Race and Ethnicity in Culture
Defining Race and Ethnicity

• **Race**: Perceived physical differences resulting in peoples being classified by skin and eye color, physical size, physical features, etc...

• **Ethnicity**: Common connections based off common cultural and historical origins
The myth of “race”

• Biological variations are real
  – Differences are only skin deep

• Racial origins
  – Finding any genetic differences or origins is impossible due to inter-racial mixing
Impact of Race and Ethnicity

• Race is a societal concept
• Ethnicity led to rise of “otherness”
  – Once used as a justification for social inequalities
  – Led to tight knit communities and conflict among groups
Societal Make-Up

• Homogeneous
  – Only includes members of one group
    • Very little diversity from family to family
  – Usually very resistant to outsiders and change

• Heterogeneous
  – Include members from more than one group
    • Can result in either cultural conflict or cultural integration
Racial Divisions in the United States

• Race is still main way that people identify themselves in the United States
  – Resulting in official and un-official segregation
    • Ethnic neighborhoods
    • Housing covenants
Case Study: Rondo Neighborhood, St. Paul, Minnesota

• Ethnic neighborhood located west of Saint Paul
  – Created by African Americans moving from Southern United States
  – Created vibrant community

• Interstate construction
  – Cut neighborhood in half and displaced 600 residents
Case Study: Rondo Neighborhood, St. Paul, Minnesota
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Ethnic Migration

• Chain migration led to ethnic enclaves
  – High concentrations of people forming communities and changing identity of the city
    • Irish in Boston, Poles in Chicago, Italians in New York, etc...

• Ghettos
  – Areas where minorities live, usually due to economic or political pressure
Case Study: Swede Hollow, St. Paul, Minnesota

• Slum community from 1850s to 1950s
  – Swedes, Poles, Italians, then Mexicans
  – No sewage, electricity, running water, or building code
  – High concentrations of ethnicities impacts culture of the city
    • Ex. Restaurants, churches, etc...
Case Study: Swede Hollow, St. Paul, Minnesota
Vietnamese Restaurants in the Twin Cities
Mexican Restaurants in the Twin Cities
Conflict

• Economic/Political tensions can often be directed towards different races or ethnicities
  – Ex. Jewish prior to World War II in Germany
Compromise

• Over time racial/ethnic tensions alleviate
  – Sometimes after years of conflict
    • Gradual changes over time
  – Eventually leads to integration of different cultural trends
    • Leading to a hybrid culture