

Introduction

To say that we are a nation of immigrants is a truism, for no society of comparable size was populated so quickly by so many different peoples, most coming voluntarily but some coming in fetters. So massive was this influx that half of all Americans, it is believed, have an ancestor who passed through one port of entry, Ellis Island. And no icon symbolizes this immigrant past so well as the Statue of Liberty and the words inscribed beneath it:

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breath
free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to
me:
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

These lines speak to the American Dream, the vision of the United States as an egalitarian society in which anyone—regardless of origin—can fulfill his or her ambitions through pluck, hard work, and perseverance. This is surely a splendid dream, yet for all its splendor, it has played a strangely divisive role in American history. From the very founding of the nation, the American Dream has been juxtaposed against immigration and ethnicity. The basic issue has always been simple: can immigrants of different races and unique cultures melt into the mainstream to become part of the great American mass? Or will these groups remain separate, perhaps partaking of a portion of mainstream culture, but holding forth as separate ethnic and racial entities?

For some groups, the American dream became a reality, while for others it did not. And despite the ideology of equality, the *others* are often clearly identifiable by their ethnicity and race. The facts

contradict the Dream, creating an issue that defies easy solution and simple scientific explanation. Consequently, ethnicity remains a major concern of American culture, politics, and scholarship.

In this monograph, I study a facet of the concern: ethnic inequality and assimilation. Paradoxically, while white ethnic groups have been in the United States as long as any other (except Native Americans, of course) more is known about nonwhite assimilation, especially that of African Americans. While not neglecting the black case, I hope to partially correct the uneven distribution of knowledge.

Approach of the Study

Various theories are invoked to account for different dependent variables, and from that view, this monograph is eclectic. Despite this diversity, however, the investigation is guided by the single broad principle of "infrastructural determinism." This principle implies that infrastructural forces, such as institutional arrangements and economic variables, are of primary importance, that superstructure derives from infrastructure, and that social behavior has a firm basis in the material, pragmatic constraints of life.¹

The emphasis on infrastructural determinism is in keeping with the *Annale* approach to history, which maintains that historical explanations are composed of layers, with culture and ideas resting on a substratum of demographic and economic causes. In that sense, infrastructure is more basic than superstructure, but of course, that is a limited sense. In reality, both exist and both are important.²

Even while one might agree that society consists of both infrastructure and superstructure and that both are important, most empirical research must focus on one or the other. To simultaneously investigate both is not possible as a practical matter—at least not in the present instance. For that reason, and also for the pragmatic reason that the data are now available, I have chosen to emphasize infrastructural variables while drawing on culture and historical knowledge to help interpret the findings.

The goal of this study is now practicable because the necessary data are now in the public domain: the U. S. Census Bureau's Microdata Samples. In 1980, the Census asked about ancestry for the first time, and when those responses are linked with socio-economic, demographic, and ecological data, some fundamental insights into ethnic stratification should appear. Almost as a byprod-

uct, a statistical portrait of ethnicity in America is drawn and the store of fundamental knowledge about assimilation and stratification is increased.

Genetic Determinism and Race

An issue that has existed at least as long as sociology concerns the relative importance of "nature" versus "nurture." Put bluntly, are some races innately superior to other races? If "yes," then social causes have substantially less impact on life chances than genetic causes; if "no," then the reverse is true. Either answer obviously has enormous political implications, which is why the issue has not faded away despite more than a century of debate. Because of this, it would be well to discuss the issue now.

Given the disagreement over nature versus nurture, it is ironic that so much of the controversy stems from agreement. Everyone agrees that *some* human traits are genetically determined and that *some* are culturally determined—the issue is *which*. As yet, this issue has not been resolved to everyone's satisfaction, and so the debate continues.

The application of genetic determinism to biological matters does not generate much controversy among social scientists. For example, no one disputes the contention that blacks are genetically more prone to sickle cell anemia than whites. Applications to social matters, however, lead to a much different situation. Sociobiologist Edward O. Wilson, perhaps the most prominent advocate of such applications, has written:

The question of interest is no longer whether human social behavior is genetically determined; it is to what extent. The accumulated evidence for a large hereditary component is more detailed and compelling than most persons, including even geneticists, realize. I will go further: it is *already decisive*.³

Wilson does recognize that direct evidence linking specific genes to specific social behaviors has not been found. His evidence rests solely on correlational data, that is, data showing statistical relationships between social behaviors, often loosely defined and poorly measured, and characteristics known or strongly suspected to be genetically determined. These are also often loosely defined and poorly measured.

