**Tec(h)tonic Race and Ethnicity: Conceptual Structuration of Census Data**

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In her 2008 “Ethnic Classification in Global Perspective: A Cross-National Survey of the 2000 Census Round”, Ann Morning describes how different national census instruments construct race and ethnicity. In this large comparative study, we see how governments construct the concept of race and ethnicity, focusing on the *known* and then moving to residuality (Star and Bowker, 2007), incommensurability (Olson, 2001), and caveats.

There are two ways we can examine this as a lesson for classification theory. First, we can examine the construction of the concept of race and ethnicity - either combined or separated. Secondly, we can examine, comparatively, across these census categories. Both of these approaches are techniques in what has been called *categoriography* (Tennis, 2018). Categoriography is the *writing of the life* of a category. In this case we have a few. This approach to studying concepts is inspired by history of ideas, intellectual history, and ethnography.

In the case of the race and ethnicity in the Morning paper, or as she puts it, *ethnic enumeration*, we can make three preliminary observations. First, there is no one characteristic of division applied in creating the classes of ethnic enumeration. This is not surprising given the varieties of motivation for this practice (more on this below). There is an interesting tension between faithful representation and too many or too few groups. Finally, as alluded to above, there is a sense that, in many of the cases of ethnic enumeration in the Morning article, the designers move from the known to at least three other kinds of categories. This landscape is interesting for classification theory, because it moves our understanding of the conceptual models forward into a practice we have nodded to, but never embraced. Related to this structural point of divergence, we can also see novel motivations for the inclusion or exclusion of classes in ethnic enumeration.

Morning cites four motivations for ethnic enumeration.

1. Enumeration for political control
2. Non-enumeration in the name of national integration
3. Discourse of national hybridity
4. Enumeration for antidiscrimination

Reading this with a lens drawn from classification theory allows for a Feinbergian analysis of race and ethnicity and its example classes. That is, we are motivated by a particular argument or arguments to model race and ethnicity in the geopolitical arena. This reinforces or at least partially justifies the structural observations above.

In this paper I will provide a set of cases that allow me to demonstrate the value of this approach in the milieu of conceptual modeling and the novelty of this approach to advancing classification theory. We might see this categoriographic work as a map of potential divisions of the concept of race and ethnicity which is split along variable tectonic schisms and as a technology of the state, motivated by a particular narrative. Thus a tec(h)tonic of race and ethnicity. Both of these views lend us insight into classification practices.

**References**

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