

SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT AS IDEOLOGICAL APPARATUSES OF EMBOURGEISEMENT FOR THE BLACK POWER ELITES IN THE AGE OF NEOLIBERAL GLOBALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

This article highlights how sports and entertainment are ideological apparatuses of embourgeoisement for the black power elites, black underclass, who would come to serve as the bearers of ideological and linguistic domination for black people the world-over in the age of neoliberal globalization. The work puts forth the argument that people of African descent in the age of neoliberal globalization are under the ideological and linguistic domination of two identities, the negro, i.e., black bourgeoisie, or African Americans, on the one hand, under the leadership of educated professionals and preachers; and the “my nigga,” i.e., the black underclass, on the other hand, under the leadership of street and prison personalities, athletes, and entertainers vying for ideological and linguistic domination of black America. The latter are socialized or embourgeoised in American society via sports and the entertainment industry in general, which serve as ideological apparatuses of socialization or embourgeoisement for bourgeois society in the age of neoliberal globalization.

Keywords: African-Americanization, Racial identity, Religiosity, Black Diaspora, Spiritualism, Phenomenological structuralism, Neoliberalism, Globalization, Ideological apparatuses.

INTRODUCTION

Neoliberal globalization represents the right-wing attempt to homogenize (converge) the nations of the globe into the overall market-orientation, i.e., private property, individual liberties and entrepreneurial freedoms, of the capitalist world-system. This neoliberalization is usually juxtaposed against the narcissistic exploration of self, sexuality, and identity of the left, which converges with the neoliberalizing process via the diversified consumerism of the latter groups as they seek equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution with white agents of the former within their market logic. Hence private property, individual liberties, diversified consumerism, austerity, and the entrepreneurial freedoms of the so-called marketplace become the mechanism of system and social integration for both groups in spite of the fact that the logic of the marketplace is exploitative and environmentally hazardous. The black American power elites would emerge within this

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structure of the neoliberal global framework as structurally differentiated black “other” agents of the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism seeking equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution with their white counterparts.

This article highlights how sports and entertainment are ideological apparatuses of embourgeoisement for the black power elites, black underclass, who would come to serve as the bearers of ideological and linguistic domination for black people the world-over in the age of neoliberal globalization under American hegemony. The work puts forth the argument that people of African descent in the age of neoliberal globalization are under the ideological and linguistic domination of two identities, the negro, i.e., black bourgeoisie, or African Americans, on the one hand, under the leadership of educated professionals and preachers; and the “my nigga,” i.e., the black underclass, on the other hand, under the leadership of street and prison personalities, athletes, and entertainers vying for ideological and linguistic domination of black America. The latter are predominantly socialized or embourgeoised in American society via the streets, sports, and the entertainment industry in general, which serve as ideological apparatuses of socialization or embourgeoisement for black Americans in bourgeois society in the age of neoliberal globalization.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Since the 1960s, there have been two schools of thought on understanding the origins and nature of black American practical consciousnesses, the ideas black Americans recursively reorganize and reproduce in their material practices in the United States (US): the pathological-pathogenic and adaptive-vitality schools. The pathological-pathogenic position suggests that in its divergences from white American norms and values black American practical consciousness is nothing more than a pathological form of, and reaction to, American consciousness rather than a dual (both African and American) hegemonic opposing “identity-in-differential” (the term is Gayatri Spivak’s) to the American one (Elkins, 1959; Frazier, 1939,1957; Genovese, 1974; Murray, 1984; Moynihan, 1965; Myrdal, 1944; Wilson, 1978, 1987; Sowell, 1975, 1981; Stamp, 1956, 1971). Afrocentric Proponents of the adaptive-vitality school suggest that the divergences are not pathologies but African “institutional transformations” preserved on the American landscape (Allen, 2001; Asante, 1988, 1990; Billingsley, 1968, 1970, 1993; Blassingame, 1972; Early, 1993; Gilroy, 1993; Gutman, 1976; Herskovits, 1958 [1941]; Holloway, 1990a; Karenga, 1993; Levine, 1977; Lewis, 1993; Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990; Nobles, 1987; Staples, 1978; Stack, 1974; West, 1993).

