

THE EROSION OF RACE IN ANTHROPOLOGY TEXTS

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INTRODUCTION

For years, the prevailing outlook among physical anthropologists in the United States was that of *splitters* who held that race concept was a valid description of varieties of *homo sapiens* and a useful research tool. The reality of race was affirmed by the majority of physical anthropologists (Lieberman, 1968). The earliest challenge to the splitters' position came in 1942 with the publication of Ashley Montagu's *Man's Most Dangerous Myth*. Montagu articulated what came to be called the *lumper's* viewpoint. Lumpers believe that the race concept is not valid, since there are no aggregates of humans that fulfill the definition of races as populations genetically distinguishable from neighboring populations. Lumpers claim that the race concept is not only useless for research purposes, but is potentially harmful in its social consequences.

Discussion between lumpers and splitters following publication of Montagu's early work was sporadic, and was dominated until the 1970s by the splitters. The discussion was largely confined to the professional journals like *Current Anthropology* (June, 1962 179; October, 1964 313). Recent studies, however, have shown that the lumper position is rapidly gaining in acceptance and strength (Lieberman & Reynolds, 1979; Reynolds, Lieberman & Stark, 1979; Lieberman, Reynolds & Kellum, 1980).

We will now consider the extent to which physical anthropologists' positions on the race concept are reflected in the basic textbooks prepared to reach a large student readership, and from whose ranks will come the next generation of physical anthropologists. Do texts published before 1969 reflect the prevailing and rather monolithic view of the splitters, and do the textbooks published during the last decade mirror the acceptance of the lumping perspective? The data indicate that texts published before 1969 reflect the prevailing splitter view, while textbooks published during the decade of the 1970s

mirror the growing acceptance of the lumping perspective by authors of physical anthropology textbooks.

PROCEDURE

In this study 64 texts were selected by the following criteria: 1) the text was designed for a beginning course in anthropology; 2) it was published in a single volume devoted to physical anthropology; 3) it was a general text with broad coverage of anthropology.

Once selected, every subsequent edition of the text was also included, except in rare cases where copies were not available. Because of the rather different organization of anthropology in the universities of many other nations, and because of the special difficulties posed in identifying and obtaining comparable texts, only books published in the United States were included.

A panel of five university undergraduate students classified the 64 physical anthropology texts published between 1932 and 1979. The purpose of the panel was to reach a consensus on the classification of each text, based on how they might be interpreted by students who are their intended readers. Since our purpose was to classify the books according to the interpretation reached by students, we provided them with a coding sheet which required that they read those sections of the text discussing race, and that they cite page numbers and provide quotations to support their conclusions. Completed code sheets were verified for thoroughness and accuracy. Consensus was inferred if a majority of the panel agreed on the classification. Panel members were asked to classify each text according to one of the following positions: 1) author argues that races exist; 2) author argues that races do not exist; 3) author discusses both the *splitter* and the *lumper* positions but takes no position; 4) no mention is made of the race concept. In the three cases where there was no majority agreement, the book was classed as *no consensus by panel*.

FIGURE 1: CODING OF ANTHROPOLOGY TEXTS ON USE OF RACE CONCEPT
 Code on race: 1 Exists; 2 Does not exist; 3 Uncommitted; 4 No mention; 5 No consensus

