

The Contemporary Theories

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Introduction

Throughout the evolution of sociological theory, theory has made a tremendous impact on the regression and progression on the discourse of race. These theories execute a profound critique and exposure of racist ideology woven into the tenants of society. The insertion of black and feminist theory has provided sociology with an immersive and multi-dimensional scope previously overlooked by its forerunners. This paper will analyze Critical Theory, Critical Race Theory, Global Capitalist Theory and Theories on Race, Class and Poverty while assessing their similarities and differences.

Critical Theory

Critical theory, as a radical emancipatory of Marxist theory, seeks to emancipate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them. Originating in the Frankfurt school in Germany, one of the main contributors to this theory was an European scholar named Max Horkheimer. Critical theory concentrates on presenting a hardy critique on society and the cultures within it to challenge and expose the prevailing power structures. What sets Horkheimer apart in his criticism is his ability to not only explain and understand society but to challenge it unlike philosophers before him. Horkheimer contends that because of the oppressive systems in place, there is a limit to society's validity. He further argued that social problems that arise within a society are byproducts of social structures, not individuals themselves. This can be applied to the argument on crime. When crime within minority communities is studied by members outside of those communities, the cause of it is easily misconstrued. They fail to articulate that crime is a derivative of the larger problem of economic insecurity, but instead they pathologize the behavior of minorities. Amidst his work with critical theory, Horkheim provides an assessment

of the devices used by the ruling class, one being ideology. Ideology can be seen as the fundamental hindrance to humans attaining liberation for themselves. Humans suffer from an ideological illusion that keeps them from accurately perceiving their conditions and prevents them from understanding their true interests. This way, achieving social justice becomes close to impossible for the oppressed as orchestrated intentionally by the elite.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory derives from Critical Theory but contains strong differentiating qualities. Critical race theory originates in the field of law with a framework that places emphasis on race and law in the United States. CRT challenges the mainstream approaches we've seen used throughout history to racial justice. Race and racism are intrinsically intertwined with the history of America and its social structures and with the tool of critical race theory, it can be exposed and robustly critiqued. Some of critical race theory's prominent contributors are Derrick Bell, Kimberle Crenshaw and Richard Delgado. One of the sectors it tackles is the dogma of scientific racism that deems whites as biologically superior. CRT asserts that race is not to be regarded as biological, rather, a social construct. Other aspects of CRT explore the concept of intersectionality and how an individual can possess multiple identities (queer, black, disabled etc) that all contribute to the inequality that they face. Critical race theory has also been able to uncover the way racism moved into an era of color blindness and disguised itself in order to ensure the upkeep of systems and structures in place that perpetually garner racially discriminatory outcomes. In combination with this newly found color blindness, Derrick Bell coined the theory of interest convergence, where civil rights progression, primarily concerning the matters of race, is only achieved when the interest of whites is considered. In the past, classical theorists such as Emile Durkheim have introduced their own conceptualization of what

an individual's meaning is and how it is given and the product of this was structural determinism. Critical race theory sharply opposes these ideas and teaches that the experience of an individual is shaped by large structural forces.

Global Capitalist Theory

American professor William Robinson born in 1959 with experience studying in Nicaragua, Kenya and Costa Rica completed his MA in Latin American studies and produced works on Global Capitalist theory. This theory focuses on the world's political economy and globalization. One of his works is titled "Global Capitalism and the Crisis of humanity" written in 2014, which depicts Global capitalism as one of the later stages of capitalism that has influence now globally, is interdependent amongst nations, and far more complicated than the capitalism bred in the industrial era. His works seek to update the previous analysis done by Karl Marx. Its goal is to address the actualities of the 21st century's social, political, and economic situations. Before, economies thrived off of the trade and exchange between countries, now due to transnationalization, nations are related through production, finance, and capital accumulation. Susceptible countries are integrated and coordinate with others according to the playbook of capitalism. The origins of the framework that outlines the concept of transnationalization started with the formation of Bretton Woods institution in 1944. This was the period after World War II and organizations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, World Trade Organization (WTO), the G8 (league of eight powerful nations) and others all contributed to developing production and distribution across the globe. The agreement amongst these organizations was considerably the start to the spread of capitalism internationally. William Robinson suggests that analysis of capitalism should transcend its nation-centric lens, and that it proves to be more efficient to view how it organizes the world. On the global level, there is

global capital and global labor. The global capital category accounts for the corporations, banks and the wealthy billionaire class who own the means of production. This class is also politically engaged. On the other hand, there is global labor which consists of the working class and middle-class, who are under the control of policies that are enforced by the capitalists. These classes are organized across the world, making the transnational capitalist class. The transnational capitalist class works to supply low wages to the working class, low taxes to the higher class and deregulation. Under the system nations are no longer individualistic. Instead, these transnational states are a function in the maintenance of the interest of global capitalist. Similar to the ideas of Marx, Robinson, predicts that the boom-bust nature of capitalism will lead to its disaster, namely, economical degradation, global poverty, and repressive state violence. Robinson proposes that in order to counteract this oppressive and unequally balanced system, the working class across the world must resist and a large redistribution of wealth has to take place.