Contemporarily, both positions have been criticized for either their structural determinism as in the case of the pathological-pathogenic approach, or racial/cultural determinism as in the case of the adaptive-vitality (Karenga, 1993). In directly or indirectly refuting these two positions for their structural and racial/cultural determinism, contemporary post-sixties and post-segregation era black scholars (Critical Race Theorists) in the United States (US) attempt to understand black consciousnesses and communities by using post-structural and post-modern theories to either reinterpret W.E.B. Du Bois's (1903) double consciousness construct as an epistemological mode of critical inquiry that characterizes the nature or essence of black consciousness, a la Cornel West (1993) and Paul Gilroy (1993), or, building on the social constructivist work of Frantz Fanon, offer an intersectional approach to the constitution of black consciousnesses and communities, which emphasizes the diverse and different levels of alienation, marginalization, and domination, class, race, gender, global location, age, and sexual identity, by which black consciousnesses and communities get constituted, a la bell hooks (1993) and Patricia Hill Collins (1990) (Reed, 1997). In spite of their efforts, these two dominant contemporary responses to the pathological-pathogenic and adaptive-vitality positions inadequately resolve the structural and racial determinism of the aforementioned approaches by neglecting the fact that their theories and they themselves, like the positions of the pathological-pathogenic and adaptive-

vitality schools, derive from the racial-class division and social relations of production of global capitalism or the contemporary Protestant capitalist world-system.

THEORY AND METHODS

My structural Marxist position, phenomenological structuralism, building on the theoretical work of Louis Althusser (2001), suggests that the rhetoric of pathological-pathogenic, adaptive-vitality, double-consciousness, intersectionality, postmodernism, and post-structuralism should be understood within and as being constituted by the dialectical structure of a global Protestant capitalist social structure of class inequality and differentiation put in place, through actions of bodies, mode of production, language, ideology, and ideological state and transnational apparatuses, in order to limit, direct, and integrate the meaning and discursive practices of subjective identities, which may arise as a result of the decentered subject and the indeterminacy of meaning in ego-centered communicative discourse. Hence for me to understand the historical constitution of the aforementioned theories and the practical consciousnesses of black communities throughout the world, we must attempt to synthesize the rhetoric and black consciousness within structural Marxist dialectics, which highlights the class division and capitalist social structure of inequality put in place, through bodies, mode of production, language, ideology, ideological state and transnational apparatuses, and communicative discourse, to limit the practices of the indeterminate meanings and subjective positions allowed to organize and reproduce in a structural world organized since the sixteenth century for capital accumulation and class differentiation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Black American social agency occurred and emerged within the dialectic of the American Protestant capitalist social structure of racial-class inequality. No African ideological apparatuses were put in place to reorganize and reproduce an African worldview on the American landscape. The African body, which embodied its initial African practical consciousnesses that were reified in Africa, were thrown in, interpellated by, and socialized (embourgeoisied) in new “white” capitalist ideological apparatuses that they would subsequently adopt and reproduce, i.e., the black church, nuclear family, etc., in regards to the politics of their black bodies not an African worldview. That is, their social agency centered on their identification as members of the society who recursively reproduced its ideas and ideals as people with black skin not as Africans with a distinct worldview (praxis, language, ideology, ideological apparatuses, and modes of production), represented in the discourse of whites as backwards and primitive, which they warred against, from that of their former slavemasters and colonizers.

As such, American blacks, as interpellated (workers) and embourgeoisied agents of the American dominated global capitalist social structure of inequality, represent the most modern (i.e. embourgeoisied) people of color, in terms of their “practical consciousness,” in this process of homogenizing social actors as agents of the protestant ethic or disciplined workers working for owners of production in order to obtain economic gain, status, and upward mobility in the larger American society and the world. Whereas, they once occupied the social space as agricultural and industrial workers, the former less educated than the latter, which were much wealthier because of their education and industrial work and therefore made education and industry the means to economic gain and upward economic mobility. Today, they continue to constitute the social space and their practical consciousness in terms of their relation to the means of production in post-industrial capitalist America. This relation differentiates black America for the most part into two status groups, a dwindling middle and upper class (living in suburbia) that numbers about 25 percent of their population (13 percent) and obtain their status as preachers, doctors, athletes, entertainers, lawyers, teachers, and other high-end professional service occupations; and a growing segregated “black underclass” of criminals, unemployed, and under-employed wage-earners occupying poor inner-city communities and schools focused solely on technical skills, multicultural education, athletics, and test-taking for social promotion

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given the relocation of industrial and manufacturing jobs to poor periphery and semi-periphery countries and the introduction of low-end post-industrial service jobs and a growing informal economy in American urban-cities (Wilson, 1978, 1998; Sennett, 1998). Whereas street and prison personalities, rappers, athletes, and entertainers, many of whom refer to themselves and their compatriots as “my niggas,” are the bearers of ideological and linguistic domination for the latter; the former, once called negroes, the black bourgeoisie (E. Franklin Frazier’s term), and now African-Americans, is predominantly influenced by preachers and educated professionals as the bearers of ideological and linguistic domination. Both groups share the same ideals and goals, i.e., economic gain, status, and upward social mobility, within the class division and social relations of production of the Protestant capitalist world-system under American hegemony. Therefore, their practical consciousness is neither progressive, nor counter-hegemonic. It is reproductive.