Wilson further recognizes that the same hypotheses about human behavior can logically stem from a theory of cultural rather than genetic determinism. He wrote:

It is nevertheless a curious fact, which enlarges the difficulty of the analysis, that sociobiological theory can be obeyed by purely cultural behavior as well as by genetically constrained behavior. An almost purely cultural sociobiology is possible. If human beings were endowed with nothing but the most elementary drives to survive and to reproduce, together with a capacity for culture, they would still learn many forms of social behavior that increase their biological fitness. But as I will show, there is a limit to the amount of this cultural mimicry, and methods exist by which it can be distinguished from the more structured forms of biological adaptation.⁴

Contrary to Wilson's claims, not everyone is convinced that cultural mimicry can be distinguished from genetic determinism.⁵ Attempts to draw the distinction are, at their crux, based on a fundamental and simple correlational paradigm. Scores on a trait of interest, such as intelligence or personality, are grouped by race and then statistically compared. Controls for variables such as education and motivation may be introduced, but the controls have not been totally satisfactory.⁶

Race

Despite the problems with sociobiological reasoning, many scientists and lay people alike think of race as a conglomeration of biologically inherited traits, such as skin color and hair type. Based on possessing a particular set of these traits, individuals are classified into *races*.

A major problem with the above approach is specifying *which* and *how many* genetic traits are required to define a separate race. Presumably, only the important traits should be counted, but how is that determined? Whereas visible characteristics may seem to be the most obvious criterion of importance, they are not decisive. Many of the most important differences between people, differences that have led to immeasurable suffering and inhumanity, are not highly visible. Without supplementary clues, such as distinctive dress, it might be impossible to know the race, religion, or creed of casual acquaintances.

To put the matter conversely, how many genetically determined similarities must be present to classify people into distinct racial groupings? Would skin color alone suffice? Or does it additionally require hair texture, facial shape, eye shape? Although a broad cultural consensus exists—whites, for example, are classified as a single race—consensus on the details is absent. The British are white, and so are the French and Germans. Is each group a separate race? Or are they all the same (white) race? This question may also be asked of a specific group. Are the British a political and cultural entity composed of separate races such as Welsh and Scot? Or are the British a single race? The data used in this study are not consistent in this matter, a situation that is hardly surprising given the ambiguity surrounding the concept.

Classifying persons of mixed genetic-racial backgrounds poses another conceptual problem. Obviously, if racial categories have not been defined, the notion of a mixed background has no meaning. Even if racial categories have been defined, the notion has but limited meaning, for everyone has a mixed genetic background.⁷

Another problem with the genetic definition of race concerns faulty generalization. A simple logical error, but one made with disconcerting frequency, is to believe that because behavior X has a genetic determinant, so does behavior Y. Blacks are susceptible to sickle cell anemia for genetic reasons, yet does it follow from that fact that the genes also determine the black crime rate? Clearly not—at least not without a well-established theory and strong evidence, both of which are currently missing.

The logical error in the foregoing example may be fairly evident, but much less evident is the error of generalizing from within a group to between groups. For instance, studies of intelligence have compared the tests scores of parents with children, siblings with siblings, and sometimes, one identical twin with another.⁸ The conclusions have usually been that (1) the heritability coefficient is quite high with (2) the implication that racial differences in intelligence are genetically determined.

While these conclusions appear to be entirely reasonable, part (2) does not necessarily follow from part (1). For obvious ethical and practical reasons, this point can never be subjected to scientific experimentation with humans, but it can be clarified by performing the following “thought experiment”:

Consider two groups, X and Y, and assume that their races are different, that all cultural influences are identical except that Group X is exposed to cultural Factor Z while Group Y is not, and that Z

can be measured by Test W. Further, assume that on Test W, Group X has a mean score of 100 with a standard deviation of 10 and Group Y has a mean of 0, also with a standard deviation of 10. Finally, assume perfect methodology and measurement.

Under the given circumstances, the difference between the group means must be due to Factor Z, because no other possible source of that variation exists. At the same time, individuals within each group differ as to their ability on Test W (indicated by the non-zero standard deviations), and under these hypothetical circumstances, those differences must be due to genetic factors because no other source of *that* variation exists. In other words, even on the same measures, genetics factors can account for the within-group variation while social factors can account for the between-group variation. One does not preclude the other. As biologist Stephen Gould stated, "variation among individuals within a group and differences in mean values between groups [blacks and whites, for example] are entirely separate phenomena. One item provides no license for speculation about the other."⁹

Rather than following the nature versus nurture debate farther (which would be empirically pointless because the present data set does not bear on it), one may consider anthropologist Marshal Sahlins's observation that nature unfolds within culture, and that culture imparts meaning to nature.¹⁰ In our culture, race is very important. Laws, policies, norms, morality, and ethics are constructed with regard to it. Power and affluence are divided by it. And a vast amount of research and scholarly debate, including this monograph, studies it.

