

Team,

November 2020

Critical Theory is the philosophical worldview driving much of the discourse in our country right now. The NY Times best sellers "White Fragility" and "How To Be An Antiracist" are based upon critical theory. Nearly every university these days teaches critical theory and puts it into practice and over the past 10 years consultants and activists have promoted this theory through governmental institutions, corporate boards and HR departments, media / entertainment, and now K-12 education.

As we make suggestions to our school boards for developing the district's strategic plan, I think it is important to understand critical theory (both its positives and its negatives). Continued implementation of critical theories will certainly impact our children, our administrators and teachers, and our community.

Introduction to Critical Theory (Charitable Definition) 7 min

Search Youtube for: "James Lindsay Explains Critical Race Theory"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXihpG020>

What Would You Say About Critical Theory (Reasons to Be Cautious) 7 min

Search Youtube for: "Critical theory is practical"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rQve0x4aNE>

High School teacher interviewing James Lindsay, the scholar who did the first 7 minute video above. (Detailed response to significant problems with Critical Theory and its implementation in schools and society) 77 minutes

Search Youtube for: "Social Justice Theory for K-12 education on teacher podcast Cylinder Radio"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yD29n8tTfo>

I recognize that asking anyone to watch a 77 minute video is a big ask, but that video is excellent. The high school teacher asks what I imagine are

the exact questions that teachers would be asking and I'm certain many of our teachers would be asking those questions.

Please at least watch the first two shorter videos.

If you are hesitant about the 77 minute video start 1:01:55 mark when the teacher gets pretty passionate about some of the things he has learned.

Here is a link with that start point:

<https://youtu.be/5yD29n8tTfo?t=3715>

When the teacher is talking about "this", he is referring to the discussion of 'critical theory' from the first hour of the interview. Watch for 10 minutes until about the 1:11:50 mark. If after watching that 10 minute segment you are wondering what the teacher is so passionate about then go watch the first hour of the video.

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When I spoke at the Hollis School Board meeting back in July, one of the primary things I asked the school board to do was to look closely at definitions of various terms impacting society today. The meanings of some words have been redefined in various ways by various leaders to such a point where there is significant confusion about what these words actually mean.

This is the important work we are about to begin for our community. As I was preparing to send information on definitions, I realized we are likely going to waste a lot of time if we don't understand why some of these words mean different things to different groups.

This young scholar, Coleman Hughes, from Columbia University does an excellent job at the beginning of his presentation outlining the two visions driving the current discourse. He refers to them as the Humanist vision (Martin Luther King) and the Antiracist vision (Malcolm X, Ibram Kendi).

I am NOT asking you to watch the entire 2 hours presentation! The pertinent parts that I thought would be helpful to our work would be the first 25 minutes (link 1) and the part from about 49 minutes to 59 minutes (link 2) where he outlines various implications for the competing visions.

Search Youtube search for:

“Coleman Hughes Anti Racism and Humanism, Two Competing Visions”

Segment 1: Beginning of talk to about the 25:00 mark

<https://youtu.be/6orCV4I7jjU?t=54>

Segment 2: Approximately the 49:00 minute mark to the 59:00 mark

<https://youtu.be/6orCV4I7jjU?t=2932>

The second clip talks about getting an understanding of these visions out in the open for discussion is critical to moving toward solutions. Right now the confusion is so great that people are talking over each other in ways that tears apart instead of leading to understanding. **Without understanding, inclusion is impossible. So, if you only have a short amount of time, watch the second clip.**

Other interesting Coleman Hughes videos (he has a podcast which he posts on Youtube as well):

Search Youtube for:

The Arc of Racial Progress with Neil deGrasse Tyson July 2020:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dKklcL1WNec>

Q&A with Coleman Hughes - Bonus Episode June 2020 (First 20 minutes on wealth gap and question on White Fragility and How to Be An

Antiracist): <https://youtu.be/tEfDwbprlWM?t=631>

=====separate note on definitions below=====

Team, the more I thought about the definitions we are going to discuss, the more I gravitated back toward the letter I wrote to the Hollis School Board after speaking at the July meeting.

