



“Constructing” others

Sonia Nieto writes:

“Society categorizes people according to visible and invisible traits, uses classifications to deduce fixed behavioral and mental traits, and then applies policies and practices that jeopardize some groups and benefits other groups. Classifications based on race, ethnicity, gender, social class, religion, culture are all around us; frequently they result in gross exaggerations or stereotypes.”



What Do You Think?

1. Did you feel like your teachers, counselors, or administrators labeled you?

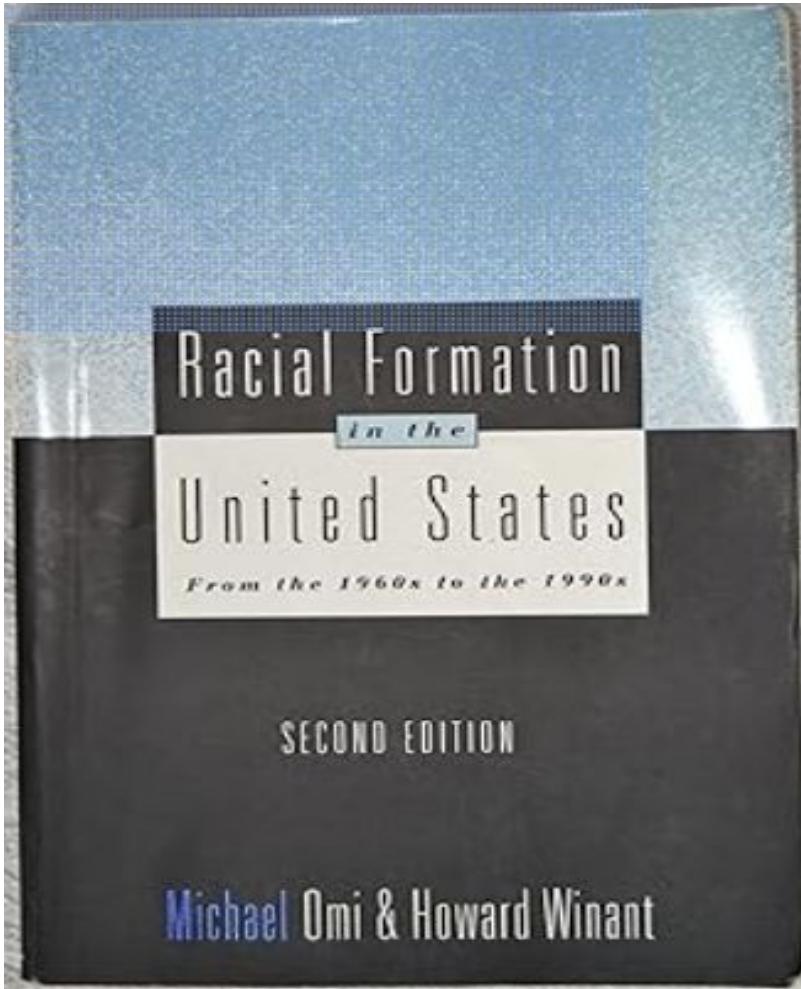
2. Did those labels influence how you saw yourself, your intelligence, your motivation, what you thought you were capable of?

3. Did those labels accurately reflect who you were, your full self? Or, were they “distortions” (meaning only partially accurate)?

Silence, Fear, Denial



- In society and in schools there's usually **fear** around talking about issues of race or cultural difference.
- **Silence or denial** are common, but **not the answer**.
- **The answer is courage** – courage to confront how societal views influence us; courage to honestly reflect how our upbringing might have shaped our views about race or cultural difference.



“Everyone learns some combination of racial classification...often without obvious teaching or conscious inculcation. Race becomes ‘common sense.’”

Widely accepted in the social sciences and by geneticists that race is not biologically determined.

Socially constructed nature of racial categories can be seen in reviewing historical developments, in how political struggles have led to redefining categories, the way economic conditions contributed to the economic and social importance of racial identity and racial categories.

RACE: Are we So Different? A 2009 project of the American Anthropological Association, funded by the Ford Foundation and the National Science Foundation.