Few years prior to William Robinson, Manning Marable, a Black American professor of history and public affairs, and Afro-American studies was born and provided a unique analysis on capitalism as it relates to blackness. His writing included a look at the history of racial and social inequality in America. Under the inspiration of Black scholar Walter Rodney's "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa", Marable publishes his book titled "How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America" and in it he details the history of exploitation present in the relationship between Black Americans and American capitalism. He argues that this underdevelopment of the black community isn't new and has been happening since the establishment of the nation. Beyond that, Marable opens the reader up to the damaging effects that colonization had on the continent of Africa. He explains the dialectical processes of this invasion: Europe strips Africa of her wealth and resources to become one of the world's

superpowers while actively impoverishing Africa. Due to slavery, Africa lost a large amount of its own labor force, leaving the people of the land famished and technologically stagnant.

Manning Marable effectively draws a parallel between this occurrence and American Capitalism on Black Americans. Under capitalism Black workers are steadily becoming unemployed, Black women battle the unfair wage gap and are suffering from both racial and gender discrimination making upward mobility in the corporate world difficult. Mass incarceration as Marable explains it is the metamorphosis of debt peonage and Blacks will find it next to impossible to escape this due to the utter criminalization of black bodies.

Race, Class and Poverty

Rod Bush, born in 1945 was a Black American sociologist, activist and known public intellectual. Hailing from the 'Jim Crow' south he migrated to New York then later attended Howard University. She taught at St. John's University in New York where he delivered classes on race, the black experience and social movements. Some of his books are, "We Are Not What We Seem; Black Nationalism and Class Struggle in the American Century", and another book called "The End of White World Supremacy". Much of what Bush theorized about poses the argument that the advancement of the global system of capitalism impacted the progression of social movements. These resistance movements are products of the oppressive conditions brought about by global economic changes. He studied primarily the 20th century and he divides the black liberation movements during that era into two general categories, one being movements around race or class and another being movements around nationalism and integration. In his scholarly work, she outlines five historical periods during the 20th century. The first period is called the Age of Imperialism, which lasted from 1890 to 1914. Within this time America was far more conservative and countries were in competition for power. Booker T. Washington

becomes a palatable figure for whites at this time because of his plan for Blacks to build themselves up from the bottom. The second period of the century was the Inter-war Period lasting from 1915 to 1930. During this period was the rise of Garveyism, Communism and the Universal Negro Improvement Association. This era served as the building blocks for the civil rights movement later down the line. The next era is the great depression and World War II from the years 1930 to 1945. This time period was characterized by a global economic crisis and black veterans returning from the war. Black activists would protest for freedom in the United States after escaping Jim Crow in Europe. The fourth period was the Post War Period starting in 1945 and ending in 1960 where we saw black protest become more potent and demanding of their freedom. Groups like SCLC (Southern Christian leadership conference) and CORE (Congress of racial equality) were active. Finally, the fifth. Named the crisis of US hegemony in 1960 up until 1980. Around this time with the rise of global capitalism, smaller countries were now being superexploited for their cheap labor. Due to this, urban areas in America endured a wide loss of jobs. This process is referred to as deindustrialization. Black people heavily populated these urban areas and experienced economic isolation and the communities turned into ghettos. Rod Bush witnesses different fights for liberation through the decades.

Dr. Joyce Ladner born in 1943 offers a unique perspective to Race, class and poverty theory by introducing a point of view through the eyes of the black woman. Dr. Ladner is a Black American Sociologists, Oscar and civil rights activist. She was born in Mississippi and joined the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and was jailed for her activity. Later became the first to hold the position of interim president in 1994 at Howard University. Her completed works consist of "Tomorrow's Tomorrow: The Black Woman" and "The Death of White Sociology". Historically in negative stereotypes surrounding black women, and further pathologizing the

black woman's and her families behavior. One of the popular studies done to support the misunderstanding of the Black family was done by Daniel Patrick Moynihan where he identified black women as emasculating and domineering and that the Negro family exemplified deviant behavior. Dr. Ladner counters this by acknowledging the social, political and economic inequality that shapes the experience of black women. She acknowledges the immense strength and adaptability black women had to possess in order to reach success and provide for their families. According to Dr. Ladner this resilience can be traced back to the African cultural heritage of survival. In her book "The Death of White Sociology" she challenged what was known as scientific truth and exposed it for being racial bias. She asks three questions: Why was black scholarly thought being disregarded, why were white works on Black people and their experiences being published over black sociologists and why does the public place emphasis on black criminality but fails to take notice to black victimization. Dr. Joyce Ladner's research has worked to deconstruct the racist and patriarchal scopes in social science.

