

A Reflection of Reality: A Call for the Racialization of Immigration Studies

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Overview

- Historical overview of immigration in the United States
- The racialization of immigrants particularly over the past half century with shift of source of immigration
- Enduring racism and the contemporary political terrain
 - Overt race talk
 - Massive detentions and deportations
- The traditional theoretical perspectives used in study of immigrants
- Call for immigration scholars to more fully incorporate race perspectives into the study of immigrants

Presentation Draws from Several Works

- Sáenz, Rogelio and Karen Manges Douglas. 2015. “A Call for the Racialization of Immigration Studies: On the Transition of Ethnic Immigrants to Racialized Immigrants.” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1 (1):166-180. DOI: 10.1177/2332649214559287.
- Douglas, Karen Manges and Rogelio Saenz. 2013. “The Criminalization of Immigrants and the Immigration-Industrial Complex.” *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 142 (3):199-227. DOI: doi:10.1162/DAED_a_00228.
- Douglas, Karen Manges, Rogelio Sáenz, and Aurelia Lorena Murga. 2015. “Immigration in the Era of Colorblind Racism.” *American Behavioral Scientist* 59 (11):1429-1451. DOI: 10.1177/0002764214566502.

The U.S. Myth on Immigration

- We are a nation of immigrants
- Our ancestors overcame great challenges but pulled themselves by their own bootstraps
- They learned English, learn the American way of life, and they worked hard
- Immigrants today don't want to learn English, they want to keep their cultures and ways of life, and they want to take our—used interchangeably—welfare, services, and jobs
- They don't want to become Americans

A More Complicated Reality

- For long, who was allowed to immigrate to the United States and who was allowed to become U.S. citizens not random
- Over four decades (1882-1924), immigration policies constructed to keep some groups from entering the country (Chinese, Japanese, Asians, Southern and Eastern Europeans)
- For nearly two centuries, only whites eligible for U.S. citizenship
- Access to U.S. citizenship a valuable commodity representing ticket to social mobility
- Immigrant groups historically have experienced discrimination, prejudice, racism, and hostility in this country
- While some immigrant groups not originally seen as white (Irish, Italians, Jews, Southern and Eastern Europeans), eventually racial boundaries broadened to give them the white designation
- Whiteness and U.S. citizenship eased the road to inclusion, integration, and upward mobility...tickets to get to second base and beyond

Contrasting Experience for Groups of Color

- What to do with the byproducts of conquest, slavery, manifest destiny, and warfare?
 - Backdoor U.S. citizenship
 - African Americans: 14th amendment (1868) [granted U.S. citizenship to persons born in the U.S.]
 - Mexican Americans: Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848)
 - Puerto Ricans: Jones Act (1917)
 - Native Americans: Indian Citizenship Act (1924)
 - Second-/third-class citizens
 - Significant policies and practices with intent to keep people of color in their place
 - Jim Crow, lynching, anti-Asian legislation, repatriation of Mexicans, Japanese internment camps
 - The groups disadvantaged in gaining access to inclusion, integration, and social mobility
 - Unequal playing field...smoother path to integration, acceptance, and success for whites

Enduring Racism and the Contemporary Political Terrain

- Mexican and more generally Latino migrants have been racialized and depicted as the “other” —invaders, people who do not belong here
- Over last decade there have been a number of studies reporting rise of hate crime and violence against Latinos
- Rise of anti-immigrant ordinances across the country
- Open season on using hate and racist talk and images against Latinos with little, if any, censure

