

Understanding whiteness or white identity

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Annotated Bibliography: Understanding Whiteness or White Identity Banks, J. A. (1995). The historical reconstruction of knowledge about race: Implications of transformative teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 24 (2): 15-25.

James A banks (1995) in his article “ The historical reconstruction of knowledge about race: Implications of transformative teaching” examines how the race was constructed and reconstructed between 19th century and 1940’s, and he also focuses on significance of racial construction in transformative teaching. In this article, Banks discusses that racial knowledge is influenced by social, cultural, political and historical contexts of the people who created the knowledge. Banks points out that racial knowledge of the knower is both objective and subjective. Banks explains that in order to define whiteness, African Americans were necessary. This is because constructing other racial categories helped as a source of identification for powerful main groups like whites (p. 22). In this article, bank has discussed racial theories developed by intellectual leaders and also explains how Franz Boas, Robert E Park and African American scholars and social scientist strived for racial reconstruction. Banks’ article helps student to realize how racial knowledge is constructed and how it is evolved over time. Banks also emphasises the importance of having transformative teaching and learning.

2. Linton, R. (1937). The one hundred percent American. *The American Mercury*, 40: 427-429.

Ralph Linton’s article “ The one hundred percent American” humorously describes that most of the things an American use in everyday life are originated from other countries. Linton brilliantly analyses that majority of materials a typical American uses are un-American, and yet they consider <https://assignbuster.com/understanding-whiteness-or-white-identity/>

themselves as “ one hundred percent American”. Linton has explained almost every routine including activities like waking up, taking shower, having breakfast, going out in rain, catching train and reading paper, and finds out that American uses un-American materials for all these needs. This includes a pyjama he wears which is of East Indian origin or bed he sleeps which is from Persia or Asia Minor (p. 1). Linton shows us that most of the American way of doing things exists because of the other countries which invented them. For students, this article is really informative and may help them understand the extent to which American culture is unique.

3. Schlesinger, A. M. (1992). *The dis-uniting of America: Reflections on a multicultural society*. New York: Norton Co, 119-138.

Walzer, M. (1990). *What does it mean to be an American?* Social Research. The article “ Do we need a common American identity?” discusses about the complex issues in American identity. The title question is supported by Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr (1992) who asserts that multiculturalism is a threat for basic values of Americans. While Michael Walzer (1990) opposes the title question and suggests that multicultural identity cannot be avoided in America. According to Schlesinger, American identity is based on western values which are fully developed in America. He explains that values like freedom, tolerance, liberty, equality and human rights are part of American identity. Schlesinger stresses the importance of mastering one’s own culture and also states that history should be properly taught to students in schools and colleges as it gives a sense of national identity. On the other hand, Walzer states American have no singular national identity. American people are Americans only by the virtue of coming together and they retain whatever identity they had before (p. 16). He states that one can prove his <https://assignbuster.com/understanding-whiteness-or-white-identity/>

Americanism by peacefully living by respecting social diversity. This article is helpful to understand the major issues in American identity which is assimilation and pluralism.

4. Gould, S. J. (1994). The geometer of race. *Discover*, 49: 65-69.

The article "The geometer of race" by Stephen Jay Gould (1994) explains the subjectivity in perceiving races. This article describes about the findings of Johann f Blumenbach, a German anatomist and naturalist. Gould explains that even though Blumenbach was not a racist, his hierarchical theory of race based on beauty made a negative impact on society as it supported slavery and racism. The article also describes Carolous Linnaeus who founded four race system based on geography. Gould explains that Blumenbach divided human races in five categories based on both geography and beauty, and brought Caucasians at the top and Africans and Asians at the bottom (p. 250). The title of the article which begins with "the geometer of race" suggests that theories developed by these scientists developed a mental geometry about race. Gould makes us realize that scientific theories are not completely objective as there will be personal or cultural interpretations of these theories. Also, the author conveys the message that scientific theories can create strong ideological impact in the society.