

WORKING DEFINITIONS – D. John Lee, Ph.D.

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CULTURE THEORY - a theory to describe and explain human diversity by referencing environmental factors: some primary cultural influences are language, religion, foodways, socio-economics/class, gender roles, sexual orientation, geography, music, art, dance, health practices, etc. (e.g. Dutch, German, Polish, Kenyan, Chinese, Apache, Mexican, etc.)

CULTURAL CHARACTERISTIC - a general (on average, not everyone) characteristic of a cultural group (not racial) which has been supported and replicated through empirical research (e.g. most North Americans speak English)

CULTURAL STEREOTYPING - assuming that the characteristics that one associates with a cultural group all apply to an individual member of that culture (e.g. all Chinese practice the martial arts)

ETHNIC GROUP - a sub-culture (not race); a distinct cultural group existing within a larger national culture: e.g. North American culture is comprised of several different sub-cultures or ethnic groups (e.g. urban vs. suburban vs. rural, North vs. South, New York vs. Los Angeles, Opera vs. NASCAR, etc.)

ETHNOCENTRISM - the beliefs, attitudes, policies, and practices which claim that a particular cultural or ethnic way of life is superior to all others (e.g. “If you ain’t Dutch, you ain’t much.”)

ASSIMILATION/ACCULTURATION – the process of how a person, cultural, or ethnic group adopts the norms (e.g. language, religion, foodways, etc.) of another (usually the majority in number and power) cultural or ethnic group

APPROPRIATION – the process of a cultural/ethnic group absorbing or claiming as their own the artifacts (e.g. language, music, food, arts, health and healing practices, etc.) of another cultural/ethnic group without giving credit where it is due

MULTICULTURAL - a description of a country or organization which consists of a variety of cultural or ethnic (sub-cultures, not racial) groups

----- **POSITIONALITY** – *positions (not identity) in a hierarchy of power and privilege that has been constructed by a society through a web of intersecting cultural mechanisms (e.g. politics, economics, education, military, myth/narrative, etc.). Positionalities are a mixture of being given at birth, granted, acquired, chosen and subject to change.* -----

RACE THEORY - a theory proposed to describe and explain human diversity on the basis of biology/heredity: skin color was the primary phenotype to define the racial categories and explain significant cultural characteristics; race theory is racist – it was a pseudo-scientific-theological justification for slavery, genocide, and colonialism

RACIAL PREJUDICE - a “prejudge-ment” based on race: e.g. the belief that people of another race are inherently inferior to one’s own racial group; having the power (see below) to enforce and institutionalize this belief is racism

RACISM - “power plus prejudice” - the inequitable distribution of power on basis of race (e.g. wealth in North America is primarily based on race not merit or hard work); the attitudes, policies, and practices associated with the belief that “Caucasians” are the superior race; the internalization and institutionalization of the belief in white supremacy

POWER - access to and opportunity for education, money, resources (i.e. educational and economic power) and the ability to exercise control over others (i.e. military and governing power)

OPPRESSION – relationships where power inequities allow for a group of people to benefit at the expense of another group of people (e.g. cultural/ethnic and racial oppression)

PRIVILEGE – a right or immunity granted as a peculiar benefit, advantage, or favor due to group membership, usually gained at the expense of another group of people (laws, policies, social norms): e.g. man privilege, white privilege, class privilege, etc.)

RACIALIZATION - the process/events of how a person or group of people learn to think of themselves and others through racial constructs: e.g. Noel Ignatiev’s *How the Irish became white* (1977)

RACIAL STEREOTYPING - making judgments about a person’s cultural characteristics because of his or her skin tone; the media perpetuates false racial stereotypes based on historical events or conditions that were a direct result of racism (e.g. whites are rich, Blacks are poor, Asians own laundries, Indians are savage, Hispanics are illegal immigrants, etc.)