Race and Ethnicity in Health and Vital Statistics

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Suzanne Heurtin-Roberts, Ph.D., M.S.W.

Why the confusion?

◎ Scientific concepts used in everyday speech

◎ Used interchangeably

◎ Used without definition

◎ Used a-theoretically

◎ Difficulties in measurement

Race

◎ Race is the categorization of parts of a population based on physical appearance due to particular historical social and political forces

Race is not genetically defined

◎ There are **<u>no</u>** racial genotypes to delineate boundaries among races.

◎ Race is socially defined based on appearance.

◎ Appearances *may/may not* represent historical breeding populations

Race is a socially constructed phenomenon.

- **Determination of race is subjective**
  - **Internal identification**
  - **Expressed identification**
  - **External identification**
- **There are no clearly agreed upon phenotypical criteria to delineate boundaries among groups**

Race

◎ **Racial categories differ with different societies and nations.**

◎ **Fluid and situationally variable**

◎ **Contested by persons/populations involved**

Cline

◎ **Single trait genetic gradient over space and differing environments**
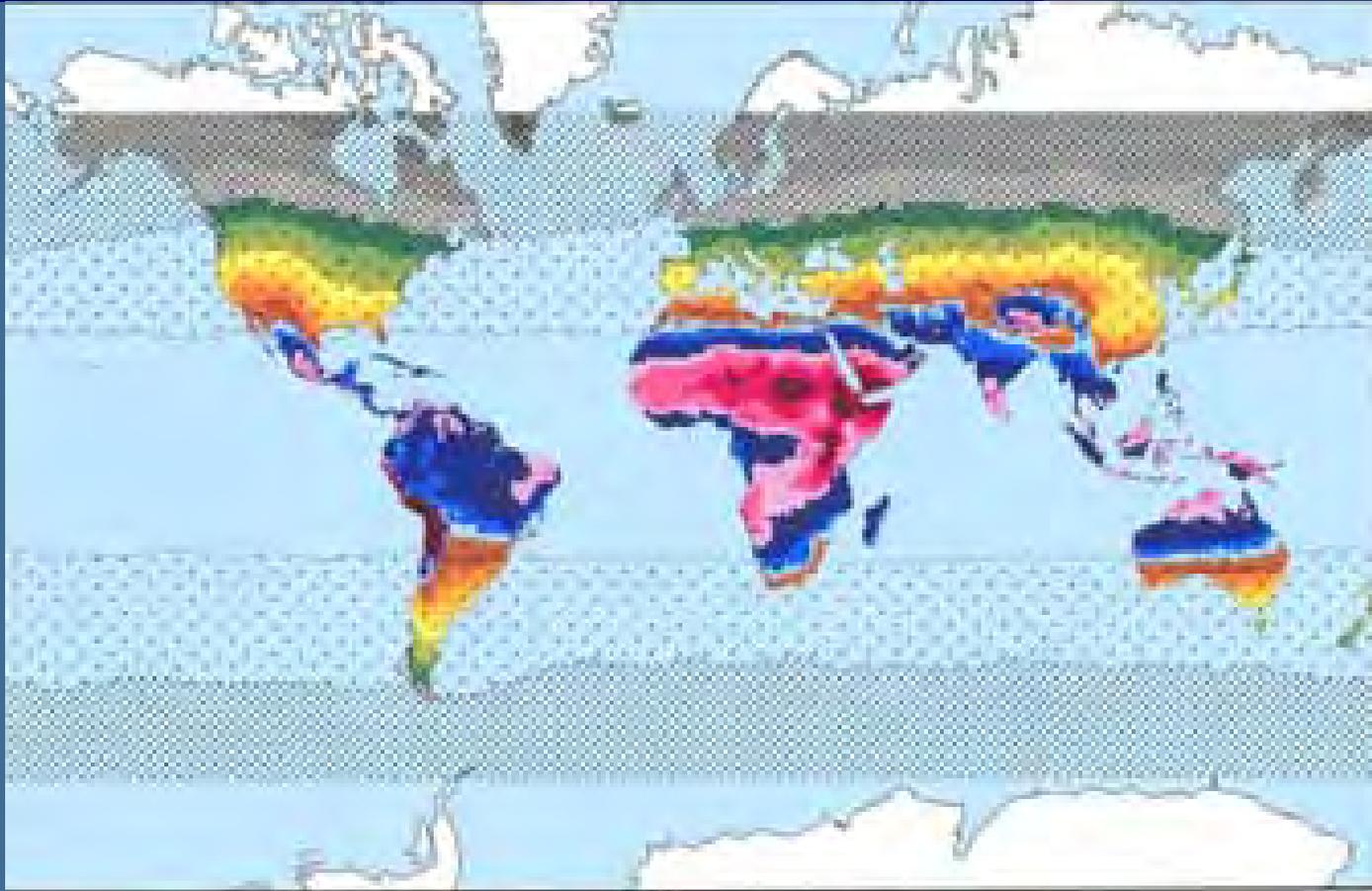
　○ **Example: skin color**

