

# Racial formations: reflection and analysis

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I am, without a doubt, completely uncomfortable discussing race. In fact, it is among my least favorite things to do. I mostly feel as if I do not know how to discuss race without offending someone, using the wrong word, revealing my ignorance about many issues within the topic, changing my mind about a certain belief midstream, or just generally looking like a fool. I avoid these discussions at all costs because they put me in a place I am rarely ready to be. So, naturally, this reading struck a chord with me before it actually even began.

I related instantly and wholeheartedly to the question raised in the introduction: “ If race is not ‘ real’ in a scientific sense, why can I look around my classroom or campus and see that someone is black or Asian or white? ” This quandary has plagued me for years. It seemed to me that race had to be more than a social construction established centuries ago. It had never really made sense to me, and this question established a personal connection for me to Omi and Winant’s subsequent explanation of this perplexing notion.

The authors’ explanation of the history of race consciousness certainly helped me in my quest for answers and gave me a much clearer understanding of the origins of race consciousness. I could imagine the European settlers’ surprise upon discovering theirs was not the only existing race, thus challenging essentially every religious belief they held about creation. They could not explain this difference, and, as human beings devout in their religion, that was unacceptable. They needed explanation, and they needed to find it in the Bible.

It is not difficult to relate to the anxiety and uncertainty they experienced. People of all religions seem to spend much of their practice justifying what happens in their lives -- both good and bad -- within their particular religious texts. We take scripture, verses, lines, chapter, and so on and make it fit into what makes sense for us or, in many cases, make it work to our advantage so that we can cope with what we do not understand or agree with. Having established how race consciousness came to be in the first place, Omi and Winant address how race became a social concept, the issue at the heart of my original conundrum. As I read about hypodescent and beliefs about racial intermixture, I started to understand. The authors' use of Marvin Harris' work further established this understanding, particularly Harris' statement, "... The rule of hypodescent is, therefore, an invention, which we in the United States have made in order to keep biological facts from intruding into our collective racist fantasies" (11). That was it.

This eighteenth-century way of thinking was a continuance of the European settlers' need to justify certain behaviors. They may not have been using the Bible to do so, but the creators of hypodescent were merely creating a belief to help them get through the social structure they had established and accepted. Now that I have a much better understanding of race as nothing more than a social construct, I suppose my issue is not entirely with those European settlers and not with inventors of outlandish notions about "Negro blood" but rather with current society.

We are now at a point that we should know better. We should know that no one race is superior. We should know that "white" is hardly "pure" and certainly does not equal "better" simply because it is "white." We have <https://assignbuster.com/racial-formations-reflection-and-analysis/>

more than enough information to move beyond these ways of thinking and into a new era in which we are able to, as Omi and Winant state at the end of the writing, “ break with these habits of thought” (15).