WEEK SEVEN
Mon Oct 26, 2009
Tues Oct 27, 2009

SOCIAL IDENTITIES AND GENDERED EMBODIMENT

LECTURE OUTLINE

1. GENDER AS SOCIAL ACCOMPLISHMENT
A) THEORETICAL ACCOUNTS OF THE PRODUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF GENDER
B) GENDER AND GENDER DIFFERENCES

2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL IDENTITIES AND BODIES
A) SOCIAL IDENTITIES AND EMBODIMENT
B) INTERACTIONIST ACCOUNT OF BODIES
>   **i)   WE CONSTRUCT PERSONAL AND SOCIAL IDENTITIES THROUGH OUR BODIES**
>   **ii)   BODIES ARE SOCIAL OBJECTS AND THEREFORE SOURCES OF SOCIAL AND PERSONAL IDENTITIES.**
>   **iii)   WE KNOW OURSELVES BY HOW OTHERS RESPOND TO US (looking glass self and self/other/social object interaction)**
>   **iv)   OUR READING OF SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OFF BODIES REFLECTS SOCIAL AND CULTURAL MEANINGS**
>   **v)   WE ALSO COME TO KNOW OURSELVES BY WHAT AND WHO WE ARE NOT**
>   **vi)   WE MANIPULATE OUR BODIES TO CONSTRUCT IDENTITIES**

3. READING IDENTITY OFF BODIES
A) Bodies as Personal Billboards
B) Body Images as Self-fulfilling Prophecies
C) Beauty as a Master Status
D) Disorderly Eating

4. CONCLUSION: SUMMARY OF *MICKEY MOUSE MONOPOLY*

See: Mickey Mouse Monopoly

QUESTIONS OF THE WEEK
What is the relationship between social identities and bodies?
In what way is gender embodied?
How many gender identities exist?

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DETAILED LECTURE NOTES

SOCIAL IDENTITIES AND GENDERED EMBODIMENT

1. GENDER AS A SOCIAL ACCOMPLISHMENT
Introduction:

Gender is a more than a role or an individual characteristic. It is a mechanism whereby situated social action contributes to the reproduction of social structure.

EG: womanly or "manly" natures are rendered natural, normal characteristics of individuals *as well as* legitimating the unequal and distinctive fates of women and men within the social order.

A) THEORETICAL ACCOUNTS OF THE PRODUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF GENDER

DETERMINIST ACCOUNT: Socialization creates gender. By age 5, kids have taken on relatively stable gender characteristics because they have internalized femininity and masculinity.

   ie structures make you what you are (family, day care, religion, neighbours, peers) – empty vessels who absorb what others tell them they should be

EG: gender roles, like racial roles and class roles, are learned by enacting the social structural position and the expectations associated with that position

INTERACTIONAIST ACCOUNT: structural ideas and practices do constrain and shape individual behaviour BUT individuals produce gender in everyday life

: gender is a situated accomplishment of societal members, the local management of conduct in relation to normative conceptions of appropriate attitudes and activities for particular sex categories

: gender is accomplished in interaction with others, it is a routine, methodical and ongoing accomplishment

How do we Accomplish/Produce/Construct Gender?

We make individuals accountable for their behaviour.

Accountability (Heritage 1984) = the possibility of describing actions, circumstances and descriptions of themselves in both serious and consequential ways

EG: call someone "unmanly" or "unwomanly"

Heritage notes that we routinely characterize activities in ways that take notice of these activities

EG: we name, blame, excuse or merely acknowledge actions and place them in a social framework (situate them in the context of other activities that are similar or different) – announcements and placements

Therefore, the process of rendering some action accountable **is** an interactional accomplishment. Accountability permits individuals to conduct their activities in relation to their circumstances in ways that permit others to take those circumstances into account and see activities for what they are.

Another way of saying this: *The intersubjectivity of action rests on A symmetry between the production of activities and their recognition.*

B) GENDER AND GENDER DIFFERENCES

"Doing gender" = involves a complex of perceptual, interactional and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of manly and womanly "natures**"**

Rather than conceiving of gender as an individual characteristic, we see is as an emergent property of social situations

ie both an *outcome of* and *a rationale for* various social arrangements

Also a way of justifying gender divisions and gender inequities

= if we examine how gender is accomplished, we can reveal the mechanisms by which power is exercised and inequality is produced

Difference = SI sees it as an ongoing interactional accomplishment

*** According to SI, while gender, race and class – what people come to experience as organizing categories of social difference – exhibit vastly different descriptive characteristics and outcomes, they are nonetheless, comparable as mechanisms for producing social inequality.

