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# The Race for Class: Reflections on a Critical Raceclass Theory of Education

Zeus Leonardo

*University of California, Berkeley*

This article is intended to appraise the insights gained from Critical Race Theory (CRT) in Education. It is particularly interested in CRT's relationship with Marxist discourse, which falls under two questions. One, how does CRT understand Marxist concepts, such as *capital*, which show up in the way CRT appropriates them? The article argues that Marxist concepts, such as *historical classes*, *class-for-itself*, are useful for race analysis as it sets parameters around the conceptual use of *historical races* and a *race-for-itself*. Two, how does CRT understand the role of capitalism, therefore shedding light on its position regarding the class problem? It is no doubt attentive to class power, but this is not the same as performing an immanent critique of capitalism. As a result, within CRT class achieves a color whereby class becomes a variant of race, better known as *classism*. Race becomes the theory with class vocabulary superimposed on it. Last, I suggest areas where CRT could combine with Marxism in order to forge a Critical Raceclass Theory of Education.

In many respects, both Critical Race Theory (henceforth CRT) in law and education are as American as it gets. Since the 1980s, CRT in legal studies was sparked by Derrick Bell's public protest at Harvard University over the need to hire more faculty of color, as well the shift from the treatment of race as a methodological variable to a central, conceptual place in research (Omi and Winant 1994). Eventually making its way into the educational discipline in the mid-1990s

(Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995), CRT quickly became a well-known discourse. By this, I mean that a way of making sense of a phenomenon, of rendering it intelligible, became possible through a family of terms. Critical Race Theory (CRT) gave educational scholars an arsenal of concepts, such as knowledge apartheid (Delgado Bernal and Villalpando 2005), microaggressions (Solorzano 1998), and critical race pedagogy (Lynn 1999; see also Lynn and Jennings 2009). In short, CRT became a field of discourse. As an intellectual practice, CRT legitimated a critical study of race and education.

Like CRT in legal studies, which traced racism throughout the law beyond its ostensible presence in criminal and civil rights cases, CRT in education does not stop at the obvious iterations of racial contestation that many educators are aware of, such as tracking, unequal funding, and the valorization of Eurocentric curriculum (see Dixson and Rousseau 2005). Critical race theorists in education argue that race and racism permeate the entire educational enterprise, from aspirations (Yosso 2006), to spatial configurations (Allen 1999), and teacher education itself (Sleeter 1995). CRT in education is a thorough examination of schooling as a racial state apparatus (Leonardo 2010). Through CRT, we learn that education is, in essence, a racial project and race consists of an educational project.

This article is intended to appraise the insights gained from CRT. It enters the mode of criticism that is central to any critical research project on education and race. By criticism, I mean something quite specific (Leonardo 2004b). Criticism exists in everyday parlance and is usually considered a negative mode of appraising an idea or proposal. In daily circles, being critical is often not welcomed. To be critical may mean:

1. urgent: as in, critical condition;
2. central: critical point or idea;
3. scrutinizing, discerning: criticism of a movie, art, or book.

Although criticism in the educational sense includes these common iterations, the tradition of intellectual criticism deployed here examines the limits of social thought. It accomplishes this by going through an interpretive exercise of a hermeneutics of suspicion, as well as empathy (Ricoeur 1986; see Leonardo 2003c).

A hermeneutics of suspicion is a project of negation insofar as it represents textual exegesis of the distortions contained within a thought experiment. Of this mode of criticism, Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche were exemplars, even masters. However, the ultimate goal is not simply mastery, but emancipation from falsehoods. The objective is less to exalt the critic or refute a set of texts, but to affirm the project of criticality that is central to CRT. As such, CRT is assessed and appraised for moments wherein explanations incompletely capture racial phenomena. This form of criticism assumes that because race is contradictory, even critical racial

thought contains double binds that need to be fully worked out. This negative appraisal does not signal limitations at the personal or authorial, but rather social, level. That is, racial contradictions at the social level enter scholars' attempts to apprehend the very phenomenon they endeavor to understand. So it is arguably less a commentary on any individual thinker but the collective project of CRT, of how it may be limited by its own precepts. This is a large, if not unreasonable, claim. The collective project of CRT is diverse and multifaceted and, therefore, resists simplification. However, in order to assess its strengths as well as limitations, a reduction is unavoidable and becomes a risk in any project of criticism (Leonardo in press).

On the other hand, a hermeneutics of empathy is an appraisal of CRT's ability to transcend current limitations in racial understanding. Contrary to hermeneutics of suspicion's ability to expose the *true nature* of reality behind the veil, a hermeneutics of empathy unfolds the project in front of it. This second form of interpretation asks to what extent an intellectual project extends our understanding, even shatters and breaks through conventions to offer a new vision of the racial predicament. In this sense, the exegete enters a new world through the word. A framework is critical not only because it exposes lies and myths, but equally because it makes possible a new regime of truth (Foucault 1980). Ricoeur (1986) is instructive when he pairs a hermeneutics of suspicion with ideology critique and a hermeneutics of empathy with utopic thinking. The first is a distortion of reality as worse than itself (say, to the right of it) whereas the second represents reality as better than itself (to the left of it). Critical race hermeneutics is the capacity to maintain the intimate dance between commentary marred by the effects of ideology (in its classical sense) and utopia, without which a society, even less an intellectual framework, lacks direction as it flails about in search of a better condition or explanation. Both moments misrepresent race reality as it exists before human interpretation. Appraising their presence in race frameworks, such as CRT, is part of any criticism whose goal is to shed light on what is hidden behind an explanation as well as shining it in front for a way forward. So let's proceed.

