A Review of Ethno-Racial Measures

on the General Social Survey

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June, 1995

GSS Methodological Report No. 85

## Introduction

Race and ethnicity are two of the most important variables in the General Social Survey (GSS). Race and/or ethnicity have been used in more research than any other variables in the GSS except for education and age (Smith, Arnold, and Wesley, 1995). Davis' (1979) analysis of the predictive power of seven demographics found that race was "the strongest and most consistent net predictor" across 49 attitudinal measures. Later work by Davis (1987) and Smith (1992a) indicated that distinguishing ethnic sub-groups within racial groups usually appreciably increases the explanatory power of the ethno-racial variable.

But race and ethnicity are difficult variables to utilize (Smith, 1980; 1982; 1984; 1992b). Researchers differ on how these variables should be defined and conceptualized and how they should be measured. Moreover, both legal and customary definitions of what constitutes races and ethnic groups and the very terms used to label these groups have changed over time. Further complicating matters is the fact that the actual racial and ethnic composition of the population is shifting. Reflecting the uncertainty and the shifting population distributions, the federal government is currently carrying out a comprehensive review of how the ethno-racial variable should be conceptualized and operationalized (Anderson and Feinberg, 1995; Evinger, 1995; McKay and de la Puente, 1995).

Similarly, this report discusses 1) how race and ethnicity have been measured on the GSS from 1972 to 1994, 2) how the race and ethnicity measures relate to each other, 3) what changes have

occurred in the collection and reporting of race and ethnicity over the last 22 years, 4) how GSS and Census estimates compare for several special racial and ethnic categories, and 5) what modifications and experimentation should be carried out regarding the measurement of race and ethnicity.

### Measuring Race and Ethnicity on the GSS

The GSS uses two main measures to delineate ethno-racial groups. Race (RACE) is coded either by observation or by asking "What race do you consider yourself?" Coding by observation is done "only if there is no doubt in your mind."[1] The three response categories are White, Black, and Other (SPECIFY). Of the 744 Other race respondents from 1972 to 1994 37.8% are Asian, 36.7% Hispanic, 21.4% American Indian, 2.3% Other (e.g. Human, Brown, Iranian, Arab), 1.8% Mixed (e.g. Mulatto, halfbreed, biracial), and 10.8% are unspecified.

Ethnicity (ETHNIC, ETH1, ETH2, and ETH3) asks:

From what countries or part of the world did your ancestors come?

IF SINGLE COUNTRY IS NAMED, REFER TO NATIONAL CODES BELOW AND ENTER CODE NUMBER IN BOXES:

IF MORE THAN ONE COUNTRY NAMED, REFER TO NATIONAL CODES BELOW, CODE UP TO 3 RESPONSES AND THEN ASK A:

A. IF MORE THAN ONE COUNTRY NAMED: Which of these countries do you feel closer to?

ETH1, ETH2, and ETH3 contain respectively the first, second, and third mentions. ETHNIC is the summary measure. It consists of either single mentions of countries (i.e. no mentions in ETH2 or ETH3) or the country one feels closer to as determined by part A.

ETH1-3 have been coded since 1984. Before then only ETHNIC is available. In addition, ETHNUM indicates whether a respondent named one country, named two or more countries and choose one, named two or more countries and couldn't choose one, or couldn't name any country.

There are 34 prelisted national codes, plus an Other (Specify) code:

Africa 1 Mexico 17

American Indian 30 Netherlands (Dutch/Holland) 18

Austria 2 Norway 19

Belgium 36 Philippines 20

Canada (French) 3 Poland 21

Canada (Other) 4 Portugal 32

China 5 Puerto Rico 22

Czechoslovakia 6 Rumania 35

Denmark 7 Russia (USSR) 23

England and Wales 8 Scotland 24

Finland 9 Spain 25

France 10 Sweden 26

Germany 11 Switzerland 27

Greece 12 Yugoslavia 34

Hungary 13 Other (Specify) 29

India 31

Ireland 14

Italy 15

Japan 16

Lithuania 33

Codes 1-29 were the original codes used since the inception of the GSS. Code 30 (American Indians) was added in 1974 and codes 31-36 (Belgium, India, Lithuania, Portugal, Rumania, and Yugoslavia) were added in 1978. These six additional codes represented all countries which accounted for at least 0.1 percent of cases from 1972 through 1977. Also, in 1978 one original precode, West Indies (28), was deleted from the National Codes since it referred neither to a country nor a distinct ethnic group. After 1977 code 28 became a category representing West Indies (Not Specified) and is recoded from the Other (Specify) precode.

