

Looking Within and Up at Racial Inequality

(portions forthcoming in *American Sociological Review*, with Adam L. Horowitz)

Tomás R. Jiménez

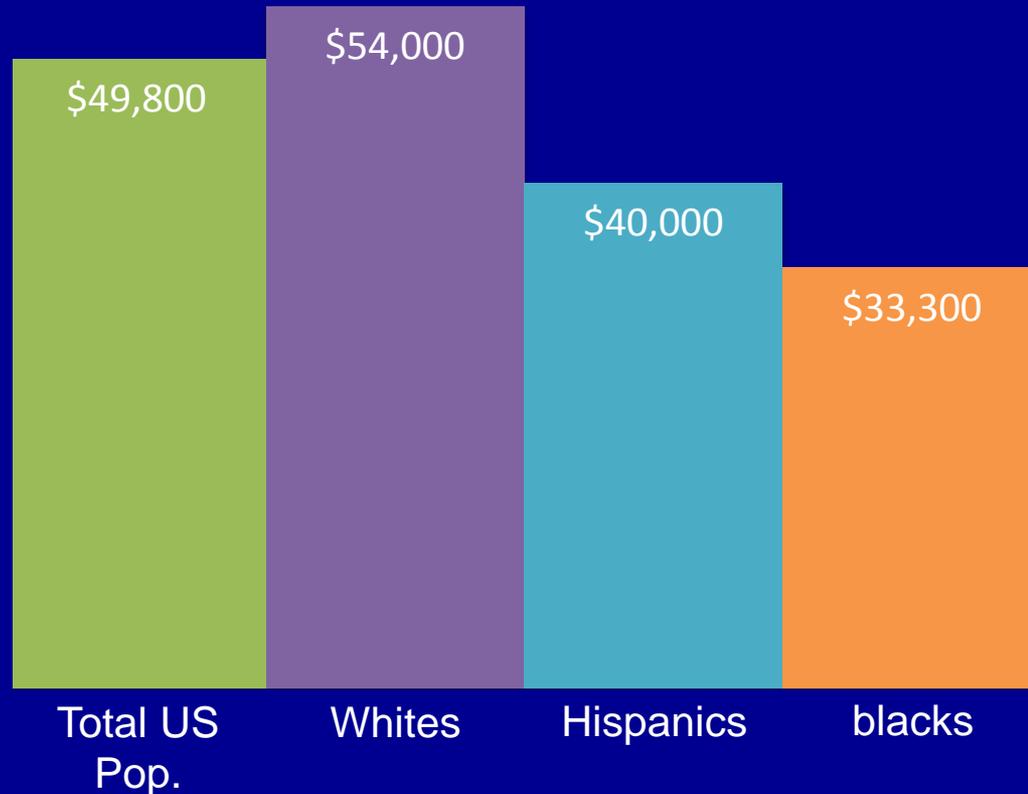
Department of Sociology

Stanford University

With support from the National Science Foundation, the UPS Grant at Stanford,
the American Sociological Association, & Stanford's Institute for Research in the Social Sciences

