

Ideas of race in the western society



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Human beings have distinctly different characteristics that according to anthropologists of the past claim these differences are biological. Now, in the modern era with advances in science and human development, these different human characteristics are viewed as a cultural concept rather than biological. Through our readings, we learned that race was once not important or determined of our status in society only previous to colonization. Then, race became a factor to ascribing status to individuals in our society. Now, with the awareness of racism in our society, we as human beings have declared race an unessential factor to our way of life in America . Biological characteristics mainly discussed in the text book is the color of our skin. The color of our skin has many connotations tied to what the textbook claims as a meaningless fraction that in fact ignoring the color of our skin we as humans are unable to come to terms with historical events that led to the destruction of certain peoples, lands, and cultures.

When we examine race, we can view race as being culturally constructed by human beings. When race is culturally constructed, we being to learn that race means more to us as humans than we like to admit due to the destruction and perversion against other humans in history especially in North America in the name of superiority and inferior nations. We are able to take race as we know it today and elaborate on how race challenges traditional Western notions and ideas of race itself. I have read the source, " Dimensions of Inequality in the Contemporary World: Class, Caste, Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism", from the text book and included information from our class notes to explore, explain, define, and outline meanings of race, how race is culturally constructed, and more importantly, what race

means to us today and the effects racializing people in our society, all, in efforts, to present my own personal view of cultural and race in modern society tied to past anthropological occurrences.

Definitions of terms:

We discuss terms without really ever defining these terms clearly so we have a foundation and outline of what we discuss in this paper, therefore, this paper will clearly define the terms used in order to guide what it is we are discussing so there is no confusion. When we think of anthropology, we often view anthropology as the study of old human bones, dug up like some old dinosaur that will teach us about the people of the past. However, we can take the anthropology concept further by labelling the term cultural anthropology, whereby cultural anthropology is the study of explaining human cultural diversity (Schultz 2005: 1). One area of our human cultural diversity is the concept of race.

Race is not clearly defined in the text book, however, race has been described in our class notes as the cultural concept of humans rather than a biological concept that is ascribed, which is the reason that social anthropologists view race as important. Race is at times tied to forms of culture concepts. Culture is according to the Schultz (2005), from a historical perspective, a complex whole that draws together the unity of knowledge, beliefs, laws and customs for groups of people. However, I argue that culture is more than the whole, culture is the total way of living and viewing the world each one of us live in.

According to my belief, culture is evolving and never stays the same; There are many different cultures and not one can be defined so clear, but just different. We can not view other groups culture without stating our own cultural biases, which is why anthropology is crucial to studying human behaviour through time. For example, we as humans are naturally stratified according to Schultz by race, economic status, or employment status. This stratification system put in place in many nations divide and limit individuals ability to move towards a better life or future. Many people are succumbed to a rigid system of inequality all in efforts to keep the status quo of a hierarchy. Class is the form of economic stratification and caste is stratification based on whom one is born into.

Race is Culturally Constructed:

Race was defined as a cultural concept developed by humans mainly and for greater purposes than we admit and not a biological determined fact.

Therefore, we can understand that race is separate than culture. Schultz provided an example of the melting pot in what we call Mexico now, back then, where people became oblivious to the racial cultural caste system (2005: 205). There were Spanish, Indigenous, and African Americans who were not to mix or interbreed, however, due to unexplainable events, many of the racially culturally distinct groups intertwined and fused races and cultures together. There is a large historical significance that is tied to present events now. And these meaningful acts become ever more important as we look at the past.

We can understand that early anthropologists were unable to fully understand the concept of race or culture due to the racist beliefs of that

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time. For example, we learned in our class lectures that early anthropologists measured human skulls and place attributes and characteristics to a group of peoples labelling the group inferior to the anthropologist's culture. According to Schultz, these actions of the anthropologists were justified by a means of being unaware of connotations that stemmed from these actions in the name of science. However, if these scientists really studied these cultural groups from a clear cultural perspective rather than studying the color of the skin and how it benefits the European descents, descriptions of cultures would be plentiful. Anthropologists and European scientists declared other cultures obsolete to their standards of living. We have yet to really grasp what culture means to the group being studied, unless we ask; instead, we impose Western thoughts and ideas, which have more than deadly actions than we understand. Race as a cultural concept is the best way to describe the historical events in human development.

