

RACE — Are We So Different?
Summative Evaluation of the Website
<http://www.understandingrace.com/>
ESI #0307843
Prepared by Minda Borun, Museum Solutions
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Introduction

The American Anthropological Association contracted with Minda Borun, Museum Solutions, to conduct a summative evaluation of the [website http://www.understandingrace.com/](http://www.understandingrace.com/) developed by s2n Media in connection with the Race exhibit. The exhibit, created by the AAA and the Science Museum of Minnesota, will travel to museums around the country. The website complements the exhibit and also stands on its own as a rich resource on the subject of race and human variation.

The summative evaluation is based on an online survey. The link was posted on the website and data was collected using Survey Monkey. There were a total of 121 responses between March 22 and May 10, 2007. Of these, 100 respondents completed all of the questions in the survey and are the basis of this report. Comments that, in the opinion of the evaluator, ought to be discussed are highlighted in bold

SUMMARY

- Respondents span a broad age range from 12 to 60 years of age. Two thirds of respondents are female. The sample is well-educated, with 80% having a bachelor's degree or higher and 51% holding a graduate or professional degree. The most frequent users are white and African-American. Predictably, some people objected to the use of race categories to collect demographic information on use of the site. Two thirds of the users frequent websites seeking information several times per day.
- Three quarters of the users said that they found what they expected on the website. Indeed, many said that it was better than they expected. Some people did have specific issues. Almost everyone reported no difficulty with navigation.
- Users gave the site high marks particularly for images and overall design. People appreciated the variety in content and treatment, the clarity of the explanations, and the organization of the site.
- The content of the site also received very high scores. The most valued components of the site were "A Girl Like Me" (video), the history timeline, the quizzes, and the historical content in general.
- Suggestions for change were often requests for more content. Some people did have specific criticisms. Possible issues to consider are bolded.

- While less than half of the users said that the web site changed the way they think about race or human variation, those who did say their ideas were changed said that the site clarified their understanding, made them more aware, dispelled myths, enlightened them, and heightened their awareness of assumptions.
- Over two thirds of the users thought this website compared very well or excellently to others. An impressive 82% said they would visit the website again and eighty-eight percent will recommend the site to others.

DETAILED RESULTS^{1,2}

1. Age

- *Respondents span a broad age range from 12 to 60 years of age.*

	Number	Percent
Under 14	1	1
14 – 20	17	17
21 - 30	15	15
31 - 40	25	25
41 - 50	13	13
51 - 60	17	17
Over 60	12	2
Totals	100	100

2. Gender

- *Two thirds of respondents are female.*

	Number	Percent
Male	33	33
Female	67	67
Totals	100	100

¹ *When more than one respondent gave a similar answer the number is in ().*

² *The number of responses in the tables does not always agree with the number of comments below that table since some comments were moved under appropriate questions.*

3. What is the highest level you completed in school? (check one)

- *The sample is well-educated with 80% having a bachelor's degree or higher and 51% a graduate or professional degree.*

	Number	Percent
Less than high school	6	6
High school diploma	14	14
College degree	29	29
Graduate/professional degree	51	51
Totals	100	100

4. How often do you go to websites for information?

- *Two thirds of the sample frequents websites seeking information several times per day.*

	Number	Percent
Several times a day	64	64
Once a day	12	12
2 – 3 times per week	17	17
Less than 2 times per week	7	7
Totals	100	100

5. OPTIONAL: With which of the following groups do you most strongly identify?

- *The most frequent users are white and African-American. Predictably, some people objected to the use of race categories to collect demographic information on use of the site.*

	Number	Percent
African-American or Black	18	18
White	53	53
Hispanic or Latino	3	3
Asian or Pacific Islander	5	5
Native American or Alaskan Native	2	2
Other *	6	6
No identification **	13	13
Totals	100	100

* *Mixed background (5)*
Asian American (1)

***Human (3)*
'Matter out of place'
I think it wrong to identify with these constructed, racist categories
'World Person'
I identify with all races
These are only American categories and undermine your census exercise by reinforcing
US census categories of which you are critical.
No answer (13)

6. Did you find what you expected to find in this website?

- *Three quarters of the users said that they found what they expected on the website. Many said that it was better than they expected. Some had criticisms (see below).*

	Number	Percent
Yes	75	75
No	25	25
Totals	100	100

Better than expected:

Videos and other ways of explaining human variation are very engaging and innovative.

