



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

ECISO4001: Understanding Society

Modern Sociological Theories 2023

Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives



www.uwtsd.ac.uk

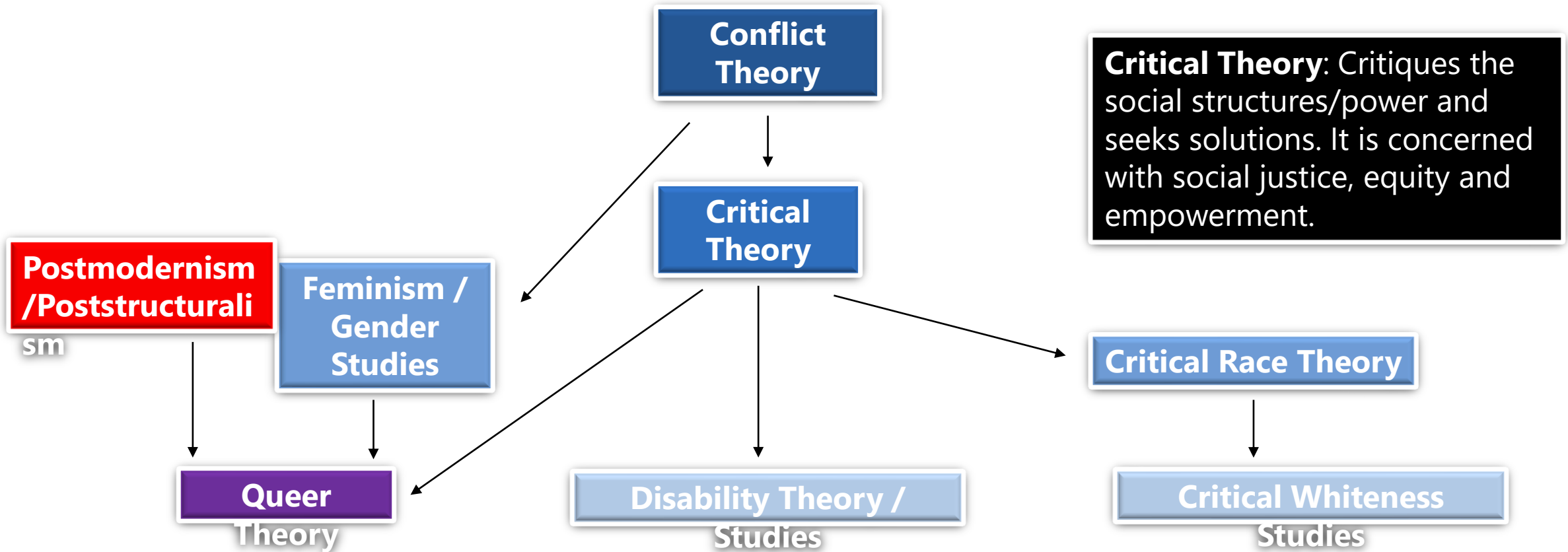
The 5 sociological perspectives

- Structural functionalism
- Conflict Theory
- Symbolic Interactionism
- Feminism
- Postmodernism

Some other theories...

