

Some tools for using gender and race as analytical categories in feminist/antiracist research

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Background context: critical theory of gender and race

- For my purposes, **gender, race, disability**, are paradigm cases of socially constructed categories.
- These are cases in which oppression is read into, marked upon, and lived through the body.
- This involves a masking of the social process by which we come to have a gender or race (etc).
- Social constructionists of the sort I have in mind attempt to unmask the social structures and processes that constitute these categories *in order to reveal injustice and locate the levers for social change.*

Slogans

Gender is the social meaning of sex.
Race is the social meaning of “color”.
Disability is the social meaning of impairment.

NB: “color” = those bodily features presumed to be evidence of ancestral links to a certain geographical region

Social
position:

Gender

Race

Disability

Anatomy or
Phenotype:



Sex



“Color”



Impairment

These distinctions allow us to ask questions about the meanings of sex, “color,” and impairment across cultures: Why here and not there? Why this form and not that?

Analysis of woman/man (*not* male/female)

- *S is a woman* [in context C] iff_{df} [in C]
 - S is regularly and for the most part observed or imagined to have certain bodily features presumed to be evidence of a *female's* biological role in reproduction; and
 - S is subordinated along some dimension and, within the dominant ideology, having (or being imagined to have) these features motivates and justifies this *subordinate* position.
- *S is a man* [in C] iff_{df} [in C]
 - ...a *male's* biological role in reproduction; and
 - S is *privileged* along some dimension and...motivates and justifies this *privileged position*.

Being gendered

A group G is *a gender* (in context C) if and only if

- G 's members are regularly observed or imagined (in C) to have bodily features presumed to be evidence of their reproductive capacities; and
 - against the background ideology (in C) this motivates and/or justifies some aspect of their social position (in C).
- Feminist goal is to eliminate men and women (not males and females!) and allow new (non-hierarchical, “minimal”) genders.

Being raced

A group G is *racialized* (in context C) if and only if

- G 's members are regularly observed or imagined (in C) to have bodily features presumed to be evidence of ancestral links to a certain geographical region; and
- G 's are subordinated or privileged along some dimension, and the background ideology (in C) motivates and/or justifies some aspect of their social position.

"Focal" Analysis

Unconscious habits

Self-understanding

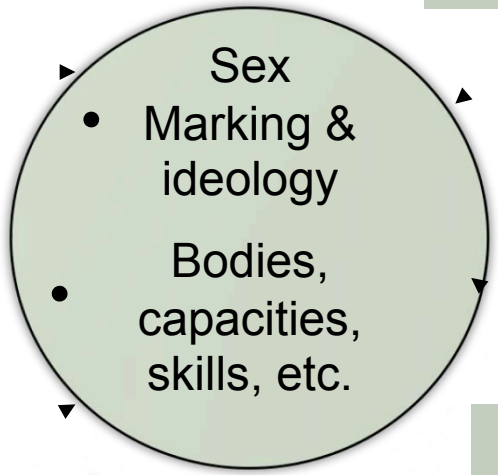
Sex

Family

Work

Gender Identity
(internalized norms/ideals?)

Gender Roles



Existing gender structures

Gender Norms
(ideals relative to role?)

Masculinity

Femininity

Gender symbolism

Narratives

Visual images

Unconscious habits

Self-understandings

Racial Identity

Race •

• “Color” marking & ideology
• Bodies, capacities, skills, etc.

Racial symbolism

Narratives

Visual images

Intersectionality causes roles, norms, etc. to reflect gender, race, class, nationality, sexuality, etc. (Note color overlays.)

Racial Roles

Politics

Work

Social networks

Racial Norms

Whiteness

“Authentic” Whiteness

Ideology

- We are not just cogs in structures of subordination; we enact them. And something about how we represent the world is both a *constitutive part* of that enactment and *keeps it going*.
- Ideology in ***pejorative*** v. ***non-pejorative*** sense
 - *pejorative sense*: ideology distorts our beliefs and practical reasoning by masking our true interests.
 - *non-pejorative sense*: ideology is inevitable. We enact good, just and helpful social structures too.
- For present purposes, ideologies should be thought of as schemas or bundles of schemas.

Schemas

- Schemas are intersubjective patterns of perception, thought and behavior.
 - They can be more or less conscious, articulate and determinate.
 - They can be propositional, or not.
 - They are typically embodied as common or shared dispositions to respond to things in a certain way.
- Unconscious, uncontested schemas are *hegemonic*.
- Schemas tell us how to interact with some part of the world: *schemas* direct our responses to *resources*.

