What is Out There? A Practical Review of Race/Ethnicity Coding System Beyond IPEDS

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Abstract

Post-secondary institutions record data on race and ethnicity to enhance the diversity, equity, and inclusion of students, faculty, and staff. The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) is the current system used for coding race and ethnicity for the majority of United States postsecondary schools. IPEDS was last changed to include alternative racial and ethnic categories in 2010 and has yet to be altered. Prior scholars and practitioners have identified that the current IPEDS coding system skews the percentages of individuals from certain racial and ethnic populations. This is due to there being a lack of specific categories provided for these individuals during the data collection process. **The goal of this project is to contribute to the current literature and work of the Florida State University (FSU) Office of Institutional Research to compare different race/ethnicity coding systems.** Concurrently, this proposal intends to posit changes that could be implemented in internal university assessments.

Research Question

What different race/ethnicity coding methods can be applied to internal reporting beyond current IPEDS-informed practices?

FSU Internal Reporting

Citizenship Information

Primary Citizenship

What U.S. visa status will you hold during your studies?

Race/Ethnicity

Colleges and universities are asked by many groups, including the federal government, accrediting associations, college guides, and newspapers, to describe the ethnic/racial backgrounds of their students and employees. In order to respond to these requests, we ask you to answer the following two questions. **View Definitions**

Are you Hispanic or Latino?

○ Yes
○ No

Regardless of your answer to the prior question, please check one or more of the following groups in which you consider yourself to be a member:

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
☐ Asian
☐ Black or African American
☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific
☐ White

Continue

Definitions ✕

White: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, Middle East, or North Africa.

Black or African American: A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.
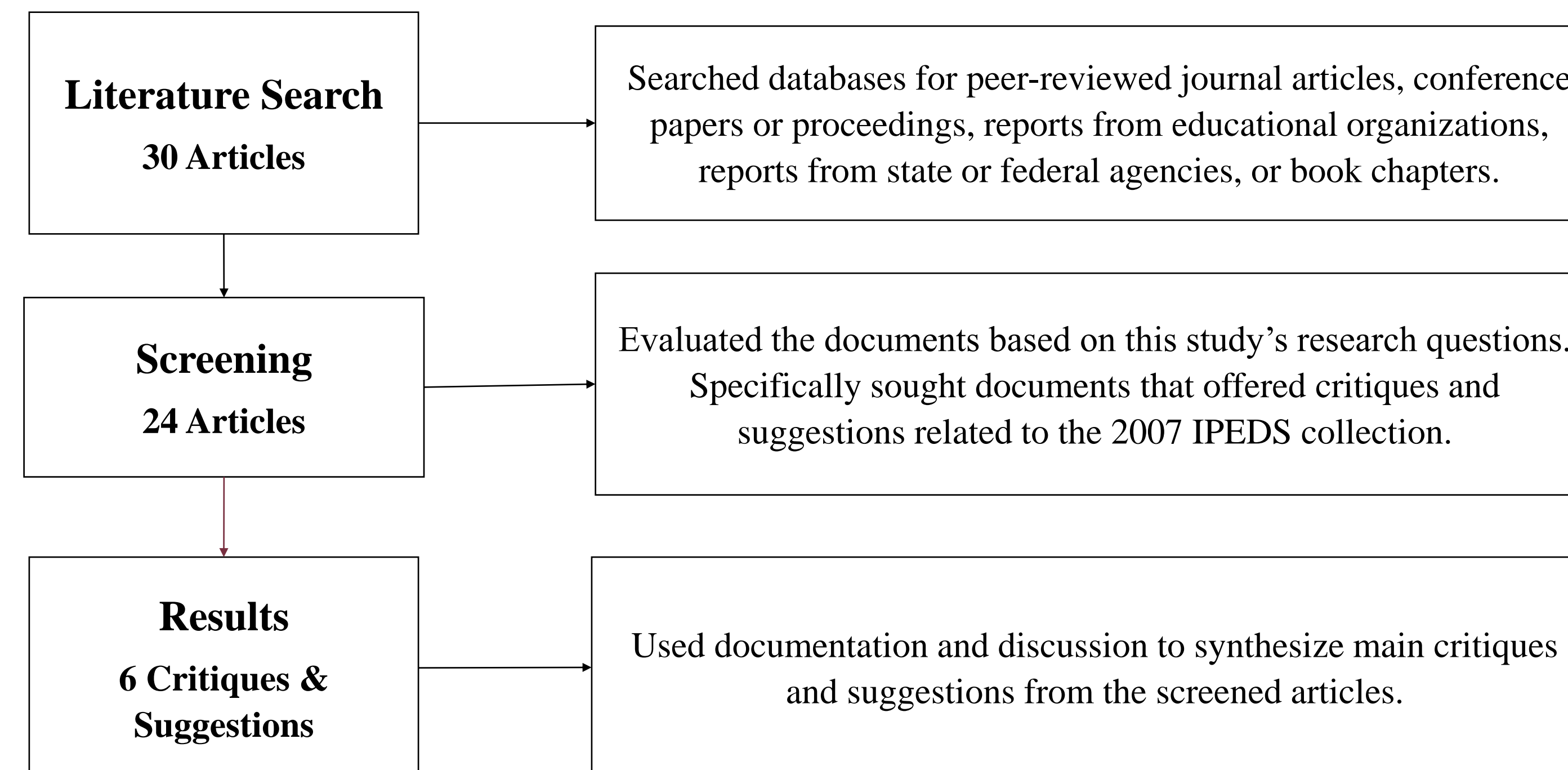
Hispanic or Latino: A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