I found a lot more than I expected. I was delightfully surprised. A lot of truth spoken in an intelligent way.

I learned more than I expected. It's more than just education, but interactive and includes real views from real people, which is better than a science lecture.

I not only learned things, I was impressed by the aesthetic, the functionality, usability, and better yet, it changed the way I feel and think about myself and others in terms of race, identity, and culture.

*The website is very pleasant and beautiful. The introduction video is beautiful and expressive. The modernity of the literature on the website is very informative, though hard to follow for a beginner of anthropology. **The dot maps for example are helpful but confusing.** The out of Africa theme is very well presented, and Africa retaining the largest gene pool is very interesting. Thank you for presenting this site.*

It was very informative and very accurate about what was said.

Expectations not fulfilled:

There are no clear definitions of terms or comparisons of biological race v. social race, ethnicity, etc.

[Would like] a more diverse theoretical and empirical approach.

I expected to find more scientific studies about races, at least as a complement.

More stories, especially those of mixed backgrounds. Validation of those who have more than one heritage

Maybe some more information about the concept of ethnicity and 'clear' definitions

I expected a professional explanation given to a public audience as happens with so many effective professionals associated with museums, freshman teaching or public programs in the social sciences and humanities.

Everything was about self-reflection and self-confirmation about American conceptions and categorization. I expected a step beyond that.

*I expected to find a mention of R. Lynn's *Race Differences in Intelligence* (Washington Summit Publishers, 2006) for an important exposition.*

Other comments (quoted):

Black females feeling inferior due to the way blackness has been constructed in the past by the "white superior" group. These ideologies of seeing black people as being inferior still affect us even today, and coming from South Africa, a country that has experienced in the past racial segregation, I can relate.

It is true that skin color does reflect a natural adaptation to the sun by natural selection, but individuals that are born today in areas that are not extremely hot still have dark skin, meaning that race is an identifier, not in the sense of social stature, but still a genetic identifier. If race was not biological then the individual child would take on the variation for the climate they live in. To say there is no race in the human species would be like saying that there are no different types of dogs (breeds).

I'm searching for a particular video that I recently viewed at an exhibit in St. Paul. Where is a book with all the content offered in the exhibit/website that I can give to my Korean born daughter?

WHERE is GOD in all this??? Do you really think we will be around in a 1000 years? What about God's Promise of returning to His Chosen???

Where is the reality?

I didn't have expectations. (3)

7. Did you have any difficulty finding your way around the site?

- *Almost everyone reported no difficulty with navigation.*

	Number	Percent
Yes	4	4
No	96	96s
Totals	100	100

The moving time line is confusing.

The timeline would have been interesting, but difficult to navigate.

It doesn't follow a clear line of thought. I think it would be better served if the information was trimmed down a bit to be more effective. It was hard to navigate in a logical fashion. My computer would not download Adobe Flash Player.

8. How would you rate the design of this website? Please check one box for each line.

- *Users gave the site high marks particularly for images and overall design.*

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Mean
Images		5	17	27	51	4.24
Use of color	5	5	15	28	47	4.07
Navigation	1	7	19	28	45	4.09
Overall design	2	4	16	25	53	4.23

9. How would you rate the content of this website? Please check one box for each line.

- *The content of the site received very high scores.*

	Not at all	A little	Some- what	Pretty Much	Very Much	Mean
Interesting	2	5	7	17	69	4.46
Clear		2	11	32	55	4.40
Organized	1	3	10	24	62	4.43
Informative	3	6	12	14	65	4.32
Overall rating	2	5	11	17	65	4.38

10. What did you like best about the site? (multiple answers accepted)

- *“A Girl Like Me” (video), the timeline, the quizzes, and the historical content were the most valued aspects of the site. People also appreciated the variety in content and treatment, the clarity of the explanations, and the organization of the site.*

Specific sections/content:

A Girl Like Me (12)

Timeline (6)

Quizzes (5)

History (3)

Section on genetic variation out of Africa (2)

Lived Experience section (2)

Human Variation links (2)

The collage of different faces (2)

Maps showing variation of skin color and genetics

Clear statement of 3 factors making race

Blogs

Maps

Stories

The Game of Life

Texts about today's race

DNA video and height example

General content:

Information (6)
The variety of media (5)
Videos (3)
Images (3)
The interactive aspects (3)
Interesting (2)
Treats most common misconceptions of race (2)
The variety of topics
It's written for a general audience, but doesn't talk 'down' to the user.
That it gives a great modern overview, more information to teach the beginner.

