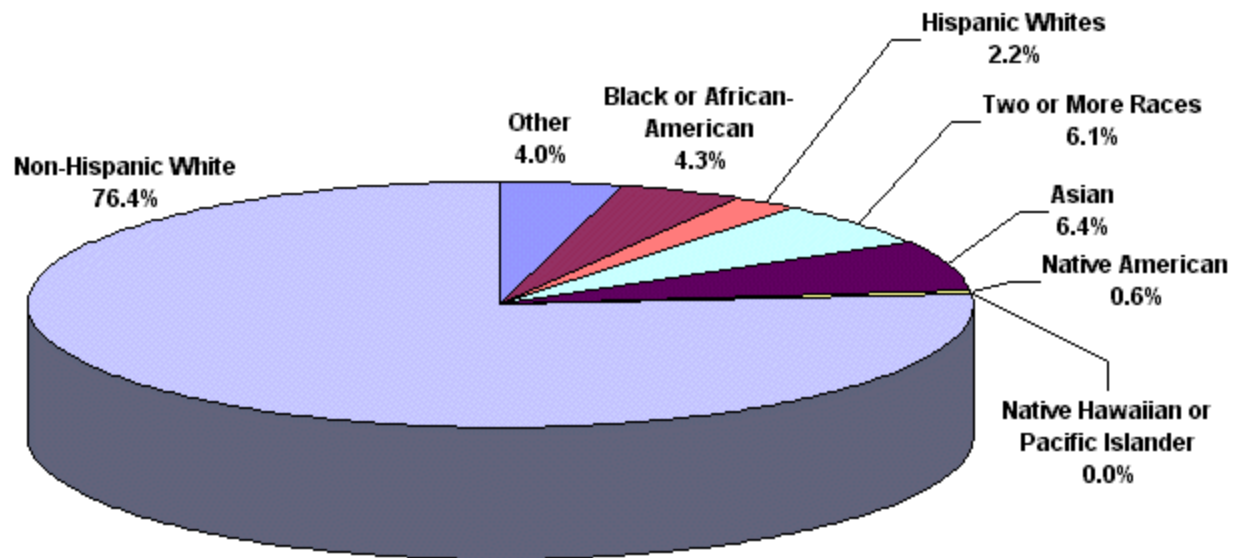


2000 Racial and Ethnic Breakdown Fox Point Neighborhood

Providence, RI



The Providence Plan website breaks down data about race and ethnicity in Fox Point as of 2000, but this breakdown of data for years before 2000 is difficult to access. Information about race and ethnicity in Providence as a whole is available through the Rhode Island Census, but this information doesn't provide much insight about Fox Point specifically. I tried to find information specific to Fox Point by looking at census tracts, which essentially break down cities into neighborhoods, but I couldn't find any analysis of the Fox Point tract.

In addition, even if I had been able to find a racial and ethnic breakdown of Fox Point prior to 2000, that data's usefulness would be limited. As I look at the above pie chart, I am unsure where Portuguese, Cape Verdeans, and Irish—three groups we know have been a strong presence in Fox Point over the past century—fit in both now and in the past. I have heard several Fox Pointers describe themselves as “black,” but from my understanding most don't consider themselves African-American, so would they fit best into the category of “other”? Are Portuguese from the mainland or the Azores Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic whites, or other? While Irish-Americans are generally subsumed under the category of “non-Hispanic whites” today, it took time for them to achieve whiteness—when the first waves of Irish

immigrants reached the U.S., they were discriminated against as untrustworthy foreigners. How would the Irish have been categorized in the 1900 census?

Information about waves of immigration into Fox Point may be helpful in beginning to understand its racial and ethnic demographic shifts. The Providence Plan website states that by 1865, immigrants made up more than half of Fox Point's population, and most of those immigrants were Irish. Portuguese, Azorean, and Cape Verdean immigrants settled in Fox Point until 1924, when immigration restrictions were tightened; people from these groups began to arrive again when restrictions were relaxed in 1965.

From this information, as well as from general knowledge I have begun to gather at Fox Point, I would hypothesize that before 1900, the population of Fox Point could be classified as mostly white (if white includes Irish). As more Cape Verdeans immigrated during the 20th century, whites likely were not as dominant demographically as they had been. Finally, as rents went up and gentrification took root in the 1960s (and continued through the 20th century), whites probably regained the majority status in Fox Point (as seen in the breakdown of 2000 data above).

My struggle to find information about race and ethnicity in Fox Point reinforced two important points. First, it underscored how little scholarship there still is on this neighborhood, and therefore the importance of the work that Fox Point scholars are currently engaged in. I spoke with Claire Andrade-Watkins about my research topic, and she said that one of the reasons she is so engaged in her work documenting and preserving Fox Point is that the type of data I was looking for doesn't really exist. Someone still has to put it together in a way that's accessible. Also, this information (or lack thereof) emphasizes how socially constructed and arbitrary constructions of race are. From the 2000 pie chart, it's impossible to tell how many people identify as Portuguese or Cape Verdean—which as I understand is the most important self-identification of many Fox Pointers. For these reasons, the research I began to undertake for this assignment raised more questions than answers.