



American Political Thought: Minority Influence

Curriculum Unit 98.04.08
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Objectives:

- To teach math concepts
- To develop research and analytical skills
- To prepare tables, charts and graphs to depict data
- To use charts and graphs for the purpose of comparing data
- To develop reading and writing skills
- To develop an understanding and appreciation of different peoples
- To highlight the accomplishments and contributions of selected minorities

INTRODUCTION

This unit is meant to be taught in a 6th grade inner-city classroom. The makeup of the classroom is African American and Hispanic (Puerto Rican). Although our students are being reared in one of the most liberal and affluent society of all, so many of them have no knowledge of the history of America. Many are unaware of the contributions of their own forefathers.

The population that this unit will be taught to is not “native” Americans. All of their ancestors came to this country from another land. There were diverse reasons for their ancestors coming to this country. With the exception of the African American, it appears that all the other groups generally came to America of their own

free will.

This unit will focus on four minority groups. Asian (Japanese and Chinese), Jewish, Hispanic (Puerto Rican and Mexican) and African American. We will look at their contributions in politics, education and inventions. We will also look at the living habits of these groups. Mathematical presentations will be used extensively to display and compare data.

UNIT PLAN

The goal of this curriculum unit is to teach mathematical concepts through Social Studies. The unit will incorporate reading, writing and research in teaching math. This method of teaching reading and writing across the curriculum is very much endorsed by the district. Our students are required to do research and write in all classes.

This unit is designed to be taught over a ten-week period. This does not necessarily mean a marking period. The unit can be presented in parts designed to coincide with ethnic celebrations such as Puerto Rican Pride week or Black History month. The unit can also be broken down to coincide with the teaching of math concepts such as creating graphs, teaching fractions, decimals and percents while showing the relationship of the minority population to the total population.

MINORITY GROUPS

Jewish

The first wave of Jews came to New Amsterdam (New York) in 1654. The Jews who came to America came from three national locations: Spain and Portugal, Germanic states and Eastern Europe. In 1970 about 6 million Jews lived in America. Between 1970 and 1996 the Jewish population in America decreased slightly. The Census Bureau reported approximately 5,800,000 Jews in America in 1996.

The German Jews were the most financially successful of the three groups. Many started out as peddlers, an occupation that did not require great skills or a large capital investment. Many German Jews became very wealthy. They excelled in retailing, banking and finance. The German Jews were often concerned with assimilating themselves in the American society. Most did not wish to appear different. The Sephardic Jews (from Spain and Portugal) and the Eastern European Jews differed from German Jews in that they were generally more concerned with maintaining their identity. They had strong feelings of homogeneity, where a set of Jewish values and attitudes prevailed. These included religious devotion and observance.

The Modern Jewish Family

The Jewish family can be divided into three generations. Pre-holocaust, Holocaust and Post-holocaust. For the purpose of this unit, we will concentrate on the Post-holocaust generation. This generation is lowest in religious affiliation, has a higher divorce rate and participates in more mixed marriages with non-Jews. As a result of having mostly American born parents, this generation is removed from their European origins. There

is a great importance placed on graduate education for women.

The modern Jewish family tends to have fewer children than their forefathers. This shift has permitted Jewish women to become more involved in Jewish communal life and to expand their participation in the labor force.

Asian

Chinese

The Chinese laborers arrived in San Francisco in 1853. 1876 estimated the Chinese population to be 200,000, with 75,000 in San Francisco. In 1990 there were 131,000 Chinese living in San Francisco. The Chinese came to America seeking opportunity. Railroad agents who went to China promising plentiful work, high wages and free passage lured them to this country.

The Chinese endured much discrimination in the US. Quite often they did not migrate to America as families. There were always more Chinese men in America than women. Discriminatory immigration laws made it impossible sometimes for married men to bring their wives with them.

Chinese like all other immigrants were free to immigrate to America until 1882. They were considered aliens and ineligible for citizenship until 1943. The communal life of the Chinese American was distinctly different from the other immigrant groups in that church was not a major institution. The focus of most Chinese religions was the Family. For most Chinese immigrants the Family Association clan was the most important organization. These associations united all those who had common last names. It was thought that people with the same last name had common ancestors.

Chinese in America were very concerned about the welfare of other Chinese coming to America. They formed benevolent associations. The associations collected money from their members. The money was used to help new arrivals find jobs and housing. They fed the hungry, nursed the sick and buried the dead.