I heard the author of the site below interviewed on a podcast and found him interesting as he talked about being a strong social and economic liberal who supported almost everything President Obama supported but was strongly against the emergence of critical theory due to its negative impact on free speech and intelligent discourse. He shifted his work toward reading an enormous amount of critical studies literature and developed the newdiscourses.com website to help others understand what these terms mean.

The key definitions are the first 3 for our work but I included the 2 others I sent to the board given their prominence in our current cultural moment.

Dear Hollis School Board,

Thank you for taking time at the end of the session to take public input on the non-discrimination and equity initiative. I asked during my comments that you each please take time to read through the definitions and commentary below to understand the current usage of these words (I have copied all the definitions in the email to save you all time....see below).

<https://newdiscourses.com/tftw-diversity/>

<https://newdiscourses.com/tftw-equity/>

<https://newdiscourses.com/tftw-inclusion/>

<https://newdiscourses.com/tftw-institutional-racism/>

<https://newdiscourses.com/tftw-antiracism/>

Before getting to the definitions of some of the words in the resolution, I mentioned Critical Race Theory in my comments. Here is the definition from one of the primary sources:

Critical Race Theory

Source: Delgado, Richard. Critical Race Theory, Third Edition. NYU Press. Kindle Edition, p. 3.

The critical race theory (CRT) movement is a collection of activists and scholars engaged in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and

power. The movement considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses take up but places them in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, setting, group and self-interest, and emotions and the unconscious. **Unlike traditional civil rights discourse, which stresses incrementalism and step-by-step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law.**

I bolded the last part because this theory which is playing a major role in our current cultural moment seeks not just racial justice but to undo legal reasoning, the use of logic, reason, and debate to move society forward (ie Enlightenment rationalism). It does not believe in incremental change and improvement. It seeks to disrupt, dismantle, and tear down the institutions that have made this country the great nation it is, despite its imperfections and continued need to improve.

It is easy to tear down. It is not so easy to build. What is on the other side of the tearing down process? I don't think it will be a good outcome for many people in the nation. This is why we need to define words clearly before we insert them into the DNA of our school system and what we are teaching our kids.

Here are the definition of words (via primary sources) and the commentary from the newdiscourses.com website I mentioned in my comments:
<https://newdiscourses.com/translations-from-the-wokish/>

Diversity

Social Justice Usage (primary source definition)

Source: <http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/diversity/definition.html>

The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.

Diversity is a reality created by individuals and groups from a broad spectrum of demographic and philosophical differences. It is extremely important to support and protect diversity because by valuing individuals and groups free from prejudice and by fostering a climate where equity and mutual respect are intrinsic, we will create a success-oriented, cooperative, and caring community that draws intellectual strength and produces innovative solutions from the synergy of its people.

“Diversity” means more than just acknowledging and/or tolerating difference.

Diversity is a set of conscious practices that involve:

- Understanding and appreciating interdependence of humanity, cultures, and the natural environment;
- Practicing mutual respect for qualities and experiences that are different from our own;
- Understanding that diversity includes not only ways of being but also ways of knowing;
- Recognizing that personal, cultural and institutionalized discrimination creates and sustains privileges for some while creating and sustaining disadvantages for others;
- Building alliances across differences so that we can work together to eradicate all forms of discrimination.

Diversity includes, therefore, knowing how to relate to those qualities and conditions that are different from our own and outside the groups to which we belong, yet are present in other individuals and groups. These include but are not limited to age, ethnicity, class, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, sexual orientation, as well as religious status, gender expression, educational background, geographical location, income, marital status, parental status, and work experiences. Finally, we acknowledge that categories of difference are not always fixed but also can be fluid, we respect individual rights to self-identification, and we recognize that no one culture is intrinsically superior to another.

New Discourses (Commentary)

The first thing to notice about this definition of “diversity” is that it’s oddly long and isn’t likely to match the definition you’ve been carrying for the word. You’re likely to think “diversity” means something about having different identities and points of view represented, and yet this definition immediately asks us for more, first and particularly that differences be explored in a “safe, positive, and nurturing environment.” It also requires “embracing and celebrating” diversity. Therefore, under the auspices of Critical Social Justice, “diversity” mandates creating and maintaining such an environment, which in turn requires controlling it. As

indicated, “diversity” includes “knowing how to relate” to others across demographic differences, which will also be controlled under Theory (see also, inclusion).

