

# Racial & Ethnic Classifications In Epidemiology: The U.S. Context

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# Agenda

**Context**: Racialization in the U.S. context

**Measurement**: Institutionalized racialization over time

**Developments beyond race/ethnicity**:  
Moving towards capturing racism

**CONTEXT:  
RACIALIZATION IN  
THE UNITED STATES**

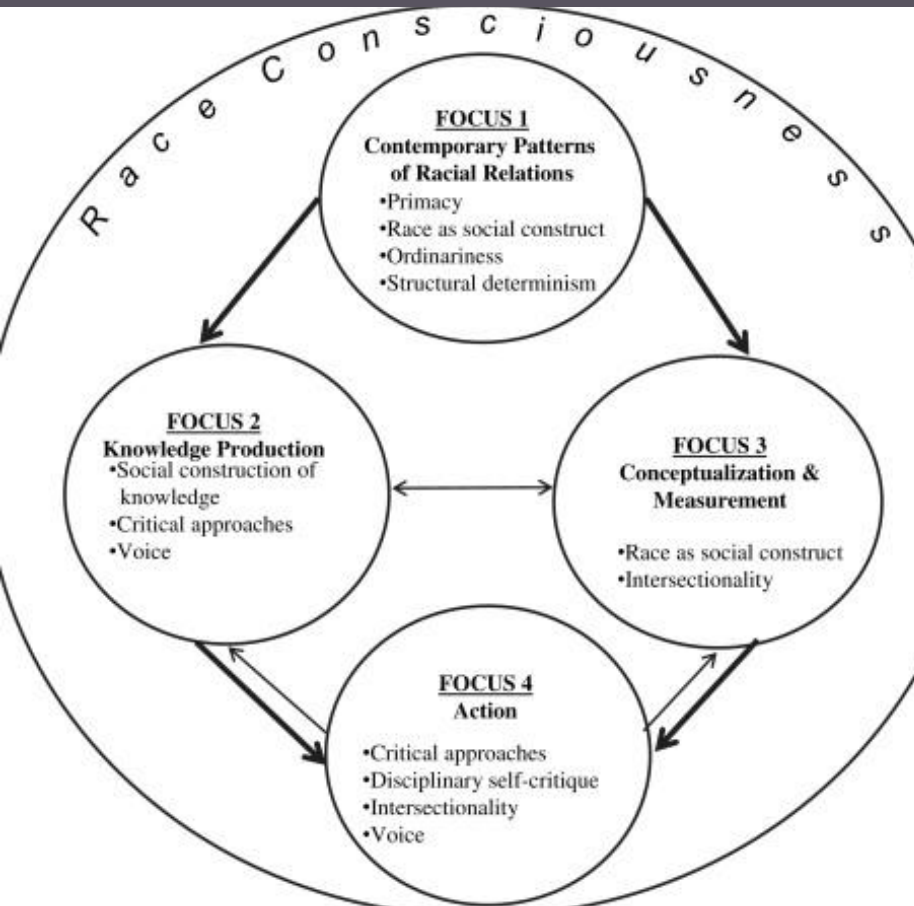


# Critical Race Theory & Public Health

Chandra Ford & Collins Airhihenbuwa (2010): Public Health Critical Race Praxis

A model for applying CRT empirically

1. *How is racialization relevant to the problem?*
2. *How is racialization relevant to the production of knowledge about the problem?*



Context

Measures

Developments



# Racialization

“...the processes by which a group of people is defined by their ‘race.’ Processes of racialization begin by ***attributing racial meaning to people’s identity*** and, in particular, ***as they relate to social structures and institutional systems, such as housing, employment, and education.*** In societies in which ‘White’ people have economic, political, and social power, processes of racialization have emerged from the creation of a hierarchy in social structures and systems based on ‘race.’”

(Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society)

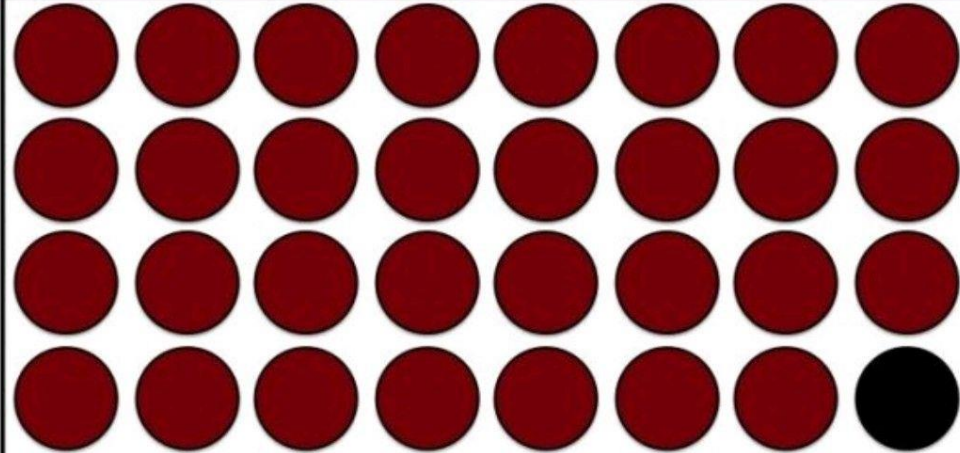
Context

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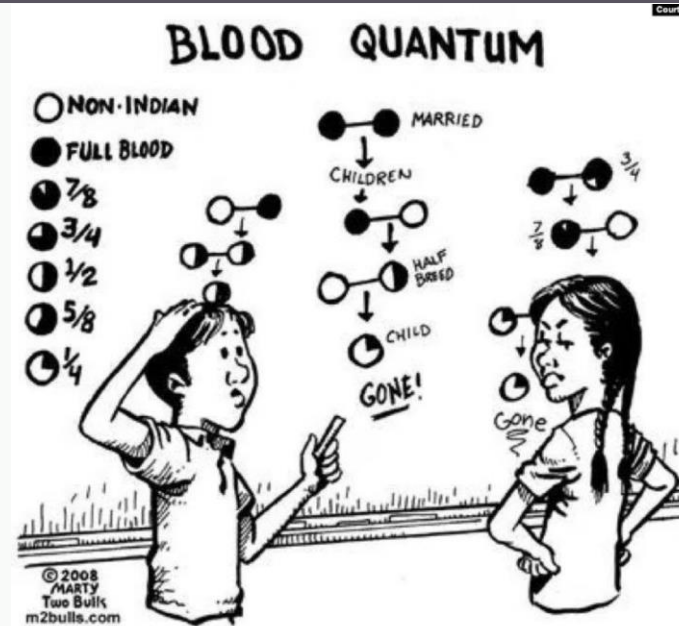
# Two Particularities of U.S. Racialization (Colonization)

## One-Drop Rule



Refers to how U.S. courts and law books historically declared that a mixed race person with one black ancestor or one drop of black blood should be categorized as black. If any

[https://www.linkedin.com/posts/elizabethleiba\\_the-one-drop-rule-is-a-legal-principle-of-activity-7029824836944187392-ffMC](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/elizabethleiba_the-one-drop-rule-is-a-legal-principle-of-activity-7029824836944187392-ffMC)



