



## Race (Human Categorization)

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## KEYWORDS :

**Race** is the classification of humans into groups based on physical traits, ancestry, genetics, or social relations, or the relations between those groups. First used to refer to speakers of a common language and then to denote national affiliations, by the 17th century race began to refer to physical (i.e. phenotypical) traits. The term was often used in a general biological taxonomic sense, starting from the 19th century, to denote genetically differentiated human populations defined by phenotype.

Social conceptions and groupings of races vary over time, involving folk taxonomies] that define essential types of individuals based on perceived traits. Scientists consider biological essentialism obsolete, and generally discourage racial explanations for collective differentiation in both physical and behavioural traits.

Even though there is a broad scientific agreement that essentialist and typological conceptualizations of race are untenable, scientists around the world continue to conceptualize race in widely differing ways, some of which have essentialist implications. While some researchers use the concept of race to make distinctions among fuzzy sets of traits or observable differences in behaviour, others in the community suggest that the idea of race often is used in a naive] or simplistic way, and argue that, among humans, race has no taxonomic significance by pointing out that all living humans belong to the same species, *Homo sapiens*, and subspecies, *Homo sapiens sapiens*.

**Race and colonialism**

According to Smedley and Marks the European concept of "race", along with many of the ideas now associated with the term, arose at the time of the scientific revolution, which introduced and privileged the study of natural kinds, and the age of European imperialism and colonization which established political relations between Europeans and peoples with distinct cultural and political traditions. As Europeans encountered people from different parts of the world, they speculated about the physical, social, and cultural differences among various human groups. The rise of the Atlantic slave trade, which gradually displaced an earlier trade in slaves from throughout the world, created a further incentive to categorize human groups in order to justify the subordination of African slaves. Drawing on Classical sources and upon their own internal interactions—for example, the hostility between the English and Irish powerfully influenced early European thinking about the differences between people—Europeans began to sort themselves and others into groups based on physical appearance, and to attribute to individuals belonging to these groups behaviours and capacities which were claimed to be deeply ingrained.

**Early taxonomic models**

In the 18th century the differences among human groups became a focus of scientific investigation. But the scientific classification of phenotypic variation was frequently coupled with racist ideas about innate predispositions of different groups, always attributing the most desirable features to the White, European race and arranging the other races along a continuum of progressively undesirable attributes. The 1735 classification of Carl Linnaeus, inventor of zoological taxonomy, divided the human species *Homo sapiens* into continental varieties of Europeans, asiaticus, Americans, and after, each associated with a different humour: sanguine, melancholic, choleric, and phlegmatic, respectively.

The 1775 treatise "The Natural Varieties of Mankind", by Johann Friedrich Blumenbach proposed five major divisions: the Caucasoid race, the Mongoloid race, the Ethiopian race (later termed Negroid), the American Indian race, and the Malayan race, but he did not propose any hierarchy among the races.

From the 17th through 19th centuries, the merging of folk beliefs about group differences with scientific explanations of those differences produced what Smedley has called an "ideology of race". According to this ideology, races are primordial, natural, enduring and distinct. It was further argued that some groups may be the result of mixture between formerly distinct populations, but that careful study could distinguish the ancestral races that had combined to produce admixed groups.

**Race and polygenism**

In the last two decades of the 18th century, the theory of polygenism, the belief that different races had evolved separately in each continent and shared no common ancestor, was advocated in England by historian Edward Long and anatomist Charles White, in Germany by ethnographers Christoph Meiners and Georg Forster, and in France by Julien-Joseph Virey.

**Models of human evolution**

Today, all humans are classified as belonging to the species *Homo sapiens* and sub-species *Homo sapiens sapiens*. However, this is not the first species of homininae: the first species of genus *Homo*, *Homo habilis*, evolved in East Africa at least 2 million years ago, and members of this species populated different parts of Africa in a relatively short time. *Homo erectus* evolved more than 1.8 million years ago, and by 1.5 million years ago had spread throughout Europe and Asia.

**Biological classification**

In the early 20th century, many anthropologists accepted and taught the belief that biologically distinct races were isomorphic with distinct linguistic, cultural, and social groups, while popularly applying that belief to the field of eugenics, in conjunction with a practice that is now called racism. After the Nazi eugenics program, along with the rise of anti-colonial movements, racial essentialism lost widespread popularity. Race anthropologists were pressured to acknowledge findings coming from studies of culture and population genetics, and to revise their conclusions about the sources of phenotypic variation. A significant number of modern anthropologists and biologists in the West came to view race as an invalid genetic or biological designation.

**Ancestrally differentiated populations**

Cladistics is another method of classification. A clade is a taxonomic group of organisms consisting of a single common ancestor and all the descendants of that ancestor. Every creature produced by sexual reproduction has two immediate lineages, one maternal and one paternal. Whereas Carl Linnaeus established a taxonomy of living organisms based on anatomical similarities and differences, cladistics seeks to establish a taxonomy—the phylogenetic tree—based on genetic similarities and differences and tracing the process of acquisition of multiple characteristics by single organisms. Some researchers have tried to clarify the idea of race by equating it to the biological idea of the clade. Often mitochondrial DNA or Y chromosome sequences are used to study ancient human migration paths. These single-locus sources of DNA do not

recombine and are inherited from a single parent. Individuals from the various continental groups tend to be more similar to one another than to people from other continents, and tracing either mitochondrial DNA or non-recombinant Y-chromosome DNA explains how people in one place may be largely derived from people in some remote location.

