

Lecture: Multiculturalism in Western Europe and North America

Lecturer: Dr. Laura Laubeova/Antonin Mikes

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AQCI: Cornell, Stephen, Hartmann, Douglas (1998). *Ethnicity and Race. Making Identities in a Changing World*. Pine Forge Press/A Sage Publication Company, text on "The Definition of Race", pp 21-43, 68-69.

1. Central Quotation

"Ethnicity and race are not the same, but they are not mutually exclusive categories either. They sometimes overlap. In short, races may be but are not necessarily ethnic groups." (Cornell, Hartmann, 25)

2. Argument

Cornell and Hartmann argue throughout this essay that the terms race and ethnicity, although used interchangeably throughout historical texts, are markedly different categories, where race is primarily based on similar physical characteristics and ethnicity primarily classifies groups from a common origin, ancestry, or descent. While race is assigned by those outside the group being classified, ethnicity is assigned by those individuals within the ethnic group, and these assertions create an identity commonly shared. Ethnicity forms feelings of self-assertion and self-concept within the group; race is socially constructed towards the group being defined by the group in power. This forms a stigma attaching race to being *inherently* inferior, different, of a lower status, and places racial groups in the lowest categories of hierarchy within social organizations. Race almost always pertains to skin color or other physical classifications rather than origination. However, Cornell and Hartmann also explain that both ethnicity and race overlap in a number of ways, which is why the terms are so difficult to define. The most appropriate example of overlapping is how a group of people can be classified as originating from the same territory, while simultaneously sharing common physical characteristics; thus, they can't be classified under race or ethnicity, because they embody both definitions at the same time.

3. Question

The question raised in this essay is literally, "What is Race?" which cannot easily be interpreted, as both authors show through examples of how definitions of race and ethnicity have changed over time. The question is put at its best when insight is offered through studying the lists of racial and ethnic categories that various countries use to define their populations. For instance, the authors ask if there in fact only five races in the United States, according to its census bureau. Or are there only four, according to the South African government? Furthermore, these categories have been changed and renamed over time, and the ethnic groups classified under them have been shifted as well, making the argument of "what is race?" all the more complex and unanswerable.

4. Experiential Connection

Growing up my whole life as a second generation United States citizen, it has always been easy to fill out forms in school and check off the box "White" or "Caucasian". It would realistically be impossible to classify all the ethnic groups within the United States without running out of room on the page. However, I often wonder how it must feel to have to classify oneself in such a narrow categorization as "White, Black, Latino, or Other". The sense of identity is lost within these classifications. In addition, it is very easy to overlap these identities, where one person can be simultaneously White and Hispanic, from South Africa by origin, and living on a Native American reservation. Although this may not seem plausible, it is quite possible for Americans to have this type of multi-ethnic heritage, and be genuinely confused as to how they are defined by others around them, in contrast to how they define themselves and their relationship to others within their ethnic identity.

5. Textual Connection

This text closely resembles the attempt by T.H. Eriksen's¹ essay to define the terms of ethnicity and race specifically. Eriksen's observations confirm Cornell and Hartmann's argument that while race and ethnicity tend to be defined in similar terms, and grouped together more often than not when being studied, there still remains an important and "distinguishable" difference between ethnicity and race. The texts do have variations though; whereas Cornell and Hartmann speak of overlapping through politically and socially organized terms, Eriksen also sees overlapping, but his example is more direct, through the physical interbreeding of the human population over time. Both essays clearly define, however, that there *is* a difference between race and ethnicity, and it lies within one similar comparison; that race is socially constructed by outside groups as a way of classifying "them" or "other", while ethnicity is defined within the group itself as "us". Although Eriksen agrees there are differences in the ideologies of race and ethnicity, he chooses not to separate the terms when speaking of interethnic relations, classes, etc., because he doesn't see the distinction as being "useful" to that specific discussion.

6. Implications

This text reevaluates the classifications we take for granted when defining populations within different countries. It poses the question of what exactly race is, and reduces it to a social construct that really has no application for the betterment of a nation as a whole. Ethnicity and its grouping, on the other hand, have very relevant implications when studying populations and deciding on policies for various groups. "Ethnic" in all its forms is much more appropriate when considering correct terminology, and can be defined by both those within the ethnic group and those outside of it, without discriminating qualities. Therefore, I think governments and census bureaus would be better off defining populations in terms of ethnicities and not races, as this would create a more equal tone in formulating policies affecting ethnic minorities and solving ethnically-charged political issues.

¹ Eriksen, T.H. "Ethnicity, Race, Class, and Nation", text 4, in Hutchinson, John, Smith, Anthony, eds. (1996) *Ethnicity*. Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, p. 28-31.

Sample Self assessment form
 Department of Western European Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University
AQCI ASSESSMENT FORM

Student's name:	Leeann Davulis	Name of assessor:	Julie Buhl Joergensen Nic Hyland	Date:	March 6, 2007
Essay title:					

	Excel lent	Go od	Avera ge	Poo r	Not accepta ble	Comments
1) Is the chosen quotation central to the author's argument?		++ +				I think that your quotation is very relevant for the understanding of the text, another good quotation would have been about people categorizing each other and that race is a social construct
2) Has the main argument been fully understood (including its 'for' and 'against' sides, if applicable)?	++	+				Yes I think so
3a) Is the question raised important/relevant/interesting?	++ +					It is relevant because the main theme is to show that we can not justify the fact that human being defined each other to belong to some certain race, there is no prove of that.
3b) Has this question not been fully answered in the text?		++ +				
4) Is the experiential connection relevant/interesting?	+	++				I think it is relevant that you talk about the United States and how you deal with such issues. Maybe you can be a bit more critical towards the system and the way the make people put a label on themselves A very relevant experiential connection was used
5a) Is the textual connection relevant/interesting?	+	++				
5b) Has it been cited properly?	+	++				
5c) Has it been adequately explained how the present text's argument contrasts with, contradicts, confirms, clarifies, or elaborates the other text's argument or point?		++ +				I think you have a good understanding of the similarities and the differences between these two opinions
6) Have the implications been well understood, can they have a practical impact for policy making?	+	++				Perhaps a little more specific would be good?
7) Expression/Presentation	++					Really well presented and easy to read. Arguments made sense.
a) Are the style, grammar and general use of English adequate?	++ +					
b) Is the AQCI professionally presented?	+++					