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**Facts, Statistics, and Theories on Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Diversity  
Module 3: Ethnicity and Race**

An overview and extensive PowerPoint display and a disk.

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For the Alliance, 2002

**FACTS, STATISTICS, AND THEORIES ON RACIAL, ETHNIC, AND CULTURAL  
DIVERSITY**

**MODULE 3: ETHNICITY AND RACE**

**Philip C. Chinn**

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**AN OVERVIEW**

The United States is one of the most diverse nations in the world with over 270 ethnic groups including 170 American Indian groups. With the exception of the American Indians and the native Hawaiians, the U. S. is a nation of immigrants. Nearly everyone can trace their ancestry to immigrant parents, grandparents, or other ancestors (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002).

**Immigrants of Yesterday**

Early immigrants came to the United States for different reasons. Africans were brought to the country involuntarily as slaves. Most Europeans came voluntarily to escape religious persecution, economic or political conditions in their countries of origin. Many people from Ireland came to escape the famine that swept their country, while Jews sought freedom from persecution that was prevalent in Germany, Russia, and other countries. The Chinese came in the mid 1800's as laborers to build the transcontinental railroad. Later they came to Hawaii to work the sugar and pineapple plantations. Others who came to Hawaii to work the plantations included Japanese, Koreans, Scots, Portuguese, and the Pilipinos (Filipinos). Whatever their reasons for immigrating, these individuals became a part of the fabric of the nation.

The descendents of the earliest immigrants, primarily English and other Northern and Western Europeans, established themselves as Americans. Immigrant groups brought with them their political institutions, which greatly influenced the framework of the new country. Early immigrants were in control of the government and the economy. They became highly protective of their interests and sought

to curb further immigration. Many of the English, and the Northern and Western Europeans seemed to lose sight of the fact their families had also been immigrants.

Congress began to pass a series of laws in an effort to stem immigration. The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 clearly sought to discriminate against the immigration of Southern and Eastern Europeans, while prohibiting the immigration of Japanese. The Johnson-Reed Act was repealed in 1965. Since then, Congress has tried to make amends for the 40-plus years of discriminatory immigration policies. The quota for immigrants from the Eastern Hemisphere was increased, while the quota for those from the Western Hemisphere was decreased. In 1997, leading countries of origin were Vietnam, Philippines, Mexico, China, and India; the leading European immigrants were from Ukraine and Russia.

### Immigrants of Today

Today's immigrants are vastly different from those of a century ago. Over 70% of the immigrants are now from Latin America or from Asia. Today, 45% of immigrants live in large cities around the country including: Miami, New York, Chicago, the Washington D. C. metro area, San Francisco, Orange County, Los Angeles, Oakland California, Houston, and Boston (Olson, 2000).

Some immigrants are now moving directly to rural and suburban areas. The reasons are varied. In some instances, job opportunities are the primary motivation. At times, church or other civic-minded groups sponsor families and bring them to their communities, finding them housing, jobs and assisting with their adjustment.

In some rural areas, businesses such as meatpacking and poultry processing plants are unable to fill labor needs with people from the immediate area. The work is often difficult, and sometimes dangerous and may be shunned by the local residents. Immigrants and other individuals are thus recruited to fill the labor pool (e.g. Hmong in Wisconsin and Minnesota). In addition some people from the same ethnic group are attracted to a particular area because they feel a sense of security being close to others from their own culture.

While more cities have become the homes for new immigrants, violence is also part of the community. Many immigrants who live in the inner cities of the U. S. face difficulties; in large cities such as Los Angeles, gang violence has claimed the lives of thousands of immigrant children and teens. In Texas, Klan members have harassed Vietnamese shrimpers, causing some of the Vietnamese to move to the Carolinas, with others following.

### **RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS**

The terms *racial groups* and *ethnic groups* are often used interchangeably, and there is often considerable confusion as to their meaning. *Race* was a concept developed by physical anthropologists around a hundred years ago in an attempt to describe the differing physical characteristics of groups of people. *Racial groups* included many different ethnic groups. For example the Asian race includes many ethnic groups, (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, etc.) Ethnic groups can include individuals from one or more racial groups (e.g. Puerto Ricans can include White or Black Puerto Ricans).

The U. S. Census Bureau requires individuals to identify themselves in one or more of five pan-ethnic groups:

- American Indian and Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders
- White

NOTE: People of Hispanic origin may be of any race. (See Pan Ethnic and Racial Classifications.)

Among the 28 million foreign-born individuals in the 2000 Census, two-thirds identified themselves as White. This is in spite of the fact that approximately 70% of the country's immigrants are from Asia or Latin America. Latinos, the nation's largest immigrant group, are the driving force behind these statistics. Almost half of the Latinos checked "White" in the last Census. Many equate being

White with having access socially and in their work. Some see race as fluid, where you can move in and out of categories to fit your needs. At times, being a person of color has advantages, especially in affirmative action situations. At other times, it may bring discrimination, so that being White is the prudent choice.

