

WEEK EIGHT
Mon Nov 2, 2009
Tues Nov 3, 2009

**SOCIAL IDENTITIES, RACIALIZATION AND
INTERSECTIONALITY**

LECTURE OUTLINE

- 1. RACE AS A SOCIAL ACCOMPLISHMENT**
- 2. INTERSECTIONALITY**
- 3. MALE BODIES AND THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF
MASCULINITY**
 - A) DEFINING MASCULINE GENDER IDENTITIES?**
 - B) TYPES OF MASCULINITY**
- 4. CONCLUSION**

See: *Tough Guise*

QUESTIONS OF THE WEEK

How do sociologists define race?
What is the process of racialization?
How do men use their bodies to accomplish masculinity?

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DETAILED LECTURE NOTES

**SHAPING SOCIAL INTERACTION AND IDENTITY THROUGH
LANGUAGE**

1. RACE AS A SOCIAL ACCOMPLISHMENT

Background:

- **no biological criteria** (hormonal, chromosomal, anatomical) that allow physicians to pronounce race assignment at birth thereby sorting individuals into distinctive race

- **racial categories and their meanings change over time and place**

EG: how much Jewish blood did you have to have to be considered Jewish by the Nazis?

- **categories are arbitrary**

But still, in everyday life, individual can and do sort themselves and others on the basis of membership in racial categories

The very fact that we don't challenge the existing racial order is a testament to the effectiveness of the racial formation process in constructing racial meanings and identities

EG: "Asian Canadians" – who is this?

No biological criteria

No ethnic criteria: why put in one category the distinctive histories, geographic origins and cultures of Cambodians, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Loatian, Thai and Vietnamese?

Therefore, to call someone "Asian Canadian" = a way to achieve racial categorization in everyday life

Individuals are accountable to racial categories

- If we accept that there are prevailing normative conceptions of appropriate attitudes and activities for particular race categories and if we grant the claim that accountability allows people to conduct their activities in relation to their circumstances (in ways that allow others to take those circumstances into account and see those activities for what they are), then we can see race as a situated accomplishment of individuals.

ie race is not simply an individual characteristic or trait but something that is accomplished in interaction with others

People are held accountable for their performances as members of their race category.

Race category is used to justify or discredit other actions so virtually any action can be assessed in relation to its race categorical nature

The accomplishment of race does not necessarily mean “living up” to normative expectations appropriate to a particular race category. Rather it means engaging in action at the risk of race assessment.

Individuals are the ones who accomplish race but
“the enterprise is fundamentally interactional and institutional in character” (West & Zimmerman, 1987,137)

The accomplishment of race renders the social arrangements based on race as normal and natural ie as legitimate ways of organizing social life

What happens if someone does not act their race?

- we don't care if a man or woman does not act "black" or "white" but we do become disconcerted when Black women do not act like Black women or white men do not act like white men

EG: most Black men been pulled over by police for no apparent reason. Indignation or outrage (which might befit a white man in similar circumstances) is likely to generate hostility, if not brutality, from the officers on the scene

In order to accomplish race, we need to create differences among members of different race categories – differences that are neither natural nor biological

Once created, these differences are used to maintain the "essential" distinctiveness of "racial identities" and the institutional arrangements they support

Races can change, normative expectations about appropriate racial behaviour can change, racial identities can change but what never changes is the idea that members of different races have essentially different natures, which explain their very unequal positions in society.

Implications of seeing race, class and gender as simultaneous ongoing, methodical and situated accomplishments?

a) we cannot determine their relevance apart from the context in which they are accomplished

EG: individuals inhabit multiple identities and these may be stressed or muted, depending on the situation so when a Law professor was not buzzed into a Manhattan dress store by a white teenager, undesirability revealed itself as racial determination

b) **Goffman:** “social situations do not so much allow for the expression of natural differences as for the production of those differences themselves”

ie some of the most extreme displays of “essential” womanly and manly natures may occur in settings usually reserved for a single sex category like a locker room or a beauty parlour whereas in situations that involve more than one gender, race or class category, not necessary to rely on just your categorical identity to produce joint social action

c) depending on how race, class and gender are accomplished, what looks to be the same activity may have different meanings for those engaged in it

EG: mothering and childcare have very different meanings depending on whether you are economically secure or insecure

d) race, class and gender are accomplished or constituted in the context of the differential “doings” of others

EG: if you’re watching on TV a Muslim man being arrested for a crime, are you seeing the Muslim or the man? Are you seeing racism relationships etc.

