Abstract

CLONING CULTURES: RACE, GENDER AND THE PROBLEM OF SAMENESS

Philomena Essed, University of Amsterdam, University of California Irvine

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Instruments affirmative action, multicultural training, anti-racism programs or diversity requirements may have reduced the more blatant forms of discriminative practices, but they have not eliminated gender and racial-ethnic discrimination. The preferred profiles for top positions, whether in corporate or in public institutions represent still predominantly images of whiteness and masculinity. I discuss the theme of the cultural cloning with illustrations from two professions with the highest social status in the Netherlands, one, university (full) professors and, two, medical specialists The higher echelons of medicine and of academia are such relatively homogeneous circles monopolizing access to higher learning and the body politics of life and death, sickness and health. Rather than focusing on how to include more diversity, I first question the underlying preference for sameness which shapes resistance against diversity. The very organization of society - the modernization process - is one where human and material relations are organized in terms of uniformly organized institutes (school, universities, hospitals) and sections (disciplines, administration, catering). Human categories are often organized in unequal functional pairs (employers-employees, teachers-students, parents-children) and unequal bio-social pairs along lines of gender, race, ethnicity, age, abilities (men-woman, black-white etcetera). At the very basis of these concepts are processes of emulation (school buildings look alike) and real or attributed sameness (nation, men, women, professor, surgeons, and nurses).