How Did We Get Here? Race and Ethnicity in Dewey Decimal Classification

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Abstract: There is burgeoning interest in decolonizing the library catalog to recognize and remove longstanding bias. This article takes a step back and examines how theories about human classification from antiquity informed 18th and 19th century ideas of race and ethnicity and how these ideas became embedded in Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC). It explores the evolution of DDC with respect to these subjects across four editions and over the course of 130 years, reflecting on DDC's presentation of changing dominant societal views. Finally, the article acknowledges the role librarians play in tending to the values of knowledge organization and our need to continually evaluate the impact of our work on the production, organization, and distribution of knowledge.

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1.0 Introduction

Knowledge organization is the process of organizing documents that society sees as worth preserving (Tennis 2008). By examining the application of classification and categorization of the items we hold in libraries, we are offered a window into what is deemed important by society. The study of classification schemes adds an extra dimension to the historical study of the field of knowledge and culture (Beghtol 1986). Current recognition of the historic legacies of colonization represented in our current library taxonomies and vocabularies has produced important research on the need to decolonize and address the biases in the library catalog (Baker and Islam 2020; Drabinski 2013; Hardesty and Nolan 2021; Howard and Knowlton 2018; Martin 2021).

Previous research by Dousa (2009) and Adler (2016; 2017) considered how the scientific framework of evolutionary order prevalent in the late 19th century played a role in the development of library classification and exposed the marginalization or exclusion within that classification that was built on the cultural discourses of the time. Adler (2017) explains that the presumption of an Anglo-Saxon racial superiority embedded in this evolutionary theory played a role in the development of library classification by Charles Cutter, Richard Bliss, John Fiske, and Melvil Dewey, forefathers in the creation of the North American classification systems of Library of Congress Classification (LCC) and Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC), universalizing "whiteness" as the norm in these systems. In a similar vein, Ibekwe demands a more scrutinized look at Paul Otlet's writings noting that his choice to espouse evolutionary theories that assign immutable scientific traits to the classification of humans and accepting the "imperialist ideology of European scientists and thinkers bent on proving the superiority of their 'white race' at the expense of rigorous science," negatively impacted the structure of Universal Decimal Classification (UDC) (2024, 9). She notes of DDC and UDC, "these supposed 'universal classification systems'

carry with them the hegemonic and white supremacist ideologies that were pervasive in western societies in the science of the time..." (Ibekwe 2023, 361).

This paper builds on this work but looks further back in time to consider the ways in which theories about human classification from antiquity, eighth century BCE to fifth century CE, informed 18th and 19th century ideas of race and ethnicity and how these ideas became embedded in Dewey Decimal Classification. DDC was created in the United States at the end of the 19th century and is still the most widely used library classification system in the world (Satija and Kyrios 2023). While other library classification systems, including LCC and UDC, deserve equal scrutiny, this paper is focused on DDC as an in-depth inquiry. This study examines four editions of DDC summaries and schedules to better understand how the system classifies race and ethnicity. This research illustrates that the changes in terminology and placement within the DDC over 130 years reflect the transition of societal understanding of race and ethnicity, as both biological and social constructs.

2.0 Classification

To better understand how the idea of human classification has evolved, we look at some ideas from the early eighth century BCE through the fifth century CE as well as those from the 18th and 19th centuries.

2.1 Classification in Antiquity (8th Century BCE-5th Century CE)

Throughout history, humans have classified one another into various groups, often within a hierarchical structure. The descriptions of foreigners in ancient literature offer a glimpse into how ancient people organized their ideas about the physical and cultural differences between themselves and others. Using these starting points, we may consider how this understanding impacted theories that developed in modernity. Jablonski points out that "our minds appear to be organized in a way that makes it easy to classify people into distinct groups" and we learn to categorize people based on similarities in appearance or action (2012, 94). As ancient peoples tried to understand the differences between themselves and foreigners, they came up with theories to help them explain the world. Murphy purports that ancient literature from the Greeks and Romans suggests a "lively curiosity about the people on the peripheries of their civilizations" (2004, 79).

One idea with lasting impact developed to explain physical and cultural differences was climate or environmental theory. This early conceptualization of classification is the idea that there is a relationship between humans' physical environment and their physicality, temperament, intelligence, and moral character. Characteristic of this era, Aristotle asserted that Greeks were superior because of their intermediate climate and geographical conditions, which, in his view, developed humans with ideal physical, intellectual, and social characteristics (c. 4th cent. BCE, l. 7.7.1327b 20-35). The ancient Athenians viewed their culture and language as normal and superior (Gruen 2013) and the environmental theory set the Mediterranean as the normative climate and all others as extremes (Herodotus 1907; Hippocrates c. 5th cent. BCE). It is here that we may see a glimpse of early prejudices. Isaac (2004) notes that racism occurs when we group mental and moral characteristics together with physical traits and assign them to a particular group of people as if they are unalterable.

