

Racism and sociology



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The Plight of Man Racism has punctuated the shaping of society for centuries, each major instance of which has helped dictate the direction of social interaction. Although we have come a long way in addressing the situation, it still remains a prevalent issue today. Being a global citizen in this day and age, one has a responsibility to be tolerant, as social circles overlap in a multicultural environment, and the luxury of being informed, grace of the globalizing advances in technology and social media.

We live in a melting pot society and the idea of “ Racism” holds no place in the modern world. Being collections of individuals who perceive ourselves to be members of the same social category, we share similar emotional involvements and we experience social overlap. To have conflict or strife in the community, as a result of racial animosity, degrades the moral pillars upon which society is built and results in what is effectively a civil war. The population experiences stratification and the distribution of social rewards are poorly distributed, as are the burdens.

These institutionalized mis-allocations as a result of race or ethnicity continue to perpetuate prejudice and create a minority group, which is characterized namely by lack of social power or authority. The term " Prejudice" refers to attitudes of aversion and hostility toward the members of a group simply because they belong to it and hence are presumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to it. The results of deeply engrained racial prejudices are active racial discriminations and the arbitrary denial of privilege, prestige, and power to members of a minority group.

With every stigma attached to members of a certain culture, the potential for conflict and separation increases, as does the social and political stress.

These prejudices can be very deeply engrained, because of the nationalistic tendencies, on both sides, to carve your own independent nation out of an existing state. These tendencies set the tone and direction for the social interactions to come. In North American society, immigration has long since been a part of our heritage and until recently had very lenient immigration laws allowing immigrants from Africa, China and people of varying faiths and groups to retained their ultural identities and distinctiveness for many years. As a result of these multi-ethnic societies, certain ethnic groups can lose their personal distinctiveness through the process of assimilation, or retain their identity and integrity through the process of pluralism. Assimilation refers to those processes whereby groups with distinctive identities become culturally and socially fused. Pluralism refers to a situation in which diverse groups coexist and boundaries between them are maintained.

There are two distinct direction in terms of mind-set when practicing pluralism: Equal Pluralism, where ethnic group members participate freely and equally in political and economic institutions. And: Unequal Pluralism, where economic and political participation of minority groups is severely limited by the dominant group and may even entail genocide. Through the scope of global media we've been able to catch a glimpse all of these social phenomenons at play. From racist remarks in professional sports leagues, to hate fueled attacks at home as well as abroad, we can see these interactions affect public opinion and incite unique reactions.

When a race is being discriminated against, it becomes very difficult for a person of that race to compete, survive, and strive in that society. Because the allocation of social benefits and opportunity are not based on the merits

of the individual, but rather preconceived notions. The contemporary or modern racism has been derived from many different places and ideas, one of the most common ideas being upbringing. As a youth, we are malleable and we rely on our parents to help us become who we are.

Part of that involves how their own experiences have shaped their attitude. Distinct opinions, that of which children don't have the maturity to form on their own. They rely on the education of their parents. But not only that, they believe it whole-heartedly; not having known anything else. This is often where the problem starts. Racism creates boundaries for people with potentially great minds and does not allow for a collective contribution of its citizens, which I believe to be a critical component of a country's development and success.

If a class of people is not allowed to be educated, they cannot make important contributions in a society of technological advances and medical arenas. The denial of quality education to certain groups of people only serves to obstruct the economic progress of a nation. If we ostracize a class of people and don't allow them to participate culturally, we fail to understand and appreciate our differences and similarities, we fail to improve and we fail to develop socially. These issues can be analyzed from multiple different perspectives.

Some see society as a system made up of a number of interrelated and interdependent elements, each performing a function that contributes to the operation of the whole and others as power struggle over scarce resources, while for some, society is based on human interaction. Let's start with Functionalism, focusing on dysfunction or disorganization within the social

system as a cause for conflict. The premise behind the Functionalism perspective on race is that there would be a consensus between different ethnicities and race as immigration continued and our social circles continued to overlap.

Naturally, to have this consensus, the minority group would need to assimilate with the larger group. At which point, they would become working and active members of society, contributing towards the benefit of the dominant ethnicity. At the core of Functionalism, is the idea of harmony but Functionalists do say that ethnic differentiation reduces consensus, increases the chances of conflict, and threatens the equilibrium of a society. Racism interferes with the efficient operation, the stability of the system and the achievement of societal goals. The saving grace for this theory is that it also promotes group formation and cohesion.