Melanin in adjacent breeding populations

Site A

Site N

Environmental variation: UV radiation →

Cline for skin color

Jablonski, N and Chaplin, G. ,California Academy of Sciences
http://www.calacademy.org/science_now/archive/academy_research/nina_121900.htm

Ethnicity

◎An ethnic group is a sub-<u>cultural</u> group of a multicultural society.
  ○Usually based on a common national or tribal heritage.

Culture:

◎ **Is learned**

◎ **Passed from generation to generation**

◎ **Shapes experience of the world around us**

◎ **Changes over time**

Culture is comprised of:

- ❑ **Environment**

- ❑ **Economy**

- ❑ **Technology**

- ❑ **Religion/World-view**

- ❑ **Language**

- ❑ **Social Structure/ society**

- ❑ **Beliefs and Values**

Hammond, 1976

Ethnicity

- Based on heritage, experience, group membership?
- Not necessarily geographically delineated
- Situationally variable
- Contested by persons/populations involved

Race vs. Ethnicity

- **Race is a social category based on similar <u>physical</u> appearance.**
- **Ethnicity is a social category based on shared <u>culture</u> or <u>cultural heritage</u>.**

Race ≠ Ethnicity

◎ **Racial Group ≠ Ethnic Group**
  - **Any given racial group is not necessarily all the same ethnicity**
    - **Example: Whites**

◎ **Ethnic Group ≠ Racial Group**
  - **Any given ethnic group not necessarily all the same race**
    - **Example: Cubans**

"White Race"

Georgian	Italian	Finn
French	Greek	Moroccan
Iraqi	Swedish	Spanish

Slide adapted from a presentation by M. Kagawa Singer (UCLA), at the NCI, 2004.

Cuban Ethnicity

Includes at least:

"Black"

"Mestizo"

"White"

Multiracial persons

Reported	number	%
One race	274,595,678	97.6
Two or	6,826,228	2.4
more races		

Source: Table DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics
    U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.

Multiracial persons

◎ **How to measure?**

- **Primary race**

- **Self identification**

- **Other identification**

- **What about contextual changes?**

Some problems measuring race/ethnicity

- ◉ Both are subjective and contested
  - ○ Self report?
  - ○ ID by others?
- ◉ Context dependent/vary situationally
  - ○ One identity is emphasized over another according to context
  - ○ Can change from birth to death records
- ◉ No clear boundaries

What's my race?

