

Richard J. Payne (1998). "The Changing American Culture: Challenges to Race"

Main Point: Discusses the complexity of American culture with a focus on its racial component. Analyzes the general concept of culture and factors that are causing it to change. Separation of black and white cultures is presented as a myth. Discusses different types of multiculturalism and their effects on racial division. Factors changing American culture include family, interpersonal contacts, fraternizing at college, media, religion, sports, and generational replacement.

Central Issues And Concepts:

- *Enculturation* is defined as cultural transmission, or the passing of cultural values through generations through different agents. However, no matter how thorough the process, it is impossible for enculturation to produce homogeneity of behavior for four major reasons. First, biological factors affect how people absorb culture. Second, views transmitted will vary between institutions, even within the same family. Third, it is an ongoing process that is not limited inside one's own culture. Finally, people will choose actions to satisfy both themselves and the demands of society.
- Separation of black and white cultures is a myth, because one cannot exist without the other. This dates back to the early years of American history when the institution of slavery was still in place. As stated in the chapter, "Europeans and Africans together created a unique culture that is distinct from European as well as African culture. Europeans made Africans into Americans and Africans made Europeans into Americans" (p. 56). Historically and modernly, the connection between black and white cultures is seen in architecture, cooking, folklore, and music.
- There are different types of multiculturalism that can affect racial division positively or negatively depending on the focus. Positive multiculturalism exists when it "represents a pluralistic view of American culture, in which ethnic groups can maintain separate identities but simultaneously embrace common American values" (p. 59). However, multiculturalism that only focus on differences between groups without recognizing similarities only serves to intensify segregation.
- Change factors in the United States are helping to erode racial boundaries. Families initiate change by instilling tolerant racial attitudes in their children. Interpersonal contacts help by causing people to see others as individuals instead of labeling them according to their racial group. Colleges create more liberal and educated students who embrace tolerance. The media, while often focusing too much on the negative side of race issues, contributes to progress by allowing room for more celebrities of minority status. Religion is moving towards opposition of segregation to maintain credibility. Sports force diverse team members to work together and develop common values. Finally, generational replacement means that older generations that grew up with segregation are being influenced and replaced by younger, more tolerant generations.

Two Key Quotes:

"Multiculturalism that is aimed at getting national recognition of contributions made by non-European Americans and that teaches how to diminish racial discrimination is consistent with building a common national culture and identity. This kind of multiculturalism can help to decrease racial antagonisms among all Americans." (Page 60)

"Black influence on the evolution of American culture is evidenced by the fact that while Jesse Jackson and others were picketing the 1996 Academy Awards, claiming that there was not enough black representation in the movie industry, black performers like Whoopi Goldberg, Vanessa Williams, and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar were participating in the Oscars program and Quincy Jones, an American with African ancestry, was producing and directing it." (Page 72)

Two Questions:

-- Payne says that multiculturalism that focuses on the differences of racial groups only adds to segregation. What would his stance be in the discussion from our education town meeting? Would he see cultural organization like the Black Student Alliance or Association of Hispanic Students as contributors to self-segregation?

--Payne discusses a movement away from segregation in churches as evidenced by actions and statements from church leaders and he mentions some extreme cases of segregation in religion, but why doesn't he say anything about the general population's tendency to self-segregate according to race on Sunday mornings? Does he not find it important, or does he maybe view it as something that will follow the example of church leadership?