Uses a range of scientific evidence to dispel





5364 MULBERRY STREET, NEW YORK CITY

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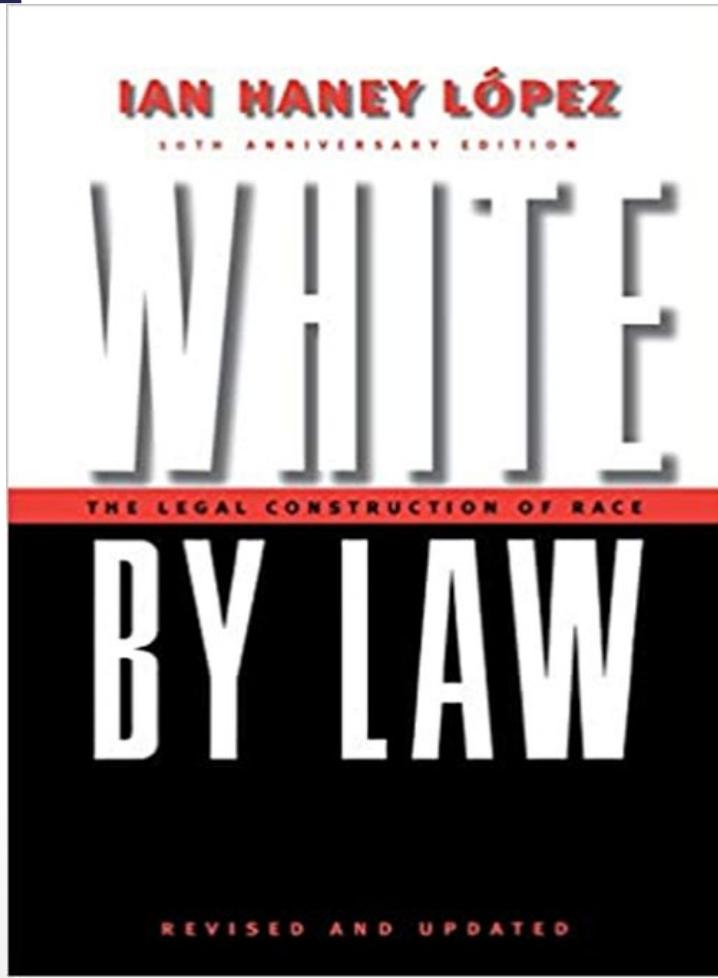


"No Irish Need Apply"

Anonymous (Written about 1910)



