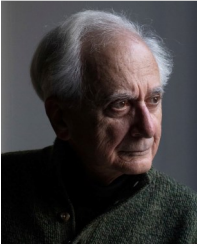


The Great Demographic Illusion: Majority, Minority, and the Expanding American Mainstream

Friday, April 16, 2021 | 12:00PM - 1:30PM PST

Will be held via Zoom (This Event May Be Recorded)



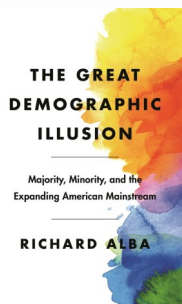
Author: Richard Alba

Richard Alba is Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. His teaching and research on immigration and race/ethnicity have long had a comparative focus, encompassing North America and Western Europe. He is a former vice president of the American Sociological Association (2000-01). He has recently been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and to the National Academy of Sciences.



Discussant: Susan K. Brown

Susan K. Brown is Professor of Sociology at UC Irvine. Her research interests include immigrant integration, educational inequality, and urban sociology.



A widely accepted demographic narrative for the U.S. holds that, by the middle of this century, whites will become a minority of the population, outnumbered by the aggregate of people of color, the current minorities of the society. Presumably, such a demographic shift would have manifold societal ramifications. In this talk, I show that this narrative is highly problematic—first, because of unacknowledged problems in the conventional demographic coding of ethnicity and race and, second, because the demographic data and the narrative obscure processes of assimilation that are reshaping ethno-racial contours. The best window on both of these points is provided by the rapidly growing numbers of young Americans from mixed family backgrounds that create kinship connections both to whites and members of a minority group: Today, at least 10 percent of U.S.-born young children are growing up in mixed minority-white families. The great majority of youth from such backgrounds are coded as “not white” in census data. A synthesis of the evidence about them, however, indicates that, for the most part, they are integrating into and diversifying mainstream milieus, which are mainly white at present. The hugely important exception involves individuals of black and white parentage, who confront high racist barriers to mainstream inclusion.

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