Moreover, while race, class and gender can be seen as different axes of social structure, individuals experience them simultaneously.

This simultaneity has eluded theoretical treatment.

In order to capture simultaneity, we need to focus on the actual mechanisms that produce social inequality.

Q: How do forms of inequality, which we see are more than the periodic collision of categories, operate together?

Q: How do we see all social exchanges, regardless of their participants or outcomes, as simultaneously "gendered", "raced" and "classed"?

Somehow, in their day-to-day interactions, structure and culture are made to appear "natural"

2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL IDENTITIES AND BODIES

What is the relationship between social identities and bodies?

Why is the study of bodies so theoretically significant?

What does the study of bodies tell us sociologically?

A)   SOCIAL IDENTITIES AND EMBODIMENT

- Bodies are both the site and source of personal and social identities

- We both "know" someone's identity by looking at their body and we understand that bodies are a way to construct and change one's identity

All of the SI concepts we are learning are implicated in the study of

bodies.

B) INTERACTIONIST ACCOUNT OF BODIES

Key Questions: *Who are we?   How do we become who we are?*

   i) WE CONSTRUCT PERSONAL AND SOCIAL IDENTITIES THROUGH OUR BODIES.

Bodies are key sites for judgments about a variety of individual and social characteristics (race, class, education, age) by looking at a person's body. We immediately and mostly unconsciously, come to a set of opinions about his/her age, race, social class, sexual orientation and so on.

EG: Aging bodies are often a source of disgust and revulsion.
Why? Because aging has a set of social and cultural meanings which come to life in aging bodies.

Mostly we see aging as an unfortunate, frequently disgusting, bodily process that ought to be controlled.

We do not mind a few 'lumps and bumps' but we do insist that individuals work to either conceal or control the aging process if they want our social approval.

Eliciting social approval is a ***moral imperative.***

ii) BODIES ARE SOCIAL OBJECTS AND THEREFORE SOURCES OF SOCIAL AND PERSONAL IDENTITIES.

ie we mediate identity through the very process of embodiment

- The materiality (physicality or corporeality) of the body provides the means through which identity comes to be ascribed and taken on by people
- others respond to our bodies as social objects and we in turn take into account these responses

EG: How we take up the project of aging affects social interpretations of both the project of aging and us as individual aging people involved in the process.

Aging exemplars are those seniors who are physically active, trim, slim, run marathons, and basically seem physically, socially and culturally indistinguishable from those in early midlife (45 year olds).

iii) **WE KNOW OURSELVES BY HOW OTHERS RESPOND TO US (looking glass self and self/other/social object interaction)**

ie We work on our bodies precisely because we know that social characteristics are assigned to us on the basis on how we look

EG: We judge thin people to be of good character, morally responsible and disciplined versus fat people whom we judge to be lazy, morally suspect and definitely lacking in will power

Therefore, our ability to control our bodies is seen as the same as our ability to control our selves, our personalities and our moral characters

iv) **OUR READING OF SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OFF BODIES REFLECTS SOCIAL AND CULTURAL MEANINGS. These meanings are often based on hegemonic or dominant ideals.**

EG: We assume that minority groups have inherent bodily characteristics that make them different, that these group members are less able to control their bodies and that somehow they look and smell different. By marginalizing the minority body, we engage in the process of "othering".

v) WE ALSO COME TO KNOW OURSELVES BY WHAT AND WHO WE ARE <u>NOT.</u>

- One way we come to know who we are and what our social status is by how our body compares, looks, interacts with others who may, or may not, represent dominant or hegemonic ideal types but we also know who we are not

What if we don't like what we see?

- There is a great emphasis on "**finding oneself**" precisely because one not only has the ability to morph into someone else but also is encouraged to do so

- There is a contemporary perception that one can design one's own life via consumerist options ie it is seen as an option to have multiple and changing identities and lifestyles and in fact, the greatest life project is now the project of self-construction

- The "**Project of the Self**" = involves viewing the body as malleable and controllable through what we consume (food, culture, activities, clothng, friends)

Therefore in and through our resistance to aging bodies (our resistance to the physical restrictions of our bodies) represents another way in which we form our personal and social identities

vi)   WE MANIPULATE OUR BODIES TO CONSTRUCT IDENTITIES BUT this self- construction or consumption has limits

ie Self-construction is limited by social and biological characteristics such as race, class, dis/ability etc but even still there exists a fairly wide latitude in becoming whatever self we want to become

- Self is always **becoming** but the body is the daily reminder that there are limits to self-construction

EG: Aging bodies simply cannot do what 20 year old bodies can do but we are judged negatively if we do not try to "tame" or discipline the aging body into doing what we want.

