

biological theories about Race and Racism

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Introduction

There is an established fact about humans: they are from the same race. Their creation is based on the same biological pattern. However, they classify each other by grouping, caste, tribe, nation, and color. This division on the basis of race has resulted in wars, conflicts, worries, exile, persecution, hate, and so many other negative aspects in the history of humanity. Though, humans are now living in a civilized era troubles are still going on in the world in so many different ways regarding racism. Also, we have to tick a box to mark our race in so many places. Anthropologists and biologists are of the view that humans do not apply the social concept in terms of racism. Also, we'll discuss their ideology that race based classification is made to give justification for discriminatory behavior, extermination, worse exploitation and is also used as a tool to get political mileage.

Race (A Biological Construct)

Biological differences are not equally divided in any species. Although there is a tendency for all members of the species to interbreed with others, most breeding takes place in lower beings and populations. The natural selection process and the variation in genotypes lead to the inhabiting of populations at different geographical locations and display some variations in biological characteristics. Within a species, if the difference is quite notable, then various populations may be divided by biologists in different categories and/or races. If the terminology race is perceived in a way that biologists use for the sake of classification to describe the kind of different variations among the species, then the concept of race won't be controversial by any means. But if this term is used in the context of racism, it would imply that some humans label another group of humans inferior to them, which, in fact, is the starting of a trouble point. The misconception associated with the term race has prompted biologists and anthropologists to not use this terminology to define biological variations in humans.

In this regard, the second reason why scientists do not apply the term racial difference to humans is that humans, in general, have come across so much interbreeding that various populations cannot be classified clearly into various groups that can be described by means of their existence and non-existence of specific biological characteristics. For this reason, many believe that race is not a useful word in science in terms of the description of biological variation. The complication in coining this term is visible by making a comparison of a number of races presented by its classifiers. The total number of human "racial" classifications varied from three (3) to thirty-seven (Hefner, Joseph T, 2003).

How can humans be transparently divided in terms of race if most of the biological characteristics related to adaptation demonstrate gradual variation and cline in one area and the other? In this region, the color of the skin can be called a clinal variant. Generally, there is darker skin near the equator towards the south, and it gets lighter close to the Mediterranean, but other adaptation characteristics are not specific to the lines of the north and south because of the different distribution of environmental indicators. The shape of the nose depends on the level of humidity. However, clines do not show similarity in terms of variation in latitude. Therefore, gradients for skin color and nose color differ from each other. Since there is a clinal distribution of adaptation characteristics, this is why there is no yardstick through which blacks can be segregated from whites or Arabs from Asians. Only those traits that hold neutrality related to natural selection would most likely prevail in the region.

Problems with Racial Classification

The classification in racial terms is complicated due to the involvement of diverse physical, psychological, and physiological factors within any one geographical group that may be termed as race among different racial groups. The variations among Africans are high as compared to the other groups of people living in different parts of the world. Different studies of all the human populations have indicated that from ninety-three (93) to ninety-five (95) percent of variations occur due to the individual differences inside of the populations. However, just three percent of genetic variation occurs because of the difference between the major groups of populations. The application of race in humans is deemed as a social category rather than a scientific notation.

As discussed above, the human race is not distinctly used as a biological term. Also, there are more variations in genetic context within professed “races” than between the traits used to elaborate races, which are predominantly visual, i.e., hair color, eye color, form of skin, and complexion. More than seventy percent of anthropologists don’t agree with this statement. A species called “Homo Sapiens” have the biological races. Considering this fact, it sounds strange that quite a few anthropologists still coin “race” as one of the tools for identification purposes of skeletal leftovers.

Why Anthropologists Continue to Use Race

Further, George Armelagos and Diana Smay come up with three factors as to why anthropologists still use the racial concept. Firstly, few anthropologists are under the belief that race is a functional analytical tool. For such anthropologists, the fact remains that it is simple for anyone to classify other people into races must indicate something about the genuineness of this concept. Some forensic anthropologists claim that they have the ability to identify the race by keeping 80 (eighty) percent accuracy from the skeletal remains. Whereas others come up with the counterargument that the accuracy level drops to below 20 percent in the absence of proper data and information about geographical location.

Secondly, in some situations, the concept of “race” appears to work. A professionally well-trained forensic anthropologist officer within local areas can identify if a skeleton belongs to one of the main racial groups. However, Madeleine Hikens (forensic anthropologist) elaborates that “At times the experience of anthropologists is instrumental in conveying to him about something that cannot be explained about the skeleton which suggests one race over another’s not very conclusive evidence for the analytical purpose of race.

Forensic Anthropology and the Race Concept

However, the third reason, given by Armelagos and Smay, is that “Many anthropologists use the concept of race as they have been directed to do so. It is of the view that. *“The forensic anthropologists who can tell officials that an unknown skull is for instance Hispanic, provides a datum useful in narrowing down search parameters, by contrast, forensic anthropologists who delivers philosophical lecture to the sheriff on the nonexistence of human races is unlikely to be consulted again”*(Stanley Rice). The question arises, “Is it a reasonable ground to use the concept of “race”? Could there be another suitable option, such as giving adequate information to police and other concerned authorities, to help them recognize the set of human leftovers?

Alice Brues does think so. According to her argument, forensic anthropologists should consider local and geographic factors within the population that exist according to our knowledge, and large categories in this context must be avoided (which are not in our knowledge). Examples of forensic experts from Alaska can be quoted in this regard as they might be able to differentiate between Aleut leftovers and Inuit.

Works Cited

Hefner, Joseph T. *Assessing nonmetric cranial traits currently used in forensic determination of ancestry*. Diss. University of Florida, 2003.