

American Society and Literature

- 1. American Society today. Values. Historical outline.
- 2. Immigration; dominant and minority groups.
- Race; ethnicity and religion; gender
- What is prejudice?
- What is discrimination?



Immigration 1820-1978

| | | |
|---------------|-----------|------|
| Germany | 6,978,000 | 14.3 |
| Italy | 5,294,000 | 10.9 |
| Britain | 4,898,000 | 10.0 |
| Ireland | 4,723,000 | 9.7 |
| Austr-Hungary | 4,315,000 | 8.9 |
| Russia | 3,374,000 | 6.9 |
| Sweden | 1,272,000 | 2.6 |
| Norway | 856,000 | 1.8 |
| France | 751,000 | 1.5 |

Irish Immigration to the United States. 1717 – XX century.

1846 – 1855: 1,442,000

1856 – 1865: 582,400

1866 – 1875: 645,700

Literature of Irish Immigration:

- Pre-famine generation (1780-1845)
- Famine generation (1845-1875)
- Third generation (1875- 1925)

XX century Irish Literature

- **F. Scott Fitzgerald** (1896-1940) - *This Side of Paradise; The Great Gatsby; The Beautiful and Damned*
- **Eugene Gladstone O'Neill** (1888 – 1953) - *Anna Christie; The Hairy Ape; Beyond the Horizon; The Iceman Cometh; A Long Day's Journey into Night*
- **Flannery O'Connor** (1925 - 1964) - *Wise Blood; The Violent Bear It Away; short stories*

Contemporary Irish-American Literature

- James T. Farrell (1904-1979): *Studs Lonigan trilogy (1932 – 1935), Chicago Stories*
- Edwin O'Connor: *The Last Hurrah (1948)*
- William Kennedy (1928 -): *Ironweed (1983), Cotton Club (1986), Quinn's Book (1988)*



Literature at the turn of the century

- Late 19th century – romanticism and new realism (Mark Twain, Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, Jack London, Theodore Dreiser, Bret Harte)
- Early 20th century
- Roaring 20s, Jazz Age
- Great Depression, 30s



African Americans Today.

- The making of African Americans in a white America
- African American Literature:
- Native Son, Richard Wright;
- The Street, Ann Petry;
- Invisible Man, Ralph Ellison
- Another Country, James Baldwin
- White “African” Literature – To Kill a Mocking Bird, Harper Lee

American 50-60s



- Civil Rights Act; Black Freedom
- Vietnam?
- The Rise and Fall of the Great Society
- The Making of a Youth Culture
- No Cease-Fire: 1969-1974
- 60s literature

Asian Americans



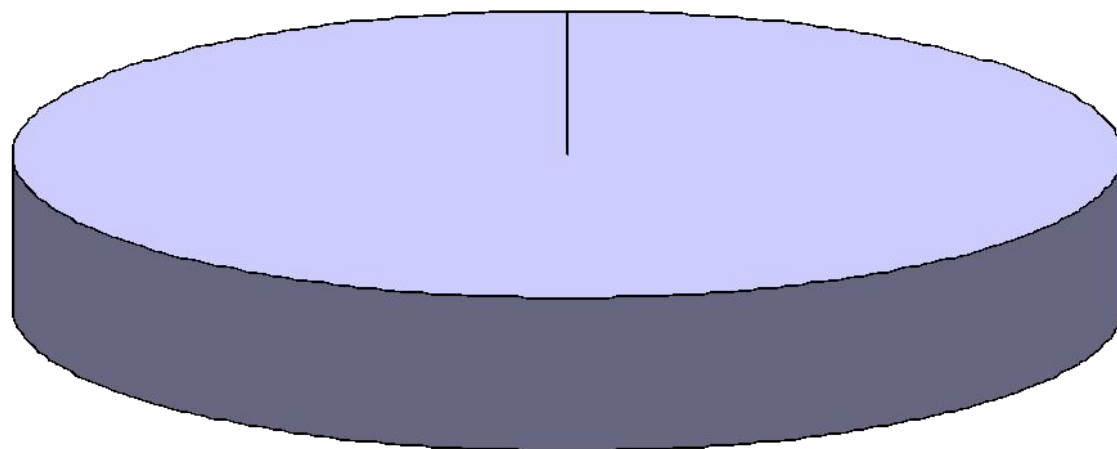
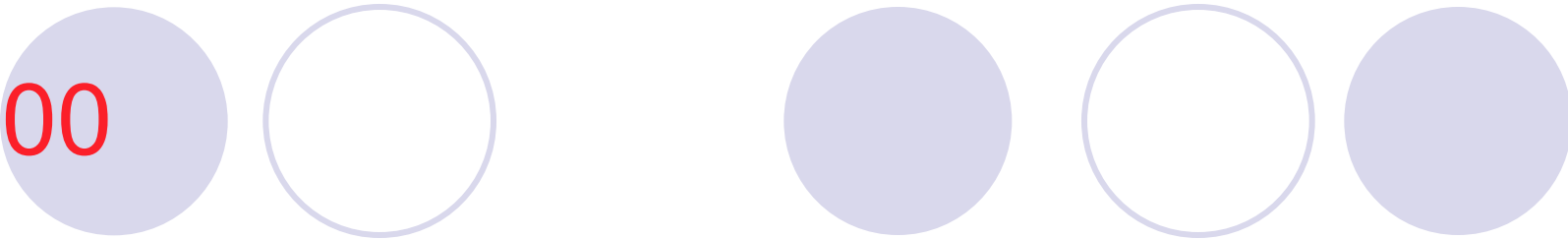
- Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)
- Chinatowns Today
- Chinese American Literature (*Amy Tan, Collection of Chinese American Short Stories*)
- The Wartime Japanese Evacuation
- Japanese American Short Stories