The trend towards more self-identification as White can have profound consequences. It may have financial implications when federal dollars are funneled into communities or states for specific purposes. For example, institutions of higher education that are designated as minority institutions are entitled to certain benefits from the government. The eligibility is usually based on a certain percentage, typically 25% of individuals enrolled. The decision not to self-identify as a person of color may deny benefits to which the institution would otherwise be entitled.

In the United States, ethnicity and race impact individuals throughout their lives. There has consistently been a high correlation between the quality of life and race/ethnicity. While greater number of Whites live in poverty than any other group, the percentage of African Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians living in poverty is disproportionately higher as compared to Whites (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002). The poverty issue impacts individuals in a multitude of ways. Those living in poverty often have less than adequate medical care. Their diet is often lacking in adequate nutrition, and those who work have jobs which are more physically demanding, and often dangerous. The life expectancy for this group is lower than those with higher incomes. Many people in this group will not have adequate pensions, and some are not covered by Social Security. Consequently, they may have to work well beyond normal retirement ages.

### Pan-Ethnic and Racial Classifications

Some of the classifications developed for government convenience create confusion and misunderstanding for the general public. Hispanics are a group that share an historical common language background (Spanish). That is where most of the similarities end. People of Hispanic origin may be of any race. Black Puerto Ricans and Argentines share an Hispanic origin but may have few

cultural similarities, with the exception of language. For example, if a Black Puerto Rican has lived in the continental U. S. for several generations, and speaks no Spanish, this individual may not experience a shared camaraderie with a recent immigrant from Argentina. An immigrant from Nepal and a Native Hawaiian in Honolulu will be placed in the same category of Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, but will have almost nothing in common culturally. Thus, while placement of various ethnic groups into specific categories may imply that the groups share similar cultural characteristics, this is often not the case.

### **INTER-GROUP CONFLICTS, PREJUDICE, DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM**

Individuals tend to be ethnocentric, believing that their values and ways of doing things are the best, or the only ones of value. Therefore, the values of other groups are judged against the standards of one's own group. Predictably, the qualities of other groups are judged to be inferior.

Reasons for inter-group conflict are seldom simple. Typically, the group in power enjoys more rewards from society than the less established groups. Conflict arises as the in-group tries to maintain control over these benefits, while the newer groups want to share in the wealth of their new country. If the controlling group sees their control threatened, conflict may develop. When the established group helps to put elected officials in office, they can have considerable influence in the legislative process. When the new group begins to grow numerically to the point where it threatens the electoral process and puts new candidates in office, conflicts can arise. Conflicts can arise for other reasons, for example, school and higher education enrollments, housing patterns, and job competition. Conflicts can arise because of economics; groups of people at the lower end of the economic continuum may feel forced to compete for resources, such as low cost housing, academic scholarships, and other government-sponsored initiatives.

## Prejudice

Prejudice often stems from a lack of understanding about another group's history, experiences, and values. Inaccurate stereotyping characterizations may be considered genuine because of the way cultural groups are depicted in the mass media. When unfortunate stereotyping takes place, there may be no consideration given for individual differences. Prejudices are often formed by impressions gained from the movies. Individuals in their 50's or older may have grown up when the "bad guys" in the movies were Japanese or Germans. Later, the bad guys were Italian or Sicilian organized crime figures, Soviet bloc personalities and South American drug lords. More recently, Arabs and Muslims are depicted as media villains. Historically, the entertainment industry has appeared to be more concerned with profit and ticket sales than with race relations and conflict. Though entertaining to some, these stereotypic characterizations have led generations of Americans to believe that these are typical characteristics of all individuals from the target group.

## Discrimination

Prejudiced attitudes may evolve into negative or discriminatory behaviors. While prejudice focuses on attitudes, discrimination focuses on behaviors. Discrimination may be carried out against an individual or against an institution. For example, an individual apartment owner may discriminate by not renting to certain groups of people. Government policies, such as immigration laws and school segregation are examples of institutional discrimination.

## Racism

Racism is an extreme form of prejudice. "Racism is the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance" (Lorde 1995, p. 192). It is often difficult for members of the dominant group to acknowledge the existence of racism in American society. A factor known as "White privilege" illustrates that benefits are given to White individuals (better jobs, schools,

medical care, streets in particular neighborhoods). White privilege is sometimes difficult for White individuals to acknowledge.