“Diversity” in the Critical Social Justice usage, while occasionally claiming to be tolerant of differences of ideas and political viewpoints and nodding toward “philosophical differences,” focuses, in reality, almost entirely on physical and cultural differences, which it evaluates according to the Critical Social Justice conceptions of privilege and marginalization (see also, positionality). It therefore aims to privilege the marginalized and marginalize the privileged in order to redress the imbalances it sees in society (see also, equity and progressive stack). This is made more obvious by observing that in this usage, diversity is described as a “set of conscious practices.” That is, not only is diversity something that one is expected to do under a rubric of Critical Social Justice, it is a set of practices that require conscious awareness (see also, consciousness raising, antiracism, and woke).

This may seem confusing, but it is because the Theory of Critical Social Justice takes the view that one’s relationship to systemic power in society is productive of knowledge. That is, who you are demographically and how your group identities relate to systemic power in society determines what you can know and how society values you as a potential knower. Critical Social Justice Theory posits that a person’s “way of knowing” about anything is tied to their identity and its position in relation to (systemic) power in society (see also, standpoint epistemology).

“Diversity” in the Critical Social Justice usage therefore tends to mean uniformity of viewpoint about ideological matters (thus the drive to silence / cancel anyone who disagrees).

All diversity of viewpoint, from the perspective of Critical Social Justice’s meaning of the term, arises by providing different cultural knowledge(s), which are only considered authentic if they corroborate the relationship of the identity group in question to systemic power as described by Theory. (This is because Theory insists that various identity groups have identifiable relationships to systemic power that only they can comprehend—see also, lived experience—and that these, in many ways, define that identity group. This, in turn, follows because Critical Social Justice Theory sees systemic power and oppression by it as the only objective truths there are about material reality—see also, essentialism and positionality.)

As a final note, the example given above contains a remark concerning diversity’s dependence upon cultural relativism, that “no one culture is intrinsically superior to another.” The important thing to recognize here is that this statement is not limited under Critical Social Justice to generally arbitrary

cultural mores like styles of dress, food, music, speech, and so on, but also includes the belief that knowledge-producing and dispute-resolving methodologies—like science, liberalism, capitalism and property ownership, philosophy, debate, reliance upon evidence, and so on—are mere cultural relics that cannot be compared one against another for superiority. Under such a rubric, folklore, superstition, magic, and witchcraft are cultural artifacts that cannot be gainsaid by others like science, reason, logic, and legal standards.

Equity

Social Justice Usage (primary source definition)

Source: <https://www.brandeis.edu/diversity/resources/definitions.html>

The notion of being fair and impartial as an individual engages with an organization or system, particularly systems of grievance. It reflects processes and practices that both acknowledge that we live in a world where everyone has not been afforded the same resources and treatment while also working to remedy this fact. “Equity” is often conflated with the term “Equality” which means sameness and assumes, incorrectly, that we all have had equal access, treatment, and outcomes. In fact, true equity implies that an individual may need to experience or receive something different (not equal) in order to maintain fairness and access. For example, a person with a wheelchair may need differential access to an elevator relative to someone else.

New Discourses (Commentary)

Notice that, in Critical Social Justice, the meaning of “equity” takes pains to distinguish itself from that of “equality.” Where equality means that citizen A and citizen B are treated equally, equity means “adjusting shares in order to make citizens A and B equal.” In that sense, equity is something like the intentional redistribution of shares, but not necessarily along lines of existing economic disparity but in order to adjust for and correct current and historical injustices, both as exist in reality and as have been drawn out by the various critical theories (specifically, Theory—see also, critical race Theory, queer Theory, gender studies, fat studies, disability studies, and postcolonial Theory).

The example given (above) of providing a wheelchair user with privileged access to an elevator is one that few people would find unfair. However, within Critical Social Justice conceptions of the world invisible systems of power and privilege

are understood to hold some people back in often invisible ways because of their race, gender, sexuality, or other marginalized identity factors. Therefore, “equity” requires giving some identity groups privileges in order to redress the perceived imbalance.

In common parlance, this is the difference between attempting to force *equality of outcome* by enforcing some resource allocation system and *equality of opportunity*, which Critical Social Justice regards not only as myth but as a harmful ideology that upholds injustices like “white supremacy.”

