

THE POWER OF AN ILLUSION

Shifting our understanding of RACE

Information from episode one of RACE: The Power of Illusion titled: The Difference Between Us and Intra-European Racism in Nineteenth-Century Anthropology (2009) written by Gustav Jahoda

THE IDEA OF RACE ASSUMES

Human variation is rooted in our biology - with everything from athletic ability to intelligence being the result of innate biological differences.

Early classifications were based on the identification of features such as pigmentation, hair and facial form, or skull shape. Such classifications were used to rank people into "races," as well as to assert and justify superiority based on an ideology of inferiority, further classifications of 'race' were used to devalue, disempower, & differentially allocate valued societal resources and opportunities to groups deemed inferior. This legacy persists today.

RACE IS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

Racial categories are fluid and have shifted throughout history, culture, and geographical space.

These constructions occur via the process of **racialization** by which societies construct races as real, different, and unequal in ways that matter to economic, political, and social life.

RACIAL CATEGORIES RECOGNIZED BY SOCIETY ARE NOT REFLECTED ON THE GENETIC LEVEL

Mitochondrial DNA (DNA inherited by one's mother) shows us that there is more diversity and genetic difference within any so-called racial group than there is between them.

RACE DOES NOT ACCOUNT FOR PATTERNS IN GENETIC VARIATION

Traits most commonly used to distinguish one race from another, like skin and eye color, or the width of the nose, are controlled by relatively few numbers of genes and thus have been able to change rapidly in response to environmental pressures - such as the amount of melanin in one's skin in relation to the amount of exposure to ultraviolet radiation.

DON'T LET LOOKS DECEIVE YOU

Human evolution has only occurred over a period of 100,000 years - a blink of an eye in terms of evolution. The human species is so evolutionarily young, and its migratory patterns so wide that it has simply not had enough time to divide or isolate itself into separate biological subgroups or "races" in any but the most superficial ways.

THIS DOES NOT MEAN

That the concept of race does not hold serious weight in our lives - social structures are based around visual cues and the racial categories in which we're assigned can determine real-life experiences. Racialized categories drive economic, political, and social outcomes, and even mean the difference between life and death.

CHALLENGING COMMON SENSE ASSUMPTIONS

And understanding that these categories are socially constructed allows us to better understand how the illusion of race has become so deeply embedded in various systems and institutions that have evolved over time, how it has affected various racialized communities, and debunk so-called "racial lines"