M5 Assignment: Human Diversity

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ANTH 112: Intro Anthropology

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**Section 1: Multi-Ethnic Person**

The person of choice I have picked for this assignment is Keanu Reeves. They are a famous actor known most prominently for his role in the Matrix Franchise, playing a computer hacker with the name “Neo.” He is also known for starting as John Wick in the John Wick Franchise. I choose Keanu not because of his on-screen performance, but because of his personality when there aren’t cameras rolling. He is open and honest about his difficult childhood and is constantly seen helping others. It is common for famous people to let the power get to their heads, so it is nice to have someone who treats everyone equally. Granted, Keanu Reeves could have done some terrible thing no one knows about, but until that comes out, he will be regarded by many people as being an awesome human being.

**Section 2: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality**

For Keanu Reeves, the terms race, ethnicity, and nationality apply to him. He was born in Lebanon, his mother was English, and his father is from Hawaii, and is of Native Hawaiian, Chinese, English, Irish, and Portuguese descent. When his parents divorced at age 2, his mother moved to Sydney Australia, and then to New York. It was in New York where she married a Broadway and Hollywood director. They then moved to Toronto at age 11, and his Mother divorced again. Because of his Chinese ethnicity from his father, and his Grandmother being mostly Chinese, Keanu grew up with Chinese culture. Knowing this, it is safe to say that race, ethnicity, and nationality apply to Keanu Reeves. However, these categories do not agree, as he looks “white-passing”, so the public discourse is to categorize his race as white, while his ethnicity is diverse, and his nationality is that of a Canadian citizen. Because of his appearance, he never received any discrimination regarding his race. Keanu Reeves' reluctance to conform to simplistic racial or ethnic labels reflects his resistance against societal attempts to simplify individuals based on their appearance.

**Section 3: Culturally Constructed vs Biological Explanation**

Culturally constructed categories, such as race, gender, ethnicity, etc., are fluid concepts, meaning they can change over time. For example, gender used to be just male and female, now gender is a broad spectrum. Biological explanations are the scientific answers to why something is the case, such as why some people have different skin colors. It does not explain the implications or sociological perspectives of race. With that said, both concepts only work well when they are both understood. This means that just understanding the culturally constructed categories might confuse understanding the biological function and vice versa. Biologically race doesn’t make sense, so trying to understand race biologically would cause confusion, but by understanding how race works under the societal lens you can understand the history of race and what that means.

**Section 4: Moving Forward**

Being able to explore the difference between culturally constructed categories and biological categories was my favorite part of this assignment. It was interesting to me because I think those two concepts when understood, provide an individual with a strong worldview in interpreting events or changes. Knowing that the concept of race, for example, has no biological explanation makes so much sense, because the concept was something invented by humans to explain differences. Moving forward from this assignment, I would like to learn more about the culturally constructed categories, and the direction that is moving in. While it has roots in negativity (i.e. the invention of race), people are now using the concept to further individualize themselves and explore their freedom.

**References**

Muckle, Robert James, et al. Through the Lens of Anthropology: An Introduction to Human Evolution and Culture. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2022.

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