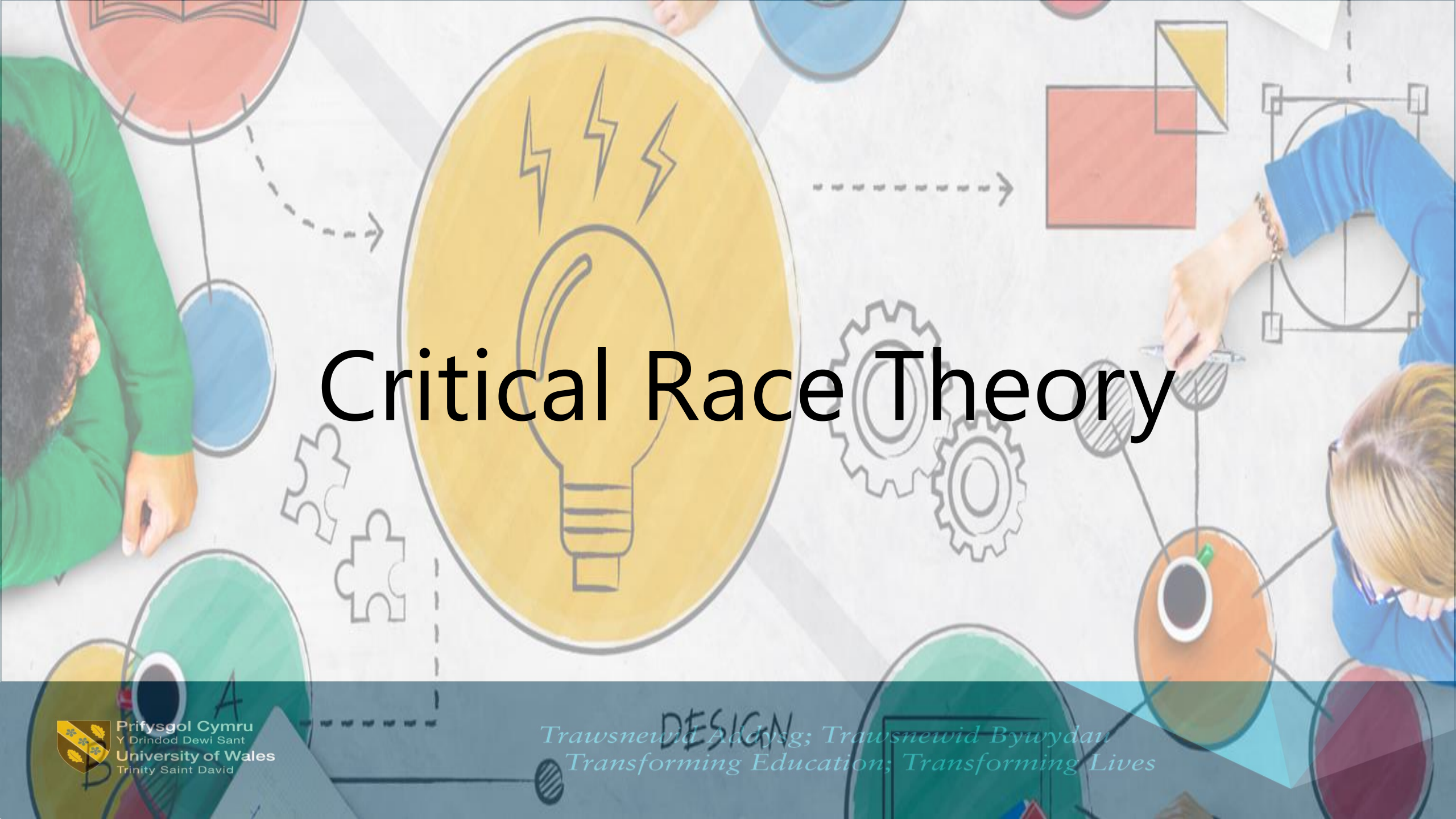
- Critical Race Theory
- Critical Whiteness Studies
- Queer Theory
- (Critical) Disability Studies

Family tree of theories



Influence of critical theory and postmodernism

- The 'new' sociological perspectives want to:
- Challenge established systems (e.g., policy / institutional / ways of thinking)
- Change established systems (e.g., policy / institutional / ways of thinking)
- Deconstruct normalised social constructions (language / understandings)
- Tackle inequality
- Take a political and activist stance

A top-down view of a collaborative workspace. Several people are visible, some with their heads down, focused on their work. The floor is covered with large, hand-drawn diagrams in various colors (yellow, red, blue, green). These diagrams include a central yellow oval with a lightbulb and lightning bolts, a red circle with a book icon, a blue circle, a green circle, and a large red square. There are also gears, puzzle pieces, and arrows drawn on the floor. A person in a blue shirt is using a pen to draw on a diagram. The overall atmosphere is one of creative collaboration and problem-solving.

Critical Race Theory

Typology of Whiteness Critical Race Theory as a methodological domain



(taken from Burton, 2009, p. 178)

Understanding 'race'

- Race is a socially constructed idea (Fernando, 2010)
- Race had historical consequences, e.g., slavery (Whitford, 2016), eugenics (Saini, 2019) and the Holocaust (Conroy, 2017)
- Race has contemporary consequences, e.g., education (Gillborn, 2008; Gillborn et al, 2017) and mental health (CQC, 2010; Wallace Nazroo and Bécares, 2016; Chouhan and Nazroo, 2020)

	Characterised by	Perceived as	Assumed to be	In reality
Race	Physical appearance	Physical, permanent	Genetically determined	Socially constructed
Culture	Behaviour, attitudes, etc	Social, changeable	Passed down by parents/ parent substitutes	Variable and changeable blue-print for living
Ethnicity	Sense of belonging	Psychosocial, partially changeable	How people see themselves in terms of background and parentage	Culture-race mixture
Identity	Subjective feelings	Psycho-personal, several parts. Each fairly fixed once formed	Formed through upbringing and experience	Feelings about heritage; personal choice

Summary of the Core Tenets of Critical Race Theory

(adapted from Delgado and Stefancic, 2017, pp. 8-11)

Core Tenet

Description

Racism

Racism is an ordinary, everyday occurrence for people of colour and not an anomaly.