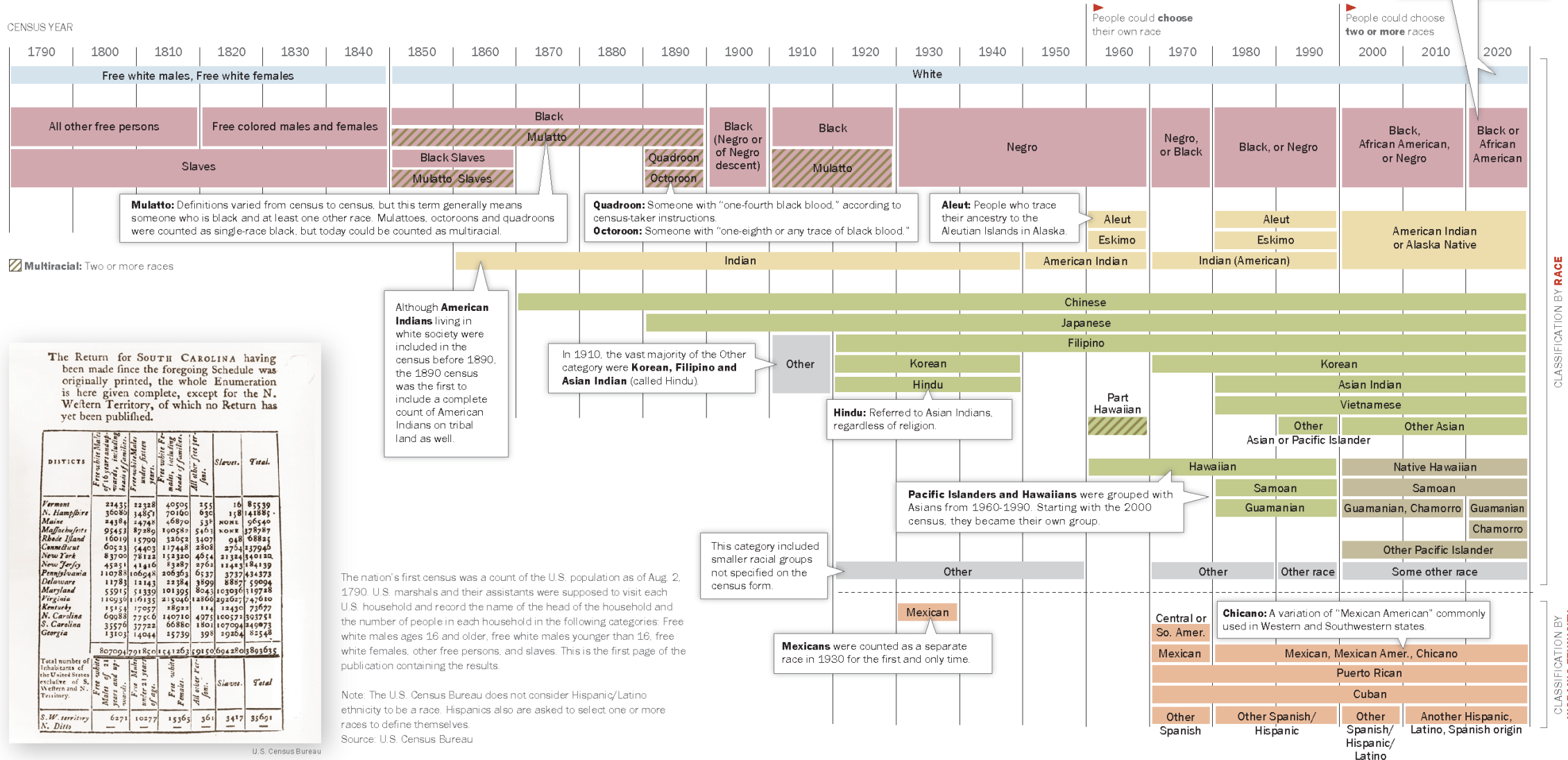
Hey wait a minute, we're disappearing!

<https://www.voanews.com/a/usa-some-native-americans-fear-blood-quantum-formula-paper-genocide/6208615.html>

# What Census Calls Us A Historical Timeline

This graphic displays the different race, ethnicity and origin categories used in the U.S. decennial census, from the first one in 1790 to the latest count in 2020. The category names often changed from one decade to the next, in a reflection of current politics, science and public attitudes. For example, "colored" became "black," with "Negro" and "African American" added later. The term "Negro" was dropped for the 2020 census. Through 1950, census-takers commonly determined the race of the people they counted. From 1960 on, Americans could choose their own race. Starting in 2000, Americans could include themselves in more than one racial category. Before that, many multiracial people were counted in only one racial category.