Racist Images of Mexicans

IF IT'S BROWN



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DMV MEXIFORNIA DMV

EXPIRES: NEVER 8763678911

CLASS: ILLEGAL ALIEN

JOSE GOMEZ, JR (512878)
1234 CAMINIO DEL TORO
LOS ANGELES, MEXIFORNIA

SEX: MAHO HAIR: BRN
HT: 5'4" WT: TOO MUCH

DOB: NOT KNOWN


Entitled to:
Drive
Attend College
Purchase Guns
Vote

Signature 

ILLEGALS
aren't
IMMIGRANTS
they're
CRIMINALS



THIS IS PEDRO... HE'S AN ILLEGAL ALIEN, BUT IT'S O.K.... HE'S HARMLESS... ALL DAY, EVERY DAY, HE STANDS ON A REMOTE CORNER IN YOUR TOWN TRYING TO FIND SOME DAY LABOR... BUT IT'S O.K.... HE'S A HARD WORKER... HIS WIFE HAS T.B... BUT IT'S O.K.... SHE'S BEING TREATED AT A FREE CLINIC... HIS FOUR SONS ARE BUDDING GANG MEMBERS... BUT IT'S O.K.... THAT'S WHY WE HAVE POLICE. PEDRO AND HIS FAMILY ARE NO THREAT... THAT'S WHY LOCAL AUTHORITIES NEVER BOTHER TO ASK THEM WHAT THEY'RE DOING HERE... PEDRO HAS 237 RELATIVES BACK HOME... HE JUST WROTE AND TOLD THEM HOW GOOD IT IS HERE... THEY'RE PACKING RIGHT NOW... GOOD 'OL HARMLESS PEDRO!



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BORDER PATROL

PLAY

THERE IS ONE SIMPLE OBJECTIVE TO THIS GAME, KEEP THEM OUT... AT ANY COST!



Trump Quotes Re: Mexicans

- On Mexican immigrants: "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're sending people that have lots of problems. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists."
- On building walls: "I will build a great wall — and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me —and I'll build them very inexpensively. I will build a great, great wall on our southern border, and I will make Mexico pay for that wall. Mark my words."
- Donald Trump Vows to Clamp Down on Mexican Remittances
- Donald Trump: Mexican migrants bring 'tremendous infectious disease' to US

Ted Cruz on Mexican Migrants

- Ted Cruz Challenges Donald Trump on Immigration at Mexican Border
- Ted Cruz Calls Latinos 'Violent Criminal Illegal Aliens,' Slams Democrats For Protecting Immigrants
- Ted Cruz: To Help Stop Drug Abuse, Build the Mexico Border Wall
- Ted Cruz: I 'salute' Donald Trump for discussing immigration

The Criminalization and Commodification of Undocumented Migrants

- Not only have Latino immigrants and other immigrants of color been racialized, they have also been criminalized and commodified
- Two Clinton policies in 1996 criminalized unauthorized migrants, minimized their rights and appeals process, and strengthened the power of INS (later becoming ICE)
 - Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA)
 - Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA)
- Massive increase in detention centers, gave rise to the *immigrant-industrial complex*

