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Introducing critical race theory to archival discourse: getting the conversation started

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Abstract This article introduces the application of Critical Race Theory (CRT) to archival discourse in order to demonstrate how such a critical and analytical approach can help identify and raise social and professional consciousness of implicit racial bias. To demonstrate the potential of CRT, the paper discusses how the terminology and methodological structures of CRT might be applied to some aspects of archival theory and practice. The paper concludes that CRT can contribute to a diversified archival epistemology that can influence the creation of collective and institutional memories that impact underrepresented and disenfranchised populations and the development of their identities.

Keywords Critical race theory · Archival terminology · Discourse · Recordkeeping practice · Social justice · Counter story · Microaggression · Record · Identity · Social construct · Underrepresented population · Marginalized population · Disenfranchised population · Collective memory · Institutional memory

"Race Matters"[1]
– Cornell West

"I am interested in race matters *because I live within their constraints daily, and therefore*, race *matters every second of my life"*
– AWD

[1] This article opens with the title of West's classic monograph as the launching point because of its dual literary context, which frames 'race matters' as topic and affirmation. In this instance it is the affirmative statement that is the context confirming that race is worthy of the importance and focus this article stresses. See West (2001).

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Introduction

About 20 years ago, archival discourse in the English-speaking world began expanding beyond the foundational constructions of modern archival theory and practice propounded by such seminal figures as Jenkinson, Schellenberg, Norton and Maclean to address the social dimensions of archives and archival activities. Several scholars mark this time-period as a point of transition. However, it could be argued that the synergy of this apparent paradigm shift in the United States can be credited to the endorsement of the Society of American Archivists. However, in a discussion about broadening the social contexts of archival discourse one must not ignore the influence of Hans Booms and the writings of F. Gerald Ham, or Hugh Taylor's notion of the total archive. Other key figures promoting the social dynamics of archival discourse include Terry Cook, Tom Nesmith, and Sue McKemmish. One strategy that was endorsed by the Society of American Archivists (SAA) in 1986 was to promote ''archives and society,'' in order for archives to have a more interactive relationship with the general public (Maher 1986). Subsequently, archivists have begun to contemplate how to expand theory and practice in order to address social and cultural issues more systematically. In making room for discussions about cultural dynamics such as class, race, gender, and social equity, to name a few from a broad list of possibilities, this paper argues that space might also be created for such socially conscious notions as alternative, non-traditional or diverse epistemologies. This article is an effort to diversify epistemologies by suggesting that under different circumstances, such as a broader social consciousness that includes the values and issues of underrepresented populations, and through a different form, notably a Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework, that a different quality of knowledge formation, or a diversified epistemology is possible.

In an effort to support the development of epistemological processes and a methodological toolset that can explore issues of racial bias, this paper introduces the context, terms, and social emphasis of CRT to the professional, theoretical, and cultural dynamics of archival discourse. Thus, this paper will first introduce the origins of CRT. Secondly, the applicability of CRT will be discussed in relation to the historical and administrative aspects of archiving records. The discussion then moves to the application of CRT as a research mechanism employing the records continuum model. Before concluding, the article offers a brief commentary on the importance of raising the collective social consciousness of the archival field about racial issues as these apply to establishing alternative discussions or counter-narratives within the archival discourse.

In the bigger picture

The ideas and concepts presented in this article have a duality of purpose. The initial purpose is to explore the compatibility between CRT and the canons, foundations, innovations, and occasionally the debates within archival discourse. This objective alone is an ambitious endeavor. However, the CRT introduction to archival discourse is not the only purpose of this article. The discussion here is also part of a scholarly vision that is broader than any isolated goals that can be achieved utilizing CRT.

The bigger picture is to bring a critical theory framework to the various ways in which information types and domains are studied, documented, researched and taught in both the academic and professional arenas. Thus, the introduction of a critical framework to archival discourse is an integral component of a vision that aspires to locate a negotiated space for those who might want to approach information tenets with a critical social consciousness. Key in this pursuit is the consistent presentation of social constructs as variables to measure, discuss and teach within the information disciplines. For my purposes, social constructs are shaped as ideas, terms, social identifiers, social indoctrinators that position individuals or groups of individuals hierarchically for a perceived convenience (or justification) of a society as a whole. In the case here, race and ethnicity are the thematic social constructs. Beyond this particular discussion, are an exponentially abundant number of possible critical discussions using various other social constructs. One might consider social constructs such as religion, gender, and sexual orientation to name a few.

As a person of color my passion is not limited to, but is often focused on, race and ethnicity. By the same token, there should be opportunities for members of other (and in some cases individuals who identify themselves within multiple) underrepresented and disenfranchised populations to critique how their identities are developed within institutional and collective memories. Along the same line, there should be some form of agency that encourages, facilitates and increases the expression of counter-identities created with some autonomy by traditionally marginalized groups.

With that stated, this article while published in Archival Science is written to appeal to a broader base than those solely interested in the archival discourse. In the most optimistic sense, this article also aspires to appeal to scholars operating within ancillary disciplines with established critical frameworks, as well as established scholars and developing students connected to information disciplines. In a best-case scenario, it is hoped that articles like this might initiate a collaborative interdisciplinary synergy between those who theorize critically and those who study various dynamics of information.

Concepts of theory

Before addressing CRT and its applicability to archival discourse, a discussion that frames the meaning and context of theory in general is useful for enriching a discussion of CRT and archival discourse. As Livelton has pointed out, theory can be thought of in one of three ways: as an hypothesis, as a programmatic scheme of ideas or as an explanatory scheme of ideas (Livelton 1996). Understanding the subtle and profound differences in the ways in which theories are initially expressed is significant in analyzing the research methods that will either support or disprove a theory. Hypothesizing articulates theoretical assumptions (big or small) or empirical observations that require further testing or evaluation. Moreover, a hypothesis offers a possible reality until tested or proven (Newton 1999). This expression of theory, while useful in many circumstances for empirical research, however, is not quite as useful to this discussion as is the notion of theory as a programmatic or explanatory scheme of ideas. Thus, theory as hypothesis is beyond the scope of this paper for both CRT and archival theory.