For the first time, people who check one or both of these boxes are asked to write more about their origins, for example German, African American, Jamaican, etc.



The Return for SOUTH CAROLINA having been made since the foregoing Schedule was originally printed, the whole Enumeration is here given complete, except for the N. Western Territory, of which no Return has yet been published.

DISTRICTS	Free white Males of 16 years and up, including heads of families.	Free white Females of 16 years and up, including heads of families.	Free white Males under 16, including heads of families.	Free white Females under 16, including heads of families.	All other free persons.	Slaves.	Total.
Vermont	22435	22328	40505	255	16	85539	
N. Hampshire	30080	34857	70100	935	118	141885	
Maine	24384	24748	68700	531	none	95640	
Massachusetts	95453	87280	100583	5461	none	378787	
Rhode Island	16019	15700	32052	3407	948	68825	
Connecticut	60523	54403	117440	2308	2754	339445	
New York	83700	78122	153320	4854	21334	540132	
New Jersey	45251	41416	83287	2761	11423	184139	
Pennsylvania	110788	106948	206363	6537	3737	434373	
Delaware	11783	12143	22384	3809	8897	59096	
Maryland	55915	51339	101399	3023	10320	119748	
Virginia	110230	116135	215940	12860	29462	449610	
Kentucky	15154	17057	32211	114	12430	73677	
N. Carolina	60988	77556	148710	4075	10057	303751	
S. Carolina	35576	37722	66880	1801	10794	149973	
Georgia	13103	14044	25739	398	19264	85448	
<b>Total</b>	<b>807094</b>	<b>791820</b>	<b>1541263</b>	<b>50150</b>	<b>604280</b>	<b>3803635</b>	

The nation's first census was a count of the U.S. population as of Aug. 2, 1790. U.S. marshals and their assistants were supposed to visit each U.S. household and record the name of the head of the household and the number of people in each household in the following categories: Free white males ages 16 and older, free white males younger than 16, free white females, other free persons, and slaves. This is the first page of the publication containing the results.

Note: The U.S. Census Bureau does not consider Hispanic/Latino ethnicity to be a race. Hispanics also are asked to select one or more races to define themselves.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

# MEASUREMENT OF RACE/ETHNICITY



# Racial/ethnic classifications

“The Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity (OMB Statistical Policy Directive No. 15) define minimum standards for collecting and presenting data on race and ethnicity for all Federal reporting.

The race and ethnic categories are presented as separate questions, and individuals can select multiple racial categories.”

## **Minimum Standards**

### *Ethnicity*

- Hispanic/Latino

### *Race*

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White

# Ethnicity

Ethnicity Data Standard	Categories
<p>Are you Hispanic, Latino/a, or Spanish origin (One or more categories may be selected)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. ____ No, not of Hispanic, Latino/a, or Spanish origin</li><li>b. ____ Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano/a</li><li>c. ____ Yes, Puerto Rican</li><li>d. ____ Yes, Cuban</li><li>e. ____ Yes, Another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin</li></ul>	<p>} These categories roll-up to the Hispanic or Latino category of the OMB standard</p>

# Race

Race Data Standard	Categories
<p>What is your race?            (One or more categories may be selected)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <input type="checkbox"/> White</li> <li>b. <input type="checkbox"/> Black or African American</li> <li>c. <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian or Alaska Native</li> </ul>	<p>} These categories are part of the current OMB standard</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. <input type="checkbox"/> Asian Indian</li> <li>e. <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese</li> <li>f. <input type="checkbox"/> Filipino</li> <li>g. <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese</li> <li>h. <input type="checkbox"/> Korean</li> <li>i. <input type="checkbox"/> Vietnamese</li> <li>j. <input type="checkbox"/> Other Asian</li> </ul>	<p>} These categories roll-up to the Asian category of the OMB standard</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>k. <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian</li> <li>l. <input type="checkbox"/> Guamanian or Chamorro</li> <li>m. <input type="checkbox"/> Samoan</li> <li>n. <input type="checkbox"/> Other Pacific Islander</li> </ul>	<p>} These categories roll-up to the Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander category of the OMB standard</p>

# Revisions to the Standards

After 20,000+ comments, 94 listening sessions, 3 public virtual townhalls, & 1 tribal consultation, on March 28, 2024, changes have been revised.