EG: anyone who doesn't spend time working on their selves and their bodies are seen as "odd"
Therefore cosmetic surgery and technological maniupulation of bodies is **normalized and encouraged** because these are seen as ways to control bodies and to make bodies conform to social ideals

3. READING IDENTITY OFF BODIES

What can we conclude about the process of reading identities off bodies?

A) BODIES AS PERSONAL BILLBOARDS:

- Every society creates ideal types standards of physical attractiveness for both women and men

- These standards define and encapsulate what is considered to be desirable, meaningful and aesthetically appealing

- The standards are often the product of social and historical circumstances
EG: fashionable to be fat for most of history (fat = wealthy)

Two qualities stressed: youth and thinness

- Increased age, increased weight (width) are linked by advertisers with lonely nights spent alone with only a cat, loss of promotions and power on the job, increased life-insurance rates and public ridicule and scorn

- Canadians spend billions on books, lotions and potions, clothing, cosmetics, plastic surgery, diet plans, exercise plans, torture machines devoted to the elusive search for physical attractiveness and that it is believed to entail (Wolf)

B. BODY IMAGES AS SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECIES:

- Our emphasis upon physical attractiveness appears to be socially validated

- Attractive people judged to possess more socially desirable personalities, to be more competent, more attractive

- The stereotype that attractive adults are believed to be more sociable, poised, sophisticated, sexually warm, kind and genuine = means that appearance becomes a route to social success

- Physically attractive people receive more social rewards

- The closer you conform to ideal standards of physical attractiveness, the more power and resources you acquire over your lifetime

C. BEAUTY AS A MASTER STATUS
- Beauty acts as a master status from which stem other desirable attributions and positive responses

- The beauty standard is European: white, thin, tall, straight hair

- Beauty more important for women so those who are not attractive are judged more negatively than men
EG: they are called "feminists" or even worse "lesbians"
_ Men's power and status more likely to come from other sources so not judged as harshly (financial resources)

EG: women gain social mobility from beauty: more important than education and intelligence (trophy wives versus trophy husbands)

EG: Elder (1990s) Oakland Growth Study found that physical attractiveness in women is not merely instrumental in sexual or other interpersonal relations but is also correlated with socioeconomic advancement

- Women learn from an early age society's emphasis upon physical attractiveness
EG*: "My how cute you look!"*   *"What a pretty dress!"*

- Girls are socialized to bask in their own beauty or bemoan their lack thereof

- WIth the help of media, school, community, friends, girls learn how to observe and analyze themselves as "beauty objects" or "sex objects"

- By late adolescence, girls have internalized physical standards of female beauty and sexuality and generally see themselves as lacking in one way or another

EG: adolescents spend huge amounts of time reading fashion magazines learning how to look physically attractive through makeup, clothes to "guys" and how to become a "natural beauty" through diets and cosmetics

4. DISORDERLY EATING: A NORMATIVE AND CULTURAL STATE

"Thin is Perfect"   "Thin is Magic"   "You can never be Too Thin or Too Rich"

- Of all the beauty elements women can have, our culture defines weight as the most important
- Dieting is a $35 billion dollar industry that makes money on the culture that defines female beauty on weight

- So many women concerned with dieting that this concern has become a "normative obsession" and a "cultural obsession"
ie: Very few women are perfectly content with their bodies as they are
ie: Most women fall along a continuum of "odd eating behaviours and attitudes"

EG: Body Image Quiz

Anorexia Nervosa, Self-Imposed Starvation, Anorexia/Bulimia:

- Most suffers are women with the typical sufferer being a white, middle-class woman under the age of 25 who attempts to achieve a thin body and a low body weight and is characterized by a morbid fear of becoming fat

- Most have distorted body images: one is always "too fat" despite objective evidence to the contrary

Bulimia nervosa is a binge-purge pattern of eating and eliminating, most often by self-induced vomiting, lots of laxatives, purgatives, emetics or diuretics

- Medical effects are organ failure and death

RECENT SURVEYS:

Psychology Today: surveys of predominately white, highly educated, financially comfortable, heterosexuals (the prototype composite for our culture's attractiveness standards) indicate that dissatisfactions with body weight have heightened over the past 25 years

       Why? What does this trend mean socially?

