



Culture

- I. Introduction
 - a. Culture consists of the meanings, values, and assumptions that are passed from one generation to the next (and are sometimes created anew).
 - b. We can articulate our values. ("Education is important")
 - c. We may not be able to articulate our assumptions
 - i. They seem obvious to us – we're assuming it!
 - ii. This is the most powerful part of culture because we don't even realize we maintain these assumptions.
 - d. Cultural vs. Biological Reproduction
 - i. Biological point of reproduction is the fertilization of an egg
 - ii. Cultural *period* of reproduction is *socialization* – especially as a child, but throughout life.
 - iii. We all die, so we need to recreate. Likewise we need to pass on our culture
- II. Assumptions
 - a. If assumptions are hidden from us, how can we study them?
 - i. We already study many things we can't see.
 - 1. Gods, religion
 - 2. Gravity
 - 3. Microorganisms (germs, viruses)
 - 4. Astronomy, history
 - 5. Brain waves, thoughts
 - ii. We study the *effects* of these things.
 - iii. We study radiation using a Geiger counter.
 - iv. We can study hidden assumptions in culture using the same general technique – we need a "Social Geiger Counter."
 - v. We can detect "race" easily. We just need ways to detect the assumptions we have about race.
 - b. Hidden assumptions in culture become hidden biases (stereotypes, prejudices)
 - c. Cultural Reproduction
 - i. Culture works because it is passed from one generation to the next
 - ii. Families, Schools, Media / "Popular Culture"
 - iii. With all these powerful influences, are we prisoners of culture?
 - iv. Do we get so much of our consciousness from culture that we become its prisoner?
 - v. If we aren't prisoners of culture, then how can we change the culture to match our values?
 - vi. Or, how can we keep culture from affecting us?
- III. Stereotypes
 - a. Stereotypes are an element of culture, but they emerge out of economic structure and interest. They have a definite, finite history and their use (and perhaps their meaning) is affected by social change
 - b. Relevant Historical Periods
 - i. Antebellum (before the civil war)
 - ii. Reconstruction (after the war)
 - iii. What changed economically, politically? How might these changes affect stereotypes (change the old ones, create new ones)?
 - c. Antebellum
 - i. Sambo
 - 1. T.D. Rice, a white man, saw a crippled black man dancing at a time when dancing was outlawed.
 - 2. His Jim Crow character, the "simple, docile, laughing black slave" was dubbed Sambo as he performed the part on the minstrel stage.
 - 3. It was created for comedy, and adapted to meet popular demand.

4. Slaves must be content, since we've seen the Sambo image.
 5. This allowed us to reconcile the values of equality with the economic desire to have slaves.
 6. Came around 1820s, just as an attempt to abolish slavery was beginning
 7. Plantation owners, and anyone involved in the plantation economy benefited.
- ii. Zip Coon
 1. Look what happens if you give black people freedom!
 2. Bumbling, "black lecture on phrenology" image
 - iii. Mammy
 1. Fat, pitch black, happy to serve
 2. Loyal, docile, protective of the house.
 3. Presented as the antithesis to the fragile, white woman
 4. Not sexual, so couldn't compete for master's attention
 5. Thoughts: Same benefactors as Sambo
- d. Transition
- i. Labor must be paid all of a sudden! A huge economic change.
 - ii. Former slave owners worked hard to attach former slaves to the same land they had worked before the war. They were largely successful.
 - iii. Blacks could vote after the war too.
 - iv. Some of these changes were, clearly, reversed later.
- e. Reconstruction
- i. The Brute
 1. Now blacks are a challenge. This image justifies returning to slavery, killing blacks.
 2. Wouldn't have helped at all during slavery – would have been harmful.
 - ii. The Uncle
 1. Image of an old slave who yearns for "the good old days"
 2. This is the older generation. The younger generation was represented by "the brute."
 - iii. Pickaninny
 1. Children
 2. Dirty, unkempt, savage. Sub-human
 3. A bit like a child version of the brute
- f. Pre-WWI
- i. Blacks competing for jobs in cities
 - ii. Urban Coon
 1. Threat of expanding labor force.
 2. Dancing, Gambling, Razor Blades
 3. Cross between Zip Coon and Brute
 4. Combination of the two reasons blacks are "unfit to be free"
 - iii. Blacks thought they could demonstrate their merits and gain respect through fighting in the war.
 - iv. Upon their return, their demand for respect inflamed whites. Race riots followed.
 - v. Bert Williams: Dignified black man, lowered himself to playing the fool.
- g. Conclusion
- i. Stereotypes were created for economic and political reasons but they lasted beyond the era in which those reasons existed.
 - ii. Why? Part of the reason is that they're passed from generation to generation as part of culture (families, schools, media)
 - iii. Stereotypes are created in popular / public culture, not in families. Families just pass along existing images.
 - iv. Socialization: Reproduction of the receptivity of culture. Can it thrive or not?
 - v. Draw a distinction between the *producers* of ideas / images and the *consumers*.
 - vi. Families in general are not producers but are consumers.

