

## Phil 318: RACE AND SCIENCE

“CDRGs” (Conventionally Defined Racial Groups), such as “blacks,” “whites,” “Asians.” (This terminology makes it clear that these are not *races*, but it acknowledges that they are real social groups.)

### A. Significance of historical population movements for “race”

### B. Genetics and race:

How do these 3 ideas relate to the popular idea of race: (a) somatic characteristics; (b) genetics; (c) inherent psychological and mental characteristics?

The popular idea of race is *not* inherently based on genetics (Blum, 139f)

1. If we use genetic commonality to group different populations, we get completely different groupings for different genetic characteristics, depending on which genetic characteristic we pick. And these groupings almost never correspond to CDRGs. [see handout: “Different Ways to Divide Humans into Races”]
2. Race is not fundamentally a scientific idea but a popular idea rationalizing inequality and discrimination that was given a scientific legitimation and systematization.
3. But science can show it to be invalid.
4. Race is not fundamentally a genetic idea, but genetics can show it to be false:  
How?
  - a. That genetics shows that “under the skin” we are all much more similar than different: 99.78 commonality across CDRGs. [but we also share 98% genetic material with chimpanzees]
  - b. Current approach: There is genetic variation. But 85% of all human genetic variation can be found within *any* ethnic, geographically located human group (Blum 138), and 90% can be found within *any* continentally-defined groups (i.e. CDRGs)(Bamshad and Olson, 80). In other words, there may be plenty of genetic variation, but it is almost all *within* each CDRG, not *between* them.

(a and b are consistent with each other, even though their emphasis is opposed.)

(c. There are *more behavioral and psychological* differences between CDRGs than there are genetic differences, but this is because environmental and cultural factors affect behavior. The constant emphasis on “genes” tends to mask this fact. Problem of “geneticization.”)
5. But don’t polymorphisms allow us to genetically link people to continental origins? [difference between genetic material that causes significant human characteristics, and genetic material that is just there and can be used to trace ancestral history, but otherwise is not linked to inherent characteristics]

C. Race and medicine: Aren’t some medically significant conditions more typical of some CDRGs than others? Answer: No. There are statistical correlations, but “race” is only a *proxy* for the cause of the medical condition. [Blum 141-2; Bamshad/Olson 84-5]

D. Racist science (Rushton; Herrnstein and Murray, The Bell Curve); and racial science

E. Scientific uses of “race” vs. popular uses, and the effect of each on the other