Interest Convergence

White supremacy offers both 'psychic' (p. 8) and 'material' (p. 9) advantages to white people, meaning there is little incentive to challenge the racial hierarchical status quo. Therefore, it is only challenged when it can benefit white people.

Social Construction

Race is a socially constructed category that is under constant revision and reinvention that 'society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient' (p. 9)

Differential Racialisation

The dominant racial group (white) racialises minority groups depending on the conditions and circumstances that suit them. For example, Muslims are harmless neighbours pre 9/11 vs Muslims are terrorists post 9/11.

Intersectionality and anti-essentialism

Intersectionality recognises that a person will have many aspects to their identity (race, gender, class, sexuality etc.) which affect their lives. These experiences cannot be essentialised or reduced and generalised to whole groups.

Unique Voice of Colour

People of colour have more insight about race and historical and current forms of oppressions than white people and will 'be able to communicate to their white counterparts matters that whites are unlikely to know' (p. 11).

Racism

- Racism can be overt or covert
- It is mutable
- It takes multiple forms, including...
 - Systemic (structural) / Institutional
- Racialisation
- Colour-blind
- 'Not Racism' (Lentin, 2020)

Summary of Bonilla-Silva's (2018 [2003]) Four Frames of Colour-blind racism

(adapted from Bonilla-Silva, 2018, pp. 54-74)

Frame	Description
Abstract Liberalism	The foundation of new racism. Based on the tenets of liberalism, a belief in 'everybody is equal', ignoring the reality of minority inequality (such as in education and criminal justice).
Naturalisation	Echoes biological racism by claiming it is natural for groups to prefer associating with those like themselves.
Cultural Racism	Uses culturally centred statements to generalise whole groups as a rationale for that groups' lack of racial progress.
Minimisation	Minimises the realities and consequences of discrimination. Understands racism only in explicit, overt forms.

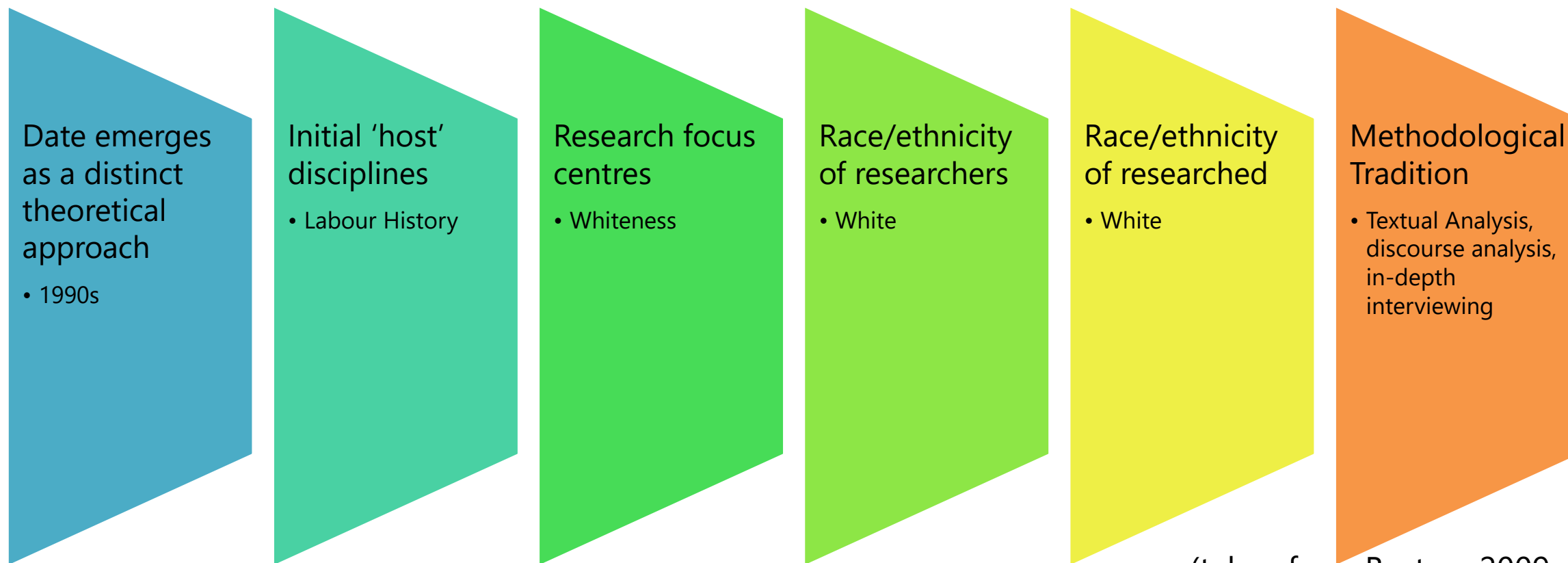
Colour-blind Racism and 'good white people'

