Lecture 1
Anthropology of Ethnicity and Race
ANT3451
Do Races Exist?
(see Marger, Chapters 1 and 3)
Is "race" a scientifically valid concept?

A. Anthropologist Ashley Montague calls this “Man’s Most Dangerous Myth” (in 1942 book)
   1. Says concept promotes damaging stereotypes, but has no validity
   2. Says should substitute concept of “ethnicity” for “race”

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What is the difference between “race” and "ethnicity"

A. Ethnicity: based on cultural (socially produced) differences—e.g, nationality, language, religion
B. Race: group of people defined by perceived (may be imaginary) inherited or biological traits; these vary historically:
   1. Skin color,
   2. Hair color and texture,
   3. Facial features,
   4. Stature,
   5. Shape of head,
   6. Proportional distribution of blood types (racial serology). Ultimately, “races” are socially constructed. For example, black disadvantage and corresponding negative stereotypes are created through societal mechanisms and not through biological processes. These societal mechanisms, to be discussed in this course, include redlining, ghettoization, restrictive covenants, racial steering, profiling, disenfranchisement, enslavement, etc. The perceived differences need not be visible:
   1. Burakumin in Japan: low caste identified by lineage (ancestors) but not by physical traits

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Scholarly Critique of “Race:” not “meaningful” in biological sense (anti-essentialist perspective)

A. Number of races: experts don’t agree; it is purely arbitrary—anywhere from 3 to over 100; 3-way “Caucasoid-Mongoloid-Negroid” classification fails in face of data: where put Aborigines, Maoris? “as so many scholars have demonstrated, the idea that human can be classified into four or five distinct races is scientifically untenable, at best absurd, and avaricious at worst (Gould 1996; Montagu 1974)” (Croucher, 2004, Globalization and Belonging: The Politics of Identity in a Changing World, p. 119)

See Fig. 1

B. Blurred differences in phenotype: because migration and invasion eliminated pure gene frequencies (genotype). Phenotypes are “visible anatomical features” (e.g. skin color, facial shape)

C. Nonconcordance: very different ‘racial” classifications produced by different traits:
   1. if use Scooped-out shape of back of front teeth: a standard “Asian” trait; Native Americans and Swedes also have these shovel-shaped incisors and therefore could be categorized in the same race.
   2. if use Blood types: New Guineans & Germans in 1 race; Estonians & Japanese in another
   3. Problem: 96% of human variation is unaccounted for by “race” (or by major continental groups); (yet this alone is not decisive: humans share 96% of functional genes with chimpanzees [Varki and Nelson (2007) Annu. Rev. Anthropol. 36:191–209]); yet differences among individuals of same “race” are greater than differences between “races;” If we were to select any two ‘black’ people at random and compare their chromosomes, they are no more likely to be genetically similar than either would be when compared to a randomly selected “white” person (Begley 1995)” (Croucher 2004: 120).
4. Cycle cell anemia is not black disease; it protects from, & is found in areas with, Malaria—in parts of southern Europe, southern Turkey, parts of Middle East, much of central India, mid-Africa. Discordance is shown by frequencies of sickle cell anemia variants and disease that are higher among Greeks (white) than among Zulus (black) (Graves 2009). Yet “race” may be surrogate marker for distinct responses to therapy—e.g. black heart drug BiDiL*—until specific marker is found. These are examples of correlation (black skin & cycle cell anemia) not being equal to causation.

D. Superficial characteristics only: claims that race causes morality, intelligence, or behavior have no scientific basis and are a product of racism

1. *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein and Murray 1994): claim low IQ is a cause of poverty, crime, other social ills and say group difference is largely genetic; their claims rejected by most scientists

2. Social factors could 100% explain group differences even if 90% of IQ is inherited

   a. Thomas Sowell (1978) “Race and IQ”: shows increase in immigrant group Scores the longer in the U.S. because of acculturation & improved SES (income, ed)

   b. Sowell (1995:74-75): “IQs of both Italian Americans and Polish Americans. . . rose substantially over a period of decades. . . follows the rising patterns found among Jews and among American soldiers in general between the two world wars, as well as rising IQ scores in other countries around the world. . . . The implications of such rising patterns of test performance is devastating to the central hypothesis of those who have long expressed the same fear as Herrnstein and Murray, that the greater fertility of low-IQ groups would lower the national (and international) IQ over time.’ (in Steve Fraser, ed., *The Bell Curve Wars: Race, Intelligence, and the Future of America*. Basic Books)

   c. IQ scores reflect privilege: In U.S., Koreans students score above average, but not in Japan where they face discrimination. In Belgium, dominant Flemish score higher than do French. In N. Ireland, Protestants best Catholics (Malik, 2008:281)

Insofar as “race” is socially constructed, it has social significance rather than biological significance

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A. No biological significance, but perceptions reinforce different treatment (discrimination)

1. W.I. Thomas: if myth is socially defined as true, then it is real in its consequences; it is self-fulfilling prophecy: “false definition” of a situation generates behavior that makes that definition later appear to be true; e.g., if sent to poor quality schools, black student will perform less well on standardized tests, confirming false view student has less ability

B. Race is socially constructed at two levels in the contemporary period. One level is overt and the other is structural.

