

AI in the Real World

Data, Power, & Society - Day 02

Foregrounding groups in human data

CMSE 492 (aka CMSE 101) • Fall 2026

Prof. Danny Caballero

Answer to Your Questions...so far.

- **Is there an Honors Option?**
 - Yes there will be. Gimme a couple weeks to post some information about it.
- **Does this course count as a "selective"?**
 - Yes, for Data Science majors only. Ask Kevin M. if you have questions/issues.
- **Wait, where do we find our assigned groups?**
 - For the first few weeks, you have been assigned groups. Find them using the D2L group assignment.
- **How long will we have these groups?**
 - About 4-5 weeks depending on how the schedule goes. You will switch to new groups later.
- **What happens if I'm absent during group work?**
 - It is your job to communicate with your group and distribute the work accordingly.
 - *You cannot complete Case Studies individually; they require discussion.*
- **What about the final project?**
 - You will select your final project groups and tell us Oct. 2nd.
- **Office Hours?**
 - Complete this [office hours poll](#) by next Wednesday - also posted in D2L.

This Week's Agenda

1. **Course intro** (✓)
2. **Group the class!** - Get up and move around! (✓)
3. **Wednesday: Constructing Categories** - How we perceive people matters (you're here ✓).
4. **Wednesday: Who do we make into groups?** – We'll work through the Census timeline together
 - *In your assigned groups - find them on D2L*
5. **Friday: First Case - Census Data** – Drawing on Wednesday's work; Focusing on the Data in DTPA

Exit ticket – Your second one is due by 5pm today on D2L.

Case Analyses - Today, we will get started together; try to complete Friday; due Sunday 11:59pm.

Quick Debrief from Monday's class

From Exit Tickets:

- It was challenging at first to find common interests
 - It was nice to meet most of the class on the first day
- We often had to make larger categories as we moved around
 - Some categories got discarded, some new ones were adopted
- We had to dive into the "data" quite a bit to develop categories
 - It still felt like we were making generalizations.

*This activity was meant to illustrate a **social constructivist** approach to making categories.*

Activity: Our Kind of People - Bayeté Ross Smith



Source: <https://www.bayeterossmith.com/our-kind-of-people>

Activity: Our Kind of People - Bayeté Ross Smith

Break into six groups of roughly equal size

- We will count off group numbers (1-6)
- On D2L, open the link to the [Gallery: Our Kind of People](#) Activity
 - On D2L, under In Class Materials -> Day 02.
 - Write your names at the top of your Group's Tab in the Google Doc
 - *This is how we count attendance; don't forget!*

Read the Instructions

Write down a list of labels or assumptions someone might make about the person in the photo, answering the question: What assumptions might someone make (regardless of what this person intended to convey) about this person's identity?

You will have about 10 mins

Activity: Our Kind of People

Reflection Questions (15 min)

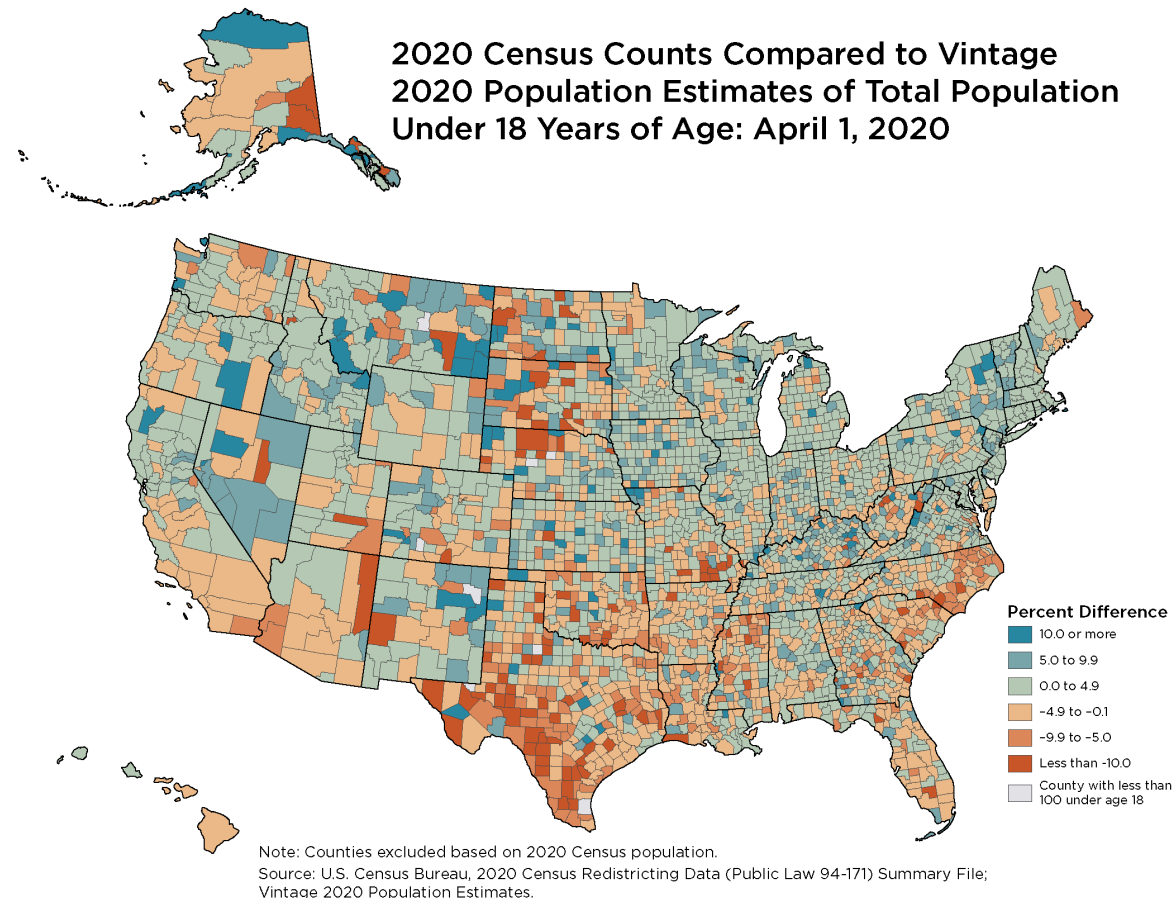
Feel free to take notes in the [Last Tab of the Google Doc](#)

