

GEO 403.1: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY

Social Geography: Nature Scope and Content

Definition

- The sub-discipline that examines the social contexts, social processes and group relations that shape space, place, nature and landscape. The generality of this definition indicates both the breadth of social geography and changing emphases through time, across various paradigms and also in different national traditions. (Johnston, 2009)
- Social geography is concerned with the ways in which social relations, social identities and social inequalities are produced, their spatial variation, and the role of space in constructing them. It places particular emphasis on the welfare issues which affect people's lives, and aims to expose the forms of power which lead to social and spatial inequality and oppression.
- Concerned with the way space mediates the production and reproduction of key social divides – such as class, race, gender, age, sexuality and disability – social geography eventually became broadly established as ‘the study of social relations and the spatial structures that underpin those relations’ (Jackson, 2000b: 753).

Approaches in Social Geography

Positivist approaches

Positivists approach social geography as though it were a natural science, seeking to make general statements, model geographical phenomena and discover 'laws' to explain human/spatial interactions. Quantitative methods have usually been employed in support of these goals. In most positivist research social scientists are assumed to be capable of being objective, neutral, value-free observers. Although this position has been widely criticized, positivism has been a popular approach to social geography and dominant until relatively recently.

Humanistic approaches

Humanistic approaches offer a longstanding alternative which challenges deterministic explanations. Humanistic social geographies assert that there is no objective geographical world, but that geographies are both perceived and created by individuals' perceptions, attitudes and feelings. They give centrality to human agency, diversity and difference, and value the trivial, local and everyday human experience. They believe that science and scientists are subjective and involved, and indeed may alter what they are studying.

Approaches in Social Geography

Radical approaches

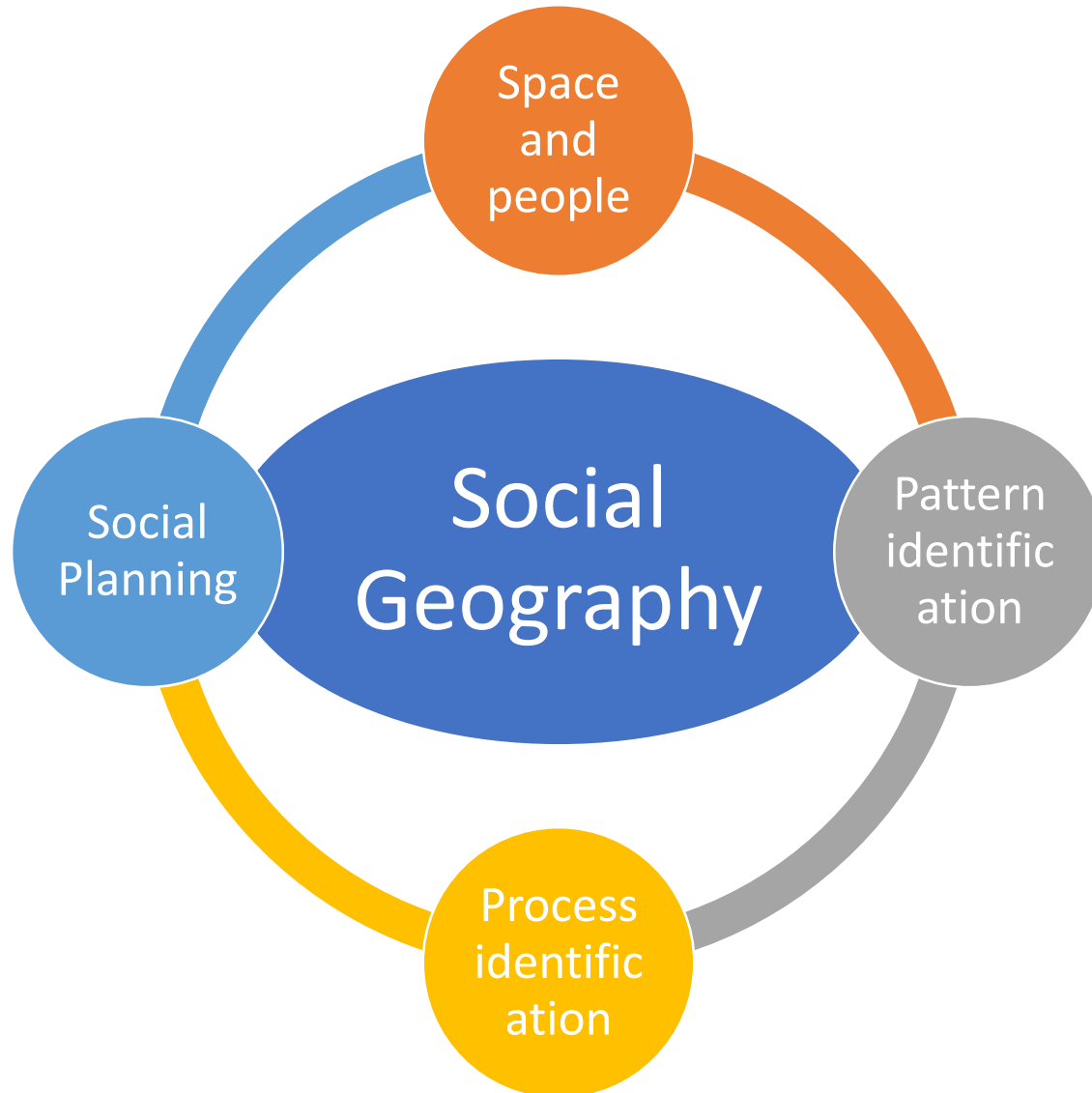
Radical approaches emphasize power relations and social and political structures in explaining the social geographical world. Radical social geographers have an explicit political and moral commitment to the issues they study. The most influential have been Marxism, feminism and anti-racism, all of which apply important bodies of social theory to the analysis of society and space. Marxist geographies draw on the theories of Karl Marx, stressing the centrality of capitalist economic and political systems in underpinning social and spatial life, and adapting and refining theory to keep pace with current changes to society and economy. Feminist geographies draw on feminist theories, and have expanded their focus from examining women's lives and the importance of gender in constructing space to a concern with other forms of difference and oppression. Anti-racist geographies have highlighted and contested the racism endemic to western societies and in human geography itself. Radical approaches stress the need to constantly re-examine not only the content of social geography but the ways in which research and theory are done.