Livelton positions theory as a programmatic scheme of ideas that determine what is normative and practical, not descriptive and predictive. Theory in this sense seeks

improved circumstances or conditions from the point-of-view of an individual(s) affected by a particular circumstance or condition. In this sense the discussion is about what *can be* or what *should be* the better scheme of ideas. This definition of theory gets right to the spirit of CRT, which critiques issues related to race that are based on what is normative, as well as offering an alternative to what is normative. Additionally, archival theory also fits quite well within this definition of theory. One does not have to look further than the competing theories of archival appraisal to see that the normative dynamics of theory saturate archival discourse, even if *which* scheme of ideas should be the standard-bearer is a topic that continues to be debated.

Equally important to this discussion is the notion of theory as an explanatory scheme of ideas, usually expressed from the vantage point of the observer. Theory, in this case, describes why and/or how things happen, or better yet, what is perceived to be actual. In essence, a hypothesis, a programmatic scheme of ideas, or an explanatory scheme of ideas, are the foundational statement or group of statements of a theory with the research methods providing structure towards supporting the theory (Vogt 1999). The nature of theory here is a justification or explanation of the current state of affairs. Again, CRT is very much concerned with the current state of affairs of racial discourses and behaviors. Archival theory—by having a strong professional ontology—is equally focussed on how archivists go about their practice. The point here is that archival theory is often intimately related to (if not married to) archiving as practice; that is, archival theory is frequently inductive in the sense the theory names an existing practice or set of practices.

The foundations of CRT

At this point, the questions ''What is CRT?'' and ''How can it be useful?'' can be addressed. It is worth noting that in the information disciplines, it is not a new idea to borrow theories from other disciplines and appropriate them within their discourse. For instance, Hjørland makes the point that in Information Science, ''we do not have many explicit theories...often theories from other fields, for example, psychology, sociology, or management are applied'' (Hjørland 1998, p. 607). Therefore, while bringing the critical application of CRT to archival discourse may be a fresh approach, the borrowing from other disciplines is not a new phenomenon to archival scholarship.

The origins of CRT manifest from legal scholarship. Founding scholars such as Bell (1973, 1980), Bell et al. (2005), Delgado and Stefanic (2000, 2001) and Crenshaw (1995), felt compelled to address the lack of racial equality in the 1970s that seemed so promising based on Civil Rights legislation of the 1960s (Taylor 1998). Observing the continued racial disparities in affirmative action, campus speech codes, and criminal convictions, the founding CRT scholars developed a discourse that could bring a social consciousness to the racial conditions of minorities. The discussion and literature in the 1970s of liberal civil rights in the legal discipline was thematically known as critical legal studies (CLS), and eventually evolved in to what is now known and as CRT (Lawrence 2002).

The distinction between CLS and CRT can be understood through time, text and identity. In the mid-1980s, scholars who wanted CLS scholarship to discuss the legal disenfranchisement of people of color began publishing legal scholarship focusing on issues of race and began identifying themselves as critical race theorists (Brown

1995). In general terms, CLS can be associated with discussing liberal civil rights legislation that addresses social constructs of class, religion, gender, and gender identity, to name a few, with minimal attention giving to the social constructs of race and ethnicity. Brown illustrates this point quite succinctly by stating, ''There simply has not been the sustained self-examination by traditional civil rights scholars that should result from the powerful critiques that critical race theory has posed to fundamental tenets of the academy. As scholars have tinkered with these more peripheral questions [of race and ethnicity], sadly the more fundamental questions [about race and ethnicity] have hardly been posed, much less answered.''

In the most practical sense, CRT challenges the privileges of dominant culture—particularly whiteness—as the normative benchmark of social acceptability. All whiteness theories problematize the normalization and naturalization of whiteness. Rejecting the notion of white values as a generic or colorblind norm, they point to how the very status of whiteness as a norm is a privilege (Thompson 2002). In other words, the conventional lens of academic research and narratives positions people of color as the subject of investigation, along with the identity as ''the other.'' However, critical white studies (CWS) and CRT often position whiteness as the subject of investigation, with the normative position and privileged values belonging to or being shared with people and cultures of color. In the last 15 years, CRT has evolved beyond legal scholarship and now makes significant contributions to such academic disciplines as Sociology, Social Welfare, Public Policy, Education, Gender Studies, Queer Studies, and of course, Ethnic Studies.

CRT is effective by emphasizing noticeable and hidden behaviors within cultures; CRT is even more effective in this sense when focusing on cultures with multiple racial identities. By offering tools, such as counterstories, which are helpful in exposing microaggressions within both interpersonal interactions, as well as marginalizing dynamics within social institutions as the legal system, educational system, and social welfare system. Brown (1995; citing Lawrence 1993) offers a couple of astute points about the strength of counternarratives:

- ''Critical race theorists use narrative in a self-conscious effort to include the voices of people of color who have traditionally been excluded from conventionally 'appropriate' legal scholarship.''
- ''The use of narrative challenges the traditional meritocratic paradigm of the academy by attempting to subvert what are viewed as pretenses of 'objectivity', 'neutrality', 'meritocracy', and 'color-blindness' '' (p. 514).

In order to move the discussion forward, an explication of the concept of race is essential at this point. Race, for the purposes of this text is a social construct that contributes to various forms of under-representation for people who fall beyond the privileged position of whiteness. Moreover, race denotes groups of people understood socially in unique manners based on phenotypes versus biological factors (Cornell and Hartmann 1998). By the same token, the terms ''whiteness'' and ''dominant culture,'' as applied in CRT, are used inter-changeably and can be defined as invisible, visible, and hyper-visible hierarchically privileged positions of Eurocentric cultural standards and values. Whiteness provides advantages of both social capital (Putnam 2005) and institutionally structured control (Frankenburg 2001; Thompson 1999). The central premise of social capital is that social networks have value. Social capital refers to the collective value of all ''social networks'' [who

people know] and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other [''norms of reciprocity'']. Thus, CRT provides an appropriate antithesis to hierarchies of Eurocentric privilege and values.

