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Journal #8

Week 10

This week one of the assigned readings was Yosso “Whose Culture Has Capital?” and reading it a second time I find myself as invested, as I was when I previously read it. Yosso calls for scholars to “transform the process of theorizing” (69) in an effort to ask questions about knowledge. Specifically, whose knowledge does and does not count. This is similar to the discussions we have had in class about power and definition and the power of definition. Understanding who has the power of definition has come up numerous times when we discuss risk and situations where risk is staged. Yosso takes a slightly different approach. He uses critical race theory (CRT) as means to counteract the perceived harm done by theories that reinforce the social hierarchy. Yosso’s call to scholars is to do work that empowers and loosens theories that restrict or reaffirm. The process of doing this is theory. Essentially, the call is to fight theory with theory. There may be confusion as to how this is possible, or to what end and/or purpose, but this is at the very least an important conversation to have whether you agree or disagree with Yosso’s approach.

In this article CRT is defined as a “framework used to theorize, examine, and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact on social structures, practices and discourses” (70). For the purpose of this class I see CRT as our framework for approaching the ways in which risk should, or could, be communicated. This is the fourth time I’ve read this article and I always find myself walking away from it with a different area of study in which I can apply some element discussed in it. For this class reading it caused me to think back about a lot of our early discussions when we grappled with how to communicate without acting as though you have the correct answers, and are the authority. It appears to me incredibly tricky to avoid the top down model of communication.

It seems to me that thinking that people are lacking in capital, and then deciding to help them the focus shifts to depositing information that the dominant social groups view as important. This urge is obviously problematic because it only values the information produced by one social group, and as I understand it Yosso, and other scholars, view this as devaluing the knowledge and capital people possess that may or may not exist outside of the generally accepted and/or valued capital. As I start to think more about my research project I wonder how it is that I can incorporate some of this line of thought in my own work. Be it on a small scale in the scope of a class project or something larger I do think it’s important to make an attempt to transform the process in the way that Yosso urges us to do.