Approaches in Social Geography

Postmodern approaches

Postmodern approaches to geography are disparate. Postmodernism denotes a supposedly new era for western societies, the idea that we are now beyond the 'modern' age. Postmodern approaches generally involve challenging the linear progress of history and social science; the fragmentation of traditionally discrete forms of explanation; and the rejection of realism, certainty and truth, including 'grand theories'. The term is often used to incorporate the cultural turn and postcolonial approaches. The perspectives it encompasses sometimes conflict. Some have viewed postmodernism as relativistic, while others claim it has opened up spaces for those previously excluded from geographical theory.

Content of Social Geography



Space and Social Geography

First space: Space reflects social activity

For example, we can view highly segregated social areas as reflecting social inequalities of class, race, age and gender.

Second space: Space constructs social activity

We can also view space as having an active role in the creation or maintenance of social inequality. Continuing with the example of housing patterns, there are many ways in which where you live reinforces your social position. For example, some areas have fewer job opportunities than others and their reputations may make it difficult for residents to find work elsewhere. These areas also have poorer services, education and public transport.

Third space: Space is a means of resistance and celebration

Rather than accepting these social constructions of space, we might challenge them through our use of space. Spaces can be used to resist oppression and redefine social identity. Some of those that geographers have written about are metaphorical or imagined spaces (e.g. the spaces of music), but oppressed communities can use local spaces to contest and redefine their labelling, for example as living in a 'bad neighbourhood'.

Scope of Social Geography

- Up to 1945, social geography was mainly concerned with the identification of different regions, themselves reflecting geographic patterns of association of social phenomena.
- Socio-geographical studies of population distribution and ethnic composition in urban areas emerged as a major trend after this phase.
- The **city** with its specific functional specialization cast these social groups in its mould, resulting in the assimilation of diverse elements into a universal urban character.
- Social Geography is primarily concerned with the ways in which ***social relations, identities and inequalities*** are created.
- How these social creations vary over space and the role of space in their construction is the principle distinction between sociology and social geography.

