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Chapter 2 Teaching Resources

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Chapter II: Challenging Binary Systems and Constructions of Difference

A. Introduction- Binary Systems

B. The Sex/Gender/Sexuality System

C. Sexualities

D. Masculinities

E. Race

F. Class

G. Alternative to Binary Systems

Key Concepts

LGBTQ identities

compulsory heterosexuality

transgender

intersex

sexual 'inversion'

genderqueer

bisexuality

hormones (testosterone, estrogen)

chromosomes

secondary sex characteristics

gendered bodies

tough guise

female masculinity

scientific racism

one-drop rule

wealth

cultural capital

Discussion Questions:

1) Discuss a moment in your life when you realized that binaries were not sufficient for understanding a situation. Did this situation make you question the binaries? How did you react to the situation?

2) How does the history of race in the United States illustrate that the black/white binary is socially constructed?

3) What is intersexuality? What is transgender identity? How are they different? How do they challenge the dominant sex/gender/sexuality system?

4) Where, in your daily life, do you see the various binaries discussed in this chapter? What effect do these binaries have on your life or the way you think about the world?

Activities:

1) (from UNC Campus Health Services)

a) Divide participants into small groups, give each group paper and writing utensils, and ask them to write down (list) what it means to be masculine and what it means to be feminine. After a few minutes, have everyone come together and share ideas with the group.

- Did everyone share the same ideas? Did some people disagree?
- Were there any ideas that surprised them? Any that did not surprise them?
- Where did people learn these ideas about gender and gender expression? When?
- Are there differences in ideas about gender in different communities or cultures? Racial identities? Age groups? Socioeconomic groups? Religious groups? Etc.
- Explain that everyone experiences intersecting identities based on their race, gender, class, age, religion, etc. and that one might be more salient at one time than another and that all affect a person's experience and self-expression.
- How does gender appear on campus? Can you think of gendered spaces? (Examples: bathrooms, some residence halls, etc.) What do you think about these spaces?

b) By the end of this discussion, participants should begin to see how gender and gender expression are not “givens,” but that they are historically and culturally changing social constructs. Gender is better thought of as a continuum than a binary.

2) For this activity you will need to get episode two of *Race: The Power of an Illusion*.

The Consequences of Creating an Ideology of Race: Viewing the Concluding Sections of Episode 2 of RACE.

Resume showing Episode 2 at approximately 16:21 through to the end of the video. Before viewing this segment ask students how they think the creation of "race" as an ideology would impact American history beyond the end of slavery and the Civil War. After viewing the rest of the film, discuss the following:

- Who is the "common man" in American history? What is the relationship between his growing rights and freedoms and the denigration of other groups?
- Indians were at one point thought to be "civilizable"? Why was this line of thinking abandoned?
- As American nationalism took root, who was deemed eligible for U.S. citizenship, and on what basis?
- How was the scientific community influenced by Jefferson's hypothesis that Blacks were inherently mentally and physically inferior to whites?
- How did the creation of whiteness divide the working classes, not only in colonial Jamestown, but later in American history?
- What was the relationship between theories of the "white man's burden" and U.S. imperialist ventures?
- Had slavery been justified on an economic basis as James Horton suggests instead of a racial one, how might American history after the Civil War have been different?
- What purposes did the creation of "whiteness" serve?

3) *The Box Exercise*

The Box Exercise: Draw a box on a chalkboard. Ask students to name characteristics of a "real man". Write them inside the box. When the box is full, ask for themes (e.g. strength, toughness are equated with masculinity). Then ask them to name characteristics of men who don't measure up, and write these outside the box. When you've gotten a sufficient number of words (e.g. wimp, wuss, fag), ask for themes. Then talk about how boys/men are boxed in by these definitions, and punished if they don't fit in.

Suggested Readings:

Barret, James and David Roediger. 2008. "How White People Became White", Pp. 35-40 in *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism*, 3rd Ed., edited by P. Rothenburg. Worth Publishers.

Brienza, Casey. 2009. "Adoption, White Women, and the Keeping of Culture" Pp. 79-81 in *Contexts*.

Ferber, A. 2009. "Keeping Sex in Bounds: Sexuality and the (De)Construction of Race

and Gender”, Pp. 136-142 in *Sex, Gender, and Sexuality: The New Basics*, edited by Abby L. Ferber, Kimberly Holcomb and Tre Wentling. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Hill-Collins, P. 2004. “The Past is Ever Present: Recognizing the New Racism”, Pp. 53-86 in *Black Sexual Politics: African-Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*. New York: Routledge.

Lorber, Judith. 2009. “Night to His Day’: The Social Construction of Gender”, Pp. 53-68 in *Feminist Frontiers*, Eight Edition. Edited by Taylor, V., Whittier, N., and L Rupp. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Mantsios, Gregory. 2007. “Media Magic: Making Class Invisible.” In *Race, Class, & Gender: An Anthology, Sixth Edition* by M.L. Anderson and P. Hill Collins. Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth. 384-392.

McKenna, Wendy and Suzanne Kessler. 2008. “Transgendering: Blurring the Boundaries of Gender”, Pp. 478-489 in *The Gendered Society Reader*, edited by Kimmel, M. and A. Aronson, Third Edition. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Rubin, Gayle. 1984. “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex.” In *Pleasure and Danger* by C. Vance (Ed.). New York: Routledge.

West and Zimmerman. 1987. “Doing Gender”.

Video Resources:

- Zirin, Dave (Dir.). 2010. *Not Just a Game: Power, Politics, and American Sports*. Media Education Foundation. [Film]
- Gale, P., and L. Soomekh. 2000. *XXXY—A short Documentary About Intersex*. Berkeley Media:

<http://www.isna.org/files/xxxy.mov>

- PBS. *Race: The Power of an Illusion*.
- *Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and the Crisis in Masculinity*. Media Education Foundation.

Web Resources:

- An excerpt from *Drag Queens at the 801 Cabaret*, by L. Rupp and V. Taylor (2008):

<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/731588.html>

- Sociological Images:

<http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/>

Sociological Images is a visual culture clearinghouse that is a great teaching resource.

- The teaching resources website that accompany the *Race: The Power of an Illusion*:

http://www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_04-teachers.htm