Ethnicity

The present study concerns *ethnic* rather than *race* relations, but unfortunately, distinguishing between the two is not easy. An old but still useful distinction was implied by the first sociology textbook: "Amalgamation is a biological process, the fusion of races by interbreeding and intermarriage. Assimilation, on the other hand, is limited to the fusion of cultures."¹¹ Based on the implications of this statement, race becomes a biological category and ethnicity a cultural one.

While that distinction advances this analysis, many specific issues remain, the most pressing of which concerns the cultural traits that define ethnicity. Although no consensus prevails, several suggestions have been offered. *The Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* proposed the following: geographic origin, migratory

status, race, language or dialect, religious faith, ties that transcend kinship, neighborhood and community, traditions, values and symbols, literature, folklore and music, food preferences, settlement and employment patterns, special interests in regard to politics in the homeland and the United States, and finally, institutions that specifically serve and maintain the group's internal sense of distinctiveness.¹² Other analysts have proposed similar but shorter lists.¹³

A difficulty with this approach is obtaining agreement on the items to be listed, and then obtaining agreement on how many of those items must be present before a collection of people can be characterized as an ethnic group. Researchers admit that their lists do not include all possible cultural traits, nor do researchers require a group to possess every trait. However, given the state of current knowledge, this approach is probably the best available solution, however imperfect it may be.

Power and Majority-Minority

Political power influences the definition of racial and ethnic categories, a point illustrated by William Petersen's study of Hawaiian census data. He concluded that changes in the criteria used to define the various groups rendered intercensus comparisons highly suspect. While appearing to be random, these variations actually reflected the view of the dominant group. Offsprings of unions between Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians were originally designated as *hapa-haoles*, or half foreign. Later, when the United States assumed control of Hawaii, the designation became Caucasian-Hawaiian or Asiatic-Hawaiian, and still later the designation become part-Hawaiian.¹⁴ Nothing in the biology of these people changed; what changed was the group with the power to apply labels.

This general principle bears on the current practices of the Census Bureau and thus on the data to be analyzed later. In the 1980 census, the *householder* provided information on all persons in the household. The householder (person listed in column 1 of the questionnaire) either owned or rented the domicile. If no such person existed, then anyone aged at least 15 was substituted.

To indicate race, the householder selected predesignated racial categories. The categories were the common ones and did not reflect a consistent underlying logic. Hispanics were not considered a separate race and were included among whites. Asians might be considered a single race but were given specific categories, such as Chinese or Japanese. By this logic, white groups (Germans and

Swedes for instance) should be considered separate races too, but just the single *white* category was provided for them.

The reason for using this particular set of categories is difficult to fathom, but it undoubtedly has to do with the political importance of the groups. Even though minuscule in number, Chinese and Japanese immigration has constituted a political issue since the mid-19th century. Asian exclusion, and the token quotas allocated to other nonwhites under the 1924 immigration law, resulted from political fights.¹⁵ On the other hand, not until the 1960s and the war in Southeast Asia did the Vietnamese become important enough to warrant a separate census category. Also resulting from political confrontation was the designation of Hispanics as whites. When the Census Bureau suggested making Mexicans a separate race, Mexican protest groups exerted enough pressure to thwart the proposal.

Political power is important in yet another context. It underlies the concepts of *majority* and *minority*. To be sure, if a society consists of two separate groups, then the numerical majority is the one that constitutes more than 50.0% of the total; if there are three groups, then the numerical majority constitutes more than 33.3% of the total, and so on. (In the latter situation, the term *plurality* might be substituted for *majority*).

By this simple numerical logic, one can speak of, say blacks, as being a minority in the United States and, in fact, most of the groups that have traditionally been studied under the rubric of *race* or *ethnic relations* are numerical minorities. Had attention remained exclusively focused on those groups, then the numerical definitions might have been adequate. Inadequacies appear, however, when the numerical criterion is applied to women in the United States or blacks in South Africa. Women are a majority yet they obviously do not command the majority of power. Blacks constitute an overwhelming numerical majority in South Africa but are surely a minority with regard to power. For sociological purposes, therefore, power may be a better criterion for *majority* than number.