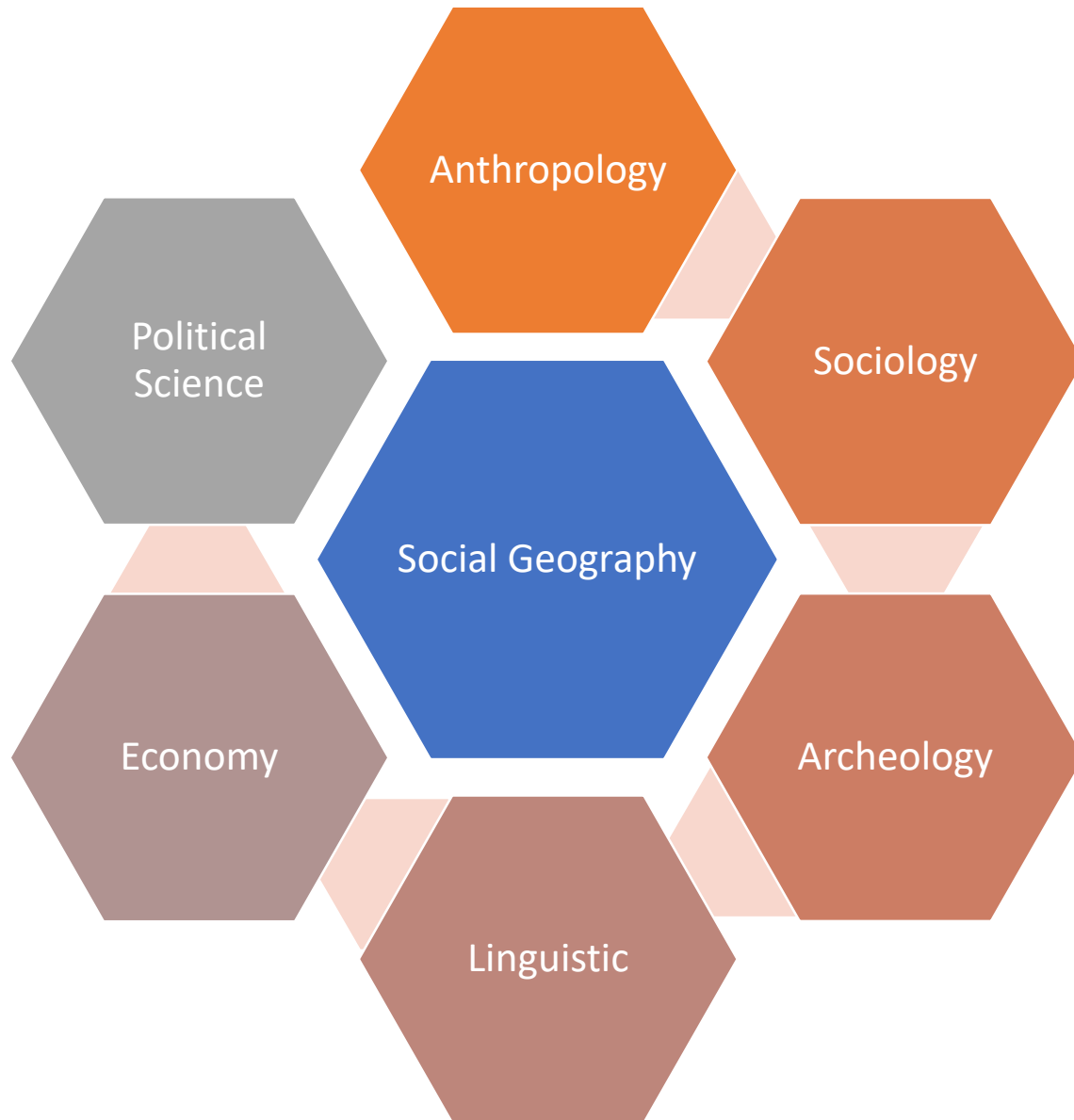
Scope of Social Geography

- *Social Interaction and relations*: Social interaction refers to the mutual inter stimulation and response between two or more persons and groups through symbols, language, gestures and expression of ideas.
- Social interaction is the foundation of society. Without interaction there would be no group life.

Social interaction has different form of interaction:

1. Between individual to individual
2. Between Individual to Groups
3. Between groups to groups
4. Between individual and culture

Nature of Social Geography



Ethnicity

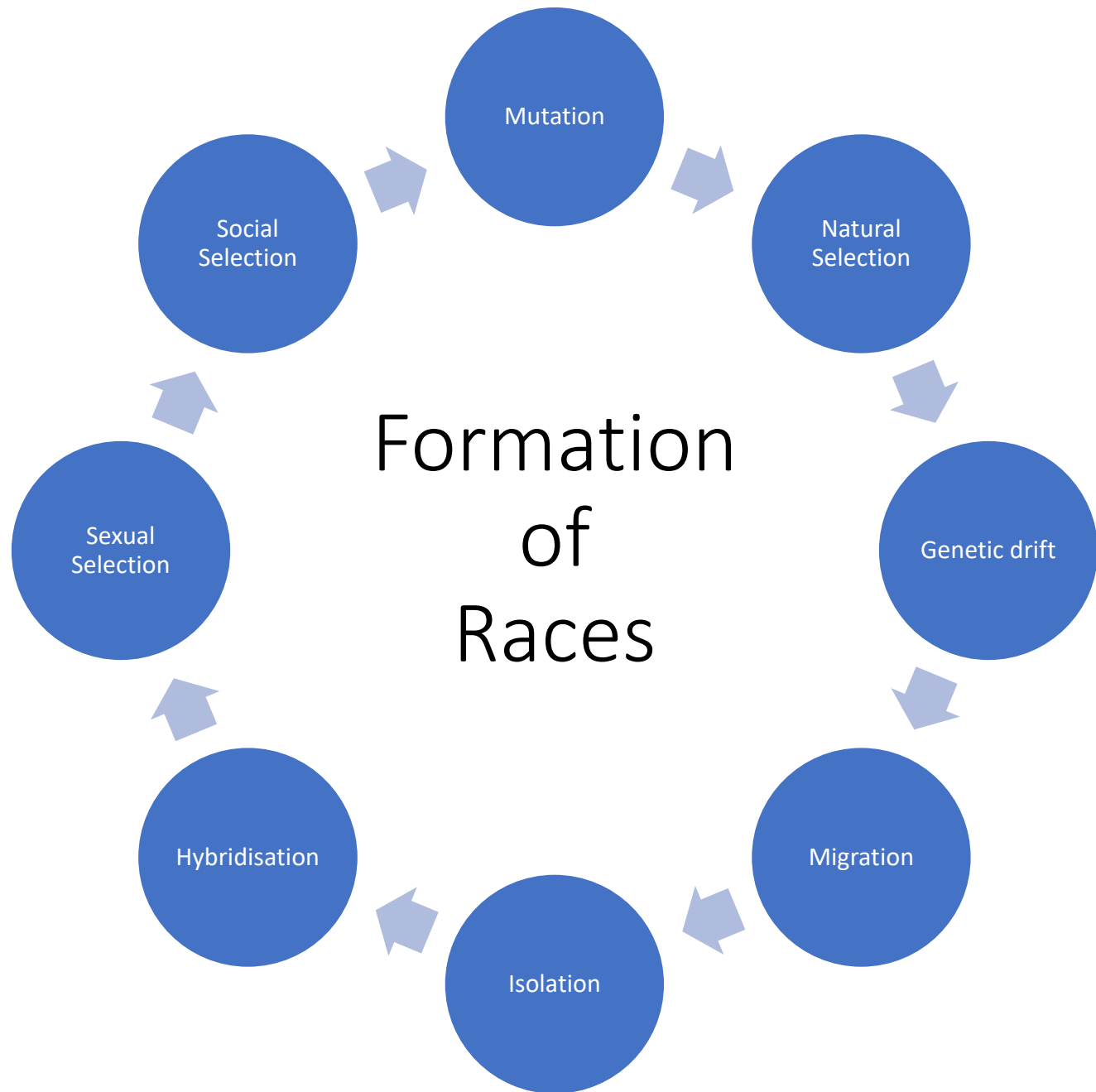
- According to Schermerhorn (1978) “An ethnic group is defined here as a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a share historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood.” So according to Schermerhorn’s ideal ethnic communities are only parts of a larger society. Hutchinson and Smith (1996) have identified six major common criteria which help to find out the commonness in an ethnic community.
 - i. A common proper name, to identify and express the essence of community
 - ii. A myth of common ancestry, ideas like common origin, common kinship etc.
 - iii. Shared historical memories, stories of a common past
 - iv. Elements of common culture, these elements may be more than one
 - v. A link with a homeland
 - vi. A sense of solidarity on the part of at least some sections of the ethnic population