The ethnic variables also employ five collective recodes: Arabic, Other Asian, Other European, Other Spanish, and West Indies (Non-Spanish). These categories are created from specific mentions in the Other (Specify) precode. The countries contained in each of these group codes in 1994 are indicated in Table 1. In addition, the category America (97) is created from mentions of the United States or parts thereof.

Remaining in the Other (Specify) category are a few countries that do not clearly fit into the group codes (e.g. Lebanon, Armenia, Brazil, Israel) and any unspecified or unidentifiable mentions.

In addition to the five group categories that are created by recoding specific mentions from the Other Specify category, a number of precoded categories are broad enough to cover more than one ethnicity. These include Africa, American Indian, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, England and Wales, India, Russia (USSR) {which includes Ukraine}, Switzerland, and Yugoslavia.

Besides these two main ethno-racial measures, some identifying information comes from four other variables: current religion (RELIG) and religion raised in (RELIG16) which are primarily useful for identifying Jews, race of household (HHRACE),[2] and place of residence at age 16 (REG16) which identifies people raised in foreign countries. In addition, related information that might be used in constructing a multi-fold ethno-racial measure include current region of residence (REGION), region of residence at age 16 (REG16), and immigration generation (country of birth of R (BORN), parents (PARBORN), and grandparents (GRANBORN)).

## Comparing Race and Ethnicity

In much analysis researchers will want to combine race and ethnicity (and perhaps other variables such as religion) into a single ethno-racial variable. Race has the advantages of being complete and simple. First, there is no missing information on race - from 1972 to 1994 every respondent has been successfully classified. Second, respondents are placed into three categories - White, Black, and Other. It has extremely high test/retest reliability (Smith and Stephenson, 1979) and there is high consistency between the household and respondent-level measures (Table 2).

In contrast, ethnicity is incomplete and complicated, but rich in detail. Across all years there is no ethnic information for 11.0%, no summary ethnicity for 10.2% (i.e. two or more ethnicities are mentioned, but no main ethnicity is chosen), and 1.9% mention only the United States (or parts thereof). Thus, for 23.1% there is no simple ethnic origin is reported. This % has remained quite stable over the period from 1972 to 1994. However, there has been a decided shift among those

with an ethnic identity from naming only one ethnicity to choosing one origin from among multiple ethnicities. In 1972 58.7% mentioned only one group and 18.2% chose a main identity from two or more origins. In 1994 only 47.3% had a single ethnicity and 32.3% chosen one from among multiple ethnicities.

Since 1984, when the coding of up to three ethnicities started, 46.7% have named one ethnicity and 42.1% named two or more ethnicities. (The average number of ethnic groups mentioned has been 1.47.) Of those naming two or more 32.1% were able to select a main ethnicity while 10.0% could not chose between their various backgrounds. Of those with more than one ethnicity 27.2% mentioned two groups, 14.7% three or more groups, and 0.2% other combinations.

For each of the three possible ethnic mentions there are currently 45 values that can appear - 42 ethnicities (including America), plus three missing values (Not Applicable, Don't Know/No Nth mention, and No Answer).[3] A total of 1,648 different combinations have appeared so far. For example, there are 141 combinations with Ireland as the first mention. The most frequent occurrences are 708 Ireland only (no second or third mention), 217 Ireland-Germany, 171 Ireland-England and Wales, 81 Ireland-Scotland, and 66 Ireland-American Indian. There are also 65 combinations with only a single occurrence including Ireland-Switzerland, Ireland-Sweden-Dutch, and Ireland-Mexico-Spain. Thus, in many cases there is far too much detail to be fully utilized in analysis. Various data reduction procedures have to be used to work with the ethnicity data.