1. First, there is personal or overt racism: which is attributable to specific individuals (“micro” level). This has 2 components: (1) prejudice (an attitude) & (2) discrimination (a behavior):

   a. Prejudice comprises: statements or beliefs about a group that are: 1. negative, 2. rigid, 3. emotional. Based on feeling, these beliefs are deeply embedded and rarely changed by facts. Prejudicial beliefs are linked to negative stereotypes, which are exaggerated/inaccurate “pictures in our heads.” Prejudice, unlike stereotyping, ALWAYS has negative content overall. Consider, for example, Archie Bunker—the racist TV character (in “All in the Family”)—who thought Jews were more intelligent. Isn’t that positive? No, he thought Jews use their intelligence to cheat others. What about the idea of black “athletic” superiority? Again, this is negative. It fits the slaveholder’s mentality, which valued black “physical prowess” as brute strength—a characteristic sharply contrasted with intelligence or leadership qualities.

   1. 1990 U.S. survey by Larry Bobo and James Kluegel (1997): majority of whites (54%) Say blacks are “prone to violence” and 47% characterize them as “lazy.” In a 4-city survey in 1990s, nearly
half of whites say blacks are less intelligent than whites (Massey 2007: 69).

2. Philip Moss and Chris Tilly, in a study published in 2001: report that 46% of employers commented informally that they see black workers as less motivated (Massey 2007)

3. Prejudice is negative overall because it legitimates dominance and discrimination:

   a. stereotypes (Buchanan and Cantril 1953): “do not exist until...events demand their creation” (Marger:54); symptomatic rather than causative; rationalize adverse action

      i. during WWII, Japanese seen as “evil/cruel”; after war, seen as “clean/efficient”

      ii. Allport (1958): competition turns positives into opposite: e.g. Jewish “thrift” and “hard work” become “cheap” and “overambitious” when Jews seen as threat

   b. Richard LaPiere (1934); in 1930s, refused hotel service only once when traveling with Chinese couple; yet in later survey, most proprietors say they would “refuse service” to Chinese patrons; shows “situational pressure” rather “prejudicial statements” may in some cases predict discrimination; proprietors may fear boycott by white patrons

b. Discrimination: is behavior showing favoritism not based on qualifications or performance. This includes intentional “micro-discrimination” that may or may not stem from prejudice.

1. Hiring bias: In Bertrand and Mullainathan’s (2004) “audit” study, when standardized resumes were sent in response to 1300 ads placed by employers in Boston and Chicago, applicants with “black-sounding” names (e.g., Tamika, Jamal) received @ 1/3 less as many callbacks as those with white-sounding names. In Pager and Western’s “audit” study in New York, published in 2006, black and white teams contained equally qualified job-seeking auditors. The results again show a dramatic disadvantage for black applicants compared to white applicants. Remarkably, the study showed that callbacks for black job seekers as a whole were no more likely than for white job-seekers who reported felony convictions. The researchers conclude that the chance of being hired for black job seekers is about ½ the potential for white job seekers, even when qualifications and other background characteristics are equal.

2. Jury Bias: Rand Corp. study of civil jury trials in Chicago, 1965-1979, found that black litigants were less likely to win and received less when winning.

3. Racial Steering: HUD “audit” study in 2000 reports that black auditors are steered away from housing in white areas by real estate agents. Why? Ignoring white consumer preferences negatively impacts career and clients. The majority of whites in 3 separate surveys (Detroit, Boston, Los Angeles) said they would be uncomfortable in a neighborhood that is ½ black. In 2000, 25% of whites preferred neighborhoods with no blacks (Charles 2003; see Massey, 2007: 71-72, Categorically Unequal)

4. Racial profiling: occurs when whites suspect criminal intent of blacks seen in stores and in neighborhoods. For example, police more likely to stop or search blacks.

   1. Accordingly, blacks are said to be guilty of the so-called crime of “driving while black,” which is a play on the words “driving while drunk.”

   2. NY City’s “Stop and Frisk”; police target blacks for “drop to ground” searches

   3. Trayvon Martin: killed by “neighborhood watch captain” who targeted blacks

5. Linguistic profiling: based on diction, pronunciation, and other subtle language differences, studies have shown that house hunters and job seekers speaking on the phone with a black accent receive fewer callbacks than those with a white accent.

