

Rethinking race theory in education: Racial Value Theory (RVT)

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John Preston¹ 

Abstract

Race theory in education is locked into a mode of critique that accepts conventional categories of political economy and essentialises race and education as timeless. Attempts to build economic factors into CRT (Critical Race Theory) and recent attempts to combine CRT with theories of racialised social systems to create Racialised Social Systems (RSS) Theory do not enable a negative critique of capitalism. Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) and Marxist theories of racialisation do engage with a negative critique of capitalism but could further consider the contradictions of capitalist society. This requires an understanding of capitalism, class struggle and race that transcends naïve materialism and enables an understanding of education, race and capitalism as locked into permanent crisis. Using metatheoretical critique, a new metatheory, Racial Value Theory (RVT) is presented. This shows how methods of ‘racial organisation’, racial categorisations and racial theories in education become archaic. For educators, RVT shows the redundancy of forms of practice and praxis but also the possibilities for revolutionary education.

Keywords

race, class, capitalism, Marx, education

Race theory in education is being torn apart and is tearing itself apart. Right, and left, wing critiques have been mobilised to such an extent that they appear on popular TV debates, in social media and at protest events. From the right, race theory in education has been criticised for its atheoretical nature, its mistaken belief in white privilege and for its colonisation of schools and universities. From the

¹Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Essex, Colchester, UK

Corresponding author:

John Preston, Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester CO4 3SQ, UK.
Email: j.preston@essex.ac.uk



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left, it has been blamed for the failure of class politics and its centring of race above inequality. Political forces are ripping into race theory. Meanwhile, theoretical arguments between CRT (Critical Race Theory) and Marxism largely oppose each other. Newer theories, such as Racialised Social Systems (RSS) (Meghji, 2020) and Social Reproduction Theory, resuscitate previous theories about racial formation and the origins of family and community under capitalism. There are constant attempts at synthesis (Walton, 2021) but there is no resolution.

This tearing into (from the right and the left) and tearing apart (from academic theoretical argument) is significant. It signifies a crisis, a failure, and a theoretical degeneration. The inability to form a theoretical synthesis, or a new theory of race, is part of a wider crisis. A response could be to generate new, better, synthesised theories of race in education. Indeed, the marketised university demands it as the returns to dead theories fall in the academic marketplace. Rather than ask why synthesis, or new theorisation, hasn't worked, I argue that it will *never* work in this field as a transhistorical theory of race and education is not possible. Rather, we need to *theorise our theories*, through *metatheory*. Additionally, we need enter the realms of negativity, rather than affirmation. As will be expounded at the end of the paper, negative critique means a critique of capitalism as a totality (as an all-consuming form) that is not only the imminent (final) form of production (Memos, 2018) but one in constant crisis as opposed to an affirmative one that seeks to reform, or redistribute, the spoils of capitalism. Theory on race and education, and those very categories, are collapsing into a vortex, simultaneously capitalised and crumbling.

We have been here before in terms of educational theory. Nearly 20 years ago, Rikowski (1997) argued that Marxist theory in education had degenerated into a position where it was merely concerned with social justice and reproduction rather than fundamental questions of capitalism and class struggle. Theory and praxis itself merely asked for crumbs from the table and was unable to escape the vortex of capitalist brutality and decline. For Rikowski it was time for 'scorched earth' and a new beginning for Marxist theory in education. In this paper I argue that 'race theory' in education has reached a similar impasse where current theoretical positions are inadequate in considering changing and complex racial dynamics in capitalism, and their relation to education and pedagogy. Contemporary critical thinking on education and race, whether from a Critical Race Theory (CRT) or a Racialised Social Systems (RSS) approach, is affirmative of capitalism, considering it to be a similar social entity, or subordinate to other racist, or racial, systems of oppression and making race eternal. Neo-Marxist Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) and racialisation have the obvious merits of considering capitalism, and a critique of capitalism, but in terms of historical explanation some strands of this work could benefit from further focus on the mode, rather than the means, of production.

