

LEARNING FROM SMALL NUMBERS: THEORY-INFORMED INSIGHTS ON GENDER AND RACE

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Acknowledgement of Territory

Purdue is on the unceded territory of the Peoria, Miami and Potawatomi people.



Opinion

Ask Who Paid for America's Universities

Cornell, Virginia Tech, Ohio State and many more were created with wealth stolen from Indigenous people.

By Tristan Ahtone and Robert Lee

Mr. Ahtone is the editor in chief of The Texas Observer and a member of the Kiowa Tribe. Dr. Lee is a lecturer in American history at the University of Cambridge.

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“what we can learn from small data sets and building the evidence base of research related to increasing the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women of color in tech.”

Disclaimers

1. “No More White Saviors” by Aura Bogado (Yes! Magazine, 10/24/17)

“preguntando caminamos”

No More White Saviors: Let People Lead Their Own Movements

Activists who come to command without listening to those they’re ostensibly helping produce a devastation that makes the project of systemic oppression that much easier.

Save



The White savior: a person of privilege who picks a cause they know little to nothing about and insists on solutions that inevitably cause more harm than good.

YES! Illustration by Fran Murphy.

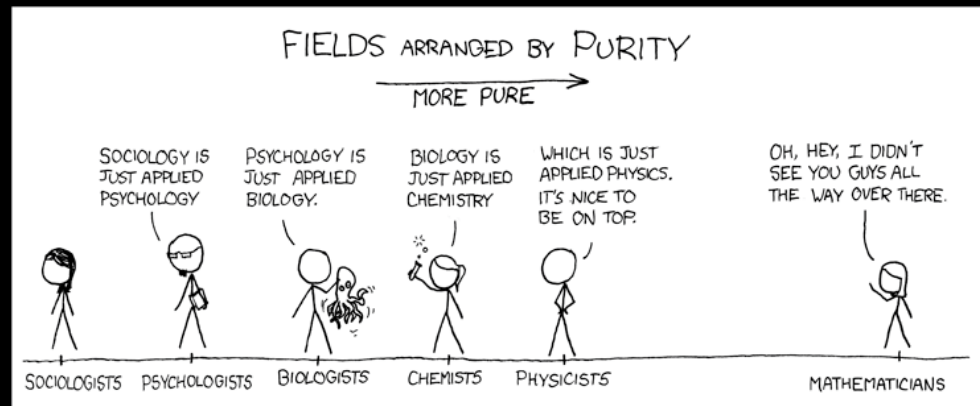
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Disclaimers

1. “No More White Saviors” by Aura Bogado (Yes! Magazine, 10/24/17)

“preguntando caminamos”

2. Engineering is not “tech”



“Purity” <https://xkcd.com/435/>

Map

3 questions we need to ask.

1. How race and gender are baked into social structures?
2. How the system makes it hard to think about them together?
3. When, how, and why the default groups are let off the hook?

1. How race and gender are baked into social structures

Some setup

1. How race and gender are baked into social structures

1997 OMB Standards

RACE

White – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

Black or African American – A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

American Indian or Alaska Native – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.

Asian – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

ETHNICITY

Hispanic origin

Not of Hispanic origin

1. How race and gender are baked into social structures

Omi and Winant (2015)

race: "a concept, a representation or signification of identity that refers to different types of human bodies, to the perceived corporeal and phenotypic markers of difference, and the meaning and social practices that are ascribed to these differences." (p.111)

racial projects - "simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial identities and meanings, and an effort to organize and distribute resources (economic, political, cultural) along racial lines." (p. 125)

racial formation - "The theory of racial formation suggests that society is suffused with racial projects, large and small, to which all are subjected." (p. 127)

1. How race and gender are baked into social structures

Muddled survey categories of “gender”

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other

AND

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Trans

- ☐ Heterosexual
- ☐ Gay/Lesbian/Homosexual
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Transgender

Sex “vs” gender



1. How race and gender are baked into social structures

Connell and Pearse (2015)