Another ancient concept of classification is the degeneration theory. Pliny the Elder described Africans as defective and lacking civilization, believing that they experienced a degradation of humanity (c. 77-79, l. 5:8:46). Snowden discusses that Ethiopians became the yardstick by which classical antiquity measured people of color, pointing to Manilius' grouping of humankind by the "classical color scheme" of Ethiopians, Indians, Egyptians, and the Mauri (1983, 7). However, Snowden (1983) asserts that value judgements were not placed on the noted physical differences in antiquity between the Greeks and the Ethiopians, for example; somatic differences were simply recognized. Isaac disagrees with Snowden. He states, "the Greeks and Romans never developed an elaborate conceptual framework to justify their classification of humanity," but we can examine ancient literature "to understand their implicit and explicit assumptions regarding the differences between peoples" and how these biases may have been a precursor to modern racism, according to Issac (2004, 55).

2.2 18th Century Classification

Both environmental theory and degradation theory show their impact through time in Blumenbach's classification, which identifies a hierarchy of peoples based on somatic characteristics and geographic location. Blumenbach [1775] describes five varieties of *Homo sapiens*, placing "Caucasians" at the top of the hierarchy and suggesting that "American," "Malay," "Mongolian," and "Ethiopian" peoples degenerated from the "Caucasian" ideal. In each of these theories and classification schemes, somatic characteristics are linked to social, moral, or intellectual traits and organize people based on these characteristics, tying concepts of race or ethnicity to biology. Jablonski explains that "humanity's most momentous logical fallacy" is when we associate particular physical characteristics such as skin color with character and the ranking of people (2012, 4).

In Linnaeus' taxonomy, its roots in ancient climate theory and 18th century worldviews are apparent. The first edi-

tion of his *Systema Naturae* was published in 1735. In his genus *Homo*, in the 1802 English translation, Linnaeus separates humans into two species: "*sapiens* (varying by education and situation)" and "*monstrosus* (varying by climate and art)" (1802, 10). Within "*sapiens"* we see humans grouped geographically by "variety" and described by physical appearance and social characteristics. For example, the American is described as copper-coloured, choleric, obstinate, and regulated by customs, whereas the European is described as fair, sanguine, brawny, inventive, and governed by laws (1802, 10). There is a great deal of similarity between Linnaeus' descriptions and the way that Hippocrates (c. 5th cent. BCE) connects climate and geography with the political institutions, physical appearance, and social characteristics of humans from different parts of the world. Showing a continuance from Hippocrates' ideas, Linnaeus believed that people could be classified by their innate physical and social characteristics. Linnaeus' definition, therefore, is modeled on the idea of race as a biological construct: biological characteristics are the determining factors. Fredrickson explains, "In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and beyond...whenever and wherever it was used...the term implied that 'races' had stable and presumably unchangeable characteristics" (2015, 53).

2.3 19th Century Library Classification

For most of us, the word "classification" suggests an orderly, scientific scheme that puts ideas or objects into a naturally organized system. At its core, classification brings like items together, separates them based on their differences, and creates a framework for how they are related (Olson 2001; Furner 2007). But, as we have seen, classification systems are created by fallible humans, who have difficulty leaving their worldview behind while organizing information. We bring societal and personal biases into our systems, whether intentional or not, and this leads to a prejudiced result (Olson 1996).

Hodgson explains, "Library classification schemes do not operate in an ideological vacuum: despite their authors' invariable claims to objectivity, innateness, and universal applicability, classifications reflect and corroborate the sociocultural, epistemological, religious, racial and gendered outlooks of their creators and practitioners" (2022, 499). Furner, agrees, stating, "every classification scheme is an objective representation of a subjective point of view – that of its human constructors, who share the perspectives and ideologies of those populations with which they identify" (2007, 154). It is difficult to tease out where our worldview may be influencing how we create and implement classification. Adler and Harper explain, "Library classifications provide important insights into the processes by which epistemic violence becomes established, as the hierarchies and structures are mostly hidden from the public's view but establish relationships and order among bibliographic works" (2018, 63). An examination of the evolution of the terms and structure of DDC helps to elucidate the underlying changes in these ideologies.

In 1876, when Melvil Dewey published his *Classification and Subject Index for Cataloging and Arranging the Books and Pamphlets of a Library* (Dewey 1876), now known as the first edition of Dewey Decimal Classification, he had developed a base 10 scheme to organize knowledge based on the worldview of the white, nineteenth-century American male (Higgins 2016). As a librarian at Amherst College in the late 1800s, his scheme was initially applied to the books in his library, which would have projected a similar worldview. In the same way that Linnaeus intended his taxonomy to encompass all living things, Dewey believed his classification system would be able to accommodate all knowledge (Dewey 1990).