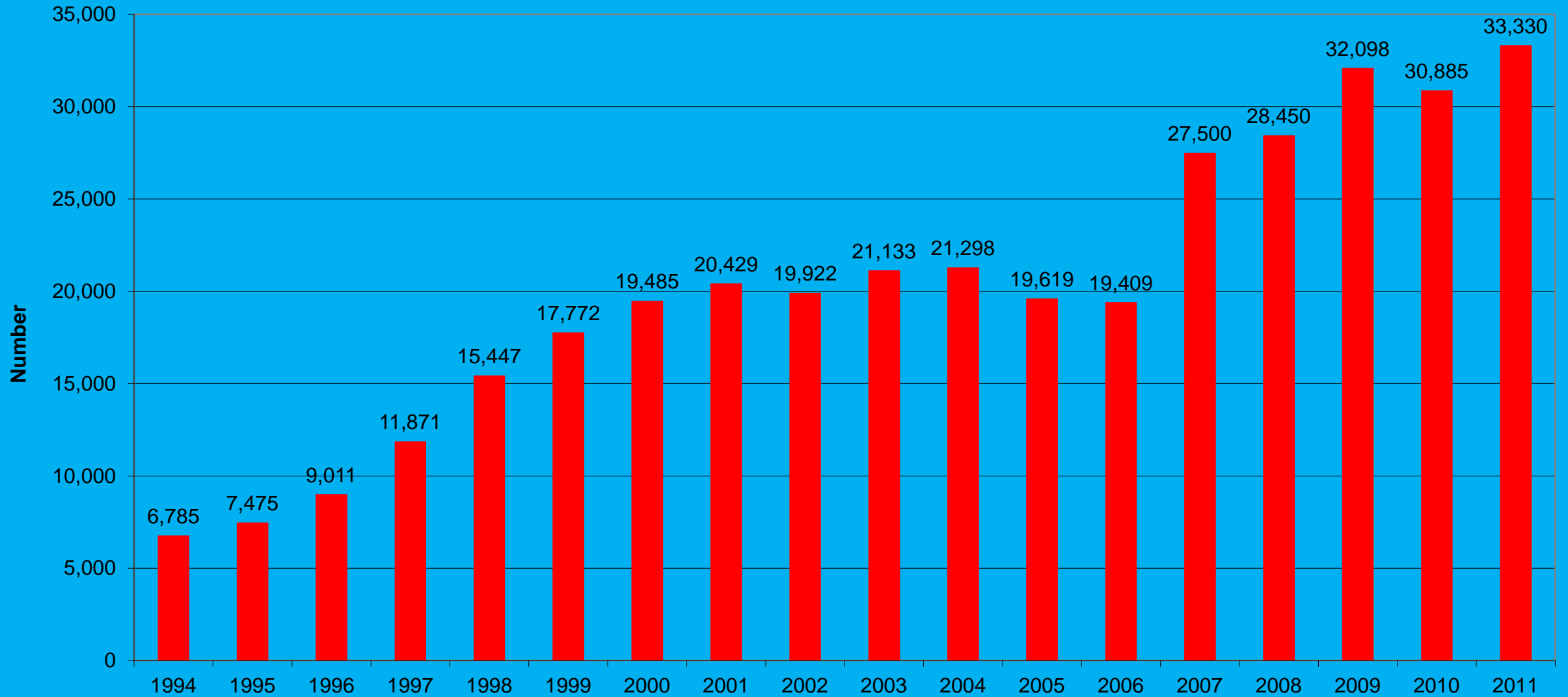
Immigration-Industrial Complex

- “the public and private sector interests in the criminalization of undocumented migration, immigration law enforcement and the promotion of ‘anti-illegal rhetoric’” (Golash-Boza 2009, 296)
- 3 features of the immigration-industrial complex
 - A rhetoric of fear
 - Linkage of terrorism and immigration...war against terrorism and protection of international borders
 - The confluence of powerful interests
 - Interlinkage of powerful entities in government, corporate, immigration and criminal justice sectors
 - A discourse of “otherization”
 - The complex sustained by discourse of otherization and racialization of immigrants

