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SP.601J / 17.006J / 17.007J / 24.237J Feminist Theory
Spring 2008

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Discussion 4: Embodied Knowledge

- What is it?
- How do we know what we know based on how our body is configured?
- If we isolate embodied knowledge versus “authoritative knowledge” (the objective knowledge, gained from outside a subject looking in) what are the differences?
- Are both types of knowledge valued?

Embodied:

- What is the value of embodied knowledge? What marks embodied knowledge?
- Is embodied knowledge an example of a deviant? If so, a deviation from what?
- Does culture weigh knowledge over emotion?
- If one is the bearer of an “insider’s knowledge,” what types of pressures does she face? Is she forced to represent a certain type of stereotype?
- If one is pressured by society to “speak out,” to be the “insider voice”, is there a difference implied? How does inherent difference modify what the speaker and spoken to understanding?

Authoritative:

- Does objective knowledge help enrich one’s experience?
- From the objective lens what does one assume? That white is normal? Is white unmarked?
- Is it easy for those writing objective studies to be “blind”?
- Is authoritative knowledge marked? Does it claim to be unmarked?
- Of the two types of knowledge discussed, which is more masculine? More feminine?

Multiple Types of Knowledge:

- How are there multiple types of knowledge?
- What is situated knowledge? How is it a component of embodied/authoritative knowledge?
- How does one reach outside his/her realm of knowledge? (Eg. a black person writing about the white experience, or vice versa) Is this valuable? Is one’s tone always going to be condescending when writing about one’s idea of another’s embodied knowledge? If so, why?
- Are there absolutes? Why not?
- Is generation under talked about in regards to experience?
- How has evaluation of one’s experience moved from object to subject?
- Is our idea of subjective and objective knowledge inherently unstable? How so?

Refer to Eli Clare’s novel *Exile & Pride*:

- Did you like the novel? Why, why not?
- Is this an example of intersectionality? How?
- How does she express multi-dimensionality?
- How is home expressed?

- Does she create rigid definitions of gender, class, abuse?
- What kind of willingness does she show? A willingness to understand? Define? Accept? Is this willingness a form of courage? How?
- Why does our society not funnel more resources into assisting the disabled in public? Rather than spending money on research for a “cure”? Does one make the assumption that a disabled person wants to be cured?
- What is the spectrum of needs and wants in the disabled community? Does society group them into an enormous “disabled” group instead of acknowledging the spectrum of difference?
- Why do people feel the need to change? What do we fight against? What does Eli fight against? Is it good to accept?
- Does Eli know her limits? Does she accept them? Is this good and/or bad?
- What words hurt? Don’t hurt? Why?
- Does Eli embrace language? How?
- What kind of authority does one need to have to use words like “gimp,” “crip,” and “dyke” casually? If one does not identify as those things, does she ever have the authority to use them?
- Is Eli sensitive to the potential hurt of such words? Does she use them too casually?
- How does Eli discuss the urban and rural difference? Is it significant?
- What does exile and pride mean? How does it resonate in the novel? What does Eli take pride in?
- What does Eli’s self-definition involve? Is she placed? How does she explain her identity as an outsider yet also an insider in her hometown and family?
- Is she female-identified? Transgendered? What is the significance of “Eli” versus “Elizabeth”? Do we assume that Eli still identifies as a woman in her work? Why, why not?

Refer to Joanna Kadi’s, “Stupidity Deconstructed”:

- What does she discuss in the essay?
- What makes class tangible? Intangible?
- What is one’s reference point when discussing class? Is it embodied? Authoritative?
- What kind of people does one assume comprise the “working class”?
- Can Kadi be working/middle-class and smart?
- What has she internalized?
- How is class multi-dimensional?
- What rootedness does Kadi describe? Are all people rooted in class? Can people escape class? Is it an escape to change one’s place in the social hierarchy? What labels/doesn’t label it as an escape?
- Is one less likely to be put on the spot in regards to “inner” class knowledge?

Refer to Felly Nkweto Simmonds article, “My Body, Myself: How Does a Black Woman Do Sociology”:

- Is she objective? How so?
- How does her identity as the only black person in the sociology department affect her scholarship?

Film: "Gendernaut" by Monica Treut

- How is the male distinct from female in this film? Are the genders distinct?
- Did the individuals reject the binary idea of gender? Why? Yet have not some embraced the very polar idea of male versus female in transitioning to the other sex? Do some trans people re-evaluate patriarchies or undermine them by extreme manipulation of the body and stereotypical image identification?
- Do these people embrace stereotypes? Experiences?
- What does "trans" imply?
- Is only a single gender identity safe? Are people scared to experiment with gender? Why?
- How many genders are there?
- Is height a secondary sex characteristic?
- What is the significance of cyber space?
- What does "in control of one's body" mean?