DDC, as a classification scheme, goes from general to more specific. It is organized by class, division, and section. There are ten main classes covering the major academic disciplines. These classes are split into a hundred divisions and a thousand sections. Numbers following the decimal after the three-digit main number provide greater specificity. For example, the current number for Spanish Americans is 305.868. Three hundred is the main class of "Social sciences," 30X is "Social sciences, sociology & anthropology," 305 represents "Groups of people," and 305.868 is "Spanish Americans" (Webdewey 2011a, 356).

Shelf classification is organized around the assumption of universal norms, treating people and subjects outside those norms as other and marginalizing them (Adler and Harper 2018). In the base ten system created by Dewey, subjects relegated to "other" generally fall under nine, at the edges of the scheme, and are grouped together (Olson, 1996). Referencing Olson, Hodgson summarizes, "Classifications always involve choices, whether deliberate or unconscious – what is the same and what is different? – and the privileging of one set of characteristics or qualities over another" (2022, 501). Olson (2000) suggests that not only does library classification need to become more inclusive but that, once achieved, that classification could, in turn, impact cultural change. Dick (1982) agrees arguing that our frame of reference guides how we proceed with inquiry.

3.0 130 Years of "Race" and "Ethnicity" in the DDC

This paper examines four editions of the DDC: the first (1876), tenth (1919), 20th (1989), and 23rd editions (2011). These four editions represent a broad range of time and will provide the basis on which we may consider the evolution of the terminology and structure of DDC in relation to race and ethnicity. The tenth edition is the first edition to be

published after the American Library Association established the DC advisory committee to work in the editorial offices of the DDC (Satija and Kyrios 2023), expanding the input of librarians on the classification. The 20th edition was the first edition published by the current owner, Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), and was the first to be distributed in both print and electronic (CD) format (Satija and Kyrios 2023). This edition was also when the *Manual on the Use of Dewey Decimal Classification* became a standard addition to the summaries and schedules, which increased consistency and uniformity in the way DDC was applied (Satija and Kyrios 2023). The 23rd edition, the last traditional edition, is that which most librarians refer to outside of OCLC's subscription-based Webdewey; it is freely available in pdf format. For this study, we will focus on divisions within the 300 (Social science) and 500 (Natural science) main classes, where resources addressing race and ethnicity have been variously classed over time, across the four selected editions.

3.1 First Edition

In the first edition of DDC, ethnicity is not clearly defined. Fought (2006) explains that factors such as religion, language, customs, and other cultural elements are often used as criteria for highlighting a particular ethnicity or community ideology. Here, the class that may come closest to describing 19th century ideas of ethnicity appears in the 300s main class for "Sociology" in the 390s division: "Customs and Costumes" (Dewey 1876, 16). If we examine the sections within this division (Table 1) we see that there are sections for time periods and continent. If we also look at terms in the relative index of this edition, we find "ethnography," the in-depth study of a particular group or culture, listed as 390 (Dewey 1876, 28). This classification from the relative index directs librarians to classify resources relating to this topic in the 390 division, subdivided by specific time period or geographical location as needed, even though the term "ethnography" does not appear in the main schedule. These subdivisions and the relative index term of "ethnography" being assigned to the "Customs and Costumes" division, suggest that ethnicity in this edition is at least partially related to the culture of different people across time and place. As discussed previously, the number nine in the DDC is frequently used for "other," falling towards the outside of the normative scheme.

Murphy (2004) explains that ancient ethnographies were examined by 19th century classical philologists who catalogued the characteristics of this literary genre. He notes the repetition of cultural and geographical descriptions such as the land, climate, people's appearance and their social institutions (2004, 80). Further, Burt illustrates that in the mid-19th to early 20th century, the British Museum used "ethnography" as a category pertaining to "what were regarded as evolutionary stages of 'savagery' and 'barbarism,' represented by tribal and peasant societies, as distinct from 'civilisation'" (1998, 11). Thus, as these 19th century scholars typically read each other's work, it is possible that these were the concepts Dewey had in mind when assigning "ethnography" in his classification.

Another section that may relate to ethnicity is "ethnology," the analysis and comparative study of the characteristics of different people, classed in 572 in the first edition of the DDC (Dewey 1876, 18). Gunn (2015) explains that in the mid-19th century, ethnology was considered the study of the science of man and the world in which he lives; its investigation was important for helping nations understand each other in order to advance "civilization." Terms more clearly defined as "race" appear in the first DDC edition at 573, "Natural History of Man" (Dewey 1876, 18). In the relative index, we find "Negroes" classed in 573 and "Races, history" in 572 (Dewey 1876, 33, 36). The classification of the topics ethnology, race, and the history of man in the 570s ("Biology") suggests that during the late 19th century, race was viewed from a biological perspective, which is consistent with what we saw in Linnaeus' classification.

