

Problematizing Hegemony: Hyperprivileging, Pain, and Theater

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A 1994 article by Virginia Dominguez proposes that institutional practices of hyperprivileging minorities do not challenge, but instead reproduce structures of racialization in American society. Minority scholars benefitting from these practices are therefore complicit in the very processes that make them “Other.” The classic Gramscian dichotomy of force and consent, however, is inadequate for understanding the complexity of Dominguez’s thesis regarding the social construction of minority types.

This paper offers an approach to understanding the more complex processes of hegemony that forestall an oversimplified conceptualization of “force” and “consent” by examining the ways in which relations of domination are experienced and negotiated daily by those in positions of subordination. An outline of the psychological implications of “diversity” are explored within a problematized framework of hegemony that highlights the non-homogenized nature of racial opposition to dominant discourses and ideologies. The paper moves beyond the social construction of minority types to explore the performative aspects of minority participation in racializing cultural practices. Minority strategies of acting “as if” point to the potential explanatory power of performance theory within the realm of hegemonic social formations.

Keywords: hyperprivileging, racialization, Gramsci, hegemony, performance

In his *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci developed the argument that intellectuals and the intellectual function are historically “produced.” The category of intellectuals is culturally inscribed and elaborated “in accordance with very concrete traditional historical processes” (Gramsci 1971:11). Intellectuals, in other words, are not an objective fact. Following suit, Philip Abrams wrote in 1977 that what we know as “the state” does not, in fact, exist. In a well-quoted passage, Abrams asserts that “the state is not the reality which stands behind the mask of political practice. It is itself the mask which prevents our seeing political practice as it is” (Abrams 1988:58). Benedict Anderson’s 1983 groundbreaking study on nationalism, *Imagined Communities*, declared further that nations are also invented and created. “Communities are to be distinguished,” writes Anderson, “by the style in which they are imagined” (Anderson 1983:6). Finally Lila Abu-Lughod reminds us that a leading tenet of feminism has always been that women are made, not born (Abu-Lughod 1991:144). It is therefore not an illogical or entirely

revolutionary suggestion that other categories may also be socially constructed. Virginia Dominguez, in a 1994 article entitled "A Taste for the 'Other': Intellectual Complicity in Racializing Practices" adds her own category to the growing list, proposing that minorities "are not born, but are made" (Dominguez 1994:337).

These theories, attempting to both expose the "misplaced concreteness" with which these categories have been culturally inscribed and erase the "uncritical reproduction of common sense" they promote may leave some of us searching about in theoretical space for any available categorical referent (Alonso 1994). However, I find much value in these arguments because they free us from the essentializing features of these social categories and highlight certain aspects of hegemony that are usually elided or misused in academic literature.

In this paper I will first briefly discuss the commodification of minorities and outline Dominguez's argument, for her proposition that minority intellectuals are produced and commodified for purchase and exchange in colleges and universities is not a simple one. We cannot simply tack it onto the end of the list of "imagined" categories without detailing its own complex cultural politics. Practices that highlight marked forms of difference (such as hyperprivileging in the academy) perpetuate rather than challenge practices of racialization, according to Dominguez, and contribute to the "production" of a certain kind of minority - the kind required by academic institutions. Hyperprivileging thus engenders minority scholars to be complicit in the very practices that make them "Other."

I will then place Dominguez's analysis of minority hyperprivileging within the classical Gramscian dichotomy of force and consent. We will find, however, that a bi-polar analysis is insufficient in terms of explaining and understanding current social complexity. I will present a more problematized conception of Gramsci's theory that highlights three important tenets of hegemony that are obscured by the oversimplified force/consent dichotomy. A complete understanding of minority production, multiculturalism, and practices of hyperprivileging, then, goes deeper than minority consent to dominant appropriation of critical discourses and practices. In the following two sections, I will outline some of Gramsci's perspectives as they might apply to the analysis of race and racism as outlined by Stuart Hall. I will then operationalize those perspectives in an analysis drawing on the work of Signithia Fordham. Finally in the last section of the paper, drawing on the works of Fordham and Victor Turner, I will suggest that various aspects of performance theory may provide important insights into the nature and construction of hegemony that move beyond a simple

conception of society in terms of those who dominate and those who are dominated. The performative nature of minority consent not only masks severe damage done to minority identities, but demonstrates that any hegemony is only tenuously “established” through struggle and violence.