Race and ethnicity can be used together to create a composite ethno-racial variable that combines the contrasting strengths of the other variable. Taken alone the racial categorization used on the GSS is rather crude with Asians, American Indians, Hispanics, and other groups indistinguishable in the Other category. However, the ethnicity variable allows us to identify 95% of the Others and to place them in more detailed categories (Table 3A). Their origins are quite diverse: 36.0% Hispanic, 29.2% Asian, 15.7% American Indian, 8.3% Other (mostly Asians not separately classified before 1994), 2.0% 2 or more origins, etc.[4] Additionally, there is some more detailed ethnic information for 90.5% of Whites. 78.9% report their origin as European. 4.1% give Hispanic origins (including mentions of Spain) and 3.3% define themselves as American Indian. Other minor mentions include 2 or more origins, no main ethnicity - 2.2%, Other 0.9%, American 0.5%, Asian 0.3%, and West Indian - 0.1%. Of course most of Whites can be further broken down into specific ethnicities (e.g. German, Polish) or ethnic groupings (e.g. Germanic - German, Austrian, Swiss). However for Blacks there is relatively little additional information provided by ethnicity. Many Blacks report no ethnicity: 17.7% give no ethnic origin, 1.9% are missing, and 8.8% report their origin as America. Of the 75% with ethnic information most report origins in Africa directly (57.6%) or in the waystation of the West Indies (5.2%). A few mention origins in other areas or groups in whole or in part outside of Africa (American Indian - 3.1%, European - 2.0%, 2 or more origins - 1.7% Hispanic - 1.1%, etc.). Furthermore, since Africa is a single category (unlike the regional amalgamations of Asia, Europe, and Hispanic), no further refinement is possible for most Blacks.

Similarly, it is possible to sub-divide ethnicities by racial groups. However, since most ethnicities are overwhelmingly from one racial stock (for 24 of the 42 ethnicities 99+% of respondents are in one racial group - Table 3B[5]), the possibilities are limited. There are however several groups for which notable intra-ethnic racial variation occurs. In 10 groups less than 80% are in one race.

Besides the naturally heterogenous Other and America ethnic categories, these mixed groups consist of the four Hispanic categories (Spain, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Other Spanish), three Asian groups (Japan, India, and the Philippines), American Indian, and Arabic.

To some extent the racial classification of Hispanics is a function of their actual racial lineage. Among Hispanics on the ethnicity items since 1984, most (72.8%) report only Hispanic origins and they are classified as 65.4% white, 2.8% Black, and 31.8% Other (Table 4). The Other mentions are almost entirely references of a general Hispanic category (mostly Hispanic, but occasionally Latinos and Latin) or a specific Hispanic nationality (Mexican, Puerto Rican, etc.). If only Hispanic origins are mentioned, then 65.4% are classified as White, 2.8 as Blacks, and 31.8% as Other. If an European ethnicity besides Spanish is mentioned, racial classification as White increases to from 80 to 94%. The White % is higher when European origins dominate over Hispanic background. Among Hispanics with an Africa origin, 89% are coded as Black and among those with an Asian origin, 60% are Other.

In addition, the social definition of the race of Hispanics also plays an important role and one that has varied over time. From 1972 to 1994 Hispanic ancestry has changed from being seen as only an ethnicity to being also viewed as a race (Table 5). There is one alteration in GSS procedures that relates to this change. In 1972-1976 a question specification (Q-by-Q) defined Others on race as "American Indian, Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Korean, Polynesian, Hawaiian, Aleut, or Eskimo." Whites were noted as including "Mexicans, Spaniards ... or Puerto Ricans who appear to be white." Since 1977 no definition of racial terms have been supplied. Since the first increase in Hispanics among the Other race category did not occur until 1982, the GSS's deletion of racial definitions does not appear to be closely related to the shift. Rather the change probably occurred because of society changing how Hispanics are viewed racially and ethnically. Thus, both interviewers and respondents are more likely to think of Hispanics as a separate race than previously. The elimination of a definition that in effect excluded Hispanics from the Other racial category did however at least permit the classification of Hispanics into the Other category.[6]

Another way of considering the racial profile of Hispanics is to examine how the host countries of Latin America classify their populations. Most countries recognize four groups that may be broadly referred to as Indian, White/European, Mixed Indian/European (Mestizo), and Others (Asian, African, Other mixtures, etc.). Excluding Puerto Ricans, who are US citizens, Hispanic immigrants come mostly from Mexico and Cuba. Mexicans are about 60% mixed, 30% Indian, 9% White, and 1% Other. Cubans are 51% mixed, 37% White, 11% Black, and 1% Other. Other smaller immigration sources range widely in their racial composition from 96% White in Costa Rica to 55% Indian in Bolivia to 73% mixed in the Dominican Republic. Of course, immigrants to the United States may come disproportionately from certain racial groups. For example, Cuban immigrants have included relatively few Blacks and an over-representation of Whites.