The process of assimilation, in which a minority becomes absorbed into the dominant society -socially, economically, and culturally- infers willingness to participate and becomes a part of the majority social circle. The Conflict Theory perspective would involve all the different groups in society fighting amongst each other for all available resources and opportunities for advancement or personal betterment. When a sub-population feels somehow disadvantaged or are not receiving a sufficient share of the resources, be they money, power, prestige, or respected values and work to overcome those perceived disadvantages.

This theory relates back to Marxist train of thought and his famous “ Class Theory” where these struggles for resources are limited to conflict between castes in society. This perspective argues for class-based conflict as an

inherent and fundamental part of society, Conflict Theory promotes the idea that racial and ethnic conflict is in fact tied to class conflict and that in order to reduce racial and ethnic conflict, class conflict must first be reduced. Some cultures in the past, because of these repetitive battles over assets, have been bred out of War and as a result were quick to behave in a conflicting manner.

The conflict is related to ethnocentrism and for more reasons than one relates directly to racism. Symbolic Interactionism is the individuals experience with and insight into meaning, as a function of interactions. The primary determinant of behaviour is the understanding that people have for one another. We start to see social problems and conflict in Symbolic Interaction when some social condition is defined by an influential group as stigmatizing or threatening to their values and disruptive of normal social expectations.

Society, for a Symbolic Interactionist, is a network of interlocking roles and understanding your role, is pivotal. Social order is constructed mainly through interaction as individuals, through shared ground, explore their social world. The thing that first sets Symbolic Interaction into motion, from a racial perspective, is Competition: creating a niche for people by dividing urban space. Making it a prime medium through which to analyze the effect of racism on behaviour. Generally, the Functionalist perspective looks at society as a complex system.

Functionalists aim to focus on different contributions to social solidarity and stability. Orthodox Functionalism did not technically envelop critical analyses of race or ethnicity, going instead for perceiving race as another constituent

element. This element, within the larger whole of society, that is assimilated into its harmonious and smooth functioning's. From this perspective, societies can be seen as finely tuned, interacting, and fundamentally relational constructs that function like organisms, with all different facets of the model are continuously, and unconsciously working towards social equilibrium.

Given this repetitive emphasis on equilibrium and harmony, the Functionalist perspective easily allows for specific micro and macro analyses' of more explicit race-inspired issues such as hate crimes or social power discrepancies and general racial conflict. It allows for the microanalyses in that most of modern sociology is oriented around the individual and trying to identity formation of the socially constructed nature of race. It is much less well adapted to understanding individual discrimination and prejudice because it ignores the inequalities that cause tension and conflict.

The Conflict theory, although it does account for much of the tensions seen in a discriminant world, is much too inclusive of all classes for it to be the main theory that can describe the tensions precipitated by race. To that effect, the Conflict Theory revolves around competition for resources and precipitates a much better scope through which to analyze of racist behaviour. The Symbolic Interaction Theory encapsulates the individualistic nature of mans behaviour as well as the social aspect of it.

Peoples interactions with each other are attaching meaning to one another's actions instead of merely responding or reacting to them. Human interaction is mediated by the use of a more subtle language of symbols and signification, by interpretation, or by ascertaining the meaning of one

another's actions. This can be done collaboratively in the instance of a one on one form of behavioural interpretation, as in attacks, or general attitude interpretation, as in social stigmas. We can clearly see the necessary relationships that define racism, in this day and age, with the Symbolic Interaction alone.

Functionalism makes much available through its similar perspective but it's lack of attention to the micro scale of society and the truly individualistic approach that humans take to understanding, and exhibiting behaviour makes it's contributions lacking a key aspect of racism. The Symbolic Interaction also takes into account the Correspondence Bias and it's tendency to overestimate the extent to which people's behaviour is due to internal, dispositional factors; and to underestimate the role of situational factors. Biology and nature are very deeply connected and share a complex relationship.

Early outlook of this relationship revealed that culture is slightly a product of biology. More recent perspective, however, is that human culture has reversed this particular causal direction and, culture can actually influence human evolution, which I personally think is where we're at now. Racism ranges from the abstract micro interactions that stem from socializing negatively and being misinformed to concrete, cultural objects. We need to strive for a functioning society and the only way there will be to work collectively.

In conclusion, humans are naturally competitive, and naturally we're going to continue to be competitive in nature. The only thing we can do is attempt to step outside of the boundaries that are set for us socially and the ones we

personally set for ourselves. We are inherently social creatures, even though our Western perspective of self is more introspect-based, it's all about society in the end.