

from Hitchcock, Jeff. 2002. Lifting the White Vest.

SOME ASPECTS AND ASSUMPTIONS OF WHITE CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES

While different individuals might not practice or accept all of these traits, they are common characteristics of *most* U.S. white people *most* of the time.

Rugged Individualism

- Self-reliance
- Individual is primary unit
- Independence and autonomy highly valued and rewarded
- Individuals assumed to be in control of their environment—"You get what you deserve"

Competition

- Be #1
- Win at all costs
- Winner-loser dichotomy

Action Orientation

- Master and control nature
- Must always "do something" about a situation
- Aggressiveness and extroversion

Decision Making

- Majority rules (when whites have power)
- Hierarchical

Communication

- "The King's English" rules
- Written tradition
- Avoid conflict, intimacy
- Don't show emotion
- Don't discuss personal life
- Be polite

Holidays

- Based on Christian religions
- Based on white history and male leaders

History

- Based on Northern European immigrants' experience in the United States
- Heavy focus on the British Empire
- Primacy of Western (Greek, Roman) and Judeo-Christian tradition

Justice

- Based on English common law
- Protect property and entitlements
- Intent counts

Protestant Work Ethic

- Hard work is the key to success
- Work before play
- "If you didn't meet your goals, you didn't work hard enough"

Emphasis on Scientific Method

- Objective, rational linear thinking
- Cause and effect relationships
- Quantitative emphasis

Status, Power, and Authority

- Wealth = worth
- Heavy value on ownership of goods, space, property
- Your job is who you are
- Respect authority

Time

- Adherence to rigid time schedules
- Time viewed as a commodity

Future Orientation

- Plan for future
- Delayed gratification
- Progress is always for the best
- "Tomorrow will be better"

Family Structure

- Nuclear family (father, mother, 2.3 children) is the ideal social unit
- Husband is breadwinner and head of household
- Wife is homemaker and subordinate to husband
- Children should have own rooms, be independent

Aesthetics

- Based on European culture
- Woman's beauty based on blonde, thin—"Barbie"
- Man's attractiveness based on economic status, power, intellect
- Steak and potatoes—"Bland is best"

Religion

- Christianity is the norm
- Anything other than Judeo-Christian tradition is foreign
- No tolerance for deviation from single god concept

Figure 6.1 Reprinted from Judith H. Katz, "White Culture and Racism: Working for Organizational Change in the United States," *The WHITENESS PAPERS*, no. 3, Roselle, NJ: Center for the Study of White American Culture, 1999, p. 5.