Objectivity
Reliable
Biology content
Anthropological perspectives
Clarity on the misuse of "race"
Completeness
Human variation
Educational

Presentation:

Logical progression of topics (6)
Clear (3)
The measured way the information was delivered (3)
The design (2)
Easy navigation (2)
Its visual beauty and respect (2)
Anybody could easily understand all of the information presented. (2)
Provides complex ideas simply
The animations are incredible.
Imaginative presentation
Very user friendly and good resource to use with kids
Nicely done
Sound

General

All (3)
It was so good.
The fact that it exists
It explained things I didn't think still existed. The doll test was horrible.
Reawakened me to the meaning of race.
That its future is not final
I learned more than I expected to.
The fact that there is no race
The policy behind it
It's appealing.

11. What, if anything, would you like to change on the site?

- *Suggestions for change were often requests for more content. Some people had specific criticisms (see below). Possible issues to consider are bolded.*

	Number	Percent
Nothing	59	59
<u>Suggests change</u>	41	41
Totals	100	100

Would like additional content:

Links to other cities/communities having similar exhibits, or groups in those communities who might work on an exhibit of their own (2)

[Include] much more scientific studies as a complement to the other information. See http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm

More clever ways to get ideas about human variation across to college students.

Give a score after the quiz so one has an idea how close or far his opinion is from the truth.

Include a segment about when you think skin color may have evolved. As we moved out of Africa, how long may it have taken for lighter skin tones to have developed?

More that asks visitors to think critically about these topics. Tools to aid critical thinking that don't seek necessarily shaped messages/aims/goals.

[Include] the North and South American continent in the human variation maps to illustrate the migration of indigenous people into North America and their genetic variation.

More consideration on non-American conceptions of 'race.'

More quizzes!

More on the life of mixed people like myself.

Needs a link to show through pictures how diverse Africans really are. There is a strong tendency to view all Africans as the same. This would be a very powerful way to debunk the stereotypes of Africans rooted in 19thC race science, the slave trade and colonialism.

Add content.

More games to help understand more stuff, and probably a talk room to let people know how you feel about race.

Add social perspective of racism within racial groups. For example how dark-skinned African-Americans think about light-skinned African-Americans.

I'd like to see it in multiple languages. I know this is easier said than done, but it would be ideal. Or a link to altavista.com to translate the site (though I recognize the translation may not be completely accurate)

Add how this is NOT genetic but political. Really leaving out this crucial aspect.

Concerns with existing content:

The information doesn't even graze the tip of reality.

I would change the viewpoints on certain subjects; the information seems very biased.

I think the clip on the human spectrum shows a really difficult and poorly expressed moral slip. "Do you think 'race' is a good way to group people?" is the last quote from the series. I think a better attempt should be made to keep the more scientific and factual aspects distinct from evaluative language.

The link on the "human spectrum" needs to be made clearer. The analogy to the grading continuum is useful but it can be misinterpreted to mean that some groups are better than others.

In the Sports Quiz, there are a number of serious errors. The answers say that racial causes for distinction in sports are 'partly true' or 'true'; these answers should be 'false.' The fact that SOME black people are good at basketball has NOTHING WHATEVER to do with 'race.' In fact, AS YOUR OWN WEBSITE POINTS OUT, there is more genetic variation within so-called 'racial' groups than between them. This fundamental error erodes much of the good work that this site is meant to do.

Be much more critical about the use of the term race. It is reified here and in itself sounds like cultural racism.

Explain better what it is you're trying to say about race. State better that you are trying to disprove the ideas of racism, but not the idea that there are genetic differences among the races.

Greater detail for explanations.

A wider perspective and a clearer stance against race thinking. It comes across as more anxious not to upset people than having a commitment to debunking race thinking.

Presentation concerns:

As someone who is color blind (I do see colors) the colored dot diagrams for gene distribution was not as clear for me than it is for people with standard color perception.

Bigger print for my tired old eyes.

Change the colors.

The spoken word video streaming is not continuous on my computer (Mac).

In the introduction to biology and genetics section, the narrator sounded a bit condescending.

The biological information moves a bit quickly for someone with no background in the discipline.