Immigration-Industrial Complex

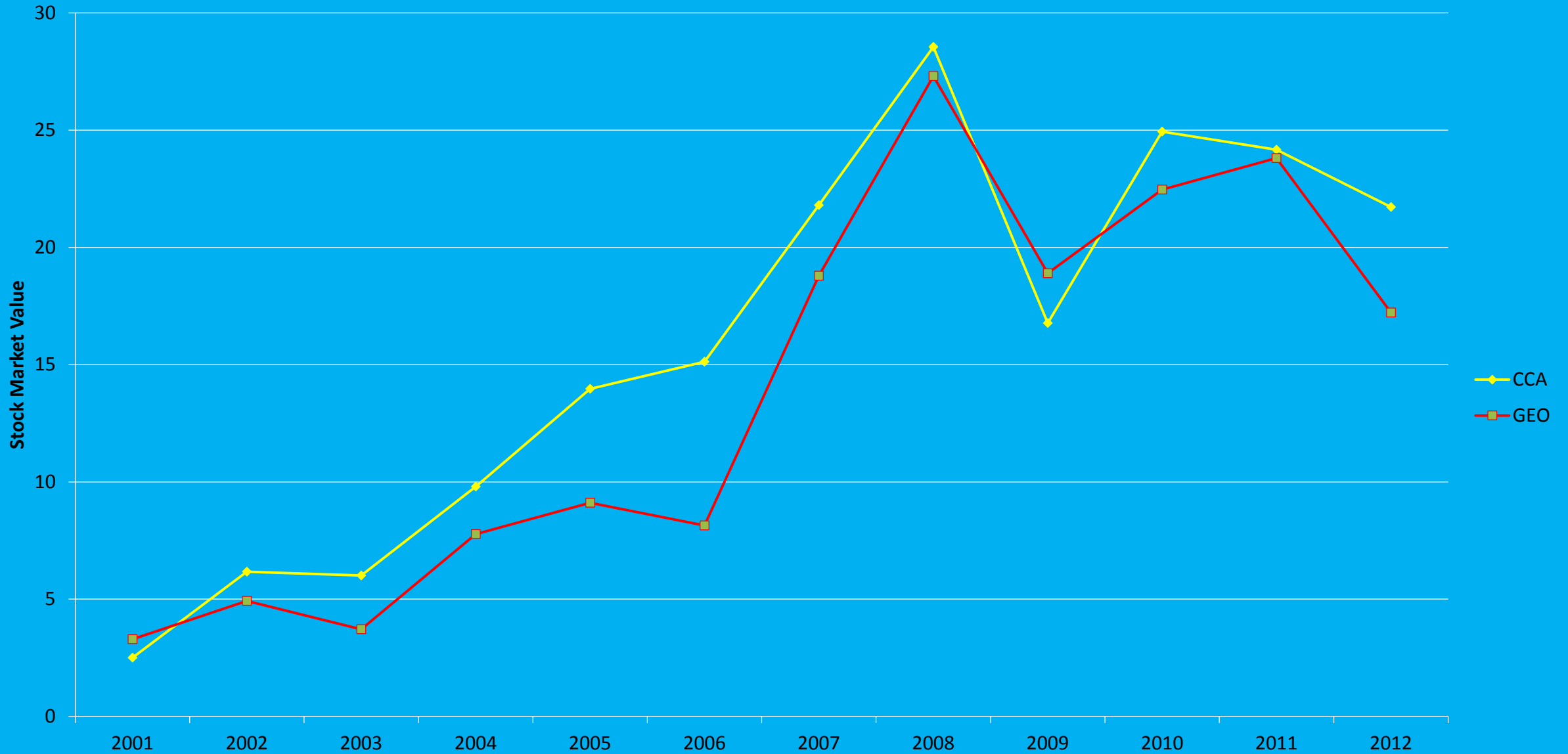
- Two largest corporations in detention business
 - Corrections Corporation of America (CCA)
 - GEO Group
- Board of directors with connections to corporate, governmental, corrections, and immigration sectors
- Major profits particularly at time when the stocks of CCA and GEO had plummeted toward the end of the 1990s as they had overbuilt private prisons

Average Daily Immigrant Detainee Population, FY 1994 to FY 2011.



