



Critical Theory for Research on Librarianship (RoL)

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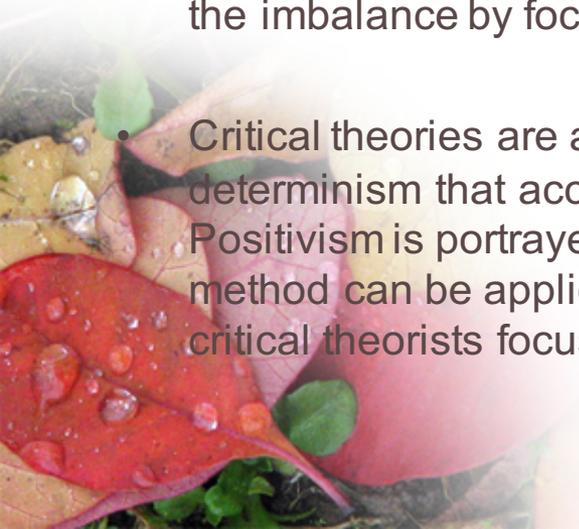
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What is Critical Theory

- Critical theory is the product of a group of German neo-Marxists who are dissatisfied with the Marxian theory (Kellner, 1993) for a broader view of critical theory, particularly its tendency toward economic determinism. Critical theory is largely composed of criticism of various aspects of social and intellectual life, but the ultimate goal is to expose more accurately the nature of society.
- The theory of critics is based on a critique of Marxian theories. Theorists of criticism theory are mostly troubled by economic determinists. They do not claim that economic determinists are mistaken in focusing on the economic determinism, but they should also look at other aspects of social life. Critical theorists attempt to correct the imbalance by focusing on the realm of culture.
- Critical theories are also critical of positivism, related to critiques of economic determinism that accept all or some of the positivistic theories of knowledge. Positivism is portrayed as an attitude that accepts the idea that a single scientific method can be applied to all social fields and considers as a natural process. While critical theorists focus on human activities.



What Critical Theory is for

- The critical theory can help us to break, or at least expose, the self legitimation cycle by allowing us to examine the unexamined and question the unquestioned.



The Beginning of Recognition of Critical Theory

- Critical theory began as a tool to provide new insights on how to conduct research on problematic modern society and its socio-historical context.
- Since the early 1930s, critical theory has been able to show that economic, political, cultural and ideological issues in the socio-historical context have direct relevance to normative forms, practice and orientation of social life as well as social science.



The Emergence of Critical Theory

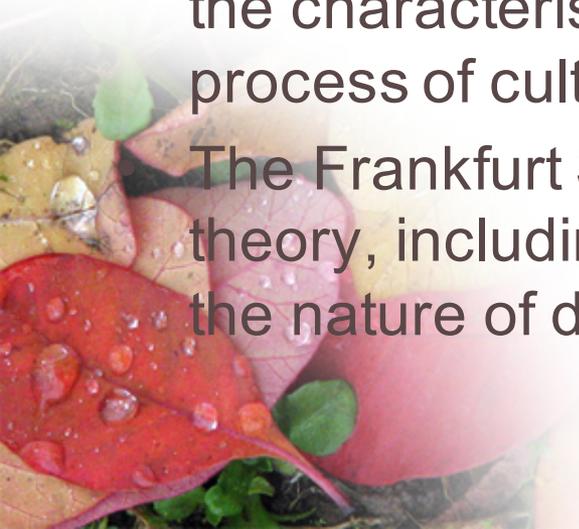
- The rise of critical theory is identified with the Institute for Social Research (Institut für Sozialforschung), established in 1923 and associated over the years with the University of Frankfurt am Main in Germany
- The institute was the home known as the Frankfurt School of social thought/critique.
- Under Max Horkheimer since 1930s, the institute focuses on radical criticism of the structure of society (including its economic and socio-political formations) and social theory that can explain social phenomena



Critical theorists

- Early critical theorists of the Frankfurt School are Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Wilhelm Reich, Jürgen Habermas.
- This group of scientists has a broad intellectual agenda, but they are united in neo-Marxist thought and analysis. They use it to analyze such as the historical origins of capitalism and the nature of work in the capitalist system, the characteristics and functions of the modern state, the process of cultural hegemony/domination

The Frankfurt School focuses at contemporary social theory, including logical positivism and pragmatism, and the nature of dialectics.



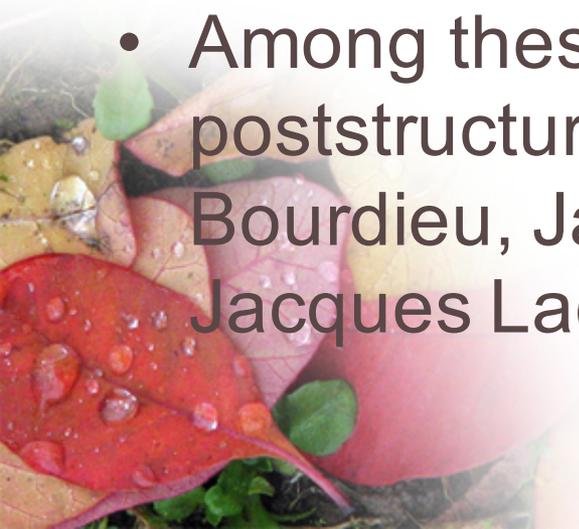
Germanic and Gallic Group

- While in some academics the term critical theory is still used as a special term adherent to the Frankfurt School. This is not the only group of theorists who offer sharp criticism of social issues. Dant (2003) points out that there are other critical theorists of the "Gallic" group that are somewhat similar to those of Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, Andre Gorz, Henry Lefebvre, and Alain Touraine
- Both the Germanic and Gallic critical theorists took Marx's analysis of the mode of production as a starting point that needs to be developed to cope with the changes in capitalism that had become apparent by the middle of the twentieth century and from there attempted to extend the critique of political economy towards a broader critique of society and culture as a whole.



French Scholars

- There were other French scholars whose work has come to be considered as critical theory, but who did not see themselves as aligned with the project of the Frankfurt School and who rejected, or at least resisted, the Marxian and Hegelian foundations of the Frankfurt scholars.
- Among these are included both structuralist and poststructuralist theorists, most notably Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, and Jean-François Lyotard.



Research on Librarianship nowadays

- Tends to favor technical and managerial language use, which in turn prevents librarians from critically examining and evaluating information resources and systems (Andersen 2005, 21).
- Library technologies continue to be seriously undertheorized, with a consequent research focus on their technical facility, look, feel, appeal, popularity, and connection to other media products of postmodern culture.
- These issues should be explored in depth.



THE NEED FOR CRITICAL THEORY IN RoL

- In RoL, analyses that describe forms of power is so complex, with so many root causes, make it almost impossible to direct critique against any one source of power. A more critical-theoretical approach, therefore, is warranted and necessary.
- As a practice-oriented field tied to large institutions, a certain lag in theory use might be understandable. However, RoL cannot forever remain innocent of the debates and the progressions of thought that have characterized broad realms of theoretical influence in the humanities and social sciences and still maintain its place within those constellations of research and practice.
- Sophisticated use of critical theory makes our research and practice more relevant to a larger academic society and avoid the dangers of RoL isolationism.



Conclusion

- Finally, as a part of social and humanities field, Librarianship is interested to study how society, institutions, governments, and information technologies work, and the interactions among them.
- RoL is also important for the betterment of society. It can examine from the development of national information policies, to the provision of user-friendly and equitable access to information, the inclusion of diverse and/or marginalized users, the support of citizen lifelong learning, developing libraries in the community, and many other areas of research and practice.



THANK

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