Unpacking “Black”: Ending Erasure and Homogenization of Black College Student Experiences

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Defining “Race”

• Socially constructed, symbolic boundaries categorizing a group of people who share physical and cultural traits and common ancestry
  • Complex and fluid based on political, economic, or other social interests at a given time
• Race has real consequences—shapes access to goods and resources
• Race is multidimensional—racial identity vs. racial categorization
• We examine how the homogenization of Blackness in higher education statistics and measurement may conceal important variation among Black racial/ethnic subgroups
Immigrants Are a Growing Share Among Black Americans ...

% of U.S. black population that is foreign born

1980: 3.1
1990: 4.9
2000: 6.7
2013: 8.7

SOURCE: Pew Research Center tabulations of the 2013 American Community Survey (1% IPUMS) and the 1980, 1990, and 2000 censuses (5% IPUMS)
Among the U.S. Black population, both multiracial and Hispanic numbers have grown since 2000.

**U.S. Black population**

- **U.S. Black population 36,200,000**
  - 1,000,000 (Gold)
  - 1,500,000 (Teal)
  - 33,700,000 (Light yellow)

- **U.S. Black population 42,000,000**
  - 1,700,000 (Gold)
  - 2,400,000 (Teal)
  - 37,900,000 (Light yellow)

- **U.S. Black population 46,800,000**
  - 2,400,000 (Gold)

**Black Hispanic**

- 2,400,000

**Multiracial (Non-Hispanic)**

- 3,700,000

**Single race (Non-Hispanic)**

- 40,700,000

**SOURCE:** Pew Research Center analysis of 2000 decennial census (5% IPUMS) and 2006-2019 American Community Surveys (IPUMS)
Cornell University Black Student Group Complains of Too Many African, Caribbean Students

By Tanasia Kenney | October 2, 2017  Comments (0)

Kamala Harris is Asian and Black. That shouldn't be confusing in 2020 – but it is to some.

Questions about what constitutes Blackness aren't new. Black people's ability to answer those questions for themselves is.
Institutional Racial Categorization

• American Sociological Association—measuring and collecting data on race is vital for equity

• Practical and symbolic meanings
  • Institutional goals for equity, diversity, and inclusion
  • Allocation of power and scarce resources

• US Government mandates how data on race is collected in higher education
  • Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)
  • Required reporting categories change over time
Which of the following groups best describes your background? Check as many as apply.

- “Hispanic or Latino” = Always “Hispanic” even if multiracial
- Non-Hispanic Multiracial people are reported as “two or more races”
- “Black” always excludes multiracial and Hispanic/Latino
Theorizing Black Heterogeneity in Higher Education

• Blackness is expansive and diverse—not adequately captured by homogeneous measures
  • Sociologist Tressie Mcmillan Cottom (2018)—”Basic Black” vs. “Special Black”

• Black Immigration
  • Black ethnic variation is often ignored when it is centered for other groups
  • Other racial groups are granted more ethnic complexity
  • Immigrant-origin Black college students have better college outcomes than US-born Black college students, on average (Mwangi, 2014; Massey et al, 2007)

• Black Multiraciality
  • Legacy of one drop rule
  • Post-2000 census
  • Marginalization vs. privilege
  • Multiracial Black college students have different social and academic experiences in college (Smith and Moore, 2000),
Research Questions

1. Does the use of IPEDS race measures conceal heterogeneity in the backgrounds of Black college students and/or systematically erase particular groups?

2. Is there significant variation between theoretically derived subgroups of Black students in early college outcomes (first term GPA and STEM major choice)?
Data and Methods

• Full population of entering first year students at three University of California campuses in Fall, 2016 and Fall, 2017
  • Admissions, Financial Aid, and Registrar data
  • Deidentified data
  • Exclude international students
  • N=22,246 in total sample; 1,154 in Black only sample

• Methods:
  • T-tests; Logistic and OLS Regressions—Both full sample and Black only (focus for today)
  • Examined intersectional variation by gender and class, but these were not significant
Multiple Measures of “Black”

• IPEDS Measure:
  • Black/African American—excludes multiracial and Hispanic or Latinx Black students

• Theoretically Derived Black Racial/Ethnic Subgroups
  • US Black
    • selected only “African American/Black” and no other race or Black subcategory
  • Multiracial/Diasporic Black
    • Diasporic Black—Caribbean, African, or Other Black
    • Marginalized Multiracial Black (Black + Latinx; Black + Indiginous)
    • Privilege Adjacent Multiracial Black (Black+ White; Black + Asian)
Other Measures

• **Dependent Variables**
  - **STEM Major in first term**:Declared STEM major (science, math, or engineering), compared to humanities, social science, arts or undeclared
  - **First term college GPA**: from college transcript