2. Structural racism: constitutes the 2nd level at which the social construction of race occurs. Structural racism is the unintentional continuance of race-based disadvantages that were
overtly created in the past, but in the present are indirectly sustained through the normal functioning (or inertia) of societal institutions. That is, the “individual only has to conform to the operating norms of the organization and the institution will do the discriminating for him” (Baron 1969:143; Marger 61). According to Roithmayr (2014:6), racial inequality is “locked in” by “institutional feedback loops.” These feedback loops “parlay earlier [dis]advantage into continuing [dis]advantage.” Here are some examples:

*a. informal job referral networks:* According to Roithmayr (2014), personal referrals are the basis for filling half of all job openings. However, compared to white networks, black and Latino networks are smaller and are less well connected to the top personnel in hiring organizations. Although informal job referrals are normal operating procedure and not intentionally discriminatory, disadvantaged group members get fewer good referrals. Blacks and Latinos, then, are kept at the bottom through this hiring feedback loop.

*b. homeowner associations and real estate boards protecting property values:* Even when such organizations are not overtly racist, lowered home values from redlining (see redlining lecture) will motivate steering away or blocking black home buyers. Dual housing markets (white areas and black areas) then remain, depressing values for black-owned homes and reinforcing the grounds for redlining in a self-sustaining feedback loop.

*c. neighborhood schools:* assigning children to local neighborhood schools is not overtly racist, but nonetheless insures that white children receive a better education than black children. The inferior education provided in ghetto schools restricts mobility out of the ghetto. Neighborhood schools are part of a feedback loop sustaining black disadvantage.

*d. commerce and industry moving outside inner city:* has effect (not intentional) of hampering black access to jobs because of distance from segregated housing (spillover effect)

*e. stores charging higher prices in inner city to offset higher insurance costs due to crime

*f. requiring voter ID and restricting voting hours and places:* Although racial discrimination is not explicit, the effect of these measures is disenfranchisement (no access to the voting booth) for poor blacks without ID or with restricted mobility. Disenfranchisement not only reinforces black disadvantage but weakens any challenge to structural racism.

*g. all-white social networks: rooted in segregated jobs, neighborhoods, & schools, restrict equal-status contact between blacks and whites, so blacks can’t alter whites’ racial stereotypes and storylines. In turn, these stereotypes and storylines reinforce white resistance to government efforts to foster racially integrated social networks. This generates an all-white-network feedback loop.

In conclusion, race is socially constructed at two levels today: one level is overt and the other level is structural. There is another level, however, which was dominant in the past. This third level was both explicit and institutional. That is, slavery, Jim Crow statutes and practices, restrictive covenants, and black codes directly (explicitly) identified blacks as a target. This was done in laws and informal rules (institutions). These will be the topic of an upcoming lecture.

What, then, is the “social construction of race?” The social construction of race is: (1) the widespread and recurrent social channeling of disadvantage to broad ancestry or lineage groups, and (2) the legitimation or justification of this by generating the perception of inherent inferiority of the subordinated group (an essentialist or pseudo-biological argument). The social channeling of disadvantage—via redlining, racial steering, ghettoization, informal hiring networks, etc.—is primarily a zero-sum game. That is, the dominant lineage group’s strategy for creating and maintaining privilege—wealth, power, and status—entails systematically
excluding the subordinate lineage group. Positive feedback loops (via neighborhood schools, informal hiring networks, inheritance of assets from ancestral kin, etc.) lock-in the intergenerational transmission of these advantages to the dominant ancestry group. For the subordinated lineage group, intergenerational disadvantage creates the appearance of inherent or biological inferiority, thereby reinforcing racial ideologies.

* Regarding BiDil, the so-called “race pill” that is marketed to black for lowering hypertension, Graves (2006) makes the following observation: “BiDil may work for African American patients because they have greater oxidative damage in their cells, due to chronic stress. This would mean that the drug is acting on an environmentally induced difference, not a genetically based one. If the drug were used in Western Africa, where Africans face less racialized stress and a variety of environmental factors differ, we may not observe any ‘race-specific’ effect.” [See Graves, Joseph L. Jr. 2006. “What we know and what we don’t know: human genetic variation and the social construction of race,” SSRC Web Forum. Available from http://raceandgenomics.ssrc.org/Graves/.

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a. not based on intentions, but unequal education, income, power, housing, etc. that persists
b. basis for Voting Rights Act of 1965; do not need to show overt discrimination
c. example: 2 criteria for attending university: pay tuition, high test scores; these are more likely met when coming from a high “SES” family; black SES (income, educ) is lower

**SEE FIG. 2, FIG. 3, FIG. 4**

d. example: outlying location of commerce and industry has effect (not intentional) of hampering black jobs because of distance from segregated housing (spillover effect)
e. example: black neighborhood schools hamper entering top universities (spillover effect)
f. example: grocery chain charges higher prices in inner city to offset higher insurance (crime)
g. unconscious: “individual only has to conform to the operating norms of the organization and the institution will do the discriminating for him” (Baron 1969:143); not dependent on actions “of specific individuals or even organizations” but “standard working procedures” (Marger 61)

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