American Society



- What is it that holds a nation together?
- “Two elements that define a nation are the desire on the part of the inhabitants to be governed together and the “common sympathy” installed by shared history, values and language”. (*John Stuart Mill*)

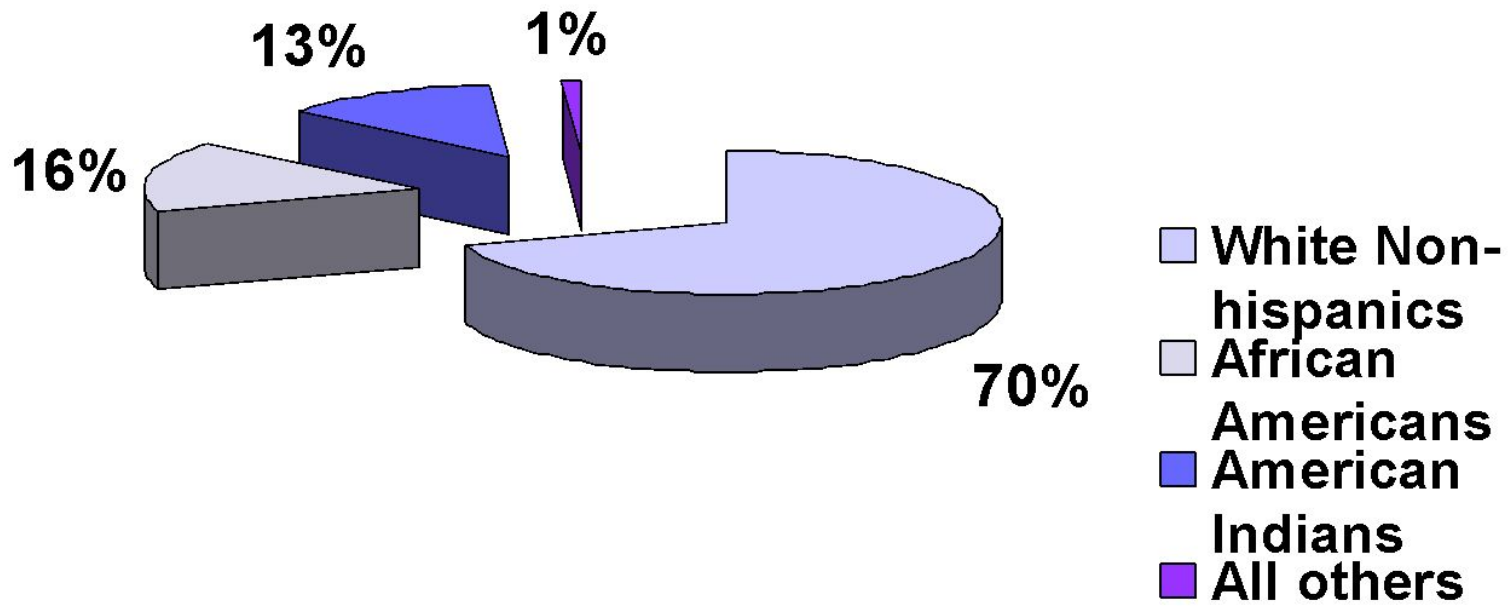