Because of the blank slatism and simplistic ideas of power and identity found within Critical Social Justice worldviews, all imbalances of representation in desirable areas of work are held to be caused by these perceived power dynamics. Equity is the intended remedy to this problem, and it is made applicable only (and especially) to positions of status and influence. For example, there is no equity program that attempts to increase the number of female sanitation workers, though there are equity programs that seek to increase the number of female doctors and politicians, and these endure even in high-status positions that employ more women than men. Of particular concern are positions that have influence where power is concerned, including in terms of shaping the discourses of society.

For this same reason, the measurement for equity is wholly on assessing the most superficial aspects of outcomes and then ascribing any differences from either demographic parity or parity adjusted upward to “correct” for historical exclusion to systemic bigotry. **That is, in practice, an equity approach is almost wholly unconcerned with the root causes of disparate outcomes and merely seeks to identify where they occur and then artificially “correct” them, perhaps through preferential hiring, grading, promotion, pay, etc., by eliminating measurements that reveal disparities like standardized testing, by open, secret, or tacit discrimination against “dominant” group members, or even by installing quotas and specific guidelines for how outcomes must come out, regardless of what leads to them. In that sense, it is a very impoverished theory that is unlikely to achieve any of its stated goals (and will probably hurt most those it claims to help).**

Where equality would imply not being particularly concerned with the demography of people filling certain roles, equity is centrally concerned with this. It often calls for wanting to achieve parity with the existing demographics of the population, which would mean that most (status-bearing) professions would employ roughly 50% women and whatever percentages of racial and sexual minorities as are

present in the prevailing population. This itself can be considered problematic, however, and often seeks overrepresentation by members of smaller minority/minoritized groups (e.g., trans identities).

Moreover, equity, importantly, is often to be assessed historically, not merely in the present moment. If an identity group has historically been disenfranchised or excluded from a particular (status-bearing) role, equity often implies achieving representation numbers *higher* than demographic parity to make up for the historical injustice. Thus, we can understand quips like Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's when she said that the proof of equality would be that there are nine women on the Supreme Court of the United States (that is, the entire court is female). It is also in this light that many arguments about reparations, whether material, monetary, or symbolic (e.g., through high-status employment) are situated. **That is, equity is not merely about “making up for injustices” but also often about “making up for past injustices.”**

Equity is often sought under a combined suite of “diversity, equity, and inclusion” (DEI) or sometimes “justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion” (JEDI), and as such, these terms have become major buzzwords in most professional sectors, particularly including education. Often, however, Theorists and activists remark that equity may not be enough, because it is, in some sense, incrementalist in orientation, and therefore that revolution (of the system) might be advocated instead. This is, in fact, the underlying objective of the critical approach—social revolution according to the terms of Critical Social Justice Theory—and incrementalist proposals like diversity, equity, and inclusion are either fallback/compromise positions within liberal systems or half-measures deemed better than nothing.

When equity programs do not meet their intended goals, the “resistance” by privileged people (especially whites) is typically blamed (see also, white fragility). The program itself isn't allowed to be a failure. This “resistance” is often easy to find “proof” of because equity programs deliberately stack the deck in favor of certain identity groups and occasionally explicitly attempt to reduce the numbers of others (famously, Asian students at Ivy League universities like Harvard), which most people understand as intrinsically unfair, if not a bad idea that places some irrelevant characteristic like demographic identity ahead of relevant characteristics like competence in hiring/appointment decisions (see also, meritocracy). Indeed, the “diversity, equity, inclusion” suite was introduced as a deliberate work-around for Affirmative Action (notably following the 2003 Supreme Court case *Grutter v. Bollinger*).

In early 2020, and rather shockingly, in the Washington state legislature, an “Equity Task Force” was assembled that offered the following definition for equity: **“Equity = Disrupt and Dismantle,” which is to say an explicit call for a systemic revolution.** (NB: The Task Force was assembled even after the state voted against Affirmative Action.) The Task Force took pains to explain that *they* (the Social Justice supporters present) know that equity means disrupt and dismantle, and debated whether or not the language was too naked to be able to be approved by the legislature. In the end, the centrality of disruption and dismantling was considered so crucial to the proper understanding of equity, lest anyone in the future mistakenly leave it out as a result of their euphemisms, that the language was included in the proffered definition.

