

# [Race rather than the rule. it is important](https://assignbuster.com/race-rather-than-the-rule-it-is-important/)

Race is a purely social concept. Ethnicity refers to a shared cultural heritage. Basic Definitions: •         Race – A group of people who have beenidentified as having real or alleged physical characteristics. It is the factthat these biological traits are endowed with social meaning that brings theminto the realm of the social sciences.•          Ethnicity– refers to people who share common cultural characteristics and ethnicidentity; they share a sense of “ oneness”, and a shared fate. •         Minority – a group that has less powerthan the dominant group, has less esteem and prestige, and is often the targetof discrimination.

The two major characteristics are distinctive identity andsubordination. The sociological meaning of minority does not refer to thenumerical size of a group, nor to any specific ethnicity, race, or other realor imaged factors as these factors are relative to a specific society. Consider the following: “ A racial group is a sociallyconstructed category of people who are distinguished from each other by selectphysical characteristics” (Basirico et. al., 2014). Conversely, an ethnic grouprefers to a group of people who share certain cultural traits, such as areligion, language, or a geographic region. Key to the concept of an ethnicgroup, however, is the sense of “ peoplehood” that is developed withinthese groups. Ethnicity Ethnicityrefers to selected cultural and sometimes physical characteristics used toclassify people into groups or categories considered to be significantlydifferent from others (Identities and Inequalities).

In America today, there are many ethnic groups that are widely recognized.  These groups can include: American Indians, Latinos, Chinese, African Americans, European Americans, etc. For someethnicities, there is no “ real” connection to others in the same grouping. Itis possible that there are no shared or recognized traditions or customs.  This is the case with many Irish and GermanAmericans.  In contrast, some ethnic groups are coherent subcultures witha shared language and body of tradition.  Newly arrived immigrant groupsoften fit this pattern (Identities and Inequalities). Ethnic membership is usually ascribed at birth; when aperson is born into an ethnic group it is unlikely that he or she will leaveunless there are unusual circumstances.

A person born into Jewish culture mayleave and adopt Christianity for example, or an Amish born person may opt toleave the Amish community but cases like this are the exception rather than therule. It is important not to confusethe term minority with ethnic group. Minority is simply a number, in relationto the number and population of ethnic groups in a population. Even if an ethicgroup is a “ minority” in the overall population of a country, they may be a” majority” in the town or city in which they reside. For example, think aboutthe Amish population in some towns in Michigan, Pennsylvania, etc. While thisethnic group is a minority in the over US population, they are the majoritypopulation where they live. RaceRace is allabout biology and species.  Race, in thetraditional sense, has more to do with physical characteristics, rather thanculture.

However, in this day and age, this traditional  definition doesn’t fit in with what ourreality is, in relation to “ race.” Ashumans, we like to divide and define. Sociologists believe that “ races” arecreated by humans, not by biology.

We can no longer define and group peopleinto “ race” based on skin color and/physical traits.  We cannot continue to categories people by” race” because in this day and age, there is too small a dividing line between “ black”,” white”, or any other race.   Ethnicity versus RaceEthnicity andsupposed “ racial” groups are largely cultural and historicalconstructs.  These two categories are now thought of as socialdivisions rather than actual biology. However, this does not mean that they donot exist.  To the contrary, “ races” are very real in the worldtoday.

In order to understand them, however, we must look into cultureand social interaction rather than biology. In the US culture today, races have been defined by physicaltraits that we can quickly identify by looking at a person.   Due to this misinterpretation of a socialphenomenon, discrimination has become easier in our culture. People can nowfocus on minute differences in others instead of focusing on what could and issimilar.

Diversity Patterns inAmericaWhen we talk about race and ethnicity, we are focusing oncategories and numbers. The most comprehensive information that is presented isthe US Census that is Census gathered every 10 years.  Even with how farwe have come with technology and information gathering, the Census can still beconsidered not always or fully accurate. There are populations, think migrantfarm workers, who are under counted and/or not counted at all.

This can be dueto several reasons, including people choosing to not answer the Census at all. CensusThe US Census asks people to self-identify in terms of theirrace and their ethnicity. There are people who do not realize that there aredistinct difference between these two words. And, while people are allowed toself-disclosure, not every person filling out the Census will truly disclose.

For example, there are people who are two or more races and yet would checkonly one box. Another factor to consider is that the US government provides thecategories in which people must choose. The failure to allow people to identifywith categories that they themselves subjectively volunteer makes the data lessreliable. The Census lumps people into groups based on the informationprovided but, again, people must choose from what they are given by thegovernment. A person with European descent is guided to choose the “ white” category. While at the same time people from Africa are guided to choose the” black” category.

The Census alsodivides by ethnicity and race. The only ethnic groups on the Census are” Hispanic” and non-Hispanic. But when we look at race, the categories couldpossibly be endless. Implications forchanging patterns in America The US Census takes only numbers into account. In no waydoes it account for the actual human or family behind the numbers collected. Diversity, race, ethnicity and culture are deeply ingrained in each person whofills out this piece of paper.

What we learn from the Census can create changeand even social movements in our country. People can become more aware of theirown attitudes and thoughts toward another social group. In the next fewdecades, what we now consider “ minority” groups will no longer be so, in termsof numbers. But how will the current “ majority” population react to this shiftin numbers?  When the “ majority” population become used to being equal? What about the day when the current” minority” population becomes the “ majority”? A significant problem faced by most racial and ethnic groupsin America involves concerns regarding how they are perceived and treated byothers.