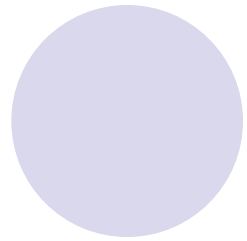
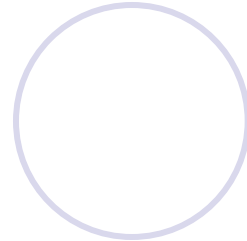
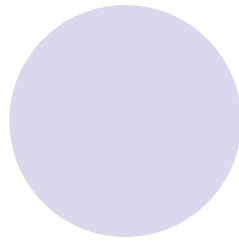
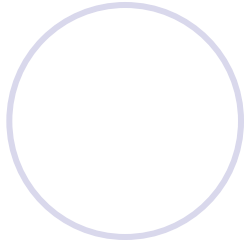
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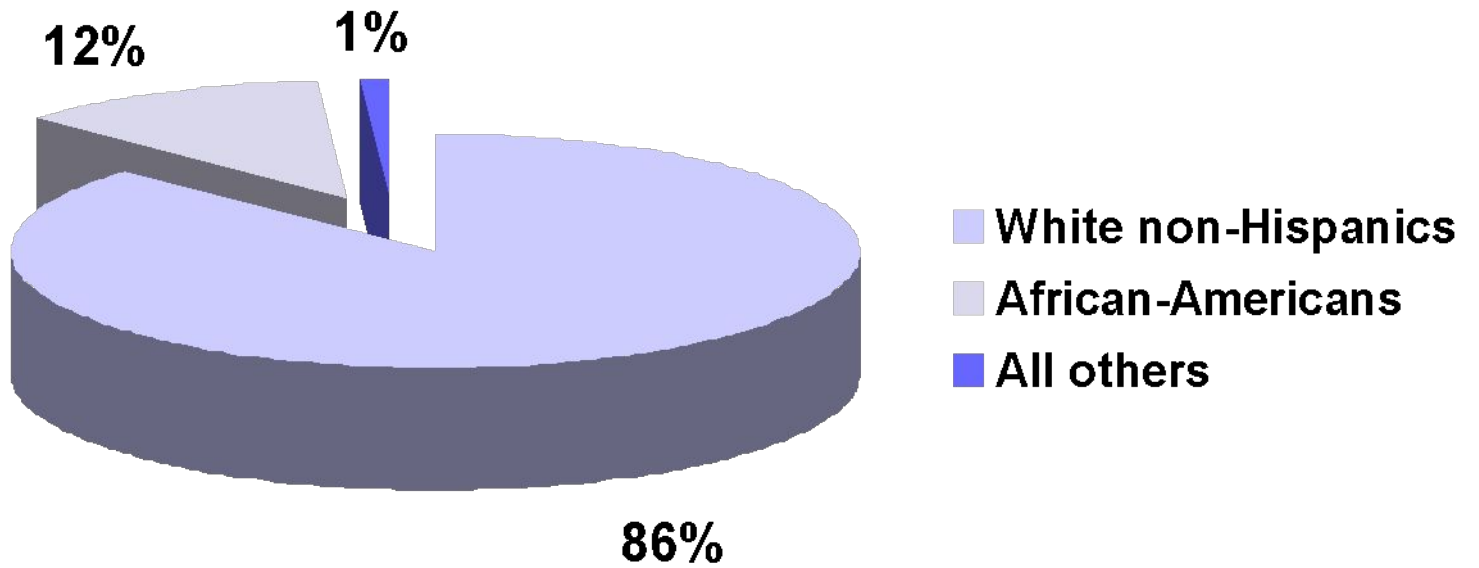
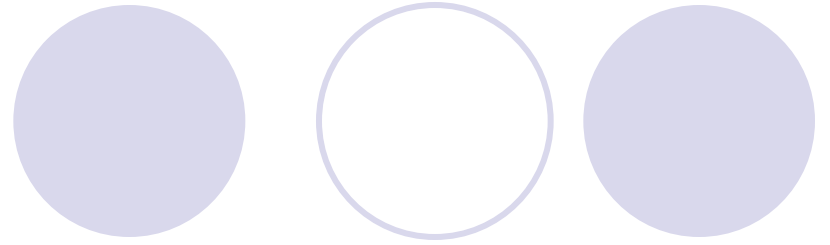
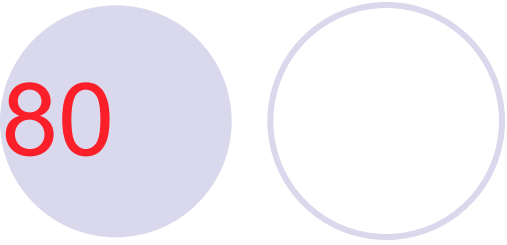
100%