Inclusion

Social Justice Usage (primary source definition)

Source: <https://www.brandeis.edu/diversity/resources/definitions.html>

The notion that an organization or system is welcoming to new populations and/or identities. This new presence is not merely tolerated but expected to contribute meaningfully into the system in a positive, mutually beneficial way. Inclusive processes and practices are ones that strive to bring groups together to make decisions in collaborative, mutual, equitable ways.

New Discourses (Commentary)

Inclusion, in the general sense of the word, means to welcome everybody (in context: into a particular space). That is, to be inclusive is not to exclude anybody. **Inclusion, in a Critical Social Justice sense, refers to something subtly different that extends that idea in a particular way. It means to create a welcoming environment specifically for groups considered marginalized, and this entails the exclusion of anything that could feel unwelcoming to any identity groups** (see also, safe space). This is because everything in Critical Social Justice must be understood in terms of systemic power dynamics that it Theorizes characterize all of social, if not material, reality.

Thus, inclusion is an expansive concept that could apply to silencing certain ideas like conservatism, meritocracy, or support for freedom of speech, usually in the name of safety and preventing the “trauma” or “violence” that such ideas

could inflict upon progressives who see them as ideologies that perpetuate systemic harm. It could be used to prevent specific terminology like “ladies and gentlemen” (see also, man, woman, and binary), which Theory insists carries an unjust assumption that everybody is one or the other (which is thus not inclusive to gender minorities like queer, genderqueer, genderfluid, gender non-conforming, or trans people). It could be applied to exclude certain symbols like “MAGA” hats (which are Theorized to support systemic racism, systemic sexism, misogyny, heteronormativity, and so on) or specific sounds like clapping (which can trigger people with PTSD, under a rubric of ableism). In all cases, either the safety (mostly, but not always only, psychological – see also, violence) of the people involved in the space or their right to have a space free from oppression is cited as the reason for the exclusive limitations done in the name of inclusion.

On some occasions, to be inclusive of members of marginalized groups, inclusion has been used to justify excluding *people* considered privileged, like men, straight people, and white people (Example: Bret Weinstein interviewed by Joe Rogan about incident at Evergreen State College

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xq4Y87idawk>), or to limit their numbers, seat them at the back of a gathering, or ask them to listen silently (see also, shut up and listen and progressive stack). This need to exclude certain *people* in the name of inclusion follows from the Critical Social Justice Theory insistence that one of the features of systemic power and privilege is that all spaces are spaces in which the dominant groups’ cultures are welcomed and other cultures are excluded (by means of the hegemony of dominant culture). Thus, segregated “black only” spaces, for example, are considered a necessary corrective to whiteness and a form of *desegregating* those spaces, according to the Theory of Critical Social Justice.

In this sense, “inclusion,” in the Critical Social Justice usage, always implies restrictions on speech.

An inclusive environment cannot, by the Critical Social Justice definition, tolerate any speech (including symbolic displays or representation) that offends, might offend, or could be construed as being potentially offensive to any member of any marginalized group. If it did, that would be exclusionary to members of that group and would multiply or perpetuate their oppression. Of note, this offense need not be experienced by anyone but could merely exist in a potential state, thus leaving speech in an “inclusive” space subject to problematization, or it could be experienced as offense by proxy, in which a member of a “dominant group” indicates that she is offended on behalf of a (perhaps entirely hypothetical) marginalized person who might at some point enter the inclusive space (see also,

allyship). That is, under Social Justice, “inclusion” means restricted speech and sometimes physical exclusion.

Because Social Justice always interprets *everything* through a lens of systemic power dynamics, this status is unidirectional and thus never applies to members of dominant groups, who can be made to feel as unwelcome or offended as possible, up to and including through explicitly derogatory speech and physically prohibiting their attendance.

Inclusion is usually presented in a suite alongside other concepts that it is supposed to help or enhance. Thus we often hear of “diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)” or “justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI)” as a core program of Social Justice activism and application. Most universities, many corporations, many organizations, and some governmental agencies now have offices or officers of “diversity and inclusion,” who are, in effect, administrative Critical Social Justice police.