300	**Sociology**	**390**	**Customs and Costumes**	**570**	**Biology**
310	Statistics	391	Ancient	571	Prehistoric Archeology
320	Political Science	392	Medieval	572	Ethnology
330	Political Economy	393	Modern	573	Natural History of Man
340	Law	394	Europe	574	Homologies
350	Administration	395	Asia	575	Evolution
360	Associations and Institutions	396	African	576	Embryology
370	Education	397	North America	577	Spontaneous generation
380	Commerce and Communication	398	South American	578	Microscopy
390	Customs and Costumes	399	Oceania	579	Collectors' Manual

Table 1. 300, 390, and 570 delineations, adapted from First Edition of the DDC (Dewey 1876)

3.2 Tenth Edition

In the tenth DDC edition, we see a shift in the 390 section to focus more specifically on types of customs. This class is renamed "Customs, Costumes, and Folklore" in the class summary but is listed as "Customs and Popular life" in its division summary (Dewey 1919, 50,54). There is, however, mention of race and ethnicity in 397: "Gipsies, Nomads, Outcast races" (Dewey 1919, 54). In the relative index, "ethnography," previously assigned to 390 in the first edition, is now classed in section 572 (1919, 681). This shows a stronger shift towards race and ethnicity as biological concepts in the early 20th century.

In fact, if we look at the schedule for 572 in the tenth edition, we see this section is built out with more specificity, and we may glean some information about views on race as a scientific idea (See Table 2). In this edition, section 572 is titled "Ethnology" and "Anthropology" and subsections are made for the "unity" and "diversity" of races (572.1 and 571.2, respectively) as well as "Savages: race divided by practices" (572.7), "Races divided by language" (572.8) and "divided by countries" (572.9) (1919, 422). The 573 section is renamed "Natural history of man" and "Somatology." Subsections here refer to "influence of climate and surroundings" (573.4), which harkens back to our discussion of environmental theory. Somatic characteristics such as skin pigmentation, "Color in man" (573.5), and head shape, "Craniology" (573.7), are also classed here. These are all topics related to biological race in a way that aligns with what we saw in antiquity. These subject delineations of race and ethnicity within the natural sciences are indicative of some of the more dangerous ideas in early 20th-century thinking, such as the American Jim Crow laws and the eugenics movement.

3.3 Twentieth Edition

By the 20th edition, the 390s of the DDC are more fully established as relating to customs, etiquette, and folklore and deal much less with social groups (Dewey 1989, 679). (See Figure 1 for a progression of the 390s.) However, a separate section specifically for "Social groups" (305) is created (1989, 249). This section is subdivided to include "religious," "language," and "racial, ethnic, and national groups," which is consistent with the ways people were categorized in antiquity.

At the same time, the 572 section, "Human races," undergoes a significant change in terminology and becomes more focused on physical/somatic characteristics (see Table 3). Topics such as ethnology, cultural ethnology, and ethnography are relocated to 305.8, in the social sciences (Dewey 1989, 249). Subsections of 572 include "Origins of physical characteristics of race" (572.2), "Causes of physical differences" (572.3), "Specific races" (572.8), and "geographical distribution of races" (572.9) (1989, 857). The 573 section, on the other hand, becomes focused on "Physical anthropology" but still includes "Environmental effects on physique" (573.4),

300	**Sociology**	**390**	**Customs Popular Life**	**572**	**Ethnology Anthropology**	**573**	**Natural history of man Somatology**
310	Statistics	391	Costume and care of person	.1	Unity of the human race	.1	Man's place in nature
320	Political Science	392	Birth, home and sex customs	.2	Diversity of races	.2	Origin of man
330	Political Economy	393	Treatment of ded [sic]	.3	Migrations of men	.3	Antiquity of man
340	Law	394	Public and social customs	.4	Original home of man: Eden, Atlantis, etc.	.4	Influence of climate and surroundings
350	Administration	395	Etiquet [sic]	.5	[unassigned]	.5	Color in man
360	Associations and Institutions	396	Woman's position and treatment	.6	[unassigned]	.6	Anthropometry
370	Education	397	Gipsies [sic] Nomads Outcast races	.7	Savages: races divided by practises	.7	Craniology
380	Commerce and Communication	398	Folklore Proverbs, etc.	.8	Races divided by language like 400	.8	Dwarfs and giants
390	Customs, Costumes, and Folklore	399	Customs of war	.9	Races divided by countries like 930-999	.9	Monstrosities