■ American Indians

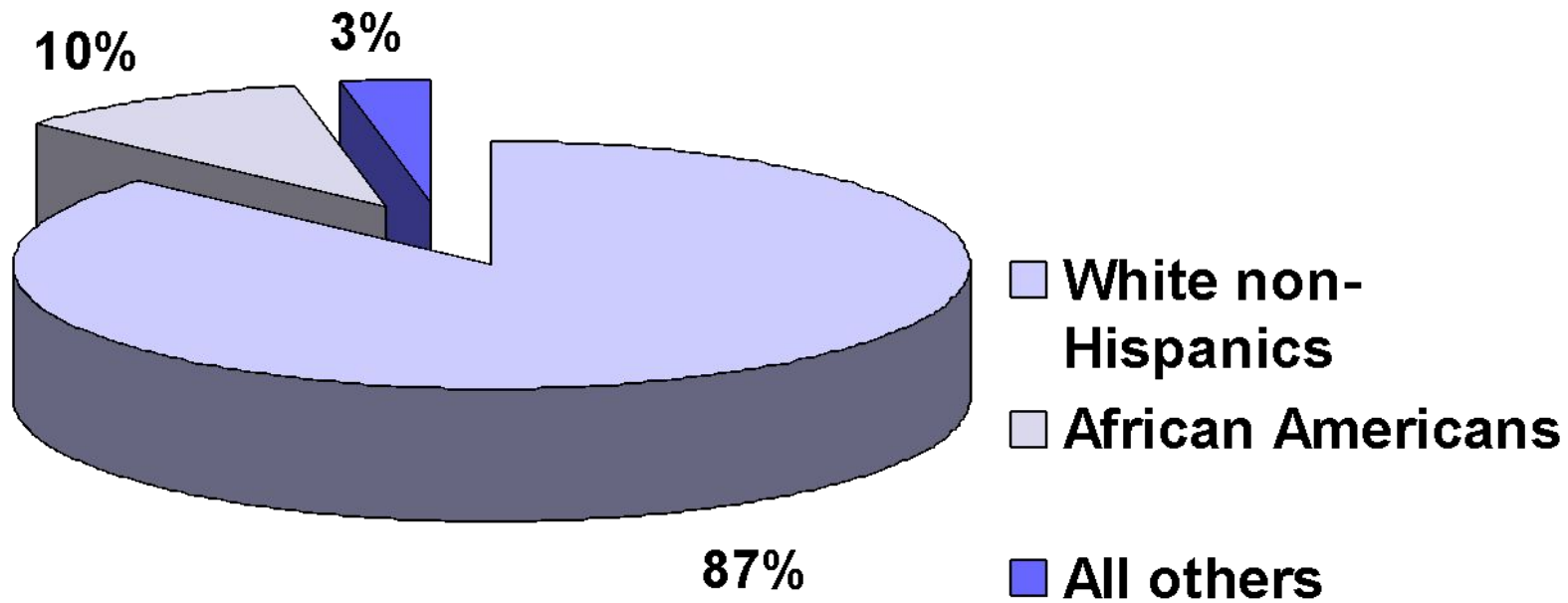
1790