I am particularly interested in CRT's relationship with Marxist discourse. So in this article, I devote some attention to this dynamic tension. Although there are equally interesting angles to pursue, such as CRT methodology (Solorzano and Yosso 2002), its stance on particular topics, like NCLB (Leonardo 2007), the curriculum (Yosso 2002), or the law as it affects education (Chapman 2005), CRT's proximity to or distance from Marxism provides a productive beginning to determine the possibilities of a *raceclass* analysis of education, two intimately related points on one axis, what I call elsewhere an "elliptical discourse" (Leonardo 2003a, 38). Because the United States is unarguably, one of the most advanced nations with respect to race and class relations, it is possible to find here examples of mature contradictions related to their dynamics. As a result, the likelihood of their resolution may also be posed. The coordinated but awkward dance between

race and class represent the dilemma around which educators and students twirl and spin. Breaking up that dance then requires understanding what each partner contributes to racial oppression in schools.

### THE CONCEPT OF RACE

Within the framework of CRT, the concept of race is centered. Even when an intersectional analysis (Crenshaw 1991) is deployed, race analysis in education is arguably foregrounded, which is not objectionable in itself. Just as Raymond Williams (1977) once argued that a Marxism without determinisms is hardly recognizable, CRT in education *sans* race determinism would belie itself. In other words, despite its capacity to speak to other social identities and systems, CRT is perceived by most scholars inside, as well as outside, its circles, as first and foremost a racial intervention. This is arguably the case, even when CRT integrates feminism, studies of culture, and sexuality into its framework. These other cocentral concerns are meant to bring race analysis into focus, rather than blur its status. It is a bit like looking to the side of a dim star in order actually to see it more clearly because looking directly at it fails to register the faint light. Or in the case of looking directly at the sun, it is overwhelmingly bright and one is again forced to look indirectly at it in order to see it. Williams also brings up the point that Marxism's current set of determinisms cripples its politics and effectiveness. For now, I want to recognize the centrality of the race concept within the intellectual borders of CRT production. This preference has a lot to recommend it, one of which is the clarity of the project regarding the problematic it sets in motion, mainly the awesome burden and influence of racialization in schools and society.

In addition, not unlike Marxism, CRT lays down the gauntlet that other social problems emanate from a center. At its minimum, this suggestion means that educators will not make much headway into formidable challenges like sexism, class disparities, and cultural mismatch between student families and schools without simultaneously addressing racism. At its maximum, centering race is a bold announcement that these same dynamics will not abate unless racism is eradicated. This gives CRT a particularly strong explanatory position on education and its discontents, the daunting challenge of systemic reform, and a singular view on issues like the perennial achievement (read: racial) gap and stubborn attrition rates. It treats race as a defining principle rather than a variable within research for which scholars account (Omi and Winant 1994). This means that race is never not in play. It lends CRT scientific credibility on questions of parsimony, origin, and causality. If it can argue convincingly for the first cause, even a meta-narrative of sorts, which explains why education assumes its current social shape and institutional form, CRT establishes itself as a scientific framework. Insofar as

the claim to science is the guiding ethos of social science research, CRT becomes a competing paradigm vying for scientific legitimacy.

Having established the centrality of race in CRT, it is then surprising that there is neither a concerted effort nor an agreement to define this driving concept. If race is indeed the privileged center, it is more often assumed than fully worked out. If this impression is correct, the fact that there is no consensus about the meaning of race is not as worrisome as the lack of in-depth explanation concerning its usage. This is not merely a problem of definition but about setting conceptual parameters and analytical clarity. On the issue of consensus, it may be too much to expect CRT scholars to agree upon a given meaning of race. In this, CRT is like most other engagements, where a lack of agreement is often the norm. But it is not inconsequential. For example, the absence of consensus around a definition of race may signal the lack of necessary cohesion around the main feature that defines the movement. Therefore, race becomes a proxy for social group, but there are other competing collectivities that organize people and schools, such as ethnicity or nationality. Without an agreement on the parameters of race, it is difficult to discern when CRT scholars are, in fact, discussing race, ethnicity, or nationality. Admittedly, there is no clean way to separate these concepts as evidenced by Omi and Winant's (1994) claim that, at least within the sociological literature, ethnicity, class, and nation stand in for race. However, if race is not separated out as a distinct social phenomenon conceptually, if not also empirically, analysis cannot sustain its specific claims outside of folk theory or common sense. It cannot discriminate between culture, on the one hand, and race on the other. They slide into one another and elide a specifically racial analysis. They step on each other's toes and no one knows who is leading.

CRT also enters the second difficulty of whom it includes when it stops short of defining race. For instance, there is a debate regarding whether or not Latinos and Asian Americans comprise actual racial groups. At clearest, they may represent quasi-races or pan-ethnicities (Espiritu 1993). There are two reasons for this difficulty. One, because the White-Black binary is still the dominant framework for understanding race, non-White and non-Black groups exist in a vague and associative relationship to race. They are either White-like or Black-like, depending on the nature of the comparison. For example, when it concerns educational attainment, Latinos resemble more closely their Black counterparts, whereas Asian American trends fulfill White patterns. In assimilation studies, the test case for minority mobility is the extent to which its members achieve a modicum of whiteness whereas its opposite is termed downward assimilation (Portes and Rumbaut 2001), which could be a euphemism for assimilating towards Blackness. Within skin color studies, it bears out that lighter Asian Americans and Latinos fare socially better than their darker counterparts, confirming the racial poles of Blackness and Whiteness as guiding measures (Hunter 2005; Rondilla and Spickard 2007). Two, it is questioned whether or not Latino or Asian American experience

is determined by race as defined by skin color, despite the fact that skin tone matters for them. That is, language and immigration status matter at least as much as skin color for non-Black minorities. By language, I mean a primary relation or proximity to English, standard or not. That is, Latinos and Asian Americans are socially defined by their relationship to a language outside of English, even if English is their main spoken language (see Bernal 1998; Villenas 2010). This assumed characteristic marks them as foreigner or exotic (Wu 2002; Park and Park 2005), both of which become significant in their educational experience.

