

Some key concepts in the field of ethnic studies

Acculturation

1. the process of conditioning a child to the patterns or customs of a culture
2. the process of becoming adapted to a new or different culture with more or less advanced patterns
3. the mutual influence of different cultures in close contact

Assimilation

The cultural absorption of a minority group into the main cultural body

Ethnic minority group

Usually, but not always, this phrase is used to refer to a non-white population. Alternatively, it may be used to describe a specific identifiable group, for example, gypsy travellers, and less commonly, Irish in the UK. Some people consider the phrase inaccurate and prefer minority ethnic group, but the two phrases are used synonymously.

Ethnicity

The social group a person belongs to, and either identifies with or is identified with by others, as a result of a mix of cultural and other factors including language, diet, religion, ancestry, and physical features traditionally associated with race (see race). Increasingly, the concept is being used synonymously with race but the trend is pragmatic rather than scientific.

Ethnocentrism

The tendency to perceive and interpret from the standpoint of one's own culture. In epidemiology the tendency is reflected in the practice of using the White population as the norm or standard .

Hybrid

A person whose background is a blend of two diverse cultures or traditions

Ideological racism

An ideology that considers a group's unchangeable physical characteristics be linked in a direct, casual way to psychological or intellectual characteristics and that on this basis, distinguishes between superior and inferior racial groups

Indigenous

This term is usually used to mean a person who belongs naturally to a place in the sense of long term family origins (see Native). This term is sometimes used to identify the majority population, for example, in the United Kingdom as an alternative to the word White. In some parts of the world, for example, Australia, the word indigenous is used specifically to refer to aboriginal populations (for example, Aborigene).

Majority population

When used in race/ethnicity studies this phrase is usually used as a synonym for White or European.

Mestizo/a

A person of mixed parentage; esp., in the W U.S. and in Latin American countries, a person having one Spanish or Portuguese parent and one American Indian parent

Miscegenation

Marriage or sexual relations between a man and woman of different races, esp., in the U.S., between a white and a black

Multicultural

Of, relating to, reflecting, or adapted to diverse cultures <a multicultural society> <multicultural education> <a multicultural menu>

Multiculturalism

The policy or practice of giving equal attention or representation to the cultural needs and contributions of all the groups in a society: special emphasis may be given to minority groups underrepresented in the past, as through bilingual education

Native

Sometimes this word is used to refer to populations born, or with family origins, in a place (see indigenous). This was also a pejorative term meaning populations belonging to a non-European and imperfectly civilised or savage race, so writers need to take care.

Prejudice

1. an unfavorable opinion or feeling formed beforehand or without knowledge, thought, or reason.
2. any preconceived opinion or feeling, either favorable or unfavorable.
3. unreasonable feelings, opinions, or attitudes, especially of a hostile nature, regarding a racial, religious, or national group.

Race

By historical and common usage the group (sub-species in traditional scientific use) a person belongs to as a result of a mix of physical features such as skin colour and hair texture, which reflect ancestry and geographical origins, as identified by others or, increasingly, as self identified. The importance of social factors in the creation and perpetuation of racial categories has led to the concept broadening to include a common social and political heritage, making its use similar to ethnicity. Race and ethnicity are increasingly used as synonyms causing some confusion and leading to the hybrid terms race/ethnicity (see Ethnicity).

Racial discrimination

To treat differently a person or group of people based on their racial origins. Power is a necessary precondition, for it depends on the ability to give or withhold social benefits, facilities, services, opportunities etc., from someone who should be entitled to them, and are denied on the basis of race, colour or national origin

Racial prejudice

Negative beliefs, perceptions, or attitudes towards one or more ethnic or racial groups.

Racism/institutional racism

A belief that some races are superior to others, used to devise and justify individual and collective actions that create and sustain inequality among racial and ethnic groups. Individual racism is usually manifested in decisions and behaviours that disadvantage small numbers of people. Institutional racism, whereby policies and traditions, sometimes unwittingly, favour a particular racial or ethnic group, may be less obvious but may disadvantage large populations.

Stereotype

An unvarying form or pattern; specif., a fixed or conventional notion or conception, as of a person, group, idea, etc., held by a number of people, and allowing for no individuality, critical judgment, etc.

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