

ACTIVITY: Transferring Intersectional and Performative Responses to Mediated Representations of Sexuality

Introduction

This interactive and performative activity focused on recent mediated representations of sexuality and the ways in which intersectional identities chaperone sexual performance of race, gender, class, celebrity, incarceration, religion, slavery, privilege and liberation. Instructor will place large sheets of paper around the room and each audience member will be provided a marker. The instructor will then show three clips from pop culture, (1) Miley Cyrus' VMA performance, (2) *Orange is the New Black* by Piper Chapman (Netflix), and the "Harriet Tubman Sex Tape" (Def Digital). Each of these videos solicited strong popular responses from scholars, journalists, politicians and others because of their representations of sexuality. While *Orange is the New Black* was primarily celebrated, all three videos were met with negative commentary because of the misappropriation and theft concerning cultural production, narrative, and history. The interrogation of these moments allow us to examine the transfer of negative histories within the intersections of mediated bodies and our bodies (panelists and participants).

Rationale/Class Readings

Several scholars called for utilizing intersectionality in scholarship in an attempt to recognize (1) the significance of multiple categories' explanatory power and (2) the vast intra-group differences instead of singling out aspects of identity as if they are discrete, neat concepts we can separate (Hancock; Cole and Stewart; Hawkesworth; McCall)

Ange-Marie Hancock defines intersectionality as "both the normative theoretical argument and an approach to conducting empirical research...that considers the interaction of race, gender, class, and other organizing structures of society a key component influencing political access, equality and the potential for any form of justice" (75). In her groundbreaking article, Kimberle Crenshaw delineated the qualitative differences between women's experiences with sexual assault and domestic abuse across intersections of race, class, and gender. She puts forth three categories to map out the multiple dimensions of Black women's experiences (1241): structural, political, and representational intersectionality. Representational intersectionality refers to the cultural and social construction of women of color within popular cultural contexts. What Crenshaw's work contributes to communication scholarship is a delineation of the multiple and overlapping ways in which bodies not only perform as political entities through discourse, but endure the systematic attempts to maintain power through representation, politics, and institutions. The labels attached to our bodies mimic more than arbitrary words designed to highlight difference; they also have the ability to (re)enforce and challenge power structures as divisive systems of oppression.

Those divisive systems of oppressions enter our own intersectional identities, forcing us to question the categories assigned to us (and avowed) on the basis of religion, gender, race, class, sexuality, geographic location, body type, beauty, ability, etc. As our bodies consume imagery that is offensive, misappropriated, derogatory, painful, celebratory, affirming, and/or salient, our bodies respond. Via performative displays, our bodies then transfer those responses to others. Each of these moments we will share offer a space to unpack intersectional identities alongside privilege and sexuality in meaningful ways, transfer the ways in which our bodies respond to each representation as well as each other's bodies, and allows us the space to foster ideas for future study directed at activism, social justice, and liberation. Conversations will center around these three key moments and the key terms they solicit: privilege, appropriation, race, white girl body politics, rape, incarceration,

twerking, and the following hashtags, #solidarityisforwhitewomen, #blackpowerisforblackmen, and #harriettubmansextape.

Activity Rules

- Facilitator/Instructor writes hashtags/terms for response on the top of each piece of butcher paper (be sure to leave plenty of room for student responses, also do this ahead of class to save time) hang paper around the room to allowing enough space to move around and write. (Hanging paper at various heights allows for an opportunity to talk about abilities and norming of intersectional bodies and privileges as well)
- Begin playing the videos/songs clips (this is going to require prep. Ideally you will create a montage closely connected to the hashtags and terms on the papers that will play continuously for 10-15 minutes.)
- Each participant should have a colored sharpie to write responses to terms based on seeing the video/hearing songs
- Facilitator/Instructor instructs the participants to make their way around the room three times.
 - The first time, comment on the concepts, hashtags, or experiences written on the posters.
 - The second round, read and comment on what other's wrote on the posters.
 - The third round, read and comment on how other people commented on your originals comments.
 - Take a final walk around to soak it all up
- Allow for 30-40 minutes for facilitated class discussion

AV Request/Needs

Projector

Speakers

Computer with Internet Access

butcher paper for each hashtag/theme (should have 5-10 pages with terms/themes/tags)
sharpie (1 per student. This is important. You want all the students writing and engaged at the same time)

Bibliography

- Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1993): 1241-1299. Print.
- Cole, Elizabeth R. and Abigail Stewart. "Invidious Comparisons: Imagining a Psychology of Race and Gender Beyond Differences." *Political Psychology* 22.2 (2001): 293-308. Print.
- Hancock, Ange-Marie. "When Multiplication Doesn't Equal Quick Addition: Examining Intersectionality as a Research Paradigm." *Perspectives on Politics* 5.1 (2007): 63-79. Print.
- Hawkesworth, Mary. "Congressional Enactments of Race-Gender: Toward a Theory of Race-Gendered Institutions." *American Political Science Review* 97.4 (2003): 529-50. Print.
- McCall, Leslie. "The Complexity of Intersectionality." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30.3 (2005): 1771-1800. Print.