This is as much a critique of my own work, and a dissatisfaction with that previous work, as a critique of the work of others. I was an early adopter, in the UK at least, of CRT in education. I authored the first UK book on whiteness in education, wrote articles with some of the first UK academics to use CRT in their work and attempted, with varying degrees of success to synthesise CRT with Marxism and Anarchism. I may have had some good ideas, and I believed in those theories and the primacy of racial struggle. That *idealism* not only failed to change the world, but failed to change theories and contributed to, what is in contemporary society, a largely discredited form of political naivety. However, I am not just critiquing my own work, and CRT, here but rather interrogating all theory concerning race and education for its affirmative nature.

From a metatheoretical position, many contemporary racial theories affirm a political economy of race and racialisation accepting the naturalism and permanence of economic categories, including race and education. I begin with an analysis of existing theories of race – CRT, RSS, SRT and racialisation. I then show how metatheoretical critique can be used to expose the essentialist fallacies

underpinning many of those theories. I expound a metatheory, ‘Racial Value Theory’ (RVT), that suggests a new way of conceptualising the relationship between race and education and racial theories in education. Finally, I explain how RVT can provide ways for educators to move beyond idealism, reformism and mere critique.

What’s wrong with race theory in education?

In brief, the system that primarily supports, but also destroys, human life on earth – capitalism – is a totalising form of social domination, but not eternal, and failing, conflictual and dialectical. In contrast, most critical theories of race and education do not have a sufficient and adequate theory of those things over historical time, particularly in terms of how race might articulate with capitalism. This includes CRT and RSS. Those theories that do articulate the relation between race and capitalism (Racialisation and SRT) do engage more adequately with capitalism, but some strands tacitly foreground the *means* of capitalist production (its current method, and organisation, of production) rather than the *mode* (as capitalism).

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is both critically lauded and popularly despised (by amongst others the current President of the United States) as a theory that articulates structural racism in terms of the permanence of racism (Bell, 1987, 1993) rather than the imminent (dominant, but failing) temporality of capitalism. CRT was a radical response to questions of race, initially from legal scholars (Bell, 1987, 1993, 1995; Delgado and Stefancic, 1993), which was then transferred into education first in the United States (Ladson-Billings, 1999) and subsequently in the United Kingdom (Gillborn, 2005, 2006, 2010; Hylton, 2012; Rollock, 2012; Warmington, 2020), to form a structural conception of race which was allegedly sufficient in any empirical context. Whether CRT is a ‘theory’ or not is a contested point. CRT has been described as a set of connected tenets (Capper, 2015), an empirically testable theory (Obasogie, 2013), a call to educational activism (Stovall, 2005) and a mode of rhetoric (Subotnik, 1998). There is no doubt as to its influence in contemporary education theory on race. CRT has been employed to explain racism in education policy contexts (Bhopal and Pitkin, 2020; Gillborn, 2010, 2013) in terms of its intersections with characteristics such as gender, class and disability (Gillborn, 2015; Gillborn et al., 2012). CRT has also been used alongside approaches in Marxism (Leonardo, 2012) and Bourdieuan cultural sociology (Bhopal, 2016; Rollock, 2012; Rollock et al., 2014; Tichavakunda, 2019).

Although CRT considers racial dynamics in education it is wanting in terms of its ability to consider dimensions of capitalism and the extent of its own temporality. CRT adopts a nihilistic critique of race and racism (the permanence of racism, Bell, 1993) which requires an affirmative response (continual struggle against racism) without entirely negating its object (racism, that is never defeated). The struggle continues eternally with no resolution. There is a slight exception, in that the final abolition of race or racism has been an object of struggle in some versions of CRT/CWS (Critical Whiteness Studies, for example, the ‘Race Traitor’ contribution of Ignatiev and Garvey, 1996), but there is nothing within CRT that makes such an abolition/destruction necessary or inevitable. Even conflict over the educational ‘spoils’ of race/racism (in terms of grades or educational access, for example) between racial groups is never resolved. There is a critique of all aspects of social reality (including education and education policy) as forms of ‘whiteness’ or in ‘white interests’ but these are eternal. They may be beset with psychological contradictions (the emotional pain of their cruelty for whites) or political contradictions (the permanence of racism in a

multicultural society) but these are not the sorts of contradictions which, within themselves, are dialectical. Critique does not resolve itself into negative critique and the formation of race and racism is trapped within the historical time of an eternal capitalism (see [Cole, 2009a](#); [2009b](#)). Struggles against racial inequity may be won but constant further struggle is needed.