Accepting the criterion of power, however, does not solve all difficulties. There are still the questions of how power should be defined and measured. Assuming those questions can be adequately answered, another vexing issue arises. By definition, a minority has less power than the majority, so to define the minority we must be able to identify the majority, but to do that, we must be able to distinguish between minority and majority—which is what we started to determine in the first place. Thus, a certain amount of circularity is inherent in this situation.

Furthermore, how can we determine whether a group has a *proportionate* share of power? While one is tempted to adopt the obvious—power proportionate to group size—that approach raises an additional problem. How is group size calculated? Should the total population of the local area be placed in the denominator of the fraction, or should it be the population of the state, the nation, or some other unit of analysis?

Although the problems involved in defining majority, minority, ethnicity, and race might appear to be insoluble, they can be worked through well enough—at least well enough to permit this research to proceed. As will be indicated later in this chapter and at points throughout the monograph, various procedures can be applied and certain assumptions about racial and ethnic groupings seem reasonable even without confirming evidence.

Assimilation

Stated most tersely, assimilation is the extent to which groups resemble each other. An important consideration when analyzing assimilation concerns the direction or flow of the resemblance: which groups are becoming like which other groups? For simplicity, assume a majority group, A, and a minority group, B. As related to assimilation, four possibilities exist: Group A merges with Group B and both become partially like the other (called the melting pot); Group A remains distinct and coexists with Group B (called pluralism); Group B becomes like Group A (called Anglo conformity or Americanization); or Group A becomes like Group B (here called minoritization). Let us consider each of these possibilities.

1. *Melting Pot.* In the late 1700s, author-statesman St. John De Crevecoeur rhetorically asked, who is an American? His answer: a new, freedom-loving race sprung from European stock.¹⁶ This basic idea is the essence of the *melting pot*, a term popularized by playwright Israel Zangwill in the early twentieth century. He believed that the United States was a crucible of ethnic groups and that cultural and biological amalgamation would eventually result in a single, unique racial-ethnic group, a "*Homogeneous-Americanus*," so to speak.

Zangwill thought the melting would produce good, but his was not a popular opinion. Many people feared that amalgamation would weaken America's genetic stock and debase the American character. For these reasons, sociologists Edward Ross and Frederick Steiner endorsed restrictive immigration, while Robert Park

believed that although assimilation was inevitable, it should still be resisted.¹⁷

The type of assimilation implicit in the notion of the melting pot has obviously never come to pass. Even the hastiest glance at the current ethnic scene reveals dozens upon dozens of ethnic groups. That these groups exist means, *prima facie*, that they have not amalgamated.

2. *Cultural Pluralism*. Opposite to the melting pot is a situation in which each group maintains its distinctive identity, subculture, and infrastructure. At the hypothetical extreme, each group would be so distinct as to form a society unto itself. Although that extreme is somewhat unusual, ethnic groups often remain highly distinct even while submerged within a broader encompassing society.

In offering *cultural pluralism* more than 60 years ago, psychologist Horace Kallen anticipated many modern notions about assimilation.¹⁸ He argued that ethnic groups could remain distinct while peacefully interacting with each other and with the majority through the common culture of American life and under the authority of the duly accepted government. This vision, although different from Zangwill's, is no less idealistic.

Another more recent and darker variation of cultural pluralism is *internal colonialism*.¹⁹ Ethnic groups remain separate, but the equality envisioned by Kallen is replaced by the domination of the minority for the benefit of the majority. More specifically, an internal colony exists when the following prevails: the ethnic group is subjugated by political power; the social organization and culture of the minority is weakened; the majority controls all important institutions; the majority profits from the internal colony; and finally, the majority imposes a racist doctrine justifying the internal colony. The black racial turmoil of the 1960s prompted this model, but it applies to other groups and to other times as well.²⁰ (More extreme but not germane to this study are the forced relocation of a minority and physical extermination).

3. *Anglo Conformity*. Another model holds that while the minority becomes like the majority, the majority adopts little of the minority's ethnicity. In the case of the United States, this is sometimes called *Americanization* or *Anglo Conformity*. If the process takes place for a sufficiently long time, then the minority will eventually become identical to the majority. The 1924 Immigration Act implemented this goal by establishing a quota system based, for all practical purposes, on race and ethnicity. It was assumed that Western

Europeans would easily Americanize, that Eastern Europeans and Levanters would probably not Americanize very much, and that nonwhites would not Americanize at all. Hence, quotas were established approximately in proportion to the group's prospects for achieving Anglo Conformity—or more accurately, what was *believed* to be the group's prospects. This latter point warrants emphasis. In the cases of the Chinese and Japanese, a major argument for exclusion centered on their alleged unassimilability. Yet today, these same groups closely resemble the white majority in terms of socio-economic status.²¹ Beliefs about prospective assimilation can be incorrect.

