

Race, Gender, and Class in the Media

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This assignment is designed to help you a) apply sociological and cultural analysis and b) develop your skills in constructing a written argument. You will choose a song from any genre that interests you and analyze it in depth from multiple perspectives.

Part 1 (300-350 words):

- Select a song under 8 minutes long from any genre or era of popular music.
- Describe the situations in which you typically listen to this song, how closely you pay attention to it, and what kind of activities you think the song's target audience engages in while listening.
- Explain what the song means to you personally, considering both the lyrics and how the music itself contributes to that meaning.

Part 2 (300-350 words):

- Listen to the first 30 seconds of your chosen song.
- Describe the music in real-time: note when instruments enter, what they are playing, the dynamics, tempo, characteristics of the beat and melody (if present), and qualities of the vocals and lyrics (if present).
- Listen to the same 30-second excerpt again, but this time, describe the overall feel and style using the elements you identified in the previous step. Discuss how this introduction sets the tone for the rest of the song.

Part 3 (300-350 words):

- Have three classmates listen to your song and provide four words each to describe the singing style/character and four words to describe the song's overall effect.
- From the 24 total words you collect, select 3-5 that most intrigue you or differ significantly from your own interpretation.
- Analyze the song objectively to determine what might have led your classmates to choose those words, without asking them directly. Incorporate socio-cultural data into your analysis.

Part 4 (350-400 words):

- Choose any excerpt from your song.
- Provide an in-depth analysis of this excerpt, avoiding repetition or redundancy. Challenge yourself to generate as many original ideas as possible about the rhythm, melody, vocal style, form, history, and any other relevant aspects.
- Go beyond mere description; use your understanding of social and cultural elements to argue how each musical component contributes to the overall perceptual effect and influences how the lyrics are interpreted and perceived by society.

The final draft of this assignment should total approximately 1200-1300 words (roughly 3 pages).

Part 5: Create a video response this week that includes information from the textbook chapters on gender and equality/inequality, as well as the documentaries "Mansome" and "Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes." Title your response "Race, Class, and Gender in the Media." In your video, critically analyze the intersections of two or more social categories as portrayed in the media. For example:

- Discuss social perceptions of certain individuals at the intersection of race and class
- Examine the economic realities faced by individuals at the intersection of gender and class
- Explore social perceptions of individuals at the intersection of race and gender
- Or analyze any other combination of racial, class, or gender classifications

Consider how media both influences and is influenced by popular perceptions of individuals at these intersections.

In your analysis, treat race, class, and gender as general classifications, each with multiple specific categories.

- Gender classifications include categories like men/boys, women/girls, transgender, and transsexual
- Racial classifications include categories like Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, etc.
- Class categories include high, middle, and low

For example, if you choose to focus on the intersection of race and gender for men/boys, use the notes you took on representations of White men from "Mansome" and Black men from "Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes" to critically analyze this intersection. Issues of class and economics may also be relevant to your discussion, as media portrayals often highlight class status in conjunction with race and gender.