There are sound reasons for refusing the binary for its incompleteness and obvious limitations and CRT in education should be lauded for broadening its analysis of race by including multiple forms of racialization. At the same time, the binary functions, indeed works, to explain certain racial phenomena, such as skin color stratification among non-Black minority groups. This does not return the discussion to accept unproblematically the binary's implications. Its limitations have been well rehearsed, essentialism being only one of its bugbears. Rather, it begs the question of what actually defines race as we know it, whether expanding its boundaries beyond the binary enriches or weakens CRT's analysis, or whether or not we should encourage the perpetuation of racial classifications, an interpellation reinforced when CRT includes more, rather than less, groups into its racial cosmology (Leonardo 2011). A similar lesson may be learned if we turn to Marxist discourse on the nature of classes.

In Marxism, there have been, and still are, two main classes. On one side, the propertied class, or the bourgeoisie, owns not only the means of production but also its social cognates, including the ruling ideas of a society. On the other side, the propertyless class, or the workers, own primarily their labor, which they exchange for wages within an unequal relation of power that favors the owners. Marxists recognize that other classes exist, such as the middle class writ broadly, of which Marx and Engels were part, but they are quasi-classes. They are only classes by way of social classification but do not exist as historical classes in themselves. In short, they are existential classes but in no way comprise part of the motor of history, the fundamental tension and driving force of which is located between the bourgeoisie and workers. The latter two are said to be the real objective classes because their resolution represents the true, dialectical progress of history. Members of the middle class may join either the capitalists or workers, but their experience with labor does not enter the essential contradiction that alienates workers from their essence, labor, product, and one another. They are not inconsequential but their objective position within the relations of production is only a by-product of the strife between workers and owners. Because workers are directly involved in the material production of goods, Marxists make a distinction between historical, objective classes and quasi-classes. Finally, because the bourgeoisie cannot universalize its interests, it must be eradicated through the revolutionary consciousness and praxis of the working class (Lukács 1971).

Unlike the middle class, about whom there is increasing attention in class and educational research (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Lareau 2000, 2003; see Gordon, 2012, for study of the Black middle class in the US; see Gillborn et al. 2012 for a study in the UK), the working class' experience with production generates knowledge about a historical vocation and human development that is revolutionary *par excellence*. This argument is not necessarily a comparative description of the amount and intensity of the worker's oppression with those of the middle class, or better yet, people who are unemployed and cannot provide for even the basics. Arguably, the latter group is even worse off than the worker, more indigent. To a Marxist, unemployed people do not have access to the fundamental and historical contradiction brought about by the exploitative interaction between the owner and worker within the progressive development of the mode of production. They comprise its surplus army of laborers, which capitalists recruit when times are lean and profit margins are threatened, such as during economic downturns and depressions. As a result, within a strictly Marxist perspective, people without work may suffer a great deal but do not comprise a revolutionary group or experience. Much like women who did not historically participate in industrial work, the point is to bring this segment of society into the sphere of industrial labor. For instance, in Russia, peasant classes were brought into the Bolshevik Revolution as part of an overall attempt to establish the workers' hegemony (Gramsci 1971; Laclau and Mouffe 2001). Peasants were arguably worse off than the industrial proletariat, obliged as the former were to their lords. It is in this sense that Marxism, for better or worse, has defined the nature of classes and reduced them to two.

#### ESTABLISHING THE REVOLUTIONARY RACE

In a study of race, which groups count as races, historical races, and determining the revolutionary race, are unsettled questions. Often, the suggestion that there exists an ultimate victim group, such as Blacks, is enough to retreat from defining what constitutes, in roughly analogous terms with Marxism, the existence of historical races. This is not unreasonable because constructing the ultimate victim group tends to minimize the racial experiences of other oppressed races, be they quasi or not. Latino, Asian American, and Native American racial experience quickly becomes judged on the basis of whether or not it approximates Black oppression. Often, the debate is framed as a contest over which group suffers most from racism. This tendency exists for a good reason. A group's claim for ultimate victim status represents an appeal to have its experience with racism treated with utmost seriousness and recognition. Treating it as less than this through parallelism or symmetry may minimize its severity and a slippery slope is established. For a minority group whose plight has not been fully acknowledged and whose struggle is not yet resolved, the drive for recognition remains strong. That said, it is enough

to cause fundamental tensions among minority groups because the minimization cuts both ways and the struggle for the center of the margins wages on. CRT is right to resist this discourse, especially if there is a strong case for multiple processes of racialization, targeting each group differently. But determining which group suffers most from racism is different from determining which dynamic represents the fundamental racial tension in history. Therefore, reconciling this tension, like the one between owners and workers within Marxist philosophy, becomes an important discussion within race analysis. If this suggestion has merit, it is also consequential for a critical understanding of race and education.

Deciding which racial groups comprise the historical races is difficult but warranted. At the very least, it shifts the discourse away from establishing what Derrick Bell (1992) calls *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, or a language of ultimate victim status, and toward a language of reconciling revolutionary racial contradictions. Marxists are very clear on the strategic point regarding the preference for the objective position of the working class, not its ultimate victimization. Within raciology, whether Black, Red, Brown, or Yellow represents the dialectical counterpart of White remains to be established. The easy answer is that the dominant frame suggests Black and White are the warring poles of a racial contradiction. For instance, the common-sense discourse of color pits black as the absence of light and white as its opposite. In school, children learn to use their crayons and pens with this understanding relatively unchallenged. Within this frame, no other two colors exist as antipodes. Yellow is not the counterpart of brown, red and orange are not at war, and blue and pink are gendered and only implicate race.

