

A Critical Review of Racial Discourse in America

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The article “‘*New racism, Color-Blind Racism, and the Future of Whiteness in America*,” (Bonilla-Silva, 2013) presents a review of both historical and current racial discourse in America considering racial relationships and equalities to identify the currently predominant “new racism.” He explains the characteristics of ‘new racism’ before divulging the ideological and structural elements sustaining ‘new racism.’ Finally, he argues that the concept of whiteness in America will experience a significant transformation throughout the 21st century. Bonilla-Silva (2013) concludes his article by predicting the possible political implications of evolving whiteness and provides possible ways to combat the newly emerging ‘new racism.’ While racial discourse has existed since the founding of America, the article presents a new perspective by concentrating on the concept of whiteness and how it is likely to evolve concerning other races. Bonilla-Silva (2013) predicts the disruption of whiteness in America, considering several factors, including changes in demographics.

In arguing his case, Bonilla-Silva (2013) begins by contending that whiteness underpins and sustains the ideology of ‘white supremacy’ regardless of the way it is expressed. He stresses that dominance in the United States is expressed through whiteness; therefore, individuals considered either ‘white’ or ‘nearly white’ obtain systemic privileges by merit of adorning the white uniform. In contrast, actors considered as nonwhite are stripped of the same opportunities. True to the arguments, a survey by Krysan and Moberg (2016) on racial equality and application of equal treatment confirmed that whites more willingly support the underlying principles of equality but refrain from committing resources towards implementation. The research also concluded that in the case of principles governing equality versus the implementation of policies relating to equality, whites are more ready to advocate for the concept of racial equality than

supporting the enactment of policies recommending affirmative actions aimed at redressing historically persistent racial discrimination. According to Bonilla-Silva (2013), racial privilege has remained and is still reproduced in many and various subtle ways both systemically and systematically in the United States.

Bonilla-Silva (2013) acknowledges that the manifestation of racial prejudices has evolved from more overt and formal ways to covert ways which he captions as “*Now you see it, now you don’t.*” The author specifically addresses the concepts of color-blind and ‘new’ racism, considering how both are manifested through social interactions. Referring to ‘new racism,’ the author asserts that blacks have successfully challenged the previous demographic, political, social, and economic factors that historically subverted their individual rights. However, he attributes the change to internal and external pressures. He provides the abolition of Jim Crow segregation laws during the world war as an example of a necessary step that was implemented to erase the contradicting stance on freedom in which blacks fought for freedom abroad yet lacking the same at home. Essentially, the step underscored the real meaning and purpose of racial equality and instead cushioned the emergence of a systemically instituted color-blinded racism and ultimately, the ‘new racism’.

Bonilla-Silva (2013) suggests that the historic racial structure and segregation laws dubbed as ‘Jim Crow’ have become replaced by ‘new racism.’ He attests that in contemporary racial inequality, most whites do not openly associate with foundational Jim Crow tenets that blamed blacks for their oppression and degraded their moral, intellectual, and mental superiority. Instead, modern racial ideology integrates aspects of liberalism with ethnic-based anti-minority opinions to justify the existent racial position and order. He explains that color-blinded racism is framed by naturalization, abstract liberalism, minimization of racism, and cultural racism. In

applying abstract liberalism, Bonilla-Silva (2013) elaborates that whites openly acknowledge their open-mindedness and subsequently attribute their opposition to affirmative action such as reparations as support for equal opportunity. Whites also uphold the current racial position and order through naturalizing sentiments such as ‘it is no one’s fault that communities (black or white) build social relations amongst themselves.’

Consequently, Bonilla-Silva (2013) explains that the ‘new racism’ ideology manifests covertly. Blacks who have traversed the demographic, political, social, and economic Jim Crow boundaries experience racism subtly than low-income blacks because they have accessed a social space that was historically inaccessible. He contends that 70% of African-Americans have experienced discrimination at one point in their lifetime. Considering the future of racism in the United States, the author argued that due to the dwindling population of whites coupled with interracial marriage practices, the country is likely to develop a tri-racial hierarchy led by whites, followed by ‘honorary whites’ and collective blacks at the bottom. The author describes the process as Latin-Americanization of whiteness. In that light-skinned Latinos, Korean Americans, Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, Asian Indians, Middle Eastern Americans, and most multiracial individuals will become acknowledged as ‘honorary whites’ to sustain the white supremacy. However, according to the author, the unification is highly unlikely.

Similarly, Banton (2008) explains that the interaction between ethnic majorities and minorities changes both actors. Some groups merge, while others disintegrate. The speed and trajectory of change portray the shift in values sustained by legal actions, shared experience, and more significant individual connections with people from different background, among other reasons.

The course discussions provide a framework for studying social interactions between individuals, societies, and institutions. The article focuses on the discourse of racial interactions which has continuously headlined the global discussion of group relations, particularly, the United States. The article educates the reader on the causes and consequences of racism as a social fabric that impacts policy concerns covered in the course such as education, housing, household income, wealth disparities, and political inclusion among others. Fundamentally, the article provides an informed perspective on historical and future race relations while also providing possible remedies to counteract the potential negative consequences of race relations.

However, the article fails to provide empirical evidence demonstrating how color-blind and ‘new’ racism ideologies have impacted critical social segregation parameters such as education, household income, and political inclusion, among other measurements. The measures provided a realistic way of gauging how racial discrimination indices change with racial ideologies across generations of the population in America. For example, in her article, Das Gupta (2017) provided an empirical report denoting that the median income of blacks had increased by 5.7% as compared to white households which were 2%. Regardless, the median income for black homes remained significantly low at \$40,065 compared to that of white, Asian, and Hispanic households which had \$ 65, 041, \$ 81, 431, and \$47, 675 respectively. Generally, the positive trend depicts how African-Americans have over the years struggled to bridge the income inequality gap, yet, they remain at the bottom of racial order and positioning in terms of median household income per race.

The author’s theoretical stance posits that Latin-Americanization of racial relations in America has already commenced. To support his argument, the author argues that the concept of whiteness in America has always remained fluid and has historically become constituted by

various ethnic groups such as the Polish, Jews, Greeks, Irish, and Italians among other Eurocentric ethnicities. The future of whiteness is therefore predicted to darken as multiracial communities such as light-skinned Latinos are integrating into the white population. The author also theorizes that Latin-Americanization will eminently lead to reorganization of ethnic identities; therefore, specific ethnic identities may become erased, specifically, whiteness. The propositions conform to the research findings by Krysan and Moberg (2016) which detailed that the gradual and consistent decline in recognition of racial discrimination against blacks amongst whites will likely derail or prevent the implementation of racial policies anchored on continued discrimination against blacks in America.

In conclusion, the author has used both theoretical and empirical evidence to support his argument. The author has gathered both theoretical and empirical evidence by reviewing scholarly works of other researchers and scholars. The study resources include surveys previously conducted on specific subjects like housing discrimination, neighborhood integration disparities, and racial attitude, among others. The justifications provided make a compelling argument; therefore, I acknowledge that the evidence provided strongly supports the author's case because the author has produced a systematically organized discussion. The author has effectively relayed racial discourse information and ultimately offered the possible solutions and direction for future researchers. While the future of racial relationships in the United States remains obscure, the idealization of the concept of racism continues to evolve through demographic, economic, social, and political agents of change. Tracking the trajectory of racism is thus relevant for sociologists to help inform future policy changes and counter the counterproductive consequences of racial relation.

References

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