



CONCEPT OF RACE

(S/GEO/202/MN-2T: FUNDAMENTALS OF HUMAN GEOGRAPHY)

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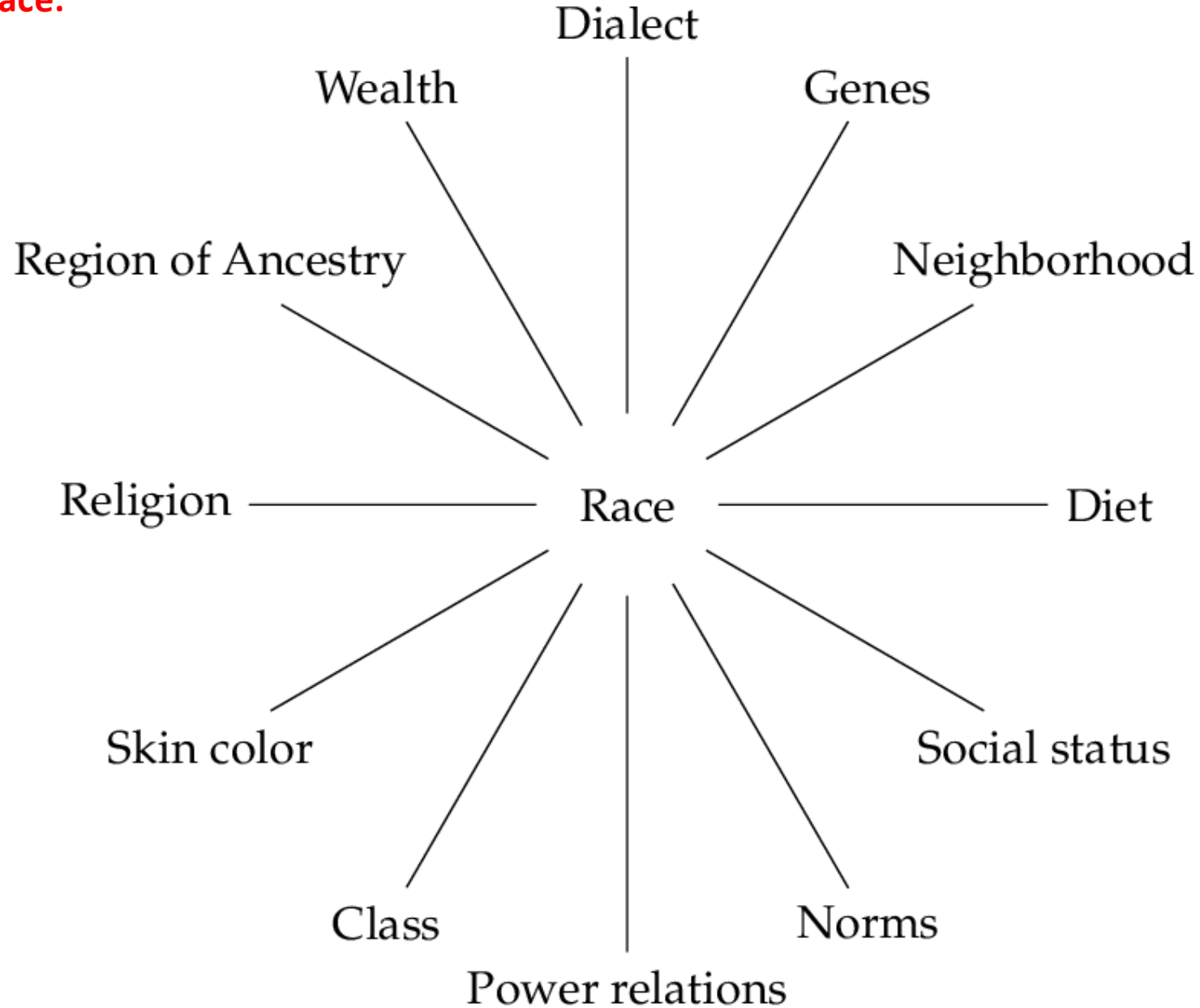
2nd Sem, Major
04.04.24

