

# Identity: Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Sexuality

## Chapter 5

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Key Question:

## What is Identity and How are Identities Constructed?

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## Identity

- Identity – “how we make sense of ourselves” – Rose
- How do we establish identities?
  - we construct our identities through experiences, emotions connections, and rejections.
  - An identity is a snapshot of who we are at a point in time
  - Identities are fluid, constantly changing, shifting, becoming.
  - Identities vary across scales, and affect each other across scales.
  - Identities are also constructed by identifying against (defining the other and then defining ourselves as “not that.”)

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## Gender

Gender – “a culture’s assumptions about the differences between men and women: their ‘characters,’ the roles they play in society, what they represent.”  
- Domosh and Seager



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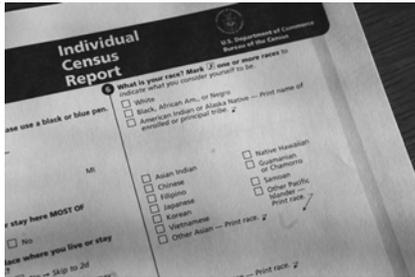
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Race – a categorization of humans based on skin color and other physical characteristics. Racial categories are social and political constructions because they are based on ideas that some biological differences are more important than others.



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## On Racism and Colonialism -

“Colonial racism was a major element in that conception of ‘Empire’ which attempted to weld dynastic legitimacy and national community. It did so by generalizing a principle of innate, inherited superiority on which its own domestic position was (however shakily) based on the vastness of overseas possessions, covertly (or not so covertly) conveying the idea that if, say, English lords were naturally superior to other Englishmen, no matter: these other Englishmen were no less superior to the subjected natives.”  
- Benedict Anderson



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- Racial Categories are typically imposed on people through:
  - Residential segregation
  - Racialized divisions of labor
  - Racial categories defined by governments

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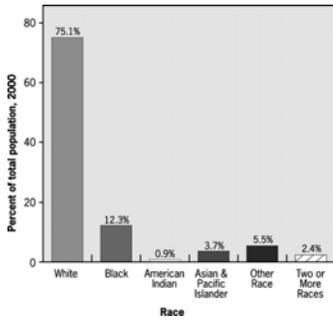
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### Population in the U.S. by Race, 2000

In 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau allowed Americans to categorize themselves as one race or more than one race.




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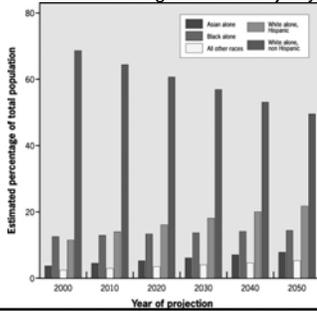
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### Estimated Percentage of U.S. Population by Race and Ethnicity until 2050

In 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau calculated race and Hispanic origin separately. Estimates are that by 2050, the "White, non-Hispanic population will no longer be the majority."




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## Residential Segregation

- The “degree to which two or more groups live separately from one another, in different parts of the urban environment.”  
– Massey and Denton

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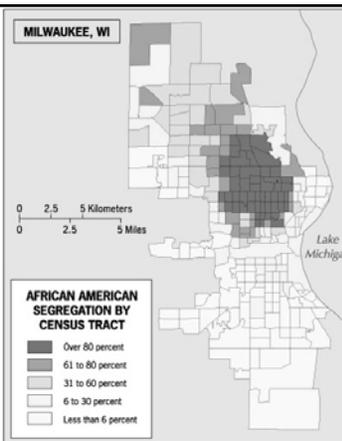
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### Highest Rate of Residential Segregation for African Americans:

Milwaukee, Wisconsin



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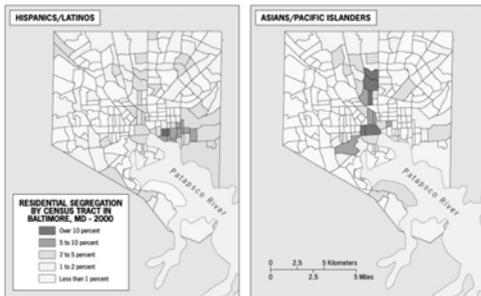
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### Lowest Rate of Residential Segregation for Hispanics/Latinos: Baltimore for Asians/Pacific Islanders: Baltimore



Baltimore, Maryland

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Identities in Neighborhoods change over time:



**Invasion and Succession:**  
new immigrants to a city often move to areas occupied by older immigrant groups.

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Recall the last time you were asked to check a box for your "race." Does that box factor into how you make sense of yourself, locally, regionally, nationally, and globally?

