

Demystifying Race

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Racial narratives of classifications perpetuate racism. Cultural variability can be used to appreciate unique identities rather than establishing a common narrative on traits. There is a need to discount the primitivity theory which has been used to perpetuate racial supremacy ideals. In this process, the evaluation of biological theories, their history, and development serves in solving the racial-based theories conundrum (Marks, 1996). In that regard, this paper discusses how discounting the various racial theories including primitivism and biological theories can help in understanding the origins of racism, as well as showing the usefulness of understanding distinctive cultures in demystifying the existing racial supremacy theories.

The concept of racial inferiority or superiority is mainly an appendage of classism. The richer person is likely to consider the poorer person to be of less intelligence or to belong to an inferior race. The foundations of American and European colonialism and racial narratives were founded on the exploitation of the Asian and the African race. The colonial conquest of Africa and Asia perpetuated a sense of white superiority as the Whites experienced material benefits from the backs of the African and Asian people. This is to be found as true in India and the African colonial experience. Similarly, the African American experience under the slavery of the White supremacists in the US also helps to explain the intersection between class and narratives of the racial inferiority of the so-called “weaker” or dispensable races (Boas, 1901; Carbado & Gulati, 2002).

The concept of primitivism and cultural superiority is barely a racial creation aimed at demeaning a whole people or race as inferior, dumb, or uneducated. The genesis of such a narrative is based on the elevation of one cultural history or foundation to be morally or economically superior to the others. In effect, the culture of the economically less empowered is

deemed as inferior or primitive (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Compounding culture as a whole or general experience rather than a unique identity of a given people who live in a given geographic location tends to condemn an entire race or people to common biases (Boas, 1901). For instance, when the Africans are considered as primitive from a study of a given race of people, the entire population or race is demeaned and made to look racially inferior (Starbuck, 2013).

In perpetuating racial biases, and racism, it is notable that most American education has been based on clinical and biological theories that are Eurocentric and racist in nature. While in reality, the biological studies prove that there is concordance in the variability of humans, there is no singular identity. However, those who seek to advance a racial theory or position are likely to consider the physical features of a given people and collectively judge them as inferior based on that aspect. This superimposition is aimed at creating distinctive groups of people, which is not scientifically true. For it occurs that most of the cultural narratives are based on assumptions (Marks, 1996).

Many eugenic studies prove that there is no single identity or racial identity that is not a mixture of other racial interactions. For it occurs that people of variant racial groups share similarities, which are at times outside the main racial expectations or experiences. For instance, there are Asians who resemble both Whites in their facial features, and bear a dark complexion as Africans. There is variability in the body features of Africans from different parts of Africa. For example, the Nilotic groups possess a thin tall frame, while the West Africans possess a strong and built frame. The Arabs of Middle East are more likely to have similar complexion to the people of Somalia than they have to Europeans. This is an indication of the diversity that exists

within a given race, and the relationship with other races (Marks, 1996; Boas, 1901). In effect, it proves that there is no superior race or a pure race.

In the modern age, the idea of eugenics proves that there is no superior or inferior race, as interbreeding improves the human species. This also demonstrates that the cultural interaction between the so-called superior and primitive cultures helps in the advancement of society (Starbuck, 2013). Thus, the idea of racial supremacy is etched in the idea of exclusion of economic benefits rather than on substantive factors.

In order to dismantle the power of racial narratives, the discussions of culture as formed through interactivity between people in a given geographic area are useful. The usefulness of understanding the origins of culture helps to understand that there is wide variability in how people behave depending on their environs (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). For example, people of distinct European cultures align or change over the years to adopt the dominant culture of the European or post-colonial state they live in. The English for instance, will adopt the French culture when they stay with the French, while many Europeans adopted the American culture despite their distinct cultural heritages. This proves that the idea of a primitive race is untenable given that the modern culture or civilizations as led by the West are forged from the early sea migration routes, and sea-faring developments (Marks, 1996). The Americans are a result of the confluence of early immigration. This creates a new set of differences which helps to understand how people from the same race can experience different cultures – and even represent them. A majority of the African Americans are from West Africa, and thus most of their cultural practices which they imported to the US are majorly derived from this heritage. Else, people from South Africa may exhibit distinctive cultural characteristics based on their South African apartheid experience.

Besides, by demystifying the cultural variability within same race, it is easy to realize the power of the environment in creating distinct individuals (Carbado & Gulati, 2002). This proves that culture is a factor of interactivity rather than race. For it occurs that cultural variability is purely based on sociological studies rather than racial studies. Else, most of the early racial studies assumed that the person is a product of their race rather than their individual experience. This made it easy for racial supremacists to develop narratives such as the primitive race theory which considered the Negro – that is, persons of African ancestry as primitive, lacking in initiative and lazy (Starbuck, 2013). By characterizing the people of the African race in such a manner easy to perpetuate a common narrative without considering which people were lazy or lacked in the initiative (Boas, 1901). This presents a singular story about a varied people, and does not, in science and in logic, present an impartial hypothesis about a collective group. Rather, it seeks to find reasons or justifications for colonization or subjugation of the given people.

