Race and Ethnicity Lecture

Slide one

What is race?

Race is often defined by our physical characteristic such as your hair, eye color, skin color etc….

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But... race is a recent development it was created to separate people from each other

The only reason our skin color is different is because of where our ancestors came from on the globe

Ancestors are the people we are descended from – long, long ago

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These are pictures of people from Indonesia

The Javanese culture doing traditional things such as traditional wedding attire and traditional Javanese dance.

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A common misconception is that race is rooted in biology, but it was actually a social construction. Who knows what a social construction is?

-It means that race was a term that was created by society, not due to biological differences.

We as humans share 99.9% of the same DNA, and we share the same body structures, including our bones, our teeth, and our organs. This separates us from other mammals, but not each other.

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So, why human variation? Well, different characteristics, such as face, nose, and ear size, eye color and eye shape are all physical differences that arose to help humans adapt to their environments.

We think of race as skin color right? Well the reason we have different skin colors is because humans that evolved closer to the equator needed darker skin to protect them from the sun’s UV radiation. Darker skin protected them from skin cancer and also helped in reproduction since too much UV radiation harms our ability to reproduce.

People farther from the equator however needed lighter skin to absorb Vitamin D from the sun! Without vitamin D, our bones become deformed, so lighter skin was selected for. These changes happened over long periods of time.

Human variations are responses to climates, diets, and cultural practices. You might think that people with dark skin only come from Africa, but as you can see on this map, dark skin originates from all around the globe along the equator, and people with light skin are from all around the globe far away from the equator.

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Some of the negative aspects of grouping people into races is that it might limit a groups opportunities and resources, which can lead to racism and negative stereotypes.

A positive aspect of grouping people into races is that anthropologists are able to learn about particular cultures and see what helps a group of people survive over time. Anthropologists also study race so that they can note when discrimination is happening and help influence positive changes in society.

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America is often called a melting pot because of the diversity of racial and ethnic groups. These groups are changing due to different influences, such as immigration, and joining together to create our diverse nation.

What are some of the benefits of diversity?

-Having a wide variety of perspectives allows us to see the world in different ways, working together helps us make a better world for each other, etc.

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Many anthropologists argue that it’s important to study ethnicity instead of race. Because there aren’t biological differences between humans of different races, studying ethnicity allows us to be culturally sensitive and aware. People of the same skin color might have different ethnicities.