Table 2. 300, 390, 572, 573 delineations, adapted from Tenth Edition of the DDC (Dewey 1919)

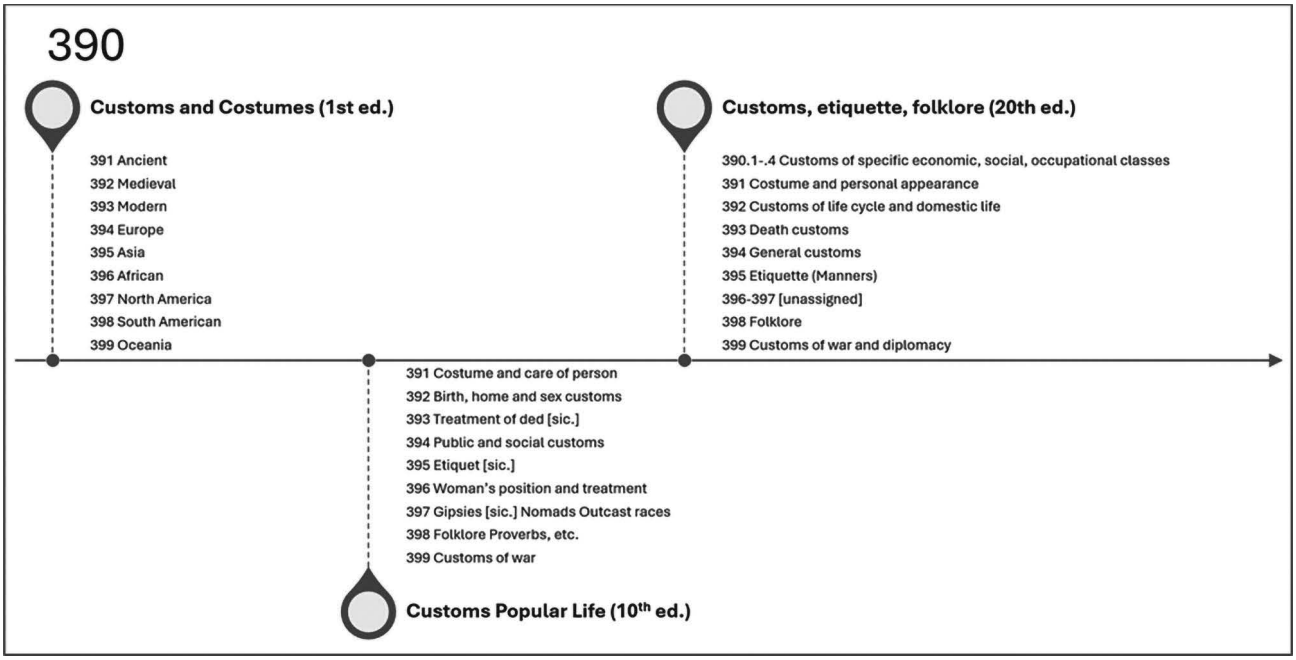

Figure 1. Progression of 390 across editions 1, 10, and 20

390	**Customs, etiquette, folklore**	**305**	**Groups of People**	**572**	**Human races** *class here physical ethnology*	**573**	**Physical anthropology** *Class here biological ecology*
.1-.4	Customs of specific economic, social, occupational classes			.09	Historical, geographical, persons treatment		
391	Costume and personal appearance			.1	[unassigned]	.1	[unassigned]
392	Custom of life cycle and domestic life	305.2	Age groups	.2	Origins and physical characteristics of races	.2	Evolution and genetics of humankind
393	Death customs	.3	Men and women	.3	Causes of physical differences	.3	Prehistoric humankind
394	General customs	.4	Women	.4	[unassigned]	.4	Environmental effects on physique
395	Etiquette (Manners)	.5	Social classes	.5	[unassigned]	.5	Pigmentation
396	[unassigned]	.6	Religious groups	.6	[unassigned]	.6	Anthropometry
397	[unassigned]	.7	Language groups	.7	[unassigned]	.7	Craniology
398	Folklore	.8	Racial, ethnic, national groups	.8	Specific races	.8	Abnormal dimensions and physique
399	Customs of war and diplomacy	.9	Occupational and miscellaneous groups	.9	Geographical distribution of races	.9	[unassigned]

Table 3. 390. 305, 572, 573 delineations, adapted from the Twentieth Edition of the DDC (Dewey 1989)

"Pigmentation" *(*573.5), and "Craniology" (573.7) (1989, 858). In this sense, though the terminology used when classi fying biological race is updated for its time, the shift in thinking in this class has not changed as much as one might expect over 70 years. However, the separation of the 300s more carefully focused on ethnicity and the 500s on race, suggests that the idea of race as a biological concept was still prevalent in the late 1900s.