How, then, might CRT be useful to the current archival discourse? The answer to this question is two-fold. First, the common ground shared between CRT and archival discourse lies at a major thematic intersection around issues of legal and historical evidence. For instance, North American archival discourse has foundational principles based on both legal and historical constructions of evidence. Both CRT (through legal studies) and archival discourse are rich with various definitions of what can be evidence. As a result, governmental recordkeeping's mandated definition of evidence may be at odds with archival profession's definition of evidence. Often, both active and inactive records of corporations or governmental agencies are utilized as evidence of compliance with laws or statutes, as well as documentation of institutional memory. In the same vein, CRT, with its roots in legal studies redresses, repositions and problematizes what has been presented or designated as evidence in regards to underrepresented or disenfranchised populations. In some cases, the evidential rectifying process may focus on the law itself, the administration of the law, or perhaps the effects of the law in order to bring attention to issues having an impact upon the lives of persons along racial or ethnic lines. Thus, in a rhetorical sense, one might suggest that the CRT techniques of evidential rectifying could be useful to archival discourse in terms of broadening notions of what constitutes a record, the role of human subjects documented as co-creators of the record, and assumptions about archives and archivists as neutral third parties in the preservation and use of the record and other forms of historical evidence.

Secondly, CRT's usefulness to archival discourse can also be examined through three of its methodological concepts: (i) counterstories, (ii) microaggressions, and (iii) social justice. The following section offers working constructions of what each term builds upon within CRT and then discusses whether or not these methodological concepts might be useful building blocks within archival scholarship.

Counterstories

The concept of counterstories or counternarratives, two terms I will use interchangeably, is articulated with great proficiency by numerous legal scholars such as Delgado (1989), and can be viewed as an offspring of storytelling. Solorzano and Yasso (2002) reference storytelling as an established qualitative method within the social sciences. This methodological tool has been most utilized with great breadth in the United States to focus on the issues of concern for disenfranchised and underrepresented communities of Native Americans, Chicana/o, Asian American, and African Americans to construct alternative realities to those constructed through social institutions of dominant culture. The breadth of applications, issues and discussions focused on counterstories is well illustrated in a volume of the Michigan Law Review 87(8) (1989), which focuses on counterstory telling presented by scholars such as Patricia Williams, Mari Matsuda, and Derrick Bell. Delgado (1989) also provides several reasons why marginalized groups use counternarratives to construct a broader reality:

- they challenge the status quo (of cultural dominance)
- many of them focus on community building (within disenfranchised communities)
- they can open new windows into reality (presenting the possibility of multiple realities or truths, which share the same social or philosophical space)
- they can quicken and engage (social) consciousness
- they can help us understand when it is time to reallocate power
- much of reality is socially constructed (pp. 2414–2416).

Strategically speaking, counterstories can be used in several ways; however, there are two that are of special note to this discussion. The first way is to supplement or compliment a dominant culture narrative. This can be thought of as a cordial collaborative agreement to enrich reality between a dominant culture and an underrepresented culture. The second way is the development of competing or conflicting stories. The constructed realities in this case are adversarial (Gur-Ze'ev 2003).

The following hypothetical examples of counterstories that might be juxtaposed with archival discourse in no way represent an exhaustive list of possibilities. Where there may not be an infinite number of possible counterstories, an understanding of documented historical perspectives; written, oral, or audio–visual that exist are potential points of intersection with a counterstory. An understanding of this premise that has breath and depth would move beyond the famous and well-documented cultural moments to include the daily-lived experiences and existence of underrepresented populations. At this point in the discussion, I offer these examples as illustrative and introductory. Consider the archival context of a U.S. government agency archive. Quite often, governmental records document disenfranchised populations in ways that underscore their status in relation to racial or socio-economic issues or demographics. For example, the gathering of racial data in census returns or the registration of Native Americans in order for their official identity and resulting rights to be recognized. Bowker and Starr (1999) make this same point about racial classification. Apartheid in South Africa was implemented in large part by recordkeeping. This phenomenon can be seen playing itself out in controversial clashes over governmental records' characterizations of people and culture, and is a manifestation of the marking of territory within history making. This context applies to other social constructs beyond race and class. Thus, social constructs such as sexual orientation, gender, and religion are applicable in this context as well. Historical representation is a strong tool of control by dominant cultures and a consistent point of critique for counterstories. One of the oft-frequented battlefields over historical territory is located within the history curriculum of the American educational system at the elementary, secondary, and post secondary levels (Nash 1996; Nash et al. 2000; Crabtree and Nash 1996).

> In order to appraise the controversies over history today, it is appropriate to examine how the history profession has changed and to sample a few aspects of the history produced by an earlier generation. In the context of arguments today over multicultural education, it is important to realize how unicultural the profession was until after World War II. Before then, history writing was the province of white gentlemen. Though certainly varied in their historical interests, political proclivities, and methodological approaches, historians partook deeply of the scientific racism of their day, had little interest in women's role in history, and were largely indifferent to labor history. Fifty

years ago, a college student might sit through a year of history lectures and rarely or never hear the words women, ''workers'', ''Jews'', or any designation for African Americans (Nash 1996).