Race

- Race refers to classification of humans into relatively large and distinct population groups based on appearance through heritable phenotypic characteristics, often influenced by and correlated with culture, ethnicity and socio-economic status.
- Hooton (1926) has defined race in **essentialist concept** as “A great division of mankind, characterised as a group sharing certain combination of features, derived from their common descent, and constitute a vague physical background, usually more or less obscured by individual variations, and realised best in a composite picture.”
- Mayr (1969) has given the **taxonomic concept** of definition as “A subspecies is an aggregate of phenotypically similar populations of a species, inhabiting a geographic subdivision differing taxonomically from other populations of the species.

Race

- Dobzhansky (1970) has defined race in **population concept** as “Race are genetically distinct Mendelian populations. They are neither individuals nor particular genotypes; they consist of individuals who differ genetically among themselves.”
- Montagu (1972) has defined race in **genetical context** as “a population which differs in the frequency of some gene or genes, which actually exchange or capable of exchanging genes across boundaries and separate it from other populations of the species.
- Templeton (1998) has given the lineage concept of definition as “A subspecies is a distinct evolutionary lineage within a species. This definition requires that a subspecies, genetically differentiated due to barriers occurring in genetic exchange that have persisted for long periods. The subspecies must have historical continuity in addition to current genetic differentiations.”



Racial Identification

There are two aspects to distinguish people based on phenotypic and genotypic traits.

1) **Phenotypic Traits:** Phenotypic traits are those physical characteristics of an individual, which may be examined: These are of two types:

- Indefinite Physical (Phenotypic) Traits and
- Definite Physical (Phenotypic) Traits

2) **Genotypic Traits:** A new approach to classify human races is based on some genetic traits.

Racial Identification

Indefinite Physical (Phenotypic) Traits

- Skin colour
- Hair
- Eye
- Nose
- Lips
- Face Form
- Ear

Definite Physical (Phenotypic) Traits

- Stature
- Head Form
- Nose Form
- Face Form
- Ear Form

Genotypic Traits:

- Blood group
- Dermatoglyphics
- Hemoglobin variants
- DNA Finger prints

Racial Classification

Hooton's Classification In 1931, American anthropologist, E.A. Hooton has suggested a four fold classification of composite races, which is the result of cross breeding amongst the primary races. In 1947, however, he modified his classification

1) White (European, Eur-African, caucosoid): This group includes six primary and two composite sub races. The primary sub-races include Mediterranean, Ainu, Keltic, Nordic, Alpine and East Baltic while composite sub races include Armonoid and Dinaric.

2) Negroid: This group includes African Negro, Nilotic Negro and Negrito (Pygmies) belonging to the primary sub-races.

3) Mongoloid: This group include Classic and Arctic Mongoloid (Eskimoid), Primary sub-races.

4) Composite Races: This group further classified into three categories:

i) Predominantly White – This group includes Australian, Indo-Dravidian and Polynesians.

ii) Predominantly Mongoloid – This group includes American Indian and Indonesian Mongoloid or Indonesian-Malay.

iii) Predominantly Negroid – This group includes Melanesian Papuan or Oceanic Negroids, Bushmen - Hottentot and Tasmanians.

Racial Classification

- Boyd's Classification In 1958, Boyd modified Wiener's classification and proposed six groups comprising thirteen races as follows:
- i) European Group - (1) Early European (2) Lapps (3) North-west Europeans, (4) Eastern and Central Europeans, and (5) Mediterraneans.
- ii) African Group - (6) The African races, excluding inhabitants of North Africa, which belong to European group.
- iii) Asian Group - (7) The Asian races (8) Indo-Dravidian. iv) American Group - (9) American Indians
- v) Pacific Group - (10) Indonesian race, (11) Melanesian race and (12) Polynesian race
- vi) Australian Group - (13) Australian aborigines.

Racial Classification

Ashley Montagu Classification In 1951, Ashley Montagu proposed a classification, which was accepted by many anthropologists. He used skin colour, hair form and head form. He classified mankind into three main groups, viz.

- 1) Negroid
- 2) Mongoloid and
- 3) Caucasoid.

Language

- To define language, it is a systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings by the use of conventionalized signs, gestures, marks, or especially articulate vocal sounds. Vocalization is the crucial part of the definition. Animals use symbolic calls, but only humans have developed complex vocal communication systems. It is estimated that there are between 5,000-6,000 languages spoken in the world today. A majority come from preliterate societies, with no actual written language.
- Dialects, on the other hand, are regional variants of a standard language. English, the most widely spoken language, geographically, has many different dialects around the world. Dialectal differences are often easily recognized through differences in accent.