The Modern Chinese Family

Chinese families arrived in this country with many of their values intact. Most families did not approve of marriage outside their race. Even marriage to Chinese girls who were reared in America was discouraged.

20th century Chinese had very strong ideas about education. Almost all parents felt that doing well in school was important. Many expected their children to complete college and go on to graduate school. Parents were prepared to make great sacrifices to make this happen. Due to the importance of education and the hard work ethic emphasized by the family, Chinese Americans occupy a relatively high economic position among minority groups in America. This high economic standard could be due in part also to Chinese Exclusion Laws. These laws initially allowed professional people to migrate but prohibited laborers from migrating. During the 1970's the percent of Chinese American males in professional positions was about 30%. A large percent of Chinese American males who did not seek professional employment became entrepreneurs.

Although most Chinese immigrants started out as farmers, but by 1940 more than 90% were urbanized.

Japanese

The Japanese came to the US during the great Industrial and Agricultural expansion that took place after the Civil War and the beginning of World War II. By 1970, 551,290 Japanese lived in America. The largest populations were in Hawaii and California.

Most Japanese coming to America possessed marketable skills and were very ambitious. The families who came to America brought with them the social class structure of Japan. There were three types of Japanese who came to America.

“Good” Japanese families provided an enriched cultural background for their children, (e.g. Japanese language schools and music lessons) and attempted to teach proper role behavior. Homemaking and other skills that would be a reflection of their ability to socialize with desirable Japanese Americans were taught.

A second group of Japanese directed their efforts toward Americanization. They wanted to lose their Japanese customs and take on American customs. They wanted to become a part of the “melting pot.”

The third group of Japanese devoted most of their effort to day-to-day survival. They did not have many of the skills possessed by the other two groups. They earned less money and had to work very hard to survive. In spite of the different focus of the three groups, there was an overriding ethnic solidarity among the groups. There was an appeal for all Japanese to behave in a manner that would reflect to the benefit of all Japanese. Family and community were important reference groups for all Japanese.

Japanese immigrants came from the middle and lower class. Although discriminated against in America, Japanese immigrants fared well. Their statistics according the 1970 census was comparable to the country as a whole. 86% had both husband and wife. The percent of children under age 6 (27%) was equal to the national average. Their mean income was comparable to the national mean. Less than 10% had income below the poverty level.

To protect their people in America who were aliens and ineligible for citizenship, the Japanese government caused the Japanese Association of America to be founded. One of the most important roles of the association was to insure that passports were issued to existing wives and brides.

Like the Chinese the Japanese also went through a period of exclusion from the US. The exclusion started in the US 1924 and lasted until 1952.

Japanese The Modern Family

The modern Japanese family has been very successful in America. Their style of living is very comparable to white Americans. In general, the Japanese Americans have gone through many cultural changes in the U .S. However, for the most part they have maintained their identity and their Japanese culture. The demeanor of the Japanese American has led to many stereotypes used to describe them, including phrases such as quietness, conformity, loyal, maximum effort, good citizenship and high scholastic achievement.

Hispanic

Puerto Rican Puerto Ricans constitutes one of the major minority groups in the eastern part of the US. In 1970 there were approximately 454,000 Puerto Ricans living in America. 60% resided in New York State. They had the lowest income of all minority groups in New York City.

Unlike many other immigrants to America, theirs is not a pure race. They are made up of many races including Black and Caucasian. As a people they have not fared as well in America as some other minorities. Their children find it difficult to achieve well on Standardized test in English and Math. A high percent of students drop out of school, A large number of students are involved with drugs.

Puerto Rican culture has been greatly influenced by Latin American culture. Like Latin Americans, they are deeply conscious of their membership in the family. Their world consists of a pattern of intimate personal relationships with the basic relationships being those of the family.

A second feature of the Puerto Rican family is the role of authority exercised by the male. The man feels free to make decisions without consulting his wife, He expects that he will be obeyed when he makes a decision.

The Modern Puerto Rican Family

When Puerto Ricans migrate to this country, they most often do so as a family. If they do not bring a family, most expect to find one when they arrive here. Puerto Ricans engage in a large number of mixed marriages. This has become a concern for some Puerto Ricans who are concerned about losing their identity.