- Hartmann *et al* (2017) found colour-blindness can be perceived as a positive attribution.
- It can be a way of expressing an antiracist stance (Burke, 2019)
- Usually enacted by 'good white people' (Sullivan, 2014)
- The good/bad binary of racism (DiAngelo, 2018)
- 'Silent racism' and the continuum of racism (Trepagnier, 2016)



Critical Whiteness Studies

Typology of Whiteness Theory as a methodological domain



(taken from Burton, 2009, p. 178)

Key principles of critical whiteness studies

Theoretical principle	Description
White Identity	White people are not generally racially self-aware, conscious about their race or its social construction.
Understanding Privilege	Whites are unaware of the status, privileges and advantages that being white affords.
Colour-blind Ideology	Structural racism is not acknowledged, ideas of meritocracy, hard work and being race neutral are dominant narratives. To talk openly about race is to fuel racism.
	(Adapted from Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll, 2009, pp. 407-409)

Key principles of critical whiteness studies

Principle	Description
White Invisibility	Making whiteness visible through explicitly exploring social power and the invisibility of whiteness. Also recognises how whiteness can adapt.
White Supremacy	Not in relation to far-right groups but to a form of racism that is invisible and expressed through practices and policies that are viewed as normal and even race neutral.
White Privilege	The benefits of belonging to the dominant group (i.e., white) that are unearned and exist despite personal beliefs. (adapted from Applebaum, 2016, pp. 2-7)

Summary of themes in British sociological whiteness research

(Adapted from Clarke and Garner, 2010, pp. 39-58)

Theme	Description
Whiteness as Invisibility	Whiteness is a de-racialised identity surrounded by silence and racialised power dynamics remain unexamined.
White Norms and Values in Practice: urban settings	Whiteness is the normalised standard, leading to white people feeling racially superior.
White Norms and Values in Practice: rural settings	Whiteness is the normalised standard, leading to white people feeling racially superior. Additionally, the English countryside represents 'a repository of pure English values' (p. 43)
Cultural Capital and Respectability	Whites perceive 'respectability' in ethnic minorities is demonstrated by their ability to become invisible and thus achieve that status if 'belonging' (p. 45) via their invisibility. Includes white peoples' belief of belonging to a 'tradition of dominance, including empire' (p. 46) Whites assume a position 'of rationality juxtaposed with the irrationality of Others' (p. 46).
Contingent Hierarchies	Whereby ethnic minorities are accepted into whiteness at interpersonal and geographically local levels, despite not having a white phenotype. For example, whites in one local area accept one group of people, e.g., Afro-Caribbean but do not accept another, e.g., Somalian.
Narratives of Disempowerment: Empire as Presence.	White people who experience societal disadvantage attribute this to racialised minority groups. This disadvantage is linked to 'a fragile and threatened slot in the post-empire world order' (p. 55).

