Stereotypes & Ethnocentrism

What are the dangers anthropologists face when studying culture?
Esera Tuaolo

- Eleven (11) year NFL career (1991 – 2002) - Def. Tackle
- Graduated with a 4.0 from Oregon State University (1991)
- Played in the 1998 Super Bowl (w/ Atlanta Falcons)
- OPENLY GAY
Cat Stevens
(Yusef Islam)

- Singer-Songwriter from the 1970’s
- Famous for his soft, acoustic songs
- Converted to Islam after a near-fatal boating accident in 1977
- Sold all his rock star possessions and devoted his life to promoting tolerance between Muslims and non-Muslims
Jimi Hendrix

- American musician / rock star of the 1960’s

- In 1961, after being arrested for stealing cars, given the option of jail time or army service

- Enlisted as a paratrooper in the 101st Airborne Division

- Was a poor soldier and was dishonorably discharged in 1962
Consider the following question...

• In your opinion, how can we keep stereotypes from becoming self-fulfilling prophecies in our community? Explain.
What are the biggest dangers we face when studying culture?

• There are two (2) major dangers when cultures interact:
  – **Stereotypes** = Over-simplified images of a person or group
  – **Ethnocentrism** = The belief or assumption of one group’s racial superiority over another
“As with the study of plants and animals, the human race is divided in specific varieties...of which are inherited and learned cultural traits. For Homo European there is the inherited traits of personality governed by laws with fair skin and hair. For Homo American there is the cooper-skin and personalities governed by tribal barbaric customs and traditions. Homo Asiastic [Asian] culture is a dark-eyed and sooty group governed by opinions and Homo African is governed by impulses of the flesh with their darker skin and curly hair.”
Who came up with the idea of ethnocentrism?

• “Ethnocentrism” was the creation of an American professor named William Graham Sumner
  – (1840-1910)
  • Worked for Yale University
  • Author / Anthropologist
What is another big danger we face when studying culture?

- Another major danger when study culture is the danger of Xenophobia
  - Fear of outsiders

- Diagnosed as a fear of anyone from outside one’s own ethnic or cultural background
Why are some people ethnocentric or xenophobic?

- People will often practice ethnocentrism or xenophobia for two (2) reasons:
  1. Know very little about other groups
     - Lack of education
     - Lifestyle
  2. Refuse to learn about other groups
     - Fear
Meet the Natives: USA
Welcome to Casa D’ Ice
North Versailles, PA

The owner of this bar / restaurant is Bill Balsamico, a third-generation Italian-American
BRING BACK THE ROTARY PHONE
SO WE DON'T HAVE TO PUSH ONE
TO PROCEED IN ENGLISH
BASEBALL AMERICAS PASS TIME!

2004 ALL STAR GAME

10 PLAYERS INTERVIEWED

THEY ALL SPOKE SPANISH

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Restaurant & Lounge

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1956 Apple Pie Chevrolet
& Dinah Shore
2006 Tacos Low Riders
& Charo
50 Years of Moral Decay !!

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What happens when cultural dangers reach their height?

• When ethnocentrism reaches its height, sometimes more dramatic events can happen:
  
  – **Assimilation**: The process by which a minority group adopts the culture of the majority
    • Forced
    • Voluntary
  
  – **Ethnocide**: The outright destruction or extermination of a culture
    • Genocide
Carlisle Indian Industrial School
(1879 - 1918)
Native American Assimilation
Jim Thorpe (1888-1953)
American Assimilation?
Nazi Ethnocide
How can we solve the problem of ethnocentrism?

- The easiest way to solve the problem of ethnocentrism is to gain experience
  - Learn about unfamiliar cultures
  - Ask questions about other cultures / read all you can
  - Be respectful of people’s cultural / ethnic differences