4. *Minoritization.* Conceivably, the minority might not change while the majority becomes like it. This type of assimilation has no name, so let us call it *minoritization*. The most dramatic illustration of minoritization is historical: white settlers who chose to live among the Indians. Today, whites who marry nonwhites and adopt a nonwhite life style are another illustration. Some minoritization may also occur in local areas where a majority adopts many minority customs. Examples are Southwestern areas of the United States where Spanish and Mexican influences are strong, and pockets in the Midwest where various Scandinavian groups have had much influence. On the other hand, perhaps these examples should not be carried too far. Great gulfs between groups may still exist. State laws proclaiming English the official language can be interpreted as resistance to minoritization, as can exclusion, Anglo conformity, and discrimination. One would conclude, based on past research and common observation, that resistance to minoritization has been largely successful.

Assimilation Defined

As mentioned, assimilation can be defined simply as the extent to which groups resemble each other. For empirical purposes, however, an operational definition is required. Following past research, assimilation is here defined as the extent to which a group differs from another group along a given empirical distribution. Assimilation implies non-assimilation or, as it is called in this context, *differentiation*. For example, if Group A does not have the same education distribution as Group B, then the groups are not assimilated insofar as education is concerned. Stated otherwise, the groups are educationally differentiated.

This operational definition of assimilation assumes that it is a multivariate phenomenon.²² A group can be assimilated along

some dimensions and not assimilated along others. A group may be educationally assimilated but occupationally differentiated. As a group, for example, Italians might attain the same education as the Irish but not the same occupations. Blacks might attain the same income as whites while the intermarriage rate remains minuscule. Thus, both assimilation and differentiation can simultaneously describe a group.

It further follows from the definition that assimilation is a structural property at the group level of analysis. An individual can be a point in a statistical distribution, but the individual cannot comprise the distribution. To be sure, an individual could be described as more or less assimilated, but that would simply be a verbal convenience and is not consistent with the terminology adopted here.²³

Operationalizing Ethnicity

The Census Bureau nominally defined ancestry as descent, lineage, nationality group, or the country of origin of the respondent's parents or ancestors. The specific question asked of the householder (the person who filled in the census questionnaire) was: "What is this person's ancestry? For example, Afro-Amer., English . . . Venezuelan, etc."²⁴ Approximately 400 specific ancestries were tabulated. As they stood, these groupings were not usable for present purposes, hence a series of refinements were applied, as follows.

1. Broader categories were required, but not so broad as to mask potentially important differences. For example, the Census Bureau lists *Welsh* and *Cornish* separately and, although they undoubtedly differ, American culture does not define them as distinct ethnic entities. Thus, they were combined with the broader category of *British*. Although this example may be self evident, it was an exception. The Census Bureau listed many unfamiliar ancestries, and to ameliorate this problem, the *Harvard Encyclopedia of Ethnic Groups* was chosen as the standard reference. When in doubt, the volume was consulted to determine into which ethnic group a specific ancestry should be placed.

The choice of the *Harvard Encyclopedia* was predicated on the assumption that it is the most up-to-date and inclusive compendium now available. It contains over 100 separate ethnic groups, each dis-

cussed by a person with special expertise on the group. The pieces roughly follow a standard outline, so substantial commonality exists among them. While not perfect, the *Harvard Encyclopedia* did serve as a useful and public criterion for resolving questions about where to place specific ancestral categories.

Using the *Harvard Encyclopedia* further helped to ensure that some consensus existed as to whether a group was an ethnic group *qua* group. Quite possibly, respondents might list a specific ancestry that did not have an established identity in the United States. It would have been perfectly legitimate for some respondents to list their ancestry as Umbrian, but do Umbrians constitute a distinctive American ethnic group?²⁵ Would it not be more sensible to place Umbrians within the broader category of Italians, as in fact, was done in the present case?

2. In a heterogeneous society such as the United States, many people claim a diverse ethnic background: Dutch-French, Irish-German, and so on. To accommodate this, the Census questionnaire allowed for single, dual, and, in some cases, triple ancestry (together, the latter two are called "multiple ancestry"). When multiple ancestry was listed, additional criteria were needed.