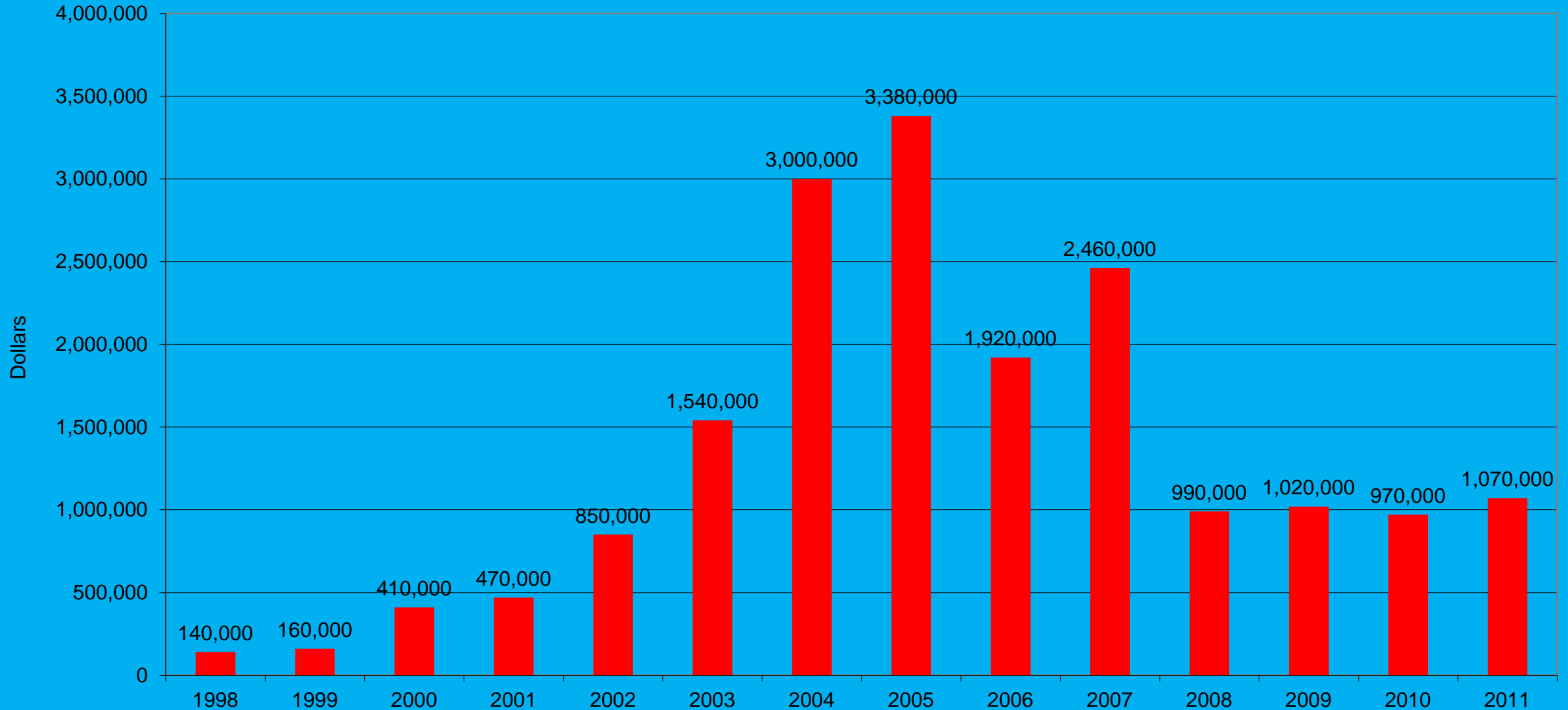
Source: Numbers for FY 1994 to FY 2006 are from Siskin (2007) and those for FYs 2007 and 2008 are from Siskin (2012).

Stock Market Values of CCA and GEO Stocks During First Week of January, 2001-2012.



Source: New York Stock Exchange (2012a, 2012b).

Lobbying Expenditures of Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), 1998-2011.



Source: OpenSecrets.org (2012).

Traditional Theoretical Perspective for Immigration Studies

- Despite long history of the racialization of immigrants in the U.S., especially in the past half century, research continues to view immigrants as ethnic group members rather than racialized individuals
- Reflection of assimilation perspective emerging from Chicago School