• **Control Variables**
  - **Social class**: First generation college student; Pell-grant eligible
  - **STEM major**: Included as in models predicting college GPA
  - **High school GPA**: From high school transcript
  - **Gender identity**: Cis-female or gender queer compared to cis-male
  - **Cohort**: 2016 or 2017 entering first year cohort
### Table 1: Comparison of IPEDS Black Sample and Our Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>IPEDS Black (std dev)</th>
<th>OUR SAMPLE All Black Students (std dev)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Term College GPA</td>
<td>2.755 (0.839)</td>
<td>2.734 (0.870)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM Major</td>
<td>0.428 (0.495)</td>
<td>0.430 (0.495)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PELL Eligible</td>
<td>0.550 (0.498)</td>
<td>0.522 (0.500)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Generation College Student</td>
<td>0.475 (0.500)</td>
<td>0.497 (0.500)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School GPA</td>
<td>3.688 (0.346)</td>
<td>3.712 (0.343)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cis Male</td>
<td>0.377 (0.485)</td>
<td>0.373 (0.484)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cis Female</td>
<td>0.616 (0.487)</td>
<td>0.617 (0.484)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Queer</td>
<td>0.007 (0.085)</td>
<td>0.010 (0.101)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>1,154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

40% of Black students are erased as “Black” using the IPEDS measures.
Table 1: Comparison of Black Racial/Ethnic Subgroup Means

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>US Black Students</th>
<th>Diasporic Black Students</th>
<th>Marginalized Multiracial Black Students</th>
<th>Privilege Adjacent Multiracial Black Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Term College GPA</td>
<td>2.680 (0.857)</td>
<td>2.851** (0.826)</td>
<td>2.634 (0.898)</td>
<td>2.792 (0.911)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM Major</td>
<td>0.375 (0.485)</td>
<td>0.512*** (0.501)</td>
<td>0.425 (0.495)</td>
<td>0.440 (0.498)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PELL Eligible</td>
<td>0.570 (0.496)</td>
<td>0.484* (0.501)</td>
<td>0.550 (0.499)</td>
<td>0.442** (0.498)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Generation College Student</td>
<td>0.516 (0.500)</td>
<td>0.386** (0.488)</td>
<td>0.593 (0.492)</td>
<td>0.510 (0.501)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School GPA</td>
<td>3.663 (0.359)</td>
<td>3.750*** (0.321)</td>
<td>3.707 (0.343)</td>
<td>3.767*** (0.323)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cis Male</td>
<td>0.402 (0.491)</td>
<td>0.354 (0.479)</td>
<td>0.402 (0.491)</td>
<td>0.304** (0.461)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cis Female</td>
<td>0.589 (0.493)</td>
<td>0.632 (0.483)</td>
<td>0.589 (0.493)</td>
<td>0.686** (0.465)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Queer</td>
<td>0.009 (0.095)</td>
<td>0.014 (0.118)</td>
<td>0.009 (0.095)</td>
<td>0.010 (0.098)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

T-test= significantly different from US Black
Predicted First Term College GPA
By Black Racial/Ethnic Subgroup

Black Racial/Ethnic Subgroups

- US Black: 2.689
- Diasporic Black: 2.848
- Marginalized Multiracial Black: 2.648
- Privilege Adjacent Multiracial Black: 2.806
Predicted Probability of STEM Major
By Black Racial/Ethnic Subgroup

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US Black</td>
<td>0.379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diasporic Black</td>
<td>0.499 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginalized Multiracial Black</td>
<td>0.420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privilege Adjacent Multiracial Black</td>
<td>0.434</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Findings

• Current IPEDS race and ethnicity measures significantly undercount Black students and mask important variation among Black students
  • Some subgroups arrive at college with relatively greater privilege

• Diasporic Black and Privilege Adjacent Multiracial Black students have higher GPAs than US Black students and Marginalized Multiracial Black students

• Diasporic Black students are more likely than US Black students (and White students) to major in STEM fields
Theoretical Implications

• Institutional choices about Black racial categorization are not neutral
  • Importance of studying and theorizing Black racial categorization in addition to Black racial identities in higher education

• Multiple meaningful Black racial/ethnic subgroups (not just two)

• Studies of Black multiraciality must consider the relative structural advantages of some groups (white, Asian) compared to others (Indigenous and Latinx)
  • Contextual

• Intersectional variation by gender, class, sexuality, etc. might be visible in a larger sample or in relation to different outcomes
Practical Implications

Figure 1. Percent of students who agreed students of their race/ethnicity are respected on campus by race/ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data from students who identified as American Indian, multiracial, international/nonresident, Pacific Islander or unknown is not provided due to small sample sizes.

Practical Implications

Graduate Division

Graduate Division

About Our Programs Prospective Students Funding Current Students Grad Resource Center Postdocs

Faculty & Staff Training Grants

Chancellor's Fellowship for Inclusive Excellence

As part of our campus goal to advance inclusive excellence, UC Merced is committed to the recruitment, admission, retention, and success of a diverse graduate student population. The Chancellor and Graduate Dean have established this predoctoral fellowship to recruit the highest caliber graduate applicants who will contribute to the diversity and inclusiveness of our academic community, especially in terms of the research and education of Black scholars. Looking forward, the fellowship also aims to identify and support students whose studies will contribute to the representation of Black scholars in academia and beyond.

Deadlines

Admissions Application:
January 15, 2021

Graduate Group Nomination:
January 29, 2021

Chancellor's Inclusive