

The treatment of topics relating to people of mixed race in bibliographic classification schemes: A critical race-theoretic approach

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Outline

- motivation 1 (narrow)
- research question 1
- approaches
- results 1
- motivation 2 (broad)
- research question 2

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DDC Table 5 (1971-2003, 18th-21st eds.)

- 03 Basic races
 - 034 Caucasoids
 - 035 Mongoloids
 - 036 Negroids
- 04 Mixtures of basic races
 - 042 Caucasoids and Mongoloids
 - 043 Mongoloids and Negroids
 - 044 Negroids and Caucasoids
 - 046 Caucasoids, Mongoloids, Negroids

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22nd ed. changes to Table 5 (2003-)

- "Racial" is dropped from table's title
 - "to reflect the de-emphasis on race in current scholarship"
- "Basic races" class -03 is dropped
 - "because without meaning in context"
- "A work that emphasizes race should be classed with the ethnic group that most closely matches the concept of race described in the work."
- "Mixtures of basic races" class -04 is relocated to -05 as "Persons of mixed ancestry with ethnic origins from more than one continent"
 - with instructions on how to build numbers using notation for specific ethnic/national groups from rest of table

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Research question 1

- how is the relocation / reconceptualization of class -04 to be interpreted?
 - reasons for change?
 - effects (potential, actual) of change?

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Approaches

- from within LIS
 - **domain analysis** (Hjørland): critical analysis of the "social and ideological embeddedness" of classification schemes
 - **critical classification** (Olson): schemes as social constructions reflecting biases of context
 - **discourse analysis** (Frohmann): schemes as interpretable texts
 - **subject ontogeny** (Tennis): historical account of "social life" of a domain's terminology

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Approaches, cont'd

- from outside LIS
 - **philosophy of race** (Taylor): ontological status of racial/ethnic categories
 - **sociology of race** (Omi & Winant): formation of racial groups
 - **ethnic studies** (Root): personal multiethnic identity
 - **public policy** (Aspinall): categorization of racially mixed people
 - **critical race theory** (Delgado): racism as persistent, endemic, systemic

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"Racially mixed people" in LCSH

Racially mixed people

- UF Biracial people
- UF Mixed race people
- UF Mulattoes [preferred term until 1991]
- UF Multiracial people
- UF People of mixed descent
- BT Ethnic groups
- RT Miscegenation

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Racial / ethnic categories for self-identification in US census, 2000

- ethnicity [may be of any race]
 - Hispanic or Latino
 - Not Hispanic or Latino
- race
 - **American Indian or Alaska Native** [+ write-in box for tribe(s)]
 - **Asian** [6 specified categories + write-in box for Other]
 - **Black or African American**
 - **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander** [3 specified categories + write-in box for Other]
 - **White**
 - **Some Other Race** [+ write-in box]

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Racially mixed people in US census

- respondents may select one or more races
 - 6 basic categories + 57 combinations of 2 or more races = 63 categories
 - 6 basic categories + "Two or More Races" = 7 exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories
- respondents who would self-identify in census with one or more races are "racially mixed people"
- numbers of (a) racially mixed people, (b) books written by racially mixed people, and (c) books about racially mixed people, are increasing

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A simple classification scheme? for documents about topics relating to racial populations

- 1 American Indian or Alaska Native
- 2 Asian
- 3 Black or African American
- 4 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- 5 White
- 6 Some Other Race
- 7 Racially Mixed
 - 712 American Indian or Alaska Native / Asian
 - 7256 Asian / White / Some Other Race
 - etc.

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Some challenges

- general
 - the exhaustivity principle
 - the specificity principle
 - the nonlinearity principle
- specific
 - the social construction of race
 - the intersectionality of personal attributes
 - the continuity of racial groups (or fuzziness of boundaries)
 - the self-identity principle

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The exhaustivity principle

- it should be possible for all documents to be classed using the scheme, with minimal assignment to the "Other" category
- are these the only races?
- in other countries?

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The specificity principle

- it should be possible for documents to be classed specifically, with minimal assignment to classes that are broader than documents' subjects
- are the racial classes divisible into subclasses?
- what criteria may be used to guide the direction and frequency of such division?

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The nonlinearity principle

- classes should not be arranged in any order that connotes a meaningful sequence, ranking, or hierarchy
- alphabetical order is OK?
- should "Racially Mixed" be separate from the main order?
- should its subclasses appear at a lower level of the hierarchy than the other main classes?