However, in other instances ostensibly nonracial, opposing colors are not black and white. In astrophysics, the phenomenon that American astronomer Edmund Hubble discovered, known as the Doppler effect, uses the language of red and blue shifts of light to explain how a source moving away from the Earth elongates its wavelength and appears as a red shift in the spectrum whereas an object moving toward an observer displays a blue shift, or its wavelength becoming shorter. In color terms, red is opposite of blue. An example closer to home is when children learn the color wheel and discover that yellow is opposite of purple and blue of orange. If race is the discursive frame, it would sound bizarre to our racially trained ears to hear that brown, yellow, or red is the opposite of white. It is more likely that brown represents the amalgamation of all the racial colors, rather than existing as the opposite of another. These discourses do not override the black–white binary, which is a naturalized racial understanding of color.

Some people trace the Black–White discourse to biblical passages where light is defined as good, whereas darkness is evil. This is well rehearsed and its racial consequences are clear. Of course, we know that, as a form of social organization, modern race does not date further back than roughly 500 years ago, with the arrival of the Age of Discovery, biologization of difference, and subsequently chattel slavery. It is more likely that the biblical justification of race is just that:



justification for our current racial order. It is the projection of a current state of affair to a time when race did not apply or exist as a social relation. There were no Whites, Blacks, and other racial groups before the consolidation of Europe into the Occident and the simultaneous cocreation of the Orient, the Americas, and Africa. Jesus was not White, but saying that he is has fundamental racial ramifications for salvation today. Whether Jesus was or was not White is not the point: That a society racializes him as White and behaves consistently with this belief system is more important. Just as interesting is the forward projection of race to a naturalized perpetual status of foreverness. For now, we receive the impression that race has always existed and will remain so in perpetuity. It is the racial equivalent of the Steady State Theory of the universe in cosmology. Everywhere you look, it seems like race is timeless.

Because CRT has avoided in-depth discussion of the constitution of historical races, it does not distinguish among different racial phenomena in ontological terms, even if it distinguishes them in phenomenological terms. There are good reasons for this move, because it behooves CRT theorists to avoid the oppression sweepstakes, which causes its own set of problems. But to reiterate, determining the status of historical races does not equate with a quantitative analysis of racial suffering even if it qualitatively discriminates among different forms of it. Neither is this a position on which racial group subjectively best understands racism. If classical Marxism has anything to say to race analysis, it is that social analysis begins from the working class' objective position as a class-in-itself, not its cognitive development with respect to an accurate understanding of capitalism, which, according to Lukács (1971), develops historically alongside the evolution of the mode of production and the particular needs of the working class. Potentially a class-for-itself, the working class is the only class with universal, rather than self, interests because it would rather generalize its project of negation against exploitation and realize human freedom. This progression is not inevitable because workers have to wade through the effects of reification, or the ideological process that distorts social creations into natural phenomena. If this theory marries with race analysis, then a revolutionary race is privileged not for its subjective apprehension of racism but for its objective position as a race-in-itself in relation to the master race (Leonardo 2004c). It is not a matter of identity, but of ideological development and maturity based on a fundamental social interaction. In other words, like the workers' exchange with material labor, the revolutionary race's interests guide the understanding of racial contestation and its negation. But also like the workers, this race's revolutionary potential is not guaranteed in advance, as it must work through distortions and misrecognitions. Education then is precisely the process that transforms the race-in-itself into a *race-for-itself* when it realizes its historic function and universal interests.

There are several problems and caveats that must be headed off or entered into right away. First, the direction of CRT and race analysis is developing toward

race coalitions, not a singular focus on one group's experience with racism. These developments are not incompatible with the discussion of a revolutionary race. The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia was a coalition among different classes, but ultimately guided by the workers' objective place in the relations of production. The urban industrial class joined with the rural peasant class, as well as sectors of the middle and intellectual class, such as the movement's leaders, to topple the Czarist regime. Second, admittedly, race relations do not proceed the same way as class relations. For example, there are multiple racializations within any regime of race. But here again, we note that there are multiple class experiences within any class regime, as previously suggested with the middle class. The question is precisely which class antagonism becomes the central and binding conflict that explains and implicates other levels of the class struggle. Likewise, race analysis in education would do well to pose a similar question.

Recent class analysis in education, particularly in public schools, suggests that the primary contact happens between working- and middle- to upper-class children. Middle-class *habitus* and culture represent the official capital that schools reinforce, which socially promotes children who enter school already embodying these codes. Working class children are at a disadvantage, leaving them few options for success other than assimilating middle-class ways and language practices (Bernstein 1977), which becomes a form of cultural violence to their family and sense of self (Freire [1970] 1993). The problem with this analysis is that it obscures the fundamental and driving antagonism between the working and owning class. Within the structures of capitalism, the middle class may represent difficulties for labor militancy because they have achieved a level of success within an otherwise exploitative system but, by and large, they are not the problem. Because public schools become a very specific node in social analysis, the larger problem becomes localized within a specific institution, and not in the manner that Althusser (1971) and Bowles and Gintis (1976) have suggested. Because the children of capitalists and the superwealthy may send their children to private schools, they remain out of sight and out of mind within recent class studies of public schools. It becomes an analysis of convenience if the global picture of class relations does not make it into the frame. It becomes an intervention into the relations between the have-nots and have-some and the have-everything fly above the fray.