Inclusion also needs to be understood *epistemically* to understand how Critical Social Justice uses the term. The epistemological thought of Critical Social Justice insists that the ideas, discourses, ideologies, knowledges, and ways of knowing of dominant groups in society intentionally or implicitly exclude others of these that come from marginalized, minoritized, or oppressed groups (see also, master’s tools). This is considered a fundamental form of oppression that prevents minoritized groups even from being able to speak up on their own behalf unless on biased terms set by those with dominance in society (see also, epistemic injustice, epistemic justice, epistemic oppression, epistemic violence, silence; and subaltern).

As a result, inclusion also requires including the “knowledges” and “ways of knowing” of minoritized groups, particularly those based in the “lived experience” of oppression (see also, standpoint epistemology, realities, and positionality). These are to be seen not just as equally valid as knowledge produced, say, by the sciences (see also, objectivity and positivism, and also, cultural relativism), but as *superior* because they are less problematically biased and disruptive, rather than supportive, of hegemony, the status quo, and systems of oppression (see also, problematize). Of course, this means the demand for epistemic inclusion generally results in calling “knowledge” or “truth” that which is neither, which will virtually always backfire in the end.

Institutional Racism

Social Justice Usage

Source:

<https://educatenotindoctrinate.org/glossaries/race-equity-glossary-of-terms/>

Refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color.

New Discourses Commentary

Institutional racism is a concept that has to be parsed carefully because there are a few subtly different meanings in play when it is discussed, and the term is commonly used and thus a site for considerable confusion. On the one hand, many people understand “institutional racism” to be racist policies enacted by institutions (including governments), such as Jim Crow laws or discriminatory hiring policies. This understanding is, perhaps rightly, considered too strict and narrow by advocates of Social Justice following legislation such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which explicitly outlawed institutional racism of this kind.

Social Justice advocates tend to opt for a subtler definition of the term, though this still creates some confusion. As written above, the term refers “to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups.” The confusion that arises on this point is that for people sufficiently far-removed from the Social Justice mindset, institutional *racism* doesn’t follow without racist intent to the policies, while for those closer to the Social Justice understanding (or speaking from it), intention doesn’t matter (see also, impact versus intent).

To understand the Social Justice usage of this term, then, it is crucial to recognize that racist intention as we would normally understand it is irrelevant, and even racist outcomes don’t necessarily matter; all that is necessary is disparate outcomes based upon racial group. In fact, from the perspective of Social Justice, the use of narrow definition that many people believe is meant by the term “institutional racism” is itself an act of racism, used to obscure the realities of institutional racism and thus maintain it.

Intention is, however, relevant in another way from the Social Justice perspective, which is in the sense that Theory tells us that power and privilege seek to maintain

and legitimize themselves. Thus, even if there are no racist intentions, or those are irrelevant, there will in fact be *hidden* racial motivations with the effect of creating “advantages for whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color” (see also, minoritize, mask, code, internalized dominance, racial contract, white supremacy, and white solidarity).

The critical mindset in Social Justice is designed to identify those hidden dominance-preserving assumptions and motivations and expose them so that they might be disrupted and dismantled. That is, while it doesn't matter for institutional racism to have occurred if any racial animus or bias is present in the people who crafted the relevant policies or not, if any racial disparities occur that benefit white people, racial motivations *were* present, at least in a systemic or implicit sense (see also, system).

The biggest problem with the Social Justice understanding of institutional racism is that it ascribes to racism, which is a highly morally salient term, any disparities in outcome that end up with white (or white adjacent) groups above other groups, no matter what are the actual causes of those disparities. This means that a highly charged term, racism, is attached to something that might be arising as a result of a different variable (like economic status, home condition, cultural mores, etc.) that correlates highly with race. Because it then proceeds from a Theoretical position in which white people are mostly unconsciously motivated to maintain their alleged social dominance, there is almost no way to disagree with such an accusation and attempt a better, more effective and accurate analysis of the policy and its outcomes. This can prevent understanding the necessary components of the issue that could generate genuine progress and thus is likely to hurt the people it aims to help most.

Antiracism

Social Justice Usage

Source: Kendi, Ibram X., How To Be an Antiracist (p. 9). Random House. Kindle Edition.

