Author Name: Teboho Lekeno

Student Number: 1130992

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The Role of Symbolic Violence in Class and Race Oppression and with Mitigation Activities

The notion of symbolic violence was introduced by Pierre Bourdieu to reason the silent, unconscious types of cultural and social domination prevailing inside the day-to-day social customs. Symbolic violence comprises of activities that have prejudice and detrimental sense or propositions, for instance, racism and class domination. Language is a medium through which power is perceptively employed as discussed by Bourdieu, through the notion of symbolic violence and misrecognition (Pierre & Thompson, 1991). Power is not obviously exerted through force applied but by the capacity to enforce judgments and to execute them as legitimate by masking the relations of power which are the core of the influence (Bourdieu & Jean-Claude, 1990). This essay aims to show the role of symbolic violence in race and class oppression and discusses some of the mitigation techniques to overcome this violence once its existence is acknowledged.

While power and authority are essential to lead the world towards success, blacks should develop cultural resistance regarding symbolic violence and power because it has an impact on their identity, causes stigmatization and misrecognition, it prevents mobility, social interaction while creating mental walls, and causes the destruction of the heritage and lifestyle through the process of normalization.

Some people may deny the effects and existence of symbolic violence because it is a soft and unconscious form of violence. People get used to it such that they do no longer suffer from it. There are people who know that they cannot do certain activities anymore and have to cross certain checkpoints every time but they become adapted to it and move on with their lives. The act of normalizing these effects hampers the upcoming generation as they also legitimize power imposed to them by the elites and also fail to see the existence of symbolic violence within it.

Victims of symbolic violence usually experience stigmatization and lack of mobility, Palestinians are a good example of that. They are victims of symbolic violence; they experience the stigmatization of being labeled terrorists (Tuastad, 2010). Palestinians also face lack of mobility whereby their human rights are being breached by limiting their freedom of movement. Permits are required from Palestinians who wish to spend time with their families outside the walls. They are also denied education, health care and workplace (El-Hasan, 2013). The study carried out by (Gast, 2018), (Anderson, 2012) and (Wacquant, 2007) also shows that black (working-class) also suffer from discrimination and lack of mobility due to symbolic violence, through his investigation he exposed how white (middle-class) attached black students to "Flatland", "ghetto" identities and crime noticing the stigmatization they imposed on their dialog. (Gast, 2018), enlarged the research on race and class with a high focus on a student to teacher relationship in school by exploring how language is used as a medium in legitimizing symbolic violence. Gast conclude by arguing that black students justify classroom disparities with the present structure of language in the school. Focusing on this study it is observed that the researcher failed to consider how both students and teachers influence the stratification of their interrelation, educational and social distinctions encompassing them.

The dominated groups experience the destruction of lifestyle and ethnocentrism whereby the dominant groups define their own culture as legit and superior, especially through the frequent use of cultural capital. (Williams, 2015), study shows how the elites consider their culture legit and thereby employ cultural capital to mark the cultural distance and contiguity, absorb all the privileges and sideline the dominated. (Blackwell, 2018), highlights that segregation was part of the system designed and controlled by white people to oppress the blacks. Due to that history, she further explains that blacks experience racism which creates difficulty for them to acquire jobs, houses, and healthcare in the current society. This results in blacks being ashamed of their identity and their cultural ways of doing things, they end adopting the culture of whites to fit in the society the whites created. She argues that blacks should be conscious and acknowledge the existence of domestic violence. Her study is limited as it does not provide solutions to how blacks should tackle symbolic violence while preserving and embracing their own culture. Adapting to the culture of another race causes self-subordination and legitimizes violence exerted by the dominant which gives them more symbolic power.

Symbolic violence exists in class. This is witnessed daily whereby the proletariat are frequently detached from education due to their discovered lack of success as students. (Healie & Connolly, 2004), performed the study in Belfast to measure the impact of symbolic violence on social class based on 10-11-year-old boys from both the working and middle class. Through their study is found out that educational privilege is given to the middle-class learners as they are observed to be hard workers while the working-class students are attached to locality and laziness. Secondary schools with quality education were preserved for middle-class learners as the other class was denied the opportunity to write the 'Transfer test' due to associating them with failure and certainty that they cannot pass the test. (Healie & Connolly, 2004), shows how these learners often blame themselves for their failure and end up dropping out of school. They conclude by arguing that there is a need for one to develop acknowledgment of symbolic violence and have the ability to see its effects and not blame the working-class learners. Their argument is legit as the working-class is not to be blamed since each individual has a moderately different profile which will bring about the specific life outlook they develop. Their conclusion tally with the proposition of (Bourdieu & Jean-Claude, 1990) in Reproduction, that bad academic performance of working-class is not due to their ability but as a result of structural bias in schools. Working-class learners are not failures, they are disadvantaged and limited to resources compared to the privilege the other class has. The educational system is found to favor the group with more cultural capital. The same effect can also be witnessed in South Africa with the knowledge that schools such as Hilton College, Michael House, and Roedean provide quality education but due to cultural capital, the working-class learners are restricted from accessing such education.

The dominated groups usually develop the mental walls whereby they fail to visit or reside in places that they were initially prohibited to them. The study of (Wallace, 2011), conducted in Germany, shows that even after three generations since the Wall of Berlin was demolished, the population raised in East Germany is finding difficulty in obtaining equality with the population of Western German. Her study is limited in showing inequality within German people whereby differentiation in culture of the same race has occurred due to the Wall of Berlin while she does not acknowledge the existed on symbolic violence that limits the East German population from

opportunities. The old generation of East German normalized the fact that they cannot go to West German, as the attempt of these civilians to go to the other side resulted in death. They had developed mental walls which passed into generations. They also become attached to their locality to avoid the stigmatization and criticism of originating from East Germany. This shows that symbolic is capable of imprisoning people by creating a wall within their mind.

Marginalized groups should develop resistance to imaginaries create by hegemony to counteract symbolic violence, this implies they should prevent their own legitimization of dominant group history. That will allow marginalized groups to acknowledge their own past and keep in mind the resilience that brought their survival (Piquard, 2016). It also is important to confront stigmatization. Challenging discrimination will automatically reduce the normalization process. Discrimination confrontation boosts self-esteem and brings self-importance. Giving testimonies, documenting events also allows one to be heard which results in recognition and the use of social media. When one is living in an isolated and fragmented area, Facebook is sometimes the only connection to life and it is significant as it allows one to give the stimulus. School is a place where you can get out of the context of things outside the school, where social support needed is received and allows the interaction with other youth. The school also allows learning about resilience and non-violent resistance. The should be new ways of supporting proletariat (black) students that are marginalized in educational structure, by changing the way the learning institutions operate rather than twisting the learners to fit into the existing structure, practice and relationships (Waters, 2017).

It is clear now that symbolic violence affects humanity beyond their assets, it affects identities, mobility, access to quality education and social interactions. These impacts are neither amazing nor gruesome but they result in the birth of psychological-cognitive injuries which obstructs the process of reconciliation. Happiness, health, and motivation depend on the sense of belonging which is damaged and conditioned by symbolic violence thus influencing segregation and disparity between the dominant and the dominated. Minimizing symbolic violence as aforementioned is important to dodge the normalization of it.

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University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

School of ...Electrical and information engineering...

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