Ian Haney Lopez, law professor

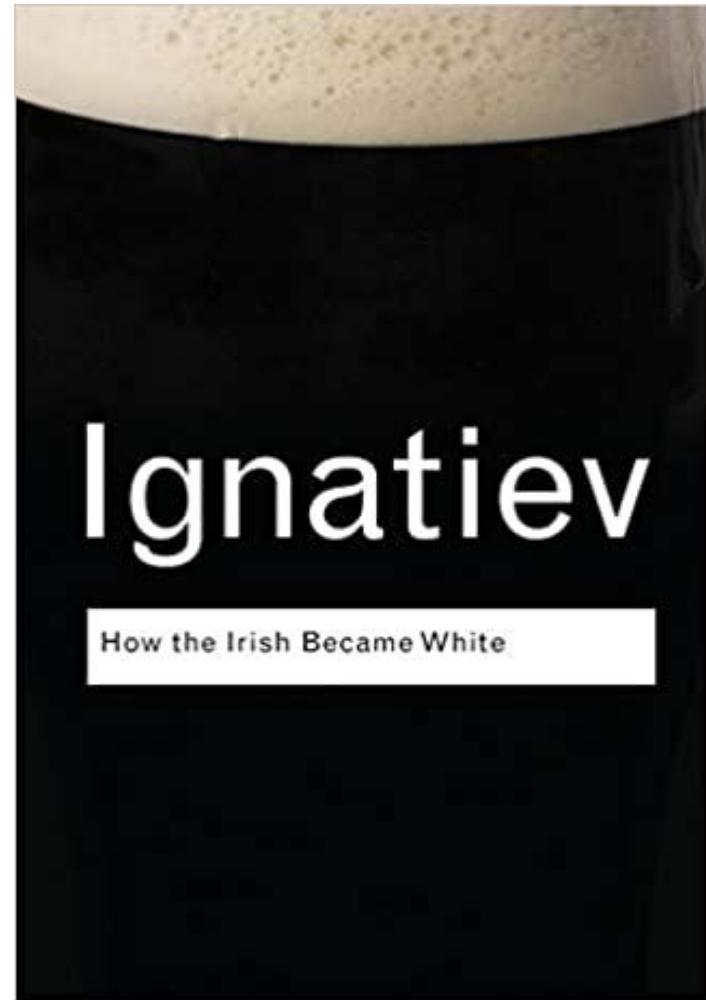
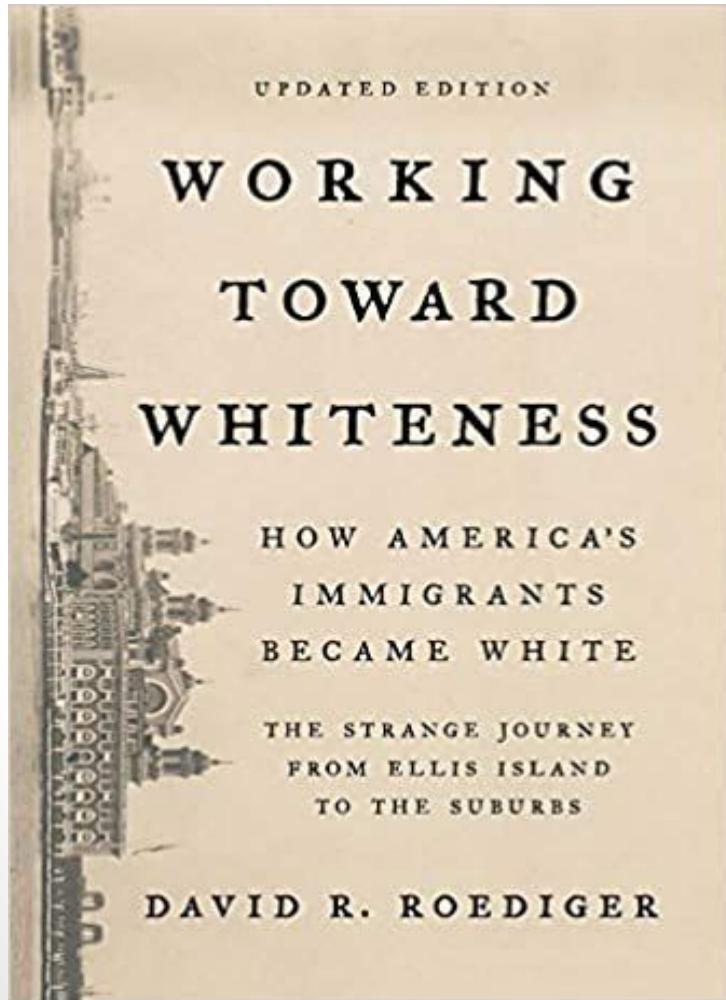


- Legal cases construct the “social systems of meanings we commonly refer to as race. Law influences what we look like, the meanings ascribed to our looks, and the material reality that confirms the meanings of our appearance”
- Law as coercion = “legal rules have shaped physical appearances, the pool of physical features present through literal exclusion and through interference with marital choices, immigration laws. Cases demonstrate laws defined racial status of immigrants, the racial identity of those already here.”

Naturalization and Immigration

- Naturalization – process and policies that lead to citizenship (who deserves to be here?)
 - Green card for residency
 - “lawful” permanent residency demonstrating obedience to U.S. laws
 - “good moral character”
 - Understand/speak English
 - Understand U.S. civics (what it means to be a good, productive citizen, belief in the Constitution)
- Racial classification of immigrants tied to economic and social status. Irish and Italians became White only to legitimate their citizenship.