3.4 Twenty-third Edition

The 23rd edition of DDC, published in 2011, is void of the term "human races" in the 500s; 572 and 573 are now designated for "Biochemistry" and "Specific physiological systems in animals," respectively (Webdewey 2011b, 618, 619). This change is significant in that it suggests that ideas about race in the 21st century are, fortunately, less likely to be viewed from a biological perspective. (See Figures 2 and 3 for a progression of 572 and 573 across editions.)

On the other hand, the summaries for section 305 are delineated similarly in the 20th and 23rd editions, though the 305 section is renamed "Groups of people" and uses terminology that might be considered more palatable by today's standards (See Table 4). For example, "Social classes" is changed to "People by social and economic levels" (Web-

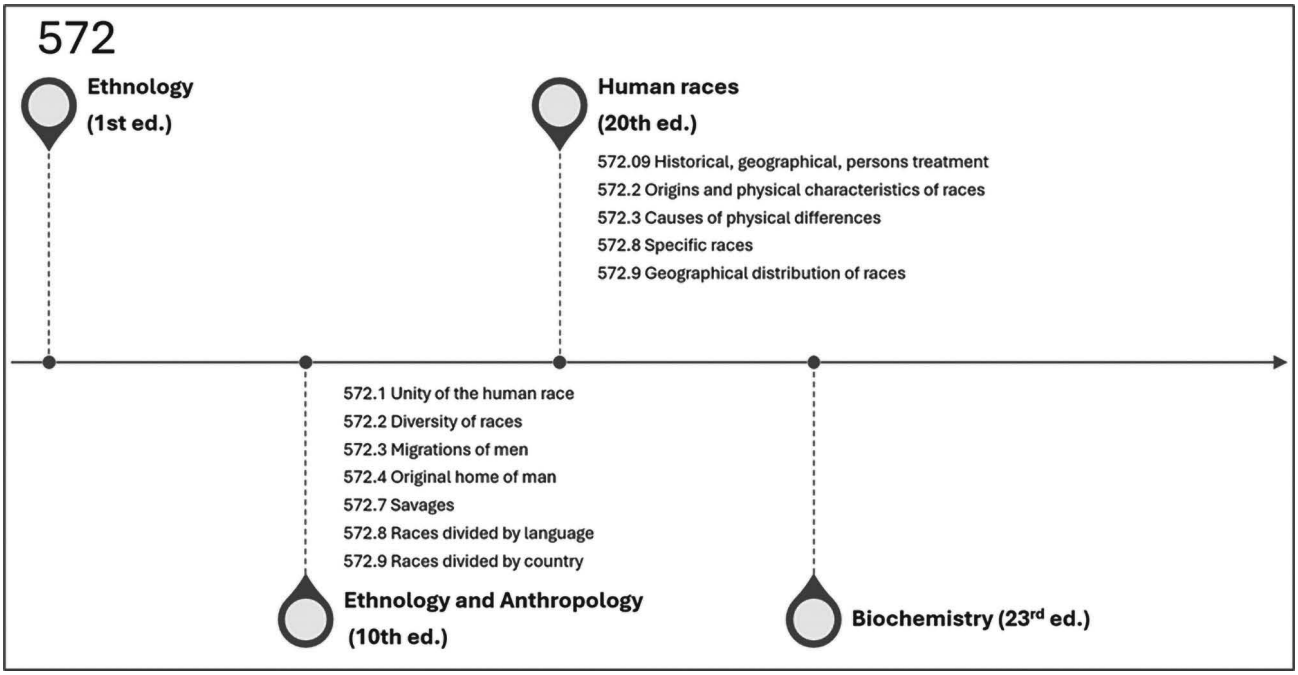

Figure 2. Progression of 572 across editions 1, 10, 20, and 23.

