

Erasure of American Anthropological Whites in Academia and History, Lived Experiences, and Racism in Education

If I am being honest, it's a *nightmare*. -Cowdrey

1. Clarifying the Term “American Anthropological Whites”

In academic usage, this phrase generally refers to **historically European-descended populations in North America** as *subjects of anthropological, historical, and sociological study*, not as a political identity or moral category. Traditionally, these populations were treated as the **default or unmarked norm**, rather than as culturally situated groups with distinct histories, migrations, folkways, class structures, and internal diversity.

Paradoxically, this earlier “default” status has contributed to a modern form of **conceptual erasure**, where such groups are:

- Underexamined as *anthropological natives*
 - Treated as culturally empty or interchangeable
 - Not recognized as first communities and how the nation itself developed
 - Reduced to a monolithic symbol of power rather than studied as plural communities
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2. Forms of Erasure in Academia and Historical Narratives

A. De-Anthropologization

While anthropology rigorously examines Indigenous, African, Asian, and Latin American cultures, **European-derived American communities** are often excluded from:

- Ethnographic study
- Cultural specificity
- Recognition of regional traditions (Appalachian, New England, Cajun-adjacent, Scots-Irish, etc.)

This results in a framing where “white Americans” appear **ahistorical and cultureless**, despite deep American roots and heritage.

B. Historical Compression

Educational narratives increasingly compress centuries of European-American history into:

- Slavery
- Colonialism
- Industrial exploitation

While these are real and must be taught, **compression becomes erasure** when it excludes:

- Poor and indentured Europeans
- Religious refugees
- White slavery
- Early diasporas
- Indigenous mixed tribes
- Abolitionists, labor organizers, and dissidents
- Cultural and artistic contributions unrelated to domination

History becomes **morally flattened**, not analytically rich.

C. Removal from Victimhood Categories

In many academic frameworks, racism is defined in ways that make **racialized harm against whites conceptually impossible**, even when:

- Discrimination is explicit

- Exclusion is institutional
- Hostility is justified through ideological language
- Racism and violence against whites happens daily

This creates a **theoretical blind spot**, not an argument against addressing racism toward others.

3. Racism in Education: Structural and Cultural Dimensions

A. Ideological Gatekeeping

Some educational environments discourage inquiry that:

- Examines bias *against* majority populations
- Studies power as situational rather than fixed
- Treats identity as context-dependent rather than absolute

Students and scholars may self-censor to avoid accusations of moral failure rather than scholarly error.

Today's environment is incredibly hostile.

B. Double Standards in Language and Policy

Practices that would be identified as racist if applied to minority groups—such as:

- Collective guilt
- Stereotyping
- Exclusion from affinity spaces
- Dismissal of lived experience

—are often normalized when directed at whites, undermining **universal anti-racist principles**.

C. Educational Impact

This environment can:

- Alienate students from academic institutions
 - Reduce trust in scholarly neutrality
 - Encourage ideological polarization rather than critical thinking
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4. Distinguishing Critique from “Supremacy Bias”

A crucial academic distinction must be maintained:

- **Studying erasure ≠ defending supremacy**
- **Naming bias ≠ denying historical injustice**
- **Anthropological inclusion ≠ moral absolution**

The goal is **analytic consistency**, not reversal of hierarchies.

5. Why This Matters for Scholarship

True academic rigor requires:

- Studying *all* populations as culturally situated
- Applying anti-racist standards universally
- Allowing good-faith inquiry without moral intimidation

When any group is excluded from legitimate study—whether idealized or demonized—**knowledge suffers**.

6. Toward a Balanced Educational Framework

A more robust approach would:

- Treat First European-American populations as they are, anthropological natives
 - Preserve critical examination of power *without collapsing identity into guilt*
 - Reinforce that racism is defined by **behavior and systems**, not by permitted targets
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Closing Thought

Erasure does not always look like silence. Sometimes it looks like **over-simplification, moral abstraction, or refusal to study complexity**. Education fulfills its purpose only when it resists all three.