Linguistic Classification

Language Family	Major Language	Location
Indo-European	English	Americas, Europe, SW Asia, Australia, South Africa
Sino-Tibetan	Chinese	China, SE Asia
Japanese-Korean	Japanese	Japan, Korea
Afro-Asiatic	Arabic	North Africa, Arabian Peninsula
Dravidian	Telugu	India
Malay-Polynesian	Indonesian	Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Madagascar
Altaic	Turkish	Russia, Northern Asia, Finland, Turkey
Niger-Congo	Bantu (language group)	Sub-Saharan Africa

Religion

- According to the etymology, the word religion means “to bind together”. There is no single satisfactory definition of religion.
- Taylor said “ it’s a belief in spiritual beings”
- According to Geertz “ It’s a system of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive and long lasting mode and motivation in men by formulating a conception of a general order of existence”
- Three kinds of religions are there: *Universalising, ethnic, tribal/folk*

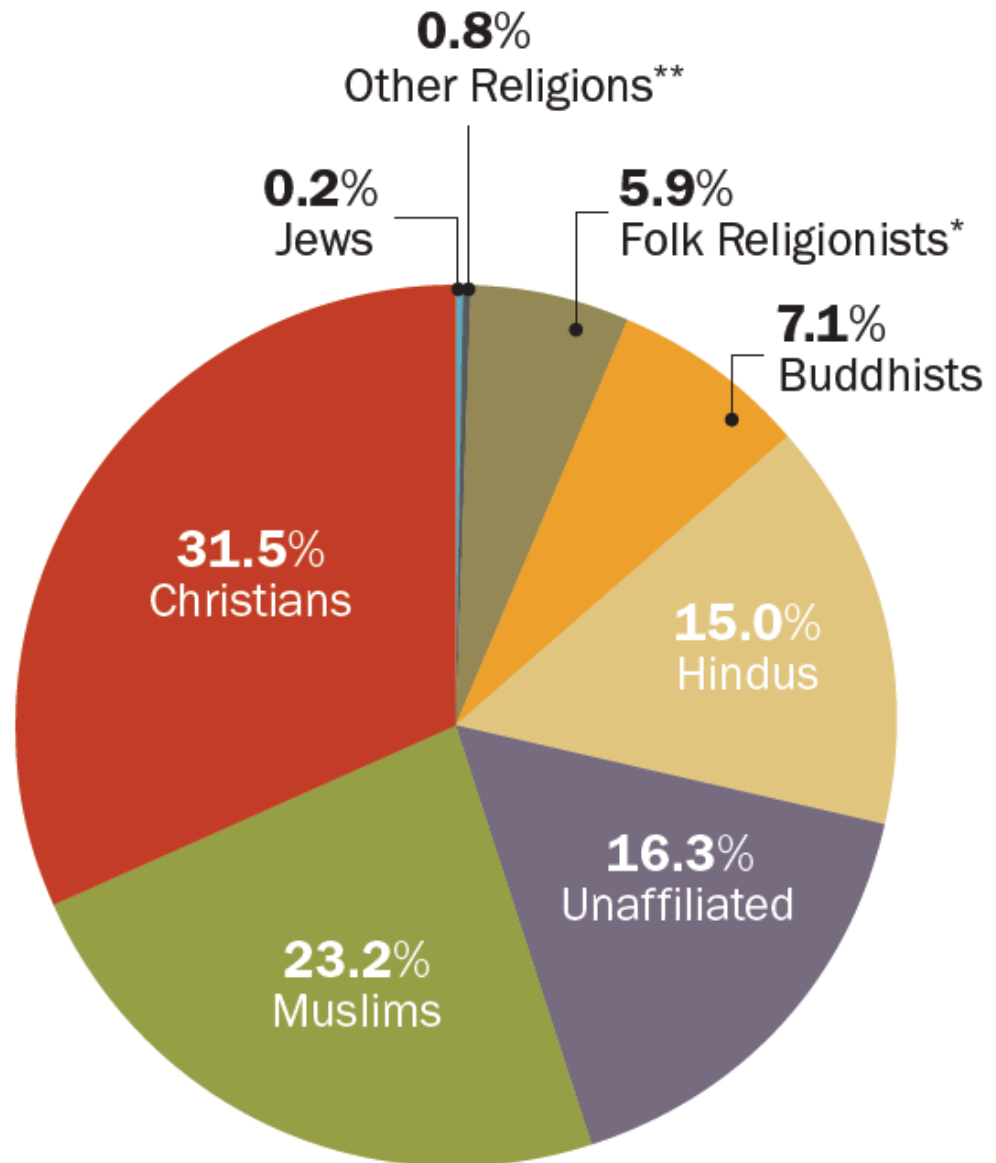
Religious Characteristics

- *Traditionalism*
- *Myth and symbol*
- *Concept of salvation*
- *Sacred places and objects*
- *Sacred action*
- *Sacred writing*
- *Sacred community*
- *Sacred experience*