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Code</u>
Adams F	1968 Way to Modern Man.	4	Jolly C, F	1976 Phys Anthro & Archaeology; 1979 2nd edition	2
Barnouw V	1971 Introduction to Anthropology Vol 1. 1975 2nd edition	1	Kelso A	1970 Phys Anthropology. 1974 2nd edition	5
	1978 3rd edition	3	Kraus B	1974 Human Animal	2
Bennett K	1979 Fundamentals of Biological Anthropology	2	Lasker G	1961 Evolution of Man Brief Intro, Phys Anthro.	1
Birdsell J	1972 Human Evolution: Intro to New Phys Anthropology 1975 2nd edition	1		1973 Physical Anthro. 1976 2nd ed	2
		2	McKern T, Sharon McKern	1969 Human Origins: Intro to Physical Anthropology.	1
Brace C, A	Montagu 1965 Man's Evolution: Intro, Phys Anthropology	5		1974 Living Prehistory: Intro, Phys Anthro & Archaeology.	1
	1977 Human Evolution 2nd edition	2	Montagu A	1945 Intro, Physical Anthropology	4
Buettner-Jaunsch J	1966 Origins of Man: Physical Anthropology. 1973 Physical Anthropology.	1		1951 2nd edition; 1960 3rd edition	2
Campbell B	1966 Human Evolution: Intro to Man's Adaptations 1974 2nd edition	1	Nelson H, R	Jurmain 1979 Intro to Physical Anthropology.	3
	1976 Humankind Emerging. 1979 2nd edition	1	Nickels M, D	Hunter, P Whitten 1979 Phys Anthro. & Archaeology	2
CRM Books	1971 Anthropology Today	2	Pfieffer J	1969 Emergence of Man. 1972 2nd edition; 1978 3rd edition	4
Downs J, H	Bleibtreu 1969 Human Variation: Intro to Phys Anthro 1972 Revised edition	1	Poirer F	1974 In Search of Ourselves: Intro, Phys Anthro.	4
		1		1977 2nd edition	3
Ekhardt R	1979 Human Evolution	1	Stein P, B	Rowe 1974 Physical Anthropology. 1978 2nd edition	3
Harrison G, J	Weiner, J Tanner, N Barincot 1964 Human Biology Intro to Evolution; 1977 2nd ed.	1	Tullar R	1977 Human Species: Nature, Evolution, Ecology	2
Haviland W	1978 Human Evolution & Prehistory.	5	Weiss M, A	Mann 1975 Human Biol. & Behavior: Anthro. Persp. 1978 2nd edition	1
Hooton E	1932 Up From the Ape. 1946 Rev; 1947 2nd, 1949 3rd print	1	Weitz C	1979 Intro, Phys Anthropology & Archaeology.	2
		1	Williams B	1973 Evolution & Human Origins: Intro to Phys Anthro.	2
Howells W	1944 Mankind So Far. 1947 2nd edition; 1952 3rd edition	1	Young J	1971 Intro, Study of Man.	2
	1964 Reprinted London: Secher & Warburg; 1967 Reprinted Penguin	1			3
Hulse F	1963 Human Species: Intro to Phys Anthro. 1979 2nd ed.	1			

FINDINGS

All of the textbooks and their classifications are shown in Figure 1. In the 37-year period from 1932 to 1969, 25 texts were published (Table 1). Of these, 18 expressed the prevailing outlook that races exist, and only 4 challenged the race concept. In the decade from 1970 through 1979, 39 texts were published. Of these,

14 supported the race concept, while 15 opposed it. In the five years from 1975 through 1979, the view that races do not exist was expressed in 11 texts, and became the dominant position, contrasted with 7 texts in that period which support the race concept.

The weakening of the race concept is further reflected in the pattern appearing

TABLE 1: RACE CONCEPT IN ANTHROPOLOGY TEXTS 1932-1979
Textbook use of race as judged by Panel:

<u>Period</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Races</u> <u>Exists</u>	<u>Races Do</u> <u>Not Exist</u>	<u>Uncom-</u> <u>mitted</u>	<u>Omits</u> <u>Race</u>	<u>No Cons-</u> <u>ensus</u>
1932-44	2	2				
1945-49	5	4	1			
1950-54	3	2	1			
1955-59	1	1				
1960-64	6	4	2			
1965-69	8	5			2	1
1970-74	16	7	4	2	2	1
1975-79	23	7	11	3	1	1
Total	64	32	19	5	5	3

in the decade of the 1970s where 10 textbooks appeared to our panel to be noncommittal or not to mention race. Where a textbook was classed as noncommittal, it usually meant that the author presented both sides of the debate over race, but appeared to take no position. The decline of *race* and the development of the *no race* position is significant because the decade production rate for the 1970s was 39 compared to 6.8 or 25 texts in the 37 prior years from 1932 to 1969. Presumably they also reached a larger audience of college students.

From 1932 to 1969 only four texts held that races do not exist, and three were written by Ashley Montagu. From 1970 to 1979 the 15 texts written from the *lumping* perspective were written by 11 authors. This indicates a change of perspective and much wider support for the *no race* position among a younger generation of scholars.

Among well-qualified and authoritative physical anthropologists, we find contradictory statements. Buettner-Janusch writes, "*Race* is a perfectly useful and valid term, and I shall use it." (1973 490). But Weiss and Mann say: "*Race* is an arbitrary unrealistic corner from which to look at human variability." (1978 508). Perhaps Kelso is correct in presenting his material in a fashion which removes the "... comfortable feeling that most (white?) people in our society have when they use the term *race*." (1970 318).

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(White, from p 169)

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