How Cultural Misperceptions and Structurally Supported Racialized Thinking Enable Everything from Educational Inequity to State Violence (Including Health Care Disparities)

Objectives:

- Explore how one’s thinking may become racialized in various situations.
- Discuss new interpretations of thinking and behavioral patterns that may not fit the typical U.S. mainstream expectations.
- Recognize how themes in the deep structure African American and Latinx cultures are often positive contributors to health and well-being in those populations.

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Eric Hurley is committed to doing research with implications for the social and educational outlook of African American and other minority children. He is especially interested in exploring the idea that all learning (cognitive development) takes place during social interactions and that, as a consequence, what develops necessarily reflects the social and cultural milieu in which those interactions occur.

Ongoing work in the DSC Lab has sought to address difficulties created by the fact that many racial and ethnic minority children, whose cognitive and behavioral repertoires are derived from the Deep-Structure Cultural values of their home and community, find themselves at odds with classroom demands geared toward the values and priorities of the Euro-centered mainstream. These children find themselves forced (implicitly) to choose between academic success and maintaining a sense of identity and connection to their home culture. Things are typically further complicated by the racial tensions that are well documented in U.S. schools. He and his colleagues have found, in a variety of studies, that infusing learning contexts with elements of students’ home culture can alleviate this troubling mismatch.

Another line of research reconsiders questionnaire methods of measuring people’s cultural orientations. These observations suggest that important between-Diaspora (Asian vs. African Diasporas) differences in the expression of similar orientations (such as group orientation) may compromise the validity of self-report measures used across groups. It also indicates notable within-Diaspora (African Americans and continental Africans) similarities. The work argues for extensive ethnographic redevelopment of related concepts and measures.

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