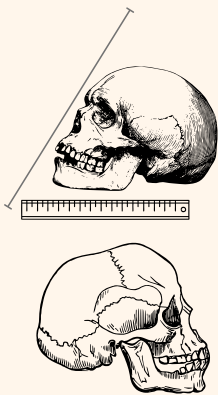


# Craniology: "scientific" racism

a factsheet by  
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In **Gustav Jahoda's** article "Intra-European Racism in Nineteenth-Century Anthropology," Jahoda discusses the false "scientific" racism that arose under the name '**craniology**' that **promoted "Nordic" superiority based on the inspection of skulls**. Here are just a few scientists who had some big impacts.

## WHAT IS RACISM?

Racism is the discrimination of groups of people based on their "race," and it is based on the idea that **distinct physical traits correspond to complex behavioural traits**.

This is the basis of craniology, it primarily aimed to distinguish different "races" by skulls, and **it always pointed to a superior "race."**

## BLUMENBACH

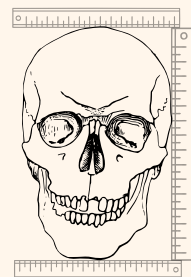


**Johann Friedrich Blumenbach** (1752–1840) was the **founder of "craniology."** His divisions of "races" included one of the first classifications using the term "**Caucasian**," which referred to Europeans, excluding Finns and Lapps.

The intent behind the term was to capture what Blumenbach saw as the "**exceptional beauty of the female Georgian skull**."

## CAMPER

**Petrus Camper** (1722–1789) was interested in art, and he recognized that there was a **misrepresentation in art** of different groups. He came up with the idea of "**prognathism**," which referred to the extent that the jaw jugged out. Camper's work on the skull was then **used by others** to further reinforce prejudices and circulate harmful ideas about "race."



## EDWARDS

**William Edwards** (1777–1842) claimed that **skulls were the essential criterion of "race"** rather than skin pigmentation, and he took up the notion of "**historical races**," using "race" as an explanation for history.

He claimed that **physical variations are associated with mental ones**; that mental traits were able to be inferred by the physical variation of skulls alone.

Edwards introduced the **long-headed vs. broad headed dichotomy**, foreshadowing the "Nordic" superiority that followed with Retzius.

**Carl Gustav Carus** (1789–1869) divided "races" into **unequal endowment** determined by **cranial form**. He categorized three "races" based off cranial forms:

1. Daylight (whites)
2. Nocturnal (blacks)
3. Twilight (intermediate shades)

## RETZIUS



**Anders Retzius** (1796–1860) introduced the famous dichotomy of "**dolichos**" and "**brachys**," which reinforced "**Nordic**" superiority. "Dolichos" came to be the "Nordics," while "brachys" were a broad category of "other."

## FLAWS IN CRANIOLOGY

Not only was craniology racist, but there were many **technical flaws** within the "science." Skulls were **not geometrical** and each had many variations. Another flaw was that **sample sizes** were not regarded as important yet, and scientists got away with making large claims based on very small samples and little evidence.

## WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

Jahoda's work is important because he highlights how **a racist pseudoscience emerged to further pursue and "prove" prejudices of European anthropologists, which resulted in long lasting harmful affects**, such as influence on policies regarding **immigration** in the 1920s.

It also played a part in **Nazi ideology** which caused a great deal of human misery