

A review of

Inside Deaf Culture, by Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, Harvard University Press, 2006, 224 pp., \$22.95 (cloth).

Reviewed by
Michaela Walsh

Provocative. Speaking out from the inside, authors Carol Padden and Tom Humphries provide a compelling narrative of the historical, cultural, and contemporary forces that influence the lives of the deaf. Only within the last 30 years has academic literature about deafness shifted its account from one centered on pathology and the search for a cure, to a more nuanced, intimate examination of sociocultural perspectives that open readers' ears, inclining them into a deeper understanding of deaf culture and the deaf experience. In their exciting new book, *Inside Deaf Culture*, Padden and Humphries give readers a chronological tour of the moments that they've identified as the most influential in shaping the deaf community.

The book opens with a haunting look into the power dynamics of the hearing community, beginning with allegations that molestation was prevalent in the first schools for deaf children. While they highlight how power, control, and repression are forces that course through this history, shaping people's identity and influencing their attitudes about deaf schools, Padden and Humphries do not oversimplify the history. Their account acknowledges the crucial role that the schools played in transmitting culture, the role the schools played in providing a vehicle for communication across hearing and Deaf communities, and importantly, a place for the Deaf to join in community. Descriptions of burgeoning Deaf social clubs during the mid twentieth century, the height of Deaf theatre, and the effects the Second World War had on the Deaf community are inflected with the voices of friends, family members, and colleagues that they interviewed. Their attempt to remember an era, and their effort to record the stories of a

different generation, is what draws readers closer to the page. It's what pulls readers into a conversation that they cannot walk away from.

Inside Deaf Culture is a book for multiple audiences. Graceful prose, a kaleidoscope of examples, personal narrative, and the authors' clear passion to preserve the history and culture of the Deaf community – complete with its bruises and its triumphs – make this a valuable book for students, professors, and anyone interested in understanding Deaf culture. Breaking the silence, Padden and Humphries offer a moving tour through the powerful and complicated history of Deaf culture, allowing readers to hear the resounding voices of a community many of us have never before heard.

A review of

Cultural Psychology: A Once and Future Discipline, by Michael Cole, Balknap Press, 1998, 416 pp., \$26.95 (paper).

Reviewed by
Michaela Walsh

Every now and then a book enters the academic scene, and it produces a shift in our way of understanding a discipline. Read and reread, taught in classrooms, taken up by one and then another discipline that sees in it something new, something that relates to our contemporary context, Michael Cole's *Cultural Psychology* is just such a book. In this compelling read, Cole outlines a program for developmental psychology as a cultural-historical science – a potentially revolutionary move that ruptures the way developmental psychology has traditionally been conceived. Drawing on Russian cultural-historical activity theories and American pragmatic social sciences, Cole thoughtfully weaves together a cultural-historical approach to the study of mind. Two provocative questions guide his project. He asks: *Why do psychologists find it so difficult to keep culture in mind? If you are a psychologist who believes that culture is a fundamental constituent of human thought and action, what can you do that it scientifically acceptable?*

To answer the first question, Cole gently guides the reader into the annals of psychology in an attempt to locate the paradigmatic moment when experimental psychology was severed from the history of psychology. The second question hinges on a re-exploration into the work of the great Russian fathers of psychology, Vygotski, Leontiev, and Luria, who viewed culture as intimately intertwined with the human experience, and who were able to temporarily accomplish what other psychologists could not: the institutionalization of a cultural psychology that

accommodated both sides of Wundt's two psychologies. In his book Cole launches the important argument that cultural mediation is a key aspect of any species along the phylogenetic line from which *Homo sapiens* appear. Relatedly, one of the most intriguing conversations begins in Chapter 6, "Phylogeny and Cultural History." Here Cole explores the role of *prolepsis* – "the representation of a future act or development as being presently existing" – in the organization of human psychological functions. Using concrete examples gleaned from studies, Cole shows that new parents construe the phylogentic-biological characteristics of their child against the backdrop of their own past (or cultural) experience. Based on their own cultural experience, Cole makes the argument that parents forecast a probable future for their child. In later chapters he goes onto argue that *prolepsis* is an integral component of culturally mediated thought.

Michael Cole's, *Cultural Psychology* is not only eloquently written, shedding important light on the history of a fractured discipline, it is also a text with broad implications for contemporary issues involving cross-cultural differences.