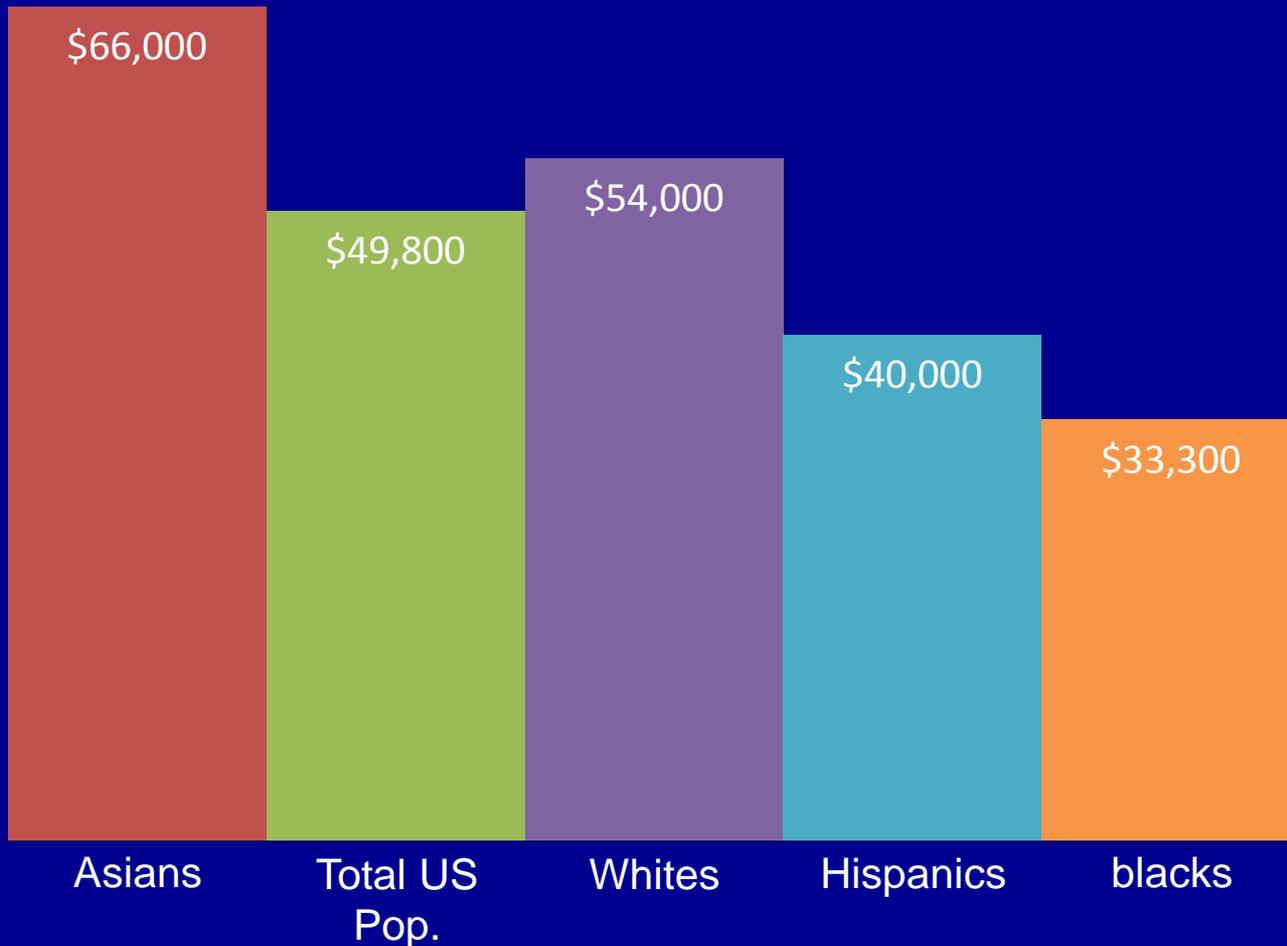
Looking Up

Median Household Income by Group, 2010



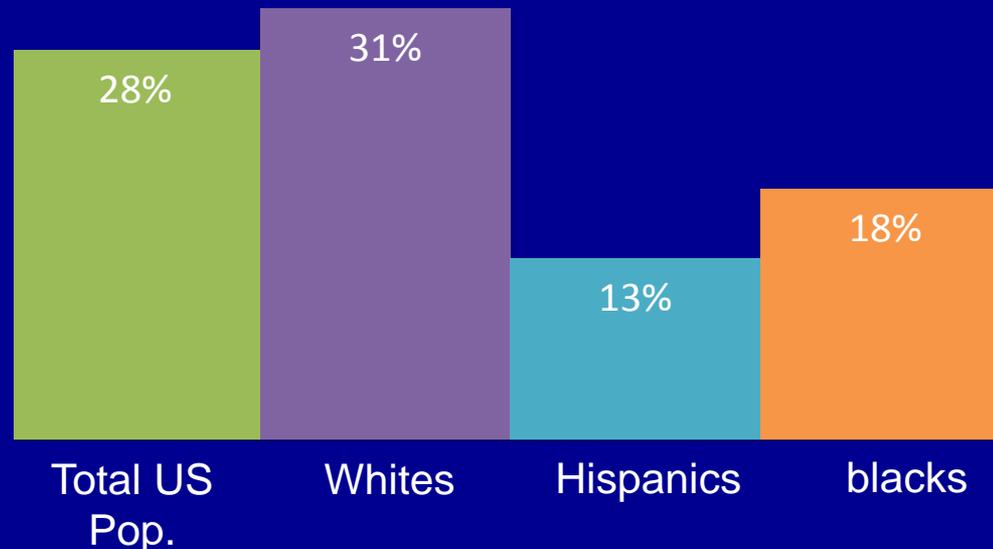
Looking Up

Median Household Income by Group, 2010



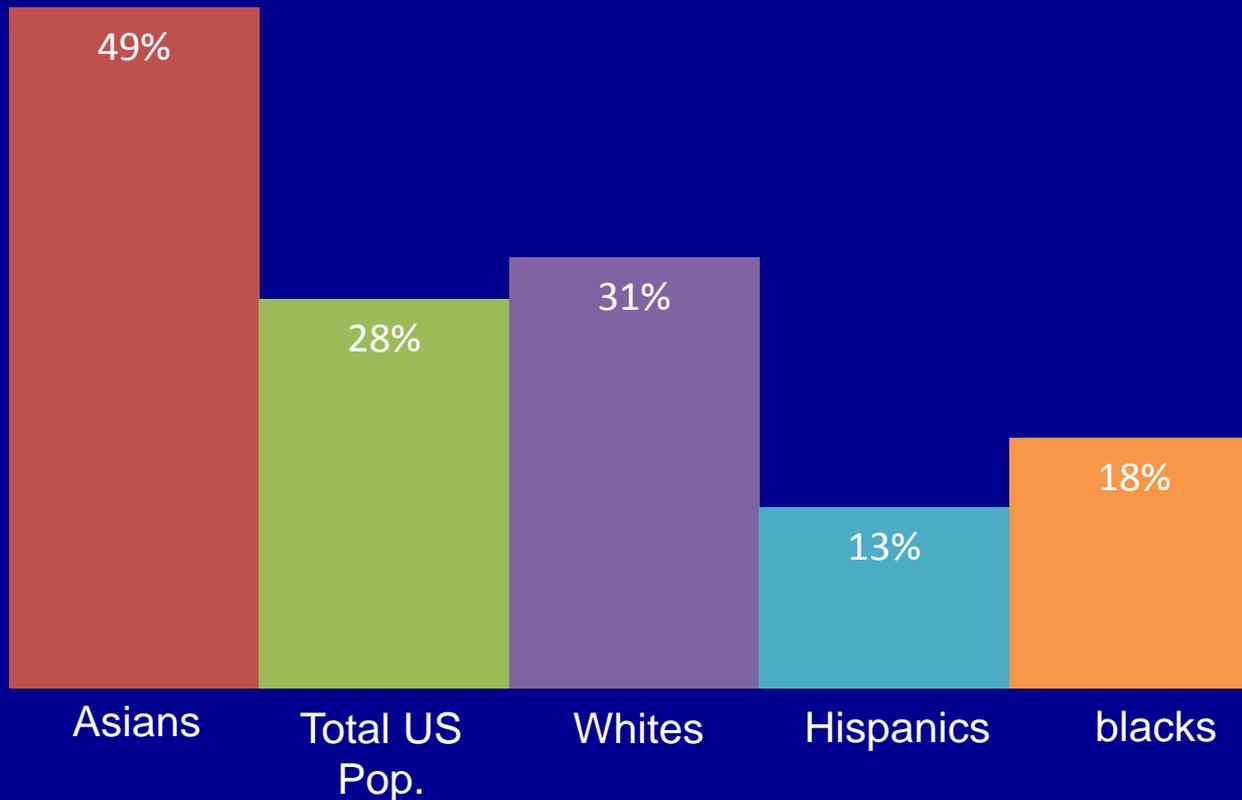
Looking Up

Proportion with a BA, 25 and older by Group, 2010



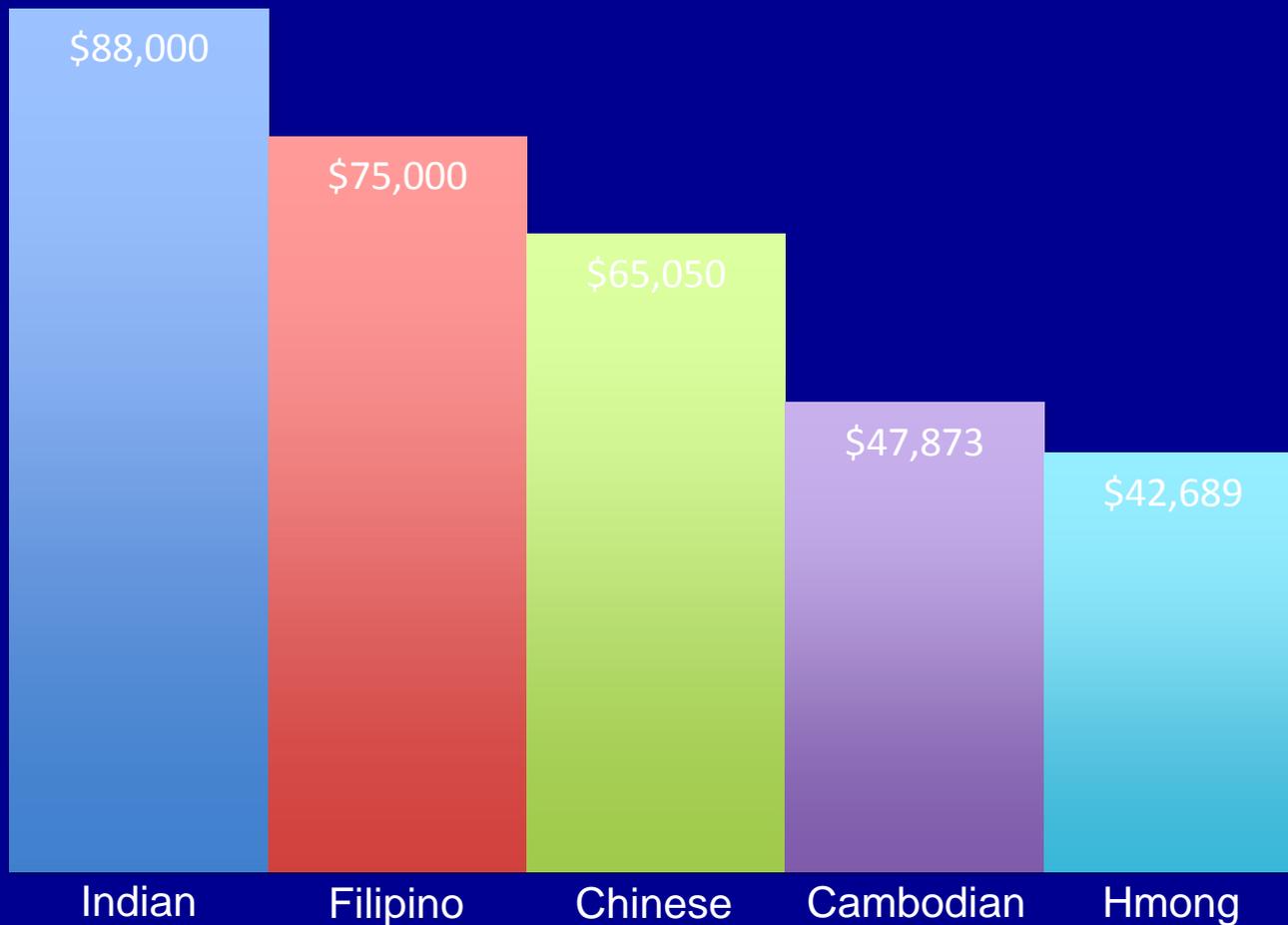
Looking Up

Proportion with a BA, 25 and older by Group, 2010



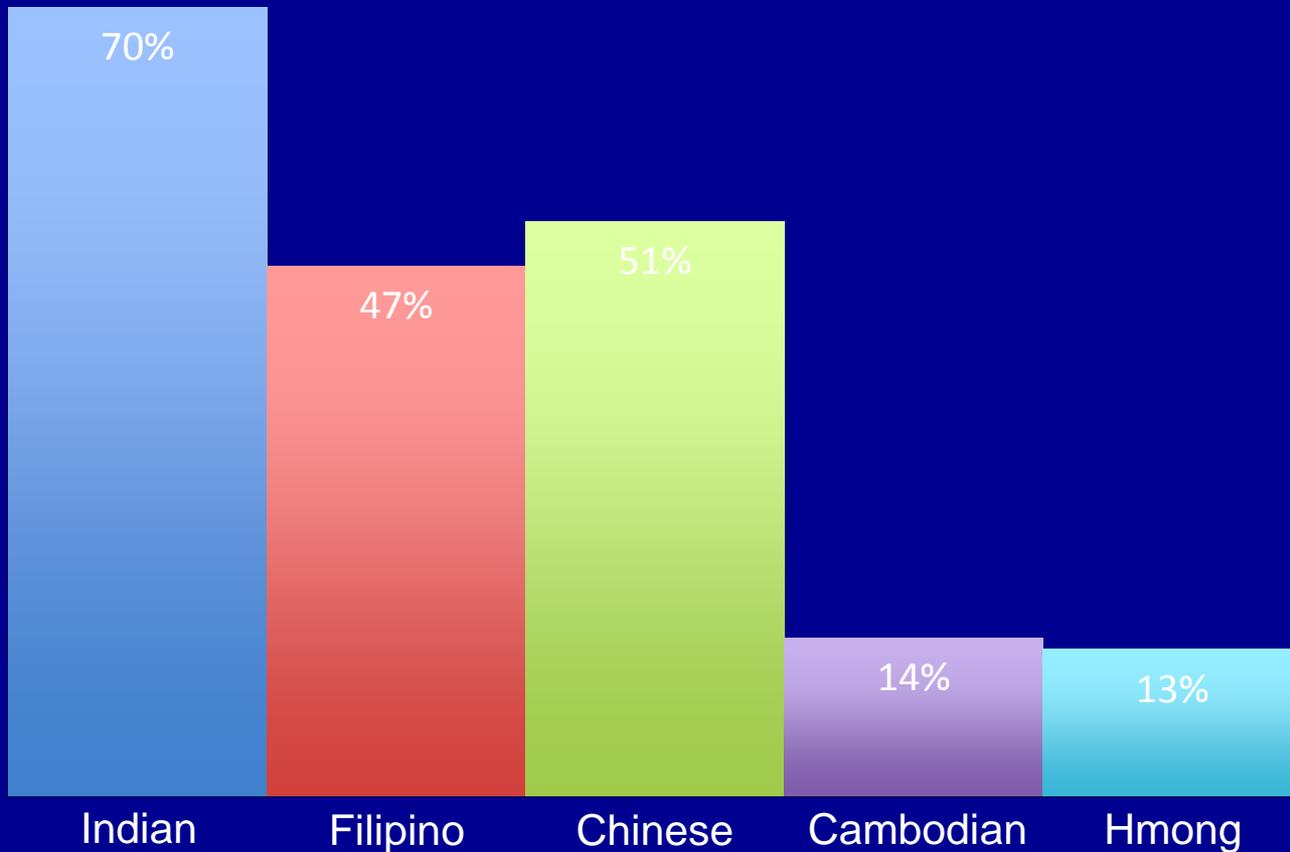
Looking Within

Median Household Income by Asian Sub-group, 2010



Looking Within

Proportion with BA, 25 and older by Asian Sub-group, 2010



Looking Within & Up

- Broad structure of racial inequality in place
- ... But there are cracks that are visible when we:
 - **Look within** groups
 - **Look up** the socioeconomic scale

Looking Inside & Up: 3+ Generation Achievement

- How do 3+ generation individuals (US-born of US-born parents) adjust to contexts defined by immigrants?
- Immigrants today:
 - Most educated and wealthiest US residents (particularly Asians)
 - Settling in suburbs alongside whites (Iceland 2009)
- “Are Asians becoming white?” (Zhou 2004)
- What’s becoming of whiteness?

Looking Inside & Up:

3+ Generation Achievement

- Racialization, assimilation: minority racial achievement relative to white benchmark
- No white monolith
 - Looking down SES distribution – poor whites (McDermott 2006; Hartigan 1999)
- Whites – a questionable “North Star” for immigrants (Kasinitz et al. 2008; Lee and Zhou 2013; Smith 2012)

Looking Inside & Up: 3+ Generation Achievement

- How is achievement racially inflected in middle- and upper-middle class contexts where the socioeconomic status of immigrants matches or even exceeds that of native-born whites?
- Interviews in Cupertino, California
 - Upper middle class (**looking up**)
 - Whiteness at high end of SES scale (**looking within**)

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Cupertino, CA, Silicon Valley, and United States

	Cupertino, CA	Silicon Valley (Santa Clara County)	United States
Total Population	58,302	1,781,642	308,745,538
Race/Ethnicity (%)			
White (non-Hispanic)	29.3	35.2	63.8
Black/African American	0.6	2.4	12.2
Hispanic/Latino	3.6	26.9	16.4
Asian	63.2	31.7	4.7
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.1	0.4	0.2
Two or more races	3.0	3.0	1.9
Native-born (%)	51.2	63.0	87.3
Foreign-born (%)	48.9	37.0	12.7
Top three countries of birth of Foreign-born	India China Taiwan	Mexico China Philippines	Mexico Philippines India
Median Household Income (in 2009)	\$120,201	\$86,850	\$51,914
Bachelor's degree or more (age 25 and over) (%)	74.7	45.3	27.9
In managerial or professional occupations (employed, age 16 and over) (%)	74.9	49.1	35.3
Median Home Price*	\$1,002,200	\$520,300	\$181,800

