Self-fulfilling Prophecies

Jan. 28, 2005

http://www.iastate.edu/~soc.134

Self-fulfilling prophecies: assumption or prediction that in itself causes the expected event to occur, thus seeming to confirm the prophecy’s accuracy (p. 63)

A self-fulfilling prophecy is a socially constructed situation whose meaning tells us what is going to happen

Examples from our educational system (meanings attached to students):

- Test taking: meanings attached to the race or sex of test takers affect the results (video clip)
- Teaching-expectancy effect (positive meanings attached to students): In the “Pygmalion in Classroom” study, students labeled “Spurters” showed more improvement than other students because teachers expected improvement and treated them differently
- Tracking: Students get placed into “tracks” that determine treatment and outcomes; factors such as class, race, gender, appearance, room size, teaching preferences, etc. affect track assignment

Chapter 7 discusses labeling theory, which focuses on negative meanings (“juvenile delinquent”) given to people and the effects of these labels

Tracking according to Groening