"Race Unknown" and "Two or More Races": IPEDS and the Social Construction of Race

Karly S. Ford

AIR IPEDS Educators

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Agenda

• Research Articles about IPEDS race reporting categories
  
  • Race Unknown (Educational Researcher)
  
  • Two or More Races (Journal of Higher Education & Race, Ethnicity and Education)
OMB (Directive 15) Collection and Reporting Guidelines

Part A: Are you Hispanic / Latino? (Choose only one)
   No, not Hispanic / Latino
   Yes, Hispanic / Latino

Part B: What is your race? (Choose one or more)
   American Indian or Alaska Native
   Asian
   Black or African American
   Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
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• Reported to federal government as 8 categories:
  • 5 race categories above, Hispanic/Latino of any race, Two or more races, Race Unknown
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Only in higher education
What Do We Know About “Race Unknown”? 
Karly Ford\textsuperscript{1}, Kelly Rosinger\textsuperscript{1}, and Qiong Zhu\textsuperscript{1}

One ethnoracial reporting category perplexes higher education researchers: “race and ethnicity unknown.” Using the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), we constructed a 28-year panel of 4,401 institutions. We find that the for-profit sector ranges from 5% to 18% “race unknown” students. In addition, almost 10% of students attending the most selective institutions were reported as “race unknown” in 2009 before dropping off precipitously. The size of the “race unknown” category can be attributed to some combination of student responses and data collection practices. We suggest researchers refrain from dropping “race unknown” from their studies as doing so may bias findings for the other ethnoracial categories, especially when comparing rates of student enrollment across institutional types.

**Keywords:** descriptive analysis; higher education; identity; race

Kelly Rosinger & Qiong Zhu
Penn State University
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year of Publication</th>
<th>Year of IPEDS Data</th>
<th>Race-Related Outcome(s)</th>
<th>Racial Categories Included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Griffitt</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1987–2005</td>
<td>Enrollment shares by race/ethnicity</td>
<td>Black, Hispanic, Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaleboye, Joyner, &amp; Slate</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2008–2009</td>
<td>STEM baccalaureate attainment by race/ethnicity</td>
<td>Black and Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backes*</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1986–2009</td>
<td>Enrollment shares by race/ethnicity, graduate</td>
<td>White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, race unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byrd, Dika, &amp; Ramiah*</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2005, 2009</td>
<td>STEM degree completions by race/ethnicity</td>
<td>White, Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, race/ethnicity unknown, noncitizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinrichs</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2002–2009</td>
<td>Graduation rate by race/ethnicity</td>
<td>White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belasco, Rosinger, &amp; Hearn</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1992–2010</td>
<td>Enrollment share of underrepresented racial</td>
<td>African American, Hispanic, Native American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhang, Hu, &amp; Senseneg</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2000–2014</td>
<td>Enrollment by race/ethnicity</td>
<td>White, non-White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rankin, Scott, &amp; Kim</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2002, 2006–2012</td>
<td>Degree completions by race/ethnicity</td>
<td>White, Black, Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaquette, Curs, &amp; Possett</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>2002/03–2010/13</td>
<td>Enrollment share of underrepresented racial</td>
<td>Black, Hispanic, Native American or Alaskan Native, multirace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill*</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>1999–2009</td>
<td>Enrollment shares by race/ethnicity</td>
<td>Minority, nonminority, race unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dache-Gerlne</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Enrollment shares by race/ethnicity</td>
<td>White, Black, Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gandara &amp; Rutherford</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>1993–2004</td>
<td>Enrollment by race/ethnicity</td>
<td>Black, Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baker, Klaasik, &amp; Reardon</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>1986–2014</td>
<td>Enrollment selectivity gaps</td>
<td>Black-White gap, Hispanic-White gap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salz</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>2001–2012</td>
<td>Enrollment by race/ethnicity</td>
<td>Black, Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen &amp; Wolniak</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>1993/99–2011/12</td>
<td>Diversity index</td>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic, White, and other (two or more races, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and nonresident alien)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelchen</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>2004/05–2015/16</td>
<td>Enrollment of underrepresented racial minority</td>
<td>African American, Hispanic, Native American, and multiracial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fountain</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>2000–2014</td>
<td>Enrollment by race/ethnicity</td>
<td>Black, Hispanic, White, Asian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Studies that explicitly included the “race unknown” category in the analyses.
Is “Race Unknown” error?

i.e. is it evenly/randomly distributed across institutional type?

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

28-year panel of 4,401 institutions
FIGURE 1. Percentage race unknown enrollment by type of institution.  
Note. All figures reflect full-time, first-time enrollment.
What drives Race Unknown?