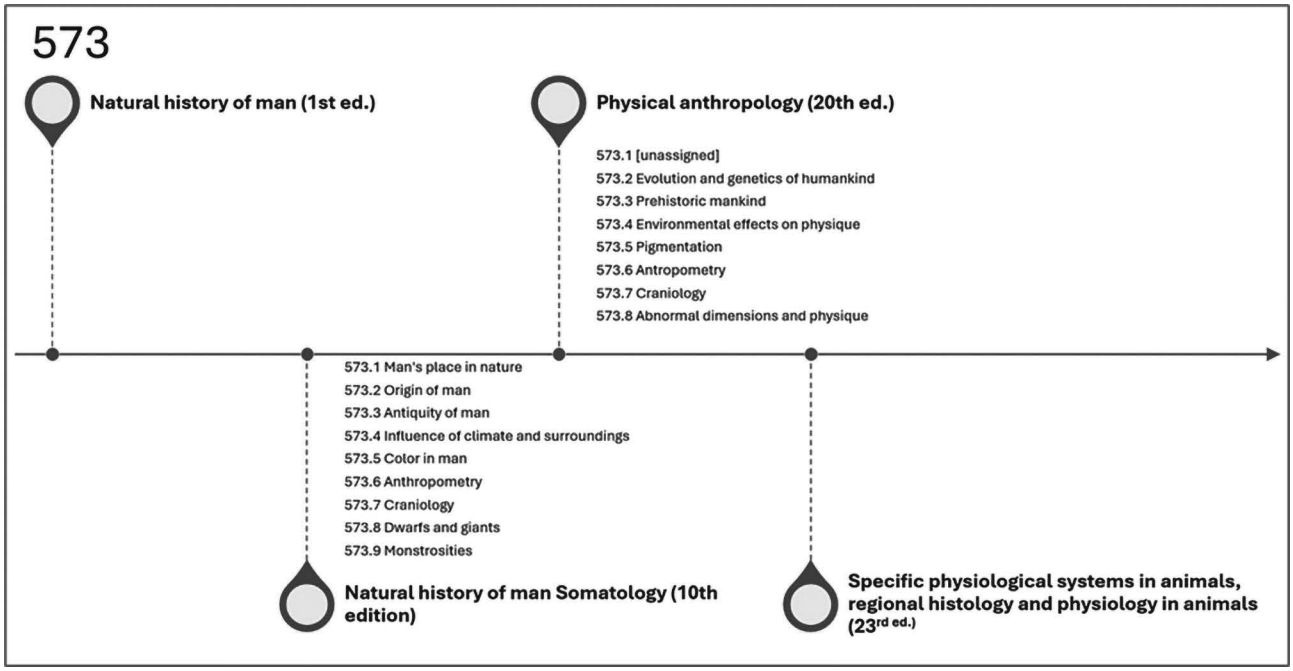

Figure 3. Progression of 573 across editions 1, 10, 20, and 23

	20th Edition	**23rd Edition**
305	**Social Groups**	**Groups of People**
.2	Age groups	Age groups
.3	Men and women	People by gender or sex
.4	Women	Women
.5	Social classes	People by social and economic levels
.6	Religious groups	Religious groups
.7	Language groups	Language groups
.8	Racial, ethnic, national groups	Ethnic and national groups
.9	Occupational and miscellaneous groups	People by occupation and misc. social statuses, people with disabilities and illnesses, gifted people

Table 4. Comparison of 305 terminology for 20th and 23rd editions (Dewey 1989; Webdewey 2011a)

dewey 2011a, 348). The subdivisions in 305.8 classify groups of people by national or ethnic groups.

Of particular note, however, the term "racial" groups has been removed from the title for 305.8. The scope note for this subdivision now states:

> Class here indigenous ethnic and national groups; ethnic and national groups associated with a specific language; ethnology, cultural ethnology, ethnography, race relations; racial groups, racism; treatment of biculturalism and multiculturalism in which difference in language is not a central element (Webdewey 2011a, 354).

The removal of headings using the terms "race" or "racial" appears counterintuitive when the scope note uses these terms to describe the topics that should be classed within the section. Satija suggests that the term "racial" was removed from this subdivision in the 22nd edition because of the current antipathy towards the word "racial" (2013, 175). In dropping this term, Furner states, "the implication is that any population defined in the work by racial characteristics should be treated, for classification purposes, as a group whose commonality resides in their ethnic (i.e., sociocultural) heritage" (2007, 156). In fact, Buell points out that ethnicity must always be understood in tandem with race because the term itself was created as an alternative to race as a biological concept in modern times (2005, 17). Fought agrees, suggesting that although both ethnicity and race are socially constructed ideas, their ideologies "create their own social reality" and that "works on race and ethnicity acknowledge the important roles of both self-identification and the perceptions and attitudes of others in the construction of ethnic identity" (2006, 6). Satija and Kyrios acknowledge that the removal of the term "racial" from the heading was because "the idea of racial classification can be quite charged" (2023, 111). However, its use within the scope note may add to the confusion regarding how the concepts of race and ethnicity are defined in this edition of DDC.