THE PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION OF “MINORITIES”

How are minority intellectuals produced and commodified? Dominguez builds on an ever-growing body of literature that historically and politically situates the range of ethnographic practices and writing techniques that in the end objectify our anthropological “Others,” thus solidifying the Self/Other relationship on which the anthropological enterprise depends. This trend, originating perhaps with Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, outlines how the anthropological “Other” has been created through the twin processes of representation and signification. According to Miles, these are processes that select from a range of possibilities only certain attributes and features to convey additional meanings (Miles 1989:70). In the case of minorities, this is what happens when physical, cultural, and linguistic differences are simplified, objectified, and transformed into Difference. Although it seems that the value of Difference lies only in its political correctness as a label, as a marker of an essential “non-Europeanism,” it nevertheless carries the historical weight of all that is “racial” in contemporary American society. In other words, the load of symbolic capital that it carries is embodied by minority scholars, making them “worth” something in our colleges and universities (Bourdieu 1977; Behar 1996). Here begins the process of commodification.

Regarding institutional practices that reproduce and reinforce the commodification of minority scholars, Dominguez specifically targets the practices of hyperprivileging, whereby only a few select minority intellectuals are chosen to fill the highly visible (savage) slots on department faculties (Dominguez 1994; Trouillot 1991). Hyperprivileging involves the “special interest, regulations, efforts, and even bidding wars” surrounding the hiring and promoting of minority intellectuals. Hyperprivileging highlights the scarce supply of minority academics by spotlighting only a few, thus simultaneously ensuring the demand. The processes of signification, inscription of symbolic capital, and hyperprivileging therefore combine to create “minorities,” types to be packaged, purchased, and traded in the academy. This process is more than filling hiring quotas and more than tokenism. As Alcida Ramos remarks, it is “tokenism with a vengeance” for it substitutes the accepting and acceptable terms “diversity” and “difference” for the paternalism implied by “tokenism” (Ramos 1994:342).

Dominguez's main thesis is that the ever-popular call for diversity in hiring practices, curricular offerings, and funding channels, instead of alleviating the stress of racist practices, actually *reproduces* the racializing structures within society that those very programs of "diversity" claim to challenge or eliminate. She suggests that although hyperprivileging practices seemingly fulfill the requirements for diversity and difference, they actually serve to replicate and maintain the racial divisions already actualized in society. The uncritical reproduction of these racial divisions continues because such programs and practices fail at a very basic level to challenge "the naturalized system of social classification on which society's system of inequality is based..." (Dominguez 1994:334).

Dominguez targets members of the academy, whites and minorities alike, as accomplices in this irresponsible and promiscuous reproduction of racist ideology. She accuses one and all of "practical complicity" in the racializing strategies of the dominant group. Even the academics, she laments, individuals who perhaps ought to know better or at least to *see* better, are not free of these peculiar "postmodern strategies of colonization" bell hooks warned of several years earlier (hooks 1990:8). In her 1990 essay "Liberation Scenes" hooks, a black feminist cultural critic, anticipates every aspect of Dominguez's argument. Both women are alarmed by the participation of scholars in the very practices to which they are emotionally, morally, intellectually and therefore publicly opposed. Their arguments against the uncritical study of Difference are not new, but what do they mean?

It means that we've been duped again. With a masterful rearticulation of the racializing practices in America by the white majority everyone, even academics and minority intellectuals who ought to know better, are buying into the idea that "solutions" such as multiculturalism and the hyperprivileging of minorities are actually changing the status quo when in fact they are successfully perpetuating it.