Within CRT, focusing on a fundamental relation does not necessarily oversimplify the process and history of racial contestation. Many who are familiar with Marxism understand that the worker-capitalist model is very complex and much elegant theory production has been spun to explain this primary contradiction. In other words, there is plenty to explain in this binary. Likewise, the current argument does not vitiate against a nuanced understanding of race relations. In fact, a more convoluted race theory may explain less, rather than more, and does not always represent an advance in social and educational thought. Rather than explain the inner workings of racism, less parsimonious theories leave one wondering what

exactly is racial about the analysis. Nowhere is this becoming more evident than in some of the ways intersectional analysis has been appropriated in education to evade race analysis rather than add to it. At the 2011 British Educational Research Association Conference, the keynote session on intersectionality was very clear on this point. In their assessment, intersectional theory has been used in educational parlance to shift focus away from race, to discredit it with class or gender analysis, rather than bringing race to sharper focus with a feminist or Marxist analysis. In its original conception, intersectional analysis was a womanist, or feminist of color, intervention into White feminism for failing to integrate race into their analysis (hooks 1984; Crenshaw 1991; Hill Collins [1991] 2000; Mirza 1997; 2009). It was not meant to dilute the effect of race, but enrich it by accounting for its gendered and classed modes of existence. It aimed for simplicity without being simple. In the same vein, Marxism inheres an intersectional argument without giving up its position on class analysis. CRT's revolutionary potential is found in its ability to reflect on its own conceptual parameters, such as determining the possibility and existence of historical races.

#### CRT'S RELATIONSHIP TO MARXISM AND A STUDY OF CAPITALISM

CRT in law was originally a response to Critical Legal Studies, a Marxist-inspired intervention, on one side, as well as problematizations of the Liberal tradition. Although it aligned itself politically with aspects of Critical Legal Studies, CRT in law found that Marxism inadequately deals with the racialization thesis of society, which cannot be explained simply by appealing to the machinations of a capitalist economy (Crenshaw et al. 1995). On the other hand, Liberalism falls prey to a nonracial idea of the social contract and sees itself as functioning outside of racial assumptions that affect both the construction and enforcement of the law (see Mills 1997). Its most common iteration prides itself on the colorblindness of the US Constitution (Gotanda 1995). Both Marxist and Liberal discourses fail to capture the law of racialization and racialization of the law. When CRT makes it way to education, we notice a parallel history.

Having been sparked by Freire's ([1970] 1993) 1970 publication of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Critical Pedagogy became a Marxist-inspired program in the educational literature. Programmatized as an educational agenda by Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) in *Education Under Siege*, Critical Pedagogy has since created an intellectual industry that favors a primary engagement with capitalism's influence over education (see Gottesman 2010). Even when Critical Pedagogy criticizes Marxist orthodoxy, it has the effect of centering Marxism as a main feature, with race as a matinee show. Like its predecessor in law, CRT in education shares a similar genealogy insofar as it points out the limitations of a singular focus on the

economy as the privileged locus of critique. That said, CRT never went so far as to reject the implications of a class study of schooling. Instead, it assimilated some of the latter's concepts and concerns.

Unlike Marxism, or its educational cousin, Critical Pedagogy, which has had a tepid love affair with race analysis, CRT does not have an ambivalent relationship with class analysis, although it maintains a healthy suspicion over Marxism. Because it is a discourse led by scholars of color in education, who in general understand that racism is a function of economic strife, CRT has developed race and class insights alongside each other. At the very least, it gestures toward an elliptical argument with two centers. But in doing so, CRT ultimately superimposes a racial discourse over class issues. In effect, *class attains a color* within CRT discourse but the basic discursive structure of CRT does not incorporate Marxism's problematic, such as a fundamental analysis of capital. Its argumentative structure is fundamentally unchanged by Marxism. Class is seen through racial eyes.

It is important to examine the manner that CRT subsumes concerns with class within a fundamentally racial discourse and explanation. This is different from performing a race and class synthesis whose goal is to privilege neither framework and, instead, offers an intersectional, integrated, or what I am calling a *raceclass* perspective. Coming from a slightly different direction, Brown and de Lissovoy's (2011) uptake of the Black radical tradition argues for the study of race within the larger development and foregrounding of capital, finding the unity of race and class relations therein. My overall project has been to locate the unity between studies of capitalism, such as the division of labor, and themes of racialization, such as philosophies of personhood (Leonardo 2009; for similar arguments, see also, Preston 2009; Stovall 2006). My current argument regarding CRT's relationship with Marxism is twofold. One, how does CRT understand Marxist concepts, which shows up in the way it appropriates them? Two, how does CRT understand the role of capitalism, therefore shedding light both on its position regarding the class problem, as well as framing the nature of race contestation by virtue of how it superimposes a racial understanding over class? It is no doubt attentive to class, but this is not the same as performing an immanent critique of capitalism.

Nowhere is CRT's relationship with class analysis more clear than its uptake of Bourdieu's (1977a) concept of cultural capital. It is one of the most frequently used and critiqued class-oriented concept in the CRT literature on education. There are several species of the appropriation. First, in an endorsement of Bourdieu's concept, cultural capital is used to explain school biases against more or less essential(ist) cultures of color, their family value systems and priorities. Consistent with Bourdieu's ideas about class stratification but applied to race, CRT scholars indict the White standards of learning in schools, from the English forms that are recognized (Delpit 1995), to the behaviors that are punished or rewarded (Ferguson 2001), and the historical contributions that are valorized or omitted (Loewen 1995). Through what Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) call the cultural

arbitrary, the dominant race's particularity is disguised as a universal. As a result, White racial worldviews are honored as objective standards for general student comportment and achievement. They remain unmarked, even unremarkable, that is, normalized.