Racialised Social Systems (RSS)

In a recent theoretical development, [Meghji \(2020\)](#) acknowledges the above difficulties with CRT and argues that the CRT conceptual framework could be strengthened through the adoption of Racialised Social Systems (RSS) theory building on the work of [Bonilla-Silva \(1997\)](#). He claims that most of the work on ‘BritCrit’ (British CRT in education) does not even mention Bonilla-Silva’s name (but this *is* both cited and used in UK work on CRT). Bonilla-Silva’s racialised social structure approach considers the totality of the social structure rather than the impact of specific policies. This includes the distribution of resources and the entirety of social space with an unequal distribution of capitals:

Social space offers a frame through which we can develop the concept of the racialized social system. Foundationally, as previously stated, the racialized social systems refer to societies in which capital is unequally distributed across racialized lines. In this regard, the racialized social system is a particular description of social space. Moreover, the racialized groups within this social space are not pre-existing, but are socially constructed and defined relationally...

([Meghji, 2020](#), pg. 351)

Meghji argues that in this social space, whites form a self-interested collective. In essence, this ‘social systems’ approach is little different from the formulations of white supremacy adopted by [Leonardo \(2012\)](#) and [Allen \(2001\)](#) who define white supremacy across different domains of social and economic life including the psychological and emotional, so this is a theory adjacent to CRT. Capital is problematically used here by [Meghji \(2020\)](#) and Bonilla-Silva in a Bourdieuan, rather than a Marxist, sense. Capital is unequally distributed racially. Although it may refer to economic capital (wealth and the distribution of wealth), this is different from a Marxist conception of capital. In a Marxist conception, the capital–labour relation is its essence, with capital being the materialised form of exploited human labour. Unlike a version of various capitals that are struggled over, this is a dialectical, conflictual form, that is not eternal – it is imminent but in constant crisis (see [Postone, 2009](#); [Rikowski, 2008](#) for a critique of Bourdieu’s conception of capitals as opposed to Marx).

In short, RSS accepts ahistorical and affirmative categories (particularly of capital) rather than considering categories to be historically situated within capitalism, which can then be the subject of negative critique. In other words, it does not consider that capitalist sociality is not eternal ([Memos, 2018](#)).

Social Reproduction Theory (SRT)

Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) enhances early Marxist theories as it introduces the social production of labour power (rather simply commodity production) as a site of race, racialisation and racism ([Bhattacharya, 2017a](#)). SRT aims to ‘complete’ other Marxist economic analysis by including the social reproduction of labour in the schema of capital and this analysis harks back to [Marx \(1990, 1991, 1992\)](#) and the theoretical work on the apparatus of Social Reproduction in Education (SRE)

and Social Reproduction Feminism (SRF) (Backer and Cairns, 2021). SRT primarily considers the means of capitalist production (with an emphasis on the reproduction of labour power) rather than a truly historical and negative critique of its mode. There may be a variety of mutations of capitalist society and the social reproduction of labour (Fraser, 2017) but this is a reproductive critique that considers capitalism to be eternal. More promisingly, Bhattacharya (2017b) does extend SRT to consider how the social reproduction of labour power itself is a site of struggle (see also Rikowski, 1997).

Racialisation

There *are* education theories that do begin to account adequately for the relation between race and capitalism. In opposition to CRT, theories of racialisation (Miles, 2004) which largely predated CRT and latterly xeno-racialisation in education (Cole, 2016) have provided a critique of a CRT perspective (Cole, 2009a, 2009b; Cole and Masuria, 2007) based on the centrality of a Marxist analysis of capital, capitalism and class struggle, emphasising the need to consider capitalism as central to the creation and maintenance of race as an emergent phenomena. These theories explore how race and racism support capitalism either through providing the material substrate from which capitalism is launched or maintained (through profits, expropriation or exploitation) or how racism works to support particular capitals or the state to further the needs of capitalism.