EG: female dissatisfaction has increased from 48% in 1972 to 55% in 1985 to 66% in 1997 versus male dissatisfaction which increased from 35% in 1972to 41% in 1985 to 52% in 1997

Psychology Today found in 1997

: Women would give up 3 years or even 5 years of life to achieve their desired weight goals
American College of Sports Medicine:
- 62% of women competing in gymnastics and figure skating suffer from an eating disorder

Toronto Hospital Study (1994): sample of 50 female patients who had to be hospitalized with eating disorders during a 3-year study: more than half had been professional athletes

EG: Janet Morin, former Canadian gymnastic champion who retired after competing for Canada at the 1992 Summer Olympics, revealed that she regularly swallowed 8-10 laxatives on weekends preceding regular weigh-ins

- Emphasis on slimness, fashion and makeup is especially marked among adolescent females

Piper in *Revising Ophelia* (1994): claims that "losing weight is probably the most common goal" of adolescent girls

EG: half of all teenage girls are currently on diets, while 1 in 5 suffers from an eating disorder

EG: so many have eating disorders that they are no longer all considered abnormal – it's a matter of degree

- The social consequences of deviating from the ideal slender feminine beauty may be especially traumatic

EG: "*Being fat means being left out, scorned and vilified. Girls hear remarks made about heavy girls in the halls of their schools. No one feels thin enough.*"
- Content analysis of magazines for women found that in 48 issues of popular women's magazines, 63 ads for diet fads, 96 articles focused on body size or shape – comparable number within men's magazines are 1 and 8

- Adolescent boys and young men can abuse their bodies by taking steroids in the pursuit of athletic achievement and a desirable physique

- Adolescent girls and young women engage in practices that pose serious detrimental health hazards in pursuit of an elusive, seemingly unattainable physical ideal

4. CONCLUSION: SUMMARY OF *MICKEY MOUSE MONOPOLY*

Can you apply Goffman's impression management theory to the movie? Can you apply gendered theories of embodiment to the film? Can you apply racialized theories of embodiment to the film?

- Giroux- critique of Disney culture
- Capitalism controls the world view Disney puts out eg. Mickey Mouse in mousetrap- took it off the cover of the book
- Disney polices it's image representation
- Monopoly on innocence- a global dominant story teller
- What kind of stories are being told?
- Less immediate impact on how we think ie. slow, belief systems, cultural systems of measuring through the media- role media plays in socializing us into belief systems
- seductive female animals coy fluttering eyes= female
- notions of what feminism is- <u>constructing</u> notions of what feminism is ie. caricatures females and rap them up in (Disney paper)
- male is the aggressive and he sweeps her off her feet ie. "no" means "yes"
- use your body to manipulate men into getting what you want
- women always have to be rescued by men eg. maiden in distress is a popular theme
- <u>Family Violence</u> in <u>Beauty and the Beast</u>- he's abusive, isolates her, hurts her father, yells at her- thrust of the story is that she excuses his rage and abusive behavior as a vulnerable hidden person
- <u>Message</u>- there is a tender prince inside the beast
- <u>Is racism and sexism intentional?</u>- doesn't matter because effect is the same

IMAGES OF THE OTHER:
Latino Character
- Always does something he shouldn't do- always insulted and the more he is insulted, the more he wasn't eg. Oliver
- Ie. Latinos are dogs

African Americans
- Monkeys, birds, buffoons are all doing the jive, breakdancing
- Will never be "real" men
- Animals get tamed by the whiteman (Tarzan) who comes into the jungle supremacy by erasing all black people
- Eg. Lion King- Hyenas are inner city black dialect and kids learn this by age 3 and that the are bad
- Lady and the Tramp (1955)- few Asians except in this movie and heavy accents, slanted eyes, buck teeth and presented as sinister, manipulative, tricky
- Mulan- feminist heroine at the expense of seeing China as so backward, have no value unless married
- Aladdin(1992)- Arabian community finds the opening scene as racist- merchants are brutal
- In Islam you are advised to feel the hungry
- Only in Saudi Arabia, after 3 convictions of stealing, you get your hand chopped off
- "It's Racist but Hey It's Disney"
- Pocahontas (1995)- rewrites history (no historical romance between her and John Smith)- colonialism and genocide is absent of Native American's
- Trivializes her important historical role
- Calls them savages

Commercialization of Children's Culture
- Products advertising Disney movies
- Affects children's play by marketing toys to children ie. play with Disney toys means play the movie (language, imagination, social skills)
- Ie. perform the narrow plot so play all over the world is the same