It is easy to see the usefulness of Bourdieu's framework when the adoption of White standards by students of color confirms his sociological concept of symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1977b), or how power is best hidden from view when it can pass as objective or unnoticeable, scientific rather than ideological, and part of the order of things rather than having social origins. It may even become engrafted onto people's self-concepts, sedimented at the level of their bodies and musculature, and affect their relations with others. Bourdieu refers to this agent-structure relation as one's *habitus*, which is at once a group sentiment, but apprehended as a person's subjective understanding of his objective chances for success within particular contests for resources. These struggles happen within the context of fields, or specific articulations of power and their regulations. At this level of understanding, CRT is harmonious with a Bourdieuan class analysis. However, when we keep in mind the idea that the descriptive function of theory may carry with it partial understandings of social phenomena, Bourdieu's framework begins to look suspect to CRT sensibilities.

Any critical theory, of race or otherwise, simultaneously consists of a descriptive and normative component. To the best of their abilities, critical theorists render phenomena intelligible through the use of theories, usually based on empirical data and in recursive relationship with it (Anyon 2009; Leonardo 2003b). In doing so, they build scientific explanations for how racial dynamics work. However, it is not as neat as that. As Said (1979) reminds us, no intellectual has ever successfully removed himself from participation in social life and, therefore, exists within his interpretations and not outside of them. In this sense, theories, even critical ones, contain a normative dimension wherein intellectuals' own ideological preferences enter the conceptual framework. This does not preclude them from arriving at more or less objective descriptions of racial phenomena under study, but their positionality ensures us that something extra-scientific seeps into the process. As Eagleton (1996) reminds us, objectivity does not equate with neutrality. His example is Marx, who mapped the objective functionings of the capitalist economy while maintaining a partisan hostility toward capitalism. The second did not prevent Marx from realizing the first. In our haste to reject the pretense of objectivity as the favored child of positivism, Harding (1991) finds that science is, indeed, objective, just not objective enough because it excludes from participation in science the mass of women, third world countries, and other marginalized groups. Therefore, the goal is *strong objectivity*, or the greater, democratic participation of hitherto excluded peoples. For Althusser, this intrusion is ideology itself, the opposite but complementary part of science (see Leonardo 2010). Ideology threatens science at every turn, as much as dark energy in the

universe is the repelling force that may tear the galaxies apart from each other if it wins over the attractive force of gravity. So goes with critical race thought. As intellectuals describe the motions of race, we render it controllable, intelligible, less mysterious. But we explain the social universe as racialized beings and our explanations have racial consequences.

Bourdieuian theory's application to race is not without problems. To Yosso (2005, 2006), it is a lopsided attempt to speak to issues of racial domination. This is where the love affair with cultural capital turns south. Favoring the domination half of the story, Bourdieu fails to capture the agency side of resistance theories. Or worse, without reinventing his theory of cultural capital, race scholars recapitulate a deficit model of people of color. Conceived primarily through the master race's imaginary, people of color come out of the other end as derogated groups, whose culture lacks honor in the eyes of Whites. By constructing cultures of color in this manner, a Bourdieuian-inspired theory cannot break out of the dominant frame that recalls Moynihan's (1965) criticisms of families of color (see also Glazer and Moynihan 1970). Slightly different, Oscar Lewis' (1968) "culture of poverty" thesis gestures toward a structural explanation but overshadowed and overwhelmed by the reception of its cultural argument. Within this framework, people of color embody pathological cultural practices, lack moral principles, and do not persevere, again, according to the White imaginary. This belief in people of color's fragility has long roots if we remember that Fanon ([1952] 1967) spent considerable text debunking the colonialist mentality that conceives of Africans as weak and prone to be dominated. But to people of color, being a minor is not defined by a fundamental lack, but the strength to withstand oppression, build beautiful cultures in the face of denigration, and even thrive when they were not meant to survive. If these criticisms are correct, Bourdieu's theory does not account for these resistant threads in minority lives and even aids in further marginalizing them when it reinforces the deficit discourse about them.

To some CRT theorists, if the situation were reversed, and Whites entered situations wherein their cultural codes were not dominant, people of color's culture would be the guiding form of capital. For example, if White middle-class children entered the ghetto, they would find that their assumed norms do not guide interactions between people and they would quickly realize that they were out of place and even found to be lacking. Their daily culture would mismatch what is expected of them, much like the way children of color and working-class kids enter schools out of sync with its official milieu, what Lareau (2003) calls separation compared with the interconnectedness that middle class people experience. Whites in ghettos, barrios, and ethnic enclaves would discover themselves as Other, perhaps even feel the situation inhospitable. They would realize that *educación* is not mainly an academic exercise about abstract mastery of information but a way of relating to a community and maintaining communal ties (Valenzuela 1999). Whites would discover that their English form would not be centered, but rather

Black English Vernaculars, Spanglish, and other hybrid forms of communication and code-switching foreign to many Whites (MacSwan 2005). In short, White cultural capital would have little exchange value in these spheres of color and they could not count on the usual privileges associated with their worldview and cultural practice. The cultural capital of color would be the privileged medium and Whites would have to contend with it. Yosso (2005, 2006) extends the inversion of Bourdieu's framework even further to argue for the multiple forms of capital that people of color possess, such as: aspirational, linguistic, navigational, social, familial, and resistant capital. Without going over each form of capital in this list, the upshot is that people of color have developed communal forms of cultural wealth in efforts to succeed in conditions that thwart their communities.