In these theories, education is an agent of class and racial reproduction, serving the interests of capital, and is also a terrain of class struggle. Race is not, though, fundamental to capitalism and these theories do not necessarily explain how race as a category might disappear within capitalism, although social or revolutionary struggle, and critical pedagogy, is a necessary part of anti-racism (Cole, 2009a; 2009b). Theories of racialisation consider how race and racism reflect the needs of capitalists in the capitalist mode of production (Miles, 2004) because of the aims of capital, as mediated through class struggle. At the level of explanation they relate racialisation, and xeno-racialisation, to the changing needs of capital in terms of the demands for labour, imperialism and militarism and nationalism.

Although the Neo-Marxist tradition of racialisation is fundamentally concerned with a critique of capitalism (Cole, 2009a; 2009b), there is a strand of work in racialisation and education more concerned with policy critique than a negative critique of capitalism (Fitzpatrick, 2013; Phoenix, 2002; Williams, 1986). The connection with the fundamentals of capitalism and class struggle is important, or racialisation can be unduly concerned with the relationship between race and only the current means of production (being the historically specific manifestation of capitalism at that time and the organisation, and relations, of capitalist production) rather than the mode of production (being capitalism).

Race, education and metatheory

In these theoretical perspectives, there are problems with the ways in which contemporary educational theories have articulated temporality and the mode of capitalist production. As has been discussed, much critical educational theory on race situates that relationship within the permanence of racism (CRT) or a timeless social structure of capitals saturated with racism (RSS). It critiques the allocation of educational resources (such as grades, or access) which then determine labour market position (and wages) taking for granted capitalist categories (education and wages) without a negative critique of capitalism (CRT and RSS). Theories of racialisation do not consider capitalism (or race) to be timeless but, if disassociated from a Neo-Marxist framework, they can be trapped in an

analysis of the current manifestation of the means of production (and its relationship to race) rather than the imminence of the mode of production. SRT and SRE tend to focus on the relation between race, education and specific temporalities of capitalist production.

This theoretical lacuna hints at a fundamental issue in terms of the difficulty of articulating race, education and capitalism, that it simply can't be done. Recent metatheoretical critiques – which theorise theories – have, indeed, argued it is not possible to articulate race with capitalism (Go 2021).

When considering 'racial capitalism', for example, Go argues that theories fail to identify the distinctively capitalist nature of racial exploitation or capitalist dynamics. Often the very meaning of 'race' is unclear in such theories. Sometimes theories of racial capitalism (particularly Robinson, 2021) conflate race with other ethnic, linguistic or national differences. There are some capitalist countries where differentiations other than race are more important and this means that racial capitalism may have a specific meaning (for example, in the North American context with relation to African Americans and the historical legacy of slavery). One way of addressing these issues is to claim that racialisation, and racial capitalism, as originally considered by Miles (2004) has expanded to include characteristics such as language, religion or even forms of dress as in Cole's theory of xeno-racialisation (Cole, 2016). This partly addresses Go's contention that race is not necessary to explain divide and rule, exploitation and expropriation in capitalism as these can always be explained by other categorisations. However, Go also argues that for race (and this would extend to xeno-racialisation) to be a *necessary* feature in the formation of capitalism there would need to be *something distinctive about race above other factors*. Some authors claim that this might involve profits from slavery as launching Western capitalism (Andrews, 2021) and so '...the actual historical process by which capitalism emerged in the world involved relations of race and racial domination' (McNally, 2017, pg. 107). This is not sufficient to establish a legacy 'racial capitalism' as other forms of accumulation and violence contributed to its origins.