These answers can be helpful to your Case Analyses

- Why did each group have different labels for photos of the same person?
- How do we use labels to understand each other? When might those labels be incorrect or incomplete?
- Where do the labels and stereotypes we apply to others come from?
- How does clothing allow people to emphasize certain parts of their identities? In what ways does it allow people to hide other aspects of who they are?
- These images are part of a larger work by an artist named Bayeté Ross Smith, titled “Our Kind of People.” What message do you think the artist was trying to convey by creating this project?

Case Study: Data Collection and The US Census

<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2021/11/demographic-benchmarks-2020-census.html>



We will focus on Data in DTPA

By first exploring historical categorizations, you will begin to answer:

- **Collection:** What was collected, by what method, and by whom? Was race self-reported or assigned by an enumerator? How did that change over time and why?
- **Criteria:** Who is included and who is excluded by the categories themselves? Name a specific group and a specific census year. Unpack or follow what happened.
- **Manipulation / Encoding:** What happens to a response after it is submitted? Look for editing, imputation, recoding, and back-end processing rules. *You might need to do more research here.*
- **Bias & Inequity:** Give a concrete downstream consequence. Who lost funding, representation, visibility, or safety because of how the data was structured? *You might need to do more research here.*

In this first case study, your group will aim to complete the Data elements of the [Case Study Template](#) (Google Docs; MSU login required)

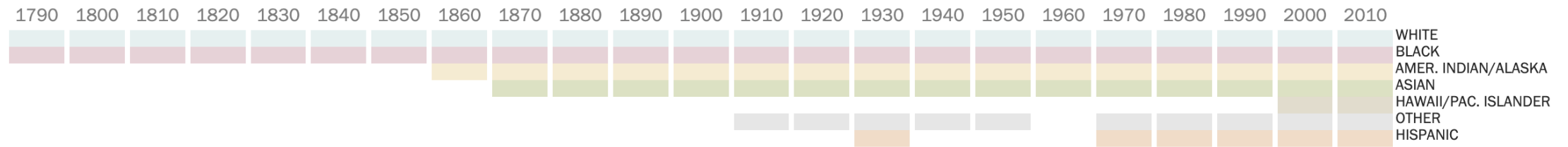
We will build up to the full template over time.

Activity: The US Census and its history of race/ethnicity

Races Counted in the US Census over Time

🚩 **1960 onward:** People could choose their own race

🚩 **2000 onward:** Americans could be recorded in more than one race category on the census form.



We will start working together in this set of [Google Slides](#)

Activity: The US Census and its history of race/ethnicity

Tracing racial/ethnic grouping over time

1. In your preparatory materials, we included the Pew research center's interactive tool on racial data collected on the US census: <https://www.pewresearch.org/interactives/what-census-calls-us/>
2. In this activity you will select a racial category to follow over time
 - Discuss in your group at least 2 categories to dive into as a group
 - Using events that were happening in the US (see the slides 3 and 4 for examples, and slide 5 for more links), place your census categories on this timeline
 - On your group's slide, create a representation of this history

Come with a complete timeline for discussion on Friday

Friday's Activity: The US Census and its history of race/ethnicity

Discussion

- **Collection:** What was collected, by what method, and by whom? Was race self-reported or assigned by an enumerator? How did that change over time and why?
- **Criteria:** Who is included and who is excluded by the categories themselves? Name a specific group and a specific census year. Unpack or follow what happened.

Work on Case Study in Friday's class; complete at home.

Reminders for this week

Exit Tickets, Forum Posts, Office Hours

- Don't forget to complete today's Exit Ticket by 5pm (on D2L)
- **Friday:** Free work on Census Case Study
 - Case study due 11:59pm Sunday
 - Individual and Metacognitive Reflection due 11:59pm Sunday
- Spend time before Sunday (~90 minutes) going over next week's preparatory materials
 - Forum Post (Week 2) due 11:59pm Sunday (anonymous to class; Jorge and Danny can see author)
 - If you choose to reply, due 11:59pm Thursday (anonymous to class; Jorge and Danny can see author)
- Complete this [office hours poll](#) by next Wednesday - also posted in D2L.