- Combined question for race & ethnicity
- Adding Middle Eastern or North African as a new minimum category (previously in the “White” category)
- Requiring additional details beyond the minimum
- Effective no later than 28 March 2029

## **Minimum Standards**

### *Race/Ethnicity*

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic/Latino
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White

# Example of Race and/or Ethnicity Questions Consistent with Revised OMB Standards

## What is your race and/or ethnicity?

*Select all that apply and enter additional details in the spaces below.*

- American Indian or Alaska Native** – *Enter, for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation of Montana, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, Aztec, Maya, etc.*

- Asian** – *Provide details below.*

- Chinese       Asian Indian       Filipino  
 Vietnamese       Korean       Japanese

*Enter, for example, Pakistani, Hmong, Afghan, etc.*

- Black or African American** – *Provide details below.*

- African American       Jamaican       Haitian  
 Nigerian       Ethiopian       Somali

*Enter, for example, Trinidadian and Tobagonian, Ghanaian, Congolese, etc.*

- Hispanic or Latino** – *Provide details below.*

- Mexican       Puerto Rican       Salvadoran  
 Cuban       Dominican       Guatemalan

*Enter, for example, Colombian, Honduran, Spaniard, etc.*

- Middle Eastern or North African** – *Provide details below.*

- Lebanese       Iranian       Egyptian  
 Syrian       Iraqi       Israeli

*Enter, for example, Moroccan, Yemeni, Kurdish, etc.*

- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander** – *Provide details below.*

- Native Hawaiian       Samoan       Chamorro  
 Tongan       Fijian       Marshallese

*Enter, for example, Chuukese, Palauan, Tahitian, etc.*

- White** – *Provide details below.*

- English       German       Irish  
 Italian       Polish       Scottish

*Enter, for example, French, Swedish, Norwegian, etc.*

# Why does this matter in epidemiology?

- Especially in disparities research, U.S. Census data are used to populate denominators
- Federal agencies regularly collecting health data will have to update their surveys to comply to minimum standards
- Many national cohorts also try to comply to minimum standards for data linkage
- ***Data crosswalks are currently in development!***

# **DEVELOPMENTS BEYOND RACE/ETHNICITY**

# Categories are not enough...

- Racial/ethnic categories in epidemiology are used to create comparisons and/or causal contrasts.
  - *This must be done with careful consideration of what race/ethnicity is a marker of.*
  - *Racial/ethnic categories must be considered within appropriate theoretical and conceptual frameworks.*



## Less interested in

“the expected difference in health outcomes [...] between setting physical phenotype, parental physical phenotype, genetic background, and cultural context to their values from a random draw from the distribution in the white population versus setting these same variables to their values from a random draw from the distribution in the black population”

(Vanderweele & Robinson, 2014)

*\*\*What would the health outcomes be for black individuals if they were white\*\**

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## More interested in

the expected difference in health outcomes in the Black population had the current social conditions that create and maintain racial hierarchies been dismantled during an earlier time period\*

Social conditions are MUTABLE, not innate

*\*society-specific, time-specific, condition-specific*

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# Historical & “futuristic” counterfactuals

- Identifying historical decision points and trajectories of racialization can show potential avenues for intervention
  - *Allows for the exploration of the ways individuals came to be “treated”*
  - *Structures that are created can be dismantled*
- What is already known about the problem should be framed within contexts of racialization & racism

# THANK YOU!

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