Historical questions aside, Go's (2021) 'concept killer' for 'racial capitalism is to argue that not only theory but even contemporary *Marxist theory* is unable to account for it. Marx did consider slavery and colonialism in his work, but for Go this is not really a theoretical matter, but a textual and interpretative one. He considers that there is a distinction between Marx's theory of capital (as articulated in *Capital* and the *Grundrisse*, Marx 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993) and Marx's theory of capitalism. His theory of 'capital', according to Go, is *purely* at the level of abstraction (value, labour, capital, socially necessary labour time) which is '...devoid of any historical specificity or social content and as such can be applied to any distinct historical phases or social phenomena' (Go, 2021, pg. 42), whereas his theory of *capitalism* 'refers to capitalist development and dynamics' (42). Go argues that theorists of racial capitalism may be on more solid ground by '...critiquing his *theory of capital* not his *theory of capitalism*' (43) but that such a theory does not exist. Similarly, Bhattacharya (2018) argues that there can be no singular theory of 'racial capitalism'; rather, there are a series of formations that might comprise different racialisations and state structures.

Go's (2021) metatheoretical critique accepts that there is value in social theory but aims to productively inspire the creation of new theory, or metatheory. The seeds of this can be found in Go's own argument but not in the way he wants it to be understood. Go is incorrect, in terms of Marxist theory on three grounds. Firstly, Go misunderstands the articulation between the abstract and concrete in Marx's work, seeing them as a separation, referring to different things (capital and capitalism), rather than as synthesis, and as separate articulations of a unitary phenomenon. Go misinterprets the meaning of the term 'abstract' in Marx's work as if it was some form of theoretical concept rather than a materialist one. Secondly, Go misunderstands the relationship between capital and capitalism. Go sees capitalism as a dominant social structure, which is correct, but in Marx's work capitalism is comprised of forms of capital over time, it has been described as 'value in motion'

(Harvey, 2017). Thirdly, Go interprets Marxism as only a critique of capitalism, which it is, but it is also a critique of economics in its totality, not an attempt to form a new, radical, political economy. Go's three errors are the starting points for a metatheory of race in education, Racial Value Theory (RVT). I will elucidate how RVT emerges from these points and then explain RVT as metatheory.

Firstly, abstraction is not theory, but a 'real abstraction' in that capitalist economic principles come to dominate the material form of life (Pitts, 2018; Sohn-Rethel, 1978). If we take teachers' and lecturers' work for example, educators work harder each year, are exploited more, are increasingly being sacked from their jobs and are, thankfully, turning to unions and strike action to protect themselves. This is a concrete struggle, involving real things like exploitation, labour and class struggle. This cannot be disconnected from the abstractions of capitalism where labour power (teachers' and lecturers' labour) is a commodity that produces an educational commodity with value that is consistently undermined through technology and new organisational forms. Those abstract concepts (commodity, value, labour power) are the twins of the concrete and inseparable from it. The movement of capital over time is capitalism. Work gets worse and more exploitative because capitalism is capital (value) in motion. Abstraction is not just a theorisation, but the abstractions of capitalism, formed in the crucible of class struggle, are the twins of the concrete materialisation of things such as labour, commodities and capital in their various forms. Capitalism creates, through successive waves of primitive accumulation, historical forms that are specific to itself and capital, so that labour and commodities have a specific meaning in capitalist societies (Postone, 2009). In RVT, race and education operate both at both the level of abstraction and as concrete, sensuous, things.

Secondly, capital and its movement, particularly the transformation of forms and the movement of value, comprise capitalism. Teachers' and lecturers' labour power makes the educational commodity that enhances labour power, and gives it value, whether in a state or private school, under capitalism. RVT does not differentiate between capitalism and capitals; capitalism is comprised of capitals. It is dominant, but not permanent.

Thirdly, Marx was not writing a version of political economy, like the classical political economists, but rather a critique of economic categories, explaining how the categories of political economy (abstractions) are fetishised as if they are real. Of course, we should not just concentrate on the abstractions of capital. Cole (2012) makes the important point that solely to focus on the abstract nature of capitalism obscures concrete forms of domination and class struggle and it is important to understand the relation between the abstract and the concrete relations of capitalism (Cole, 2012, 172). RVT does not fetishise abstraction, or prioritise the abstract above the concrete, and connects directly with revolutionary education praxis.