Taking her cue from Oliver and Shapiro's (1997) *Black Wealth, White Wealth*, Yosso's innovation rests on the distinction between *capital* and *wealth*. Whereas the former concept is limited to considering mainly income, salary, and wages, the latter is broader and includes accumulated resources over time. It is in this sense that Oliver and Shapiro's analysis of wealth disparities brings to sharper focus racial inequality amidst arguments that Black income is catching up to White levels since the steady rise of the Black middle class. By including such indicators as home equity, stocks and savings, and levels of debt, Oliver and Shapiro convincingly paint a systematic portrait of Black disadvantage and overall White advantage. In general, White families bequeath wealth upon their children, whereas Black children inherit debt from their parents. This is ironic if taken in light of the wealth that enslaved African Americans created for the United States. It brings support for Ladson-Billings' (2007) shift of discourse from the deficit of African Americans to this nation's unpaid debt to them. The empirical data is convincing and the theoretical shift is elegant. Oliver and Shapiro are right to point out that the racial situation is worse if we shift the analysis from income to wealth.

But Yosso's (2005, 2006) appropriation of Oliver and Shapiro's (1997) framework travels in the other direction. With respect to communities of color, the shift from capital to wealth signals a better condition. This is made possible by a couple working assumptions. The move from economic wealth to cultural wealth allows Yosso and others to affirm the redeeming aspects of wealth in order to argue from a position of strength rather than weakness. So the sting of capital *à la* Bourdieu is exchanged for Moll and Gonzalez's (2004) model of "funds of knowledge" wherein marginalized communities bring with them a multitude of resources that schools ought to recognize and legitimate.

However, as Lubienski (2003) diagnosed, the conflation between Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital and Moll's appeal for a funds of knowledge approach effectively "celebrates diversity and denies disparities." Although it would be too much to claim that CRT denies disparities when, in fact, it highlights them, the lesson here revolves around the hasty return to appreciating diversity as the

antidote to disparity. This is a clear instance where the racial logic of CRT is grafted onto a class analysis. Bourdieu keeps his critical eye on the limiting situation of class inequality, which he does not endorse. In fact, as a critical sociologist, he considers private enterprise from the university to Univision, a sign of neoliberalism's hegemony, which intellectuals would do well to abate. He describes the inner workings of objective class structures as they work their way into the subjective and incomplete understandings of people. In his zeal to unveil this process, Bourdieu has been criticized for ignoring the role of agency in favor of an apparent cultural determinism. To these critics, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) provide a response in the Introduction to *Reproduction*. But my analysis is less concerned with Bourdieu's self-defense and more with CRT's relationship with class analysis, so I will put aside his quarrels with his detractors.

In a class analysis, there is rarely an occasion where class diversity is celebrated. This is where both the endorsement and rejection of Bourdieu's thesis ironically share something in common. The appeal for different forms of cultural capital is a distinctly racial argument following the lead of multiculturalism, whether intended or not. To scholars who appropriate Bourdieu, a framework for appreciating minority cultures becomes available. To his detractors, Bourdieu does not go far enough and unwittingly contributes to the derogation of these same cultures. However, both sides of the argument converge on their use of *capital*. Critical race scholars fault Bourdieu for failing to appreciate minority cultural capital, which places him alongside cultural poverty arguments from Oscar Lewis and on.

Within a Marxist understanding, crafting an argument to appreciate class diversity does not make sense because it would only perpetuate a society organized around class relations, this time with the added dimension of tolerating such differences instead of obliterating them en route to a classless society. There are nuances to this argument, but this is a baseline understanding. Any effort to appreciate class differences as anything but violent is doomed to fail, because it cannot structurally work. By definition, a class-based society is predicated on the exploitation of a class of workers by the owners. A diversity paradigm for class relations is incompatible with Marxism. Furthermore, capital is a negatively relational concept. The bourgeoisie owns capital because it exploits the workers, extracts surplus value from them, and as a result, maintains social advantage over them in all spheres of life, including education. This is Marxism's theory of power as possessed by some over many, much to the chagrin of Foucault and his proponents, who argue that power is neither repressive nor something to be owned, let alone by one group. Based on this reasoning, capital is a diabolical relation based on exploitation.

When CRT suggests that there are multiple forms of cultural capital, some dominant some nondominant (Carter 2003), it builds into the concept a certain amount of autonomy. It makes it possible to recruit cultural capital of color as a resource and effectively transforms the concept. In an institutional setting where people of color are experienced as a problem at best, and demonized at worst,



countering these tendencies with all the intellectual resources one can muster is a reasonable response. Robin Kelley's (1998) reaction is perhaps the most forceful example, critiquing a whole generation of social science research about Black communities, which casts them within a pathological and cultural light. This penchant, particularly within the field of Sociology, was prominent for a few decades and popularized by scholars, such as William Julius Wilson, whom Steinberg (1998) calls the academic reincarnation of Moynihan. The culture of poverty argument was recently reconsidered in a set of articles in the 2010 *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, a special issue edited by Harding, Lamont, and Small. It seems that the problem of culture just won't go away.

These difficulties notwithstanding, it is worth insisting that a deployment of capital is informed by a project that demystifies power in all its forms. If CRT claims the concept of capital, then it must by virtue be at the expense of somebody else. Otherwise, it simply goes by the name of *culture*, or amended as *cultural resources*, *cultural repertoire*, *cultural forms*, or in Moll and Gonzalez's words, "funds of knowledge." Adding *capital* means something different because of its Marxist pedigree in the realm of social theory from Bourdieu to Bowles and Gintis, which is hard to elude and even harder to elide. Diversifying capital to represent racial difference uses only its conceptual shell and forsakes its explanatory kernel. In this, CRT is neither alone nor the first to discuss capital as a flattened or horizontal construct.