A "FORCE AND CONSENT" PARADIGM

In a classical Gramscian analysis, we may understand the social dynamics at work in this process as the dual workings of dominant "force" and minority "consent." In this analysis, "force" has proceeded not through channels of physically coercive governmental agencies but ideologically through the processes of cooptation. Groups that dominate the political and social arenas, confronted by a multiplicity of minority voices over the past several decades, have coopted minority demands for greater representation in the academy. That is, they have turned the

various rallying cries of minority groups (such as “diversity”) into cries of their own, partially satisfied their demands, and declared that democracy is alive and well in America and its institutions. Demands for greater minority representation on university faculties and in curriculum options are adopted by the state and its institutions in “suitably moderate form,” such as excessive hyperprivileging of minority scholars, so as to diminish the threat they pose (Omi and Winant 1994:106). The dominant group has thus “forced” any increased minority representation to proceed in a certain fashion, one that won’t disrupt the racializing practices important to their control of the state and, on a more local level, academic institutions. Commodification, bell hooks adds, also turns on this process of cooptation. Commodification occurs when minority bodies and cultures, once objectified, are re-created in a non-threatening form that is palatable to the white majority.

The multicultural movement in education, to briefly take another example, has also been easily contained by the processes of cooptation and commodification. “Diversity,” “pluralism,” and “ethnicism,” once cohesive rallying cries for increased minority representation in educational curriculum, have instead become code-words, indirectly referring to racial categories and themes. Philomena Essed elaborates on the point of code-words in her study of “everyday racism.” A word such as “ethnicism,” she writes, obscures power differences and “proclaims the end of class and race groups, thereby delegitimizing resistance against racism and denying fundamental group conflict” (Essed 1991:15). Once again, the established racial hierarchy goes unchallenged as attention is deflected elsewhere. As a result, various models of multiculturalism contend for superiority while their individual and collective effectiveness remains limited. These programs remain merely “stop-gap measures” that ensure the established “order” on campus won’t be disturbed. Therefore, by stripping any counter-hegemonic potential from the practice of hyperprivileging and the programs of multiculturalism, the process of cooptation ensures that the racial hegemony is further entrenched and the possibilities for dismantling white privilege diminish (Page 1994:342)

Minorities “consent” to these measures because, as promised, some demands are met. Further, and in defense of these practices, Aihwa Ong writes that she, for one, would “rather hear too many times about the question of racial formation from someone like Cornel West than from many non-minority scholars” (Ong 1994:339). Minority representation, then, is actually kept to a minimum and code-words continue to traffic the racism underground.

Approaching “force” from another direction, according to Roseberry, are theorists who believe that the power of the state does not reside in the ideological consent of its subjects, but with the state’s own “coercive forms and agencies which define and create certain kind of subjects and identities while denying or ruling out other kinds of subjects and identities” (Roseberry 1994: 357). This process perhaps fits most snugly with the idea that minorities are “made.” Althusser emphasizes and systematizes in this process of interpellation (or subject-making) the role of “ideological state apparatuses” (Althusser 1971). These apparatuses are in fact cultural and social institutions (here Althusser is delineating the specific segments of Gramsci’s more general “civil society”) such as churches, families, and trade-unions. However, Althusser considers schools and the educational system the most forceful ideological state apparatus in terms of constructing and denying subjects. While in the above example ideological “consent” may be granted knowingly by minorities, in this case ideological consent is structured in such a way that minorities or any other subordinate groups may not be aware that they have bought into the dominant construction of reality.

Reading the force/consent dichotomy as the epicenter of Gramsci’s conception of hegemony leads usually to one of two things. The first of these is for the concept of hegemony to be used in this oversimplified and incorrect fashion, where Gramsci’s metaphor of a field of force is taken literally as a bipolar field. In this sense there are only two social groups, the dominating and the subordinate, and “hegemony” is equated with “dominance.” The second is to put the concept of hegemony to no use at all- to discard it as a tool that can adequately shed light on current social dilemmas. One major problem is that subordinate groups often know they are being dominated and employ all sorts of linguistic, cultural, organizational, and symbolic strategies to contest and overcome this domination. The complaint is that a static, bipolar social field does not do justice to the multidimensional, complex, and processual world in which actual people (not subjects) live and make sense of their lives.