Racial Value Theory (RVT) and education

RVT holds that race and education in contemporary societies are related to the mode of production as a totality. Capitalism is comprised of capitals, which are in turn formed from abstract and concrete human labour. This includes abstract, as well as concrete categories, and not just the means of production but the mode. Education is an abstract commodity as well as involving concrete hours of teaching. Schools are education factories, the educational means of production as part of the mode of production – capitalism. Race and education are subsumed in capitalist societies as forms of potential value for capitalism, but these are consistently eroding and crisis ridden. RVT is metatheory, as it theorises all theories and practices and how they consistently must fail to explain race in education. It also, paradoxically, seeks to dispel all theoretical and idealist foundations in explaining how race and education are both part of the dominance of, and failure of, capitalism.

RVT draws on the New Reading of Marx (NRM) (Heinrich, 2012; Pitts, 2018), Value Critique (Kurz, 2012, 2014) and Open Marxism (Bonefeld, 2014; Bonefeld et al., 1995; Bonefeld, Gunn and Psychopedis, 1992a, 1992b) building on earlier Marxist theorisation (Marx 1990, 1991, 1992; Sohn-Rethel, 1978) and extending previous Marxist work on racialisation (Miles, 1990 and Cole, 2012, 2016). NRM theories share the consensus that Marx was attempting a negative critique of capitalism (capitalism as the dominant form), that the categories of political economy and capitalism (such as labour, commodity, value but also race and education) are specific to the capitalist mode of production (and not transhistorical), that capitalism is crisis, that it destroys its own basis as value desubstantialises itself and that the very categories of capitalism itself are open to contestation and destruction. This approach has sometimes been criticised for downplaying traditional Marxist concerns such as class struggle (Cole, 2012) which is certainly true in the work of Heinrich (2012). However, in value critique and in ‘Open Marxism’, the concern is *always* for class struggle towards Communism. Such perspectives are more critical of a workers’ takeover of the State (Kurz, 2012, 2014; Postone, 2009) as this could reproduce the exploitative relations of capitalism (as state capitalism) favouring broad-based working class revolution to establish a Communist society from below.

This has major implications for education and race, akin to Rikowski’s (1997) ‘scorched earth’ approach. For Rikowski, the notion of labour power (a commodity that, within capitalism, enables workers to create more value than is required for their production and reproduction) makes education fundamental to the continuation of capitalism. It is a crucible of the social production of labour power (Rikowski, 1997, pg. 568). Alongside a negative critique of capitalism, this paves the way for a dissolution of previous Marxist educational theory. Humans have a capacity to labour (labour power) in both concrete and abstract (value creating) terms. Capitalists use money to buy labour power from the working class which (along with capital, which is really a mass of congealed past labour power) creates commodities which may be exchanged for a greater sum of money than has been advanced (profit). Abstract labour has the potential to create additional surplus value (under certain conditions). Surplus value can be temporarily increased through the extension of the working day or the use of technology or organisational forms to enable an increase in productivity. This creates relative surplus value until this advantage, and profit, is competed away as other capitalists adopt the same methods. The cycle then begins again with a greater intensity of work and exploitation. Education is of value to capitalism as it is the primary site of the enhancement of labour power, hence of value.

Race and related categorisations (racism, racialisation) can similarly be seen to be part of the expanded circuit of the reproduction of capital. Race is not a fundamental social form (Sohn-Rethel, 1978) of capital (like labour, commodity, capital) but is still a *productive* form (one of many) that facilitates capitalism (perhaps through super-exploitation of racialised subjects). For example, Sorentino (2019), through an analysis of African slavery, explores the idea that race may be a ‘productive force’ in Marx’s theory. Slavery was not only an instance of primitive accumulation for capitalism but part of the instantiation of social categories of ‘race’ within capitalism.

