

# Differentiate between the biological significance of race and the social construc...

[Sociology](#), [Racism](#)



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## **Introduction**

Race is diverse and can be perceived from different perspectives depending on the context; for instance the scientific point of view of race is usually different from the social constructs of the subject (Foster, 2002). This paper attempts to highlight the differences between the biological significance of race and the social construction of race.

The biological approach to defining race implies that there is the existence of division in human beings with respect to their natural and physical characteristics, which are considered to constitute the hereditary factors. Foster (2002) argues that this hereditary factors are manifested in morphology, and often involves the use phrases such as White, Black or Asian. Contrary to the social construction of race, race is defined with respect to a group of people who are bound by historical and social morphology, as a result, they are referred to as such because of their similarities in physical traits.

Defining race in the biological context is extremely valuable to scientific endeavors, basing on the fact that it plays an integral role in having an in depth understanding of the differences in ethnicity, with respect to the identification of diseases and how the various people respond to drugs.

Henry (2007) argues that each ethnic grouping within a given race have their own distinctive syndrome and clinical priorities, therefore, people should not fear cultural diversity, rather, should learn to embrace cultural diversity with the intention of developing even those from minority groups. On the other

hand, race that has been socially constructed was inflicted during certain periods in history with the sole objective of categorization and discrimination of people, who were perceived to be inferior. A typical example was in the United States, whereby the Whites were viewed as superior compared to other non-whites ethnic communities such as the African-Americans (Foster, 2002). With regard to this, it is perceived that the onset of the social construction of race was between the 16th and the 19th centuries, the time of Europe's expansion. During this time, the Europeans perceived the natives as inferior in order to maintain the control over them.

## **Conclusion**

A critical analysis of the above approaches to the definitions of race, it is evident that they both hold some weight in their respective disciplines. For instance, the biological definition is imperative for scientific research while the social construction of race is important in sociology and historical understanding. The underlying argument is that both approaches to race are important in fostering the understanding and knowledge of race.

## **References**

- Foster, M. (2002). Race , Ethnicity , and Genomics : Social Classifications as Proxies of Biological Heterogeneity. *Genome Research* , 844-850.
- Henry, K. (2007). Social Construction of Race. 23-30.