However, America’s transition to a postindustrial, financialized service, economy beginning in the 1970s, decentered the negro (black bourgeoisie/African American) practical consciousness, and reified and positioned black American “my nigga” underclass ideology and language, hip-hop culture, as a viable means for black American youth to identify with and achieve economic gain, status, and upward economic mobility in the society over education and succeeding academically as emphasized by black bourgeois discourse. Finance capital in the US beginning in the 1970s began investing in entertainment and other service industries where the inner-city language, street, prison, entertainment, and athletic youth culture of black America became both a commodity and the means to economic gain for the black poor in America’s postindustrial economy, which subsequently outsourced its industrial work to semi-periphery nations thereby blighting the inner-city communities. Blacks, many of whom migrated to the northern cities from the agricultural south looking for industrial work in the north following the Civil War (1861-1865), became concentrated in blighted communities where work began to disappear, schools were underfunded, and poverty increased. The black migrants, which migrated North with their Black/African-American English Vernacular (BEV/AAEV) from the agricultural South, became segregated sociolinguistic underclass communities, ghettos, of unemployed laborers looking to illegal, athletic, and entertainment activities (running numbers, pimping, prostitution, drug dealing, robbing, participating in sports, music, etc.) for economic success, status, and upward mobility. Educated in the poorly funded schools of the urban ghettos, given the process of deindustrialization and the flight of capital to the suburbs, with no work prospects, many black Americans became part of a permanent, BEV/AAEV speaking and poorly educated underclass looking to other activities for economic gain, status, and upward economic mobility. Those who were educated became a part of the social class language game of the Standard-English-speaking black middle class of professionals, i.e., preachers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, etc. (the black bourgeoisie), living in the suburbs, while the uneducated or poorly educated constituted the social class language game of the black underclass of the urban ghettos where the streets, prisons, athletics, and the entertainment industries became the ideological apparatuses for their socialization. Beginning in the late 1980s, finance capital began commodifying and distributing (via the media industrial complex) the social class language game of the underclass black culture for entertainment in the emerging postindustrial economy of the US over the ideology and language, social class language game, of the black bourgeoisie. Be that as it may, efforts to succeed academically among black Americans, which constituted the ideology and language of the black bourgeoisie, paled in comparison to their efforts to succeed as speakers of Black English, athletes, “gangstas”, “playas”, and entertainers, which became the ideology and language of the black underclass living in the inner-cities of America. Authentic black American identity became synonymous with black underclass hip-hop ideology and language represented by young athletes and entertainers, LeBron James, Derek Rose, Lil ‘ Wayne, Jay-Z, Kanye West, Tupac Shakur, Biggie Smalls, etc., over the social class language game of the educated black professional class under the ideological and linguistic domination of black preachers, TD

Jakes, Creflo Dollar, Jamal Bryant, Juanita Bynum, etc., and other educated black professionals.

The black underclass in America's ghettos has slowly become, since the 1980s, with the financialization of hip-hop culture as an art form and entertainment by record labels such as Sony and others, athletics, and the entertainment industry, the bearers of ideological and linguistic domination for the black youth community in America. Their language and worldview as constituted through the streets, prisons, hip-hop culture, athletics and the entertainment industry financed by finance capital, has become the means by which black youth (and youth throughout the world) attempt to recursively reorganize and reproduce their material resource framework against the purposive-rationality of educated black bourgeois or middle class America. The upper-class of owners and high-level executives of the American dominated capitalist world-system have capitalized on this through the commodification of black "my nigga" underclass culture, which mainstreamed it. This is further supported by an American media and popular culture that glorifies the streets, athletes, entertainers, and the "Bling bling," wealth, diamonds, cars, jewelry, and money. Hence the aim of many young blacks in the society is no longer to seek status, economic gain, and upward mobility through a Protestant Ethic that stresses hard work, diligence, deferred gratification, and education; on the contrary, the Protestant ethic in sports, music, instant gratification, illegal activities (drug dealing), and skimming are the dominant means portrayed for their efforts through the entertainment industry financed by post-industrial capital. Schools throughout urban inner cities are no longer seen as means to a professional end in order to obtain economic gain, status, and upward mobility, but obstacles to that end because it delays gratification and is not correlative with the means associated with economic success and upward mobility in black urban America. More black American youth (especially the black male) want to become, football and basketball players, rappers and entertainers, like many of their role models, LeBron James, Derek Rose, Lil ' Wayne, Jay-Z, Kanye West, Tupac Shakur, Biggie Smalls, etc., who were raised in their urban underclass environments and obtained economic gain and upward mobility that way, over doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc., the social functions associated with the status symbol of the black and white middle class (negroes) of the civil rights generation. Hence the end and social action of the larger society remains the same, economic success, status, and upward economic mobility, only the means to that end have shifted with the rise, financed by finance capital, of the black underclass as the bearers of ideological and linguistic domination in black America given the commodification of hip-hop culture and their high visibility in the media and charitable works through basketball and football camps and rap concerts, which reinforce the aforementioned activities as viable professions (means) to wealth and status in the society's postindustrial economy, which focuses on services and entertainment for the world's transnational bourgeois class as the mode of producing surplus-value.