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Key Question:

**How do Places affect Identity,  
and how can we see  
Identities in Places?**

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## Sense of Place

- We infuse places with meaning and feeling, with memories and emotions.
- Our sense of place becomes part of our identity and our identity affects the ways we define and experience place.

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## Ethnicity

- Ethnicity –  
a constructed identity that is tied to a place ... it is often considered “natural” because it implies ancient relations among people over time.

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How do different places (eg. Switzerland vs. New Glarus, Wisconsin) create different identities (Swiss vs. Swiss American)?



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### How does a place change when the people who live there change?

Today, Mexicali's Chinatown has few Chinese Residents, but continues to be an important place for the region's Chinese population.




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### Identity and Space

- Space – “social relations stretched out”
- Place – “particular articulations of those social relations as they have come together, over time, in that particular location.”
  - Massey and Jess
- When people make places, they do so in the context of surrounding social relationships.

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### Sexuality and Space

Where people with a shared identity cluster, how do they create a space for themselves?




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## Sexuality and Space

- What theories explain and inform our understanding of sexuality and space?
- Queer Theory – focuses on political engagement of “queers” with the “heteronormative.”

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In the 2000 census, the government tallied the number of *households* where a same-sex couple (with or without children) lived. Study the map of same-sex households by census tract in Figure 5.10. What gay men and lesbian women are not being counted on this map? How would the map change if sexuality were one of the “boxes” every person filled out on the census?

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Key Question:

How do Power Relationships  
Subjugate Certain  
Groups of People?

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## Power Relationships

- Power Relationships – assumptions and structures about who is in control, who has power over others.

How are power relationships reflected in cultural landscapes (the visible human imprint on the landscape)?

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Through power relationships,

People create places where they limit the access of other peoples.



Belfast, Northern Ireland

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## How do Power Relationships factor into How People are Counted?

The U.S. Census undercounts:

- minority populations
- the homeless

The Gross National Income (GNI)

does not count:

- unpaid work of women in the household
- work done by rural women in poorer countries

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### Informal Economy –

private, often home-based activities such as tailoring, beer brewing, food preparation, or vegetable gardening.



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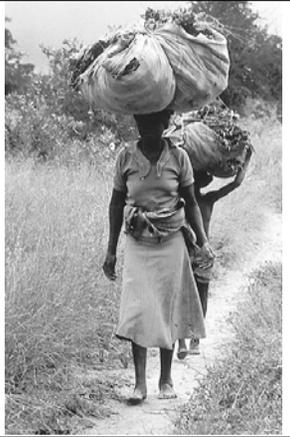
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### Women in Sub-Saharan Africa

- populate much of the rural areas, as men migrate to cities for work.
- produce 70% of the region's food.
- only a small percentage of women have legal title to their land.



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### -Dowry Deaths in India

- murders of brides (often by burning) when a dispute arises over a dowry. Difficult to "legislate away" the power relationships that lead to dowry deaths female infanticide is also tied to the disempowerment of women



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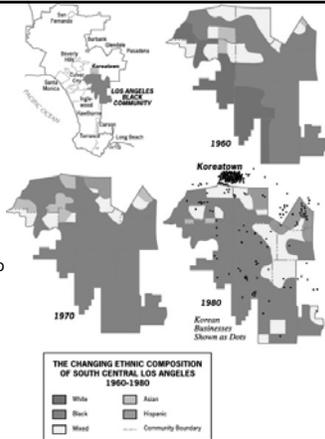
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## Ethnic Groups in Los Angeles

- barrioization – when the population of a neighborhood changes over largely to Hispanics.
- cultural landscapes change to reflect changing populations.
- strife is usually tied to economic change.




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Geographers who study race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality are interested in the power relationships embedded in a place from which assumptions about “others” are formed or reinforced. Consider your own place, your campus, or locality. What power relationships are embedded in this place?

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