Race or Racism?
Value Implications & Practical Solutions
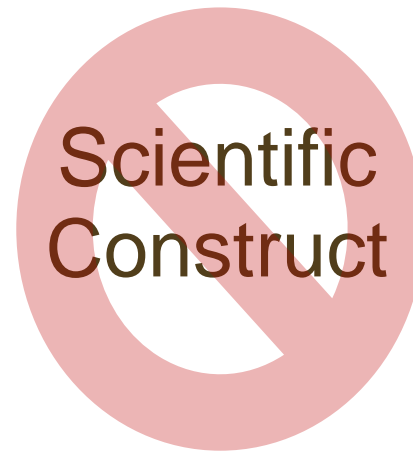
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* Adapted from presentation at the American Evaluation Association's annual conference, 2011
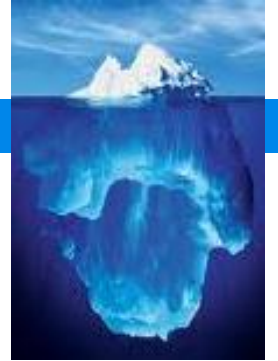
The Issue

1) Note race is proxy for racism

2) Best done when treating race as a social construct.

Social Construct

Scientific Construct

Presenter Notes:
- If not then demonstrating lack of rigor and implicitly valuing institutional and systemic racism.
- Presentation also applies to other –isms.

What is race?

1) Genetic Construct

~~Based on blood lines, genetics, and/or DNA.~~

False:

There is more genetic variation within "racial groups" than between groups

2) Demography Construct
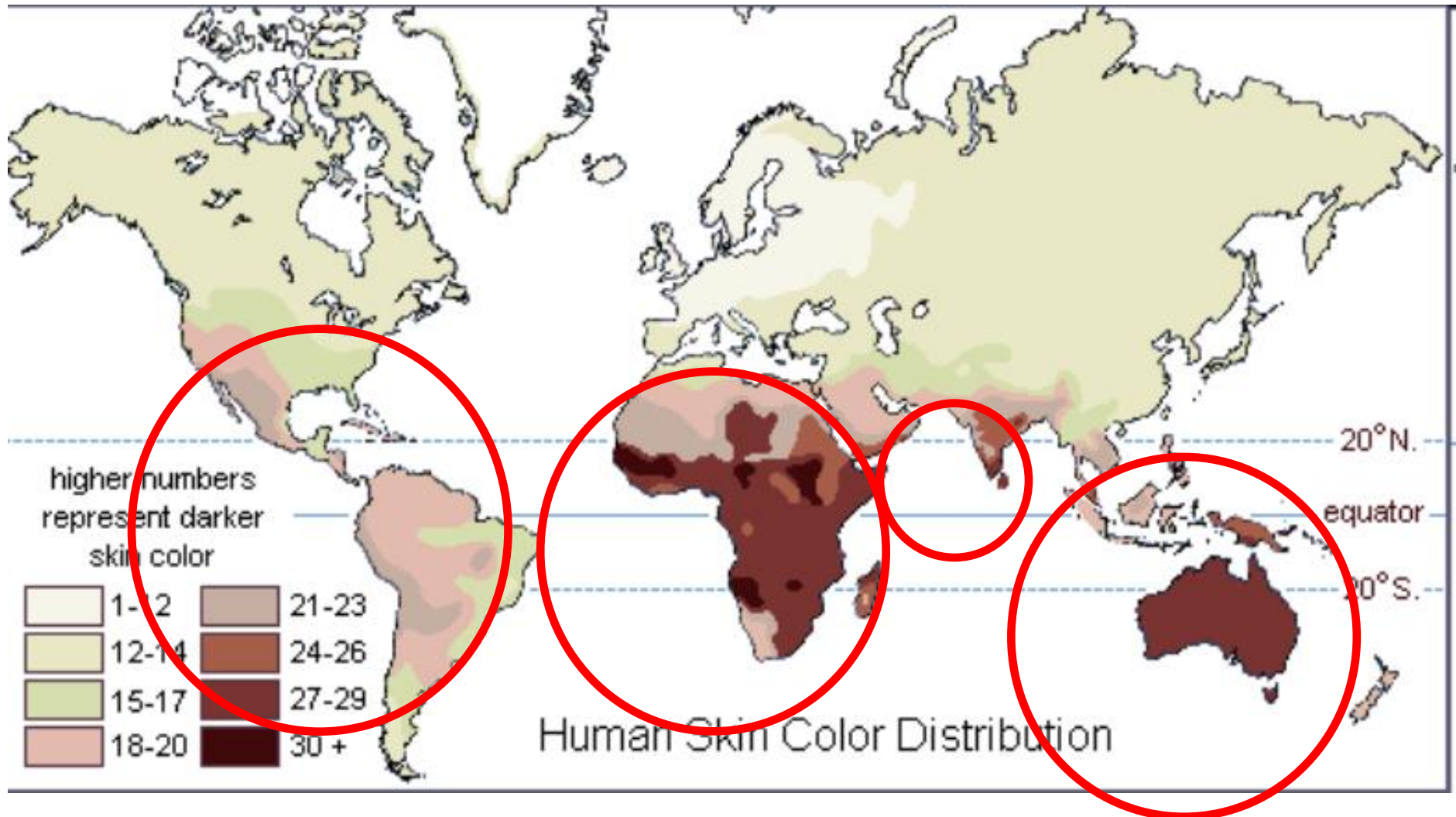

~~Based on ancestral geographic origin.~~

False:
Physical traits are more broadly distributed than is typically thought.

2) Demography Construct

Human Skin Color Distribution

3) Physical Characteristics Construct

~~Race is based on observable traits.~~

False:

Traits are not discrete but continuous, causing arbitrarily points of distinction on a continuum.

3) Physical Characteristics Construct

Where is the cut off for White, Black, Hispanic, etc.?

What is Race?

Scientific Construct

Social Construct

Race is a Social Construct

Presenter Notes:

- The problem with the social construct of race is how it is used and interpreted.

- Racial classifications have been and continue to be used to control access to resources such as land ownership, citizenship, education, housing, health care, etc.

- While signs such as this are no longer around and blatant racial discrimination has decreased, racial discrimination continues to be perpetuated through systems and institutions.

What is Racism?

Presenter Notes:

Racism is more than individual bias rather it has been incorporated into our systems and institutions from our country's beginning through laws and practices that systematically advantaged one group over another.

Prejudice
+
the misuse of power by systems and institutions
=
Racism

The top of the iceberg represents what we can see such as prejudice, including things such as the sign we just showed you or racial slurs.

The portion of the iceberg under the water represents systemic and institutional racism, things we "don't see", such as laws that discriminate against people of color.

While today less of the surface of the iceberg is showing as compared to the 1950's, the large mass lying beneath is still present, preventing our society from eliminating racism. Therefore, the solution cannot be one of individual action or change in attitudes and beliefs. In order to end racism the systems and institutions need to change.

Why use race?

- Racial stratification is real

- Race is <u>not</u> biologically real

- Race is a *social construct*

Presenter Notes:

- Race should still be included in our research and evaluation because racial disparities exist and until we can identify where they exist and the institutional and systemic factors that surround them, it is unlikely they will be addressed. And we believe that our work as researchers and evaluators should be to remedy and break down racist practices in systems and institutions.

- Since race is a social construct, the use of race in an intentional way helps to correct our past errors while working towards equity for the future.

- One step: Noting race is a proxy for racism

Value implications?


(Tatum, 2007 & 2010)

Presenter Notes:

- Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum has a great analogy for what happens. Racism is like a people mover that takes individuals from point A to point B. No matter if you stand, walk, or run on that people mover, it takes you to the same end result.

- So for example, by just saying racism is wrong and not doing anything to change things at the institutional and systemic level means that you get to the same end result, that of a world in which racial disparities still exist. In this instance, you are valuing and supporting the perpetuation of institutional and systemic racism. Similar to the idea, if your not part of the solution you're part of the problem.