If the first and second ancestry were the same, then the respondent was placed in that category. To illustrate, if both the first and second ancestry were French, then the respondent was considered French. If the first and second categories were different, such as Swedish and Dutch, the person was considered to have multiple ancestry with the first (primary) ancestry being Swedish. If, to take another possibility, the first response was Welsh and the second response was English, then the respondent was considered British because both Welsh and English were part of the British category.

The Census Bureau anticipated that some triple ancestries would be "frequently reported," and coded 17 triplets, for example, German-Irish-Swedish. All triplets were coded as multiple ancestry, and the respondent's primary ancestry was assumed to be the first ancestry of the triplet. In this example, the respondent would be coded as having multiple ancestry with German as the primary ancestry. In practice, this procedure did not have a substantial impact on the data because only 2.8% of all respondents were initially coded as triple ancestry.

3. A numerical cutoff was imposed: at least 1,500 respondents were required in a category. Admittedly arbitrary, a minimum number was necessary to provide flexibility for statistical purposes.

A smaller number would severely limit the investigation. As it turned out, some categories had to be further regrouped to increase the number of respondents for analysis.

4. Some respondents listed themselves as "Americans, North Americans, Caucasians/white." Those persons were placed in the generic category *Anglo American*.

These criteria helped produce a manageable number of more rigorously defined groups. Table 1.1 shows the composition of the 20 groups that resulted from applying these procedures. Note that *British* includes, among others, Australians and non-French speaking Canadians. The underlying commonality for this particular grouping is British historical influence. For some purposes, distinguishing between those specific groups might be useful, but that was not true here. The Hispanic categories should also be explicitly mentioned. The Spanish consist of persons who list themselves as *Nuevo Mexicano*, *Californios*, *Tejanos*, or terms that distinguish them from other Hispanics. This group is historically distinct from Spaniards (people from Spain) and Mexicans. While the Spanish are often lumped with Mexicans for statistical purposes, many Spanish resent the practice.²⁶ As it turned out, these criteria produced distinct categories for Mexicans and Spanish, but not for other Hispanic groups. These other groups were placed in the generic category of *Other Hispanic*. Also forming a generic group were Asians. There were simply too few to classify them into separate categories, such as Japanese or Vietnamese. It should be noted that the category *Asian* includes people from India. The two *Other* categories, white and nonwhite, will sometimes be shown for sake of completeness but will not be interpreted because they are so heterogeneous.

Ethnicity and Race

Ancestry and race often overlap; for instance, the typical Irish person is white; the typical Asian is nonwhite. While one expects the overlap to be high, how high is an empirical question. In Table 1.2, the racial categories provided by the Census Bureau have been cross-classified with the ethnic categories just defined. In several instances the overlap exceeds 99%. Even among the generic category of *Anglo American*, almost 93% say they are racially white. Conversely, 99% of *Afro Americans* list their race as black. The category of *Native American* includes various Indian groups, of whom 70% consider themselves white and 26% consider themselves Indian.

TABLE 1.1
Ethnic Groups Used in This Study

<i>Ethnic Group</i>	<i>Specific Ancestry Included in Ethnic Group*</i>
Afro American	Afro American, Black, Negro
Anglo American	American, North American, United States, White, Caucasian
Asian	Asian, Subcontinent, Near East
British	English, non-French Canadian, Australian
Czech	Czech
Dutch	Dutch, Hollander, Netherlander
French	French, French Canadian
German	German
Irish	Irish
Italian	Italian
Mexican	Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
Native American	American Indian, Eskimo
Norwegian	Norwegian
Other Hispanic	Cuban, South American, Spanish speaking Caribbean
Other Nonwhite	All others listing their race as nonwhite
Other White	All others listing their race as white
Polish	Polish
Russian	Russian, Belorussian
Spanish	Californio, Tejano
Swedish	Swedish

*There are over 400 ancestry categories, so only selected ones are shown for illustration.

Among the Hispanic groups, the majority list their race as white, although a substantial number wrote in a Spanish category that was not listed on the Census Bureau questionnaire. That they did so implies they strongly identified with being Hispanic and rejected being classified as racially white. The broad category of Asian is composed of several groups that identify with specific races: for instance, 18% list their race as Chinese and 9% list it as Asian Indian.

Clearly, some ethnic groups are overwhelmingly white while others are overwhelmingly nonwhite. Regardless of *a priori* theoretical distinctions between ethnicity and race, in practice they are so highly related that in most instances, to speak of the ethnicity is to speak of race.