Asian: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.

American Indian or Alaska Native: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), who maintains cultural identification though tribal affiliation or community attachment.

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

Close

Methodology: Literature Review

Literature Search 30 Articles → Searched databases for peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers or proceedings, reports from educational organizations, reports from state or federal agencies, or book chapters.

Screening 24 Articles → Evaluated the documents based on this study's research questions. Specifically sought documents that offered critiques and suggestions related to the 2007 IPEDS collection.

Results 6 Critiques & Suggestions → Used documentation and discussion to synthesize main critiques and suggestions from the screened articles.

Literature Review Results: 6 Main Critiques and Suggestions

- Collect country of origin for Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Sykes, 2012).
- Collect tribal affiliation for American Indian (Burnette et al., 2021)
- Include a Middle Eastern or North African Category (MENA), separate from White (Revesz, 2023).
- Change the two-question format to one question, including Hispanic/Latino with other race/ethnicity options (Revesz, 2023)
- Within each category, identify immigrant status (Irizarry, 2015)
- Place non-resident aliens within racial/ethnic groups (Byrd et al., 2013).

Methodology: Survey

The Node

Your weekly source for news and ideas for IR/IE professionals.

February 8, 2023

Which race/ethnicity category(ies) does your institution collect **more detailed** information than the IPEDS reported categories? (Select all that apply) *
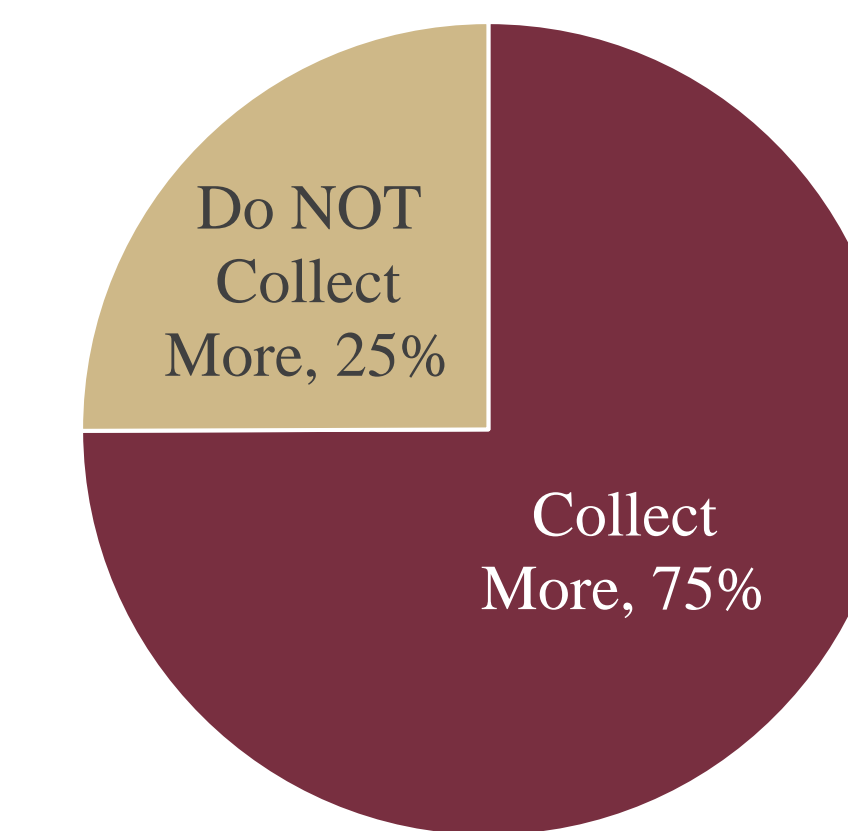
☐ Hispanic/Latino
☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
☐ Asian
☐ Black or African American
☐ Middle Eastern or North African
☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
☐ White
☐ None, we collect only the IPEDS reported race/ethnicity categories

If your college collects more detail information, feel free to link to your reporting categories (e.g., from an online data dictionary), or provide more detailed information below:
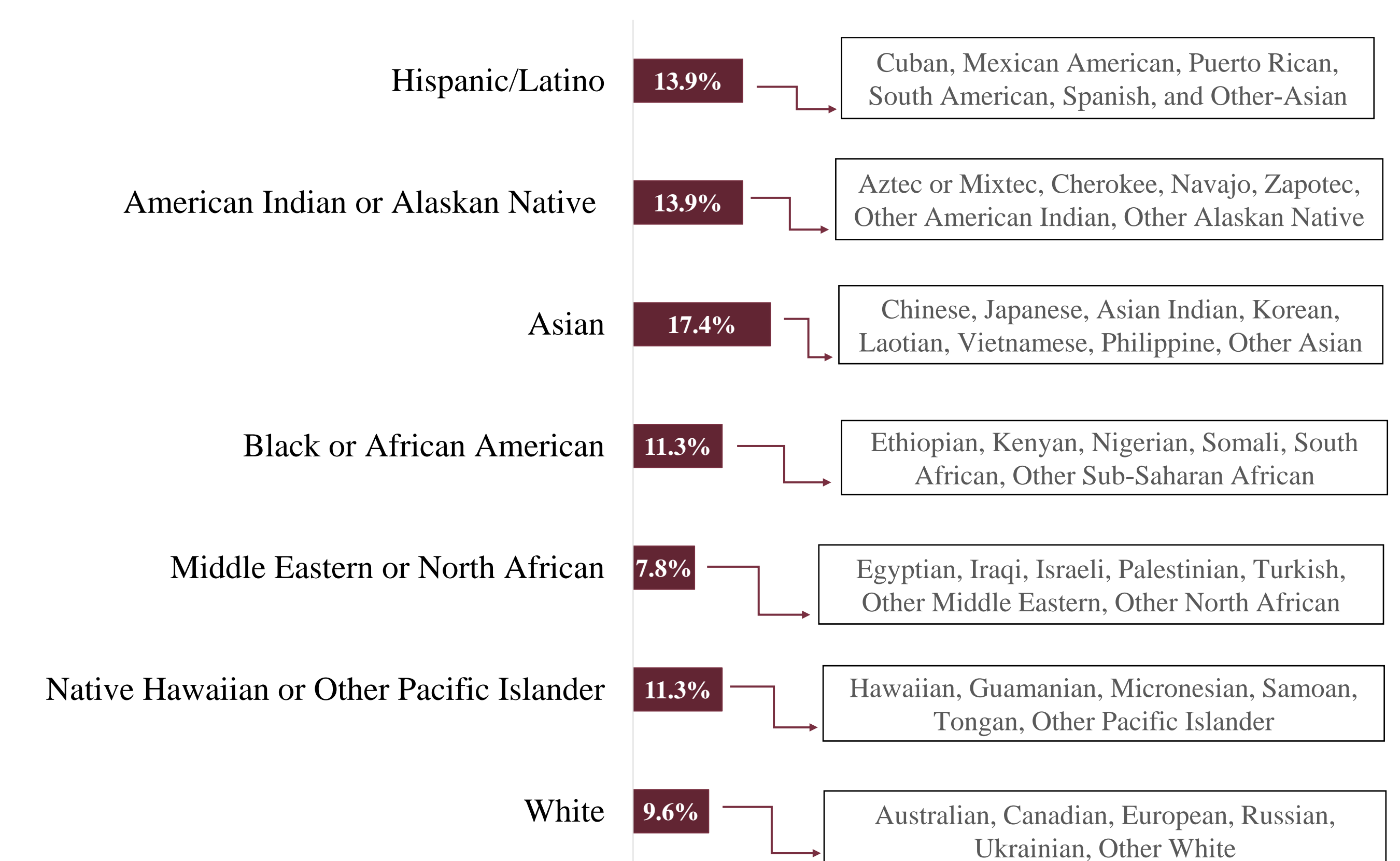
Your answer