The racial classification of American Indians follows a somewhat similar pattern. Among those with American Indian as their only mentioned ethnicity on the 1984-1994 GSS, 49.1% are White, 21.6% Black, and 29.3% Other. If one European ethnicity is also reported, the racial distribution is 89.5% White, 3.5% Black, and 7.0% Other. With two+ European origins the racial mix becomes 97.0% White, 0.0% Black, and 3.0% Other. If Africa is mentioned as an ethnic origin, 95% are Black on race and 5% are Other.

Among those with only an American Indian ethnicity, there is considerable regional variation in racial classification. Two-fifths of these American Indians come from basically one primary sampling unit in the South Atlantic region and consist of members of a well-known, tri-racial isolate group that has a blend of Black, Indian, and some White ancestry and was officially classified as racially Indian under the Jim Crow laws. Probably reflecting this former legal status this group identifies itself as Indian on race. In the rest of the South about two-thirds are classified as White and almost one-third as Black with less than 5% identified as Indian. In the Northeast and Midwest the breakdown is about 55% White, 35% Black, and 10% Other. In the Mountain and Pacific regions the racial distribution is 57% White, 3% Black, and 40% Other. Thus only in the Far West, where most of the reservation Indian population resides, and in the special case of the tri-racial isolates in the South Atlantic region are an appreciable proportion of ethnic Indians also racially classified as Indian.

## GSS/Census Comparisons of Selected Ethnic/Racial Groups

For the period 1990-1993 the Census reports that 7.9-8.0% of the adult population is Hispanic (Table 6A). The GSS finds that 5.9% have a Hispanic main identity and that 6.9% have a Hispanic main identity or at least some Hispanic ancestry. This latter figure probably corresponds more closely to the Census definition of Hispanic which is currently based on a separate Hispanic origin question which asks "Is this person of Spanish/Hispanic origin?" Responses include four Hispanic origin categories and the fifth option "No (not Spanish/Hispanic)." Adding to the GSS non-respondents who could not do the interview because they only understood Spanish, would increase the estimated proportion with Hispanic main identity to 7.7% and with any Hispanic identity to 8.7%. These estimates bracket the Census estimate of 7.9-8.0%. It also means that the GSS loses about 25% of potential, Hispanic respondents because of the language barrier.

On ethnic origin as American Indian the GSS shows a sharp increase from 1.2% in 1972-73 to 3.7% in 1974-75 after American Indian was added as a pre-code in 1974 (Table 6B). After that point the % American Indian grows slowly to 4.9% in the 90s. The GSS ethnicity figures are much higher than the Census racial figures for American Indians. This is presumably because many people who report their ethnicity as American Indian have mixed ancestry. On the 1989-1991 GSSs those who identify as American Indian and who are classified as Other on race make up 0.8% of sample which closely matches the Census racial estimate of 0.7% in 1990.

## Proposed Changes

The GSS strives to collect reliable, valid, and consistent data on ethnicity and race. We formulated concepts of ethnicity and race and developed items to measure these concepts which we believe are reliable and valid. We have generally collected the ethnic and racial data consistently across

time, but have introduced some modifications. Most alternations have been designed to extend and refine the data being collected while still preserving the time series. Examples are the addition of various ethnic precodes, the creation of collective ethnicity categories, and the coding since 1984 of up to three specific ethnic mentions. Ongoing changes in how race and ethnicity are understood by the public and conceptualized by the federal government in general and the Census in particular, as well as population shifts in the distribution of ethno-racial groups suggest that some further revisions and experimentation may now be useful.