Harris, David R. 2002. "In the Eye of the Beholder: Observed Race and Observer Characteristics," Population Studies Center Research Report 02-522., University of Michigan

Some problems: measuring race/ethnicity

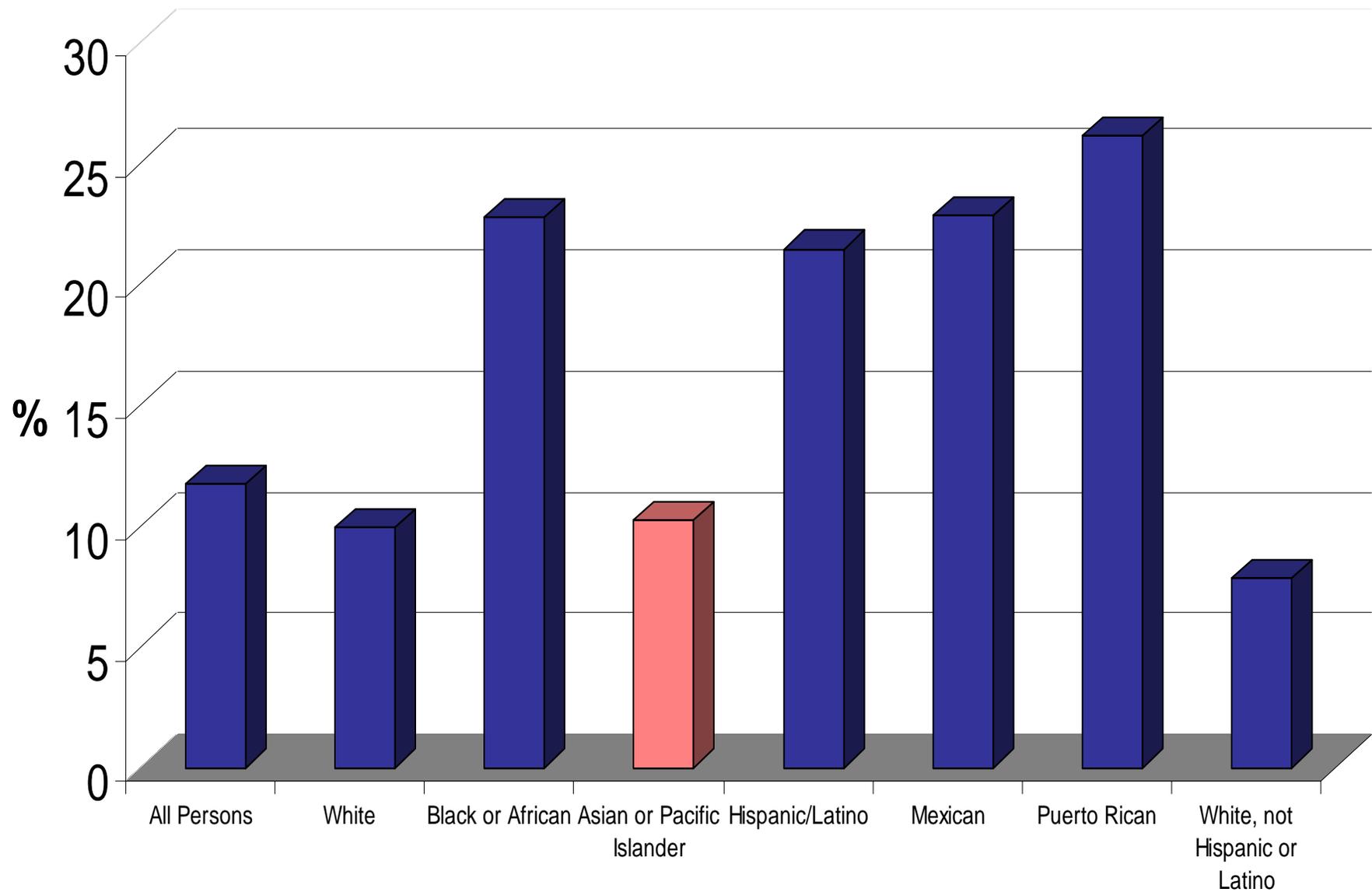◎"Lumping" vs "Splitting

OMB Directive 15 categories

Categorical **use of:**

1. **Non-Hispanic White**