Some of the concepts of critical whiteness studies

- Invisibility and normalisation of whiteness (Halley, Eshleman, and Mahadevan-Vijaya, 2011; Hayes et al, 2013; Dyer 2017 [1997])
- Whiteness as a fluid category (Ignatiev, 20009; Painter, 2010; Bhopal, 2018)
- The 'wages of whiteness' (Roediger, 1991)
- White privilege (McIntosh, 1988; Kendell, 2013; Bhopal 2018; Ryde, 2019)
- Whiteness as racial identity (Helms, 1990)
- White women and whiteness (Frankenberg, 1993; Ware; 2015 [1992]; Phipps, 2020)
- Debatability of racism (Titley, 2019) and 'Not racism' (Lentin, 2020)
- 'Good white people' (Sullivan, 2014a) and colour-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018)
- White ignorance (Mills, 2007), white innocence (Wekker, 2016); white rage (Anderson, 2017), white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018),

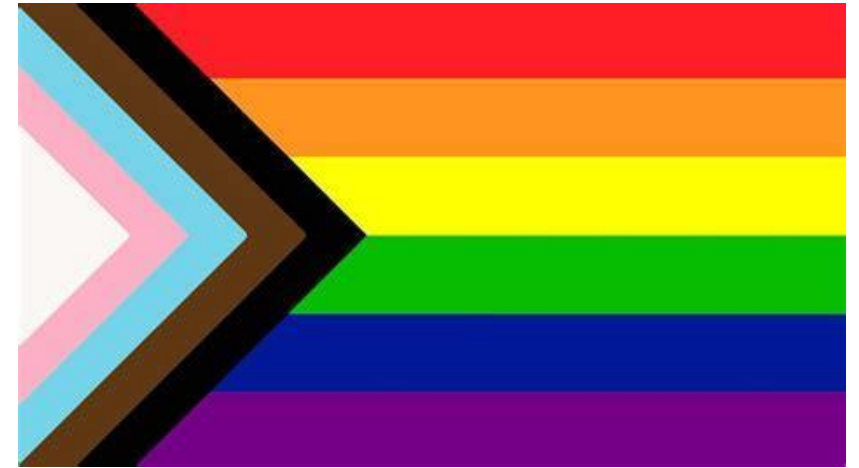


Queer Theory



Understanding 'Queer'

- 1900s: 'Queer' meant something peculiar or strange
- 20th century: an abusive word aimed at the LGBT community
- Civil Rights Movement: gender and sexuality discourse began, and activists were challenging laws that criminalised sexual acts
- They wanted to decriminalise homosexuality
- 1980-1990s: LGBT community reclaimed "queer" in a positive way
- Refers to someone whose gender or sexual identity were deviant of gender / sexuality identity binaries and heteronormativity
- AIDS (1980s) – AIDS activism brought queer discourse to light on a national scale
- Queer theory allowed an understanding of these events



Understanding 'Queer'

(Rustom Jagose, 1996, p. 1)

"Once the term 'queer' was, at best, slang for homosexual, at worst a term of homophobic abuse. In recent years, 'queer' has come to be used differently, sometimes as an umbrella term for a coalition of culturally marginal sexual self-identification and at other times to describe a nascent theoretical model which has developed out of more traditional lesbian and gay studies. What is clear, even from this brief and partial account of its contemporary deployment, is that queer is very much a category in the process of formation. It is not simply that queer has yet to solidify and take on a more consistent profile, but rather that its definitional in-determinacy, its elasticity, is one of its constituent characteristics"

