Identity and Discrimination

Name

Affiliation

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Identity is one of the most important concepts in the field of social sciences which has always attracted the attention of social scientists. The researchers have focused their observation on the role of identity in the life of people belonging to different parts of the world, in addition to observing the attitude of the rest of the society towards them. Most of the social scientists believe selfhood denotes the identity of an individual or a group of people, which sheds light on their beliefs, ideology, and perspectives towards society and life. However, with the passage of life, the concept of identity has become a little complicated due to the postmodern turn in the field of social sciences, as well as due to the modernization of the world (Croucher, 2018). Due to this change in the society and the life of the human beings across the world, the identity politics has emerged as a new concepts which sheds light on the internal and external perspectives of the individual’s identity, to which the people around the individual can relate or even just understand his/her notion (Ryan, 2019). Erik Ericson, Frantz Fanon, and Memmi are some of the social scientists who have discussed the concepts of identity and identity politics from different perspectives which will be discussed in detail in this paper.

Before starting this course, my understanding of the concept of identity was quite limited. I believed that my ethnic and religious views laid the foundation of my identity, as they represent as well as define my attitude and demeanor towards the society. I used to think that I am what I am due to my ethnicity and religion, however, the course as provided me the opportunity of exploring my own identity and view it from a different perspective. It has enabled me to not consider myself as the product of some certain ethnic and religious group, but a distinctive member of the society who has his/her own ideology, beliefs and perspectives about different aspects of the society (Williamson, 2013). My understanding of identity is supported, as well as challenged by the course content in the way that it has elaborated that I am not the product of my affiliation, but they are only the source of defining me to the society. In addition to it, there are a number of other aspects which play an important role in the development of my identity, while allowing the general society to see me in some specific light (Motteram, 2016).

There are few anthropological approaches and case studies which have enriched my understanding of identity and belonging and the most important out of them is the approach of Erik Ericson. He is the social scientist who started the research on the concept of identity, as he believed that the individuals act in a certain way due to their ideology and perspectives. According to him, identity is the “consolidation of the self,” which allowed an individual to assimilate different perspectives of their personality and portray themselves n that specific light to the rest of the society (Luhrmann, 2001). The identity of the individual was formed in the way that the individual reflected his/her beliefs and ideology through his/her views and actions which were understood by the other members of the society. The identity of the individual was strengthened by the understanding of the fact that his/her internal views are appreciated and reciprocated by the external forces. In the case of rejection of those ideas or views, the individual was able to understand the differences of identity (Jenkins, 2014). The approach of Erik Erickson enriched my understanding and knowledge of identity and belonging by depicting that while growing up, an individual develops a perspective towards different aspects of society. These aspects help him/ her to act in a certain manner, in the light of his her views. It also helps him to relate with other people, in addition to developing conflicts with some other group as well. When the ideology of the person is accepted by one group, it allows him to feel a sense of accomplishment and association with that particular group or individual. On the other hand, in the case of rejection of ideology or perspective by some group enables the individual to discuss, as well as accept the differences.

Frantz Fanon is another famous social scientists who have talked about contemporary influences on the concept of identity in recent times. He is of the view that the contemporary shift in the society has given rise to identity politics, which is specifically influenced by the cultural perspectives (Luhrmann, 2001). Colonization has been an important part of different societies of the world during the last two centuries. Most of the world population has spent life while being colonized, while another significant part of the population was the colonizers. The difference in the power gave rise to the identity politics as the individuals of the oppressed group started doubting their position in the society due to their physical appearance, more specifically due to their dark skin complexion. Identity politics has allowed people to view themselves as unique and united, instead of being a single unit with distinctive personalities (Cutcher, 2019).

Memmi, another social scientist, has talked about the concept of identity politics and the role of colonizers and colonized population in this regard. He is of the view that the colonized population feel themselves inferior to the colonizers because of the power they hold on them (Luhrmann, 2001). However, the colonized population need to realize their importance and identity in the light of their beliefs, values, and ideology and not in the light of their current position in society. The approaches of Frantz Fanon and Memmi enriched my understanding and knowledge of identity and belonging by showing that the oppressed group starts blaming its identity and beliefs as their weakness. They think that the ideology, and specifically the outer appearance of the oppressors provide them the opportunity and right of ruling over the other group. On the other hand, identity politics makes its place in such a setting in the way that the groups of people consider themselves united on the basis of their shared ideology and beliefs, in terms of religion, ethnicity and social issues and do not feel themselves inferior to any other group. They need to accept the differences in their identity, instead of feeling inferior and letting their complexes diminish the strength of their identity (Brettell, and Hollifield, 2013).

Identity is the foundation of the personality of an individual. It reflects the framework of ideology and thought the process to the society which enables it to understand why the individual works or acts in a certain manner. The contemporary shift in the society has given rise to the concept of identity politics, which allows the individual to see themselves as united in following the religious, political, ethnic and social ideologies, instead of a single unit. The social scientists have explored that the contemporary shift in the field of social sciences have identified the identity crisis of different groups of the society, as the societal conditions gave rise to the struggle of power. The people felt tormented and rejected due to their physical differences which had actually allowed the other group to gain power over them.

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