

Dr. Elliot  
SOC-105  
5/3/24

Racial formations and class in America affect one another and consistently puts non-white people at a disadvantage and has for hundreds of years. Whether it was the slave class, or the current day “lower” class, race has influenced and directly affected both. Over time racial formations have shifted in America, as there are more subgroups of race than ever before. In today's world, the idea of race is more than just about biology. It's a mix of history, society, and how people see themselves and others. Omi and Winant say race is not just about what you look like, it's about how society sees you and treats you over time. Race affects how we see ourselves and others, and it often leads to quick judgments based on stereotypes. It's also about power and who gets to control things. George Mantsios shows that in America, your race often determines whether you're poor or not and Black and Hispanic people have a much higher chance of being poor compared to white people. This is because racism is built into every part of our society. Racial biases affect how well off people are, and being poor often means less opportunities for economic growth. This cycle has been going on for a long time and has deep roots in history as Omi and Winant argue.

Although race was once considered purely “biological”, race as a concept has been shaped socially, politically and economically for hundreds of years. All these factors contribute to racial formation, which is essentially our collective meaning making of

different social meanings and contexts throughout history. Race is used to inform the identity of ourselves and others and is used to put people in a category and oftentimes inform pre- judgements. Race comes with assumptions about everything and anything including finances, criminal history or even hobbies. Race is purely about power, control and the privilege that comes with it. An example of this in the real world is the prison industrial complex and the disproportionate rate at which non-white people are accused and convicted of crimes. Non white people are jailed at an extremely disproportionate rate due to the structural racism built into policing. Often times non white people are given prison sentences much longer than white people for the same crimes. Historically, they are also stopped much more by police officers than white people which can lead to an arrest in and of itself for various reasons.

Not only has race been shaped by social, political and economic factors but it also has the power to shape those factors as seen in "Class In America" by George Mantsios.

Class positions as a whole in America are oftentimes defined by a person's race.

Mantsios explained the "Chances of Being Poor in America" where he found that black males/females have a one in four chance, hispanic male/females have a one in five chance and white male/females have a one in ten chance of being poor in America.

Race heavily impacts a person's chance to be successful in America due to racism that is intertwined with every structure in our society. Racism has a serious social impact as it can lead to low self esteem, hate crimes, a lack of a sense of belonging etc.

future earning potential, it can contribute to employment discrimination and income inequality as well. An important real world example of how race has shaped class in America is when black people were denied home loans, which is referred to as redlining, that made it impossible for them to purchase homes in “good” neighborhoods with good schools and a good resale value assuming they could purchase a home at all.

These two concepts feed into each other and create the cycle we see today. Racial formations affect a person's socioeconomic status as shown in Mansitos statistics and historically always have. For example slavery was used for economic gain and set back black people hundreds of years of generational wealth that many white people have enjoyed for hundreds of years. This feeds into the cycle of racial classifications affecting class classifications and causes lower income classes to become near impossible to get out of. Race is a complex construct that is entwined with social, political, and economic factors, going beyond biological differences. According to Omi and Winant, race is a sociohistorical construct whose definitions and consequences have changed over time. Race has a profound impact on organizations and cultural structures. Race is a major factor in determining outcomes and opportunities, as seen by the differences in incarceration rates and George Mansitos class statistics.

#### Works Cited

Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1986). *Racial Formations*.

Mantsios, G. (2006). *Class in America*.