## **HATE AND HATE GROUPS IN THE U. S.**

By the end of World War II, overt acts of hate began to decline. Prior to this time, most majority-group individuals supported policies of segregation and discrimination. Today, various forms of intolerance and violence continue daily. Hate crimes are most often directed against individuals of color, gays and lesbians, and religious groups, particularly Muslims and Jews.

It is estimated that there are over 500 hate groups in the United States (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2000). It is ironic that one of our most cherished values in the United States, the First Amendment's freedom of speech, is a major contributing variable to the proliferation of hate groups. Freedom of speech guaranteed by the First Amendment gives any American the right to express messages of hate in their speeches, in their writings, and on the Internet. For example, the *Turner Diaries*, believed to be the inspiration for Timothy McVay's bombing of the Oklahoma Federal Building, can be legally purchased in legitimate bookstores or easily accessed on the Internet.

### **Motives for Hate**

There are numerous reasons why individuals hate and commit acts of hatred. One of the motives includes *thrill seeking*—when some individuals simply commit acts of hatred for pleasure. In some perverse way, individuals receive a thrill by inflicting physical or emotional injury to institutions or members of a target group. Some individuals who are angry at their own circumstances perpetrate *reactive hate*. They blame affirmative action for denial of admission or a promotion or simply their failure to accomplish personal goals. They find it easier to blame the target group, rather than to accept responsibility for their own failures or limitations. “Individuals who seek to rid the world of evil direct *missionary hate* at their target groups” (Media Awareness Network, 2002).

## Recruitment

Almost anyone is a potential recruit for hate groups, which target vulnerable individuals. Hate groups may target individuals who are (a) losing their grip on power and control; (b) members of the majority group which is declining numerically and in political control and influence; (c) those whose “old neighborhoods” are increasingly integrated with immigrants and individuals of color, who are fearful for their safety, or believe their property values are going down; (d) White males who believe that affirmative action has robbed them of upward mobility and job advancement. Those who are angry with a “liberal” government who uses their tax dollars to support immigrants, and other minorities are also targets.

## Hate Literature

Various hate groups develop, print and distribute hate literature and displays of intolerant symbols and slogans. This propaganda is intended to demean whoever and whatever the hate group dislikes. Hate literature may be manifested in hate leaflets, hate graffiti, recorded telephone messages designed to incite hatred, posters depicting distorted images of the group, cartoons which ridicule or demean the target group, public speeches promoting hate towards a specific individual or group, and hate messages on the internet.

## Internet Access

Many hate groups have become highly sophisticated and have developed websites. Some are still crude, but many have a professional look to them. The sites are easy to locate and have links to other hate group sites.

Children and youth are particularly vulnerable to these messages of hate, particularly if they lack the ability to comprehend the true intent of the group and its website. The websites can be easily accessed by children, and deliberate attempts are used to appeal to children and youth. Some sites target young children with links to games, crossword puzzles, and even cartoons. The exaggerated features of cartoons about a targeted group may have a perverse humorous effect on unsuspecting children.

## Hate Site Components

There are three components, which are typical of many websites. *Paranoia*—(conspiracy theories found on websites): certain ethnic groups are blamed for their influence or control of the economic resources of the country, (when the country is in a recession or a depression, if taxes are too high); certain ethnic groups are often blamed for “their large numbers on welfare,” or for “illegal immigration.” *The Hand of God*— (groups that make extensive use of Biblical scriptures and remark that hate is the will of God). *Armageddon*—(hate groups that take full advantage of people’s fears of social and economic uncertainty). The attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon gave hate groups considerable opportunity to blame Muslims and other religious or ethnic groups for the loss of life, the stock market decline, increased unemployment, and other uncertainties

## Combating Hate On-Line

It is difficult to monitor a youngster’s computer activities especially when many young people have become sophisticated computer users exceeding the skills of their parents. Parents and children should familiarize themselves with terms and phrases often found on the websites of hate groups. Some sites use obvious words and trigger immediate recognition. Among the typical are, *Aryan*, *White power*, *White pride*, and *Nazi*. By discussing carefully the inherent dangers of the Internet, and by teaching children to recognize danger signs, problems can be minimized.

## Defining Hate and Hate Crimes

There is no single definition of hate. Raymond A. Franklin, author of the Hate Directory, explains that hate "advocates violence against, separation from, defamation of, deception about, or hostility toward others based upon race, religion, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation" (Media Awareness Network

<http://www.media-awareness.ca/eng/issues/internet/safety/hate/define.htm#hate>)

## Hate Watch

An advocacy group called Hate Watch defines a hate site as "an organization or individual that advocates violence against or unreasonable hostility toward those persons or organizations identified by their race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender or disability. This also includes organizations or individuals that disseminate historically inaccurate information with regards to these persons or organizations for the purpose of vilification" (Media Awareness Network <http://www.mediaawareness.ca/eng/issues/internet/safety/hate/define.htm#hate>).

