

Assignment #1: Theorizing Lived Experiences: Gendered Object Analysis

Dr. Goldman: WGS 101 Fall '20

Read this article about gendering objects (toys, in this case): <https://theconversation.com/how-toys-became-gendered-and-why-itll-take-more-than-a-gender-neutral-doll-to-change-how-boys-perceive-femininity-124386>

If you are following or active in the #BlackLivesMatter movement you may be familiar with the term *structural racism*. Although the terms may not be part of our common vernacular, the reality is that our society was built on many different interlocking platforms of structural oppression including racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism and ableism. Assumptions about gender and gender roles inform our everyday lives. They subconsciously affect our choices, behavior and expectations of others and ourselves. For this assignment we will be observing the behavior of those around us and analyzing the use of common objects found in our homes. Look around your home and make a list of at least 10 shared objects found in most homes. They should be objects that are part of regular (daily, weekly or monthly) life. Household includes objects used outside in the yard too. Keep this list because you'll include it in the assignment you hand in.

As you make your list note who typically uses the object in your home. If you have the opportunity, observe how objects are being used in your household and who is using them. If you watch t.v. or movies, notice how objects are used there as well. If you were to see that object in someone else's home who would you think it belonged to? Think back to your childhood home and friends' homes as you do your observational research. When something broke, who fixed it? Who cleaned the bathroom? Who took out the trash? Were there certain objects that were explicitly gendered in their use? Were there certain clothing items that one gender was expected to wear while it was unacceptable for another gender to wear the same items? I realize that some of you may have grown up in all female or all male homes. If so, think about what happened in your home and what happened in your friends' or relatives' homes. Also note intersectional uses: does the object intersect with race, religion, sexuality, gender identity or class in some way? If objects are/were explicitly gendered in your home, is/was this a topic of discussion? Where do you think these expectations come from? Finally, what questions do you have as you observe and analyze the gendered use of household objects? And how might you extrapolate your findings to other areas of your life and assumptions about gender. Please take the time to observe and think carefully about these questions and make detailed notes for yourself.

Once you've got your lists and your notes, review what we've read and discussed thus far in this class, especially theories of feminism, theorizing lived experiences and intersectionality. How do these concepts and theories apply to the objects in your home? Finally, choose 3 to 4 objects from your list to focus on in a 3 page journal entry summarizing your observations and analysis. Feel free to include references to gendered objects outside your home as well. Be sure to refer to our course materials whenever possible and highlight what you've learned in completing this assignment. Your journal should be typewritten using 12 point font and double spaced. Please include a topic and concluding sentence and carefully organize your thoughts. Include your original list with your journal.

Do not hesitate to email me at goldmarb@buffalostate.edu with any questions!