Rules (Schemas) + Resources = Practices

Rules
Norms
Procedures

Capabilities that
are a source of
power

Schemas

~~Rules~~ + Resources

Habits, gestures,
“tools of thought”

Practices

Material conditions;
stuff that can be used
to gain power

Schemas: Dispositions to respond to sheet music, keys, pedals, etc. by moving fingers in certain ways...

Resources: piano, music, bench, fingers, arms, brain...!

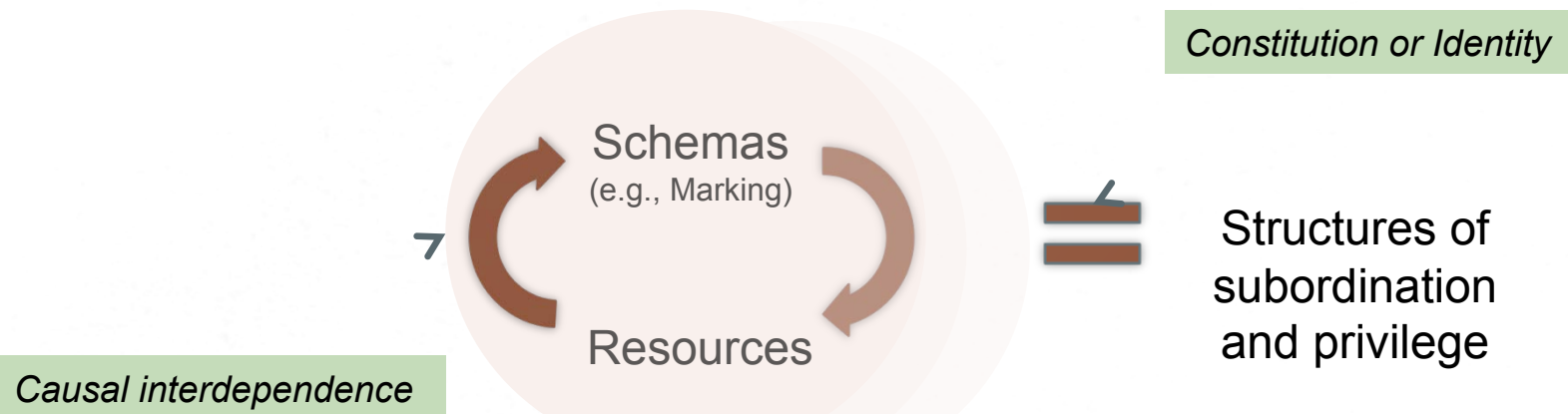
Practice: playing a Bach minuet, playing the piano.