Race does not naturally appear in this depiction, but it could appear in several places. In particular, the use of any distinguishable (real or not) characteristics in humans could be one of the organisational forms that capitals use to reduce the time taken to produce commodities, hence gaining relative surplus value and profits until the form is generalised. This could occur through divide and rule strategies to increase productivity or through excluding workers on the basis of race to provide an incentive for workers of a particular race to work harder, or privileging some workers instead of others in order to increase profits. Capitalists might exclude (directly, through redlining or other exclusions or indirectly through product or market differentiation) consumers of some races to

increase sales or by making it seem as if the product is more valuable due to its exclusionary characteristics. It might also involve *including* workers based on race, and increasing racial equality, to provide an incentive for workers to work harder, forcing workers to undertake courses or classes in privilege so that all workers seem included (or some workers feel shamed, or whatever the reason might be). It could also include promoting race equality in the product or advertising or the enhancement of human capital through education. Whatever the strategy is, and it may (or may not) be underpinned by science or prevailing social attitudes, the most important thing for the capital (organisation) will be to take advantage of the relative surplus value before it is generalised. Racial organisation is formed from the actions of capitalists, but also through the state (as a form of capital) by imposing methods of racial organisation in education, or racial classifications through policy and censuses.

Education is part of creating methods of 'racial organisation' in terms of the social production of labour power. For example, both lectures on white privilege, and pledging allegiance to a flag of an ethnostate, are methods of 'racial organisation'. Each of these might create labour discipline and increased productivity through the methods described above. However, once these become generalised, and capital or the state has exhausted the intensity of production of social labour power from those methods, new forms of 'racial organisation' must be adopted. This means that there is no teleology, no necessary movement for (or against) a particular system of racial classification or equality. Of course, the process is dialectical and the resistance, or accommodation, of the working class to these processes is central, but whatever the strategy adopted educators, as a fraction of the working class, inevitably lose as the intensity of their work and the rate of exploitation rises. Some fractions may appear to make short term 'gains' (through teaching white supremacy, or Black Lives Matter activities or diversity days in the classroom) but these are ephemeral. Sometimes this might resolve itself into a 'white supremacist' society, or a society in which there is 'white privilege', or even a more racially equitable society, but these solidities inevitably dissolve.

RVT emphasises the impermanence of racial categorisations and racisms, and is anti-essentialist, *in a particular sense*, as these are products of the movement of capital. Race, racism, education and pedagogy are not historical categories, but neither are they mere epi-phenomena, as they are parts of the fetishized process through which capitalism creates value, valorises value and converts value between social forms. There is neither a march of progress, or permanence of racism. Racialisation and racial categorisations only have value (another social form specific to capitalism) as a 'productive force' in capitalist society in terms of increasing 'profit' for capitalists. Ironically, this can include any racial organisation, including anti-racism and progressive racial agendas in education. There is no teleology here but methods of racial organisation become archaic as soon as they are established as the relative surplus value enabled by a new form of social organisation disappears as soon as it is generalised. This might lead employers, educational institutions and states to establish new, innovative, forms of racial organisation. Any form of racial organisation, whether equitable or inequitable, is, in the long run, determined purely in terms of whether it enables profit. This does not mean that the state, or social struggle, is unimportant (indeed large corporations are often the champions of both equality and discrimination) but that the longevity of methods of racial organisation is tied to profit. The fact that we consistently change the language that we use to talk about race in education, or open up new theorisations in academia, is not because we are grasping for the right term but that there is no term, or theory, to describe race as it *can't be objectively described or theorised outside of the current social mode of organisation that is being employed*. Racial change is led by experiments and innovations by capitalists, and by the state as a capital, with a monopoly of violence (and categorisation) and it might be resisted (or not) by various groups. This is discussed in theories of racialisation (Cole, 2016; Miles, 2004), but a metatheoretical analysis introduces the

wider, dialectics of this process. Capitalism undermines itself, through creating and expanding the working class, but also behind the backs of the actions of capitalists value is destroying itself, and racial organisation is part of this process.

