

Question: What is the difference between ethnicity and race, and is class analysis still important for understanding social inequality globally? Provide examples about how gender, class and race inequalities reinforce each other and contradict each other.

There are many factors which go into determining the path a person's life can take; the most significant of those being the social class into which he or she is born. Every civilised society has a class society. Each of these societies has based its civilisation, its culture, its technology, on the oppression of the majority by a minority. Class is vitally important in understanding social inequalities suffered globally by the races which structures our world, but also it extends more specifically into the different ethnicities which create a race.

There are many races which make up our world, however these races are broken up by many nationalistic ethnicities. While many confuse race and ethnicity as one in the same, an ethnic group can be a group of people sharing a common religion or national heritage or even a common cultural tradition. Race is not determined by belief or choice to belong to a group, but rather we are all born into our race. A race is a "local geographic or global human population distinguished as a more or less distinct group by genetically transmitted physical characteristics." (dictionary.com)

When evaluating races and the differences between them, the norm is to study the different races and how they are broken up into the social classes of a society. In the United States for instances, studies have been done that show ...

The concept of "race" may be usefully compared to the concept of "caste." Caste includes ancestry and actual social stratification, and also includes ideas about real or imagined body type differences and socially significant cultural differences. Both race and caste are, fundamentally, modes of constructing social hierarchy on relations of birth. The key difference is that race essentially involves the idea of groups originating in different territories, whereas members of different castes may be conceived as originating from the same territory.

The Indian caste system has been in use, and is still valued today, for several years. The system help to keep the people peaceful amongst each other, and a sense of order. There are five different levels of the system: Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra, and Harijans. In each of these categories are the actual "castes" or jatis within which people are born, marry, and die. Indians are comfortable with this system in that they never move up in class or down. They will always in be in same class. This system has worked well for Indian people, and still plays a major part in modern India.

It is not clear how some races succeed in having more upward mobility in the United States. The achievement gap between whites and non-Asian minorities has been acknowledged for years, most educators have blamed it on economic or social status. But the report, analyzing four decades of data, suggests the problem is far more complex: "Blacks whose parents are upper-middle class with college degrees score significantly lower than do whites with the same background." (Hoover part 2) And the same pattern

holds true at all socioeconomic levels. Affluent blacks, in fact, tend to score just below the level of the least well-off whites. Blacks and Hispanics make up a large percentage of lowest-performing students, and a small percentage of those achieving at the highest levels. In short, few are getting the grades and scores needed to get into top colleges.

Japanese and Mexican immigrants began arriving in California and worked in similar occupations as agricultural laborers. Yet a study from a school district in which their children attended the same schools and sat side-by-side in the same classrooms found IQ differences as great as those between blacks and whites attending schools on opposite sides of town. International studies have found “different groups of illiterate people, with no educational differences because they had no education, with mental test differences larger than those between blacks and whites in the United States.” (Hoover part 2) Yet this isn’t a matter of genetics. During the First World War, black soldiers from Ohio, Illinois, New York, and Pennsylvania scored higher on mental tests than did white soldiers from Georgia, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Mississippi.

It is the common misconception that poverty is the fault of individuals, as we can see by the passing of various new laws and acts. Instead, it is the imperfection of our social structure that is to blame. These flaws allow to prolong the existence of poverty. This unending cycle is a stark contrast to the American ideal that everyone has the opportunity to succeed in our society.

Poor people in today’s society display characteristics and values that are different from the non-poor in the same society. "These characteristics are: the absence of childhood as a specially prolonged and protected stage in the life-cycle, early initiation into sex, free unions or consensual marriages, a relatively high incidents of abandonment of wives and children, a tend toward female or mother-centered families, a strong predisposition toward authoritarianism, lack of privacy, verbal emphasis upon family solidarity which is only rarely achieved because of sibling rivalry, and competition for limited goods and maternal affection." (Lewis, 1965) These characteristics of the poor make it difficult for them to escape from poverty. Thus, the poor people live on due to the passing of these characteristics from generation to generation.

The most obvious and inescapable finding from these years of research is that huge disparities in income and wealth have been the rule, not the exception, in countries around the world and over centuries of human history. Real income consists of outputs and these outputs have been radically different because the inputs have been radically different from peoples with different cultures.

Geography alone creates profound differences among peoples. It is not simply that such natural wealth as oil and gold are very unequally distributed around the world. More fundamentally, people themselves are different because of different levels of access to other peoples and cultures. Isolated peoples have always lagged behind those with greater access to a wider world, whether isolation has been the result of mountains, jungles, widely scattered islands, or other geographic barriers.

While we see social inequality alive and well right here in the US, similar situations have occurred in other countries throughout the past century. “Anthony Marx has described race as “made” or created by the dominant classes in multiracial societies in order to de-emphasize class divisions among group members sharing similar phenotypical characteristics. Thus, the specific needs of nation-state consolidation dictated elite constructions of racial categories and, more important, the meanings attached to individuals grouped together according to skin color and other physical traits. Another study concluded that the mobilization of racial and cultural symbols in a specific context provides race its special meaning; otherwise, the concept has no significance. Race is regarded as a social construct whose meanings depends upon a specific historical moment, social context, and society. Therefore, the concept of race is flexible and subject to change, adaptation, and reformulation over time, shaped by particular social environments.” (Global Multiculturalism)

Discrimination is also one of the many factors operating against equality. But even if all human beings behaved like saints toward one another, the other factors would still make equality of income and wealth virtually impossible to achieve.

Blacks in the United States have faced more hostility and discrimination than blacks in Latin America. As just one example, 161 blacks were lynched in one year in the United States, but racial lynching was unknown south of the Rio Grande. People may debate whether race relations in Brazil, for example, have ever been quite as good as sometimes represented, but there is little or no debate that they have been better than in the United States.

If discrimination were as all-purpose an explanation of economic differences as is often supposed, we might reasonably expect blacks in Brazil to have come closer to economic parity with whites there than blacks in the United States have come to achieving parity with white Americans. In fact, however, Brazil has larger black-white disparities in income than does the United States. As inconsistent as this may be with discrimination as a dominant explanatory factor, it is perfectly consistent with cultural explanations.