2. **Hispanic (ethnicity in 2000 Census)**
   (34 countries)
3. **American Indian/Alaska Native (>600)**
4. **Asian American (37 groups)**
5. **Pacific Islander (20+ groups)** } >100 languages
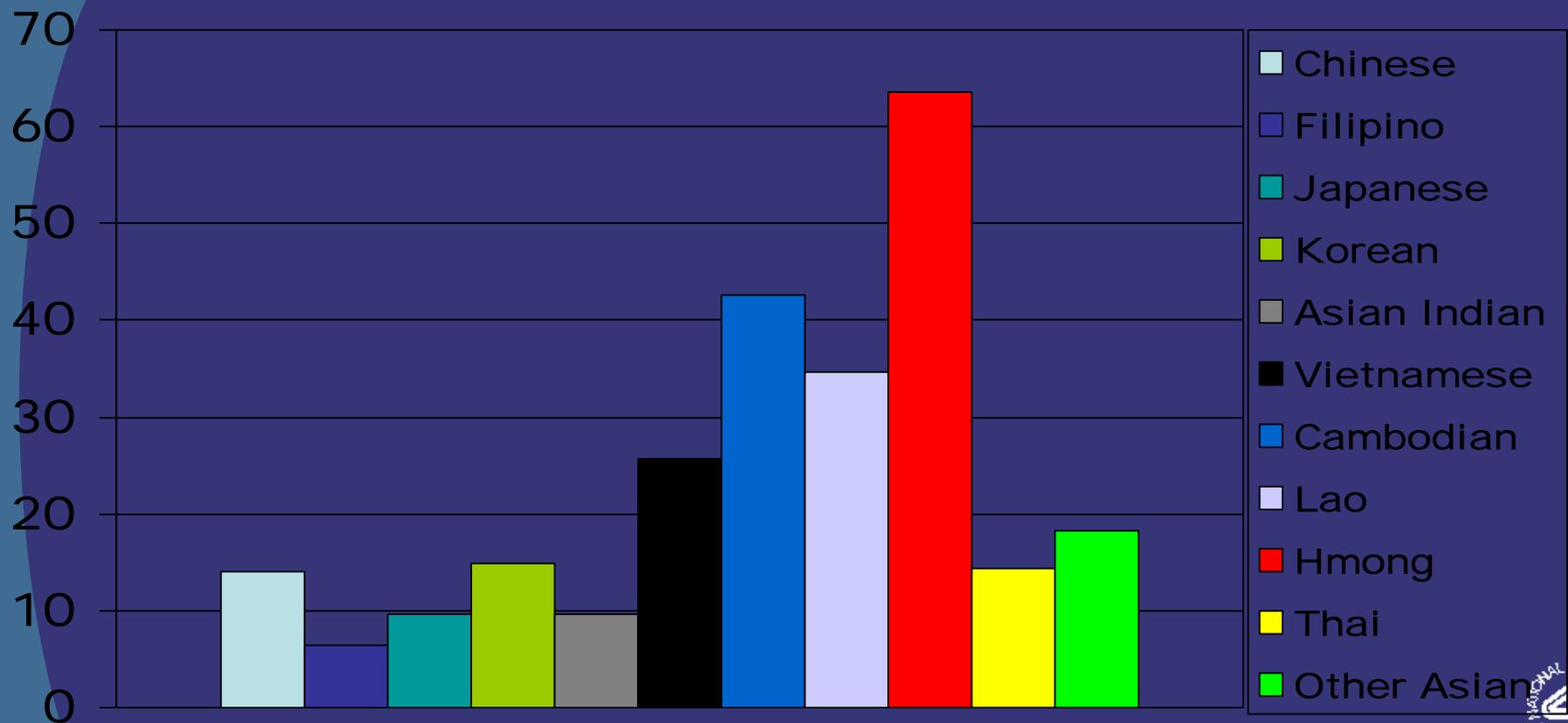6. **African American/Black (>5 groups & regional differences)**

Slide adapted from a presentation by M. Kagawa Singer (UCLA), at the NCI, 2004.