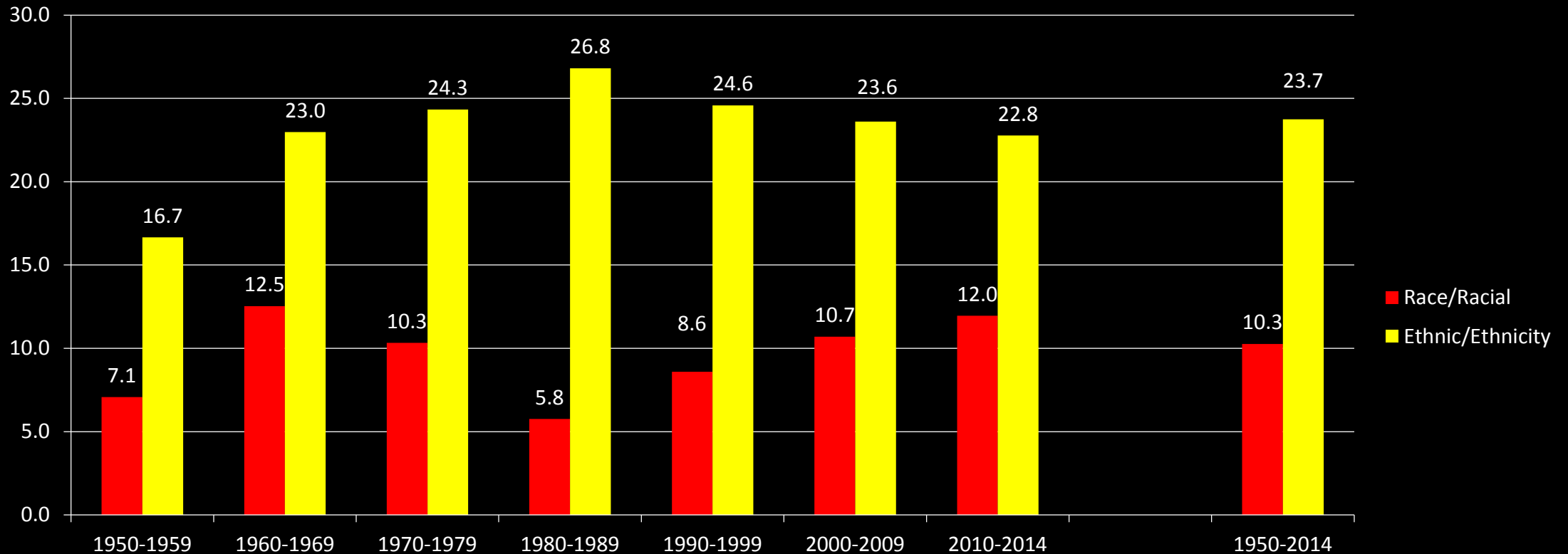
The Traditional European Ethnic Immigrant Story...

- They initially came to the U.S. with their ethnic distinctions
- They initially settled in ethnic neighborhoods
- While immigrants experienced limited social mobility, it would only be a matter of time before their conditions begin to improve as they learned the language and culture of host society
- As their children attain higher levels of education, they experience upward mobility
- Generally took roughly three generations for immigrant ethnics to achieve assimilation
- This model continues to be used to gauge the experiences of immigrants today

Reflections of Inconsistency in the Literature

- Despite racial nature of immigrants of color in the U.S. today, they continue to be treated as ethnics in the immigration literature
- Literature search consisting of 22,326 articles with subject of “immigrant” or “immigration” published between 1950 and 2014 to assess the degree to which immigration scholars associated immigrants/immigration with the concepts of ethnic/ethnicity or racial/race
- Determined whether the 22,326 articles contained a “race/racial” or “ethnic/ethnicity” in their abstracts
- Entries categorized by time period: 1950-1959, 1960-1969, 1970-1979, 1980-1989, 1990-1999, 2000-2009, and 2010-2014
- Computed the percentage of articles in each period that contained reference to “race/racial” or “ethnic/ethnicity” in their abstracts

Percentage of Immigrant/Immigration Articles Using “Race/Racial” Term or “Ethnic/Ethnicity” Term by Period, 1950-2014^a



Source: Sociological Abstracts literature search conducted on 14 July, 2014.

^a Based on articles with "Immigrant/Immigration as Subject Area and "Race/Racial" or "Ethnic/Ethnicity" in Abstract.