Similarly, archives and manuscript repositories that have non-governmental and more socio-historical missions can also be a focal point for counterstories. In these situations, socio-historical archives often have a very subjective mission statement. Consequently, two critically laden approaches geared towards uncovering counternarratives might be applied. The first counterstory approach within the archives is the development of counternarratives that bring to the surface issues of racial disenfranchisement that are submerged based on a socio-historical archive's mission which is likely to have been heavily influenced by marginalizing dominant culture realities. The second counterstory approach is a socio-historical archive that exists within itself as a form of counterstory to a dominant narrative. An example of such an institution is the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archive in Los Angeles. Their mission statement is: ''The ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives honors the past, celebrates the present, and enriches the future of all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. We foster acceptance of sexual and gender diversity by supporting education and research about our heritage and experience worldwide. ONE is dedicated to collecting, preserving, documenting, studying, and communicating our history, our challenges, and our aspirations.''

Microaggressions

Microaggression is not so much a methodology as it is a succinct concept and identifying term from which to build a research strategy or methodology. Dr. Chester M. Pierce is most often credited with developing the notion of microaggression (Pierce et al. 1978). Scholars such as Solórzano, Davis, Delgado and Stefancic, have been instrumental in evolving the term within CRT literature (Davis 2001). Microaggression, in the most simplistic sense, can be defined as subtle forms or expressions of racism or bias (Solorzano 1998; Davis 2001). However, it is the accumulation of microaggressions that powerfully reinforces racism so that it becomes an even more powerful social phenomenon. Pierce and others subscribe to the notion that part of the effectiveness of microaggressions as instruments of racism depends heavily upon their ability to maintain and support status quo racial hierarchies through subtle and quite often non-verbal behaviors. It is in the non-verbal sense that microaggressions operate as thinly veiled, yet, well-embedded social conditionings and tacit social indoctrinators. The dynamics of microaggressions, however, can be successfully expressed in counterstories. In a research design, microaggressions are the research variables and counternarratives serve as the data-gathering instrument. One example of how microaggressions might be identified and operationalized within archival discourse would be in a critique of appraisal theory. It is at the point of appraisal that future archival holdings are first assigned a socio-historical and socio-cultural value that is subsequently articulated and reified through description. Thus, decision frameworks that (re) enforce racial bias and the interests of dominant power structures, intentional or not, can constitute a micro-aggression within the appraisal process. Archival holdings that are rich with evidential and informational value are useful in reconstructing historical moments in that they reflect the values of the individuals and historical eras in which the records

were created. Examination of such records can reveal the subjective bias of the record creators or the circumstances in which records were created to document. It is not difficult to project that records created within dominant cultural contexts are laden with racial microaggressions. However, the visibility of the microaggressions in this context requires a critical sensibility and social consciousness that embraces and understands racial disparities on the part of the archivist who appraise and describe. Basically, the sensibility and consciousness that I refer to is one that understands and can explain cultural contexts beyond traditional institutional perspectives. Moreover, critical sensibility acknowledges that institutional memory is a negotiated space with multiple points of interpretation. In turn, social consciousness involves actively bringing the multiple perspectives to the forefront of archival discourse.

Social justice

Social justice discourse is perhaps, intuitively speaking, one of the stronger connecting points between CRT and archival discourse. The educational pedagogy, research interest, and critical terminology within social justice scholarship can be useful in forming and understanding the relationships between CRT, notions of archives as place, and archival practice. In order to support the claim that there is a bond between social justice as a CRT methodology and archival discourse, however, a framework of social justice must be established.

Some of the better-established frameworks for social justice originate from the discipline of Education. In this context, social justice is often defined by its goals. Those that are most pertinent to this discussion are:

- to provide a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is more equitable
- to seek vehicles for actors to express their own agency, reality or representation
- to develop strategies that broker dialogue between communities with unparallel cultural viewpoints
- to create frameworks to clearly identify, define, and analyze *oppression* and how it operates at various individual, cultural, and institutional levels (Bell 1997, pp. 3–4).

Thus, by default, social justice can be defined as a means to achieve some or all of the aforementioned goals. The fourth goal on the above list, which focuses on the term ''oppression,'' operates in a similar manner to microaggression, giving both CRT as a theory, and social justice as a methodological structure, foundational significance within critical scholarship. Equally important, are the possible dialogues about oppression that can contribute to archival scholarship. Bell offers a list of features of oppression that could play an important role in connecting social justice to the notions of archives as place, archiving as practice, and archival science as theory.

Features of oppression (Bell 1997, pp. 4–5)

- Pervasiveness—the saturating presence of discrimination, bias, and prejudices within social institution and their practices and behaviors.

- Restriction—the effects of social institutions and structures that limit self-development and self-determination an individual or group basis.
- Hierarchies—the establishment of dominant and disenfranchised cultures, communities, or social groups.
- ''Isms''—negative social treatment of a disenfranchised group, usually based on social constructs, gender, race, class, and religion (to name a few). As a result, the negative treatment is categorized within terms, such as, sexism, racism, classism, and, anti-semitism. (There are some ''isms'' that have a more positive and self-expressive tone; for instance, feminism).

Having thus established the background of CRT, this article now seeks to make explicit the connection between CRT and archival discourse.

Where is the intersection?

At this point in the discussion, readers should be pondering the question, ''Is there actually a connection between CRT and archival practice and theory? And if there is, where might the points of intersection exist?'' The best answers, perhaps, might be found in a discussion of how a record is defined and how it can serve as a catalyst for identity development. Additionally, this discussion will include how CRT relates to the historical and administrative dynamics of archival discourse. Obviously, this point can lead to an extended discussion of the connection between diplomatics and archival science, which is beyond the scope of this article. However, the point here is that there is an on-going discussion within archival discourse about the distinction between the interpretation of documents for a historically driven thesis and the administrative focus of examining the characteristics of a record/document or recordkeeping system the document exist within. This point is presented in a more proficient manner in Eastwood (1993). Equally important to this discussion is the role of both the critical theorist and archivist. With the aforementioned thoughts in mind, I offer this point made by Schwartz and Cook, to illustrate the significance of connecting CRT frameworks to archival dynamics.

