

Diversity in People and Places: Changing Locations and Characteristics of Multiracial People in the U.S.

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With Census 2000 the U.S. embarked upon a new era in terms of measuring race. For the first time, people were allowed to choose as many races as they wanted on the Census form. Nearly seven million people chose more than one race, or about 2.5 percent of the population. Using these census data, scholars have examined the methodological issues raised by how to compare answers to the multiple race question to data from the single race question of past censuses (Goldstein and Morning, 2002; Liebler and Halpern-Manners, 2008; Denton and Deane, 2010). They have also examined familial and contextual influences on whether or not parents choose to identify their children as multiracial (Liebler, 2010; Kanaiupuni and Liebler, 2005). One study (Farley, 2004) examined which states, counties and metropolitan areas had the highest percents reporting multiple races, and another (Frey and Myers, 2002) looked at segregation of the multiple race population in cities and metropolitan areas. But overall, the geographic distribution and socio-demographic characteristics of the multiracial population, particularly of specific combinations within it, has received relatively little attention except in the early census reports (Jones, 2005; Jones and Smith, 2001; Tafoya et al., 2004) or else specific areas have been the focus (e.g. Park, Myers and Wei, 2001). Research has focused at either the most macro- or the most micro- level, and in particular on children, who were less than half of the multiracial population (Tafoya et al., 2004).

As we approach the release of the 2010 Census data, it is important to examine the entire multiracial population, both children and adults, in terms of their location and characteristics so as to better assess how they fit into U.S. society. Though we know the presence of multiracial population is associated with immigration (Lee and Bean, 2004), we need to better understand who they are and where they live. By analyzing their social and demographic characteristics with particular emphasis on examining how their status and location differs by age and race/ethnicity we can answer some important questions. Are some particular racial combinations: Growing more quickly than others? Located in specific parts of the country? Dominated by children or adults? Of higher or lower socioeconomic status? These questions are particularly compelling because despite expectations to the contrary, recent ACS data has showed the multiracial population declining since 2000 (El Nasser, 2007) though group-specific analyses may reveal differences.

Who is reported as multiracial by the Census is not simple (Cf. Farley, 2004). Though the data come from answers to a single question, the data are collected by household. Children, for example, most likely had their multi-racial identity

chosen for them by an adult who filled out the Census form. Their socioeconomic status and their spatial location is a function of their parents, not their own, characteristics. Whether children are identified as multiracial is a function of many different factors, including the race of their parents and their geographic location (Liebler, 2004, 2010; Stephan and Stephan, 1989; Xie and Goyette, 1997). Adults, on the other hand, probably had more say in being identified as multi-racial, although if we assume that the form is usually filled out by the head or spouse, then other adults in the household may not have chosen their race for themselves. Research using non-census data has shown there are issues of consistency of reporting multiple races over time and across different settings (Doyle and Kao, 2007; Harris and Sim, 2002). But consistency aside, to the extent that race matters in U.S. society, then their multi-racial identification could play a role in determining their socioeconomic status and spatial location.

Baseline data will come from Census 2000 Summary Files 1 and 2 and PUMS. Change will be measured using aggregate and PUMS data from the 2009 ACS. The promised availability of the first release of the 5-year tract data from ACS in December of 2010 will allow a comparison of profiles of neighborhood residence between 2000 and 2010. Depending on the group's size, the geographic areas considered range from the nation, region and state down to the metropolitan area, and neighborhood. For inclusion, groups must have a minimum of 1,000 persons in a particular geographic area (though not per tract). Hispanics will be removed from multiple race combinations.

The analysis starts at the largest geographic level and moves to smaller geographic levels appropriate for each combination of races. The first step is the construction of indices of spatial dispersion and segregation, separately for each of the multiple race combinations, across different geographic levels. Coupled with maps, these will paint a nuanced picture of who lives where among the multi-racial population of the U.S. Next the analysis focuses on specific combinations of races in the areas where they are located, using P^* indices to show their probability of contact with other groups, as well as profiles of the racial composition and SES of neighborhoods where they live. The final part of the paper examines the social and economic characteristics of the multiracial population itself, separately for children and adults in each combined race group. It will use the method developed by Deane to estimate the multiracial population where persons contribute to the sample as many observations as they have races to estimate the effects of multiracial identity on socioeconomic characteristics (Denton and Deane, 2010). The determinants of multiracial self-identification are examined as well as whether specific multiracial profiles are more or less similar to a component racial group (e.g., of the population identifying as white and black is there evidence that that population is more similar to white single race? Or to black single race?). Taken together the three parts of the paper present a more detailed overview of the multiracial population in the U.S. and serve as a baseline examination of this important group prior to the release of the 2010 data.

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