Organizational factors

Student factors
Organizational side factors

• For-profit and non-competitive higher education
  • 140 institutions reported 100% of students as race unknown
Organizational side factors

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  • May lack resources for data collection and reporting
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• Changes over time in how race is collected
  • 2010 “two or more races” introduced
    • Never more than 2-3% so does not account for the highest levels of race unknown
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  - May have strategic/political reason for obscuring enrollment by race

- Changes over time in how race is collected
  - 2010 “two or more races” introduced
    - Never more than 2-3% so does not account for the highest levels of race unknown
  - Wording of the item changed over time
    - Common App
      - 2008 “If you wish to be identified with an ethnic group, please check all that apply”
      - 2010 “Please indicate how you identify yourself. (Select one or more)”
Student side factors

- Selective higher education (and T14 law schools)
  - High stakes admissions process
  - Reluctance may be related to the perception that some groups are favored
    - No peer-reviewed studies, journalistic and non-peer reviewed sources
Recommendations

For researchers:

• Yes. Keep Race Unknown in your studies, it is not random error.
Recommendations

For researchers:

• Yes. Keep Race Unknown in your studies, it is not random error.

• No. Do not treat it as an analytical racial group
  • Think about this group as some combination of self-interested individuals and organizations reacting to incentives
Recommendations

For researchers:

• Yes. Keep Race Unknown in your studies, it is not random error.

• No. Do not treat it as an analytical racial group
  • Think about this group as some combination of self-interested individuals and organizations reacting to incentives

• Acknowledge “race unknown” in your work: Inequalities in higher education may be way worse than our data show us
Recommendations

For practitioners:
• Collect data in less high stakes moments (selective)
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• Examine incentives
  • 140 universities over the period reported 100% race unknown
Recommendations

For practitioners:

• Collect data in less high stakes moments (selective)
• Examine incentives
  • 140 universities over the period reported 100% race unknown
• Consider federal mandate on the collection of race/ethnicity in higher education
Pause for questions...
IPEDS reporting Category: “Two or More” Races

Ashley Patterson & Leandra Cate
Penn State University
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    Race Unknown
Background

- Currently 7% of the US population
- 20% by 2050
- Politically mobilized in the 1990s
How do universities make meaning of the IPEDS reporting category for “two or more races”?
Research Design

IPEDS: Carnegie Classifications:

Research Highest, Higher, moderate
377 institutions
Research Design

IPEDS: Carnegie Classifications:

Research Highest, Higher, moderate
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• “[Name of university] race admissions statistics”
• Inclusion of sites 0-3 clicks in
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• “[Name of university] race admissions statistics”
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• Institutional Research websites had some of the most interesting patterns
Themes, coding and re-coding

• Start with the standard 8 categories from OMB and wrote out narrative descriptions about how the representation differed.

• We analyzed these descriptions until broad themes emerged

• Created codes from the themes

• And re-coded iteratively
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>less than 0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>less than 0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Races</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Undergraduate Enrollment By Ethnicity 2009-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>FALL 2009</th>
<th>FALL 2016</th>
<th>CHANGE</th>
<th>%CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>684 (23.1%)</td>
<td>1011 (17.4%)</td>
<td>+327</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American*</td>
<td>282 (9.5%)</td>
<td>432 (7.4%)</td>
<td>+150</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Hispanic</td>
<td>447 (15.1%)</td>
<td>1470 (25.3%)</td>
<td>+1023</td>
<td>229%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American**</td>
<td>1547 (52.3%)</td>
<td>2323 (40.0%)</td>
<td>+776</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>---***</td>
<td>570 (9.9%)</td>
<td>+570</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2960 (100%)</td>
<td>5806 (100%)</td>
<td>+2846</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from data provided by OSU IRIM from 3 September 2009 through 11 November 2016.

*Asian American category includes Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders
**Includes biracial students identified as Native American and White
***Data for this category were not readily identifiable until 2010
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<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black or African-American</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic of any race</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>71%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race/ethnicity unknown</td>
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*Students self-reporting two or more races are counted once in each race/ethnicity category.*
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International students can find support along the way from western's International Office, which guides both students and their families through federal regulations, institutional guidelines and the transition to living in the United States.

Students from 75+ countries

Class of 2021:

- Hispanic or Latino: 12%
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- Black or African American: 10%
- White: 48%
- International: 10%
- Pell Grant recipients: 19%
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Findings

• No consensus around how to report/present “two or more races”
  • Race is socially constructed and fluid
Takeaways across the two papers...

All social data, but race data in particular, is socially constructed
Takeaways across the two papers...

All social data, but race data in particular, is socially constructed

Race data reflects ongoing processes between individuals, organizations and contexts
Thank you!

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BONUS MATERIAL...

IF YOU WANT A DEEPER EXPLANATION OF HOW RACE IS SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED AND FLUID...
Race is...

Socially constructed:

- Race in the Americas dates back to The Barbados Slave Code of 1661
  - “Negro” and “Masters/Christians”
  - In early 1700s, “white” entered law to restrict voting

- Because it is socially constructed, categories shift based on:
  - Era (what work do these categories need to do?)
  - Geography
  - Setting
Race is...

Fluid

- No one "true" race
  - Racialization
    - experiences with schools and criminal justice system (Penner and Saperstein)

- Dominican American immigrant
- "Indio" → Latino → Black

- Mixed race kids → single race adults (Pew, 2015)
Final thoughts...

“Race, as a category is meaningful because it shapes how people are treated and the opportunities to which they have access, rather than a characteristic that individuals carry with them into educational contexts.”

John B. Diamond, 2018

Chapter 14. Race and White Supremacy in the Sociology of Education: Shifting the Intellectual Gaze