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EARLY CONCEPTION: RACE IS BIOLOGICAL

- Race is genetically determined and refers to one's ancestry and a way to identify humans based on physical characteristics.
- Race refers to the concept of dividing people into groups on the basis of various sets of **inherited physical and behavioral differences** and the process of ascribing social meaning to those groups.
- But shared genetic ancestry is a result of geographical isolation. Less geographic isolation results in the mixing of racial groups. Thus, classifying people by their race with any accuracy is difficult.
- Over time, the typology of race that developed during early racial science has fallen into disuse, and the social construction of race is a more sociological way of understanding racial categories. When considering skin color, for example, the social construction of race perspective recognizes that the relative darkness or fairness of skin is an evolutionary adaptation to the available sunlight in different regions of the world.
- In modern society, some people who consider themselves “white” actually have more melanin (a pigment that determines skin color) in their skin than other people who identify as “black.” In some countries, such as Brazil, class is more important than skin color in determining racial categorization. People with high levels of melanin may consider themselves “white” if they enjoy a middle-class lifestyle.

Construction Of Race:



Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840) divided the human species into five races in 1779, later founded on **crania research** (description of human skulls), and called them (1793/1795):

- the **Caucasian** or white race. Blumenbach was the first to use this term for Europeans, but the term would later be reinterpreted to also include Middle Easterners and South Asians.
- the **Mongolian** or yellow race, including all East Asians.
- the **Malayan** or brown race, including Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders.
- the **Ethiopian** or black race, including all sub-Saharan Africans.
- the **American** or red race, including all Native Americans.



1

Tungusae.



2

Caribaei.



3

Feminae Georgianae.



4

O-tahitae.



5

Aethiopsae.

Character	Caucasoid	Negroid	Mongoloid
1) Skin colour	Light reddish, white to olive-brown, some are brown	Brown to brown-black, some are yellow-brown	Light yellow to yellow-brown, some are reddish-brown
2) Head hair	Light blond to dark brown in colour, fine to medium in texture, straight to wavy in form	Brown-black in colour, coarse in texture, curly to frizzly or wooly in form	Brown to brown-black in colour, coarse in texture, straight in form
3) Body Hair	Moderate to abundance	Slight	Scanty distributed
4) Head form	Dolichocephalic to brachycephalic, height is medium to very high	Predominantly dolichocephalic, height is low to medium	Predominantly brachycephalic, height is medium
5) Face	Narrow to medium broad	Medium broad to narrow, prognathism is often present	Medium broad to very broad, cheekbones are high and flat.
6) Nose	Leptorrhine to mesorrhine, usually bridge is high	Platyrrhine, usually bridge is low	Mesorrhine to platyrrhine, usually bridge is low to medium
7) Epicanthic fold	Absence	Absence	Presence (internal, external or complete)

A Comparative Account of Three Major Races:

8) Stature	Medium to tall	Very short to tall	Medium to short
9) ABO blood group	Relatively high incidence of A ₂	Relatively high incidence of A ₂ and B	Relatively high incidence of A ₁ , very low frequency of A ₂
10) Rh factor	Highest frequency of Rh ^{-ve}	Moderate frequency of Rh ^{-ve}	Rh ^{-ve} is rare

Source : <https://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/73689/1/Unit-7.pdf>

OTHER CLASSIFICATION SCHEME:



2. Dane, Nordic



6. Afghan, Iranian



Caucasoid

- light skin (rosy, gold, brown shades)
- straight hair (red, blond, brown tones)
- narrow, elongated skull
- vertical, open-obtuse facial angle
- broad jaw, sharp chin
- narrow nose with a high root
- small eye sockets, light eye colors



Mongoloid

- yellowish skin
- black straight hair, sparse beard
- broad face, projecting cheekbones
- edge to edge bite
- shovel shaped incisors
- narrow flat nose
- epicanthic folds
i.e. their typical upper eyelid skin fold
- brown eye-color



no data



Capoid

- leathery-yellow skin
- small stature
- females often steatopygic
- black, spiral-shaped (peppercorn) hair
- flat faces, prominent malars
- flat and wide nose
- narrow eyelid apertures
- epicanthic eye folds (Asian similarities)
- dark brown eye-color