Practices

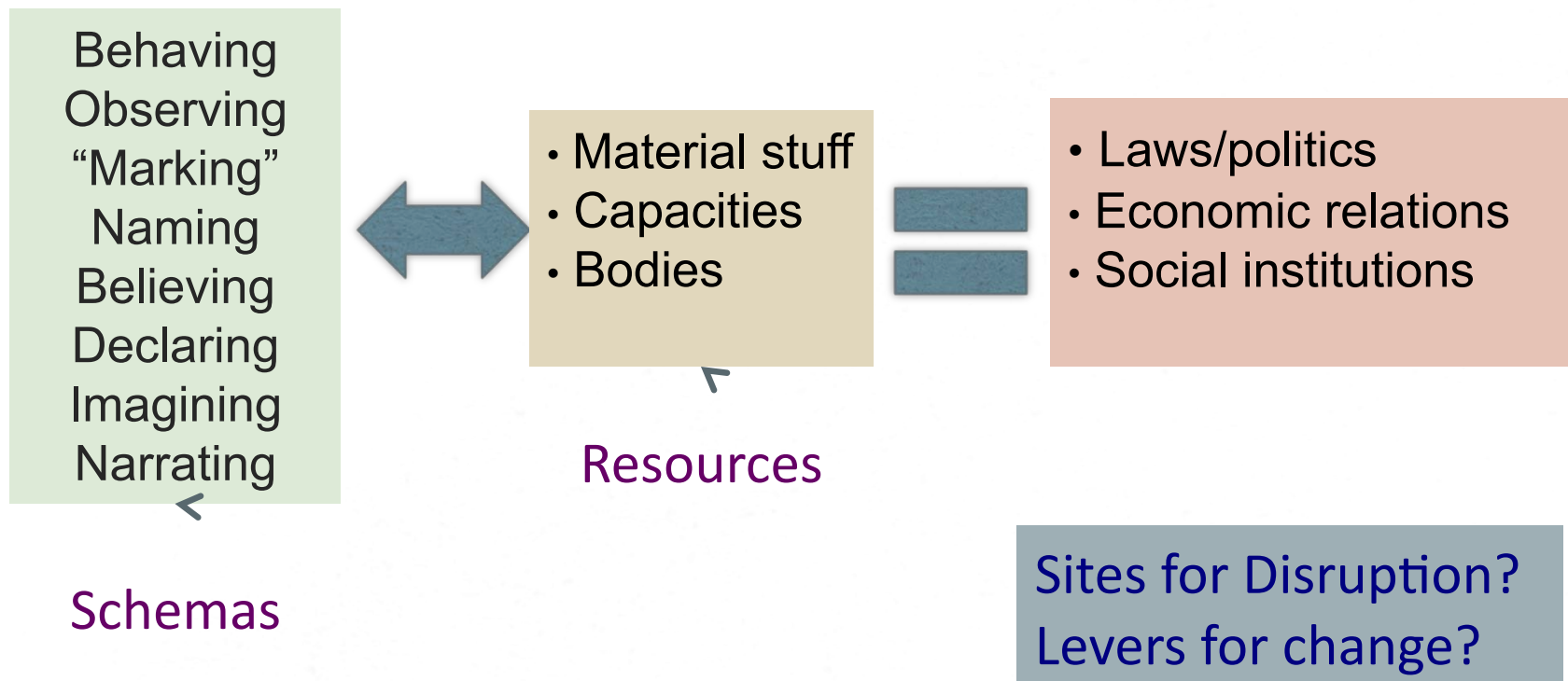


Social Structures

- **Schemas + resources > practices**
 - Male/female + wealth, sex, labor > marriage
 - White/black + market, labor > racial exploitation
- Patterns of **interdependent practices > structures.**
 - Marriage, childcare, domestic labor (etc) > **gender**
 - Economic exploitation, “color” profiling, (etc) > **race**



Epistemological-Political Interdependence



From gender/race analysis to feminist/antiracist analysis

- A gender/race analysis calls attention to the ways in which gender and race function in a particular situation – sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly.
- The analysis highlights and explains symbols, norms, roles, identities, that conform to and reinforce gender/race structures.
- An analysis is feminist/antiracist if it goes beyond this to show how the structures are morally/politically problematic, e.g., by showing how the structure is unjust.

Structural Injustice

- Oppression is “an institutionally structured, unjust harm, perpetrated on groups by other groups using direct and indirect material and psychological forces.” (Cudd 2006, 51)
 - Following Cudd, we can say that structural injustice “consists in the existence of **unequal and unjust institutional constraints**.” (Cudd 2006, 52)
 - “social constraints are **unequal** when they differentially affect the life outcomes of the individual subjected to the constraints.” (51)
 - “To say that social constraints are **unjust** is to say that in addition to falling unequally on different groups, they are unjustifiably unequal.” (51)
- Mapping an unjust structure might look like this (following):

Assume: people want to think well of themselves, through positive attributes of their "in-groups"

Unconscious habits

Self-policing of body and behavior; shame at failure

Framing of life plans within constrained options

Sex

Men gain relationship power & social status

Self-understanding

Gender Roles

Family

Rational for women to stay home, exit costs increase

Gender Identity (internalized norms/ideals?)

Schemas: Sex marking & ideology
Resources: bodies, capacities, laws, etc.

Assume: wage gap, limited access to quality childcare

Work

Men have higher pay, more options...

Existing gender structures

Gender Norms (ideals relative to role?)

Be a good breadwinner, exercise relationship power

Gender symbolism

Masculinity

Femininity

Be (or hire) a good domestic & satisfy your man

Reification of gender differentiated norms & scripts as natural, good, necessary

Narratives & Images

Assume: Stereotypes are formed quickly and are often influenced by "need" to rationalize behavior/roles.

So a feminist/antiracist (etc) analysis

- Locates the multiple interconnected ways in which gender/race are manifested in a situation.
- Pulls on the threads linking the different ways to identify obscure or hidden presuppositions and material supports that undergird more manifest gender/race practices.
- Articulates ways in which the structure revealed is unjust.
- Locates possible sites for intervention/disruption.