Notes: Total Population and Race/Ethnicity from 2010 U.S. Census; all others from 2006-2010 American Community Survey Five-year Estimates

*Based on sales price for April 2012. Calculated by Zillow.com

Racial Encoding of Academic Achievement

- All students in Cupertino are doing well by most standards
- Immigrant-origin Asians define the achievement norm
- Asianness = hard work, intelligence, focus
- Whiteness = low(er) achievement, lackadaisical attitude about school (kids), casual approach to parenting

Turning whiteness on its head

“I would almost say [Asian immigration] kind of brought about the stereotype, at least [in high school]. The Asian kids and the Indian kids were really smart, and they were really good at math, and they were always going to do really well in the AP classes. Whereas the white kids were less academically oriented. And they did okay, but they didn’t put in as much effort. Some of that in some cases was true, but it almost did become a stereotype kind of thing.” (white, 22-year-old, male recent college graduate)

Achievement and Racial Recoding

“If you’re really studious and you’re white, you’re called ‘Asian at heart’ [...] Just like there’s the white people who act Asian, there’s the Asians who act white. They’re the Asians who party. It’s definitely a smaller percentage [...] There’s not as big of a population, but you can find it.”

(biracial, 17-year-old female high school student)

Assumptions from Teachers

“You look at someone who is white and you kind of assume that they’re probably not the best student, and then... okay, a group of students have just walked in and, as the teacher, I try not to stereotype of course, but after awhile, I guess I just assume... even I am beginning to assume right now that when kids walk into the classroom, the white kids probably aren’t going to be my very, very best students. They may do great work, but they won’t turn it all in or something. If I were to go back and look at the grades I’ve given [...] I’m sure that the GPA for the white kids I’ve had would be lower than the GPA for the Asian kids I’ve had. I’m sure of it.”
(white male teacher)

Consequences for white respondents

“I’ve gotten a lot of feeling like I’m not taken seriously because I’m a preppy white girl. Or I don’t know what they would call me, but I know that after a chemistry test last year, we were all comparing answers that we got on the test afterwards and they were like, ‘Oh, what did you get for that one? What did you get for that one?’ to each other. I said, ‘Oh. I know how to do that one.’ And they were like, ‘Oh. Okay,’ (dismissive tone) and then asked their other friend, anyway. It was two Indian guys, and I was like, ‘Do you not think that I know the answer?’ And he’s like, ‘Well, I just wanted to see what he had to say.’ And I was like, ‘Is it because I’m white that you think that I don’t know?’ And he’s like, ‘Well, I don’t know if you know or not.’ [I said,] ‘Could I just give it a shot?’ I guess I constantly feel like I have to prove people wrong.” (bi-racial, 17-year-old female high school student)

Looking Within & Up at Whiteness

- Contextual variation in meaning and status of whiteness
- Class inflects experience of whiteness even at the top
 - Not just poor whites
- Study of racial inequality needs more looking up and within...

Measure it

- Capture fine-grained differences between groups across the SES scale
 - ...including the top
- Averages between groups vs. **distributions within groups**
 - Need both
- “... the best of times, and the worst of times...”
 - Blacks – President Obama but ... 1 in 9 black males, 20-34 in jail
 - Mexicans – significant assimilation in later generation but... 1 in 5 of all Mexican-descent people unauthorized

Identify Sources

- Immigration
 - Immigrants as foil for status and meaning of race (Jiménez & Horowitz 2013)
 - Long-settled and new immigrants (Jiménez 2010; Vasquez 2011)
- Mobility (up and down)
 - Great Recession (Grusky et al. 2013)
- Identification
 - Opting in and out (Lee & Bean 2010; Alba & Islam 2009)
- Laws and the criminal justice system
 - Absent from counts (Petit 2012) and marked (Pager 2009)
 - “illegality” (Gonzalez 2011; Bean et al. 2011)

Explain Implications

- Identity
 - Effect of group status on individuals? (Lee and Zhou 2013)
 - Coherent identity with internal diversity? (Pew Research 2007)
- Politics and Political Mobilization
 - Class interests vs. racial-group interests?
 - Variation in political ID strengthen or weaken a group's ability to make political claims? (Fields 2011)
- Social Capital
 - Good for some, bad for others (Agius-Vallejo 2012)
- Policy
 - Racial equality? Class/racial equality?
- How we talk about racial inequality

Questions/Comments

Tomás R. Jiménez – tjimenez@stanford.edu