Congoid

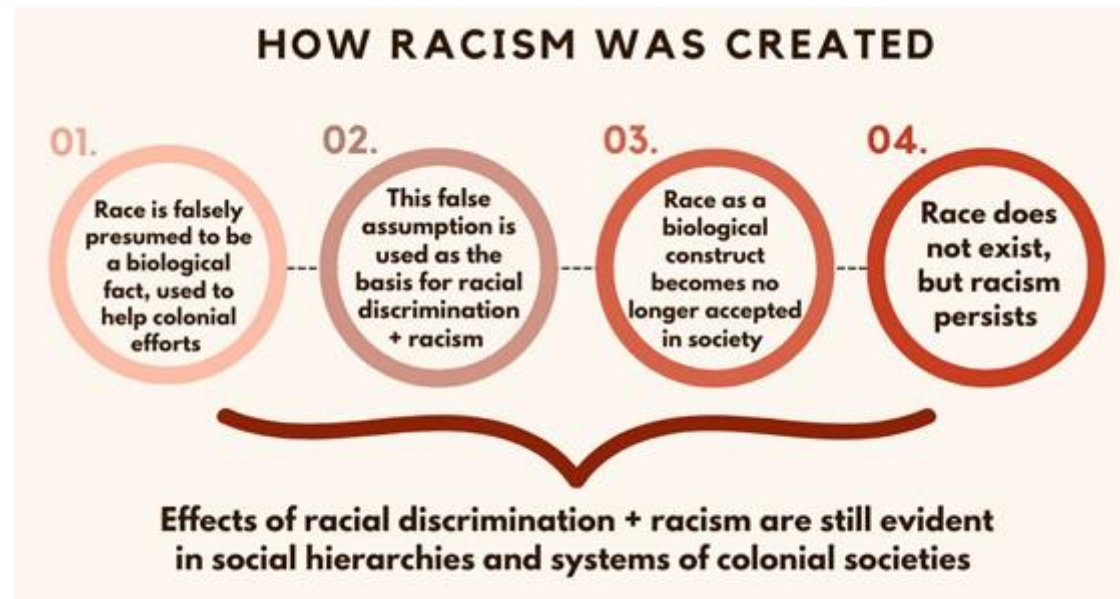
- black skin color
- tightly curled black hair
- prognathic jaw, large teeth
- flat and wide nose with a low root
- absent nasal spine
- wide space between eyes
- dark brown or black eye-color



Australoid

- chocolate skin color
- silky, black and wavy hair
- large brow ridge
- broad, flat nose
- large, heavy jaws and prognathism
- dark brown or black eye-color