> Archives, records and power: three words which now resonate across a range of academic disciplines and professional pursuits. Individually, these terms are often flashpoints for lively debate on social values, cultural identities, and institutional accountability. Yet, collectively, ''archives, records, and power'' make an unlikely troika [and research topic]: what have old dusty archives, stored away in secure vaults got to do with power? (Schwartz and Cook 2002).

The process of documentation has several interdependent components that contribute to identity development. For instance, the foundational component is the record, which is connected to administrative practices and historical interpretations, as well as being the point of examination for those seeking to apply CRT frameworks. According to the SAA Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology (2005), a record can be ''data or information that has been fixed on some medium; that has content, context, and structure; and that is used as an extension of human memory or to demonstrate accountability.'' Thus, the application of a CRT framework that is examining records seeks to point out the inherent biases that may be present in a record's content, the context of the record creation, the structure of the

record and recordkeeping system, the appraisal of archival records, the functional analysis of the record creators, and the use of the record as a component of institutional or collective memory. It is at the point when the ''extension of human memory'' and the construction of institutional memory dovetail into identity development that the interest of the socially conscious archivist and the critical race theorist intersect. That is to say, it is the construction of collective and institutional memory, as well as identity development that both the end products and the processes to produce them become issues of significance.

One of the (reciprocal) processes that contribute to identity development and memory is the ebb and flow between remembering and forgetting. Terry Cook positions this issue quite competently by stating that, ''historians in the postmodern milieu are now studying very carefully the processes of over time that have determined what was worth remembering and, just as important, what was forgotten deliberately or accidentally. Such collective ''remembering''—and forgetting—occurs through [various information institutions] and archives—perhaps most especially through archives'' (Cook 1997, p. 18). The critical race theorist uses CRT frameworks such as counterstories to bring a balance between the remembering and forgetting of memories and identities of traditionally marginalized populations. It would probably be safe to say that both the critical race theorist and socially conscious archivist would agree that the point of intersection between identity development and constructed memories should be a more democratically negotiated space.

If we revisit the basic elements of a record, that is to say, its content, context and structure, we might locate the terms of negotiation between CRT and archival discourse. One of the voices that call for a more critical examination of archival discourse belongs to Hugh Taylor. On more than one occasion, Taylor has suggested that content of the records should be examined for, as he puts it, its ''impact on politics and power struggles'' (Taylor 2003, p. 50). Moreover, Taylor also understands that ''records should be studied from a 'consumer point of view'.'' In this comment Taylor gives a charge to archivist to examine the content of the records for broader public issues versus consistently fulfilling the role as administrative gatekeepers of records.

Richard Cox in discussing the relationship between appraisal theory and documentation strategy offers several appraisal principals and among these principals is the notion ''that all *recorded* information has some continuing value.'' This value transcends just the purposes of the record creator but serves an equally important need for society as a whole (Cox 1994, p. 15). Again, this points to the importance of a record as a means to better understand social dynamics. The use of CRT frameworks narrows the ''consumer point of view'' of the record and its ''value to society'' down to the examination for bias that can be located in a record's content. This would suggest that the archivists who are often called upon by historians for assistance to examine record content for a designated purpose might also fulfill that same role in a cooperative effort with critical race theorist.

The context, the second in three elements of a record, is defined by the SAA as the organizational, functional, and operational circumstances surrounding a record's creation, receipt, storage, or use. Context includes a record's date and place of creation, compilation, or issue, and its relationship to other records (SAA Glossary 2005). Again, it should not be difficult to perceive that all of the aforementioned points of reference within the context of records might also be points of examination

for the critical theorist. Let me offer a hypothetical example. In this example, we are discussing the records of a bank or other financial lending institution. This particular bank has a national presence, that is to say, they have customers in several markets across the United States. Let us now apply the components of a record's context. We are examining banks records *dated* over a generation, 1970–1995. We are interested in 5 specific geographical areas (or *places*) where the bank has branches that serve economically marginalized communities as well as 5 branches that serve affluent communities. The *issue*, at least the one in which the critical race theorist is interested, pertains to any biases that may exist in lending practices between the affluent communities and the marginalized communities. With that stated, lets apply the CRT methodological concepts of counterstories, microaggressions and social justice.

In our hypothetical scenario, the critical race theorist is working with the assumption that there is a bias in the lending practices of this particular bank. The bank offers restrictive amount information on loans to both areas of constituency. However, the critical race theorist is building a counterstory and has accumulated the personal records of numerous customers from both the affluent and (more importantly) the records from the economically marginalized communities. The bank has promoted itself for generations not only as compliant with all federal and local lending legislation but also advertises itself within consumable mass media as a friend and fair lender to all communities. It is quite possible that based on the context (and of course the content) of the record, that the records of the economically marginalized community when examined collectively as well as comparatively to affluent communities might offer a counterstory laden with bias and quite different from the legal and public identity that the bank has offered.

To formulate the counterstory, the critical theorist might frame the bias that turns up in the examination of bank records as microaggressions. That is to say, that practices that show discrimination against the economically marginalized and reveal a consistent subtle pattern of behavior. Furthermore, these patterns of behavior may be cumulative and consistent over the entire timeframe of the examination. Social justice dynamics come into play based on the critical race theorist demonstrating a level of pervasiveness or saturating discrimination by the bank upon the economically marginalized communities. To take the example one step further, the application of a CRT framework might provide better lending practices, which in turn could result in a more equitable distribution of economic resources, an outcome that clearly meets the goals and objectives of social justice strategies.