Further Findings on Analysis of Literature Search

- Examination of use of “assimilation”
 - 10% of articles included “assimilation” in their abstracts
- Examination of use of “racism”
 - Very few of the articles (2.7%) make reference to racism
 - Continuation of significant tendency to disassociate immigrants and the immigration topic from race and racism

A Call for Incorporating Race Perspectives in the Study of Immigration

- There is a major need for incorporating race perspectives into the study of immigration
- Over past several decades theoretical perspectives have turned attention to structural aspects of racial stratification
- These perspective emphasize structural and institutional arrangements through which white supremacy endures
- In understanding how racial stratification persists, these perspectives have focused directly on whites and the privileges they derive as well as the strategies that they use to maintain their dominant position
- Scholars associated with these critical race perspectives include Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Joe Feagin (including Feagin & Jose Cobas)

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva

- Emphasis on structural and systemic nature of racism and white supremacy
- Need to move from thinking of racism as workings of prejudicial feelings and beliefs of a few overt racists
- Racism deeply entrenched and systemic existing across societal institutions and legal structures
- Institutional racism along with regular folks—rather than overt racists—play an important role in the persistence of racism and white supremacy through their own acceptance and participation in the existing racial system
- We need to understand the lives of immigrants within this context of white supremacy

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva

- EBS elaborated his ideas in *Racism without Racists* (2001, 2004)
- After passage of Civil Rights legislation, race discourse changed from overt, racist talk to more subtle forms replete with colorblind and race-neutral language
- People now talk about people of color in coded words and phrases, e.g., “inner city,” “urban,” and “underclass”
- In this context, people espouse principles of fairness and equality
 - Affirmative action policies seen as “reverse racism” and “reverse discrimination”
- Opponents of immigration report that they are not racist, not against immigrants, but that they are against “criminals” and “lawbreakers”

Joe Feagin

- Also calls attention to systemic nature of racism that is deeply etched in the country's institutions, laws, practices, customs, and so forth
- Throughout U.S. history, whites have represented the dominant group possessing economic resources, political power, and prestige
- The *white racial frame* useful in understanding how whites maintain their dominant position
 - “an overwhelming white worldview that encompasses a *broad and persisting set of racial stereotypes, prejudices, ideologies, images, interpretations and narratives, emotions, and reactions to language accents, as well as racialized inclinations to discriminate*”

The White Racial Frame

- Features a superior view of whites and inferior view of non-white outgroup
- Powerful and hegemonic perspective that for most whites is all encompassing in making sense of race in this country
- Minimizes racial inequities and on a larger scale “collective forgetting” and “collective memories”
 - Collective narratives developed and passed on through generations, making the intolerable acceptable
 - George Washington and Thomas Jefferson “good” slave owners who were not racists
 - Whites reminiscing about life in Jim Crow South where everyone—black and white—got along

The White Racial Frame

- It is through lens of the white racial frame that people of color, including immigrants, are conceptualized, viewed, and judged
- Used to justify positioning of people of color at base of the U.S. racial system
- The framework also minimizes the structural features that promote and sustain the inequality of people of color by placing the blame on their own personal shortcomings

Feagin and Cobas

- *Latinos Facing Racism: Discrimination, Resistance, and Endurance* (2014)
- Excellent analysis of how white racial frame is used to racialize Latinos
- They observe that high levels of education and socioeconomic status do not protect Latinos from racism...of course far worse for white more limited education and socioeconomic resources
- *Language* an important domain from where whites censure Latinos
 - Whites use several strategies including silencing of Spanish speakers (“stop speaking Spanish, you’re in the United States”), voicing suspicion and fearing Spanish speakers (“What are you saying? Why don’t you speak in English?”), questioning and doubting English proficiency (“Did you really write that?”), denigrating Spanish-accented English (a salesperson imitating the accented English of a customer), and ignoring Spanish speakers (waitress ignoring customers speaking Spanish)
 - Message: Spanish represents an affront to dominant English language and white control

