

# Social Construction and the Concept of Race

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## Abstract

There has been little serious work to integrate the constructionist approach and the cognitive approach in the domain of race, although many researchers have paid lip service to this project. We believe that any satisfactory account of human beings' racialist cognition has to integrate both approaches. In this paper, we propose a step toward this integration. We present an evolutionary theory that rests on a distinction between various kinds of groups (kin-based groups, small-scale coalitions and ethnies). Following Gil-White (1999, 2001a, b), we propose that ethnies have raised specific evolutionary challenges that were solved by a specific evolved cognitive system. We suggest that the concept of race is a by-product of that mechanism. To integrate the social constructionists' and the cognitive theorists' insights, we rely on the psychology that underlies Boyd and Richerson's theory of cultural evolution (Boyd and Richerson 1985, forthcoming).

**Keywords:** race, social construction, evolution, ethnies, cultural evolution

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