Broadening Equity: Critical Race Theory and the Unraveling Complexities of Social and Racial Dynamics in Public Administration

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About Me

• Third-year Ph.D. student in Public Administration at the University of Nebraska at Omaha

• Primary research focuses on Social & Racial Equity and Critical Race Theory in Public Administration & Policy, particularly public participation in policy processes

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Introduction

• The call for a renewed emphasis on social equity has surged noticeably in recent years
• Previous research has provided insights into strategies, pedagogy, and policy impacts
• Expanded research interest since 2020 (>100)
• Four theoretical grounds: Representation; Social identity construction and social categorization; Bias, discrimination, stereotyping; and Critical theories.
• The recent surge in attention to CRT within the broader context of public administration and policy provides an additional impetus for its expanded application in research
Research

• **Guiding question:** How can CRT provide an additional lens to clarify, understand, and apply pursuits of social and racial equity in public administration and policy research?

• **This paper:** employs different components of foundational readings of CRT to make a case about the different goals in the pursuit of racial equity in Public Administration and Policy Research.
Literature & Theory

• Social Equity
  • The fair, just, and equitable management of all institutions serving the public directly or by contract; the fair and equitable distribution of public services, and the implementation of public policy; and the commitment to promote fairness, justice, and equity in the formation of public policy (Wooldridge & Bilharz, 2017)

• Justice in PA
  • Adoption and influences of John Rawls’s “A Theory of Justice”, liberalism ideology of justice

• Critical Race Theory (CRT)
  • A race-conscious theory that critically examines systems
  • Invite us for an interdisciplinary understanding of social equity
Same Word but Different Meaning

• Race Consciousness and Racial Justice
• Critical Race Consciousness (Peller, 2011)
  • Drawing differences between integrationist idea and the Black Nationalist movement
  • Integrationist: Preserving current systems and institutions, focusing on integration and race-neutrality as the goals
  • Black Nationalist: Create an alternative/parallel systems that aim for liberation
Integrationists’ racial justice means achieving neutrality with respect to race, freeing racial minorities from the pre-liberal caste systems of segregation and apartheid, just as other reform efforts are aimed at transcending other forms of prejudice and irrational social discrimination.

Peller, 2011
Simple to Name but Difficult to Operationalize

- The generalization of race created the oversimplification explanation of experiences and challenges in racial equity (Crenshaw et al. 2019, Delgado & Stefancic, 2017)

- The use of race as a simple variable could be based on several reasons. One may be the fundamental epistemic racism (Starke & Mastracci, 2023) or one may be limitations on operationalizing research methodologies (Zuberi, 2008; James, 2001) or methodological Whiteness (Maloney, 2023)
As Crenshaw et al. (2019) noted, “seeming neutrality of statistical research design often masks unacknowledged ideological predispositions.”
Quick to Action but Slow to Reform

• Neoliberalism creates the urgency and market approaches to resolve challenges in racial equity

• Critical Race Materialism
  • The market approach to racial justice does not work and reproduces racial hierarchies (Valdes & Cho, 2011)
  • E.g.: Racial capitalism, nation-state relationship, CDO, DEI retrenchment
Global Neoliberalism – Because core elites in this nation-state most successfully have used law not only to create markets for oppression and injustice, but to do so along intensely racialized grids of political, cultural, and material stratification.

Valdes & Cho, 2011
Conclusion

- There are similarities in word choices, research agenda, and actionable steps, but there are differences. This may cause misalignment, especially when forming actionable strategies.

- Using CRT to understand social and racial equity provides a different research lens in understanding racial hierarchy and racialized societies and how PA research, or PA in general, is currently struggling to address these challenges.
Thank you!

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