1. Retrospective:

a. Most responses coded as Other on race could be retrieved from past GSS by drawing information from the other specify lists. However, since 95% of the other race cases are now identifiable from ethnicity and the categories on the racial other specify lists and those appearing in ethnicity are highly similar little new or different information would actually be added. If extracted from the Other lists, the racial information could be coded into either broad racial categories (e.g. Asian, Hispanic, Native American) or the specific mentions given could be retained (e.g. Korean, Mexican, Hindu, etc.). The latter would preserve all available information and allow researchers maximum opportunity for handling categories as they preferred, but would create a large number of categories with very small Ns, would use categories not normally considered to be races (e.g. nationalities and religions), and would use some unusual, inappropriate, or even offensive terms (e. g. human, mixed bag, yellow, halfbreed).

It is proposed that any retrospective recoding be done in terms of major categories only.

b. Cases originally coded Other on ETHNIC, ETH1, ETH2, ETH3, SPETHNIC, SPETH1, SPETH2, and SPETH3 could be converted into specific ethnicities (except for a small number for which no verbatims were actually specified). This would not only assign the remaining Other cases (code 29s), but would also allow all of the group codes (Arabic, Other Asian, Other European, Other Spanish, and West Indies (Non-Spanish)) constructed from the Other category to separated out into individual nationalities. This would provide users with the greatest amount of detail possible, but would create a large number of new categories (up to 50) all with extremely small sample sizes (the largest of the nationalities that could be distinguished would probably represent only 0.2-0.3% of the sample).

The retrospective reassignment of the race and ethnic variables could probably be done for most years (least likely for the early 1970s) and most cases. It would take a RA several months to accomplish the task and could probably be done in late 1996 or early 1997.

2. Prospective:

a. The race and ethnicity variables could be coded in a similar detailed fashion for 1996+ by converting Other codes into specific racial and nationality codes with no disruption to the time series and about a day of extra effort.

b. The use of broad codes on the ethnicity questions (Africa, American Indian, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, England and Wales, India, Russia (USSR) {which includes Ukraine}, Switzerland, and Yugo-slavia) could be discontinued to try to identify sub-categories. This would necessitate the changing of the precodes and would disturb the time series. It would not be possible to carry out the disaggregation retrospectively.

In addition, there is some evidence that little addition information would be forthcoming. First, before 1978 Belgium, India, and Yugoslavia were not precodes and there were very few, if any, mentions of sub-national ethnic groups (Flem, Walloon, Punjabi, Sikh, Serb, Croatian, etc.) Second, spontaneous mentions of sub-nationalities that are coded under the Other Specify by interviewers are limited to a few mentions of Wales/Welsh and rare mentions of Bohemia, Ukraine, and specific countries in Africa.

While it should be possible to construct the new codes to collapse back into the old broader categories (e.g. Czech Republic and Slovakia back into Czechoslovakia), it is likely that a number of people would prefer or only know the broader category (e.g. people might know or prefer Switzerland to Swiss German, Swiss French, Swiss Italian). Thus, it would be necessary to both maintain the general category (e.g. Switzerland) as well as create the new sub-categories (e.g. Swiss German, Swiss French, etc.). In addition, almost all of the new potential categories would be extremely small. While a disaggregation of a particular code might be justified, it does not seem useful to do this in general.

It is proposed that only a few select categories be sub-divided.

3. Experiments

a. RACE: On one sample ask race in the standard way, having it coded by observation whenever there is no doubt in the interviewer's judgment and having them ask "What race do you consider yourself?" when there is uncertainty. On the other sample have interviewers 1) code race by observation for ALL respondents, 2) have them answer a "doubt" question (e.g. "In the racial code you just assigned how sure were you about your classification: very certain, pretty certain, pretty uncertain, or very uncertain?"), and 3) ask ALL respondents "What race do you consider yourself?"). Interviewers would be instructed not to change their assignment based on what the respondent gives as a self-identification. Interviewers would record the verbatim responses of respondents, including multiple mentions.

We might also add a follow-up item that asks interviewers to explain any difference between their judgments and the self-rating of respondents (e.g. IF A DIFFERENT CLASSIFICATION WAS GIVEN IN Q. X THAN IN Q. Y, ANSWER Q. Z: Q. Z Why do to think your racial classification of the respondent differs from the respondent's self-classification?).

4. Other

Currently the federal government in general and the Census Bureau in particular are undertaking a comprehensive review of how to measure race, Hispanic origin, and ancestry. Among the issues that they are considering are: 1) the addition of a multiracial category, 2) the combining of the Hispanic origin and race questions or the addition of a Hispanic category to the race question, 3) what terminology to use to define specific groups (e.g. Black/African-American), and 4) the handling of special problems (e.g. Are Brazilians Hispanics? Should Native Hawaiians be Native Americans or Asian and Pacific Islanders?).