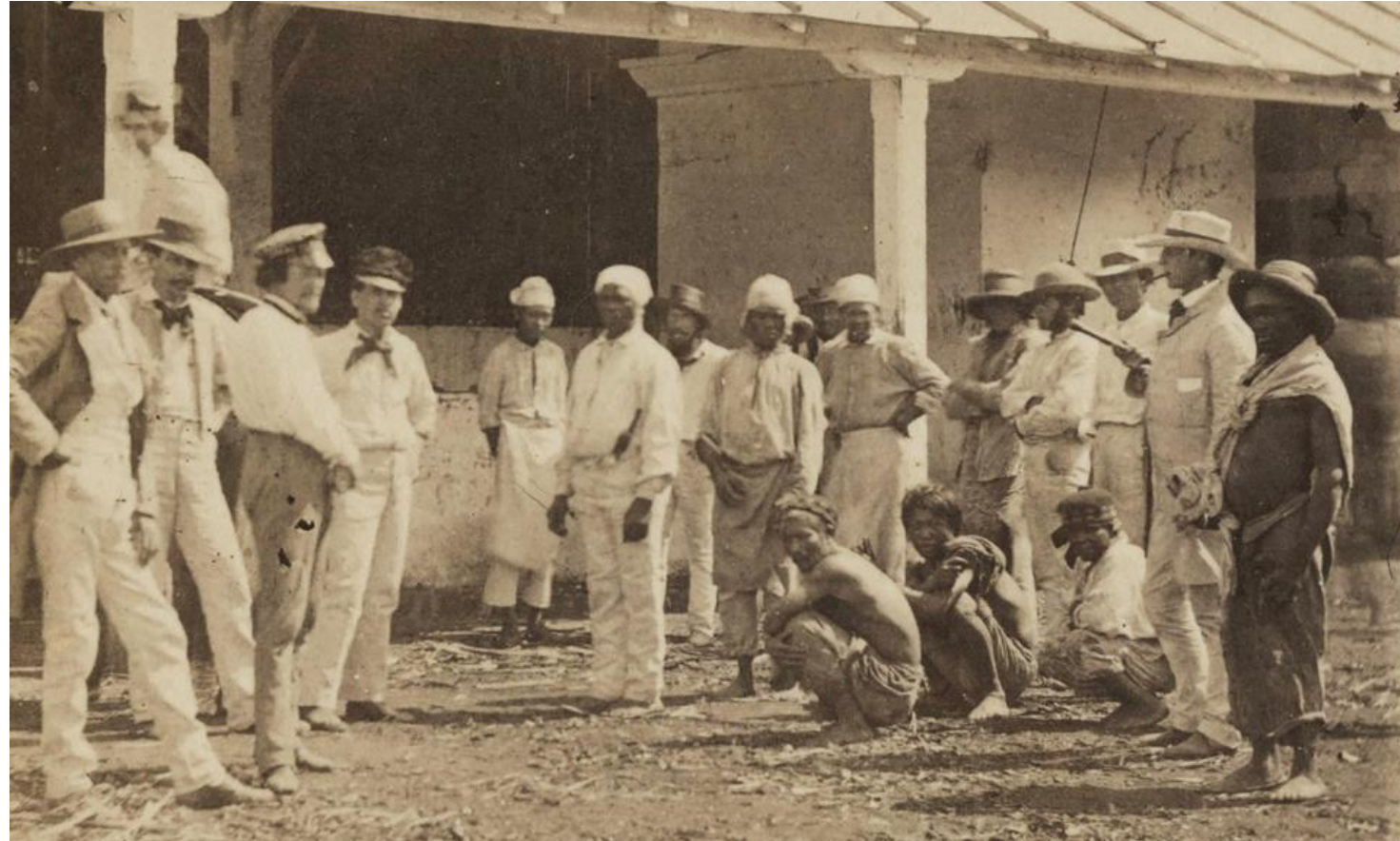
Scientific racism, sometimes termed **biological racism**, is the pseudoscientific belief that the human species can be subdivided into biologically distinct taxa called "races" and that empirical evidence exists to support or justify racism (racial discrimination), racial inferiority, or racial superiority. Before the mid-20th century, scientific racism was accepted throughout the scientific community, but it is no longer considered scientific.



Modern Genetic studies in the late 20th century refuted the existence of biogenetically distinct races, and scholars now argue that "races" are cultural interventions reflecting specific attitudes and beliefs that were imposed on different populations in the wake of **western European conquests beginning in the 15th century**.

ORIGIN OF THE IDEA OF RACE: POWER DYNAMICS and DISCRIMINATION:

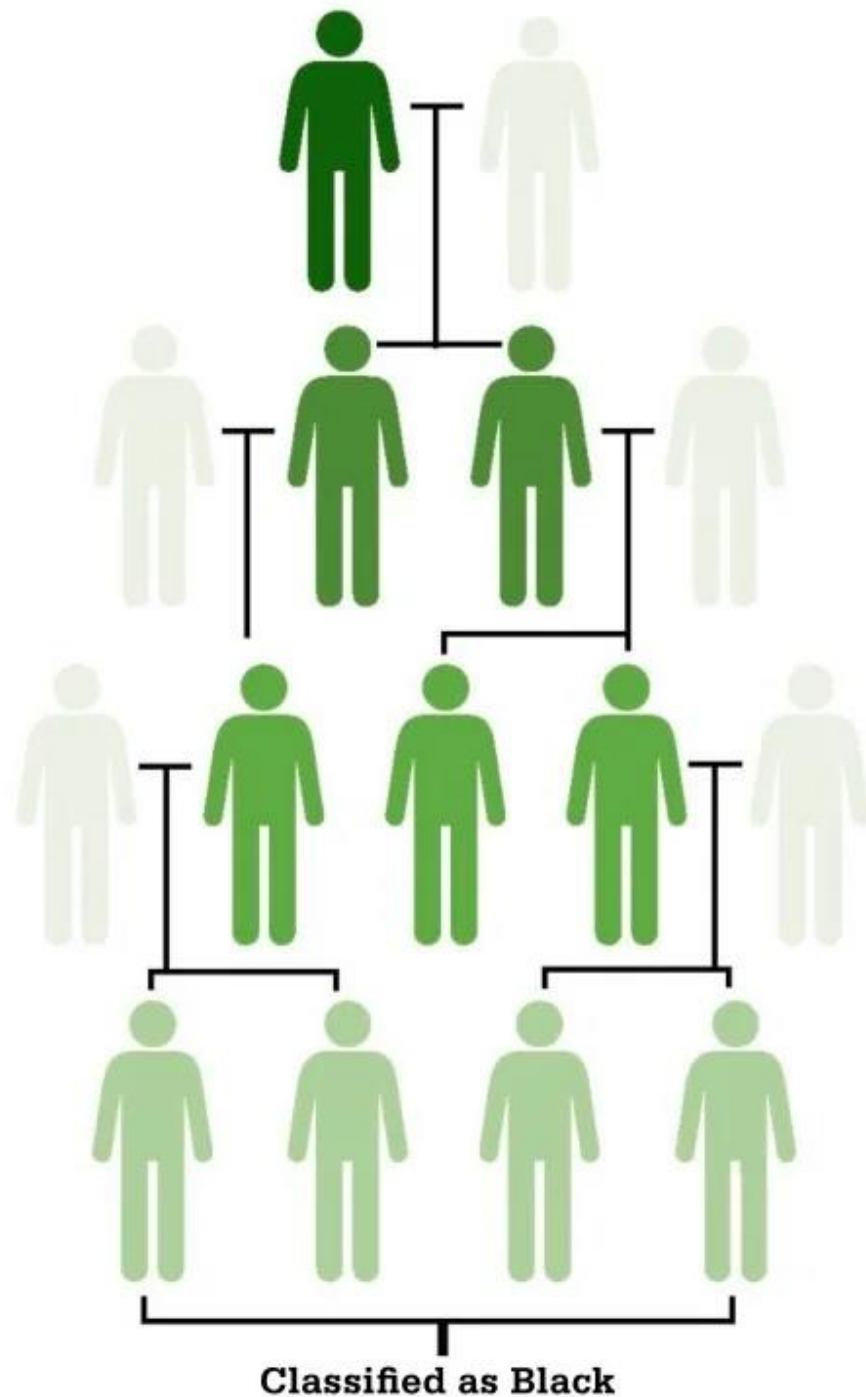
- Race had been used to justify discrimination, apartheid, slavery, and genocide.
- Race has real, material effects in housing discrimination, in the legal process, in policing practices, in education, in workplace discrimination, and many other domains of society. As a result, racial groups possessing relatively little power often find themselves excluded or oppressed.
- According to historian Milton Meltzer, the rise of the transatlantic slave trade created an incentive to categorize human groups in order to justify the subordination of Africans as slaves. Because Christianity asserted that slavery was a dehumanizing institution and therefore forbidden, a story had to be created that made Black people less than human. Pseudoscientific theories of people of color being biologically inferior to Whites was that story.



As Europeans began to sort themselves and others into groups based on physical appearance, they attributed to members of these groups certain behaviors and capacities that were supposedly deeply ingrained (biological). These supposed physical, intellectual, behavioral, and moral differences soon became part of common folk belief or "conventional wisdom".