If we examine some of the scope notes in the subdivisions in 305.8, we see that there is ambiguity in how the system defines the differences between ethnicity and race (See Table 5). For example, 305.809 is the subdivision for "Europeans and people of European descent." The scope note, among other parameters, tells librarians to class here "comprehensive works on whites" (Webdewey 2011a, 354). For subdivision 305.813, "People of the United States ('Americans')," the scope note states "Class here United States citizens of British origin, people of the United States as a national group" and provides examples for classes of other types of Americans, such as German Americans (305.83) and African Americans (305.896), which are classed outside of 305.813 (Webdewey 2011a, 354). The fact that the classification number for people of the United States is specifically for citizens of British descent, belies an ethnocentrism that names people outside of this group as non-normative Americans. If we look more deeply at the subdivisions for 305.89, most subjects relating to non-European groups are placed in the "Other ethnic or national groups category," including "Africans and people of African descent," "South Asians," "North American" and "South American native peoples," and "Semites" (Webdewey 2011a, 357–59). The subdivision for "Semites" includes a lengthy scope note which, among other peoples, includes Babylonians, Jews, Canaanites, Arabs, and "comprehensive works on Afro-Asiatic peoples" (Webdewey 2011a, 359). The subdivision for "Africans and people of African descent" also includes a lengthy scope note which includes "class here Blacks of African origin"(Webdewey 2011a, 361). Snow and Dunbar (2022) point out that if African Americans are not classified as Americans according to the DDC schedule, as discussed above, then the system is perpetuating a particular

305.8	Racial, ethnic, national groups
.8001-.8009	Standard subdivisions
.809	European and people of European descent
.81	North Americans
.82	British, English, Anglo-Saxon
.83	Germanic peoples
.84	Modern Latin peoples
.85	Italians, Romanians, related groups
.86	People who speak, or whose ancestor spoke, Spanish, Portuguese, Galician
	[unassigned]
.88	Greeks and related groups
.89	Other ethnic and national groups

Table 5. Delineation of 305.8, adapted from the 23rd edition DDC (Webdewey 2011a, 354)

worldview using standards that are both embedded and oppressive. This "othering" of some Americans is indicative of Adler and Harper's point that library classification conveys an erasure of races that suggests non-white perspectives are non-normative or lesser and "creates division rather than inclusivity" (2018, 68).

4.0 Conclusion

Whether somatic or social, value-charged or superficial, the classification of people based on the ideas we currently term "race" and "ethnicity" has existed since antiquity. Looking at the evolution of the 305 section and 390 and 570 divisions of DDC across editions provides a window into the shift in thinking about how race and ethnicity have been classified over time. In the original Dewey Decimal Classification system, the impact of antiquity on the understanding of these subjects is evident. Over time, the DDC evolved with American society's views of race and ethnicity; however, the model continues to prioritize the perspective of white Americans. As defined in the *Cataloguing Code of Ethics*, "critical cataloging focuses on understanding and changing how knowledge organisations codify systems of oppression" (2021, 1). Recent research aims to uncover and address epistemicide in our knowledge systems. Patin et al. define epistemicide as "the killing, silencing, annihilation, or devaluing of a knowledge system" and they make the point that this devaluing of information and perspectives plays a negative role in "what is collected, how it is classified and cataloged, and whether it can be accessed by the community" (2020, 2,3). They explain that universal classification such as DDC perpetuate epistemicide by centering the Anglo-Saxon American male epistemology (Patin et al. 2020). Furner (2007) and, more recently, Snow and Dunbar (2022), recommend using the lens of critical race theory to challenge the notions of neutrality and objectivity in how we classify resources in libraries. The *Cataloguing Code of Ethics* (2021) recognizes that while standards are important for interoperability, they are also biased and that catalogers must advocate for inclusivity.

As we have seen, the terms race and ethnicity are difficult to define. Buell explains, "changes in how races and ethnicities are defined over time indicates that they are in fact a social creation and not eternal realities," referring to a concept she calls the fluidity of race (2005, 6). This study of the DDC bears that out. Time and again, research into controlled vocabularies and classification in libraries has identified a need for change to better accommodate topics relating to traditionally marginalized people, cultures, identities, and religions. It is important that we acknowledge Olson's (1996) point that as naming information is the business of librarians, we exert control by deciding how subjects are represented, which affects access and retrieval of information. As this study shows, our decisions impact more than discovery and browsability, they reflect how we see the world and, in turn, may become the lens through which others view it too. As stewards of the wider knowledge system, librarians are responsible for tending the values of this system. Dick explains, the most important values of the knowledge system model include that they be "rooted in social realities" and "reflect social changes" (1982, 21). This idea plays a significant role in current attempts to decolonize our libraries so that past perspectives do not dominate current research by guiding inquiry in a direction tied to outdated ideas. Patin et al. (2021) make the case that expanding our epistemological frameworks to include more voices emphasizes the role of knowledge not just as a collection of information but as something that can transform the recipient. As participants in the production, organization, and distribution of knowledge, librarians must continually evaluate the im-

pact our work has on the way we present information and address the current frameworks that contribute to the systematic oppression of historically marginalized ways of knowing.

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