
Reflections About Identity And Belonging

Before I start this course, the reflection of my personal sense of identity is that there are different races in this world. There are those who have the dark coloured skin, the yellow coloured skin and the white coloured skin. These different skin colour has their places in the society. I always thought that the dark coloured skin such as those Aboriginal or the blacks in the United States are the less educated and more prone to violence. Whenever I see someone who is of that darker colour skin regime, I have this sense of insecurity and always attempting to seek shelter. Also, I can see that they have a lower level within the society based on the way they behave, their dressing manners and the overall demeanour. For the yellow coloured skin, this is often viewed within the society as someone who has the hardworking and smart cultural background. They are perceived as being smart at school or that they have certain talent that is better than the others. They are viewed as being within the business society who are good at negotiating and often attempts to seize the best deal for themselves or their families. Then we have the white coloured skin who is considered to be the fortunate group. They have the nice environment to live in and the society support towards their wellbeing is enormous. They tend to be well mannered and have the opportunities handed to them because of their white skin colour. In other words, the white coloured skin is perceived to be more superior. Therefore, I thought that identify is defined by the skin colour and that I form that stereotype view that the skin colour is going to have an influence on their ultimate behaviour. As a result, I shall adjust my behaviour in response to that cultural perception. For example, I tend to be nicer when I talk to someone who is of the white coloured skin compared to the black coloured skin. The negative perception of the black coloured skin also reduces the overall tendency to interact in all facets including a simple exercise of ordering coffee. If I am ordering coffee and that worker is white, I tend to be more friendly and smile. If the worker is black, then I tend to be less friendly and more hostile if something goes wrong. To illustrate this further, the white worker who provides a wrong change shall be perceived as a mistake but the black worker who provides a wrong change shall be perceived as a thief.

When applying my enriched understanding about the identity and belonging through the anthropologist's perspective, there are some learnings that can be applied towards my perception before I start this course. There are the historical events in the past about how Australia is established through settlement and the act of excluding those Aboriginals from their original land ownership. The act of marginalisation of the Aboriginals and the separation of their family members so that the whites or the supreme can take over the land is well documented within the narrations in the past. This is highlighted when the black as the original people who owns the land is not respected for that fact as part of the response by Alice (Lambert-Pennington 2012: 135). However, that self-narrative has a significant influence on how the society of the Aboriginals today as they are unable to access the various basic needs such as education. This power struggle between settlement and the Aboriginals have contributed to the current consequence on their rather aggressive behaviour. There are also the power relations that to for the governance over the land of Australia and the politics that seek to repair the damaged relationship between the Australians and the Aboriginals. Therefore, this shows that there is the self-narration of the 'us against them' or the Aboriginals against the Australians. The difference between the white and the others including the migrants and Aboriginals are that the whites are polite whilst the Aboriginals and migrants are a threat to their safety (Low 2009:

80). Such differences in the race is further examined through the anthropologist lenses in terms of the perception of the next generation especially the younger generation. There is the self-awareness about their race and colour that is developed within their cultural background that defines whether there is an issue or otherwise (Lele 2010: 30). There is also another research that investigates how the dolls are being used to reflect the differences in the races and culture through the description of the doll such as the colour of the doll (Chin 1999: 305).

In the present environment, the statistics are used to show how there is a gap between the coloured and whites such as the criminal rates or the income gap. However, these gaps are reflecting the improvisation that is developed by the self-awareness and the subsequent adaption. This is the self-narration on how the identity is formed and the subsequent transformation. For example, someone who is black in the United States may grow up in life as if they are part of the criminals as what the statistics show. This perception that forms their identity and become a reality. On the other hand, there are various examples on how the other blacks are experiencing that transformation on both the personal and social levels. One example is Oprah Winfrey who is one of the most successful persons in the world and yet Oprah Winfrey is black and grew up in one of those areas that have a high crime rate. There could be various explanations, but this shows that Oprah Winfrey is really the author of her own life irrespective of the race and cultural background. Oprah Winfrey is able to overcome the various social obstacles and challenges so that she can be successful in the business and social communities. There is no sense of us against them but there is one society as we are all humans. Another example is the former President of the United States known as Barrack Obama. Barrack Obama is the first black president in the United States that indicates the racial differences are really because of the self-authoring concept. Barrack Obama writes his own life and affiliate himself with the words like 'successful career' and 'hardworking' who is determined to change the society.

There are various efforts by the social agencies that are involved in various initiatives to promote the various cultural artefacts. This is because the cultural artefacts can provide the social values that reflects the identity of the race that has certain symbolic meaning (Perez Hazel 2014: 78). Applying this to the Aboriginal community, the painting that is done by one of the elders has the symbol of the respect for the nature such as the relationship between the sun and the land as well as how they need to treat the land. However, there are other forms of cultural artefacts that can define how they are perceived in the society. This is demonstrated by the individuals like Barrack Obama who is able to achieve the good grades and fighting for the rights of the society that provides Barrack Obama with the status. It is also important to present the various symbolic artefacts in the meaning that is relevant to the current environment and society so that there is the learning experience that is coupled with the sense of appreciation. This means that the race and culture is provided in a different meaning or light so that there is a different authoring of the perception that is allocated to the Aboriginal that changes the acceptance of the society towards the Aboriginal community (Abu el-Haj 2007: 283).

After this learning experience and enrichment about the concept of identity and belonging, I have really changed my perception and understanding. I understand that the concept of race is really created by the society based on the past events that have defined and authored those perceptions. There is the acknowledgement that the different societies have experienced the different treatment but that should not define the stereotype viewpoint that is formed from those past authors of their appearance or behaviour. There is only one race in this world being the humans and we need to support each other and embrace the differences. There is no one race

or person who is more superior than others but those perceived differences in the level of status need to be addressed at various levels. Whilst there are some efforts to improve and embrace the differences between the Aboriginals or blacks and the whites, it is necessary to incorporate and assimilate those different communities within the overall society. This can reduce the effect of the 'us against them' mentality and that everybody has the equal opportunity to perform and excel. This then provides that opportunity for the society to author their own life so that they can experience the transformation on the personal and social levels.

References

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