However, capitalism (and hence racial categorisations) is not eternal. Labour power, in capitalism, as a source of value is consistently undermining itself. Living becomes dead labour (capital) through work. This dead labour – machinery and new organisational forms – throws what produces value (the working class) out of the labour force. Capital consistently ruins itself – it desubstantialises itself (Kurz, 2012, 2014) as described above. This is a fragile process, prone to failure, and is, of course, consistently being undermined by the resistant, revolutionary working class (Holloway, 2010). This provides a key area for the praxis of educators.

Conclusion: What does this mean for education and educators?

Entwining theory with educational praxis and translating it into practice is difficult. RVT, as metatheory, is distant and reified. The lack of translation into practice, and praxis, could be problematic for RVT. In theoretical terms, the emphasis of RVT is on the ‘desubstantialisation of value’ (Kurz, 2014) in a capitalism that is crisis, rather than as a stable system which goes through periodic crisis. Class struggle is fundamental but negative critique seeks forms of praxis that ultimately disestablishes a capitalist, class society – including the destruction of capitalism (and hence class relations) themselves (Bonefeld, 2014). This does not diminish racial struggles, but considers that these need to connect to wider, material, class struggles (Heagerty and Peery, 2000; Holst, 2019). That sounds reified, but for educators, as a collective fraction of the working class, this provides them with enormous power.

CRT adopts a cynical view of educational policy and practice in that the permanence of racism means that racial change or equity is impossible. RVT might also be accused of being cynical in that policy and practice is not only of no permanent value in capitalism, but that innovations in policy and practice (‘racial organisation’) ultimately increase exploitation and intensify the labour of educators. Capitalist forms of policy and praxis serve as forms of ideological knowledge production (Mojab and Carpenter, 2011). However, this concretely brings educators in direct contact with not only the futility of their activity in capitalism (even when it appears to be progressive), but also their power in creating labour power.

There is a close affinity between RVT and other work on Marxism, race and education that consider value, abstraction and dialectics. Race and racial organisation are abstractions but they are not fantasies or ideas. They are materialised forms of capitalist abstraction. Class, as the working class are the violently birthed repository of labour power, is fundamental as the nexus of race and other materialised, yet abstract, characteristics (Carpenter and Mojab, 2017). Foregrounding any characteristic including race, or a thin description of class as a mere identity and not central to capitalism, represents a ‘synecdochical attempt’ to separate these characteristics from their materialised form in capitalism (Bannerji, 2020, pg. 24) Abstraction is not just a ‘...philosophical trick or a way of thinking. It is a *particular* way of thinking that in turn conditions a way of life’ (Carpenter and Mojab, 2017, pg. 8). We live not only in, but as abstractions (producers of a commodity, labour power). This reproduction is not inevitable (pg. 16) and we are individually and collectively resistant to these. Educators’ lives are dialectical, in terms of not only connection but opposition (Au, 2018; Baptist and Rehmann, 2011). Productivism of new forms of racial organisation, and even critical education for racial equity of the reformist kind, simply continue the wider creation of abstractions and exploitation and must relate to working class revolutionary struggle

(Katz-Fishman et al., 2011). To be meaningful, struggles should be those of revolution, and revolutionary education (Carpenter and Mojab, 2017; Cole, 2009a, 2009b, 2012).

There is also a break between RVT, as metatheory, and existing theory. Capitalism subsumes individuals into the working class, work routines into capitalist work routines and ideas into material abstractions. Radical theory is sold in articles, as an expression of labour power, that is of value to the capitalist university. Critical and even revolutionary education are repackaged as enhancing labour power (as part of degree programmes) and commoditised. However, crisis is capitalism (Holloway, 2010) and capitalism is crisis, whether socially or racially regressive or progressive. There are always cracks and fissures that allow possibilities. Capitalism is destroying itself and humanity but it is an imperfect system. Educational efforts at progressive racial organisation within capitalism are akin to the benefits of turning on the lights in a plummeting lift. RVT asks not just what is the point, but what material struggle prefigure revolutionary alternatives to capitalism, and the horrific abstractions and fading temporalities – of race, education and theory – in which we live. There is no immediate historical answer to this question, and RVT eschews transhistorical theory, but it is formed in the dialectical struggles of the working class, including educators.

ORCID iD

John Preston  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1219-4108>

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