Rachel Caspari (2003) have argued that clades are by definition monophyletic groups (a tax on that includes *all* descendants of a given ancestor) and since no groups currently regarded as races are monophyletic, none of those groups can be clades.

### Genetically differentiated populations

Another way to look at differences between populations is to measure genetic differences rather than physical differences between groups. The mid-20th-century anthropologist William C. Boyd defined race as: "A population which differs significantly from other populations in regard to the frequency of one or more of the genes it possesses. It is an arbitrary matter which, and how many, gene loci we choose to consider as a significant 'constellation'." Leonard Lieberman and Rodney Kirk have pointed out that "the paramount weakness of this statement is that if one gene can distinguish races then the number of races is as numerous as the number of human couples reproducing." In contrast, Walsh & Yun reviewed the literature in 2011 and reported that "Genetic studies using very few chromosomal loci find that genetic polymorphisms divide human populations into clusters with almost 100 percent accuracy and that they correspond to the traditional anthropological categories."

### Social constructions

Many social scientists have replaced the word race with the word "ethnicity" to refer to self-identifying groups based on beliefs concerning shared culture, ancestry and history. Alongside empirical and conceptual problems with "race", following the Second World War, evolutionary and social scientists were acutely aware of how beliefs about race had been used to justify discrimination, apartheid, slavery, and genocide.

Imani Perry has argued that race "is produced by social arrangements and political decision making." Perry explains race more in stating, "Race is something that happens, rather than something that is. It is dynamic, but it holds no objective truth."

### Political and practical uses

In the United States, federal government policy promotes the use of racially categorized data to identify and address health disparities between racial or ethnic groups. In clinical settings, race has sometimes been considered in the diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions. Doctors have noted that some medical conditions are more prevalent in certain racial or ethnic groups than in others, without being sure of the cause of those differences. Recent interest in race-based medicine, or race-targeted pharmacogenomics, has been fuelled by the proliferation of human genetic data which followed the decoding of the human genome in the first decade of the twenty-first century. There is an active debate among biomedical researchers about the meaning and importance of race in their research. Proponents of the use of racial categories in biomedicine argue that continued use of racial categorizations in biomedical research and clinical practice makes possible the application of new genetic findings, and provides a clue to diagnosis. Biomedical researchers' positions on race fall into two main camps: those who consider the concept of race to have no biological basis and those who consider it to have the potential to be biologically meaningful. Members of the latter camp often base their arguments around the potential to create genome-based personalized medicine.

### Law enforcement

Criminal justice agencies in England and Wales use at least two separate racial/ethnic classification systems when reporting crime, as of 2010. One is the system used in the 2001 Census when individuals identify themselves as belonging to a particular ethnic

group: W1 (White-British), W2 (White-Irish), W9 (Any other white background); M1 (White and black Caribbean), M2 (White and black African), M3 (White and Asian), M9 (Any other mixed background); A1 (Asian-Indian), A2 (Asian-Pakistani), A3 (Asian-Bangladeshi), A9 (Any other Asian background); B1 (Black Caribbean), B2 (Black African), B3 (Any other black background); O1 (Chinese), O9 (Any other). The other is categories used by the police when they visually identify someone as belonging to an ethnic group, e.g. at the time of a stop and search or an arrest: White – North European (IC1), White – South European (IC2), Black (IC3), Asian (IC4), Chinese, Japanese, or South East Asian (IC5), Middle Eastern (IC6), and Unknown (IC0). "IC" stands for "Identification Code;" these items are also referred to as Phoenix classifications. Officers are instructed to "record the response that has been given" even if the person gives an answer which may be incorrect; their own perception of the person's ethnic background is recorded separately. Comparability of the information being recorded by officers was brought into question by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in September 2007, as part of its Equality Data Review; one problem cited was the number of reports that contained an ethnicity of "Not Stated."

### Forensic anthropology

Forensic anthropologists draw on highly heritable morphological features of human remains (e.g. cranial measurements) to aid in the identification of the body, including in terms of race. In a 1992 article, anthropologist Norman Sauer noted that anthropologists had generally abandoned the concept of race as a valid representation of human biological diversity, except for forensic anthropologists. He asked, "If races don't exist, why are forensic anthropologists so good at identifying them?" He concluded:

He successful assignment of race to a skeletal specimen is not a vindication of the race concept, but rather a prediction that an individual, while alive was assigned to a particular socially constructed "racial" category. A specimen may display features that point to African ancestry. In this country that person is likely to have been labelled Black regardless of whether or not such a race actually exists in nature.

A 2002 study found that about 13% of human craniometric variation existed between regions; while 81% existed within regions (the other 6% existed between local populations within the same region). Another 2009 study showed that American blacks and whites had different skeletal morphologies, and that significant patterning in variation in these traits exists within continents. This suggests that classifying humans into races based on skeletal characteristics would necessitate many different "races" being defined.

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