Before moving on to discussing the third element of a record, structure, I would like to ask and attempt to answer an important question in regards to the hypothetical scenario just presented. What might be the role of the archivist in this situation? I offer this question now because I suggest that it is also a matter of context. Obviously, we cannot approach the role of an archivist from an undefined position or single point of view. Basically, we must situate (or contextualize) the role. For instance, what would be the role of the corporate archivist employed by the bank? It would be reasonable to suggest that the interest of the bank might come first. That is not to say that ethically the archivist in that role should facilitate the concealment of aspects of records. On the other hand, the archivist would not provide physical or intellectual accessibility to archived records beyond legal compliance. A diligent archivist with narrow appraisal strategies and proficient record retention and destruction schedules would only allow records to exist that were

necessary to operate commercially and legally. Obviously, this situation is driven by American culture influenced by archival principals associated the National Archives and Theodore Schellenberg. Additionally, the archivist must be adequately trained or educated to fulfill the needs of the lending institution.

Conversely, an archivist operating within a socially conscious role presents an entirely different context. The role of the archivist in this situation might be one of advocate. An archivist assisting the critical race theorist in identifying, locating, and/or authenticating records might very well need to embrace a vision of a more emancipated society as presented in the writings of Eric Ketelaar (1997). To illustrate my point I offer an excerpt from one of his essays.

> Archives—well preserved and accessible to the people—are as essential in a free democracy as government of the people, by the people, for the people. Because archives are not only tools of the government, not only sources for historical research: access to public archives gives the people the possibility to exercise their rights and to control their government, its successes, and its failures. Democracies, in this era of global change, are built on the ruins of political structures, which have held nations and minorities prisoner for generations (Ketelaar 1998, p. 750).

That brings us to the third element of a record, the structure, which refers to a record's physical characteristics and internal organization of the contents. Record structure is the form that makes the content tangible and intelligible. Structure also includes the intellectual organization of a document. A document's structure is contained within boundaries, which define the record as a unit and give it identity by distinguishing it from other information (SAA Glossary 2005). For the critical race theorist the importance of studying and researching a records structure may rest on their ability to ascertain the presence of identity hierarchies. This notion is dependent upon the format and content of a record. Within some organizational records, the demographic identities of various groups may show a consistent pattern of hierarchal positioning that also reveal a prioritizing of social values. If the archivist feels this to be the case, the next obvious question is how can such a premise be empirically substantiated?

First of all, there must be a determination of where to look. One prime source could be within mission statements. Mission statements are essentially how organizations construct their external and internal identities, as well as the prioritized the values and objectives by which they operate. These mission statements could exist on macro-levels defining an organization's identity or on a micro-level as mission statements for individual projects. An examination of the contents of mission statements may reveal a consistent pattern of valuing or devaluing the needs of certain groups [based on their social construction]. Thus, the intellectual organization of a mission statement could possibly place the values of one socially constructed group over another. From a research perspective, the employment of a content analysis might provide the methodology for approaching such an endeavor. In the case of the critical race theorist, the examination of mission statements would seek to determine if there are racial hierarchies

In the preceding discussion, the focus has been on connecting CRT to archival practice by highlighting a foundation component of an archive, the record. Moreover, by explaining the relevance of CRT to archival practice it demonstrates that CRT research possibilities are applicable to the administrative focus of archival

discourse, that being the examination of a record's or document's characteristics. However, CRT's usefulness is not limited to just an administrative focus, it also can be a tool for examining the historical focus, which emphasizes the social implications of archival discourse. The following discussion can best be thought of as the theoretical emphasis, which takes an academic tone applied to identity development. To set the tone for this discussion, I offer the thoughts of MacNeil (1994):

> Natural and even necessary to our personal and professional formation is a certain fealty to a set of beliefs concerning the meaning and value of the work we do. Yet, such allegiance should not prevent us from seeing that the validity of these beliefs—truthfulness of our truths if you will—is necessarily constrained by limitations of our individual perspectives: our truths are at best, partial ones. We need for that reason to listen, attentively and tolerantly, to other, alternative, truths and as far as possible work toward their mutual reconciliation. Such attentiveness and tolerance will only enrich archival discourse, opening the door and windows for further exploration and transformation (p. 18).

CRT, archives and the truths within identity development

In the archival literature, a commonly discussed topic inspiring recurring debates has been whether the archivist should take a hands-off approach to records creation and appraisal or work directly with the records creator or administrator to ensure that materials of archival value are both appraised for preservation and in turn, preserved. Regardless of the approach espoused, neither strategy can result in the identification of objective historical truth. The application of CRT moves past the determination of whether or not there is subjectivity or objective truth within the records, since CRT assumes the subjectivity is present because the record exists. To this extent, CRT as a methodology might work with what is known as a ''neo-Jenkinsonian'' philosophy. The neo-Jenkinsonian approach accepts the realities that Schellenberg describes in his early works (Schellenberg 1956), that it is impossible to preserve and archive every administrative record created by a collective bureaucracy as large as the combined U.S. governmental agencies. The term ''neo-Jenkinsonian'' can be applied to two identities. The first identity as second generation Jenkinsonians, are those who adhere firmly and with resolute the original premises of Jenkinson as the letter of the law. This would include scholars such as Luciana Duranti. The second neo-Jenkinsonian identity would be that of post-Jenkinsonians who in principal align with Jenkinson, or in the spirit of the law, but modify Jenkinson's notions to fit particular current record keeping realities. This would include Australian scholars such as those at Monash University. However, neo-Jenkinsonians reposition what Schellenberg posits as secondary appraisal values, evidentiary and historical context, to the forefront by making them primary values (Tschan 2002). This appraisal philosophy becomes significant when addressing issues that are of interest to underrepresented populations. Moreover, CRT seeks to identify the subjectivities and biases found in most cases, along racial lines. Thus, CRT assumes the existence of multiple truths and attempts to bring a truth, which is most expressive for underrepresented or disenfranchised populations.