Gender: “the structure of social relations that centers on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes.” (p. 11)

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2. How the system makes it hard to think about them together

Intersectionality theory

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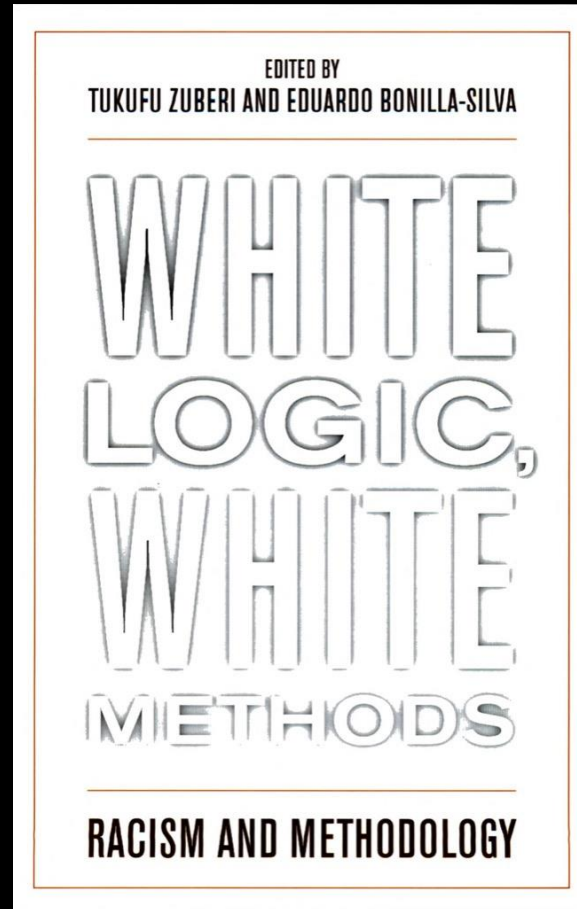
Intersectionality theory (from Crenshaw)

No matter the direction (racial discrimination, gender discrimination), Black women were not receiving legal justice.

Notice how system is set up to make it hard to think about gender and race together.

2. How the system makes it hard to think about them together

Intersectionality theory (from Crenshaw)



2. How the system makes it hard to think about them together

Intersectionality theory (operationalized by Hill Collins & Bilge)

Long history before Crenshaw

Core ideas: social inequality, power, relationality, social context, complexity, social justice

Domains of power: interpersonal, disciplinary, cultural, structural

3. When, how, and why the default groups are let off the hook

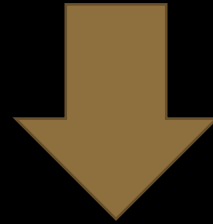
Doing some noticing

- Research on "broadening participation" focuses on minoritized groups.
- Researchers still write in the passive voice, despite decades of critique.

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Our object of analytical focus is on
women of colour
implying they are the producers of their own marginalization

