

ABSTRACT

This dissertation critically explores the general social theory of network analyst Harrison C. White. The purpose of this work is to show how White's phenomenology of social capital through history provides critical theory with new conceptual tools in order to better describe and explain events, identities, and action in contemporary "network" societies. Chapter one examines the state of the literature in contemporary critical theory in order to create sufficient opening to situate Harrison White's arguments concerning questions of social structure and action in his general social theory. Chapter two articulates what has been called the "network approach" to the study of social structure, analyzes Harrison White's position within this tradition, and describes some basic differences between Harrison White and traditional network approaches to the study of social structure. Chapter three offers an analysis of the key components to Harrison White's general theory of social structure, explicates his major theoretical constructs, and distinguishes the critique of the present work from other interpretations of this social scientist. The dissertation builds to chapter four, where it attempts to decode the meaning behind the notions of "fresh action" and "getting action" in White's oeuvre and argues that White's theory bolsters and informs the analysis of oppression and praxis in critical social theory. It further suggests three models of social domination that can be drawn from White's work, all of which center around his theory of person. The conclusion remarks upon the general findings of this study, offers some criticisms of Harrison

White's theoretical production, and addresses the future trajectory of critical social theory.