- To change things at a level that results in real change, you need to get off the people mover and help take it apart and re-engineer it to get a different outcome.

Why else?

- AEA Guiding Principles
- Program Evaluation Standards
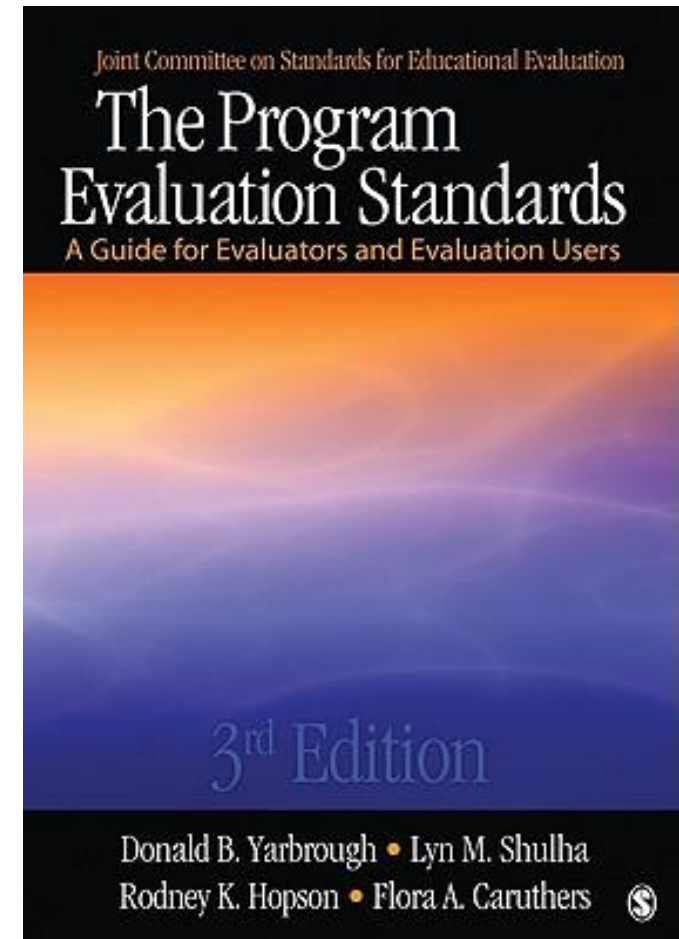
AEA Guiding Principles

Systematic Inquiry:

- *"Evaluators should communicate their methods & approaches accurately and in sufficient detail to allow others to understand, interpret and critique their work"*

Integrity/Honesty:

- *"Evaluators should not misrepresent their procedures, data or findings. Within reasonable limits, they should attempt to prevent or correct misuse of their work by others."*

Presenter Notes:

We argue that by not indicating that race is being used as a proxy for racism, that evaluators misrepresent their data and findings. Additionally, by stating that race is being used as a proxy for racism, evaluators prevent this misuse of their work by others.

Program Evaluation Standards

Violates the following standards:

- Evaluation accountability (E1)

- Feasibility (F3)

- Utility (U1, U4, U5, U6, U8)

- Propriety (P1, P3, P4, P5)

- Accuracy (A1, A2, A3, A7, A8)

Presenter Notes:

- U6: "Meaningful process & products" it says, "evaluation activities, descriptions, findings, and judgments should encourage use".

  - If racial data is collected but the results of which are not discussed within the context of the evaluand, gathering that data will not help with evaluation use.
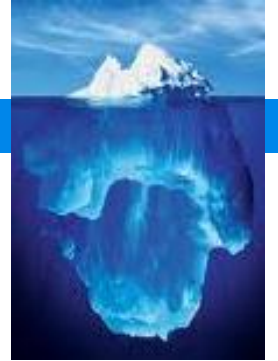
What to do?