Results

75% of Respondents Do Not Collect More Data on Race/Ethnicity Categories

Do NOT Collect More, 25%
Collect More, 75%

Respondents are more likely to collect more data on Hispanic/Latino, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and Asian people.

Hispanic/Latino — 13.9% → Cuban, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, South American, Spanish, and Other-Asian

American Indian or Alaskan Native — 13.9% → Aztec or Mixtec, Cherokee, Navajo, Zapotec, Other American Indian, Other Alaskan Native

Asian — 17.4% → Chinese, Japanese, Asian Indian, Korean, Laotian, Vietnamese, Philippine, Other Asian

Black or African American — 11.3% → Ethiopian, Kenyan, Nigerian, Somali, South African, Other Sub-Saharan African

Middle Eastern or North African — 7.8% → Egyptian, Iraqi, Israeli, Palestinian, Turkish, Other Middle Eastern, Other North African

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander — 11.3% → Hawaiian, Guamanian, Micronesian, Samoan, Tongan, Other Pacific Islander

White — 9.6% → Australian, Canadian, European, Russian, Ukrainian, Other White

Discussion

The literature review and *The Node* survey highlighted some of the main revisions that can pave the way to collecting race and ethnicity information beyond the current IPEDS coding system. There were two main changes identified. First, the literature review and survey emphasized that institutions should gather more data on each racial/ethnic category. This allows post-secondary institutions to understand the specific identities that are present on their campuses (Sykes, 2012). However, the survey illustrated that this is still not a common practice: 75% of responding institutions did not gather additional information. The 25% of institutions that do gather additional information do so for Asian, Hispanic or Latino, and American Indian or Alaskan Native identifying students. Further, Burnette et al. (2021) discussed how imperative it is for institutions to gather information on tribal affiliation for those who select American Indian, better representing them. The second major change identified was the importance of including a Middle Eastern or North African category (Revesz, 2023). The survey indicated that 8% of post-secondary institutions are collecting data on these groups, rather than aggregating them in the White category. Overall, there seems to be agreement across literature and practice that better race/ethnicity data collection and coding practices are needed.

References