Puerto Ricans tend to have larger families than the National average. Children are taught to respect their elders. Parents want their children to succeed but they are not usually pressured to do so. Females headed 45% of all Puerto Rican households in 1987. This was much higher than all other Hispanics.

Puerto Ricans tends to earn less money than any other minority group. Their average income is quite often below the poverty level. Their median income in 1987 was \$15,190 well below all other minorities. This is due in part because a large portion of Puerto Rican immigrants to America were poorly educated and unskilled. They came to America seeking a better life. The more affluent or educated Puerto Ricans immigrated in smaller numbers.

Mexican

Mass migration of Mexican Americans occurred at the turn of the century. Poverty and Politics in Mexico were the main reasons for their migration. They came looking for jobs and economic betterment. The Mexicans who came to America were generally poor and unskilled. Though faced with much discrimination in America, many newcomers thought their situation to be quite good in comparison to the living conditions in Mexico.

It is estimated that by 1930 there were well over one million Mexicans living in America. World War II marked the turning point in the lives of many Mexican Americans and set the stage for much of the variability that may be found among Mexican Americans and their families today. They became very political. Many opportunities that were previously closed became accessible. It is estimated that approximately 500,000 Mexicans were (repatriated) returned to Mexico during the 1930's.

In the mid 1960's Mexican Americans became very politically active with the birth of the Chicano generation. The Chicanos were a group of very militant Mexican Americans who were no longer willing to wait patiently for the rights which they felt were guaranteed in the Constitution.

The Modern Mexican Family

One of the most distinctive characteristics of Mexican Americans is their unusually high fertility rate. An examination of certain social, economic, and demographic characteristics of the Mexican American population highlights some of the apparent differences between the Mexican American and Anglo populations and provide indications of the subordinate status that many Mexican Americans occupy in the social structure of America.

As a People, Mexican Americans have not done as well as some other immigrants. Mexican American male are

just as likely to be in the work force as white males, however, their positions are quite different. Mexican Americans are greatly underrepresented in white-collar occupations, particularly at top levels. In 1987, the median family income for Mexican Americans was \$19,970 compared to \$31,160 for other whites.

In terms of marital status, the percent of Mexicans married with spouse present among persons 25 - 64 years old is nearly the same (81%) as all whites. Also, the percent of families with a female Head of Household among Mexican Americans (12%) is very similar to that of whites (9%).

Despite socioeconomic differences between Mexican Americans and Anglos, there is much social assimilation of Mexican Americans into American society. Although there are many incidences of intermarriages between Mexican Americans, figures indicate that there is still a preference for in-group marriages.

As Mexican American families have become exposed to and participants in the urban middle-class life style and culture, the internal structure of the family has changed. The role of male and female is not as clear as it once was. Males are no longer relegated to outside work and females to work in the home.

African

The Africans who came to America possessed four traits that distinguished them from other immigrants. They came from a continent with norms and values that were dissimilar to the American way of life. They were composed of many different tribes, each with its own language, cultures and traditions. In the beginning they came without females. Most importantly they came in bondage.

Blacks were the only immigrants who were usually brought to this country against their will. They came with no expectations of improving their life, since they were not free to pursue any personal goals. Blacks make up the largest minority group in America.

The first importation of Blacks occurred in the 1600's. Between 1600 and 1800 more than 11 million Black slaves were shipped from Africa. Although some slaves were sent to other colonies, the majority of the slaves were imported for English colonies in America. Prior to becoming slaves, Black families in Africa were free people. They enjoyed a life with the kinship groups, which was bound together by blood ties and the common interest of, cooperate functions. Within each village there were elaborate legal codes and court systems that regulated the marital and family behavior of individual members.

When they became slaves their lives changed drastically. They were not allowed to enter into binding contractual relationships. There was no legal basis to any marriage between two slaves since marriage is a legal relationship. As a result of this some marriages were initiated by slave owners and just as easily dissolved.

Despite the theories about the destruction of the family under slavery, the family was one of the most important survival mechanisms for African people held in bondage. It was from the family that the slave received affection, companionship, love and empathy with his sufferings. Through the family, he learned how to avoid punishment, to cooperate with his fellow slaves and to retain some semblance of self-esteem.

Under slavery, the traditional functions (provider/protector) of the male were eliminated. It was the male slave's inability to protect his wife from physical and sexual abuse of the master that most pained him.

The 13th Amendment to the Constitution ended slavery in 1865.