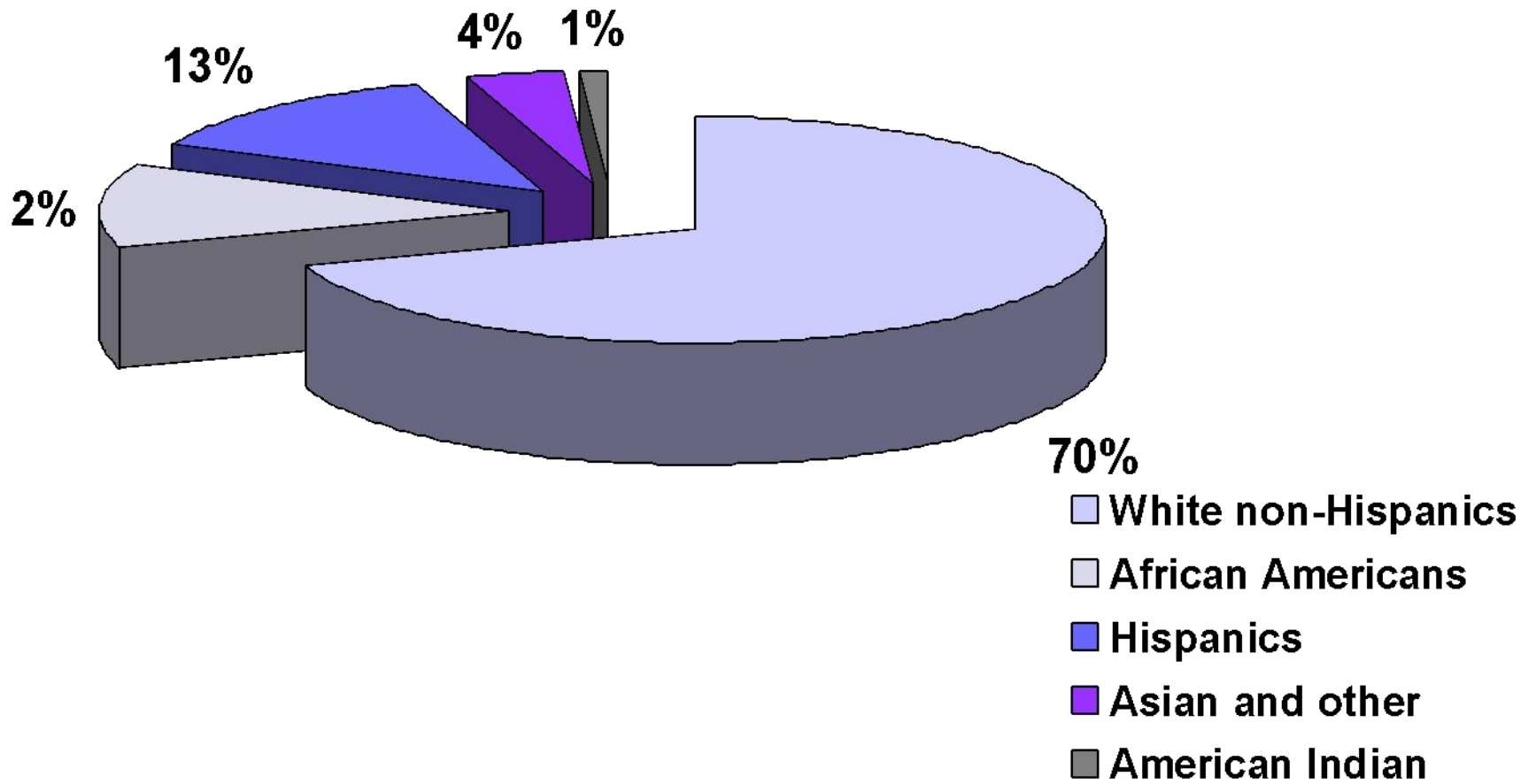
1880



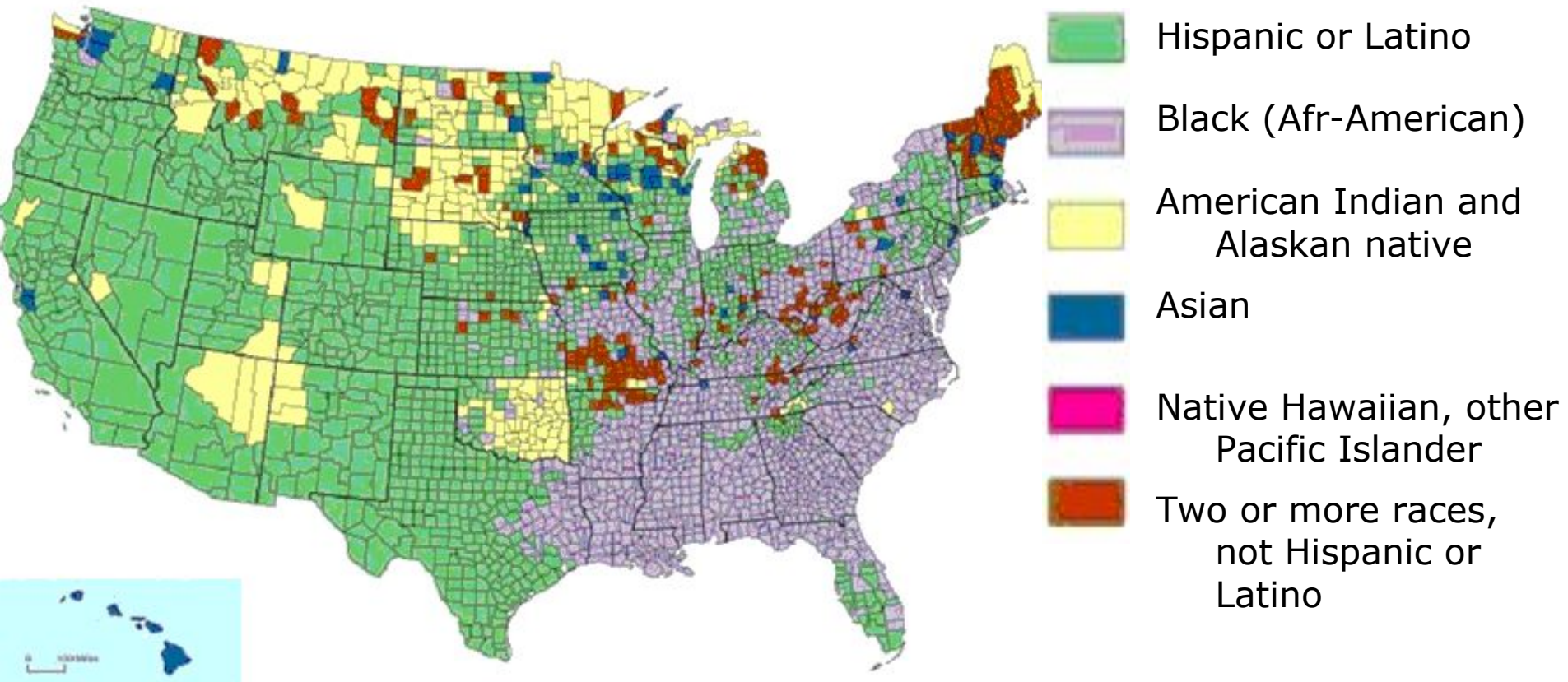
1940