An extensive series of experiments relating to the first three points above were carried out on the May CPS. Results from this research should be examined and possible further changes should be made in light of those findings. In particular, no changes are proposed regarding the introduction of multiracial categories or the changing of the handling of Hispanics on the race question until the Census results are available. Analysis is now underway and preliminary reports are expected in September or October.

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Table 1

Groups Included in Collective Categories in 1994 GSS

Arabic - 8

Egypt 3

Palestine 1

Saudi Arabia 1

Syria 1

Tunisia 1

Yemen 1

Other Asian - 17

Bangladesh 1

Korea 6

Iran 1

Persia 1

Singapore 1

Taiwan 1

Vietnam 6

Other European - 4

Eastern Europe 1

Europe 1

Latvia 2

Other Spanish - 23

Caribbean 1

Chile 1

Columbia 3

Costa Rica 1

Cuba 2

Dominican Republic 6

El Salvador 2

Ecuador 3

Guatemala 2

Peru 1

Puerto Rico 1[a]

South America 1

[a]Should have been entered under the Puerto Rico precode.

Table 1 (continued)

West Indies (Non-Spanish) - 17

Bahamas 3

Barbados 2

Haiti 5

Jamaica 4

Trinidad 2

Virgin Islands 1

Table 2

Racial Identity of Household by Race of Respondent

Race of Household Race of Respondent

White Black Other

White 99.0% 0.2 0.8

Black 1.2% 98.3 0.5

Amer. Indian 6.2% 0.0 93.8

Asian 16.1% 0.0 83.9

Other/Mixed 48.5% 10.7 40.8

n=25,195

Table 3

Race and National Origins, 1990-1994

A. Ethnicity of Racial Groups

Missing African Ameri- American Asian European Hispanic West Other

None 2+ Other can Indian Indian

Blacks 17.7 1.7 1.9 56.7 8.8 3.1 0.2 2.0 1.1 5.2 0.7 (912)

Others 4.7 2.0 0.3 0.5 0.6 15.7 29.2 2.4 36.0 0.3 8.3 (340)

Whites 8.6 2.2 0.9 0.0 0.5 3.3 0.3 78.9 4.1 0.1 0.9 (6234)

B. Racial Classification of Ethnic Groups

% White % Black % Other

Canada (French), Canada (Other),

Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland,

Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy,

the Netherlands, Norway, Poland,

Switzerland, Lithuania, Yugoslavia,

Rumania, Belgium, Other Europe 100.0 0.0 0.0

Germany (1047) 99.6 0.3 0.1

Sweden (96) 99.4 0.6 0.0

Scotland (225) 99.3 0.5 0.2

England and Wales (830) 99.0 0.8 0.2

Russia (102) 98.4 0.0 1.6

Austria (33) 95.1 4.9 0.0

France (113) 94.8 3.3 1.9

Portugal (12) 90.8 0.0 9.2

Missing (147) 87.6 11.7 0.7

No Summary Ethnicity (1443) 86.0 12.4 1.6

**ALL (7486) 83.3 12.2 4.5**

Spain (77) 77.8 1.4 20.8

Arabic (13) 75.9 4.0 20.1

American Indian (290) 71.9 9.7 18.4

Mexico (206) 66.2 0.0 33.8

Other Spanish (53) 62.7 10.1 27.1

Other (74) 58.0 7.8 34.2

Puerto Rico (53) 51.0 7.0 41.9

Japan (16) 30.0 0.0 70.0

America (116) 29.0 69.1 1.8

India (26) 22.8 4.2 73.0

Philippines (37) 15.7 0.0 84.3

China (24) 13.7 4.5 81.8

Other Asian (20) 8.1 0.0 91.9

West Indies (Non-Spanish) (47) 8.0 89.7 2.3

Africa (529) 0.4 99.3 0.3

West Indies (Not Specified) (6) 0.0 100.0 0.0


Table 4


The Racial Classification of Hispanics by Ethnic Origin


(1984-1994)


Ethnic Origins Race

White Black Other


Only Hispanic 65.4% 2.8 31.8 (710)