In 1984, famous writer James Baldwin said, “**No one was white before he/she came to America. It took generations, and a vast amount of coercion.**”



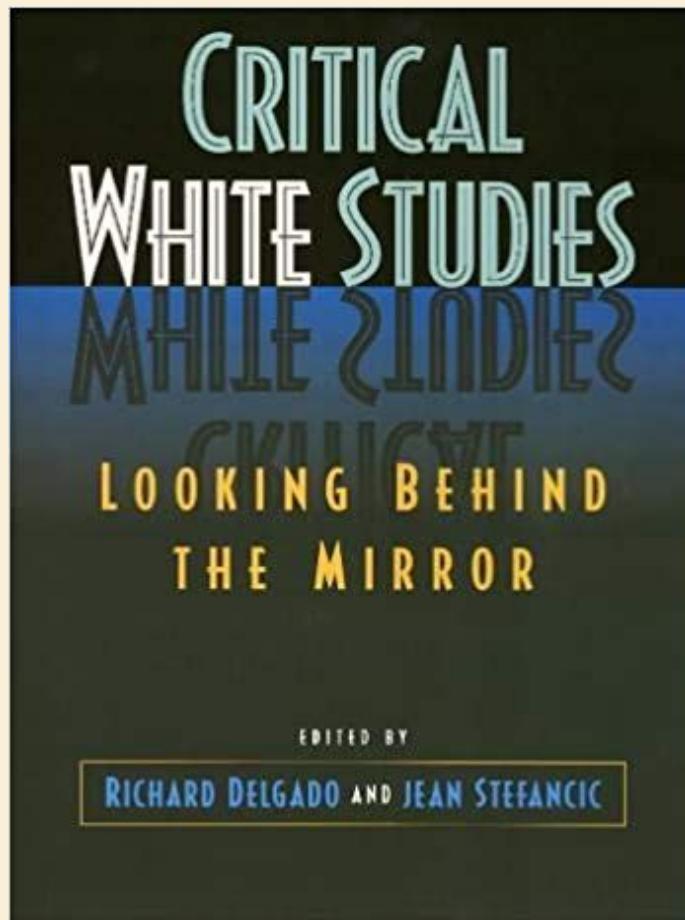
THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WHITENESS

- How did European immigrants with *distinct* ethnic identities and cultures become “white?”
- Law as coercion – in the 1800’s gaining access to jobs, education, land ownership, and other citizenship rights were reserved for white men

“No one was white before he/she came to America. It took generations, and a vast amount of coercion.”

James Baldwin, 1984

CRITICAL STUDIES OF “WHITENESS”



United States Census

- Mandated in the U.S. Constitution to collect information about the population every 10 yrs.
- Survey started in 1790 – age, sex/gender, education, family living arrangements, geography, housing, income, population estimates.
- Census categories have changed over time.
- **Census forces us to choose how we identify;** for people of Middle Eastern or North African descent the “choices” are very problematic.

Figure 1.

2020 Census Hispanic Origin Question

→ NOTE: Please answer BOTH Question 6 about Hispanic origin and Question 7 about race. For this census, Hispanic origins are not races.

6. Is this person of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

- No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
 - Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano
 - Yes, Puerto Rican
 - Yes, Cuban
 - Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin – *Print, for example, Salvadoran, Dominican, Colombian, Guatemalan, Spaniard, Ecuadorian, etc.* ↗

Figure 2.
2020 Census Race Question

7. What is this person's race?

Mark one or more boxes **AND** print origins.

- White – Print, for example, German, Irish, English, Italian, Lebanese, Egyptian, etc. ↵

- Black or African Am. – Print, for example, African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, etc. ↗