TABLE 1.2
Ancestry and Race*

Ancestry Group	Race												
	W	B	C	F	J	K	H	V	OA	AI	I	S	O
Swedish	100.0												
Norwegian	99.8												
German	99.7												
Italian	99.7												
Polish	99.7												
French	98.6	1.0 ^b											
Russian	99.6												
Irish	99.5												
Czech	99.4												
Dutch	99.4												
British	98.5	1.2											
Anglo American	92.8	6.2											
Afro American	1.0	98.8											
Native American	70.4	2.6								26.0		2.3	
Spanish	68.4	1.4 ^b										27.5	3.0 ^b
Mexican	54.5											40.1	4.2
Other Hispanic	57.8	3.2 ^b										33.2	5.3
	Race												
	W	B	C	F	J	K	H	V	OA	AI	I	S	O
Asian	8.2		17.9	20.3	15.7	9.1	4.5	6	6.3	9.2			1.8 ^b
Other White	98.5												
Other Nonwhite	8.4 ^b	84.2	1.6							2.1			1.6 ^b
Missing	84.2	12.6										1.5	

*Percent of the ancestry category in that racial category. Values less than 1% are not shown. Row values do not equal 100% due to rounding.

^bFewer than 100 persons in this category.

Legend: W: White; B: black; C: Chinese; F: Filipino; J: Japanese; K: Korean; H: Hawaiian; V: Vietnamese; OA: Other Asian; AI: Asian Indian; I: American Indian, Aleut, Eskimo; S: Spanish write-in.

Interestingly, some overlapping categories are “non-logical,” such as *Other Nonwhites* or *Asians* who list their race as white. Because of these cases, the ethnic groupings were refined. In Table 1.3 groups usually considered white (or nonwhite) consist solely of whites (or nonwhites). To illustrate, persons who listed their ancestry as Dutch and their race as black were placed in the category *Other nonwhite*; persons who listed their ancestry as Asian and their race as white were placed in the category *Other white*. While the procedure did not affect very many respondents, the result was a more rigorously defined set of ethnic groups than found in previous research.

Even after applying the above procedures, one might argue that the categories do not form a single dimension—ethnic groupings (such as Swedish) are mixed with racial groupings (such as Afro American). On the other hand, because the two dimensions are so highly related, one can argue that the categories reflect an empirical reality. To analyze an ethnic distribution is to analyze a racial distribution.²⁷

Perhaps reflecting this high overlap, the distinction between race and ethnicity is often ignored in practice. For example, the term *race relations* is already reified in the titles of university courses, textbooks, monographs, articles, and popular culture. Many researchers substitute the term *ethnic relations* for *race relations* because, I suspect, they are uneasy with genetic determinism. Nevertheless, given the close relationship between the two variables, the substitution does not affect the content of the discussion. Because of that, I use *ethnic* throughout the remainder of this monograph.

Ethnic Group Composition of the United States

Using the ethnic categories as just defined, Figure 1.1 shows the ethnic composition of the United States. The British constitute the single largest ethnic group in the country—one out of five Americans falls in that category. Between the British and the second largest group, Germans, there is a gap of five percentage points, and between Germans and the third largest group, Afro Americans, a six percentage point gap exists. From there, the sizes of the groups steadily decrease by lesser increments until the smallest groups are reached at one percent of the total.

These data are not identical to some others, notably the special counts made in conjunction with the Current Population Survey of 1979. That research found the English comprised 22% of the popu-

TABLE 1.3

Ethnic Groups Used in this Study As Modified by Race

<i>Ethnic Group</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Ancestry Categories Included in Ethnic Group*</i>
Afro American	Nonwhite	Afro American, Black, Negro
Anglo American	White	American, North American, United States, White, Caucasian
Asian	Nonwhite	Asian, Subcontinent, Near East
British	White	English, non-French Canadian, Australian
Czech	White	Czech
Dutch	White	Dutch, Hollander, Netherlander
French	White	French, French Canadian
German	White	German
Irish	White	Irish
Italian	White	Italian
Mexican	Nonwhite	Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
Native American	Nonwhite	American Indian, Eskimo
Norwegian	White	Norwegian
Other Hispanic	Nonwhite	Cuban, South American, Spanish-speaking Caribbean
Other Nonwhite	Nonwhite	All others listing their race as nonwhite
Other White	White	All others listing their race as white
Polish	White	Polish
Russian	White	Russian, Belorussian
Spanish	Nonwhite	Californio, Tejano
Swedish	White	Swedish