PROBLEMATIZING HEGEMONY

Working within a broader Gramscian framework, however, allows a more complex and vital understanding of both the non-homogenized nature of racial opposition to dominant discourses and ideologies as well as the fragility of any “established” hegemonic moment. A formulation of this sort not only resolves the problems that arise from an oversimplified conception of hegemony, but speaks directly to the issues raised by Dominguez and hooks regarding the commodification of minorities and the problematics of minority intellectual “consent.”

Problematizing hegemony, then, foregrounds three important tenets of Gramscian thought. First, given the multi-dimensional character of hegemony itself, the notion that subaltern groups are themselves not unified is valuable. For Gramsci, certain classes were never politically and ideologically unified. Fragmentation within classes is inevitable given the wide array of conflicting interests converging historically. (I am aware that I have moved from using “minority” to using “class.” Following Balibar and Wallerstein, I do not believe that the categories of “race” and “class” may be collapsed into each other, i.e. that one is reducible to the other. Further I do not believe that these concepts ought to be used interchangeably. To avoid a necessarily lengthy discussion on the subject I will follow William Roseberry’s lead and skirt the issue altogether with such phrases as “ruling” and “subaltern groups.” This is, no doubt, confusing. Yet the tension, if anything, only lends itself to my argument that the issues involved in the hegemonic formations are knotty and multi-dimensional - a tangled mess that is best understood as such, not as something that can be methodically and academically systematized and ordered.)

Second, an expanded utilization of hegemony leads to the understanding that subordinated groups are not “captured or immobilized by some sort of ideological consensus” (Roseberry 1994:360). This suggests that there is more than “practical complicity” at work in the academy than Dominguez might admit. The spectrum of minority experience in the academy cannot be painted by the wide brush of ideological consensus. Participation in the racialized and racializing configurations of meaning in any given society is never singularly homogenous, i.e. it is never emotionally, psychologically, or culturally unitary. That any subaltern group is in agreement regarding their position relative to the dominant group is theoretically limiting and tangibly untrue. Approaching consent from the other direction, then, from the lived reality of those who are subordinate confuses the issue of power and further serves to strengthen a conception of hegemony as more than a simple “force and consent” characterization of society.

Hegemony in terms of lived experience leads us to the third perspective gained by a broader reading of Gramsci, namely that that action and therefore confrontation between ruling and subaltern groups takes place within the institutional structures and formations of the state and civil society (Roseberry 1994:360). I have already noted the importance Althusser placed on schools in his theory of ideological state apparatuses. Gramsci also emphasized the importance of schools for the production of intellectuals by writing that “school is the instrument through which intellectuals of various levels are elaborated” (Althusser

1971:10). Hegemony, then, is even more fully removed from the abstract level of theory and returned to the arena of lived experience where it is more useful in terms of understanding the complexity of minority formation and institutional struggle.

GRAMSCI'S THEORY APPLIED TO RACE AND RACISM

Stuart Hall, after taking great care to present Gramsci's theory in a nutshell and warn readers of the dangers involved with moving too freely between different levels of abstraction, sets forth several ways in which Gramsci's theories might be used to transform various existing theories on race and racism. The first, which in recent years has become something of a refrain in racial theory, is that we ought to study "not racism in general but racisms" (Hall 1986:23). Various theorists have taken up this call in different ways. Kwame Appiah, for example, focuses his attention on the various doctrines of racism that have, over the years, muddied the waters of racial theories and hindered potentially powerful anti-racist strategies (Appiah 1990:4). Balibar and Wallerstein ask more generally if there might not be a "neo-racism" that is unexplainable in terms of earlier models and theories of racism (1991). Gramsci, on the other hand, would call for an emphasis on historical specificity (the *Notebooks*, we might say, exemplify this emphasis overmuch) of any racism. Dominguez's description of hyperprivileging in the academy concerns itself, primarily, with exposing specific racializing practices within a given social setting. She perhaps comes closest to Gramsci here. However, Dominguez fails to situate the offending practice of hyperprivileging historically, as Gramsci would advise. Especially given the economic-laden language of minority commodification, production, purchase, and exchange, Dominguez's argument loses potential power when these processes are not located within the broader economic spheres of current American trends in supply, demand, and resource articulation. Had Dominguez demonstrated how capital actually functions through difference instead of similarity and identity, her argument might be more useful to an understanding of the intertwined economic and political processes of the academy.