Global Distribution of Religion

Size of Major Religious Groups, 2010

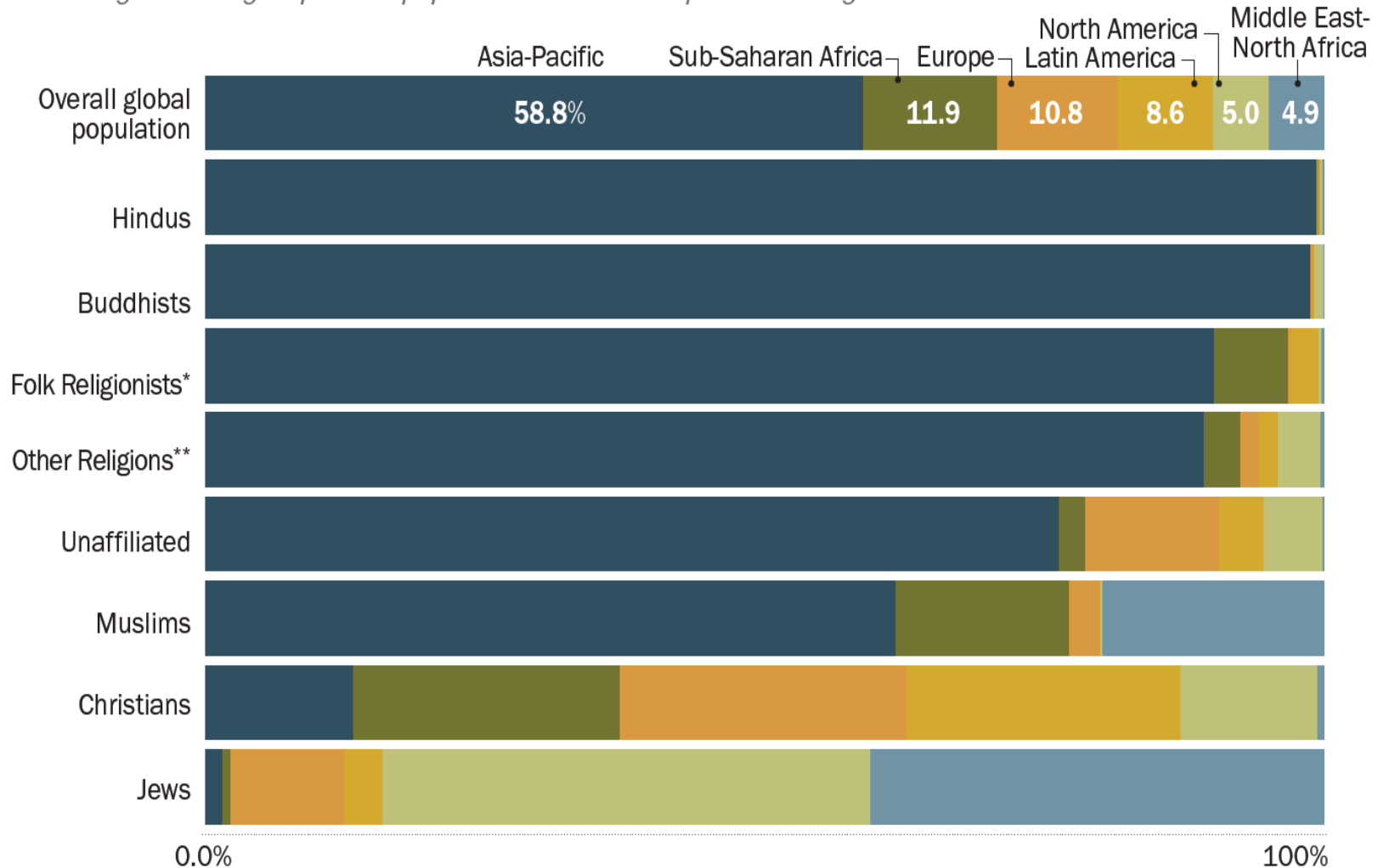
Percentage of the global population



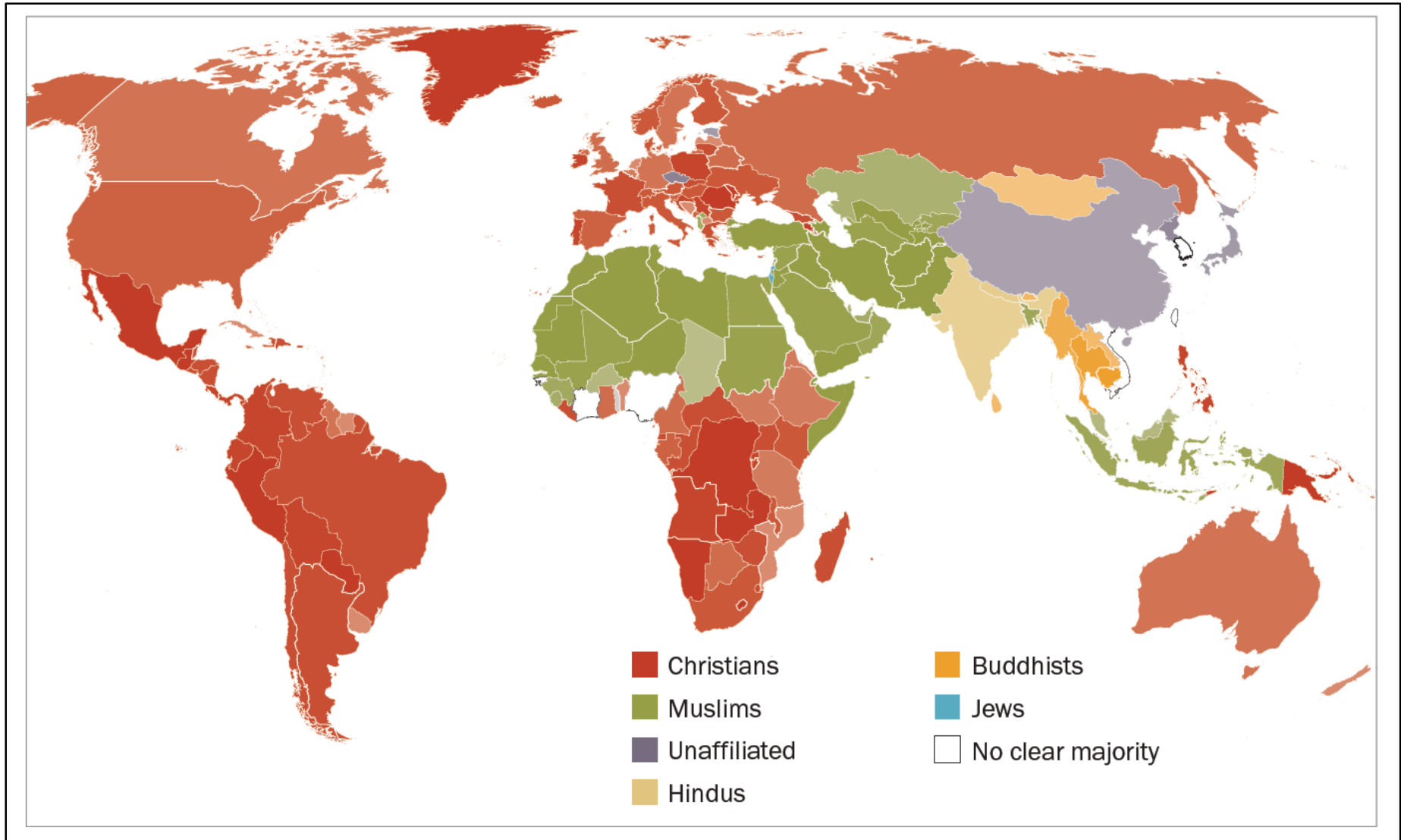
Global Distribution of Religion

Geographic Distribution of Religious Groups

