

# Race as a social construct

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Race as a Social Construct Omi and Winant's discussion from "Racial Formations" are generally about race being a social construct and is also demonstrated in the viewing of Race - The power of an illusion. Omi and Winant have both agreed that race is socially constructed in society. Ultimately this means that race is seen differently in different societies and different cultures. Media, politics, school, economy and family helps alter society's structure of race. In the viewing, also media as well as history seemed to create race by showing how social norms have evolved in different racial groups.

For example, "Rules shaped by our perception of race in a comprehensively racial society determine the presentation of self, distinction of status, and appropriate modes of conduct" (Omi and Winant 20). In other words, people tend to make their own rules for categorizing racial groups. We humans (usually more powerful ones) have set these arbitrary divisions and then call them real. Race is defined differently within each culture. For example, as explained in the viewing, people in Africa see a person that is white in the United States as black.

This because they define their races by socioeconomic status not the color of one's skin. Race is a social construction. And as a social construction, race functions as a source of management that sustains the importance of certain groups and the maintenance of other groups. This concept only becomes reality when people behave in ways that perpetuate subordination. Race should be expressed as a concept but unfortunately people misuse race. Race has now replaced the older concept of culture.

As a concept race came to be defined by superficial attributes like hair type and skin color. “ Film and television, for example, have been notorious in disseminating images of racial minorities which establish for audiences what people from these groups look like, how they behave and who they are”(Omi and Winant 23). Race is just an idea and or a biological myth. According to the viewing , humans don't differ much genetically. Actually humans are genetically the most similar species. Why are humans so genetically alike?

Humans have not existed long enough and have yet to evolve into various subspecies. “ Race is indeed a pre-eminently socio-historical concept” (Omi and Winant 21). So race is historically made and not biologically. There is nothing real about race, a social construct, unlike a river which is absolute. A river will exist regardless of people thinking, agreeing or accepting that it does exist. Race requires people to collectively agree that it does exist , unlike a river. Although race does not exist in the world in an objective way, it still is relevant in today's society.

It is obvious that race is real in society and it affects the way we view others as well as ourselves. Race is a social construct that is produced by the superior race and their power to regulate. “ The category of ‘ white’ was subject to challenges brought about by the influx of diverse groups who were not of the same Anglo-Saxon stock as the founding immigrants” (Omi and Winant 24). Frankly, ‘ white’ was the norm, the others were considered an outcast. The dominant group in society are the one whom created restriction for group membership by defining race as a biological factor. White is seen as a ‘ pure’ category”, as stated in the reading (Omi and Winant 21). Those who were ‘ black’ were biologically inferior to a ‘ white’ person. This is how

the color line became about. Because of the color line, race was used to justify the captivity of the vastly growing free 'black' population early in United States society. "Differences in skin color and other obvious physical characteristics supposedly provide visible clues to differences lurking underneath" (Omi and Winant 23).

The existence of racial ideology helps create racial stereotypes and myths. For example, in the viewing it was pointed out that American Jews reportedly dominated basketball during the first half of the 1900s. However, now it seems as if African Americans dominate the NBA. Concepts like 'Black athletic superiority' is the belief 'black' people have traits that have been acquired through genetic or environmental factors. These factors help them excel over all other races in athletic competitions.

The theories of racial differences and their possible effect on athletic ability have been noticed since the nineteenth century. More interests were attracted to the subject soon after the 1935 Track Championships, where Jesse Owen's record breaking performance had shocked white Americans. "Temperament, sexuality, intelligence, athletic ability, aesthetic preferences and so on are presumed to be fixed and discernible from the palpable mark of race" (Omi and Winant 23). The dominant group in society has always defined race which sets every other race inferior.

Race creates many differences in social status. Status is indicated by race. This can either include or exclude people from more social constructs. This can also prevent or allow certain powers or privileges. Race is a social construct fueled by agreement and acceptance. Throughout history race has been the core of our society. It is vital that people begin to realize that race

is and will always be “ an unstable and ‘ de centered’ complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle” (Omi and Winant 26).