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The Comparison Between *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* and the other writings of Sociology

105

Yuval Noah Harari is an author of many books, but the one book that is being studied in this class is *21 Lessons for the 21st century*. This book goes over twenty-one different topics and his different views on all of them. He also finds a way to somehow simplify these very complex issues and dilemmas in a way that the readers can at least understand the general ideas surrounding the problems. Harari has many consistencies and many differences with the other works and writings that have been studied in this class. One difference is that Harari believes that traditional racism is disappearing in current times and being replaced by culturism. Other writings that have been studied in this class believe that racism is still a big issue in society, but it has taken on a systematic approach. One consistency between the book and the other writings in this class is the idea of the Collective Consciousness and group think. Harari and Durkheim, the person behind the idea of the Collective Consciousness, believe that humanity's ability to make groups is what puts them above other animals. Harari's viewpoints contradict and complement the ideas of others, but it is these comparisons that help create needed conversations about today's society.

and the increasing emergence of culturism in the chapter of Immigration. He makes the argument that traditional racism is not as prevalent because “traditional racism was firmly grounded in biological theories.” What Harari means by this is that, in earlier times, there was believed to be a genetic or biological trait that made people of different races and ethnicities lesser than Europeans and Caucasians, which was backed by political and scientific figures during those times. However, in current times, the racist comments, actions, and assumptions have lost all of their scientific and political support. Harari says that the only way that these racist beliefs are supported is if they are presented in terms of culture. “Saying that black people tend to commit crimes because they have substandard genes is out; saying that they tend to commit crimes because they came from dysfunctional subcultures is very much in” (Harari). Yuval Harari also gives another example to prove his point that it is currently culturism that is the significant issue and not traditional racism through two fictional countries he came up with: Coldia and Warmland. Basically, the two different cultures of the two countries handle situations in differing ways: people from Coldia are taught to repress conflicts and people in Warmland are taught to express their conflicts. Harari gives a situation where a person from Warmland moves to Coldia and acquires a job there. When the employee from Warmland experiences a conflict at work, they will talk about the problem out loud and possibly be very aggressive and vocal about it. However, the employees from Coldia will not express their issues and continue to repress their opinions. When an opening for a higher job position is created, the employee from Warmland will likely be denied because the Coldian company will want the Coldian employee who doesn’t express their issues and doesn’t create tense situations in the workplace. This creates a never-

which means that the opinions on Warmland employees will probably never change (Harari).

In the reading “Racial Formations,” written by Michael Omi and Howard Winant, they say “Of course, particular meanings, stereotypes, and myths can change, but the presence of a system of racial meanings and stereotypes, of racial ideology, seems to be a permanent feature of U.S. culture” (Omi). They believe that racialization is becoming a more current and modern phenomenon because of the ability to spread information through television and new technology, and they also believe that people tend to view race as a concrete issue, which means it isn’t going anywhere. There was also a field experiment conducted by Devah Pager on the low wage labor market and the discrimination within it, which shows how racism influences our current society. In this field experiment, they had applicants of different races apply for the same jobs. In many of the cases, the white applicants got more call backs and more interviews than the Hispanic and Black applicants. Some companies would even lie and tell the Black or Hispanic applicants that they actually don’t have any positions open anymore, but then call back the white applicant for an interview or job offer. There were also three different mechanisms seen during the experiment that categorize the different types of discrimination and racism presented in the study. The first mechanism is called “categorical exclusion,” which is what was previously stated. The employers would tell people of a certain color or race that they didn’t have interviews that day, but then would ask the other applicants to stay for the interview. The second mechanism is known as “shifting standards.” Shifting standards is when the employers’ requirements for hiring change or are interpreted differently based on skin color. The sets of applicants had the same credentials on their resumes, but employers would tell one applicant that they didn’t have any sales experience and so they wouldn’t hire that applicant, but then applicants of another race

“race-coded job channeling,” which is when people will be offered different jobs or persuaded to do a different job depending on their race. One black tester in the field experiment applied for a sales position at a company, but during the interview was told that they actually needed a stock boy. According to these authors: Michael Omi, Howard Winant, and Devah Pager, racism is still a significant problem in our society and is not “waning.”

Yuval Harari believes that traditional racism is disappearing and that culturism has appeared in the place of it due to the fact that racism no longer has scientific or political backing. Other authors and experimenters still believe that racism is a huge modern issue in society, especially in a systematic point of view. However, Harari’s view can be applied to most of the situations stated by the authors and experimenters. With the discrimination in the low wage labor market, it may not be the race the employers are looking at, but the culture they assume the person has because of their race or skin color. So, neither viewpoint is necessarily wrong, racism does still exist, but the racism in our current society has a more cultural focus. The idea of systemic racism in the United States can also be presented as systemic culturism. Whether or not traditional racism is still the huge issue in our modern society or whether it is actually culturism, there is still an extremely complex issue that needs to be fixed.

One of the biggest consistencies between *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* and the works studied in this class is the idea of the collective consciousness. The collective consciousness is an idea created by Durkheim, which is the idea that individuals create or join groups that represent their beliefs and values in order to find a sense of belonging or a higher purpose. Both Durkheim and Harari believe that the creation of groups is what makes Homo Sapiens have an advantage over

sense of belonging and purpose and it creates the spreading of ideas.

Harari's viewpoints on traditional racism and group think both contribute to modern conversations about today's society. Harari believes that traditional racism is "waning" and that it is being replaced by culturism, which contradicts the arguments of many other sociologists and writers, but this contradiction allows for the construction of new conversations that need to be had. Harari's viewpoint on groups and group think also adds to these conversations and supports the ideas of many other sociologists.

Sources:

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