

Human Society > Culture Affects Behavior

Research on Student Learning

Although lower elementary-school children do not have the capacity to see social conventions from another point of view, they can learn about and enjoy many concrete manifestations of cultural diversity. [1]

Research also suggests that students under the age of ten may be more receptive than older students to learning about other people and more likely to develop a positive outlook toward people from other cultures and homelands. [2]

Research into student thinking about people from the past indicates that students do not realize that values, beliefs, and attitudes may differ from culture to culture or that people from other cultures have different ideas because their situations are different. Before students can reason about different world views, they often have to abandon the belief that some human cultures are biologically subordinate. [3]

Another complication is that students tend to impose contemporary values and ideas from their own culture upon other cultures. [4]

As children try to understand biological and social phenomena, they often overgeneralize information about racial and cultural differences. One must be cautious, however, not to assume that children are prejudiced or deliberately using stereotypes when they overgeneralize. They may simply be thinking typically for young children trying to make sense out of their limited experience with other groups. [5] Research indicates that stereotypic attitudes begin to develop about 7th grade. [6]

References

[1] Ramsey, P. (1986). Racial and cultural categories. In Edwards, C.P. (Ed.), *Promoting social and moral development in young children* (pp. 78-101).

[2] Stone, L.C. (1986). International and multicultural education. In Atwood, V. (Ed.), *Elementary Social Studies: Research as a guide to practice* (pp. 34-54).

[3] Shelmit, D. (1984). Beauty and the philosopher: Empathy in history and classroom. In Dickinson, A.K. (Ed.), *Learning history* (pp. 39-84).

[4] Shelmit, D. (1984). Beauty and the philosopher: Empathy in history and classroom. In Dickinson, A.K. (Ed.), *Learning history* (pp. 39-84).

[5] Ramsey, P. (1986). Racial and cultural categories. In Edwards, C.P. (Ed.), *Promoting social and moral development in young children* (pp. 78-101).

[6] Stone, L.C. (1986). International and multicultural education. In Atwood, V. (Ed.), *Elementary Social Studies: Research as a guide to practice* (pp. 34-54).