Secondly, a Gramscian perspective on race and racism heightens consideration of the "cultural factors in social development" (Hall 1986:26). To avoid confusion, Hall explicitly states that:

by culture, here, I mean the actual, grounded terrain of practices, representations, languages and customs of any specific historical society. I also mean the contradictory forms of "common sense" which have taken root in and helped to shape popular life (Hall 1986:26).

Domains of the cultural, for Gramsci, are crucial sites for the ongoing struggle between the hegemonic practices of the ruling group and the counter-hegemonic protests of those who are dominated. For example, a cultural form that will be discussed in the second half of this paper is the black system of fictive kinship as it is defined in the works of Signithia Fordham. Subjects are created and minorities produced in schools, an arena where hegemonic individualism and counter-hegemonic kinship do battle.

It is now evident that the elaboration of hegemonic processes includes, but is also more than, the one-dimensional and ideologically unified procedure originally outlined in this paper. The fragility and momentary potential of hegemony is highlighted when we consider the multitude of sites at which cultural, racial, and political confrontations occur. It is important that this more problematized conception of hegemony be utilized to grasp the full complexity of Dominguez's argument as well as to illuminate the pain to which she only briefly alludes in her description of the trafficking of minorities in the academy.

OPERATIONALIZING HEGEMONY

Sealed into that crushing objecthood, I turned beseechingly to others. Their attention was a liberation...But just as I reached the other side, I stumbled, and the movements, the attitudes, the glances of the other fixed me there...I was indignant; I demanded an explanation. Nothing happened. I burst apart. Now the fragments have been put together again by another self...

Frantz Fanon "Black Skin, White Masks"

Nearly thirty years ago Fanon wrote about the psychopathology and neuroses that he believed characterized the black psyche and stemmed from being a Negro in a world brutally colonized by white Europeans (Fanon 1967). His words are useful here, reminding us that hegemony conceptualized simply as "force and consent" is unable to either accommodate or account for the pain and psychological violence of being a minority. "Force" fails to adequately address the contestation and struggle inherent in all aspects of a hegemonic formation. And in a world that, thirty years after Fanon, still lives under the heavy weight of colonialism, the violence of the ideological and material self-making processes to which minorities are subjected denies containment by such a passive term as "consent."

To return to one of the primary arguments against theories of minority consent, minorities are well-aware, as Fanon was well-aware, that they are being dominated. Ideological, symbolic, linguistic, and

organizational resources are tapped and utilized so that subaltern groups may understand, accommodate, or resist this domination. Continual struggle and potential disruption of the status quo come to characterize the negotiation of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic practices. The psychological effects of this continual negotiation have not been adequately considered in working models of minority representation, commodification, and intellectual hyperprivileging.

The works of Signithia Fordham particularly illuminate the shallow dichotomous understanding of force and consent in social formations. She has carefully documented the psychological implications of the "ubiquitous celebration of diversity" for minority identity and identities (Stolcke:344). She begins from the position that among African-Americans there exists the concept of "fictive kinship" which refers to "a kinship-like connection between and among persons in a society, not related by blood or marriage" (Fordham 1988:56). The terms "sister" and "brother" are cultural symbols of this kinship, representing the collective identity of African-Americans. Yet membership in the "family" hinges on more than the color of one's skin. One must display the attitude and behavior that appropriately reflects the sense of peoplehood that "sister" and "brother" imply and that serve to maintain the established distance between "us" and "them." Fordham writes that criteria for membership in the fictive kinship system rests entirely within the black community, as does the judgment regarding who shall and who shall not be included. Lastly, given this collectivism that characterizes the African-American community (the postulation of which many African-American intellectuals would challenge), standards of success are defined in terms of the group. That is, "blacks must succeed as a people, not as individual blacks" (Fordham 1988:54). From Fordham's work, it is easy to see that the practices of hyperprivileging in the academy go directly against the tenets of fictive kinship.