2 Hispanic, 1 European 80.0% 0.0 20.0 ( 25)

1 Hispanic, 1 European 86.5% 1.9 11.5 (104)

1 Hispanic, 2 European 94.1% 0.0 5.9 ( 62)

Hispanic and Asian 30.0% 10.0 60.0 ( 20)

Hispanic and African 0.0% 88.9 11.1 ( 9)

Hispanic and Misc. 74.1% 11.2 14.7 ( 28)

Other -- -- -- ( 17)

Table 5

Hispanic Ethnicity by Race

% of Hispanics

Giving Race as Other

1972 1.7

1973 8.1

1974 0.0

1975 0.0

1976 0.0

1977 0.0

1978 0.0

1980 0.0

1982 22.0

1983 3.0

1984 28.8

1985 31.3

1986 24.8

1987 26.9

1988 26.5

1989 34.7

1990 35.8

1991 22.9

1993 46.0

1994 28.6

Table 6


Trends in Ethnic Composition


A. % Hispanic

GSS[a] US Census[b]

Main Identity Any Identity


1970 -- -- 3.7

1972 4.1 --

1973 4.7 --

1974 5.3 --

1975 4.7 --

1976 3.7 --

1977 3.5 --

1978 3.2 --

1980 5.0 -- 5.5

1982 4.5 --

1983 5.4 --

1984 5.6 6.4

1985 5.7 6.9

1986 5.5 6.2

1987 5.2 6.8

1988 6.7 8.0

1989 5.4 5.9

1990 5.4 6.2 7.9

1991 7.0 8.1

1993 4.7 5.8 8.0

1994 6.3 7.2


[a]Main Identity=% who gives Mexico, Puerto Rico, Spain, or Other
Spanish as their only ethnicity or the ethnicity they feel closer
to among those with an ethnic identity. Any Identity=% with a

Hispanic main identity or who mention a Hispanic origin among their other national origins among those with an ethnic identity.

[b]"Persons of Spanish Origin in the United States: November, 1969," Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 213; "Persons of Spanish Origin in the United States: March 1972 and 1971," Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 250; "The Hispanic Population of the United States: March, 1993," Current Population Reports, Series P20, No. 475; Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1992.

Table 6 (continued)

B. % American Indian

GSS Census

1970 --- 0.3

1972 0.7

1973 1.8

1974 3.6

1975 3.7

1976 4.1

1977 3.6

1978 3.0

1980 4.2 0.5

1982 3.9

1983 2.9

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1984 4.4

1985 4.4

1986 3.8

1987 5.4

1988 4.8

1989 4.3

1990 6.2 0.7

1991 4.8

1993 5.3

1994 4.2
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1. In 1993 and 1994 race was coded by observation for between 86 and 90% of respondents.

2. Coded by interviewer observation usually during completion of household enumeration form.

3. Only 44 codes actually appear for ETH1.

4. Since the Other category is still fairly small (4.5% in 1990-94) and it consists of many small groups, the practical analysis opportunities permitted by sub-dividing this group by ethnicity are limited.

5. In addition, some of the apparent racial variation is probably a result of measurement error. It was suspicious that 5% of those with Austrian ethnicity were Black. Austria is a small category with only 33 cases overall and two Black cases. Since both of these cases reported only Austrian ancestry, it did not appear that these people had mixed backgrounds. One of these cases was from 1994 and checking the hardcopy revealed that the person's ethnicity was Africa (code 1) rather than Austria (code 2). Thus, this case is apparently a data entry error involving the adjoining 1 and 2 keys. We suspect that the other case from 1987 is also a data entry error.

6. Hispanics, as well as Asians and American Indians, are more likely to be classified as White when race is coded by observation than when it is asked. For example, in 1994, of respondents with only Hispanic origins 17.5% were coded White when race was asked and 90.3% when coded by observation. There are three probable reasons for this pattern. First, interviewers only ask race when there is some doubt in their minds. Thus, people asked the race question are much more likely to be of mixed background than those not coded. Second, when people are asked their race, they often give a nationality or religion (e.g. Italian or Jewish) rather than a broader racial

category. For Hispanics this means mentions of Hispanic, Mexican, etc. which would have been coded on race as Other. Third, interviewers who do not ask are probably prone to "overclassify" respondents in the numerically and socially dominant White category.