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Hist 30.05

Professor Merchant

9/26/16

The misrepresentation of the population of the United States from 1870 to 1940

From the years 1870 to 1940, the United States census took may different forms. As our reading from the prior week suggests, the race of someone living in the United States could change between decades depending on how they identified themselves on census forms. The lack of consistency in the categorization of race year to year in this way leads to inconsistent data for each population. As a result of frequent regrouping, the race of one race such as black or Mexican could sway by millions depending on their definitions. Not only does the census in this time period lack of comparable data between decades, the difficulty of citing just one race given very little instruction on how to do so lent itself to much of the inaccuracy of the time. It is obvious that there were indeed many political reasons for the inclusion and exclusion of certain races in the census, and for this reason, I am interested in part on looking at how the writers of the United States Census shaped how the population was represented, in race as well as citizenship and occupation

In one of our readings, Hochschild and Powell wrote about the difficulty of including a Mexican race in the census. While many impoverished Mexican immigrants were more likely to agree with the Mexican label, many rich native Mexicans having lived in the South for generations were far more likely to identify as white, whether or not Mexican was on the form. In this way, the census is in fact more of a representation of what the population sees itself to be, causing yet another misrepresentation. I would like to look at this in not only race but also age.

In so studying these forms of misrepresentation, I thought it may also be useful to delve into how misrepresentation is discovered and accounted for in regards to age, race, citizenship, and occupation, the four total topics in my project.

(Merchant and Gratton 2015).

(Hochschild and Powell 2008)

Research and Plans for Coverage Measurement in the 2010 Census: Interim Assessment (2007),<https://www.nap.edu/read/11941/chapter/4>

Diana L. Magnuson, History of Enumeration Procedures, 1790-1940**,** <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/voliii/enumproc1.shtml>

Reasons Behind Inaccuracies in the Census, <http://www.civilrights.org/census/accurate-count/inaccuracies.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/>