The opposite of “racist” isn’t “not racist.” It is “anti-racist.” What’s the difference? One endorses either the idea of a racial hierarchy as a racist, or racial equality as an antiracist. One either believes problems are rooted in groups of people, as a racist, or locates the roots of problems in power and policies, as an anti-racist. One either allows racial inequities to persevere, as a racist, or confronts racial inequities, as an antiracist. There is no in-between safe space of “not racist.” The claim of “not racist”

neutrality is a mask for racism. This may seem harsh, but it's important at the outset that we apply one of the core principles of antiracism, which is to return the word "racist" itself back to its proper usage. "Racist" is not—as Richard Spencer argues—a pejorative. It is not the worst word in the English language; it is not the equivalent of a slur. It is descriptive, and the only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it—and then dismantle it.

New Discourses Commentary

This definition, which does not merely mean "against racism," as one might assume of the term, is absolutely standard in Social Justice. In fact, it reflects the core tenet of critical race Theory that racism is ordinary and pervades everything. As may be seen in Kendi's use of the word "inequities," antiracism is to be thought of in terms of equity, not equality.

In critical race Theory, it is simply impossible for racism to be absent from any situation. One may be *actively* racist by perpetuating racial prejudice and discrimination against non-white people (particularly black people), or *passively* racist by failing to notice racism in oneself or others and thus failing to address it. Both of these are bad. One can only be "*antiracist*" by noticing racism all the time, in every person and every situation, even when it is not readily apparent (or a fair reading of the situation—see also, close reading and problematizing), and "calling it out." This is understood to have the effect of making racism visible to everyone and enabling it to be dismantled (see also, consciousness raising, critical consciousness, and wokeness).

The identification of racism against non-white people in any situation is always possible and rarely, if ever, falsifiable because it does not have to be intentional or conscious (see also, impact versus intent). For example, if a black customer and a white customer entered a store at the same time, and the white sales assistant approached the white customer to offer help first, this could be identified as racism because it prioritized the white person's needs (see also, centering). However, if the sales assistant approached the black customer first, this could also be identified as racism because it could be read as indicating a distrust of black people and unwillingness to have them browse the shelves unsupervised (ie there is no way to falsify the theory...there will always be a way to call something racist). The shop assistant's perception of her own motivations are irrelevant, and, to be a conscientious antiracist, she would need to admit her racism and pledge to do better.

In fact, the antiracism approach would start from the following assumption, as phrased by critical race educator Robin DiAngelo (author of *White Fragility*): “the question is not ‘did racism take place?’ but rather, ‘how did racism manifest in this situation?’” ([Source](#).) As such, the racism of the shop assistant in the preceding example—and, more specifically, the racism underlying and defining her interactions with the customers—is fully assumed, though probably hidden (see also, [mask](#)).

Antiracism is the name for the practice she is expected to undertake under a Critical Social Justice paradigm in order to critically examine herself, the interaction, her past behaviors, her privilege and positionality within society (and its relevance—see also, intersectionality), as well as her motivations (including, especially, unconscious ones), and to find that racism and then abhor it so that she might fulfill her pledge to “do better.” To fail to do this is taken as a form of complicity—another manifestation of her racism—which is in need of critical examination under an antiracism program, and is very deeply Theorized as such (see also, white equilibrium, white fragility, white comfort, white innocence, white ignorance, racial contract, anti-blackness, active ignorance, pernicious ignorance, willful ignorance, false consciousness, and internalized dominance).

Social Justice scholars, including DiAngelo, indicate that antiracism is a “practice” that requires a “lifelong commitment to an ongoing process” of fighting systemic racism (see also, [praxis](#)). This process expects people to constantly reflect upon the ways in which they, and others, support, or are complicit in, “whiteness,” “anti-blackness,” “racism,” and “white supremacy,” as these terms are understood from within the context of critical race Theory and critical whiteness studies. It then expects antiracists to subscribe to social activism which allegedly minimizes its impacts, including—as DiAngelo has put it regarding herself—through the concerted attempt to “be less white” (see also, [problematize](#)).

Antiracism carries with it a commitment to accept the systemic definition for racism—i.e., that it exists immanently, always and everywhere, regardless of intent—even if there isn’t a single person who is racist in the usual understanding. The system itself can be “racist” even if there are no racists within that system (see also, systemic power). An antiracist has the obligation of searching for instances of racism that confirm the systemic “reality” of racism, internally, with others, and in society and its various forms of representation.