- During the time of slavery in the U.S. South, the skin tone of enslaved peoples lightened over the years as babies were born from the Union, often in the form of rape of enslaved individuals, by slave owners and other Whites. As it became difficult to tell who was Black and who was not, many court battles over people's racial identity occurred because of the existing **one-drop rule**. People who were accused of having Black ancestry would go to court to “prove” they were White in order to avoid enslavement or other problems (Staples, 1998).





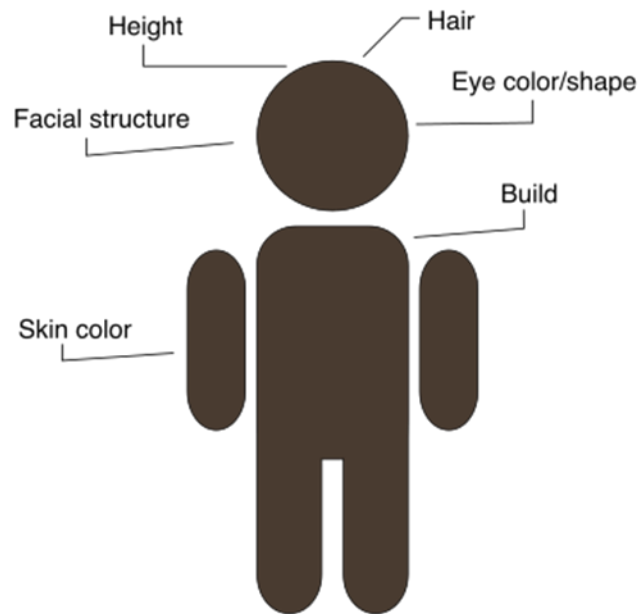
Key:

- Black ancestor
- White
- Mixed-race
- Mixed-race
- Mixed-race

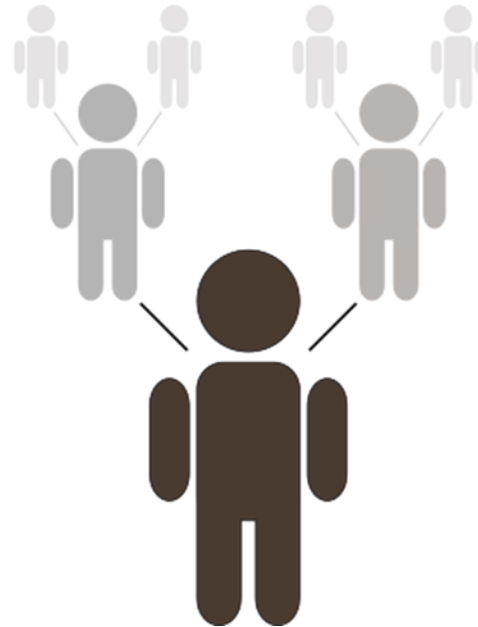
The idea that race has a scientific, genetic basis prevailed for centuries. Now defunct, the “one drop rule” adopted by some US states in the early 20th century meant that anyone with an African ancestor was classified as Black, regardless of skin color, experiences, or their own sense of racial identity.

Modern Definition: Race is a social construct used to group people. Race was constructed as a hierarchal human-grouping system, generating racial classifications to identify, distinguish and marginalize some groups across nations, regions and the world. Race divides human populations into groups often based on physical appearance, social factors and cultural backgrounds.

A)



B)



Race versus ancestry. (A) The classification of people into different races is typically based on observable physical features, with skin color being the most prominently used characteristic. Racial classifications also draw upon non-biological characteristics such as culture, language, history, religion, and socioeconomic status. Thus, “race” is a term that lacks clear definition. (B) In contrast to race, “ancestry” emphasizes the geographical origins of one’s ancestors (parents, grandparents, and beyond). Unlike “race,” the concept of “ancestry” does not focus on the static categorization of humans into groups, but rather on the process by which a person’s history unfolded.