Percentage of each group's total population that lives in particular regions



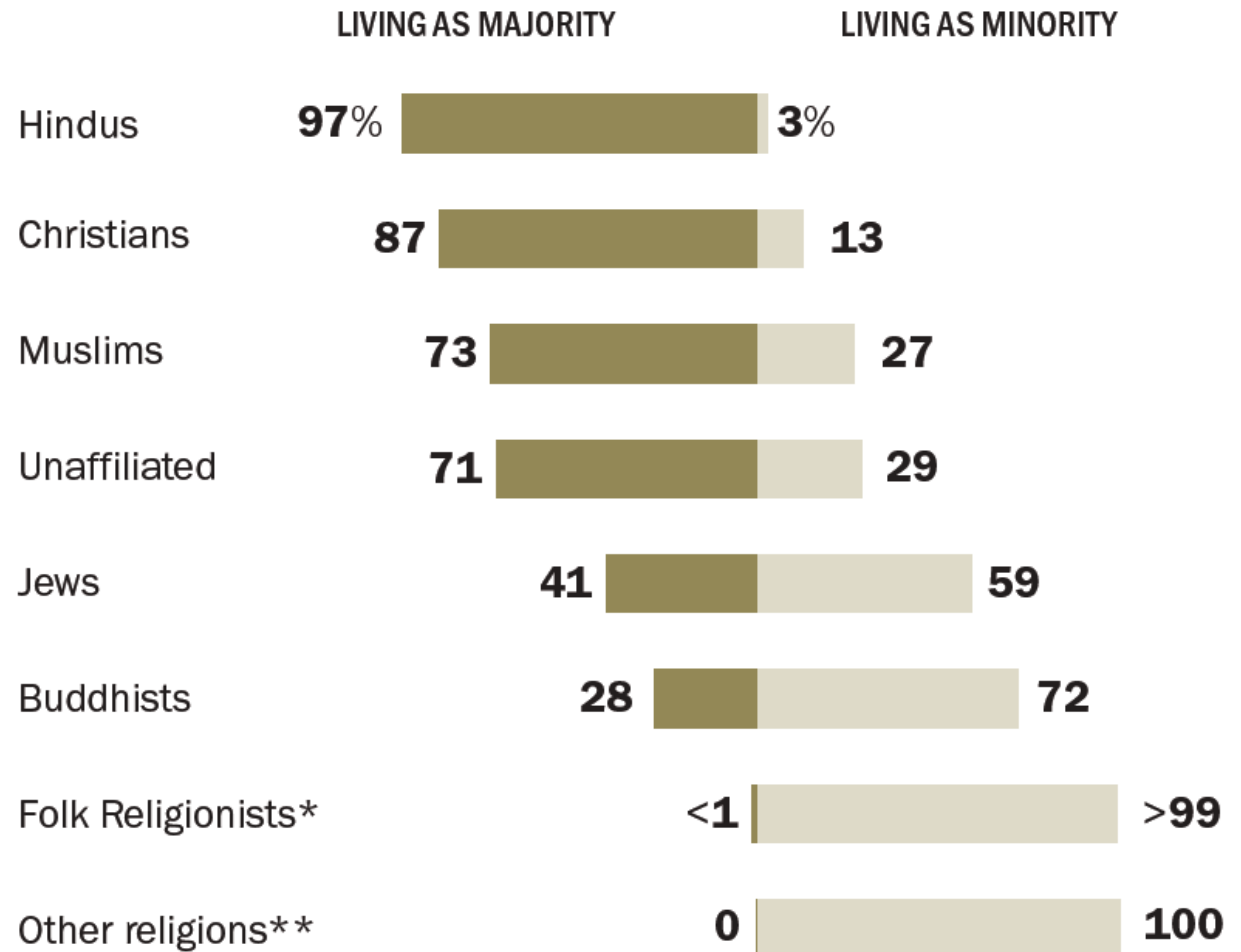
Global Distribution of Religion



Global Distribution of Religion

Majority or Minority

Percentage of each religious group that lives in countries where its adherents are a majority or a minority