In order to realistically establish multiple truths either empirically or theoretically, a dynamic structural research model is crucial. Upward (1996) could be considered a neo-Jenkinsonian of the post-Jenkinson variety, in his development of the records continuum model, delivers a dynamic structure that can ideally work with both the empirical content within archived records, as well as theoretical applications of CRT. The thinking behind the model, according to Upward, is that ''a records continuum is continuous and is a time/space construct (p. 277), which addresses records as product and process in a multi-dimensional fashion. Upward explains the dynamic qualities of the records continuum model more succinctly, ''It is built around four axes: identity, evidentiality, transactionality and recordkeeping entity. The axes encapsulate major themes in archival science, and each axis presents four co-ordinates, which can be linked dimensionally (p. 277). Below is Upward's overview of each axis (Fig. 1).

Four axes of the records continuum model

- *The recordkeeping axis:* this deals with the vehicles for the storage of recorded information about human activities. Its co-ordinates are those of the document, the record, the archive and the archives.
- *The evidence axis:* This axis consists of the trace of actions, the evidence which records can provide, and their role in corporate and collective memory.
- *The transactional axis:* this axis presents the act, activities, functions and purposes as co-ordinates. This axis reflects an emphasis upon records as records of activities undertaken in the conduct of affairs, and upon the way these activities create links between documents.

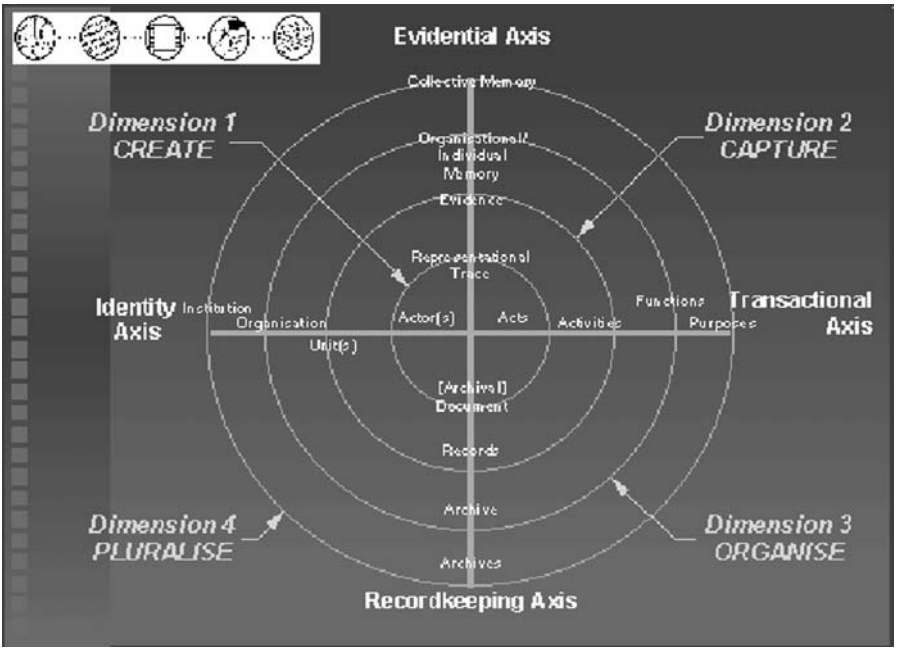

Fig. 1 Continuum diagram

- *The identity axis*: This axis represents the actor, the work unit with which the actor is associated (which may be the actor alone), the organization with which the unit is associated (which may also be the actor or the unit) and the manner in which the identity of these elements are institutionalized by broader social recognition.

Again, Upward's model provides an opportunity to discuss records multi-dimensionally as products, such as recordkeeping vehicles and artifacts of evidence, as well as processes, namely transactions and identity development.

This is an important point when connecting the multiple dimensions of records to the notion of multiple truths within CRT. For instance, the records continuum model suggests that when a record is created, it establishes at least two identities, that of the documenter (or records creator) and the documented (the subject of the record). At this point, it should be clear that both the documenter and the documented have different perspectives or vantage points of the ''transaction'' that a record is documenting. As a result it is also possible that the differing perspectives can constitute a development of different realities. In some cases, there may be differing if not conflicting documentation because those who are documented can have institutionally-created or self-created records of the same transactions that the documenter has recorded. This example clearly intersects with the recordkeeping axis, the transactionality axis, and the identity axis of the record continuum model. There is an intersection with the evidence axis but in a more subtle fashion than what exist with the other three axes.

At this point it would be helpful to connect the continuum model with CRT more directly, using the aforementioned example. In this particular case, there is an institutional narrative (a component of institutional memory) that exists within the records of the documenter. There also exist the initial elements of a counternarrative (a CRT methodology) within the records of the documented. Using a dynamic model with CRT methods can offer three levels of narrative types representing varying points in time, and for varying purposes. The figure below is one possible representation of this point.

The example in Fig. 2, which can be considered a ''Back to the Future'' representation that establishes a current, or as Upward (1997) calls it ''contemporary recordkeeping'' dynamics that can have a concurrent effect on future records and interpretations of records. Thus, with a dynamic model we can put a perception upon the concurrent future dynamics. It might also be reasonable to think that with this model, historical records can also have an effect on current recordkeeping dynamics and their associated perceptions. In this example, each narrative represents various points in time, which again is possible based on the records continuum model working as a ''a time/space construct'' (p. 277). The methods of CRT offer a tool for investigation and comparison. In essence, with two identities established, the documenter and the documented, the most obvious research scenario is one that includes counternarratives.