This linguistic and ideological domination and the ends of the power elites (rappers, athletes, gangsters) of the black underclass are juxtaposed against the Protestant Ethic and spirit of capitalism of the educated black middle and upper middle classes represented in the discourse and discursive practices of black American prosperity preachers in the likes of TD Jakes, Creflo Dollar, Jamal Bryant, Juanita Bynum, Eddie Long, etc. who push forth, via the black American church, education and professional jobs as the more viable means to economic gain, status, and upward economic mobility in the society over the street life of the urban ghettos. Hence, whereas, for agents of the Protestant Ethic in the likes of Jakes, Dollar, Bryant, Bynum, and Long the means to "Bling bling," or the American Dream, is through education, obtaining a professional job, and material wealth as a sign of God's grace, salvation, and blessings. Rapping, hustling, sports, etc., for younger black Americans growing up in inner cities throughout the US, where industrial work has disappeared, represent the means (not education) to the status position of "Bling bling."

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Hence what I am suggesting here is that, contemporarily, black American youth are not “acting white” (John Ogbu’s term) when education no longer becomes a priority or the means to economic gain, status, and upward mobility, as they get older and consistently underachieve vis-à-vis whites; they are attempting to be white and achieve bourgeois economic status (the “Bling bling” of cars, diamonds, gold, helicopters, money, etc.) in the society by being “black,” speaking Ebonics, rapping, playing sports, hustling, etc., in a racialized post-industrial capitalist social structure wherein the economic status of “blackness” is (over) determined by the white and black capitalists class of owners and high-level executives and the black proletariats of the West, the black underclass, “my nigga,” whose way of life and image (“athletes, hustlers, hip-hopsters”) has been reified, commodified (by white and black capitalists), and distributed throughout the world for entertainment, (black) status, and economic purposes in post-industrial capitalist America. This “my nigga” underclass culture as globally promulgated throughout the black diaspora by finance capital via Black Entertainment Television (BET) and other media outlets is counterbalanced or opposed by “the negro” (black bourgeois/African American) black preachers and educated professionals promoting the same ethos, The Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism, via black American churches and televangelisms, to other blacks around the world via biblical conversion or salvation, over the pathologies of the black American (“my nigga”) underclass, as the medium to and for success in the Protestant capitalist world-system. Hence, the social structure of class (not racial or cultural worldview) inequality that characterizes the black American social environment is subsequently the relational framework, which black youth in the diaspora are exposed to and socialized in when they encounter globalizing processes under American hegemony through immigration, the outsourcing of work from America, and the images of the entertainment industry (Wilson, 1998; Watkins, 1998; Ntarangwi, 2009).

Throughout the continent of Africa, the Caribbean, and black Europe black American charismatic preachers are promoting a prosperity gospel among the black poor, which is usually juxtaposed against the emergence of a “my nigga” underclass culture among the youth in these areas influenced by the hip-hop, street, prison, athletic, and music culture of the black American underclass (Ntarangwi, 2009). Nigerian, South African, East African, St. Lucian, Jamaican, Haitian, and black British Caribbean Hip-Hop, gangsta rap music, Bling bling, dress code, etc., influenced by the black American underclass are juxtaposed against the Protestant evangelism of Nigerian, South African, East African, St. Lucian, Jamaican, Haitian, and black British Caribbean preachers influenced by TD Jakes, Creflo Dollar, Juanita Bynum, and other black charismatic preachers whose global outreach throughout the diaspora are converting other blacks to agents of the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism. These two racial-class identities, whose practices are reified in postindustrial America, the hegemon of globalization, represent the class dynamics within which black others throughout the world are dialectically integrated into the capitalist world-system.

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