On the other hand, the use of the balkanization of cultural experiences for the sake of racial expedience shows the simplicity of the racial narratives. According to the study on clinical studies, it occurs that there is no given single or related identity even among people of the same race. The DNA makeup of an African person is just as unique as that of a White, as there is a high likelihood of distinctiveness based on whether a person shares with another a common ancestry. The use of the DNA as a clinical and biological testament of difference attests to the uselessness of the cultural balkanization of race. The neglect of the biological evidence of the differentiation of people shows the neglect of the racial supremacists of facts. Therefore, most of the racial narratives are based on speculation and innuendo.

The essence of the use of clinical theory or the biological examination of factors specific to the DNA is to discount the main racial based stories. Otherwise, the biological narratives of the past years were based on the speculative as they rendered the prospect of harmful traits being passed from one generation to another. The use of this theory does not however state the adaptability of the people or cultures towards their environment rather than mere biological inheritance being a determinant of traits. The traits approach only serves in the perpetuation of racial theories that demean the target cultures. For example, the primitive theory serves to block the advancement of black people (Starbuck, 2013). It is based on fantasy and conjecture rather than on any key facts. Else, when people are exposed to the same experiences, there is adaptability and high divergence in the culture. This can be accounted by the great divergence and educational adaptability of all races who were formally colonized. While they were considered to be uncivilized and lacking in the mental rigor for complex tasks and activities, prove abounds a high number of persons who have excelled distinctly (Boas, 1901). Besides, the exposure to the various rigors of the environment brings with them specializations that are adopted to the disciplines. Therefore, there is a disparity between the former plantation-based slaves who had no access to tools of study, and the modern-day African American who competes in a fair educational system (Carbado & Gulati, 2002).

Further, by studying the previous historical developments of various races there is continuous development in their abilities or the show of their intellectual abilities. This is not peculiar to a given race as the primitive theory would postulate or suggest. In retrospect, each racial group or story follows their unique historical development as exposed to the given environment (Starbuck, 2013). This is explained by both the differences in the biological

distinctiveness found in people of the same race and their cultural differences. For example, the differences in skin pigmentation and hair texture (Marks, 1996).

The Bell curve findings prove that there is a continuous normal curve among people in a given society (Boas, 1901; Marks, 1996). The Bell curve advances the argument of fair distribution of abilities within a given population. The abilities measured as such have to be a common experience or factor experienced by all the population. The Bell Curve for example in discounting the racial theory of primitivism by showing how educational abilities are spread across people who have the same education system (Boas, 1901; Marks, 1996). As it has been experimented in White and European school systems, the Bell curve proves that there is no superior mental or cognitive abilities peculiar to a given race (Boas, 1901; Marks, 1996). Else, any other ability is shared across the population of the given group.

On the other hand, hereditary heterogeneity serves in advancing the most competitive and superior traits of a given society. The choice of intermarriages of persons who have natural dispossession to certain physical traits such as athleticism among African Americans is likely to yield desired traits. However, this should not be the basis of any racial narratives on the dominance of certain traits among a sample group to be the overriding condition of all peoples. The essence of appreciating the divergence of racial groups, and the uniqueness of independent cultural groups helps in dispelling common narratives on race. The modern experiments on biological theories and experiments on racial characteristics and serves to advance racial equality.

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Interview

A one-on-one interview with Alex, a 27-year-old White American man

Q: Do you think there is a superior race?

Alex: I think so.

Q: Do you think there is a primitive race or group of people?

Alex: That is hard to answer. I think there are groups of people who belong to primitive cultures. For example, those who live in the bush.

Q: Do you think one's race influences their abilities?

Alex: Yes

Q: Which abilities do you think are influenced by race?

Alex: Well, I can say intelligence, and sports.

Q: Could you please explain why you think so?

Alex: Intelligence is higher in Asians and Europeans. Athleticism is higher among Black people.

Q: What do you think is the source of conflict between races?

Alex: Extremism. Sometimes biases.

Q: Do you think biology explains one's physical or mental abilities?

Alex: Well, people tend to inherit some abilities from their parents.

Q: What's your take on the role of culture in determining one's views on race?

Alex: Those from a multicultural society are likely to have racial tolerance. Those who are isolated are likely to be stereotypic.

Q: Do you think what we have learned in school or in the past influences our understanding of races?

Alex: Well, I have known other racial groups from the readings and primer lessons on history.

Q: Do you think racial narratives are influenced by class and power dynamics?

Alex: Yeah. If you consider the history of slavery, it would be almost impossible to negate the role of class or quest to use the inferior races for economic expedience. Blacks were initially held as slaves by Whites in the South. I tend to think that economic position influences power position.

Q: Do you think that these narratives can change?

Alex: Yeah

Q: How do you think scholars and academics could change the narratives?

Alex: I think by pointing out what is wrong with the existing narratives. You know, there is danger of a single story.