What does this mean:

We can take the discussion further by elaborating on what race means to us when it is viewed as culturally constructed. If race is not seen as biological, then it means there is no need to view or label people according to race, but this is not a fact. We still have racism and racist ideas that are tolerated that was originally developed by racist attitudes of early scientists. We are human and naturally aware of differences of the skin, however, it is how we deal such matters of skin color that skin color should not be a factor. Take for example, culture means much more than race.

Culture is a way of doing or acting. We do not have to accept what scientists labelled truth when it is hurting a culture or people. Culture is learned and therefore social. We learn from the beginning from our parents how to act and behave based on thinking and ideas. The concept of ideas that change into actions is where we take the critical question of the meaning. From the text book of Schultz, they state that colonization and exploration of European states were the backbone for declaring races inferior which leads to today's modern day forms of institutional racism among any race non-European. Reviewing how race is culturally constructed means that we today do not have to have racism in our society.

How does this Challenge Traditional Western ideas of Race:

The concepts defined above challenges the traditional concepts of race but we must as a society move forward and change the way we view race and culture otherwise the challenge we offer is obsolete. We can learn much from the study of cultural anthropology by learning that other groups can speak for themselves and declare important characteristics through their own forms of explaining and sharing. Many individuals are unaware of the social hierarchies in our society due to privilege. When individuals of privilege do not acknowledge their status, they are unable to assist the ones who have no privilege. Schultz discussed in the chapter, the importance of colorism and that once all colors are mixed there is no more racist beliefs, however there are always going to be inequalities.

Inequalities in our society stem from the early anthropologists who set out scientific guidelines to discriminate that we have to be very critical of how we use science. European descendents used race as a way to steal land and

millions of dollars of resources, and justified killing many groups to gain authority, particularly Indigenous groups across North America . We are not like the old anthropologists of the past. Today's anthropologists are more stringent towards our analysis, descriptions, and ways to classify people. This means a great deal today to you and me. We no longer are aimed to humiliate a peoples whose culture is different than our own ways; diversification stands for the new challenge against traditional Western ideas of race.

We need to have more anthropologists write books about how the wrongs of yesterdays have crippled today's notions of other human beings being inferior and thus feeling no justice towards inequality. The best way to conjure our thinking of the future is to not forget the mistakes of the past.

Analysis:

We have discussed the importance of race and culture. We also examined the historical events in anthropological undertakings of the European fallacies, and we even went further to discuss the challenges we face to break down the barriers built by the negative and racist notions related to race. These were dissected and analyzed to fully understand why one would do such a vicious act towards other humans, which was very difficult to comprehend unless there were clear cut theoretical frameworks to analysis this synapses.

We have analyzed the importance of learning from other cultures to better understand ourselves. We need a theoretical framework to outline and guide our knowledge as anthropologists. Everyone can be an anthropologist by

simply living in the city of Toronto and studying interactions among the residents. Toronto is a new city that is similar to the city explained in the book where Indians of India who move to the city become less involved in their system of caste (Schultz: 2005). They are more likely to move up when they live in the city. This is true to the city of Toronto in my personal opinion. Toronto has a mix of cultures and people that race has become obsolete. The title of my essay is called, ' Does race matter', and I answer this question to confuse the reader. Race does matter!! Race matters because it is ingrained in our history and will never change the face that there is multitude of colors of people. What matters the most is to not forget there is racism that is tied to the historical significance. We as a people in a society on earth need to be more compassion towards cultural beings. Today there is no excuse to say one group is inferior as we have proved that many cultures are more sophisticated than ever imagined.

Conclusion:

Race was reviewed in this paper to understand that race, culture, identity, land, history, and peoples of a group are all tied together that it is impossible to distinguish or separate the meanings that bind the above together. Race has been viewed in this paper as socially constructed and that over time and eras the beliefs and institutions tend to change and remain the same at the same time.

Racism is culturally constructed as well that it was ingrained in our Western belief of knowing that in a country of multi-nations, western ideas will diminish over time as well. Caste systems and class distinctions are forms of cultural constructing race in order to make a group higher in status. Until

the world understands how the anthropologists have made mistakes, then will there be a new beginning. I believe that Canada and new Canadians will explain the purpose of coming to know one another without racism or racist ideas. I explained and explored the notions of race being culturally constructed and this has been beneficially towards my higher learning leaving a mark on my cultural view.