CULTURAL MAINTENANCE

Cultural maintenance refers to the ability to choose to continue adhering to selected tenets of the culture in which one was raised, while living within the context of a different mainstream culture. These tenets may involve areas such as religion, family structure, and especially one's language (cf. Baker, 2011). In the context of education, cultural maintenance has been the subject of extensive debate because of its close relationship to issues raised by demographic change.

The extent to which cultural maintenance is tolerated within a given society can be expressed by the degree to which the society adheres to an assimilationist rather than a pluralist ideology. In essence, in the assimilationist view (often referred to as the "melting pot" view, especially with regard to the United States) the dominant group asserts that its language and culture are essential to national cohesiveness and, therefore, that these aspects of the dominant group must be adopted by immigrants as replacements for their home culture and language.

On the other end of the spectrum, the so-called salad bowl metaphor (or pluralist view) envisions the presence of diverse cultures and languages as strengthening rather than as being divisive to national unity. In this view, the freedom to maintain one's culture and to use multiple languages is viewed as a decision that should be left to the individual, rather than being prescribed by the government.

Cultures that have more power (often conceptualized in the forms known as "social capital" or "cultural capital") may be more likely to be maintained by their members in the face of an assimilationist society than cultures that have less power are. The idea of "cultural capital" (cf. Bourdieu, 1977) has provided a powerful analytical framework within which to examine cultural maintenance, differential achievement, and numerous other educationally related issues. This theoretical lens offers a cogent explanation of why, for example, Canadian schools and society have been far more successful in promoting bilingual education than the United States has.

Outcomes Associated with Cultural Maintenance

Maintaining cultural identity is associated with individuals' psychosocial and academic adjustment.

A recent extensive quantitative review (i.e., meta-analysis) study (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014) found that adolescents' good, happy, and proud feelings about their cultural identity were associated with more favorable psychosocial and academic adjustment. Adjustment outcomes included aspects of positive social functioning such as social competencies, peer acceptance, and self-esteem; positive academic dispositions toward school and academic attitudes about achievement; reduced depressive symptoms; and reduced health risks such as sexual and substance use outcomes, which held true across age, gender, and ethnicity (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014).

Outcomes for Black Americans

Maintaining cultural identity through affiliations with their own cultural groups is associated with individuals' psychological well-being. A meta-analysis by Lee and Ahn (2013) found that those who were more closely affiliated with members of their own cultural group tended to report experiencing less distress, even though they perceived more experiences of racial discrimination. The authors suggest this indicates that in-group affiliation may serve to protect individuals from internalizing negative self-concepts that result from racial discrimination, as well as offering them significant others with whom they can process their experiences and feel a sense of belonging. For example, black Americans who adopted positive views about their race had stronger ties with others in the black community, and individuals at advanced stages of racial identity development tended to report less discrimination-related distress, particularly among adolescents (Lee & Ahn, 2013). Though perceptions of increased racial discrimination also may increase distress indirectly, this indicates that it is helpful to promote black individuals' connections with their community and facilitate racial identity development (Lee & Ahn, 2013). Black individuals' association with individuals from other races who hold favorable views of black Americans also was associated with decreased discrimination-related distress (Lee & Ahn, 2013).

Outcomes for Asian Americans

Another meta-analysis by Lee and Ahn (2011) found that racial discrimination was associated with

greater overall distress and that Asian Americans suffered from discrimination-related depression and anxiety at the same rates as, or higher rates than, other ethnic groups. Further, individualistic forms of resources such as strengths and coping strategies showed equal or stronger protective effects against discrimination-related depression and anxiety than collectivistic forms such as social support and cultural identity did. This finding held despite Asian cultures' association with collectivism, or placing the needs of a family before individual needs; being relation-oriented, or defining themselves in relation to their family instead of focusing on themselves as individuals (Yee, Su, Kim, & Yancura, 2009); and focusing on filial piety, or abiding by family elder members and conforming to parents' expectations and cultural traditions (Iwamoto & Liu, 2009).

Conclusion

In the context of public education in the United States, schools often fall toward the assimilationist end of the spectrum. Because U.S. public school teachers tend to be a homogeneous group and from culturally mainstream, monolingual backgrounds, they tend (if only unconsciously) to support the assimilationist ideology of U.S. society at large. This means that educational institutions and practices tend to do little to support cultural maintenance, and often actively discourage it. Again, this is particularly the case for the linguistic aspects of culture; other aspects that may be less evident to the observer, such as traditions and beliefs, may be more easily maintained by practices within the family. This also may be in part because these other aspects of culture, while not actively supported in the schools, are neither actively discouraged. Understanding cultural maintenance can help support achievement of learners from all backgrounds, especially among those students who may find themselves struggling to thrive in an environment that differs from their own background.

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CULTURAL PLURALISM

Definition

Cultural pluralism exists when minority cultures are present within a context of a larger dominant culture. In a culturally plural environment, minority or enclave cultures are permitted to exist provided that they do not violate the major culture of the dominant group. The relationship between the minority culture and the dominant culture can be one largely, though not entirely, of mutual exclusivity—such as the Amish who reside in Pennsylvania. At the same time, the relationship could also be one in which the minority culture retains high authenticity to their culture of origin yet interacts within the broader culture, such as the Hasidic Jews