

What is gender?

What is race?

Week 2

PO307A Gender, Race and Militarism

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- a moment or moments when your gender and/or your race – either how you identify or how others have identified you – has impacted on how you have been treated/spoken to/how you have felt/moved through the world. The experience can be ‘positive’, ‘negative’ or ‘neutral’; it can be largely inconsequential (e.g. someone holding a door for you...or not) or have left more of an impact (e.g. someone speaking over you in class). Think about how gender and/or race was at play in this situation. Did you identify any other relations of power at work? In what ways did they intersect with gender and/or race?

What is gender?

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Sex differences in the brain? - Cordelia Fine



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1. How do the images represent bodies?


2. How does this representation of bodies fit with 'common-sense' understandings of bodies in the world?

3. Is the image congruent with or disruptive of conventional conceptualisations of sex and gender?

4. What does the image tell us about global politics?



Floating signifier

- The concept of floating signifiers originates with Claude Levi-Strauss: Cultural ideas "represent an undetermined quantity of signification, in itself void of meaning and thus apt to receive any meaning".
 - A floating signifier—which is said to possess "symbolic value zero"—"allows symbolic thought to operate despite the contradiction inherent in it".
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- There is nothing solid or permanent to the meaning of race. It changes all the time.... How so?

The Racial Contract?

- American political theory foundationally rests on what he calls the racial contract. (See Mills quoted in the Sabaratnam (2020) article)

The Racial Contract?

- American political theory foundationally rests on what he calls the racial contract. (See Mills quoted in the Sabaratnam (2020) article)
- “The racial contract is a tacit agreement among people racialised as White to discount the origins and functioning of White supremacy from discussions about how society is and should be organised. This is achieved through representations that obscure, exclude or exceptionalise the central role of racialised dispossession, violence, and discrimination in the making of the modern world”



How? Modernity?

“‘Modernity’ is immanent or endogenous uniquely to the ‘West’ (as argued by Bhabra), which is seen as the primary agent and subject matter of politics (as argued by Hobson). In this discursive formation, the ‘West’, itself a discursive object racialised as White, is an auto-generative entity whose own genius and social conditions drove a rapid but autonomous form of modernisation, meaning it surpassed historical competitors in achieving the advances in political, economic, social, technological, and cultural spheres.” (Sabaratnam 2020)

“What matters for international politics is not the scope of violence or war itself, but only some of its effects on Great Powers’ relative capabilities. Thus, efforts by the global South to co-operate in the face of imperial power are dismissed as irrelevant to such matters: ‘Misery may like company, but when the poor and the weak join hands they gain little if anything in prosperity and strength’.” (Sabaratnam 2020, quoting Waltz).

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“Aint I a
woman?”

https://thehermitage.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Sojourner-Truth_Aint-I-a-Woman_1851.pdf

1851 version

“One of the most unique and interesting speeches of the convention was made by Sojourner Truth, an emancipated slave. It is impossible to transfer it to paper, or convey any adequate idea of the effect it produced upon the audience. Those only can appreciate it who saw her powerful form, her whole-souled, earnest gesture, and listened to her strong and truthful tones. She came forward to the platform and addressing the President said with great simplicity: "May I say a few words?" Receiving an affirmative answer, she proceeded:

“I want to say a few words about this matter. I am a woman's rights [[sic](#)]. I have as much muscle as any man, and can do as much work as any man. I have plowed and reaped and husked and chopped and mowed, and can any man do more than that? I have heard much about the sexes being equal. I can carry as much as any man, and can eat as much too, if I can get it. I am as strong as any man that is now. As for intellect, all I can say is, if a woman have a pint, and a man a quart – why can't she have her little pint full? You need not be afraid to give us our rights for fear we will take too much, – for we can't take more than our pint'll hold. The poor men seems to be all in confusion, and don't know what to do. Why children, if you have woman's rights, give it to her and you will feel better. You will have your own rights, and they won't be so much trouble. I can't read, but I can hear. I have heard the Bible and have learned that Eve caused man to sin. Well, if woman upset the world, do give her a chance to set it right side up again. The Lady has spoken about Jesus, how he never spurned woman from him, and she was right. When Lazarus died, Mary and Martha came to him with faith and love and besought him to raise their brother. And Jesus wept and Lazarus came forth. And how came Jesus into the world? Through God who created him and the woman who bore him. Man, where was your part? But the women are coming up blessed be God and a few of the men are coming up with them. But man is in a tight place, the poor slave is on him, woman is coming on him, he is surely between a hawk and a buzzard.”

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Next week....

- Write a short (150-300 words) reflective piece on how war and/or militarism has shaped or impacted your life. Think about the ways that these are 'everyday' concepts, not things relegated to the abstracted 'out there' of global politics.