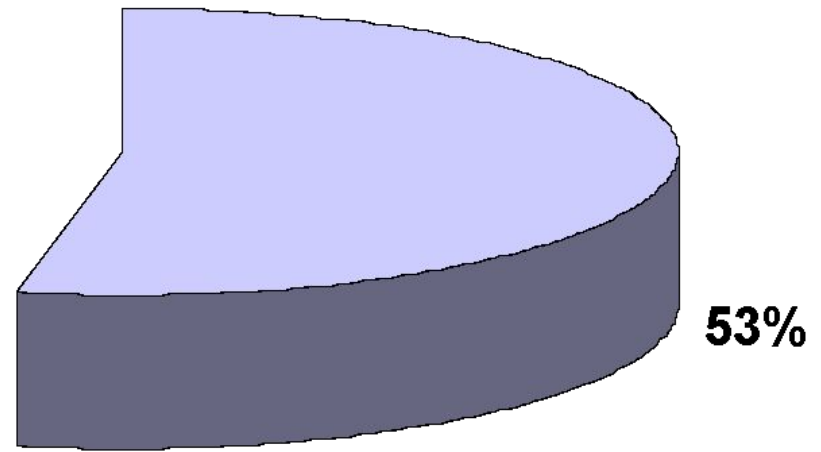
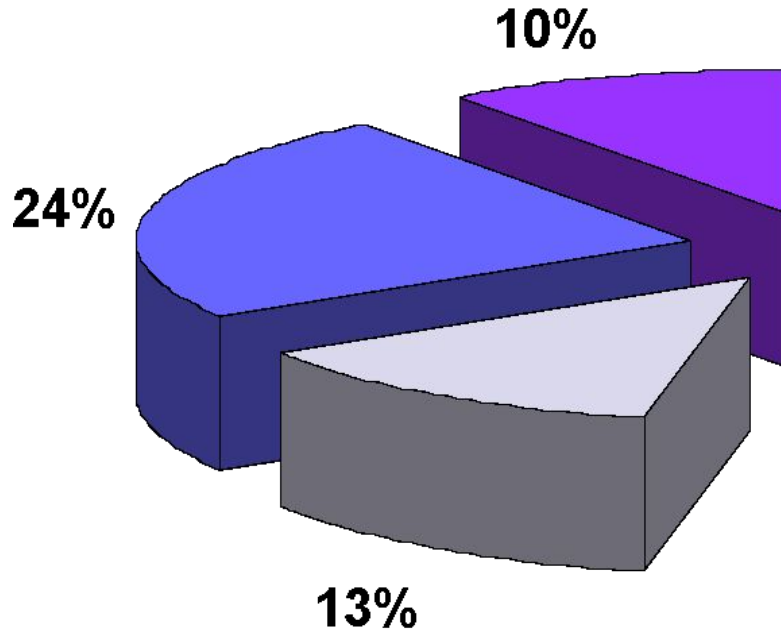
2000