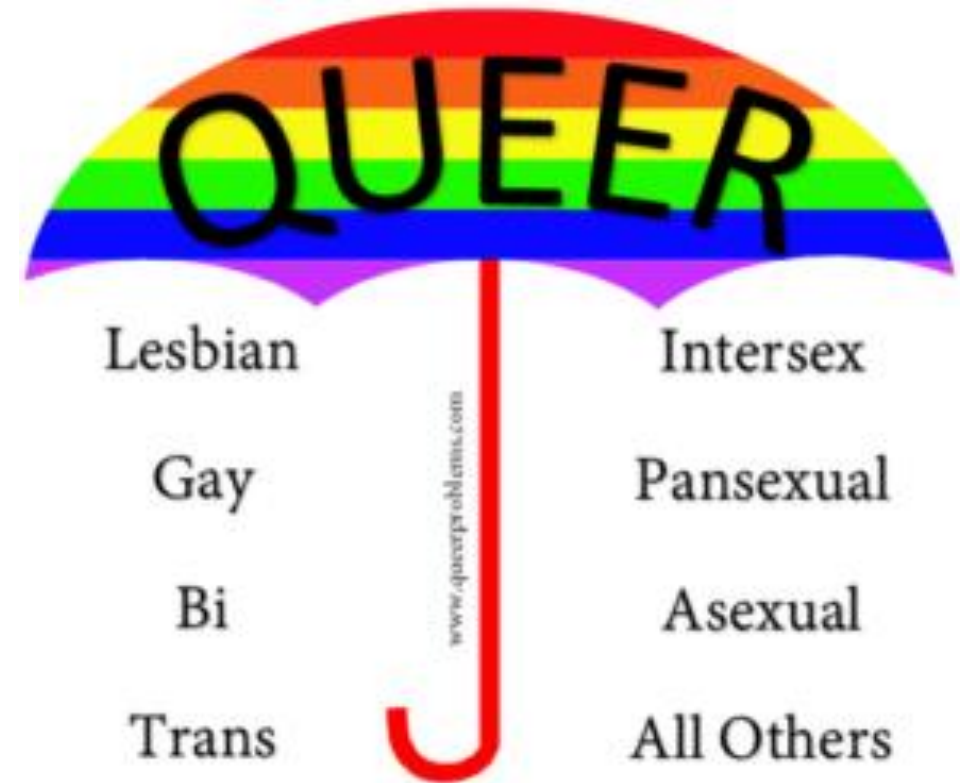
Heteronormativity

- Refers to the idea that heterosexuality is the only normal and natural expression of sexuality
- Bases on gender binaries
- Heterosexuality is the default sexual orientation
- E.g., cis-male and cis-female sexual attraction



Queer Theory

- Teresa de Lauretis coined the term queer theory in 1991
- She suggested it can:
 - Refuse heterosexuality as the normalised and accepted standard of sexuality
 - Challenge the idea that lesbian and gay studies are a singular structure
 - Reject the idea that identities are fixed and argues that they are fluid



Michel Foucault: History of Sexuality (1976)

- Same sex relationships existed historically
- Criticises the repression of sexuality in the 19th and 20th century
- 'Repressive hypothesis': from 18th century on bourgeois society suppressed discussion of sex and
- Concepts of 'heterosexuality' and 'homosexuality' born in the late 19th century
- These suppressed non-martial reproductive / non-heterosexual relations
- Victorians moralised about sex but through trying to suppress it they secretly talked about it and defined it
- This gave homosexuals a language to empower them
- The repressive hypothesis: it's both defiant and important to our personal liberation that we talk openly about sex

Gayle Rubin – Thinking Sex (1984)

- Writes about the politics of sexuality
- Social groups and systems attribute values to sexuality
- This defines sexual behaviours as good/bad, natural/unnatural
- “The Charmed Circle”: ‘Good’ vs. ‘Bad’ sex acts
- Sex is political, not just biological or psychological
- e.g., the HIV/AIDS crisis was a political experience for gay men as well as biological/psychological





- In Victorian times and the 1950s: movements against sex and sexuality
- Laws and norms are put into place to 'protect' against deviancy
- These laws are a form of social control
- 1970s: Sex liberation movement rejected these norms and fought against the laws

Judith Butler: Gender Trouble (1990)

- Did for gender what Foucault did for sexuality
- Introduced the concept of 'gender performativity'
- Breaks down the social construct of gender and the binary of 'male' and 'female'
- The binary encourages heteronormativity
- Traditionally, men are meant to be 'masculine' and women are meant to be 'feminine'
- Butler argues gender identity is not that simple
- Masculinity and femininity do not determine your sex
- Gender identity comes from behaviour / mannerisms / language and self-portrayal

(Butler, 2006 [1990]).



Gender Performativity

- Gender being performed means we act out certain gender roles
- Whereas gender performativity means there are real world effects for acting those roles
- e.g., the way we walk/talk/speak/dress etc., consolidates what it means to be a 'man' or a 'woman'
- Challenges that being a 'man' or being a 'woman' is intrinsic of factual
- Butler argues is a phenomenon being constantly produced and reproduced
- Institutions (e.g., medicine) and informal methods (e.g., bullying) keep people in their expected gendered roles
- Undoing Gender (2004) How gender can be deconstructed and become inclusive



(Critical) Disability Studies



What is 'disability'?