Modern Science and Race:

- scientific advances in the 20th century demonstrated that human physical variations do not fit a “racial” model.
- Instead, human physical variations **tend to overlap**. There are **no genes** that can identify distinct groups that accord with the conventional race categories.
- In fact, DNA analyses have proved that all humans have much more in common, genetically, than they have differences. The genetic difference between any two humans is less than 1 percent.
- Moreover, geographically widely separated populations vary from one another in only about 6 to 8 percent of their genes. Because of the overlapping of traits that bear no relationship to one another (such as skin colour and hair texture) and the inability of scientists to cluster peoples into discrete racial packages, modern researchers have concluded that the concept of race has no biological validity.

Race as a Social Construct:

- In this view, race has no real existence other than what and how people think of it; what matters then are the ideas we have attached to race and racial groups.
- “Thomas theorem”: “if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences”.
- Without having any biological reality, it is also true that race has an incredible impact on the identity and life of people. In this way, the impact of the idea of race are real.

Changing labels for racial categories:

The social construction of race is also reflected in the changing labels for racial categories:

For example:

NEGROID

NEGRO

“BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL”

AFRICAN AMERICAN

Versatile meanings of “race”

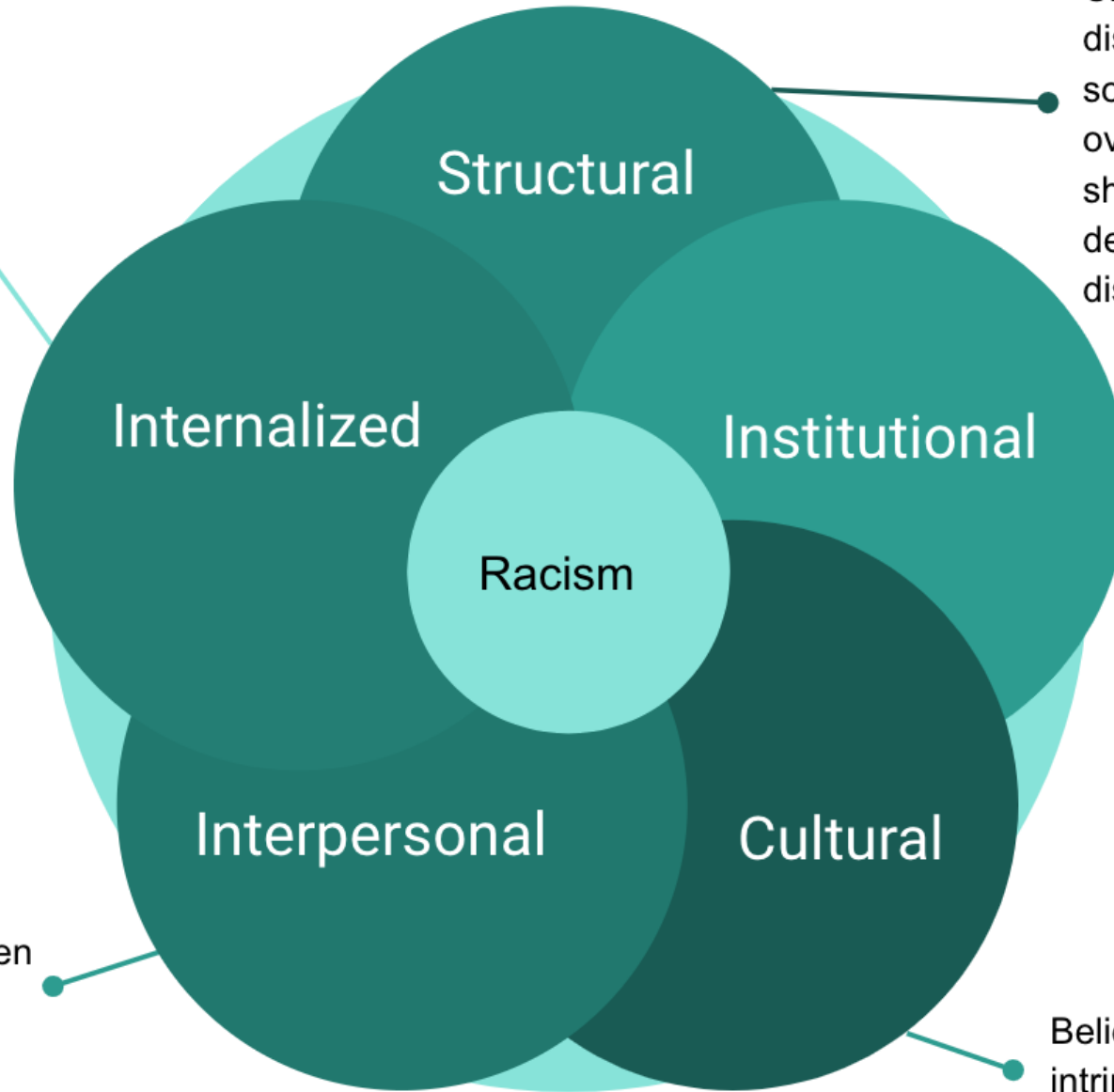
- ❑ In the United States, for example, the term race generally refers to a group of people who have in common some visible **physical traits**, such as skin colour, hair texture, facial features, and eye formation. Such distinctive features are associated with large, geographically separated populations, and these continental aggregates are also designated as races, as the “African race,” the “European race,” and the “Asian race.”
- ❑ The term race has also been applied to **linguistic groups** (the “Arab race” or the “Latin race”),
- ❑ To **religious groups** (the “Jewish race”),
- ❑ Even to **political, national, or ethnic groups** with few or no physical traits that distinguish them from their neighbors (the “Irish race,” the “French race,” the “Spanish race,” the “Slavic race,” the “Chinese race”, etc.).