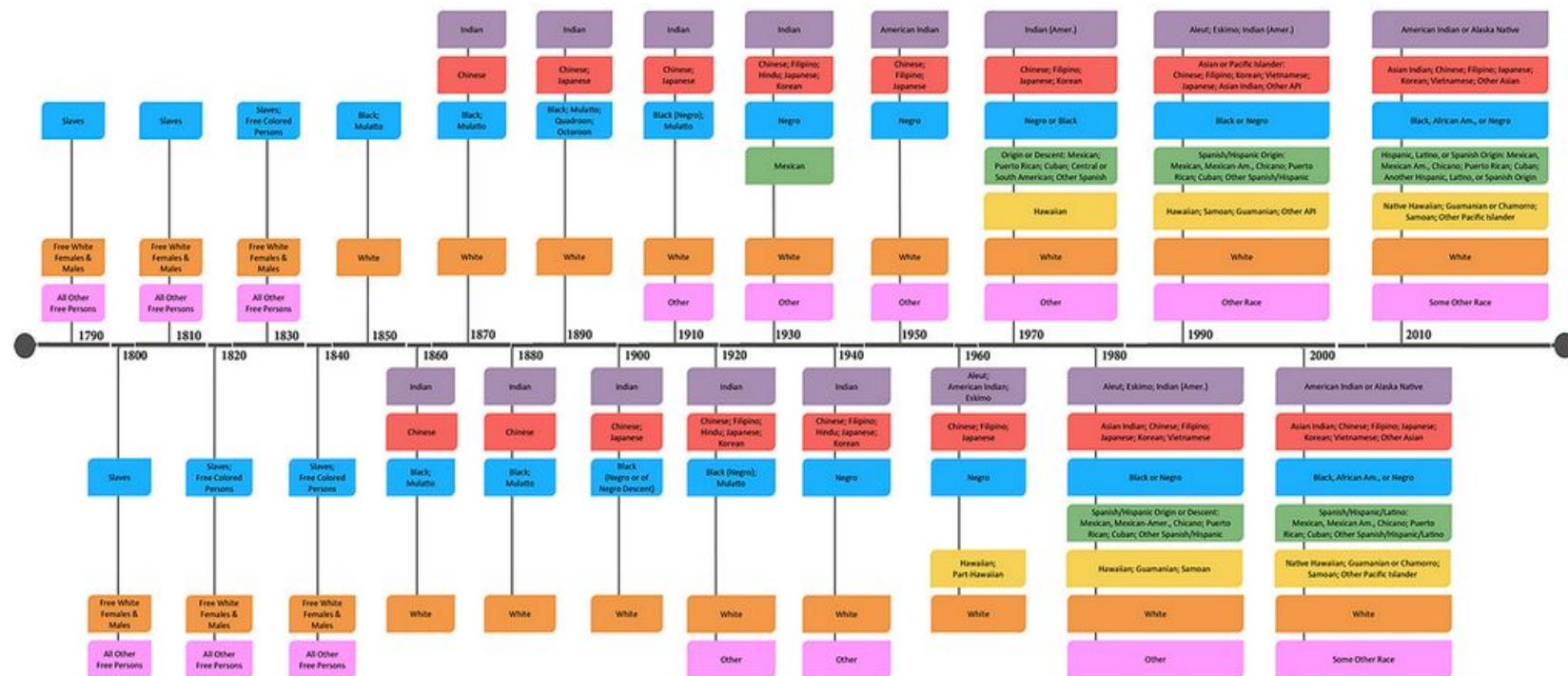
- American Indian or Alaska Native – *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe(s), for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc.* ✓

- | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Chinese | <input type="checkbox"/> | Vietnamese | <input type="checkbox"/> | Native Hawaiian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Filipino | <input type="checkbox"/> | Korean | <input type="checkbox"/> | Samoan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Asian Indian | <input type="checkbox"/> | Japanese | <input type="checkbox"/> | Chamorro |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other Asian –
<i>Print, for example,
Pakistani, Cambodian,
Hmong, etc.</i> ↗ | | | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other Pacific Islander –
<i>Print, for example,
Tongan, Fijian,
Marshallese, etc.</i> ↗ |

- Some other race – *Print race or origin.* ✓

ethnicity categories have changed over 220 years in the decennial census.