The ''Back to the future'' representation suggest that when an identity is established at a given point in time it has been affected by the characteristics previously associated with that identity, while at the same time, it is having an affect on how and which characteristics will be situated within the identities' future context. The more conventional way to show the progression of an identity development is to present it

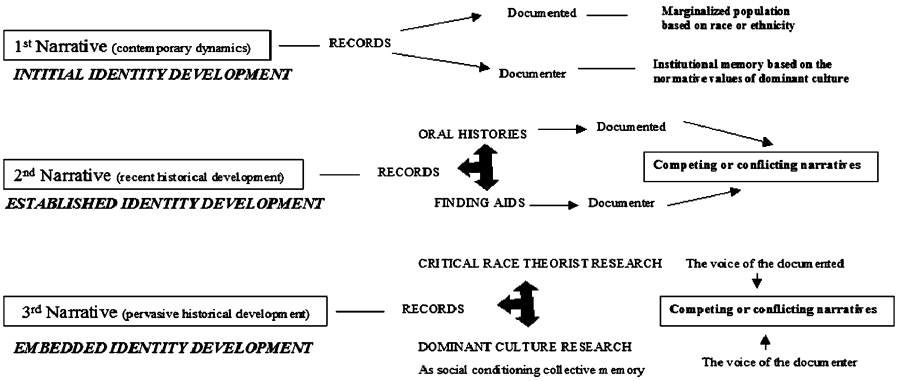

Fig. 2 ''Back to the future'' representation

in a chronological progression and discuss it in a linear fashion. Figure 2 offers a point of view extracted from the records continuum model that suggests the importance of the ''in the moment'' development of identities. The ''in the moment'' identity, which is positioned in Fig. 2 as ''initial identity development'' is a point of crucial consequence because it is when the advantages of learning from previous critiques, limitations and lived experiences of past identities is possible. Yet, it is also paramount to understand the ''in the moment'' development of an identity is a most opportune time to negotiate a more democratically constructed identity for the future.

The presentation of Fig. 2 also offers an illustration of the interdependent relationship between the documented and the documenter. Likewise, it also implies that depending on the point of view and which groups records are being voiced, the role of documented and documenter might be interchangeable. Additionally, this figure also suggests that as a developed identity progresses chronologically from 1st to 2nd narrative and from 2nd to 3rd narrative, the types of records available to provide dueling narratives also mature. As a final point about figure 1, it was constructed to provide a visual that emphasizes the point that the documenter and the documented might be considered co-creators of developing identities.

Research possibilities

Using CRT, this section offers suggestions as to lines of research that connect with the discourse of archival theory and practice. In this sense, framing research objectives can be thought of as a collaborative effort. That is to say, research must be a shared vision between critical theorist and archivist of creating and recreating identities that are expressive of the lived experiences of marginalized populations. Research initiatives must qualify and rectify the negotiated space between the documented and the documenter. In many instances research should be creative in determining who is positioned in each of these roles. Thus, bringing an understanding that the role of the documenter can and in many instances filled by the marginalized, in turn, allowing the individuals and organizations of the dominant culture to fill the role of the objectified or documented.

One of the better means to approach this negotiated space can be conveyed through social justice strategies. This would result in lines of research that investigates bias as a ''pervasive'' and/or ''restrictive'' phenomenon, which reinforces ''hierarchies'' and ''isms'' within societies through archived documents. For example, utilizing the research method of content analysis and investigating the narrative descriptions within finding aids it could empirically demonstrated that hierarchies of identities or positions cultural dominance exist within a socio-historical archive, as well as reaffirming that these same hierarchies are pervasive within society. Along the same lines, and again conducting a content analysis utilizing a social justice strategy an examination of organizational or governmental records could reveal a restrictive patterns of behavior that limits the accessibility of social and financial resources to disenfranchised groups. By the same token, archival practitioners can also be the points of examination. The associated research question would investigate the social consciousness of race (or other social constructs) within archival practitioners in order to understand if there are patterns or levels of social consciousness among archival practitioners. This suggestion might best be conveyed through a social network analysis. The patterns of interest in a social network research project could be; commonly attended schools, academic or professional conferences, and places of professional employment. The primary focus is not the activities of one practitioner but the activities of identifiable groups of practitioners that continually result in a narrow framing of disenfranchised groups within institutional and collective memories. In the same vain, the appraisal process could be interrogated. For instance, within the investigation of a socio-historical archive, one might suggest the research question ''are records of value to underrepresented minority communities either minimized within an archive or excluded all together?'' Ultimately, if one of the epistemological goals of research (in general) is to present and unveil new knowledge or a new approach to knowledge, then it is reasonable to suggest that a CRT research framework can challenge archival practices and theories of how documented identities are currently constructed, thus, broadening the episteme of identity development.

Social consciousness commentary

The use of CRT as a set of tools for archival research offer unique possibilities to construct alternative realities for people of color whose stories are usually submerged in collective or institutional memories. By their very existence, archives offer multiple points of examination by the artifacts they posses. One might go as far as to say, that the nature of archives to bring together eclectic record types within one collection or place offers greater research possibilities for underrepresented populations than say special collections within libraries. Regardless of whether there is agreement on this point or not, archives as place have rarely been utilized through a CRT lens. The introduction of CRT and archives has endless possibilities to raise the collective social consciousness about social bias.

Archiving as practice is laden with statements of how we value, what we value about our society, and the resulting collective and institutional memories that are the products of the valuing process. How we go about constructing collective and institutional memory speaks volumes about economic, educational, entertainment,

and political values. These same values can be operationalized as independent variables, as weighed against the dependent variables consistently present within a CRT research design, namely those centered around social constructs. In these cases, a CRT lens applied to archival discourse could be a useful connection towards identifying and investigating the social nuances that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Conclusion

The goal of this article has been to establish an introductory dialogue between CRT and archival discourse. I argue that CRT provides a research toolset that might be useful in raising social consciousness about bias based on social constructs such as race within archival discourse. Additionally, I offer that CRT can assist in establishing a voice and identity for underrepresented and marginalized populations that can be expressed through an agency of self empowerment based on issues of significance to them.

At this point, it would be reasonable to ask what other scholarly endeavors would expand upon this discussion? One future topic for discussion that could be powerful towards constructing diverse epistemologies would be the implications of injecting CRT into archival discourse through archival education and pedagogy. So an obvious unasked, and thus unanswered, question for future discussions would be, how to teach the concepts of CRT in archival curricula?

In closing, I reiterate that archival discourse is too important not to address...

''Race Matters'' – Cornell West (2001)

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