



What is Race?

- I. According to Common Sense
 - a. A cultural understanding of what race is
 - b. For this to work, it must be a simple concept – not a sophisticated definition.
 - c. If it were complicated, some people (kids, for example) couldn't understand it.
 - i. As it is kids start to learn the common definition as young as age 2.
 - ii. Everybody understands how groups are divided
 - d. How do you tell what race somebody is?
 - i. Physical Attributes
 1. Skin color, facial features
 2. Language, Accent
 3. Hair texture, eye color
 - ii. Geography
 - e. What racial groups are there?
 - i. Black, White, Indian, Hispanic
 - ii. Middle Eastern, Pacific Islander
 - f. Seems like this view is setup by continents.
- II. According to Scientists
 - a. How do we know if groups are scientifically valid?
 - b. Don't look at people and classify them into groups. Instead, consider whether the groups are scientifically valid in the first place.
 - c. Do the groups allow us to place "like with like?" Put similarities together into one group
 - d. To be scientifically valid, groups must have more between-group variation than within-group variation.
 - e. Must have a concordance of traits within groups.
 - i. Must be a clustering of traits.
 - ii. Each group must be different on a cluster of traits to be valid.
- III. Within-Group and Between-Group Variation
 - a. Comparing "shared variation" with "unique variation"
 - i. How much variation is common to both groups?
 - ii. How much variation is unique to a particular group?
 - iii. Graphically: How much do the distribution curves overlap?
 - b. Concordance: Traits are clustered together
 - c. Known Genetic Traits:
 - i. Skin color, hair color
 - ii. Blood type
 - iii. Lactose intolerance
 - iv. Fingerprint types
 - d. In reality, 85% of variation is shared, only 15% is unique
 - e. Viewed another way, 94% of all human variation can be found on any one continent.
- IV. Other Points
 - a. Vitamin D absorption is easier with light skin, so lighter skin developed as people migrated to less intense sunlight.
 - b. On the other hand, darker skin blocks sunlight, so it's harder to burn.
 - c. Thomas Theorem
 - i. "If men [and women] define situations as real, they become real in their consequences."
 - ii. If enough people are wrong, they effectively become right.
 - iii. Culture defines that race is real so we must accept that it is even though science concludes otherwise.
 - d. In the 1600s we started to develop the idea of race. By the 1700s it was very strong (especially as slavery was being created and rationalized)
 - e. The idea started 300 – 400 years ago and we still have it today. That begs the question, "Are we prisoners of culture?"