E. Franklin Frazier was a Black American sociologist and author who served as the first black president of the ASA and graduated from our university. He taught at Howard University in the sociology department in 1934 to 1962. One of his famous books was called "Black Bourgeoisie". Influenced by the ideas of Dubois, Frazier became a diligent student and researcher against racism and social inequality. Fraser would argue that the expansion of the economy in Europe to across the world engulfed the Negro, and turned him into capital within the capitalist, political economy. Due to slightly more accessible education, Black Americans began to pursue education and obtained a certain level of social mobility and out of this the black middle class was on its rise. Being of this class status placed blacks in an awkward position, where they are doubly isolated, meaning they reject black culture and try desperately to

assimilate to white norms in order to achieve their acceptance but they live in a society that detests their blackness and will never welcome them into their white spaces. As Frazier explains, because of this, the black middle class is experiencing an identity crisis and an inferiority complex.

Eduardo Bonilla Silva An Afro, Puerto Rican, political sociologists, and is a professor of sociology, at Duke University and served as president of the ASA 2018. His published work is entitled “Racism without racist; Colorblind Racism in the Persistence of racial Inequality in America”. In this book, he explains how white supremacy has morphed into color blind racism since the end of the civil rights era. This form of racism takes a more subtle approach and is institutional. Bonilla Silva proposes that the social system that America is operating under is racialized and theology is used to validate the status quo. Therefore, he also believes that in order to change and deconstruct white supremacy, you have to attack the ideology because it is the tool of the ruling party to protect their power. Bonilla Silva points out that this new racism takes effect in areas, such as residential segregation, substandard urban education, mass incarceration, state brutality and violence, Cointelpro, and occupational mobility. Attitudes surrounding race began to diversify post-civil rights era. There were racial optimists, who believed that racial relations we’re getting better, racial pessoptimist who believed that there has been racial progress but with resistance, symbolic racism where people tie the progression of racial issues to success reached by members of the race and implies that the system works if it is earned and lastly, the sense of group position where white privilege is defended. He also workshops a list of four frames of color blind racism. Abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism and the minimization of racism. Whites have since learned to band together which now makes it

challenging to question them and their politics. Bonilla Silva urges the community to understand that electoral politics is far less effective in achieving social justice than social movements.

Nancy Denton and Douglass Massie are two professors of sociology who Co-wrote the book “American Apartheid Segregation and the Making of the Underclass”. This particular work documents the way America's framework for its institutions is designed to perpetuate racial inequality. The white society created the ghetto and are currently still maintaining it. The pair claim that if there is a barrier blocking the spatial mobility of blacks then there must also be a barrier blocking their social mobility. Black Americans are usually forced into poorer areas due to economic inequality and this impedes on their social progress. Residential segregation is an instrument that carries out the task of racial subordination in America. When blacks are forced to live under harsh conditions consisting of poor infrastructure and enduring under-resourced education, families begin to fall apart and crime and violence rises. Whites also feared economic competition from blacks when they migrated to the north. The white middle-class that occupied the north regarded blacks as ignorant, unclean, and feared that they'd overrun the cities so to combat this, they implemented discrimination into housing and employment, which hindered Black Americans spatial mobility. Zoning restrictions, closed hotels, restrictive covenants, loan discrimination, redlining and dense public housing projects were all devices that whites used to induce hypersegregation thus concentrating poverty in black communities.

Analysis

Each of the theorists have provided very thorough critiques to these existing schools of thought and effectively make room for more inclusive study. Excluding Horkeimer, the black sociologists have used parts of their identity like race and gender to put forth an esoteric perspective desperately needed in the field of sociology. All four theories demonstrate a counter

hegemonic position in these debates. They all seek to uncover and challenge the bones that make up the status quo. All four theories unanimously include the consideration of minority oppressed groups and how they are affected by the structures in place. The research done by Dr. Ladner sets her apart in her critique because she offers specifically a view on the black woman's strife in America and where it derives from.

While Global Capitalist theory and Race, Class and Theory prompted the oppressed to resist, revolt and redistribute wealth, Critical Theory proposes no real guidelines to the political action that should be taken and Critical Race Theory does not contain an economic analysis nor a vision for extensive social reorganization. The thinkers of Critical Theory, Critical Race Theory, Global Capitalist theory, and Race Class, and Poverty Theory successfully offer a macrosociological viewpoint as they assess society and the world through the constructs of race and class. Human agency is heavily encouraged throughout each of these theories and holds the elite accountable. They emulate a dialectical way of progression

Critical Theory, Critical Race Theory, Global Capitalist theory, and Race Class, and Poverty Theory each operate with rationale and logic. The people will not endure exploitation forever. It is in human nature to question and to resist what isn't in the best interest. History will repeat itself as this has been evident in each decade.