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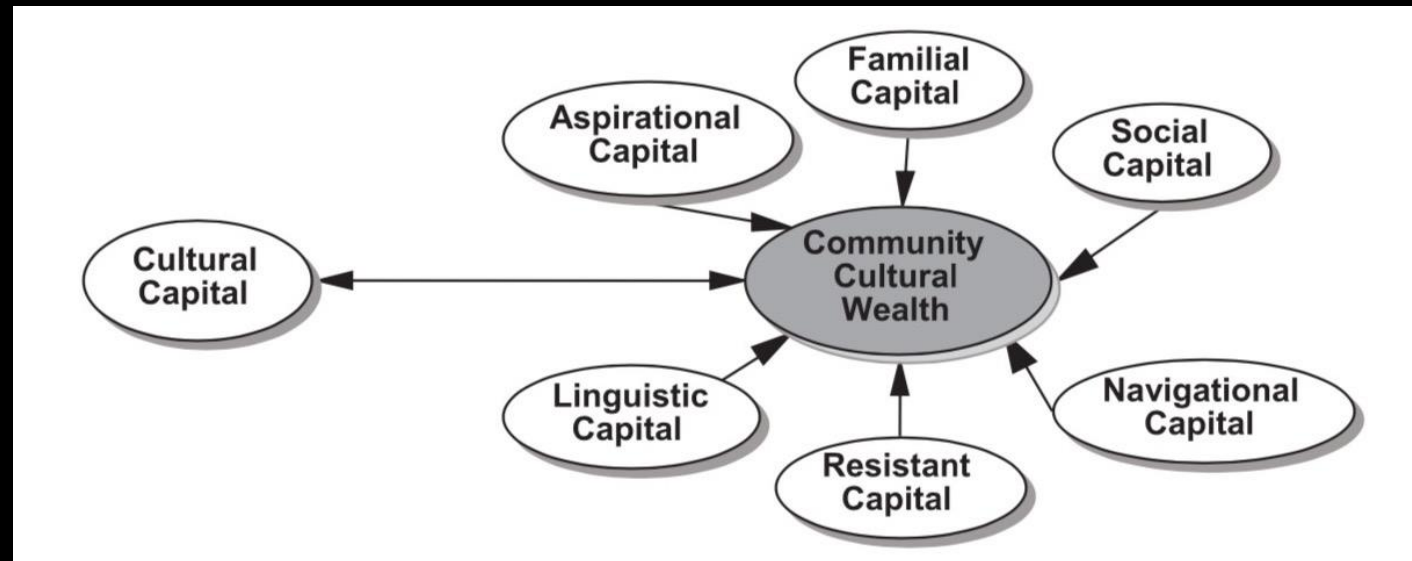
Complicating this claim

- It is important for contemporary researchers to un-erase the voices of people who previous researchers had erased, ignored, devalued.

3. When, how, and why the default groups are let off the hook

Complicating this claim

- It is important for contemporary researchers to un-erase the voices of people who previous researchers had erased, ignored, devalued.
- It is important to use asset-based (or anti-deficit-based) theories to amplify the value that minoritized people bring (or could bring when allowed) to STEM



Yosso, 2005

Asset based theories



3. When, how, and why the default groups are let off the hook

But on the other hand...

- We need to hold accountable the groups that produce oppressive environments for marginalized folks for that continued production → the groups who frame their experience as "normal," "default," "regular" etc.



Art Brann in the Temple Newsby
Kara Springer. Photo by Khanya

3. When, how, and why the default groups are let off the hook

“Dominant groups” is a difficult concept

- **Masculinity theory:** Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) – “hegemonic masculinity” as oppression through consent, hierarchy of masculinities, compulsory heterosexism, and needing to rethink geography of masculinities, dynamics of masculinities.
- **Critical White Studies:** how is Whiteness produced, how has it changed over time, how does it frame itself as “normal” or “default”?
- **Crip theory and Queer theory:** how stable or unstable is identity, how fluid? How does what is produced as “normalcy” itself produce impairment?

Theories about the production of
dominance and normalcy



3. When, how, and why the default groups are let off the hook

Some things to start with

- Acknowledge and incorporate in our analyses the fact that all participant populations always experience gender and race, not just minoritized people.
 - Majority groups always there to help us analyse how gender and race function to minoritize other groups.
- Eschew passive voice in our own writing and notice where participants use it
 - In whose service is that avoidance?

Back to the map

3 questions we need to ask.

1. how race and gender are baked into social structures
2. how the system makes it hard to think about them together
3. when, how, and why the default groups are let off the hook

So what?

Snappy version

1. How do systems produce gender and race as relevant in tech?
2. How have we produced systems that make it hard to look at gender and race together?
3. How do we stop letting majority groups off the hook for their reproduction of those systems?

PREGUNTANDO CAMINAMOS

Thank you for your time today.

Alice Pawley |

| @alicepawley

Sex "vs" gender
Quant crit
Asset based theories



Ruling relations
Theories about the production of
dominance and normalcy