African-American students, encountering Euro-centric school practices and curricula that reward individualism and competition, are forced to either adopt these practices and values or fail. They also learn early on, according to Fordham, that following the standard academic practices of schools is perceived as "acting white." Success in school, then, is often equated with learning how to "act white" and is, as such, devalued in the African-American community. The resultant tension between the cultural practices of the African-American community and the cultural and structural practices of schools are resolved only at an incredible damage done to students' identities. Students are faced with daily decisions regarding whether to "act white," thereby achieving success as defined by the dominant group while simultaneously losing

face with members of their own culture, or to remain faithful to the practices required for group membership within the African-American community while failing at school. Fordham reminds us that these decisions are made consciously, and that a great deal of energy is expended as students must constantly juggle personae and roles within a single day at school. Yet no matter how successful the routine, acting “as if” one believes in the general cultural beliefs of the majority causes an almost complete deconstruction of minority identity (Fordham 1991:471).

Fordham has carefully documented the psychological implications of the “celebration of diversity” for minority identity and identities. Her tireless studies of male and female African-American high school students in private schools as well as predominantly black public schools suggest that such celebrated terms as “bicultural,” meaning the ability of minority individuals to “switch” from one culture to another with the ease of switching from rap to classical radio stations, are decidedly misleading. Instead, there is a crushing “identity implosion” in many cases where minority students are asked to assume a “raceless” identity at the same time that they must exemplify, in fact *embody*, a school’s commitment to “diversity” (Fordham 1991). Specifically, African-American students attempting to bring their cultural knowledge into the school context are met with resistance from Euro-centric policies, curricula, and language. The student proceeds only in the face of this greater threat to the Self, which he or she can never actually escape. In fact, African-American identities are systematically deconstructed then reconstituted in terms of the white, individualistic, competitive ethos of both public and private schools. This is not a painless process. Fordham notes instead that school “psychologically crushes African-American students’ identity” (Fordham 1991:475).

The crux of Fordham’s argument is that students facing these identity-rending decisions invent and utilize various strategies for coping with this “burden of acting white” (Fordham and Ogbu 1986). These strategies help to resolve the tension for students who want to do well in school while retaining their loyalty to the African-American community. “Leveling behavior” is demonstrated whereby good African-American students go to great lengths not to look like good students, but instead appear to conform to the demands of their peers that they not “act white.” Many students, for example, spend very little time on schoolwork and homework. Others don’t attend school regularly. Still others take on the clown persona, joking in order to minimize the hostility and resentment from their peers that could be directed their way. These strategies, of course, must be juggled with other strategies that demonstrate to teachers

representing the white power structure within schools that the student is in fact a successful student. These strategies can include silence, especially on the part of African-American girls (Fordham and Ogbu 1986). Maintaining a low profile in the school is another strategy that could include anything from not attending awards ceremonies to irregular class attendance (Fordham 1988, 1993).

THE PERFORMANCE PARADIGM IN ANTHROPOLOGY

In the social sciences, or at least in those that have abandoned a reductionist conception of what they are about, the analogies are coming more and more from the contrivances of cultural performance...from theater, painting, grammar, literature, law, play.

Clifford Geertz "Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought"

Studies on the performative aspects of life began at least as long ago as Erving Goffman's now classic study *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) in which the author outlined the performative nature of individuals and groups in the course of their everyday interactions with each other. Victor Turner also explored social life using the structure of drama, although not in the same sense used by Goffman. For Goffman, all the world is a stage. Turner instead applied the drama analogy to the specific processes of social conflict. Today "performance" is a conception that throws its inclusive web over such complex phenomena as play, shamanism, ritualization, the origins of theater, crisis behavior, the art-making process, and performances in everyday life, sports, and entertainment (Schechner 1988: xiii).

