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Evolution of Racism and the Authentic Self

No single sociologist has the exact same mindset and beliefs, because sociology is made up of a slew of different ideas. From William James, to Michael Omi and Howard Winant, to Yuval Noah Harari, sociological beliefs among different sociologists from many years to the past up to the present day interlace with each other to create new and improved ideas and objectives. Although some sociologists today grow and add on to beliefs of the past, they can also steer it in the other direction. There are many contradictions between sociological concepts from the past, and sociological concepts from the modern-day. Sociology is not constant over time, it evolves as the times change. If a sociologist supports an idea from the past, then they will expand on the idea and change it to help it grow; but if a sociologist disagrees with a concept from the past, then they will contradict it and assert their new idea onto the world. These consistencies or inconsistencies include many different ideologies including racism and the idea of the authentic self.

“21 Lessons for the 21st Century” is a novel that asserts Harari’s beliefs clearly for the reader to understand. Harari’s book consists of five different parts: The Technological Challenge, The Political Challenge, Despair and Hope, Truth and Resilience. He makes multiple different arguments in this novel by expressing his opinions about what the future has in store for the world. Many arguments made by Harari are either consistent or inconsistent with past

that racism has evolved over time. An example of one of Harari's beliefs that was contradictory to a past sociologist is the concept of self and that it was inconsistent. Harari's beliefs expressed in the novel can be easily compared to older sociologists to decide if they support or contradict their beliefs.

In "21 Lessons for the 21st Century," Part Two: The Political Challenge, Chapter 9 titled Immigration, Harari declares that racism has evolved. He explains that racism in the past was based on skin color. Anyone who was not white was considered inferior to whites. Racism became unimportant when scientists, more specifically geneticists, produced evidence that the biological distinctions between different races are insignificant. People continue to fight against traditional racism, failing to realize that they are fighting against something completely different: culturalism. Harari argues that racism is changing into culturalism. Due to the fact it is now scientifically proven incorrect that people who are different races are different biologically, racism is not in play. Instead, many of the racist assertions made have been rephrased in cultural terms. Harari argues that it is no longer what is wrong with the DNA, but rather problems with their culture. People decide who they want to have power, and who they want to make a minority in the world. Whatever culture they decide they disagree with they discriminate against, and that is culturalism. Harari proclaims that racism has changed over time into culturalism.

Michael Omi and Howard Winant, authors of "Racial Formations", argue that racism has changed throughout the world. He explains that the meaning of skin color is being communicated and shifted over time, but racism no longer has the same "purpose" that it used to. In the Post Civil War era, people of color were viewed as less than human. They were not to be taken seriously under any circumstance, and were used as slaves; that was racism. In the Post

slaves, but rather viewed as “violent thugs”. Omi and Winant explain how racism was a system of beliefs developed to legitimate slavery, and it has not shifted to racialization and prejudice. Racialization can be defined as a top-down political process where a dominant group defines symbolic boundaries of subordinate groups. Omi and Winant argue that this describes the new version of “racism” because it is no longer about slavery, but rather the superiority over other races. It is simply the judgment of others because they are different, and that is it. Omi and Winant wrote “Racial Formations” to show how the meaning of dark skin and racism has evolved.

Harari’s and Omi’s and Winant’s arguments on how racism has shifted are consistent with each other. They both express the change in racism, and how even though it is still considered racism around the world, that is not the case. Both Harari and Omi and Winant explain how racism was invented as a way to legitimize slavery, however, that is not applicable in the modern world. Racial formation takes place in both Harari’s and Omi’s and Winant’s pieces of work. Racial formation can be defined as a tool used to look at race as a socially constructed identity. The collective consciousness plays a role in racial formations and results in tying these two pieces together. The collective consciousness determines the meaning of boundaries. The people determine who is in control, and who is being discriminated against; this connects to both pieces of work. Even though due to the abolishment of racism, it is no longer a thing, people still are in control of the decision of who has power and that is what all of the authors are arguing. Racism is not disappearing, it is simply shifting into something different and something that is viewed more lightly.

Fiction, Yuval Harari views the mind as unstable. He views the mind as a concept that is continually produced and inconsistent; he declares that the self is a process. He proclaims that the mind is an object that is being shaped by both biology and history. To Harari, there is no “authentic” self that lies within its own construct. Instead, we are all a combination of the manipulation of the people around us, and the lives we have lived. Harari summarized his belief in self by saying, “Even our most cherished ideals -- freedom, love, creativity -- are like a stone knife that somebody else shaped in order to kill some mammoth.” (Harari 254). There is no self-created before the influence of others. The mind continues to be manipulated throughout one’s lifetime, as one’s self continues to evolve. Harari presumes that there is no distinction between external cultural systems and internal beliefs. Everything you are is a cumulation of everything you have absorbed in external forces.

William James, author of “The Self and its Selves,” is known as the father of American Psychology. Due to his psychological views, James believes the self is developed in the brain. He believes the core of the self to be stable, and to be formed without the influence of surrounding people and experiences. James divides the self into four constituent parts, all coming together to create a whole: material self, social self, spiritual self, and pure ego. The material self is your own body, possessions, and friends. The social self is the different versions of yourself based on where you are, and the view that others have of you. The spiritual self simply put is your personality. And lastly, the pure ego represents the soul and the core of your personality. James believes that although the material and social self can fluctuate, the spiritual self and pure ego are stable. Overall, James sticks with the idea that the self is formed inside the brain and the mind, and is stable.

sociological view, while James is arguing from a psychological point of view. The differences between the two author's beliefs are intense, they completely contradict each other. Harari sees the self as something that is continually produced and "never free of manipulation". He believes there is no authentic self, but rather a combination of everyone and everything someone is surrounded with. James, on the contrary, believes that the self is made up of four different constituent parts, all formed inside the brain and the mind. His ideology is that the self is stable, and is mostly unaffected by surroundings. Harari asserts in his novel the inconsistency of self, while James proclaims the stability of it.

In Part Two and Four of "21 Lessons for the 21st Century", Harari expresses his beliefs on sociology. When comparing Harari's beliefs to past sociologists, it is obvious to see the evolution of sociology, but also the stability. Harari expands on Omi and Winant's belief that racism has evolved over time. He keeps that same overall concept but changes it to fit his ideology that racism has evolved into culturalism in the modern world. This is an example of consistency in sociology as times have changed. On the contrary, Harari contradicts James' beliefs on the authentic self. James looks through a psychological lens and thinks the self is constant; while Harari looks through a sociological lens and believes that the self is constantly changing and that there is no authentic self. Over time, sociology can both evolve and be constant at the same time, and by comparing Harari to past sociologists this is proved.