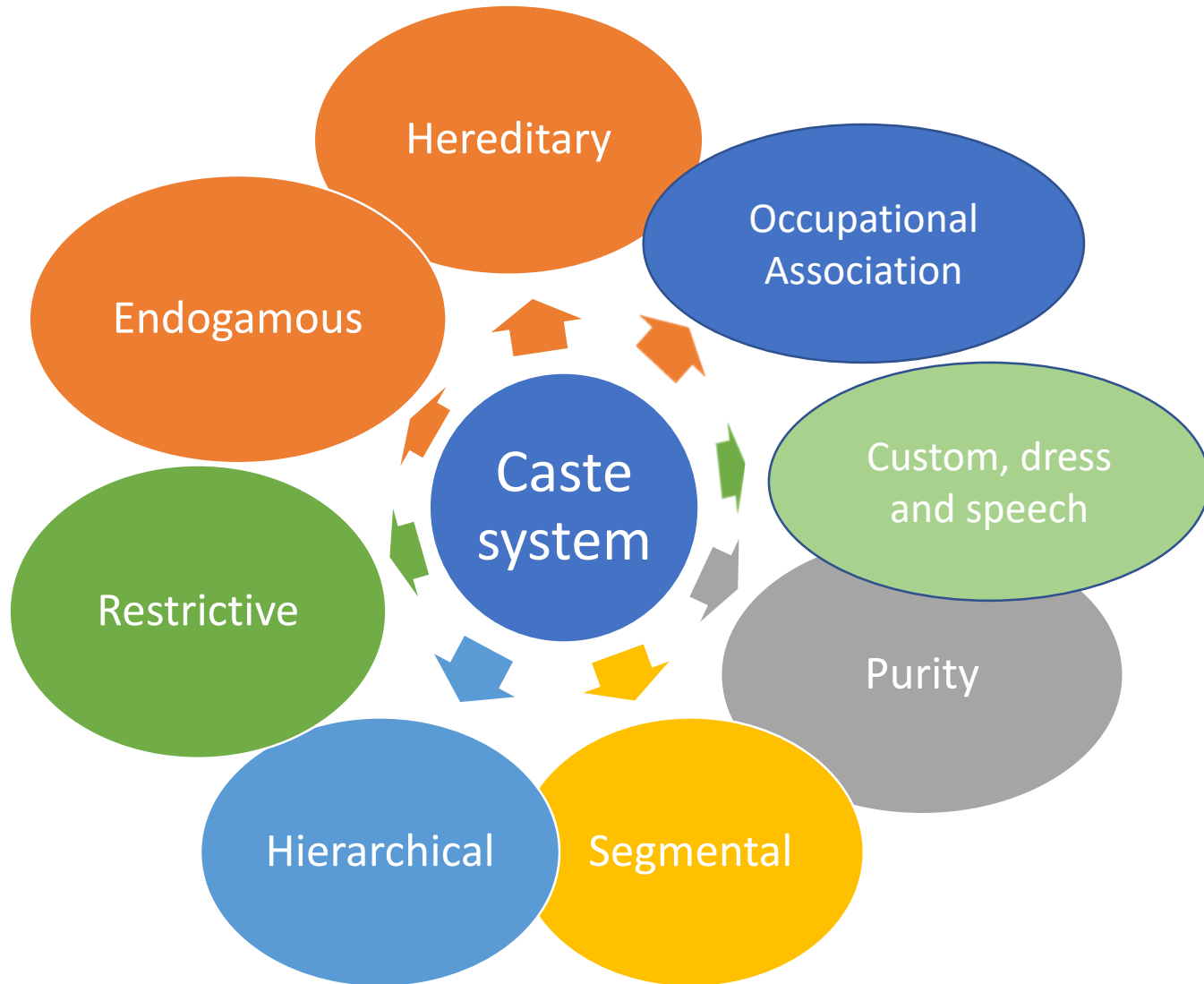
Caste system in India

- The word, “caste” is of Spanish and Portuguese origin. The term, “caste” originated from the Spanish word “casta”, meaning “lineage” or “race” or “a group having hereditary quality”. It is derived from the Latin word “Custus”, which means *pure*.
- Caste can be defined as hereditary endogamous group, having a common name, common traditional occupation, common culture, relatively rigid in matters of mobility, distinctiveness of status and forming a single homogeneous community.
- According to Dumont, ***caste is an institution unique to the Hindus.*** Some eight centuries before Christ, Brahmin thinkers made an 'absolute' distinction between 'status,' by which Dumont means religious rank, and power, and further, subordinated power to status. It is this principle of subordination of status to power that underlies the Vedic institution of varna, dividing society into four orders, Brahmin (priest), Kshatriya (warrior), Vaishya (trader and agriculturist) and Shudra (menial).

Varna and Jati

- There are two models of the caste system operating in India, varna and jati.
- Varna is the Vedic classification of the four, ranked occupational orders.
- Jati, on the other hand, is a purely local system of ranked, hereditary and mainly endogamous, groups, each associated with one or more traditional occupations, and all interdependent.

Characteristics



Influences upon Caste system

