

Comedic Dissonance: Dave Chappelle and Jordan Peele's Satirical Clash with Social Ideology

Recent social criticisms of gender and race have been brought to light through the use of satirical narratives. Such narratives have a profound effect on how these two concepts have transformed within the realm of society. Through the use of humor and irony, numerous satirists have been able to demonstrate the discriminatory horrors and inequalities that exist within these areas. Dave Chappelle and Jordan Peele are two important satirists who have been able to point out the flaws of society in an often absurd yet effective manner. Through their comedic routines, Chappelle and Peele employ hyperbolic, stereotypical, and reversal satirical devices to unearth their objections to society's dogmatic perception of gender and race; thus revealing inherent truths that lie at the intersection of gendered roles and ethnic representation.

Jordan Peele addresses race and gender in numerous ways throughout his work. Throughout the works of *Get Out* and *Key & Peele*, Jordan Peele uses multiple satirical techniques such as exaggerations and reversals to express the modern day problems within society. In regards to race, *Get Out* exaggerates an absurdist satire, as well as incorporates an allegorical reference to cultural appropriation. Chris, an African American male, is put in an odd situation as he is forced to meet his girlfriend's parents and their all white family. As his girlfriend Rose, and her parents are white, Chris becomes overly anxious about the visit as her family immediately begins their attempt to express acceptance for African Americans and African American culture. This apprehension mirrors the same demeanor shared by many other African American males in the public sphere, where their presence can induce hostility and unwarranted violence. Chris, in this satirical situation, assumes the role of any other minority representation when subject to the unforgiving and antagonistic "white gaze". Indirect satire is

used abundantly throughout this film but the first incident is when Chris meets Rose's dad. Peele portrays Rose's dad as an elite white liberal meagerly attempting to assimilate himself within African American culture. Rose's dad uses multiple microaggressions when addressing Chris, using expressions like "my man" and stating that he would have voted for Obama again if he could. Through Rose's dad and numerous other characters, Peele satirizes societies consumption of African American culture and how it can often be transformed into a good that the "white" market can consume and exploit. Peele also portrays issues regarding the commodification of African Americans as multiple characters speak to Chris as if he were an object. While talking about the hierarchical structure of society, an old relative of Rose states, "Black is in fashion" which clearly makes Chris feel awkward and uneasy (*Get Out*, Jordan Peele, 2017). Through the use of stereotypes and exaggerations, Peele silently exposes the harsh reality of racial discrimination in present day. Furthermore, the audience is given first hand experience of how African American lives are discriminated through cultural appropriation and societal confinement. While addressing issues regarding racism through his works, he also address issues regarding gender through satire. Through Jordan Peele's work on *Key & Peele*, he has used satire to display the gender discrimination that exists today, especially in regards to women. In a sketch titled, *Pirate Chantey*, Peele and his partner, Keegan Michael Key, are dressed as pirates and sing a song that starts out sounding like it's going to be about pirates sexually assaulting a woman (*Key & Peele, Pirate Chantey, 2015*). By changing the words of the song to be about women's rights, Key and Peele emphasize the use of reversal satire to ridicule men's views of women and the objectifying of women. With the use of reversal satire, Peele is making viewers reconsider socially constructed normative gendered roles and perceptions. Although gender inequality and discrimination have improved over the past century, Peele uses satire to combat

gender issues that continue to exist. Similar to Jordan Peele, Dave Chappelle also brought light to numerous ongoing issues throughout society.

