

Introduction to Critical Race Theory

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1. *The intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination.* CRT starts from the premise that race and racism are central, endemic, permanent and a fundamental part of defining and explaining how US society functions (Bell, 1992; Russell, 1992). CRT acknowledges the inextricable layers of racialized subordination based on gender, class, immigration status, surname, phenotype, accent and sexuality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1993; Valdes *et al.*, 2002).
2. *The challenge to dominant ideology.* CRT challenges White privilege and refutes the claims that educational institutions make toward objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality and equal opportunity. CRT challenges notions of 'neutral' research or 'objective' researchers and exposes deficit-informed research that silences, ignores and distorts epistemologies of People of Color (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2000). CRT argues that these traditional claims act as a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in US society (Bell, 1987; Calmore, 1992; Solórzano, 1997).
3. *The commitment to social justice.* CRT is committed to social justice and offers a liberatory or transformative response to racial, gender and class oppression (Matsuda, 1991). Such a social justice research agenda exposes the 'interest-convergence' (Bell, 1987) of civil rights 'gains' in education and works toward the elimination of racism, sexism and poverty, as well as the empowerment of People of Color and other subordinated groups (Freire, 1970, 1973; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).
4. *The centrality of experiential knowledge.* CRT recognizes that the experiential knowledge of People of Color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing and teaching about racial subordination (Delgado Bernal, 2002). CRT draws explicitly on the lived experiences of People of Color by including such methods as storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, *cuentos*, *testimonios*, chronicles and narratives (Bell, 1987, 1992, 1996; Delgado, 1989, 1993, 1995a, b, 1996; Espinoza, 1990; Olivas, 1990; Montoya, 1994; Carrasco, 1996; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, 2001, 2002a; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Villalpando, 2003).
5. *The transdisciplinary perspective.* CRT goes beyond disciplinary boundaries to analyze race and racism within both historical and contemporary contexts, drawing on scholarship from ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, law, psychology, film, theatre and other fields (Delgado, 1984, 1992; Olivas, 1990; Gotanda, 1991; Harris, 1994; Garcia, 1995; Gutiérrez-Jones, 2001).