

Week 1: Coming back to Skeggs

Response:

“Where are you from?”

A strong childhood memory that lives at an expensive rent in my mind is when I wore green for St Patrick's Day at school and a girl told me I couldn't because I'm not Irish I'm Chinese. I was so angry that she was telling me what I was and being totally wrong because I'm mixed Irish and Japanese, and upset that I couldn't speak back and correct her, I was just silent and shaking and making her feel uneasy because I'd stopped responding.

The section of the Skeggs text 'Class Performativity' makes me consider not only the assumptions of class people make based on particular signifiers but also how we choose to define our own identity. It makes me think of the multifaceted aspect of identity that intersect with class: Race, Gender, Sexuality, and how assumptions are made in different contexts. I have been watching Judith Butler videos on Youtube to refresh my understanding of performativity and what I picked up on was Butler's more recent writings on grievability – that some lives are treated as more worthy of grief – and how this relates to our lives now as we live during a pandemic.

Throughout the pandemic there has been an increase in anti-Asian hate crimes, as Trump has referred to Covid-19 as 'the Chinese virus', the so called 'model minority' has become targeted as 'other' and dangerous. This way of thinking is dangerous. It reduces our grievability. Who will mourn us if we are attacked?

Over the past years there has been a trend for self-care, but in this instance I feel community care is what's most effective, especially when we can't rely on the state to support us. The difficulties faced over the past year have made struggles that already existed more apparent, more people have recognised the faults in government support systems and the reliance on charity to bridge the gap.

In my personal experience and in the bare roots of my understanding, performativity makes me think of how I am perceived by others and what I have chosen to heighten or hide in order to appear a certain way. If I wear certain clothes, if I use a particular voice, if I'm with different people – all these things feed into how I'm perceived. Now it is all the more fraught.

The section from Skeggs is focussed on thinking about why the working class is named as such and who has chosen the naming. But who has chosen that class should obscure race, gender and sexuality? Why does it default to white, male, straight? It's difficult for me to focus on class when there are multiple assumptions that might come into place with identity.

When I am with my Mother – I'm mistaken for someone who can't speak English
When I am with my Father – I'm mistaken for a teenager

When I am with my Sister – I'm mistaken for the younger sister
When I am with my Nephew – I'm mistaken for a mother
When I am with my Girlfriend – I'm mistaken for a friend
When I am with my Friend – I'm mistaken for their girlfriend
When I am with a Lecturer – I'm mistaken for a rich international student
When I am with a Security Guard – I'm mistaken for a thief
When I am Alone