Study Questions

1. Understand why anthropologists reject biological explanations for racial differences.

There is a common problem shared by the approaches that try to explain racial differences from a biological perspective: **The approaches neglect to describe an individual and their unique genetic qualities.** There is *no* physiological parallel or relationship between skin tone and the biological/social phenomena we call **character and intelligence**. While there is a lacking of biological explanation for race, there is a racial explanation for biology (concerning health). Even this is not naturally occurring, it is a result of racism and discrimination that plays detrimental roles on health.

2. Explain the rise and persistence of racial categories in North America.

From the beginning of US history, African Americans arrived as indentured servants who worked to pay off their debts and earned freedom from slavery. But by the mid-1600's, there were higher labor needs which increased the need for enslaved Africans-- they imposed stricter restrictions on them in order to fulfill their labor demands. This power dynamic is a fundamental explanation as to why slavery became so prominent in the U.S.

3. Identify cross-cultural variation in racial and ethnic ideologies.

Ethnicity is the organization of people into groups based on their history/social status/ancestry, whereas race is the organization of people in unequal groups based on physical traits that are *thought* to reflect innate differences. **Race and ethnicity are not synonymous although they are treated as such**. Race is ***said*** to have biological significance to physical appearance (but race is ultimately just a social construct). Ethnicity is purely cultural and historically-determined.

4. Clarify how white is a culturally constructed category, just as black and Latino are culturally constructed categories.

As with black and Latino categories, white is also culturally constructed because **the idea of superificial traits such as skin tones determining the intelligence and competency of a human dismisses that person's inherent individuality**. With different cultures, whiteness is viewed differently. There is an inherent privilege that white people experience solely on their skin color, whereas they may face discrimintation in different cultures. Because of the variations of attitudes, it is indicative that whites (as with blacks and Latinos) are culturally-constructed. There is no innate and biological discrimination towards groups whose skin color differs from your own; it is a learned prejudice that is a result from cultural constructs.

Study Questions (cont)

5. Define and explain the different ways that concepts like ethnicity, class, and caste naturalize social inequality.

The naturalization of social inequality lies solely in how we perceive different groups based on superficial knowledge of their ethnicity, race and class. Social inequality requires the consent of those who **benefit from social inequality**, who gain unearned privileges simply by being members of a privileged class. Bring about real social change requires those who benefit from the inequality to accept the immorality of the situation and support the change.

7. The idea that class doesn't exist or is irrelevant in the United States is very powerful, yet social mobility (the ability to change classes) in the United States is restricted. In what ways do you think class mobility is restricted? How is the ideology that Americans have social mobility maintained?

Socioeconomic and class mobility is hardly ever the case. Most Americans believe in the idea of us being a meritocracy (the ability to climb up the social ladder if you work your hardest). In current America, it is highly unlikely that people or families will climb up the social ladder purely from hard work because poverty is both cyclical and isn't a prioritized issue in America. While that is a hefty claim, **it needs to be understood that the strives for a meritocratic America is utopian; without providing ample education, financial help and attention to the lower socioeconomic and working class, there will be no more social mobility**. In fact, it is more likely that people in the middle class will enter lower class by the end of their lives as opposed to climbing up the ladder. The socioeconomic and social disparities are rapidly growing because our institutions make it difficult to succeed, especially for those who experience prejudice and discrimination based on their ethnicity or race.

Question 6 is excluded because I answered it in question 5.

Race Vs. Ethnicity

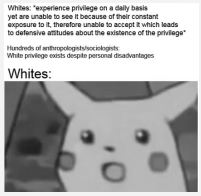


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