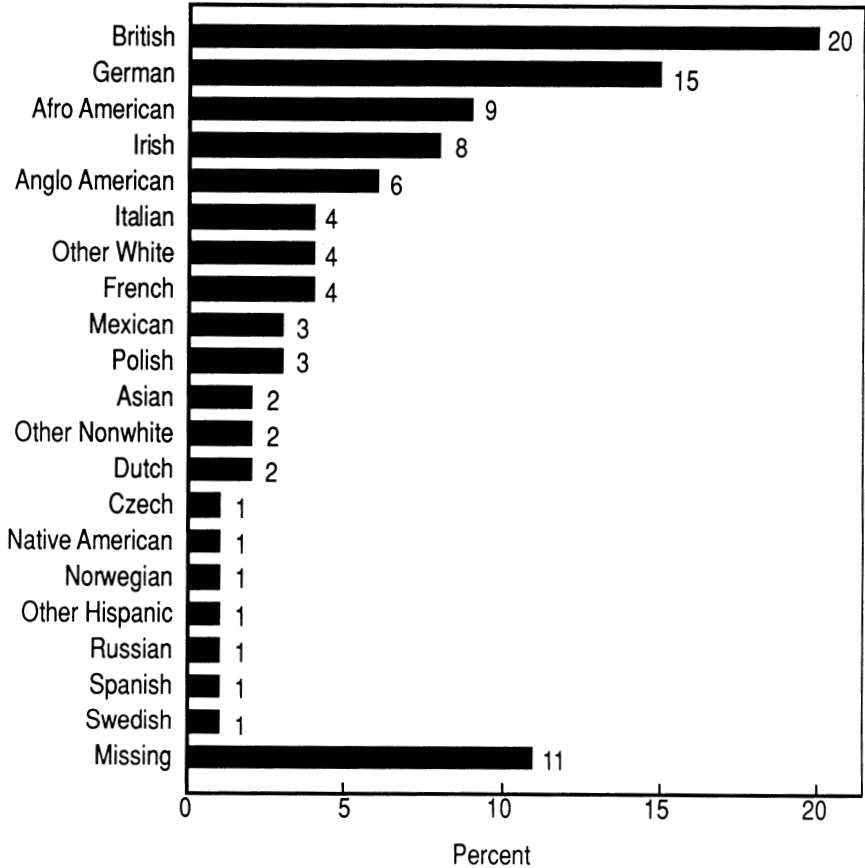
*There are over ancestry 400 categories, so only selected ones are shown for illustration.

lation, the Irish 24%, and the Germans 29%.²⁸ These figures differ substantially from those shown on Figure 1.1. However, the Current Population Survey counted the same respondents in more than one ethnic category and, moreover, the ethnic categories were not identical to those used here.²⁹

Single and Multiple Ancestry: Ancestral Diffusion

Because the Census Bureau tabulated both single and multiple ancestry, assimilation may be studied in a unique way. Claims of single ancestry should decrease as an ethnic group assimilates—

FIGURE 1.1
Ethnic Group Composition of the United States, 1980



that is, assimilation across ethnic boundaries blurs the boundaries themselves. This process, implied by the concept of the melting pot, I call *ancestral diffusion*.

Overall, 60% of the sample claimed single ancestry, 29% claimed multiple ancestry, and the remaining 11% were missing. The 60% figure implies that the majority of Americans are ancestrally assimilated, but by the same token, 29% remain differentiated. Of course, whether this situation bespeaks "high assimi-

lation" is a judgmental matter, not one of statistics. Statistically, however, considerable variation does exist among the groups (see Table 1.4). Among five groups, 50% or fewer respondents claimed to have single ancestry (Native American, Dutch, French, Swedish, and Norwegian). At the other extreme, among six groups 90% or more claimed single ancestry (Other Nonwhite, Asian, Mexican, Other Hispanic, Afro American, and Anglo American). However, for Anglo Americans the distinction between single and multiple ancestry might not apply. Persons who claimed that ancestry probably view themselves as belonging to a single generic group, *American*.

The findings are broadly consistent with American immigration history. Groups that met the most welcome should have most easily diffused into American society and, therefore, should be characterized by the lowest rates of single ancestry. That is so. The

TABLE 1.4
Ethnic Group by Single Ancestry

<i>Ethnic Group</i>	<i>Percent Single Ancestry*</i>
Native American	31
Dutch	36
French	42
Swedish	49
Norwegian	50
German	55
Irish	55
British	59
Czech	62
Polish	64
Russian	64
Other White	69
Italian	72
Spanish	79
Other Nonwhite	90
Asian	94
Mexican	95
Other Hispanic	96
Afro American	99
Anglo American	100

*Percent of the ethnic group that listed one ancestry.