IV. Families

- a. If parents believe the stereotypes, does that mean the children will?
 - b. No, schools and peers are other agents of socialization. They make take precedence over parents and family.
 - c. Teenagers in particular don't want to believe the same ideas as their parents.
 - d. Socialization in families only happens if children conform to their parents' values.
 - e. More importantly, and more deeply, socialization only happens if children conform to the *assumptions* of their parents.
- V. Schools
- a. Two types of prejudice / discrimination
 - b. Active Discrimination
 - i. Direct exclusion, unfairness, meanness.
 - ii. How quickly do kids learn to discriminate?
 - iii. How quickly can they be taught to discriminate on a new trait?
 - iv. Eye Color experiment: kids started discriminating within 15 minutes.
 - v. Self-fulfilling prophecy: when we discriminate against people, they tend to "live down" to the imposed expectation.
 - c. Passive Discrimination
 - i. Ethnocentrism: Self-centered people focus strictly on themselves. Ethnocentric groups focus only on their group. "Other people should pay attention only to us."
 - ii. Our subculture sets the standard for what everybody else should be trying to achieve.
 - iii. Ethnocentrism in Tests
 - 1. Ability tests claim to measure potential regardless of cultural background.
 - 2. The Rub: These tests are very susceptible to cultural bias!
 - 3. Achievement tests are designed to measure how much a subject has already achieved in a specific curriculum (how much knowledge)
 - a. No claim of universality: don't claim to measure anything other than knowledge of the subject.
 - b. Less susceptible to cultural bias.
 - 4. There is no existing test that's free of cultural bias. It may be possible to create one.
 - 5. Given tests that aren't completely predictive of success, we should widen the range of "acceptable" test results.
 - 6. The perfect test of whether someone can succeed in college is to put him/her in college and see if s/he succeeds.
- VI. Racial Bias Test
- a. Our brains work by categorizing things into whatever categories culture has defined for us. We may learn stereotypical categories and use them to sort new information.
 - b. Perhaps white = good, black = bad
 - i. The reverse is black = good, white = bad
 - ii. Only one is the association we normally use.
 - iii. We can think quicker with our "normal" cultural, stereotypical categories.
 - c. The hidden bias test examines the difference between the times.
 - d. Even though the hidden bias test shows, overall, a preference for whites, it doesn't prove that we discriminate.
 - e. External validity: Does a test tell us anything about the real world?
 - f. We want to know about discrimination in society, not just what biases exist.
 - g. Film: True Colors
 - i. John and Glenn, St. Louis Missouri.
 - ii. One black, one white. They received different treatment doing the same things.
 - iii. To show that discrimination does happen, just need to repeat the experiment and see that the results are consistent over time (and across locations).
 - iv. What made this test valid was that the two people were very similar excluding their race – they reported the same financial information, et cetera.
- VII. Responses to Learning about Biases
- a. Acceptance

- i. Active acceptance. "There's bias. That's good!"
 - ii. Conscious, but lackadaisical. "Okay, but who cares?"
 - b. Denial
 - i. A potent force!
 - ii. Everybody engages in denial as a protection mechanism.
 - iii. It's a common response to anything that's hard to handle.
 - c. Individual Action
 - i. This is the first response that involves *doing* something.
 - ii. Take some action as an individual to combat racial bias.
 - d. Collective Action
 - i. Act as a group to combat biases
 - ii. Need to discuss the difference between this and individual action
 - e. Individual vs. Collective
 - i. All people who think racial bias is a social problem
 - ii. Individual Action
 - 1. Do I act to change myself? How?
 - 2. Based on the idea that individuals acting on their own can change the reproduction of biases.
 - 3. Possible Actions
 - a. Change my own bias.
 - b. Reject socialization messages from family / et cetera.
 - c. Raise my kids without biases.
 - iii. Collective Action
 - 1. Do I act to change society (or something beyond myself – a policy, an organization)?
 - 2. Based on the idea that individuals must work together to change biases.
 - 3. Possible Actions
 - a. Put pressure (via protests, et cetera) on media
 - b. Make specific demands
 - i. Don't produce biased media (fight active biases)
 - ii. Represent groups in all roles (fight passive biases)
 - c. Organize a boycott
- VIII. Drugs
- a. Race has a role to play in the history of drugs.
 - b. Cocaine
 - i. In the late 1800s, the number one group using cocaine was middle class white women. High (legal) use
 - ii. By the early 1900s, most use was on the black Jazz scene.
 - iii. It was made illegal in 1917.
 - c. Similar story for Marijuana – Mexican immigrants tended to favor it.
 - d. The most dangerous drugs in terms of death are legal.
 - e.