Poverty Level by Ethnicity 2000

Census Bureau 2000

% in Poverty

Questions of usage in research

- ◎ Used as proxy for other phenomena?
- ◎ Usage to research bio/genetic phenomena?
- ◎ Is race best variable for social/cultural/behavioral phenomena?
- ◎ Race can useful for policy purposes or studies of racial bias
- ◎ Ethnicity probably more useful in understanding behavior (implies cultural influence)
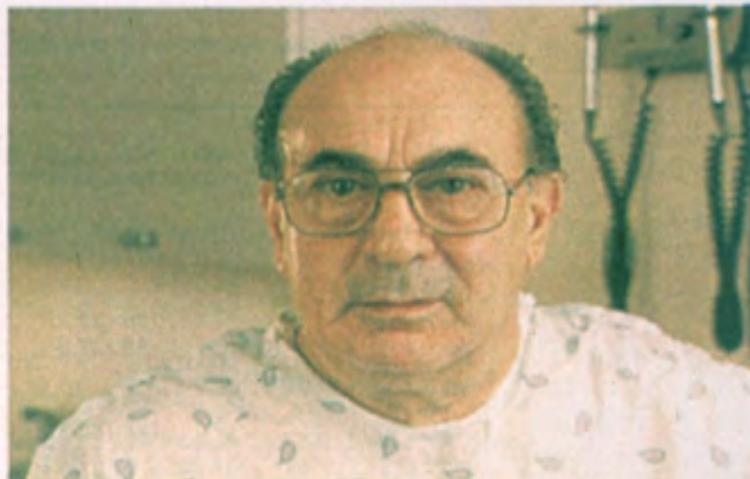
Why collect data in terms of race and ethnicity?

- Associated with differential health risks and resources
- To inform policy
- To understand social and behavioral phenomenon related to health
- To track and understand bias and disparities relative to health

Schulman, K, et al., 1999
The Effect of Race and Sex on Physicians' Recommendations for Cardiac Catheterization. NEJM 340(8): 618-26

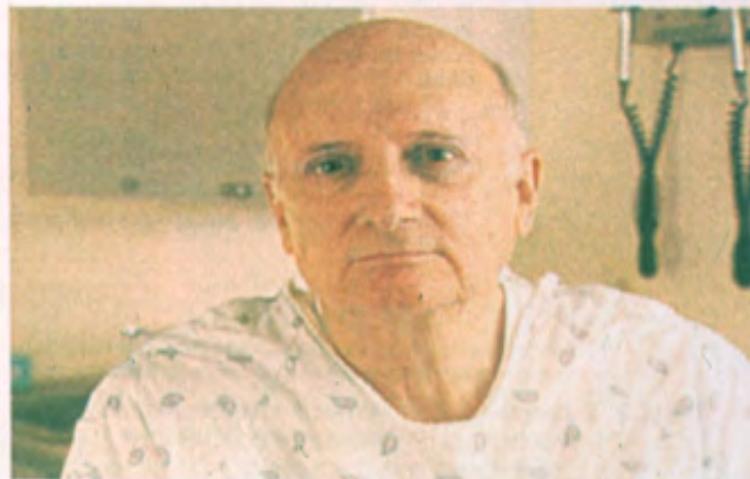EFFECT OF RACE AND SEX ON PHYSICIANS' RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CARDIAC CATHETERIZATION

Figure 1. Patients as Portrayed by Actors in the Video Component of the Survey.

Panel A shows a 55-year-old black woman, Panel B a 55-year-old black man, Panel C a 70-year-old black woman, Panel D a 70-year-old black man, Panel E a 55-year-old white woman, Panel F a 55-year-old white man, Panel G a 70-year-old white woman, and Panel H a 70-year-old white man.

◎**Physicians significantly less likely to diagnose coronary artery disease for women**

◎**Physicians significantly less likely to recommend cardiac catheterization for women and blacks than for men and whites.**

Race and Ethnicity

- Not the same thing
- Important for data collection because they're important in health and society.
- Measurement issues must be resolved:
  - for adequate data collection
  - to monitor and improve population health.