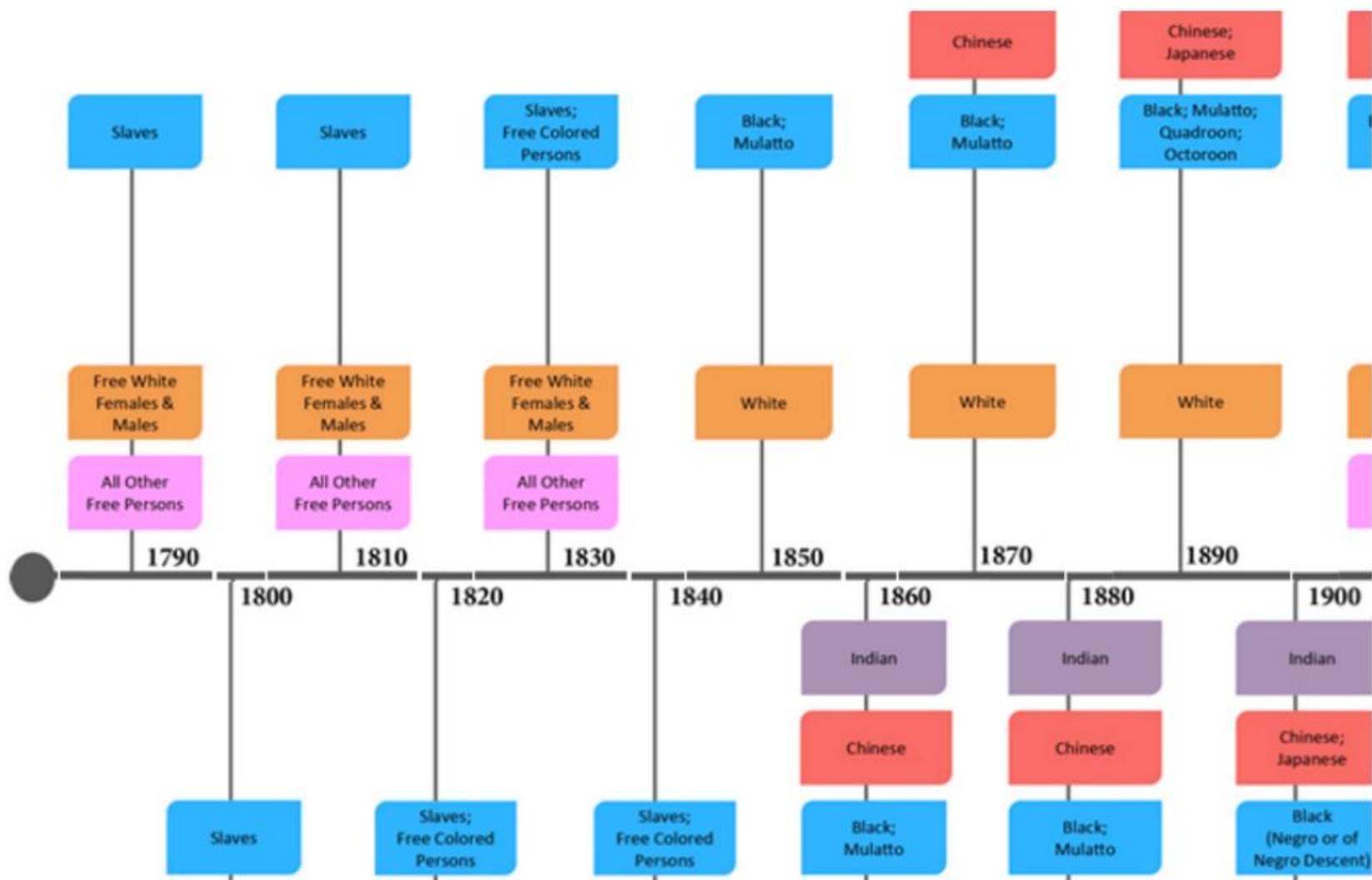
Below is a screenshot of the entire graphic. You'll have to click through for the interactive parts:



