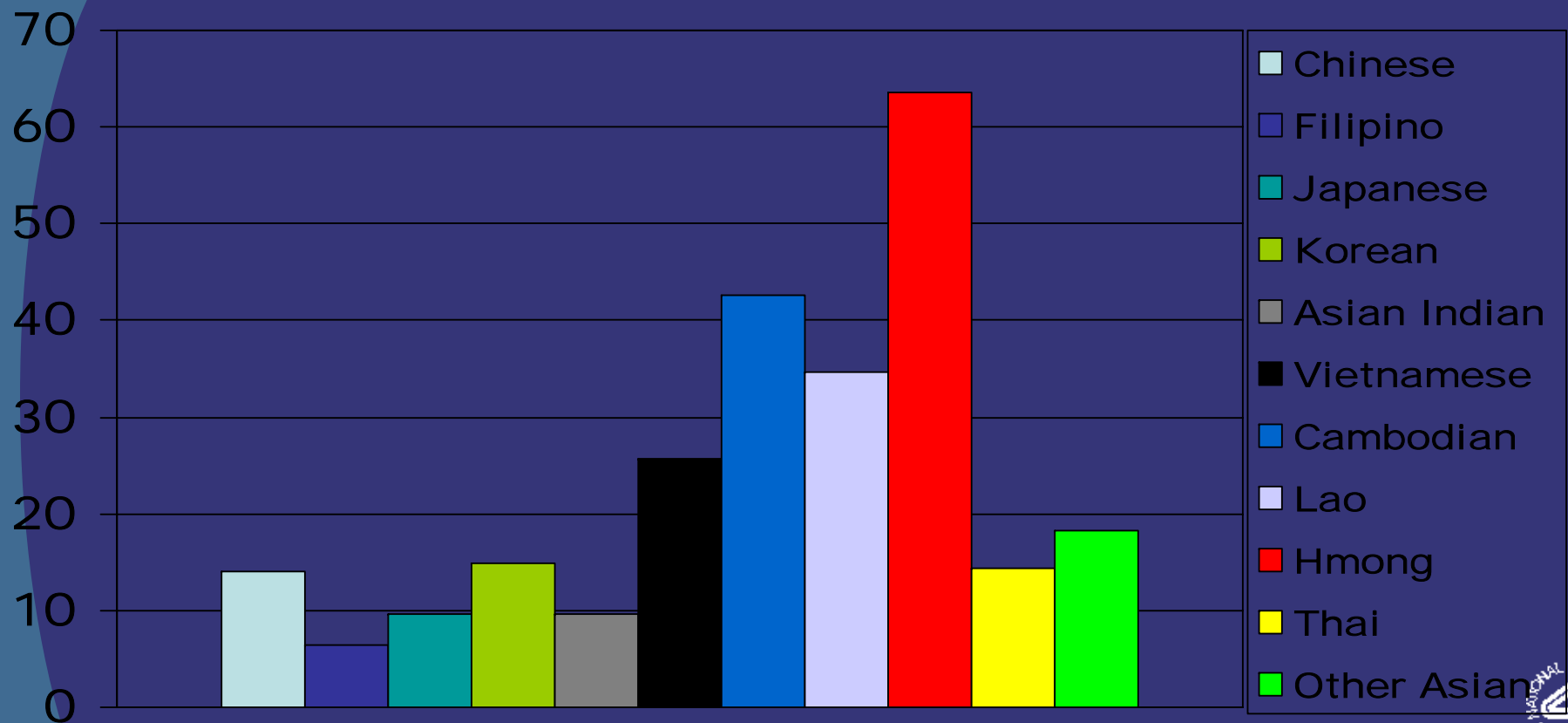
Categorical use of:

1. **Non-Hispanic White**
2. **Hispanic** (ethnicity in 2000 Census)
(34 countries)
3. **American Indian/Alaska Native** (>600)
4. **Asian American** (37 groups)
5. **Pacific Islander** (20+ groups) } >100 languages
6. **African American/Black** (>5 groups &
regional differences)

Poverty Level by Ethnicity 2000



% in Poverty



Questions of usage in research

- ⊙ Used as proxy for other phenomena?
- ⊙ Usage to research bio/genetic phenomena?
- ⊙ Is race best variable for social/cultural/behavioral phenomena?
- ⊙ Race can be useful for policy purposes or studies of racial bias
- ⊙ Ethnicity probably more useful in understanding behavior (implies cultural influence)

Why collect data in terms of race and ethnicity?

- ◎ Associated with differential health risks and resources
- ◎ To inform policy
- ◎ To understand social and behavioral phenomenon related to health
- ◎ To track and understand bias and disparities relative to health

Schulman, K, et al., 1999
**The Effect of Race and Sex on Physicians'
Recommendations for Cardiac
Catheterization. NEJM 340(8): 618-26**

EFFECT OF RACE AND SEX ON PHYSICIANS' RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CARDIAC CATHETERIZATION



E



F



G



H



A



B



C



D

Figure 1. Patients as Portrayed by Actors in the Video Component of the Survey.

Panel A shows a 55-year-old black woman, Panel B a 55-year-old black man, Panel C a 70-year-old black woman, Panel D a 70-year-old black man, Panel E a 55-year-old white woman, Panel F a 55-year-old white man, Panel G a 70-year-old white woman, and Panel H a 70-year-old white man.

- ③ Physicians significantly less likely to diagnose coronary artery disease for women
- ③ Physicians significantly less likely to recommend cardiac catheterization for women and blacks than for men and whites.

Race and Ethnicity

- ◎ Not the same thing
- ◎ Important for data collection because they're important in health and society.
- ◎ Measurement issues must be resolved:
 - for adequate data collection
 - to monitor and improve population health.