- According to the Equality Act 2010 (Part 2. Chapter 1. Section 6:1):
- A person (P) has a disability if —
 - P has a physical or mental impairment, and
 - the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on P's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
- Disabled Person: A person who can be understood using The Social Model of Disability as a person with impairments whose 'Disability' arises from society.
- Person with disabilities: Person first language, thereby promoting the person and not the disability/impairment. Is increasingly used more around the globe

“Disability is not a physical or mental defect but a cultural and minority identity. To call disability an identity is to recognise that it is not a biological or natural property but an elastic social category both subject to social control and capable of effecting social change”

(Siebers, 2008, p. 4)

Disability as a Spiritual/Moral condition

- Oldest of all disability models but, arguably, still the most prevalent worldwide.
- Spiritual or divine or acceptance
- Increased faith and forbearance.
- Finding meaning and purpose in affliction.
- Results in exclusion from family / community, feelings of shame / hiding disability symptoms / hiding the person with a disability.

(Goodley, 2017)

Disability as Individual / Medical condition

- Disability is a medical problem that resides in the individual
- It is a defect / failure of a bodily system that is inherently abnormal and pathological
- Challenges the view of disability moral issue
- But it may blame person or family for healthcare habits (e.g., someone's lifestyle leads to heart attack)
- Furthers the view of disability as a personal tragedy.
- Isolation of body parts and view of the disabled person as atypical, abnormal and pathological

(Goodley, 2017)

The Social Model of Disability

- In the last half of the 20th century, people with impairments were institutionalised for much
- Families of people with impairments began to form groups in order to share experiences and support each other.
- E.g., Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS), established in 1974.
- In 1976 they produced a key document: Foundational Principles of Disability

(UPIAS 1976, cited in Oliver and Barnes. 2012,
p. 21)

- UPIAS differentiated between impairment and disability :
- Impairment: 'lacking part or all of a limb, or having a defective limb, organ or mechanism of the body'
- Disability: 'the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities.'
- Newer understandings include sensory, cognitive and physical impairments

“Critical disability studies start with disability but never end with it: disability is the space from which to think through a host of political, theoretical and practical issues that are relevant to all.”

(Goodley, 2013, p. 632)

Critical Disability Studies

- 2000s onwards, emerging out of cultural models of disability and queer / disability activism.
- Disability is renamed as a site of resistance that critiques 'the normate' and 'the abled'.
- Connects with other disruptive positions including queer, anti-capitalist, union activists;
- Affirmative identity rather than negative connotations associated with disability.
- Key writers include Robert McRuer. Kristina Kolarova, Julie Passanante Elman.

(Goodley, 2017)

Critical Studies of Ableism

- 2000s onwards
- Disability is produced by wider standards of society, culture and economics that emphasise and idealise an ableist normativity.
- Disabled people are excluded from communities, services and professional practices because they fail to meet the standards of ableist society.
- Links able-bodiedness, whiteness, coloniality and the capitalist imperatives of labour and consumption.
- Key writers include Gregor Wolbring, Fiona Kumari Campbell

(Goodley, 2017, p. 193)

Reflections...

- What are your thoughts about these?



References

- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2018) Racism without Racists: Colour-blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States. 5th edn. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield
- Butler, J. (2006 [1990]) Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. New York: Routledge Classics.
- Delgado, R., and Stefancic, J. (1997) Critical White Studies: Looking Behind the Mirror. Philadelphia: Temple University Press
- Delgado, R., and Stefancic, J. (2017) Critical Race Theory: An Introduction (3rd Edn) New York: New York University Press.
- Fernando, S. (2010) Mental Health, Race and Culture. (3rd ed.) Basingstoke: Palgrave
- Gillborn, D. (2008) Coincidence or conspiracy? Whiteness, policy and the persistence of the Black/White achievement gap. Educational Review. 60 (3), pp 229-248, DOI: 10.1080/00131910802195745
- Gillborn, D. (2010) The White working class, racism and respectability: Victims, degenerates and interest-convergence. British Journal of Educational Studies. 58(1), pp 3–25. doi:10.1080/ 01425690701192752
- Goodley, D. (2017) Disability Studies: An Interdisciplinary Reader (2nd Ed). London: Sage Publications

Rustom Jagose, A. (1996) *Queer Theory: An Introduction*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press

Saini, A. (2019) *Superior: The Return of Race Science*. London: 4th Estate.

Siebers, T. (2008) *Disability Theory*. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press

Wallace, S., Nazroo, J., and Bécaries, L. (2016) Cumulative Effect of Racial Discrimination on the Mental Health of Ethnic Minorities in the United Kingdom. *AJPH Research*. 106 (7), pp. 1294-1300.
doi:10.2105/AJPH.2016.303121