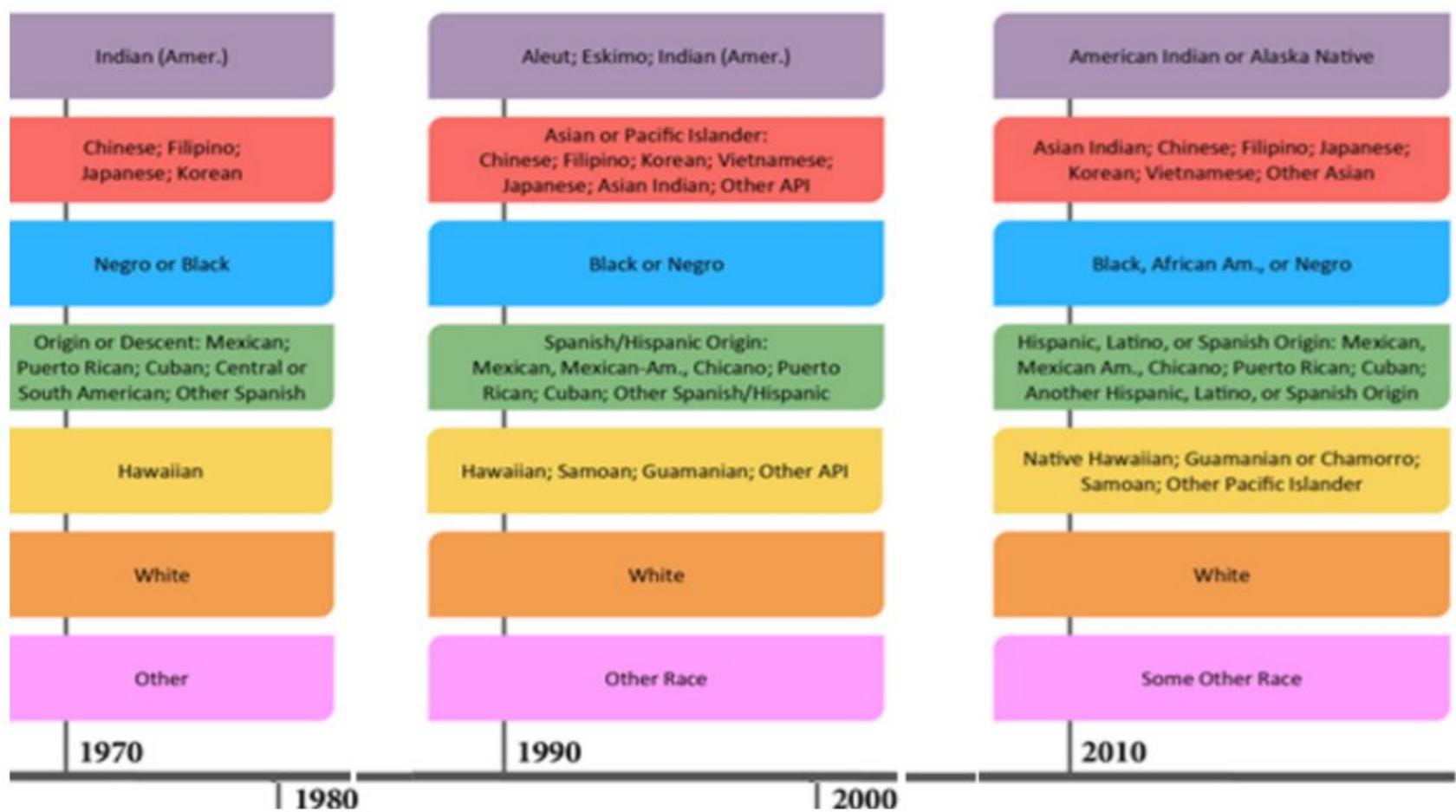
Here's a zoomed-in screenshot showing part of the front end:



Here's a zoomed-in screenshot showing part of the front end:



And here's the tail end:



If you hover over the year on the timeline, a little blurb comes up with information about which race options were added, changed, or

Race and American Citizenship – Armenians and Japanese

- 1909- Four Armenians sued to establish their racial eligibility for U.S. citizenship. Armenians had been categorized as “Asiatics” and were usually denied citizenship. Court re-examined which groups could be considered “white” and ultimately granted citizenship to the Armenians, a group not considered a “threat” to society.
- 1922- Japanese-born immigrant applied for U.S. citizenship. Court had to debate definition of race by skin color. Court rejected man’s petition and realized that using skin color as a test of race was inadequate.

Legal Examples: Race & Rights

- 1800's- Mexicans were seen as a nationality (i.e., a group tied to country of Mexico) and as belonging to a racial group – white, black, Indian, Asian – depending on physical features. As U.S. expansion grew in Texas & CA, animosity and prejudice increased. Once U.S. took over Mexican territory in CA and TX laws quickly followed that reflected prejudices. Laws re-defined Mexicans as “distinct” from other groups and inferior compared to other groups.

Marriage laws - interracial marriage complicates racial labels

- Miscegenation - a marriage between persons of different races.
- Banned by law in all states until 1967.
- In 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court held that laws banning interracial marriages are unconstitutional.
- The last remaining state-law ban on interracial marriages was a provision in the Alabama constitution. The Alabama legislature voted to repeal the ban. **In 1999, subject to a vote by the people, the repeal became effective in 2000.**

Ian Haney Lopez – law and race

- If race has been imposed through laws that are coercive, why do the vast majority of people embrace race so willingly?
- Law as ideology = the capacity to persuade people that the world is the way it is naturally and not because of human influence. Law legitimates ideology about race.
- Laws can reflect unconscious racism and seemingly race-neutral policies. Criminal law examples (arrests, sentencing, bail, plea bargains). School discipline examples (students of color, special needs students)
- Media tapping into fears about safety, economic security, losing status/power without ever mentioning race.