Treat your audience as persons interested enough to look at the site and competent enough to participate in a technical discussion given to a public audience. Instead of PBS you have given us Rupert Murdoch.

Correct typo under the assumptions of the race quiz--Croatia not Crotia is the name of the country.

Change the way the information was organized and maybe trim it down a bit.

12. Has this website changed the way you think about race or human variation?

- *While less than half of the users said that the web site changed the way they think about race or human variation, those that did say their ideas were changed said that the site clarified their understanding, made them more aware, expelled myths, enlightened them, and heightened their awareness of assumptions.*

	Number	Percent
Yes	41	41
No	59	59
Totals	100	100

More awareness/understanding of issues (6)

Made me a little more aware of the LACK of differences (3)

Race is a cultural construct, not a biological one. (3)

I was moved by hearing the opinions of black girls about themselves. You don't get to hear much from their perspectives. (3)

The sports quiz brought to mind several myths that I harbored for quite some time. (2)

It has enlightened me about the issues blacks have and the problems they face with their unknown origin. (2)

That 'race' is not a definite as I was taught in school.

Interesting new ways to think about race.

There are no genes for race.

I see that race and phenotype get easily interchanged.

Did not know about the sickle cell information.

I had been under the impression that there was a disease to race correlation.

From the blog, surprisingly, more than the educational materials.

I never knew skin color was caused by UV rays. I thought it was caused by melanin in the skin.

The role of research and public education funding in shaping our consciousness about identity -- and the symbolic and social capital of race in the US, ironically a category scientists say lacks biological foundations.

It has made me explain the errors in this site to my anthropology class.

While an anthropologist myself, the site highlighted some of my own assumptions.

I recently read of the out of Africa notion, so what your website did was to further clarify that. Your website is great.

I'm a retired anthropologist so I was trying to imagine myself as a less-informed member of the public and how the site would appear to me.

Hopefully, I continue to learn and grow. Hopefully, I will learn to express my thoughts more clearly to others, especially children.

Society still sees and judges you by skin color. Using the word African/afro for me helps to identify myself as a woman of African descent.

I don't feel so bad that I am black. I feel good about Africa as the beginning of human development reinforced by your show.

I feel even worse about people going through what they do just because of what race they are.

It's important to remember, until you've walked in someone else's shoes, you do not truly understand their situation.

The history of the construct 'race' and how it intertwined/caused/influenced slavery economics. I believe even more in the concept of reparations.

It's a great website which helps the understanding and acceptance of others.

13. How does this website compare to other websites?

- *Over two thirds of the users thought this website compared very well or excellently to others.*

Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
1 1%	9 9%	19 19%	33 33%	38 38%

14. Do you think you will visit this website again?

- *An impressive 82% said they would visit the website again.*

	Number	Percent
Yes	82	82
No	18	18
Totals	100	100

15. Will you recommend this website to others?

- *Eighty-eight percent will recommend the site to others.*

	Number	Percent
Yes	88	88
No	12	12
Totals	100s	100

16. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Positive comments:

Great job! Congratulations. (6)

Thanks for making this project! (5)

Keep up the good work (3)

Excellent work! (2)

It's wonderful and I hope you make it more visible to the general public. (2)

Clearly communicates information about a difficult topic.

Deals with the reality.

You have all done a wonderful job.

Very informative. History of scientific studies was especially interesting eg. 'timeline'

Nice use of color and images; got me interested.

I think this website is wonderful. I had confirmations on how some (most?) darker skin people feel.

Thank you. I still bristle every time I hear scientists insisting that races exist or see surveys that use the term race to classify respondents.

Dr. King's hope, expressed in his "I Have a Dream" speech, was that the civil rights struggle would one day produce a society where people were not "judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." I pray that this website will help lots of people who are seeking the truth about this issue of race. Other than that, this is the best website I visited

I've been studying issues of race for a long time, but have found your website the most helpful I've ever experienced.

Clear, informative, challenging but very well constructed and informative.

I hope I get to see the exhibit. I hope it makes it to California.

Praiseworthy!

This web site is brilliant. It is presented so clearly and logically. It is the best presentation on race.

The Internet needs more sites like this one

Use in teaching:

The site offers me a way to share this information with friends, students and other people who are not regularly exposed to this information in a user-friendly way. Thanks.

I have used this website for my class on the concepts of race and gender in anthropology.