While critical race Theorists and educators like Robin DiAngelo distinguish between “active racism” and “passive racism,” they indicate (e.g., in *Is Everyone Really Equal?*) that it is not possible to be passively antiracist. There is only active antiracism. In fact, to be passively antiracist would be to be passively racist, instead! Thus, the requirement to be an activist, both in the inward, soul-searching sense of the word and in the usual outward sense, is absolute and non-negotiable.

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Positive framework / comments submitted by another committee member Re: CRT

Andrew has brought up critical race theory, a theoretical framework for studying racism. Not a new idea, it is now, more than ever, on the public radar for many reasons. We are in the perfect storm, with an election year in a time that seems there is more political divide than ever, with growing awareness of inequities in the COVID pandemic and a summer full of social unrest. The two books Andrew mentioned became very popular. The timing for publication was perfect! Maybe more people are reading because of COVID. It's like the Tiger King phenomenon! Both books go much more beyond critical race theory. This framework is that, a theoretical framework. Some people are following it to the word, like it's the bible of social justice and others are critically analyzing it and taking what makes sense and there are still others that vehemently oppose the fundamental principles on which it is based. Some people have spent time learning about it, some have just taken on their opinions in other ways. It's no different than just about any other bit of information coming our way. (This is where I throw in the BIG plug for scientific literacy and teaching scientific thinking skills to analyze and critique the information overload that is our current reality!)

Like so many things lately, critical race theory, has recently become completely politicized and used as a wedge to divide. You will find both critics and supporters. It's probably fair to say that the supporters and critics usually fall on similar lines in other topics as feminism, LGBTQ+ etc but not always, and to think that all who support DEI must subscribe to critical race theory or all who agree with some, all or most ideas in critical race theory must also be this, this and this, or those who don't agree with the ideas are racist, is the very position we should hope for our students to push against. These gross generalizations of a group, prejudice and blind, stubborn conviction to a thought are the exact behaviors we want our students to avoid. It is the very reason our students need us to pay attention and give them more in their education, so they can be active listeners and information processors and curious and open minded as well as use their voice to communicate their views in effective ways.

Like the students, our aim is not to convince each other of our own views, ideologies and theories but listen and share with regard to what we hope for our kids and community and find the commonalities there. I'm impressed with the progress we have made. It is one thing to bring a group of like minded people together and to have them work toward a known and agreed upon, shared common goal, it is much more impressive to bring such diversity of thought together and create a collaborative environment that respects the vast differences and yet puts energy into hard and frequently messy work of finding the places of agreement, sometimes shifting ever so slightly to hopefully create something better in the end! I'm very glad to be working with you all. I also want to recognize that the nature of our conversations will likely change given the shift to a public forum. We had created a space that allowed us to share some personal thoughts and stories, be vulnerable and in doing so created connections. We were laying the

foundation for the work ahead and I am grateful for all of you to engage so fully in the past few meetings. I'm excited! We will move forward and publicly display a model of collaboration, respect and discourse that will help our students and community.

Critical Race Theory

- [Paula Groves Price](#)

Summary

This is an advance summary of a forthcoming article in the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education. Please check back later for the full article.

Race has historically been, and continues to be, a significant issue in all aspects of American society. In the field of education, racial inequality is prominent in the areas of access, opportunity, and outcomes. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a framework that offers researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers a race-conscious approach to understanding educational inequality and structural racism to find solutions that lead to greater justice. Placing race at the center of analysis, Critical Race Theory scholars interrogate policies and practices that are taken for granted to uncover the overt and covert ways that racist ideologies, structures, and institutions create and maintain racial inequality.

In the field of education, CRT is a helpful tool for analyzing policy issues such as school funding, segregation, language policies, discipline policies, and testing and accountability policies. It is also helpful for critically examining the larger issues of epistemology and knowledge production, which are reflected in curriculum and pedagogy. As education is one of the major institutions of knowledge production and dissemination, CRT scholars often push the field to critically examine the master or dominant narratives reproduced in schools and the counter-narratives that are silenced. CRT is a theoretical framework that provides education researchers, policy makers, and practitioners with critical lenses to deconstruct oppressive policies and practices and to construct more emancipatory systems for racial equity and justice.