LANGUAGE CHANGES OVER TIME

Nieto writes, “Language is always changing. Because it mirrors social, economic, and political events, it is an important barometer of a society at any given time. Language also becomes obsolete; it could not be otherwise because it is a reflection of societal changes” (pg. 24).

(Hispanic, Chicano/a, Latino/a, Latinx, Negro, Black, African American, Oriental, Asian, Asian American, Caucasian, White, European American)

WHAT IS CULTURE?



Take a couple of minutes to write down a few ideas about “culture”

- What is it? Where does it come from?
- What is NOT culture?

NIETO READING ON CULTURE

“Culture as the ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview created, shared, and transformed by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that can include a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and religion.”

“Culture is complex; it includes content or product (the what of culture), process (how it is created and transformed), and the agents of culture (who is responsible for creating and changing it). Culture cannot be reduced to holidays, foods, or dances, although these are, of course, elements of culture. This definition also makes it clear that everyone has a culture.”

NIETO READING ON CULTURE

- Culture is not inherited through genes. Culture is learned; it is a human creation
- Culture is dynamic and always changing
- Cultural change is a two-way process, meaning cultures are always hybrids



NIETO READING ON CULTURE

- People select and reject particular elements of culture as suitable or not for themselves or particular contexts
- Culture is multifaceted - cultural identifications are multiple, eclectic, mixed, and heterogeneous. Culture cannot be equated with just ethnicity or race.

CULTURALLY MEDIATING FACTORS

- Family values, beliefs, traditions (food, clothes, music)
- Peers/friends
- Race/ethnicity
- Gender/sexuality
- Religion
- Economic/social class background
- Language background
- Personal desire, effort and aspirations
- Community/neighborhood/geographic location
- School
- Home-school relationships
- Media and technology
- **Anything else?**

WAYS TO VIEW CULTURE...

Some definitions that might be useful to think about culture:

- Values – typically represent the ends toward which behavior is directed; values can predict behavior
- Frames – lenses through which people observe and interpret life; people's conceptions of "how the world works"
- Repertoires – a body or stock of strategies, actions; people are unlikely to engage in an action unless they already have a strategy in place to carry out that action

(Small, M. et. al. (2010). *Reconsidering Culture and Poverty*. The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, Vol. 629, No. 6.)

Schools Have A Distinct Culture

The tone or climate of a school through....

Physical Quality of Schools

Open/restrictive layout.
Condition of buildings,
classrooms, bathrooms

School Routines for Order Entering/leaving campus, lunch privileges, discipline, the “hall pass”

Grouping Students for Instruction – tracking or ability grouping and the quality of assignments (e.g., honors, AP, IB, regular, remedial)

Academic/Vocational Programs, Resources
tutoring, internships, college fairs, Gifted programs, construction, auto shop, etc.

Extracurricular Opportunities - sports, music, visual arts, academics, leadership, etc.

CULTURE OF SCHOOLING IN THE UNITED STATES



Guiding cultural assumptions in many U.S. schools:

- All students vary in ability.
- Ability is relatively fixed, unchangeable and can be accurately measured.
- There is a hierarchy of skills to be learned in content areas, in a set order.

BELIEFS ABOUT STUDENTS



Consider ideas about being
“smart”

- How did your schools define what it means to be a smart student?
- What cultural beliefs are underlying those definitions?

BELIEFS ABOUT STUDENTS

In your schools, when a student was considered to be a “bad” student, what did that mean?

What cultural beliefs are underlying those definitions?



IMPACT OF SCHOOL CULTURE ON STUDENTS

Think about your schools:

- How might school culture impact students' experiences in school?
- For example, their views about education or their futures, their participation in school and in the classroom, their learning and achievement?





Next Week

Tue. reading – challenging writing!

**Focus on overall main points and
evidence authors use**

Investigative Assignments