Feagin and Cobas

- *Geography* another area that is highly racialized
- Whites guard certain physical space and its surrounding environs against intrusion of people of color
- We can think of most institutional spaces that we enter representing safe space for whites who are more likely to feel comfortable compared to people of color
- Feagin and Cobas observe:
 - Situations in which Latinos were chided for invading white space including encounters with police officers (“Boy, where are you from?”), other forms of discrimination while traveling (a white woman refusing to use bathroom that a Latino young man used in an airplane), and problems crossing the border (highly intrusive search that takes place in the vehicle of Latinos)
 - Message: Latinos do not belong in these spaces

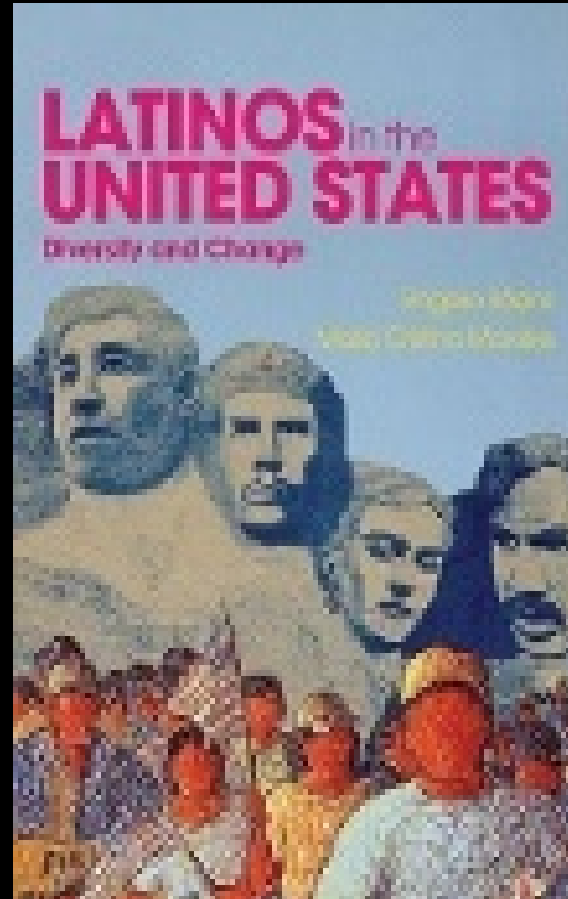
Value of Critical Race Perspectives

- Perspectives of Bonilla-Silva, Feagin, and other race scholars important lens to better understand the experiences of immigrants in the United States
- Provide important structural and contextual elements that are missing from research on immigrants that continue to use assimilation perspective or its variants
- For many immigrants in U.S. today, assimilation is not a possibility
- The white mainstream does not view many immigrants, especially Mexicans and other Latinos, as Americans or as potential Americans
- White supremacy played out in immigration arena perhaps in an even stronger fashion than in typical race relations in U.S.
 - Increasingly discourse on immigrants and immigration not subtle, nuanced, and colorblind
 - Image of immigrants as criminals; animals; breeders; people bringing drugs, violence, and disease into country; terrorists....nothing genteel in the stage of the Republican presidential primary

Concluding Remarks

- Despite the continued racialization of immigrants of color, theoretical approaches to the study of migration continue to largely ignore race perspectives
- The MMP and LAMP which represent major data sources for the study of Mexican and Latin American immigration have only several items that ask people about the degree to which they interact with whites, blacks, and native-born Latinos
- Yet, race is a fact of life in the lives of immigrants today as it was yesterday...we tend to not capture the race dynamic
- Still, race scholars too have concentrated predominantly on the experience of U.S.-born groups of color especially African Americans without addressing the racial aspects of the lives of immigrants
- Researchers studying immigration tend to be primarily white scholars and scholars of color connected to the immigration experience

Latinos in the United States: Diversity and Change
[Polity Press or amazon.com]



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