

Lesson Plan: Discussing Race using Beyoncé's Superbowl performance and the reactions to it, leading into Omi and Winant (1994) and Ignatiev (1995)

Annotations:

- I wanted to lead students into thinking about race using an accessible example that they had seen and/or heard about
- The activity went well. The thing I had to improvise in the moment was that it was ok to be unsure and ok to feel like they didn't know the correct answer. Emphasizing that helped students to talk more openly and productively about race

Before discussion acknowledgement:

- I'm a white person but I have studied race as a sociology student
- I especially have studied policing and mass incarceration of people of color. I worked for a policy research center in New Mexico that worked on criminal justice policy and practice
- **I think it is important to acknowledge my racial background as we discuss race in section.** Race continues to be something contested in US society. Many consider white to be neutral or not a race. Similar to how we equate the word gender with women, many people equate race with being a person of color. However, being sociology students, you should be beginning to see how gender is about men, women, those who are gender nonconforming, those who identify as androgenous or being agender. You should also be starting to see how white is also a race. Racial projects continue to profoundly impact our society and can be contentious. I want to encourage us to have an open, respectful discussion about race in these articles and in the USA.

Icebreaker: Beyoncé and the Superbowl

- How many people watched the Superbowl halftime show?
- What have you been hearing after Beyoncé's performance?
- What are some positive reactions to her performance? What are some negative reactions?
- What have been people been saying about race after the performance?
- Watch either performance or SNL video or Jessica Williams video on Beyoncé or both if there's time
 - Jessica Williams, *The Daily Show*: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/jessica-williams-shuts-down-beyonce-super-bowl-critics-on-the-daily-show-a6863696.html>
 - SNL, The Day Beyonce Turned Black: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ociMBfkDG1w>
- What do you notice about this video?
- What is the video's message?
- How can we relate this video to the course?
- What racial projects is SNL or Jessica Williams suggesting? What are the competing racial projects?

- What does this say about race as a classification system? As a social construction?

Omi and Winant (1994): “Racial Formation in the United States”

- Who can explain racial formation?
- What’s a racial project? What’s an example of a racial project?
- What is a racial dictatorship? How was (and still could be considered) the USA a racial dictatorship?
- Consequences of racial dictatorship?
 - P. 66: American ID as white, colorline as fundamental division in US society, “oppositional racial consciousness and organization”
- What do the authors argue about hegemony?
 - First, what’s a basic definition of hegemony? (how a certain group maintains power over another group and rules society)
 - Hegemony is different than domination by force as it’s unseen
 - Hegemony is something of which you accept small pieces (“consent”)

Ignatiev (1995): “How the Irish became White”

- So, how did the Irish become white?
- Discriminated against and looked down upon in the USA and England
 - In the USA, lived alongside blacks. Had unions and marriages with blacks and mixed race children
 - Diversity of social classes came to USA yet all subsumed under “Irish” label
 - USA development of Scotch-Irish vs. Irish distinction
 - Irish seen as a race other than white, similar to black
- What does author suggest about Irish? How did being Irish cease being a racial classification? How did Irish become an ethnic classification?
 - Citizenship was tied to being white in USA for a long, long time
 - Irish did actions that aligned themselves with white Americans, like refusing to align with American and Irish abolitionists in Great Britain