Decades before, the sociologist James Coleman (1988) uses a theory of social capital to describe its multiple forms (see also, Coleman 1966). In other words, the empowered group does not have a monopoly over capital and it is more accurate to suggest that a society only recognizes its dominant form. The task is to create a situation where multiple networks are recognized as sources of economic exchange. This reiterates the fact that the concept of capital exists in different theoretical frameworks. But our interest here is firmly in the critical tradition, one that demystifies power relations, one of which is CRT. Given that, we are warranted to suggest that not all groups' culture converts into forms of capital because of existing asymmetrical arrangements. It would not be unreasonable to interpret this claim as overly deterministic. However, if all groups' culture is able to convert to capital, then the concept withers away as a way to explain power differentials. It is difficult to claim, on one side, that White power derogates people of color, then, on the other side, reject a framework that attempts to describe this very process. It is hard to have it both ways.

When CRT speaks for the culture of the oppressed as dominant within its limited sphere of influence, such as ethnic enclaves, it lends autonomy to that culture within a larger field of cultural politics. One can appreciate that White subjects may feel out of place in spaces where they are not the dominant population or cultural viewpoint. But just as Memmi (1965) once wrote that the colonizer never feels not in charge in the colonies, Whites do not experience marginalization within a

society whose social edifice verifies their existence. In the first, the colonizer is surrounded by the colonized, does not speak their language, and does not know his way around. He may even be lost and wanders into a town, just as many Whites in the United States have been in these similar situations. But just as the colonizer brings with him the signs of his power, Whites bring their privilege into the hearts and homes of minorities. The colonizer knows it and furthermore, the colonized knows it.

People of color are not in a dominant position by virtue of being the center of a localized situation, because they are encapsulated by the larger influence of whiteness. These fields of experience do not stand on their own separated from the long arm of Whiteness because it represents their final limit situation. Whiteness may not be dominant in these spaces, but it is determining of them. Moreover, it is hard to imagine that segregated neighborhoods of color signify that people of color are in a normative position when segregation is precisely the lynchpin of Whiteness that put them there in the first place. And as soon as they step out of these confines, the great wall of Whiteness awaits them. This is not an attempt to breathe more power into Whiteness than it already possesses in order to make it omnipotent. It is precisely a move to testify to its power, no more but no less.

In effect, CRT's uptake of class analysis grafts the logic of race onto economic issues. In doing this, CRT gives class a color, made evident by the fact that class hierarchy more accurately goes by the name of *classism*, which is a class variant of racism. By achieving a color line, classism becomes the prejudicial framework for explaining the lowered life chances of working-class students, whose culture is at a disadvantage in schools. This is not untrue, but overlaying a race logic onto class issues does not fundamentally change the analysis to incorporate Marxism. In a sense, class becomes a synonym for race within the explanatory apparatus of CRT. Class is a tributary of race, from whose banks it flows. Race becomes the theory with class vocabulary superimposed on it. Within historical materialism, one finds a different focus, wherein class is explainable through its relationship with capital, which gives it life. Therefore, a thoroughgoing analysis of class relations necessitates critical knowledge of its structure, or capitalism. Understanding capitalism is obviously related to classism, but they are not the same.

A corollary of this investigation recognizes that the uptake of class is not always informed by a Marxist understanding. This is illustrated by both functionalist (Durkheim 1933; Dreeben 1968) and Weberian (Weber 1978a, 1978b; Collins 1979) frameworks on economy and society, the first conceiving the division of labor as a form of organic solidarity, the second redefining the economy as primarily a set of bureaucratic structures. In fact, it is very possible that Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital is informed by two intellectual trends: one Marxist, the other Weberian. As DiMaggio (1979) claims, Bourdieu's work is Marxist to the extent that it offers a theory of class warfare at the level of cultural production. The concept of capital is key in his understanding of power differences that are

material and economic in nature. But just as profound, Bourdieu is Weberian when cultural capital is used to explain differences in status, prestige, and honor among the classes. Whereas Marxism is driven by a politics of redistribution, Weberian analysis is guided by a politics of recognition (see Fraser 1997, for a dual theory of redistribution and recognition).

It appears that within the American appropriation of Bourdieu's work, the favored lineage is Weberian. This tendency is pronounced in the field of education for some good and obvious reasons. It allows educational scholars, particularly within CRT circles, to explicate the actual treatment of students of color, many of whom are working-class students: their derogation, dishonor, and cultural dispossession. This makes sense only if we consider schooling as autonomous from the productive system. But something about the power of analysis and the analysis of power is given up when the actual dynamics of class expropriation is translated into class privilege. Just as White supremacy is mystified through the detour of focusing on White privilege (Leonardo 2004b), class exploitation cannot be explained through its effects.

The trappings and machinations of the capitalist system of production, which give rise to social relations in the school setting, become undertheorized in CRT, which is not the same as saying it is underappreciated. It means that CRT has yet to recruit fully the offerings of a Marxist analysis of schooling. This has definite historical and ideological precursors, not the least of which is the suspicion that White Marxism demotes both race analysis and the lived experience with racism to secondary or epiphenomenal status. This being the case, Marxism still has much to offer CRT insofar as it can offer an endarkened historical materialism, a Black Marxism, or a theory of the racialized revolutionary class. This would make Marxism truly dialectical, for in the final analysis, a racist Marxism is not historical enough. Likewise, a CRT that sincerely incorporates Marxist analysis is that much closer to a complete understanding of racism.

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