Racism: Prejudice and Discrimination: Racial diversity may lead some individuals and societies to form **prejudices** about members of a particular culture or race and to practice **discrimination**.

- **Prejudice** refers to the beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes that someone holds about a group. Prejudice is not based on experience; instead, it is a prejudgment, originating outside experience. On the other hand **discrimination** consists of actions against a group of people. Discrimination can be based on **gender, age, religion, health, race** and other indicators; race-based laws against discrimination strive to address this set of social problems.
- **Racism** is a stronger type of prejudice used to justify the belief that one racial category is somehow superior or inferior to others; it is also a set of practices used by a racial majority to disadvantage a racial minority.
- **Institutional racism** refers to how racism is embedded in the fabric of society. For example, the disproportionate number of black men arrested, charged, and convicted of crimes may reflect racial profiling, a form of institutional racism.
- **Colorism** is another kind of prejudice, in which someone believes one type of skin tone is superior or inferior to another within a racial group. Studies suggest that darker skinned African Americans are discriminated against more than lighter skinned African Americans



Maintaining or participating in the set of attitudes, behaviors, etc supporting the power of the dominant group



Creation and perpetuation of systemic disparities via mutually reinforcing societal norms (stigma, etc) and overarching structures that together shape society's fabric (e.g., capitalism determines income & wealth distributions)

Creation and perpetuation of disparities via discriminatory policies and practices by institutions

Behavior and communication between individuals based on unfounded negative attitudes about one's race

Belief that there are generalized intrinsic cultural differences belonging to individuals of one race or ethnicity

Racial Discrimination in Practice:

- When a newspaper identifies by race individuals accused of a crime, it may enhance stereotypes of a particular minority.
- Another example of racist practices is **racial steering**, in which real estate agents direct prospective homeowners toward or away from specific neighborhoods based on their race.



Relevance of Studying Race:

“Race matters. Race matters ... because of persistent racial inequality in society - inequality that cannot be ignored.”

- Justice Sonya Sotomayor (*United States Supreme Court*)

- It is an established fact that racial identity is **externally imposed**: *“How do others perceive me?”*.
- And one can not deny that Racial identity is also **internally constructed**: *“How do I identify myself?”*

Understanding how our identities and experiences have been shaped by race is vital. We are all awarded certain privileges and or disadvantages because of our race whether or not we are conscious of it.

-National Museum of African American History & Culture

THANK YOU