RACE: A PRODUCT OF CULTURE

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Introduction & Interactives

- Race: The Pwr of An Illusion activity:
  - http://www.pbs.org/race/004_HumanDiversity/004_00-home.htm

- AAA website’s Race: Are We So Different? interactive
  - http://www.understandingrace.com/home.html
Scientific Racism:
This paradigm has its roots in American science. It suggests that ppl belong to fundamentally diff. biolog. stocks & that the concept of race can be scientifically supported.

Reality: Race is not scientifically supported, there is/are no gene(s) for race & it is not a biolog. based concept.
Typologizing: an attempt to classify ppl into discrete categories or “types”

An age old tendency in human grps

However, typologizing using the concept of “race” is relatively new

Who (scholar) do we know that has an affinity (liking) for classifying/organizing living things into groups?

“good ol’ Linnaeus!”
C. Linnaeus, Swedish scholar, mid18th cent.

Linnaeus: 4 variatas:
- H. sapiens Europaeus albescens
- H. sapiens Asiaticus fucus
- H. sapiens Africanus negreus
- H. sapiens Americanus rubescens

His criteria?
Geography & perceived skin color diffcs

Linnaeus, addit’nal category: H. sapiens monstrosus

How scientific was Linnaeus?
Johann Blumenbach, German scholar (~1790)

Introduced the mod’n usage of the word “race”. Prev. part of the lang, but not used to describe ppl, rather used to describe...?

5 “races”:
- Caucasian
- Mongolian
- Malay
- Ethiopian
- American

Simply modified one of Linnaeus’ categories
Which one? How?
His “Big 3” racial groupings (1926):
- Caucazoid
- Mongoloid
- Negroid

Notice the tremendous skin color variation that he collapses into a “category”. So his is not simply about skin color, then what is his criteria?

His specific perceptions of facial features & body type
Factors contributing to skin color:
- Keratin (top layer)
- Yellowish hue
- Melanin
- Brownish hue, 2 types: “dark” & “light”
- Hemoglobin-(gives us what hue?)
- Reddish hue

Role of melanin pigmentation:
- Prevents UV radiation from penetrating into the body (absorbs it)
- Plasticity (a plastic trait)
Human Skin Color Theories

1. Protection from malignant melanoma:
   - Lethal form of skin cancer, can even afflict children
   - Dark melanin provides addtl protection:
   - To be clear, protectn ≠ immunity
   - Ancestral proximity to equator may have been a pwrful selective factor in skin color
2. vitam. D synthesis: we are photosynthetic!
   - Vit. D required for absorptn of a part. mineral?
   - Calcium, which is necessary for?
     - Bone health
     - ↓ vit. D (chronically): rickets (bone disease can be lethal)
     - ↑ vit. D: hypervitaminosis D
     - Selection of light & dark melanin accordingly

3. Folate levels: (folic acid) a B vitamin
   - ↑ susceptible to light (destroys it), needed for?

(ㄨnorthwestern. Univ. fact sheet:
  [http://www.feinberg.northwestern.edu/nutrition/factsheets/folate.html](http://www.feinberg.northwestern.edu/nutrition/factsheets/folate.html))
Necessary nutrient for heart health, memory, mood & fertility

If it has an impact on fertility, what’s true about it?

Nat’l selectn!

Role of melanin in protecting folate levels

4. Frostbite susceptibility (Cold damage)
   dark skin is more susceptible to cold damage, in areas where frostbite is a prob., light skin would have selective advantage
Facts of human biolog. variation

- More variatn w/in “racial” categories than there is btwn (separating) them
- There is no gene (or grp of genetic markers) for “race”
- There is human biolog. variation (h.b.v.) & it’s a valid topic of scientific inquiry
- H.b.v. is geographically localized
- H.b.v. is continuous (gradual) in its distrib.
- H.b.v. is discordant in its distrib. (non-concordance)
What units of analysis do scientists use?

- Breeding pop. (more flexible)
- Cline: examining a single Trait (at a time) & its distrib. around the world @ a given frequency

If race doesn’t exist scientifically or biologically, does it exist at all?

Unfortunately, yes legacy continues

Within anthro: “social race” (cult’l construction)
Miscegenation ? (laws & beliefs)

The belief that race mixing is a negative occurrence & that doing so will distill the superior “race

Laws repealed but belief still all too prevalent

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/18034102/

Biolog. Response: hybrid vigor

Highly varied parents prod. genetically “heartier” & stronger offspring
DE FACTO DISCRIMINATION

RAVEN-SYMONE  AISHA TYLER  JASON LEWIS

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