2. INTERSECTIONALITY

Definition: a theory which seeks to examine the ways in which various socially and culturally constructed categories interact on multiple levels to manifest themselves as inequality in society.

: race, gender, age, sexuality, dis/ability do not act independently of one another but rather interrelate creating a system of oppression that reflects multiple identities and multiple opportunities to experience discrimination

: socially constructed categories of difference or differentiation (race, class, religion) intersect to create multiple social hierarchies which in turn shape one another's experience of social situations

EG: Woman: does this tell us anything about her experience in Canadian society? Why or why not?

EG: Racialization: How do racializing structures, social processes, and social representations (ideas representing certain groups of people) affect individuals' experiences?

Yes, but don't we also need to understand how racializing structure, processes and ideologies shape and are shaped by gender, class, dis/ability and so on?

3. MALE BODIES AND MASCULINITY

**What do male bodies tell us about “masculinity”?
Do we construct male gender identity through and by male
bodies?**

A) DEFINING MASCULINE GENDER IDENTITIES?

How are masculine gender identities defined? Is there one definition or are there multiple definitions of masculine gender? Which definitions of masculinity have prevailed and which ones have been suppressed? Why?

- a) **What we think of as “masculinity” is** not a fixed, biological essence of men but rather is **a social construction** that shifts and changes over time, as well as between and among various national and cultural contexts
- b) **Power is central to understanding gender as a relational concept. Hegemonic masculinity** (meaning the dominant definition of masculinity that exists in society) is defined by seeing masculinity as different from and superior to anything considered “feminine”.

EG: simplistic and false to see all men as powerful and privileged

- c) **There is no singular “male sex role” but many types of and ways of being masculine.**
- d) **Masculinities are configurations of discursive practices** within gender relations, a structure that includes large-scale institutions as well as economic relations as well as face-to-face relationships and sexualities.
- e) **Masculinities are constructed in culture through symbolic representations and through language.** Individuals may accept and reproduce these representations but they may also confront and contest them. Masculinity is a discursive construction.

B) TYPES OF MASCULINITY

Hegemonic masculinities:

Hegemonic means = dominate, control, superior power & authority

Hegemonic Masculinity means = the dominant form of masculinity at any one time = usually white, middle-class masculinity which is defined and constructed in relation to femininities as well as in relations to subordinated or marginalized masculinities, such as “othering” racialized masculinities

Examples: white, middle-class, European, highly educated, economically secure, trim, proper male

Subordinated Masculinities:

Subordinated means = being made inferior

Subordinated Masculinities means = those which are inferior, lesser

Example: gay masculinity

Marginalized Masculinities:

Marginalized means= of no great concern, subsidiary, secondary, trivial, insignificant

Marginalized Masculinities means = the process of rendering marginal

Examples: such as those expressed by ethnic minorities which may share many features with hegemonic masculinity but are socially de-authorized

Racialized Masculinities:

Racialized means= ethnically, culturally, racially constructed

Racialized masculinities means =defining masculinity through ethnicity

Example:

4. CONCLUSION

Self/subjectivity is constructed through self/other-social object engagement

Gendered selves/racialized subjectivities are constructed through self/other-social object engagement

Who are these others? They include all the social objects Mead outlined, including

- a) through engagement with dominant ideologies Eg: what we call culture, language, media, popular culture
- b) through interaction with social groups and social structures
- c) through interaction with other people

We conclude:

- a) **Individuals' thoughts, experiences of bodily states and emotions are actually social shaped**

EG: individual's inner life or inner reality is as much socially constructed as the outer reality that s/he shares with others

Q: Is happiness socially constructed? How?

- b) **The language, symbols and understandings that individuals draw upon in conversing with themselves are not of their own invention – they are used by and learned from others with whom the individual as communicated**

- c) **What influences the way our self is constructed? : race, gender, class, age, ability etc are dimensions of the self**