Presenter Notes:
Some Tips on how to use race as a proxy for racism…

Tip 1: Note Race Proxy for Racism

- Background

- Methods section

- Results section

- Discussion section
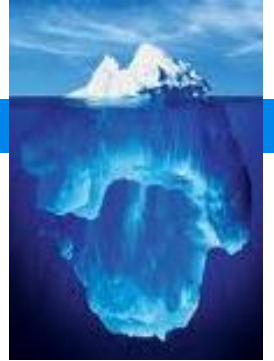
Tip 2: Structural/Systemic Nature

- Diagnosis Determines Treatment: Before an evaluation begins evaluators need to understand the systemic and institutional nature of racism surrounding the evaluand.

- Some guiding questions:

  - Do current disparities exist by race/ethnicity around this issue or closely related one?

  - How did they get that way?

  - If disparities exist, how are/will they be affected by this evaluand?

Tip 2: Structural/Systemic Nature

- Data: Gather structural/system data
  - If researching health disparities, gather data on access and insurance.

- Results: Examine in racial systemic/institutional context.
  - Saying X's have a higher mortality rate than Y's does not provide information on how to improve the mortality rate.
  - Pairing results with systemic/institutional data:
    - Helps reader focus on policy and program change
    - Avoids leading readers to think individual behavior is explanation of the problem or blame group stereotypes.

Tip 3: Don't Use Race as a Proxy

- Race should not be used as a proxy for income & education, even if they are correlated.

- Because it only focuses on a small part of the issue & misses the larger real problem, the institutional/ systemic causes.

Tip 4: Race not Causal Variable

- Race should not be used as a causal/ independent variable because race is not the cause of inequities, systemic & structural context is.

- Presenting differences in test scores by racial/ethnic categories is not enough due to preexisting stereotypes, implicitly it is being presented as causal.

Tip 5: Purposeful Communication

Choose Language & Variables Carefully:

- Individuals identify as vs are

- Asset-focused language/indicators

  - Instead of % of households on welfare, try…% of households with "sufficient" incomes to raise children.

  - Poverty/welfare vs. "sufficient income"

Tip 6: Comparing Racial Data

Presenter Notes:
1) *Investigate the history of measures you are using:* For example, categories listed on the census change with almost each new iteration.

2) *Recorded race is influenced by who identifies race*: Before 1970, racial classification on the census was determine by a enumerator through observation and not through self-report. One study at that time found 34% of people who participated in the census 2 years in a row changed racial groups from one year to the next, which this picture from the Race Exhibit illustrates. Similarly, on birth certificates race is usually determine by the parent or hospital staff and on death certificates that is usually determined by the mortician. Thus, a person's recorded race frequently changes between their birth and death certificate

2) Lack of Standardization: Categories and the number of categories an individual can choose.

Tip 7: Instrumentation

- Not assume universal experience

- Self-report

- Instructions

- Multiple categories

- Classification:

  - Open-ended

  - Pre-set categories

    - Know population

    - Standard categories

Tip 8: Note Limitations and Methods

Presenter Notes:

For example:

1) Another example is, we provided respondents with X, Y, and Z racial categories and told them they could choose multiple categories.

DANGER

The racial categories may have shifted. Be careful unpacking.

2) Could say we used Census Data from the past 20 years but it should noted that the Census categories have changed. To compare Chinese, Korean, and Japanese were combined and compared with Asian from the 2000 census.

Chipping Away the Iceberg

o Alter your own research/evaluation practices.

o Be a good consumer of research; analyze
existing racial data with a critical eye.

o In the peer review process, raise questions & identify limitations related to race as a social construct.

Next Steps

o Educate yourself about racism, & other –isms that challenge validity & quality.

- Race Exhibit

- PBS Race – The Power of an Illusion Website/Video

- This is a eval specific site: http://www.racialequitytools.org/al-assessproc.htm

- Annie E. Casey Foundation Race Matters Materials: Especially *Advancing Better Outcomes for all Children: Reporting Data Using a Racial Equity Lens.*

- Book: White Logic, White Methods: Racism and Methodology

- Crossroads Anti-Racism Training and Organizing www.crossroadsantiracism.org

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