Lecture 13 – Social Identity

Sandra Lee Bartky – “On Psychological Oppression”
Agenda

1. Psychological Oppression
2. Fragmentation and Mystification
3. Stereotyping
4. Cultural Domination
5. Sexual Objectification
Oppression

• Economic
• Political
• Psychological
• “To be psychologically oppressed is to be weighed down in your mind; it is to have a harsh dominion exercised over your self-esteem. The psychologically oppressed become their own oppressors; they come to exercise harsh dominion over their own self-esteem” (1-2).

Frantz Fanon (1925-1961)
Three Categories of Oppression

1. Stereotyping
2. Cultural Domination
3. Sexual Objectification
Fragmentation and Mystification

• Fragmentation: “the splitting of the whole person into parts of a person which, in stereotyping, may take the form of a war between a ‘true’ and ‘false’ self—or, in sexual objectification, the form of an often coerced and degrading identification of a person with her body” (2).

• Mystification: “the systematic obscuring of both the reality and agencies of psychological oppression so that its intended effect, the depreciated self, is lived out as destiny, guilt, or neurosis” (2).
Double-Consciousness

“It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (Du Bois 2).
Stereotypes

• What are stereotypes?
• What stereotypes of women exist?
• Why are stereotypes bad?
• “Stereotyping is morally reprehensible as well as psychologically oppressive on two counts, at least. First, it can hardly be expected that those who hold a set of stereotyped beliefs about the sort of person I am will understand my needs or even respect my rights. Second, suppose that I, the object of some stereotype, believe in it myself— for why should I not believe what everyone else believes?”
Stereotypes

• “The truncated self I am to be is not something manufactured out there by an anonymous Other which I encounter only in the pages of Playboy or the Ladies’ Home Journal; it is inside of me, a part of myself” (3).
“To claim that women are victims of cultural domination is to claim that all the items in the general life of our people—our language, our institutions, our art and literature, our popular culture—are sexist; that all, to a greater or lesser degree, manifest male supremacy” (4).

How does the cultural domination of women differ from the cultural domination of a colonized people?
The Bechdel Test
The Bechdel Test

The Bechdel Test Over Time
How women are represented in movies

PASS

FAIL

Less than two women
Women don't talk to each other
Women only talk about men
Dubious

Passes Bechdel Test


SOURCE: BECHDELTEST.COM
# The Bechdel Test

**BECHDEL TEST HOW THEY STACK UP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movie</th>
<th>Two Female Characters</th>
<th>Female Conversation</th>
<th>Not About Men</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Social Network</td>
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<td>Mad Max Fury Road</td>
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<td>Shawshank Redemption</td>
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Sexual Objectification

• “A person is sexually objectified when her sexual parts or sexual functions are separated out from the rest of her personality and reduced to the status of mere instruments or else regarded as if they were capable of representing her” (4-5).

• Is sexual objectification always problematic? When is it oppressive?

• “If sexual relations involve some sexual objectification, then it becomes necessary to distinguish situations in which sexual objectification is oppressive from the sorts of situations in which it is not” (5).

• https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=94&v=2SrARP_M0o
“It is a fine spring day, and with an utter lack of self-consciousness, I am bouncing down the street. Suddenly I hear men’s voices. Catcalls and whistles fill the air. These noises are clearly sexual in intent and they are meant for me; they come from across the street. I freeze. As Sartre would say, I have been petrified by the gaze of the Other. My face flushes and my motions become stiff and self-conscious. The body which only a moment before I inhabited with such ease now floods my consciousness. I have been made into an object” (5).
Mystification

• “It is itself psychologically oppressive both to believe and at the same time not to believe that one is inferior—in other words, to believe a contradiction” (7).
• “Systematically deceived as we are about the nature and origin of our unhappiness, our struggles are directed inward toward the self, or toward other similar selves in whom we may see our deficiencies mirrored, not outward upon those social forces responsible for our predicament” (8).