As demonstrated in the previous section, Fordham relies heavily on language of the theater and performance in her work. Students must cope with the burden of "acting white." They are required to make a "charade" of their identity and therefore employ various techniques of "impersonation" in their fight to retain approval from the black community while simultaneously succeeding according to white standards. "Improvising one's life" is a strategy noted by Fordham that suggests "constructing an identity that, on the one hand, does not violate one's sense of 'Self,' while on the other hand, enhancing one's sense of fit within a given context" (Fordham 1993:12).

Kesho Scott, another black female theorist, also builds her theory around a performance metaphor, that of the chorus line. Scott, in a 1991 collection of four life histories, explores black women's "habits of survival" which she defines as the "external adjustments and internal

adaptations that people make to economic exploitation and to racial and gender-related oppression” (Scott 1991:7). For Scott, the survival strategies employed by African-American women are understood as the “learned routine steps danced by a chorus line” (Scott 1991:13). I must note that this metaphor, while adopting the language of performance, also retains the integrity of African-American collectivism.

Two important strategies, or “steps” in the dance, include the denial of a black feminist movement and a constant awareness of what one personally “will have to give up” should the current, oppressive, racist state of affairs be questioned. bell hooks has also suggested that these two issues perhaps played a role in Anita Hill’s failure to present a career-damaging characterization of Clarence Thomas in the 1991 Senate confirmation hearings of Thomas’ nomination to the United States Supreme Court (hooks 1992:79). That the 1960s black power movement taught its African-American women to “assume a subordinate role” to black men, taught them that any involvement in feminism was a betrayal of the race could go a long way to explaining why Hill never invoked feminist politics or a feminist agenda during the hearings. That she was a black woman, perhaps looking to advance her career, perhaps just cognizant of the fact that “being a black woman, you know you have to put up with a lot so you grit your teeth and do it” could go a long way to explain why she failed to point the finger at Thomas when the harassment first occurred (hooks 1992). Perhaps there is more to the failure of Anita Hill than the failure of feminism and speaking out against what is wrong.

Strategies of survival and the necessity of acting “as if” are an important dimension when considering the fragility of any hegemonic moment. They demonstrate that the “consent” of a minority group is highly charged with ambivalence, tension, and symbolic violence and is not a simple case of “if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em.” The breakdown of the self that grows out of the repression of ambition and the necessity of acting “as if” highlights the psychological “splitting” that occurs when “the subject/self gives up the tension between self and other or between different aspects of the self” in favor of an opposition where one self is more highly valued than the other (Luttrell 1996:95). That what is valued by one group may be devalued by another only deepens the tension with which African-Americans, if not other minorities, must live on a daily and hourly basis. The concept of “splitting” is an important amendment to performance theory applied in the area of everyday life that Goffman was advancing almost forty years ago. For Goffman, there is often a “real” self and a “performing” self, different selves that can be used interchangeably, different “roles” that can be called upon (though not

without *some* degree of inconsistency and discrepancy) to answer the needs presented in any situation. Fanon, Fordham, Scoot, hooks, and Lutrell would all argue that there is only one self and that the violent processes of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic struggle are manifested at the deepest levels of the minority psyche.

According to Victor Turner, social drama is defined as “a process of converting particular values and/or ends, distributed over a range of actors into a system of shared or consensual meaning” (Turner 1986:97). Social dramas unfold in several stages, beginning with a breach or symbolic transgression of the established order. For example, an African-American child may like attending school. The breach is followed by an event that cannot be overlooked - let’s say our enthusiastic student has gotten all A’s, something that must be addressed by the African-American community. The stage of redressive action includes what is done to overcome the crisis. This involves, according to Turner, the encounter of past and present. It is the important stage where minority identities are violated and split. It is the stage where minority intellectuals like Ruth Behar posit the most violence. Indeed, Behar writes about being granted tenure by the University of Michigan in terms of death and mourning. She writes “I was mourning a loss for which I knew I deserved no sympathy - the loss of my innocence when I let Michigan toy with my most intimate sense of identity and buy me out” (Behar 1986:22). Lastly, the breach is healed and order reestablished by the final process of reintegration. Only, in our case, reintegration is never as harmonious as it sounds. Often, as in the case of Behar, there is only regret.