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The social construction of race

- races (i.e., racial populations) are not natural kinds
 - cannot be defined in biological/genetic terms
 - races are social constructs, artifacts, nominal kinds, concepts
 - based on perceptions of (a) bodily appearances, and (b) ancestry
 - multiple equally valid specifications of the races are possible
- BUT races (like, e.g., occupational groups) are no less real/existent for that
 - especially for their members (i.e., those people that self-identify with them)

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The intersectionality of personal attributes

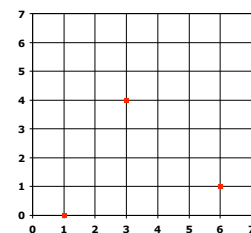
- a person's race is not the only social population of which he/she is a member ...
- ... nor is it necessarily perceived as the most significant
- ethnicity
- class
- gender
- sexual orientation
- etc.

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The continuity of racial populations



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How bibliographic classification typically handles such difficulties

- social construction
 - selection from the range of possibilities of a single specification of racial populations
- intersectionality
 - [in enumerative schemes] selection of a single prioritization of personal attributes
- continuity
 - treatment of classes as discrete and mutually exclusive

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“Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People” (Root)

- I have the right ...
 - not to justify my existence in this world
 - **not to keep the races separate within me**
 - not to be responsible for people’s discomfort with my physical ambiguity
 - not to justify my ethnic legitimacy
 - to identify myself differently than strangers expect me to identify
 - to identify myself differently from how my parents identify me
 - to identify myself differently from my brothers and sisters
 - **to identify myself differently in different situations**
 - **to create a vocabulary to communicate about being multiracial**
 - to change my identity over my lifetime – and more than once
 - **to have loyalties and identification with more than one group of people**
 - to freely choose whom I befriend and love

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The self-identity principle

- the self-identity principle:
 - allow readers to find (by searching and/or browsing) documents about topics relating to the groups with which they may self-identify
- a person of mixed race (e.g., a Métis) may choose to identify ...
 - ... with racially mixed people generally (e.g., 7)
 - ... with racially mixed people particularly (e.g., 715)
 - ... with several races equally (e.g., both 1 and 5)
 - ... with one race separately (e.g., either 1 or 5)
- how could observations of this kind help designers of bibliographic classification schemes?
 - “see-also” references
 - extension of **faceted** structure and searching on components of numbers

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Race theories

- classical race theory
 - races are biological
 - physical traits determine mental/social traits
 - races are rankable
- liberal (eliminativist) race theory
 - races do not exist
 - anti-racism = color-blindness
- critical race theory
 - races are institutional facts
 - anti-racism = reconstitution of power structures

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Early modern race theory

- Bernier (1684): “there are four or five species or races of men [whites, blacks, Asians, Native Americans, Lapps]... whose difference is so remarkable that it may be made the basis for a new division of the Earth”
- Linnaeus (1758):

Variety	Color	Temperament	Posture	Ruled by ...
Americanus	red	angry	upright	habit
Europeus	white	cheerful	muscular	custom
Asiaticus	yellow	sad	stiff	belief
Afer	black	sluggish	relaxed	caprice

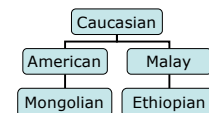
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Classical (high modern) race theory

- Blumenbach (1781) [cf. Gould]:
 - no longer based on geography, but on appearance
 - no longer unranked: now hierarchical



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Classical race theory, cont'd [cf. Taylor]

- races are discrete and **global**
- each race has a unique set of **physiological** traits (e.g., skin color, hair texture, body shape)
- each cluster of physiological traits implies a distinct set of **moral, cognitive, and cultural** characteristics
- races can be ranked according to the **value** of these characteristics
- these traits and characteristics are **heritable** as a racial essence

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Liberal race theory

- eliminativism
 - metaphysical (skepticism): there are no races
 - ethical: there ought to be no races

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Critical race theory

- realism (metaphysical)
 - there are races
 - **racism** are institutional facts, i.e., social constructs: ontologically subjective but epistemically objective
 - races are “the probabilistically defined populations that result from the white supremacist determination to link appearance and ancestry to social location and life chances” (Taylor), i.e., to assign meaning to **body** and **bloodlines**
 - **racial identity** is an individual’s self-assignment to a population defined in this way

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Critical race theory, cont'd

- realism (political)
 - acceptance of existence of races is prerequisite for effective challenge to racism
 - racism is persistent, endemic, systemic

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Interpretations

- positive reading
 - ingenious solution to perceived problem
 - some technical issues awaiting resolution
- critical reading
 - racial identity incapable of expression through ethnic identity
 - racial identity results from interpretation of characteristics of racial populations (bodily appearance)
 - ethnic identity results from interpretation of characteristics of ethnic groups (culture, language, religion, etc.)
 - multi-continental ancestry inadequate as metaphor for multi-racial ancestry

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Today's aim

- to highlight significance of recent changes in DDC
- to identify topics for debate and potential approaches

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