The Media Awareness Network suggests that "hate crimes are criminal offenses, which are committed against individuals, groups or property (e.g. synagogues), which is motivated by hate or bias against anyone who is different. Usually a person identified as belonging to a racial religious, ethnic, sexual orientation or disability group" (Media Awareness Network, <http://www.media-awareness.ca/eng/issues/internet/safety/hate/define.htm#hate>).

## Minimizing the Risks

Parents and educators can minimize the risks by providing instruction on the appropriate use of the Internet and by teaching children to be vigilant. Parents and educators can also install Internet filters, which block objectionable websites. While these filters occasionally block legitimate materials, they are generally effective and worth any inconvenience of mistakenly blocking good sites. Two of the better know programs include Cyber Patrol ([www.cyberpatrol.com](http://www.cyberpatrol.com)) and Cyber Sitter (<http://www.cybersitter.com>). More information on them can be accessed from their respective websites. *The Media Awareness Network*, a Canadian organization has an excellent website, which is helpful for parents, educators and students. The website is accessible in both English and French and has a search engine, which will yield over 150 references on hate and combating hate online.

Students can also be taught to recognize the obvious characteristics of hate group sites by keywords (e.g. skinheads, militia, conspiracy, nationalism, activism). Students may be taught the fallacy

of information such as “revisionism” a term found with some groups who tend to revise history to make it congruent with their beliefs. Some groups have rewritten the history of the Holocaust, which they claim never happened. Other groups who are anti-Semitic deny Jesus’ Jewish origins.

## **CONCLUSION**

While race relations may seem better than the years prior to the end of segregation, much still needs to be done. We are indeed a multicultural nation with many different races, ethnic groups and religions. Our ability to live, work and play with one another has made us one of the strongest nations on earth. However, much work still needs to be completed and much of it can start in schools.

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## RECOMMENDED VIDEOS

*The History Channel* has excellent videos that are very useful for a class addressing diversity in the United States. Many are available for an extraordinarily low price of \$24.95

*Films for the Humanities and Science* also has a large listing of films suitable for a course addressing diversity. These films are considerably more expensive than the History Channel, and while some films are excellent, some are disappointing. [www.films.com](http://www.films.com), (800) 257-5126 or (609) 275-1400

*Insight Media* is similar to *Films for the Humanities* and has a large listing of films over a wide range of subjects. They are expensive, and the quality of the films varies greatly. I would suggest that you secure a return commitment from them if you are not satisfied with your purchase. 2162 Broadway, New York, NY 10024-0621, (800) 233-9910 or (212) 721-6316. website: [www.insight.media.com](http://www.insight.media.com)

*Hate.com*. An excellent film about hate group websites. Available through *Films for the Humanities and Science*

*20<sup>th</sup> Century with Mike Wallace: Nazis in America*. A troubling but informative look at the history of the Nazi Party in the U. S. Available through the History Channel. \$24.95 <http://store.aetv.com>

*Ku Klux Klan: A Secret History*. A documentary of this notorious hate group. Available through the History Channel. <http://store.aetv.com> \$24.95.

*Chinatown: Strangers From a Strange Land*. A documentary on the history of Chinese immigration into the United States, with a look at the people and the reasons that brought them to a new and strange country. Available through the History Channel. <http://store.aetv.com>. \$24.95.

*Hispanics in America*. A look at the fastest-growing segment of the American Population with Mike Wallace. Available through the History Channel. <http://store.aetv.com> \$24.95

## RECOMMENDED WEBSITES

*The Southern Poverty Law Center*, [www.splcenter.org/](http://www.splcenter.org/). The Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to combating hate, hate groups, intolerance and discrimination through education and litigation. The Center has won major court cases against Ku Klux Klan and other hate groups. It publishes *Teaching Tolerance*, for educators and other material for the classroom.

*The Media Awareness Network*, <http://www.media-awareness.ca>. This Canadian organization offers practical support for media education in the home, school and community and provides Canadians and others with information and "food for thought" on our fast-evolving media culture. It is also a place where educators, parents, students and community workers can share resources and explore ways to make media a more positive force in children's lives it includes *Web Awareness*, which provides parents, teachers and librarians with practical information and hands-on activities to help give kids the "cyber smarts" they need to make wise and safe online decisions. Among some of the articles in this website are, *Challenging Online Hate: Hate Activity and the Law*; *Countering Hate on the Internet: Recommendations for Action*, *Challenging Online Hate: Advocacy Groups*; *Educating our Family about*

Hate; Challenging Online Hate: Is Your Child a Target?; Challenging Online Hate: Recruitment on the Net; Recognizing Online Hate; The Motives Behind Hate.