The Modern African American Family

The African family has gone through many changes since they were brought to America in chains. In 1972 approximately 2/3 of African American families had both husband and wife present. Females headed almost 45% of African American household by 1987.

The fertility rate among African Americans women has greatly decreased over the years. This is due in part to rural-urban differences and most importantly socioeconomic levels. Middle class college educated Black women have the lowest fertility rate of almost every demographic category in America.

A large number of Blacks have incomes well below the poverty level. This can be partially attributed to the fact that Blacks have been so discriminated against. This made it very difficult for Blacks to get an education or to secure positions for which they were qualified. Surviving and getting ahead seems to be of primary importance to most of this group. On the other hand, many middle class Blacks are very concerned about preserving their cultural traditions and thus adopt values and life styles that are commonly associated with the lower class. Although many educated or middle class Blacks especially females, have difficulty finding suitable mates in their race they are very concerned that their children receive a good education. Although very popular a few decades ago the trend now among middle class Blacks is not to marry outside their race.

Lesson Plan

Objective: Calculate distances using the metric unit of measure

Procedure:

- 1) Students will read and discuss the Jewish American section of the unit.
- 2) Students will use a map or an atlas to find German, Portugal and Spain, the places from which most Jewish peoples immigrated.
- 3) Using the legend from the map or atlas, students will calculate the approximate number of kilometers from each location to New Amsterdam. Now Ellis Island, NJ.

Materials: World maps, atlases, rulers and calculators.

Extra exercise: Have students change the kilometers to miles.

Lesson Plan

Objective: Calculate political representation as a percent of population.

Procedure:

- 1) Students will write a letter to the President of the Board of Aldermen explaining what their objective is and ask him/her to provide them with a breakdown of the Board. The breakdown would be:
Female
Male
Hispanic
African-American
White
- 2) Students will obtain the population of New Haven.
- 3) Teacher will lead the students in the solution of a problem involving ratio and percent.
- 4) Students will use the information from 1 and 2 above to calculate the number of Hispanics in office as a percent of their total population.
- 5) Students will write their answer as a %, a ratio and a fraction.

Homework: Complete this assignment again using the African American Information.

Note to teacher: Depending on the amount of time you have available, you may want to collect this information yourself and make it available to the students.

Lesson Plan

Objectives:

Understand how politics can affect population growth.

Present population data in table form.

Procedure:

- 1) Students will be lead in a discussion of the Chinese Exclusion Act. (Act will be provided by the teacher)
- 2) Students will use the Internet or library to obtain US Bureau of Census information on Chinese population relating to education,employment and income. (Teacher may choose to provide this information)
- 3) Teacher will model on the board the proper way to prepare a table
- 4) Students will use the census data to prepare a table to show population of various age groups, type of employment and income.

Homework:

Write a Type Two essay explaining how you think the Chinese Exclusion Act affected immigration.
Use the information from your table to make a bar graph.

Lesson Plan

Objective: To Discover inventions of members of the selected minority groups.

Procedure:

- 1) Students will use the computer (Internet) or library to research inventions of minority group members.
- 2) Students will decide which group they will target.
- 3) Students will prepare a time line to target inventions made during a specific time period.
- 4) Students will use the information collected to prepare a ratio of female to male inventors.

Homework: (Teacher Discretion)

Lesson Plan

(Culminating Activity)

Objectives:

To meet and interview a member from one of the target groups.

To prepare a report for oral presentation.

Procedure:

- 1) Students will be guided by the teacher in deciding which group they will focus on. (Hopefully every group will be represented)
- 2) Students will choose a person to interview.
- 3) If necessary, the teacher will assist in completing a list of possible interviewees.
- 4) Students will prepare a questionnaire. (Survey)
- 5) Students will write a letter requesting an interview with the person they chose.
- 6) Students will use the information gathered at the interview prepare a presentation.

Evaluation: Students will be able to complete an oral presentation based on the information they received in the interview.

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Teacher Resources

US Census Bureau. CSP Publications. Selected Characteristics of the Population by race.

http://www.bls.census.gov/cps/pub/1997/int_race.htm. US Bureau of the Census. Selected Social Characteristics of the Population by Region and Race. <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/race/api94/lab/txt>.

<http://www.us-isreal.org/jsourc/uslsreal/usjewpop.html> <http://wwwAsia central com/pop/demo/demo2.htm>

Distribution of Asian population by city.

NOTES

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