Minority Group with highest percent of county population



2050(projected)



- White non-Hispanics
- Hispanics
- African Americans
- Asian and other

Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1835-1840)

- A systematic study of the links between democracy and civil society
- democracy could exist only by seeking a moral support in religion, and that religion could only prosper by accommodating itself to democracy
- the Americans' inclination for civic association impressed as the key to their unprecedented ability to make democracy work.



Effectiveness of the regional governments

- Voter turnout; newspaper readership; membership in choral societies and football clubs, etc.
- "social capital" refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit



Society

- Church-related groups - the most common type of organization joined by Americans, especially popular with women.
- Women: school-service groups (mostly parent-teacher associations), sports groups, professional societies, and literary societies.
- Men: sports clubs, labor unions, professional societies, fraternal groups, veterans' groups, and service clubs.

Religion



- Religious affiliation - the most common associational membership among Americans. America continues to be a "churched" society: the U.S. - more houses of worship per capita than any other nation on Earth. Religious sentiment seems to be less tied to institutions and more self-defined.



Dominant and minority groups

- Dominant groups use their power to manipulate minority groups using better organization, equipment, access to superior technologies.
- Authority is the power that becomes legitimated.
- Dominant groups dominate the institutional structure of the society (political system, economic system and cultural values of the society).
- Dominant groups control access to the opportunity structure of the society.

Minority group



- **Numbers**: they are fewer in the society. Sometimes they are majority in population (Afro-Americans, women).
- They are **held up in power** – relative powerlessness. Black movements resulted ultimately in success, Hispanics movements now have a different character.
- **Lack of access** to the institutional structure of the society.

Minority Group



- Lack of access to money, high-status position and reward system.
- African-Americans earn 60% of what Whites earn; women earn 75% of what men can earn.
- Women neuro-surgeons earn 55% of men in the same position. Black physician earns 60% of white physician.

Minority Group



- Cultural values. Minority culture is seen as inferior, but in many cases white majority tries to acquire music, fashion, eating habits, etc. from minorities. Cultural theft. The only unique musical contribution of America – jazz – started from black music. But dominant group determines the reality.



Prejudice and discrimination

- *Racism* – is institutionalized discrimination based on physical differences between minority and dominant groups.
- *Racist ideologies* provide a moral justification for maintaining the society that routinely deprives a group of its rights and privileges.
- *Racist beliefs* relieve the dominant group of responsibility to address the economic and educational problems faced by subordinate groups.



Prejudice and Discrimination

- *Prejudice* – a negative *attitude* toward an *entire category* of people. Prejudice involves attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, not actions.
- Prejudice → categorical rejection.
- *Discrimination* involves behavior that excludes all members of a group from certain rights, opportunities, or privileges. It is categorical. It is action.



Prejudice and Stereotypes

- Prejudice is learned. Awareness begins at an early age.
- The content of prejudice: stereotypes.
- Stereotypes are unreliable generalizations about all members of a group that do not take individual differences into account.
- Trends in stereotypes – labeling of individuals



Prejudice

- Reducing prejudice:
- Mass media and education
- Equal-status intergroup contact. Key factor – presence of a common goal.
- Corporate image – diversity training: reputation of a business unfriendly to people of color or women results in fewer clients and discourages qualified people from applying for jobs.