In this episode of the Flintstones, the main characters are shown to seek martial arts lessons. The judo master in the scene is depicted as a Japanese man who wears a sinister-looking smile throughout the scene. He offers the characters lessons at supposedly good prices. As he rattles off the offers by ensuring them that they could get "silver medal lessons" for "[a] big bargain, big bargain" and "for a few more measly dollars ... gold medals, diamond medals...," his pronunciations are exaggeratedly shown to be wrong by a mix up between r's and l's and by an obvious difference in the emphasis on syllables. The man's speech is set apart from the other characters' by juxtaposing his differently accented words to the others' SAE pronunciation. Also, the Flintstones and their friends bowed while imitating his accent as if attempting to fit that man's mannerisms. However, this can be seen as making light of the man's characteristics and manners as if they are silly.

In this scene, the judo master portrays prevalent stereotypes about Asians. The man's inability to enunciate r's and l's reflect the struggle that many people face in differentiating between r's and l's in English because their native tongues do not make the same distinction. More importantly, the judo master's speech is used to indicate a lack of intelligence, as evidence by Fred's comment, "What does 'et cetera, et cetera' mean in Japanese? Sucker?" which is followed by Barney's response in a tone mocking the Japanese man's, "Oh, that's for sure!" Furthermore, prior to that, Fred had thrown in an unintelligible word in an attempt to imitate the man's Japanese accent.

Mocking an accent in a cartoon is often seen to be a harmless way to inject humor while reflecting reality. However, I feel that using a cartoon in this way is unethical. The team that worked on the scenes or shows (and also the audience of the scenes or shows) can defend these choices by citing them as a mere reflection of what happens in our daily lives. But how much of it is really *only* a reflection? I am dubious about the claim that such portrayals do not affect children's ways of thinking about the world around them. How can children tell apart a mocking and an accurate portrayal of reality? While adults may be (though this may be arguable as well) more discerning about when a social commentary is made versus when a racist parody is made, it is much different for a child who has significantly less interaction with a diverse group of people to understand the subtle differences underlying these social phenomena.

Another index of the judo master's speech is perhaps only apparent if we have been socialized to be able to recognize the racial stereotype of Asian people as scrupulous business people. In his bid to entice his customers into paying "a few more measly dollars," the judo master smiles cunningly and makes a futile attempt to hide his laughter as he was delighted by the idea of making a profit. Again, this portrayal may be argued as a means to reflect "everyday experiences" that are generalized to apply to just about any Asian business person.

The indexes involved in this short clip may only be glaringly obvious if they fall neatly into our own personal categories of racialized stereotypes. I bet many people remember the notoriously famous video of a college girl who ridiculed Asian students in the library who supposedly went, "ching chong ling long ting tong," thus disrupting the girl's otherwise productive study session. This video may have come across as either really funny or really offensive (or perhaps, to some, a mixture of both). However, in contrast to the girl's video, a cartoon such as The Flintstones can wield a larger influence because the indexicality embedded in its scenes (seemingly made for the sake of innocent fun) is received by children who are malleable and open to influence by their media consumption. When racially-fueled motivations are realized through animated films and normalized through their use, children may grow up to attach these indexes to people whom they meet in real life. Such connotations can wrongfully teach them racial categories that further advance the idea that a racial hierarchy exists and that someone's way of speaking is a substantial factor in determining where the individual is placed in the hierarchy.

As much as we recognize racialization as perpetuated through animated films, change is unlikely to happen as long as there is the backing of an argument that portraying a character's race is necessary and can only be done through the character's speech, actions, and dress. However, perhaps change can be motivated from an individual level as well. While we as viewers are unlikely able to greatly influence how big-name productions embed racial indexes in their films, we can take a more proactive role in understanding how these indexes are used and in finding a way to communicate to children the discrimination that is inherent in these films. This sounds like a heavy task (and also one that is easy to ignore due to its difficulty), but what do you think can be done to help children understand that what they watch on TV is often an exaggerated and/or distorted reflection of the world? Is there a way to mitigate these effects and hopefully see a generation that grows up to be aware and sensitive to racialization and its implications?