Through the use of racial satire and humor on his show, *Chappelle's Show*, Dave Chappelle was able to address numerous social issues and portray the wrongdoings of society through the use of satire. *Real World*, the MTV original, picks around eight individuals to live under the same residence while being filmed throughout the day. In a parody sketch from *Chappelle's Show*, titled, *Mad Real World*, a spoof on the reality MTV show, *The Real World*, Chappelle flips the script, so to speak, by incorporating one white male, Chad, into a house of African Americans. In doing so, Chappelle displays a sense of isolation similar to the isolation African Americans feel when going through similar situations. Chappelle is communicating a reverse microcosm of what is typically within social racial discrimination today. As Chad is the only white person in the house, he is subject to harsh ridicule and is even forced to work the juice bar- alluding to the tendency of white privilege's rejection of service industry jobs. Chappelle creates perspective for the audience through incongruity, as well as parody, through the house setup and the name of the juice bar. Naming the juice bar in the sketch, ReJuice-A-Nation, Chappelle makes subtle hints to the early slavery film "Birth of a Nation", an intimation that echoes history's unjust treatment of African Americans, and is used here to reiterate their marginalized role in social spheres. Near the end of the sketch, Chad is kicked out of the house and is told, "we just don't feel safe around you", a white sentiment that is continuously inherent in today's discussion around African Americans (*Chappelle's Show, Mad Real World, 2003*). Chappelle's exploration of these satirical means combats numerous racial stereotypes that are prevalent throughout society. Although the goal of the skit is to invoke humor, Chappelle exposes society's one sided ideas regarding race by placing Chad in a position that numerous

African Americans have been in. While Chappelle has continuously focused his comedy on ethnic social reform, he has shown less interest in addressing gender issues. Chappelle has often been criticized for his efforts to address gender issues as he has been an important figure in racial satire. Where Chappelle's satirical rhetoric succeeds in tackling racial issues, it falls short in addressing those similar concerns within gender. When approaching the topic of gender, Chappelle resumes a dismissive perception, and reinforces the social constructs of gender. These social confines denote the idea of gender by categorizing people into two distinct areas; male or female. Chappelle's most recent comedic performance witnessed a discussion on the pronouns used for those in the LGBTQ community. Within this community gender has evolved into a fluid form that does not require definition or a set of parameters, allowing for pronouns like "they" to be appropriate in reference to an individual who does not identify with one specific gender. Enlisting a parody reenactment of his interaction with a transgender female, Chappelle's satirical commentary on the transgender community is far more polarizing and divisive than it is enlightening (LaVendrick Smith, Dave Chappelle's new Netflix specials are drawing fire for LGBTQ, transgender jokes, Charlotteobserver.com). This satirical approach to gender reveals that while Chappelle develops critical racial undertones in society, he fails to advance the same exposure that exists within gendered difficulties that face women and the LGBTQ community.

Peele and Chappelle took very similar approaches when addressing social issues in their satire. Both Peele and Chappelle exaggerate the African American stereotypes created by society and reiterate them throughout their comedic work. Their discussion of these stereotypes is not intended to fortify social perceptions, but instead to reveal the nature of these assumptions in order to reject them. As two comedians coming from similar ethnic backgrounds, Peele and Chappelle's satire both speak on similar levels towards the audience in hopes of exposing the

absurdities behind racial discrimination. Although they both use stereotypes to satirize similar subjects, Chappelle's techniques are often seen as being too explicit or, even feeding society's negative ideology. Compared to Chappelle, Peele uses a much more subtle approach when criticizing issues about gender and race. Although Peele mainly focuses his satirical work on race, he also effectively satirizes gender inequality and discrimination. Whereas Jordan Peele assumes a progressive satirical approach to gender, specifically the role of women in society, Chappelle's satire appears to remain stagnant in the face of evolving gender issues existing in society today. This inconsistency exhibits where the two comedians contrast within their narratives on society. Making use of reversals and numerous other satirical techniques, Peele carefully illuminated relevant gender issues, while Chappelle has been unable to do so without heavy critique.

Jordan Peele and Dave Chappelle were both successful in highlighting relevant issues regarding race through their satirical works. Although their approaches and effectiveness in unearthing truths and faults within the perception of race differed- they still maintain to communicate critical issues to their audience. Through the use numerous satirical approaches and techniques, Peele and Chappelle gave the audience an alternative and more informed perspective on societies absurd beliefs. Through the satirical works of Chappelle and Peele, audiences are made aware of detrimental societal forces influencing their disposition to race and gender. One only hopes that this humor is not temporary, but instead perpetuates and demands a condemning examination of harmful socially constructed notions.

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