This conceptualization of conflict allows us to see social drama unfolding in universities, schools, and on the U.S. Senate floor. Further, Turner suggests that it is through social drama that “we are enabled to observe the crucial principles of the social structure in their operation and their relative dominance at successive points in time” (Turner 1986:92) In other words, cultural devices designed to “fix” or “crystallize” meaning, such as racializing practices of the white majority (e.g. hyperprivileging), can be best located and made visible at those points where minorities mobilize the strategies of acting “as if,” attempting to disrupt the hegemonic fixing of meaning. Meaning is asserted instead for minorities in the mode of “as if.” That is, in moments of crisis or breach there is indeterminacy, there is “that which is not yet settled, concluded and known” (Stewart 1996:188). It is in this space of indeterminacy that minorities write and perform their counter-hegemonic scripts.

CONCLUSIONS

The use of performance theory in the context of minority intellectual production, hyperprivileging, and resistance is instructive for several reasons. First, it problematizes the often oversimplified conceptions of Gramsci's ideas of hegemony. Instead of suggesting a sustained period of dominance where members of the dominated group must either wholly buy into the program of the dominant group or face complete exclusion from the "mainstream" culture and all the benefits therein, hegemony is seen here as a continuous struggle between different groups, a changing relation more than a static state of being. It also removes the expression of hegemony from the realm of abstract ideas and places it at the site of such struggles in everyday interactions.

Secondly, performance theory is useful in that it maintains the agency and will of the "actors" involved. People aren't seen as simple cultural automatons who mechanically reproduce the means of production, submitting unconsciously to the greater, more abstract will of some dominant ideology originating with the State. Performance theory clearly establishes that people have much at stake and therefore make decisions and act in ways that reflect this. We can even consider the "invention" of culture here. However, unlike the more postmodern uses of "invention" the term takes on a new, expanded meaning when considered within a framework of performance.

Finally, performance theory helps us retain the specificity of the performance. For Gramsci the political, cultural, and temporal constructions of social formations are key to understanding the fragile, multifaceted nature of hegemony. In fact, Gramsci uses the war metaphor so that we may visualize a struggle on many fronts and with many points of resistance. There is, therefore, no such thing as a unified, dominant ideology, just as there is no homogenous, politically and ideologically unified resistance. We can only now begin to understand that hegemony is not a simple, monolithic domination that has all those in subordinate positions throwing up their hands and saying "you win." Instead, a non-reductionist and struggle-oriented conception of hegemony helps us to understand that language, images, organizations, and institutions are actively used by subordinate populations to talk about, confront, accommodate themselves to, or resist their domination. Acting "as if" points to a break with the assimilationist theories of several decades ago whereby it was assumed that ethnic groups would want to assimilate into "mainstream" American society. Further, it effectively rules out the assumption that it is the values or "norms" of African-American culture that determine the success or lack of success of African-American

students. To the contrary, acting “as if” reflects the incredible degree of willingness and the lengths to which African-Americans will go in accepting Euro-centric ideologies and practices as the “norm” (Omi & Winant 1994:21).

A complete understanding of minority production, multiculturalism, and practices of hyperprivileging minority intellectuals, then, goes deeper than minority consent to dominant appropriation of critical discourses and practices. The performative nature of minority consent, masking the deeper severity of damage done to minority identities, is significant in that it demonstrates that any hegemony is only tenuously “established,” through struggle and violence. Thus, it remains a discursively, politically, and ideologically fragile moment in the history of any society.

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