The students (mostly anthropology majors) really enjoyed it and were glad to learn about what the AAA is doing to increase the public's understanding of anthropologists' take(s) on race.

Thanks for giving us resources we can use for mentoring purposes.

I teach art at a small college where mostly minority students come from difficult, challenged communities. I am excited about bringing this site to the attention of faculty, students, and maybe the library Media Center. Congratulations on one of the most constructive web-based projects that I've ever seen! 'Brought tears to my eyes ...

I am using this site with 1st year college students. Great resources.

I think the school library should carry [it] for kids and have the kids review [the site].

I would visit this site with my children to see what they think of the information and how they might like to see it used in school or other settings. I'm going to give the link to teachers I know; perhaps they'd use it in their class discussions. It would be interesting to collaborate on researching this issue in local communities. Thank you.

Great site. Will use it for teaching here in Germany. Thanks.

I will refer anyone that still believes in races to this website. Also, it is an invaluable tool to educate young people. Thank you.

I am a teacher and I designed a lesson around this site to help my students understand that race should not be an issue. Excellent site!

The USA-centrism makes it very difficult to direct students elsewhere in the world to the site and, I think, misses an important opportunity to speak against global racial thought and racism.

I teach introductory Anthropology courses in Northern California and really am glad I've incorporated the website into my section on race.

Comments on Kiri's film:

Huge congratulations to Kiri for her film. It is very interesting and informative, and to know she is still just a teenager is very inspiring. I think this film should be circulated to kids in English schools for use as a discussion starter. Thank you.

Doll test so true, my daughter was so upset when her first Barbie, 'Peaches & Cream Barbie', was the 'black' version.

I think everyone should see the film. It is heart-breaking to think those adorable girls don't feel good about themselves.

I would like to know some background on the filmmaker.

The student documentary made me cry. Seeing the children prefer white dolls was shocking. I thought that they would choose dolls that they identified with more. What was so upsetting to me was that they chose the white dolls as being 'good' and the black ones as 'bad.' This is upsetting because whatever is leading them to this opinion is already setting them up to fail. What's more, it happened during "Brown Vs. The Board of Education" and the results still haven't changed. There's something wrong with that.

Other comments and suggestions:

[This is] a broad perspective about race, from white people. We should have an overall view, from other people as well. [From] other countries too, especially countries that have multi-ethnic groups, the challenges as well as the integration within these societies, give their diversities, how they were able to embrace or silence it.

Explain your definition of race better. In today's world, everyone is so scared of offending someone. I have taken anthropology courses and the professors are so scared of saying race, scared someone will jump up out of their seat and attack them. You state there are no genetic differences when there are, if you were to look at the genetic code you would find substitutions [in the] first or second codon for a specific gene that codes for melanation in white and black individuals' genes.

I don't like your survey about who is white and who isn't. You should have had an option that says 'Depends' because a person from Latin or Central America can be white or cannot be white. Also, Spaniards are just as white as any other European-descended person and people from the Middle East, North Africa, and India are considered Caucasoid.

This website is just propaganda of American social ideology. It represents an American obsession that you have to remember to forget that race actually exists as socio-practical category in America.

While our understandings of race are profoundly informed by the US experience, world understandings of race are not just reflections of the US experience. For example, you restrict the 'colonial period' on your timelines, but in fact, global colonialism right up to at least WWI was a major (and probably equal to slavery) contributor to our contemporary world understandings of race.

I would love to see a study about hip hop culture... where I'm from; most black people are very engrossed in it. It strikes me that the MESSAGE of most mainstream hip-hop music isn't one that serves its listeners. A lot about money and power and nothing about self-respect or making a change in the world. I'd like to see your take on it.

More on changes in the DNA

More about variation in IQ, athletic ability and other traits, like the skin color examples (polygenic traits).

The overall tone is very conservative regardless of the effort to be human etc.

Will non-academics find [the site] easily?

It's a waste because dumb people won't listen to reason.

You could poll children or teens on how they might develop a site like this.

CONCLUSIONS

The Understanding Race website is informative, varied, accessible, and appealing. It speaks to people with a wide range of ages and backgrounds. It is a clear, understandable treatment of a difficult topic. The site is a rich resource for teachers who can use the content with their classes at varying levels. There is also information for scholars who wish to delve more deeply. No educational resource can please everyone, but this one comes close.