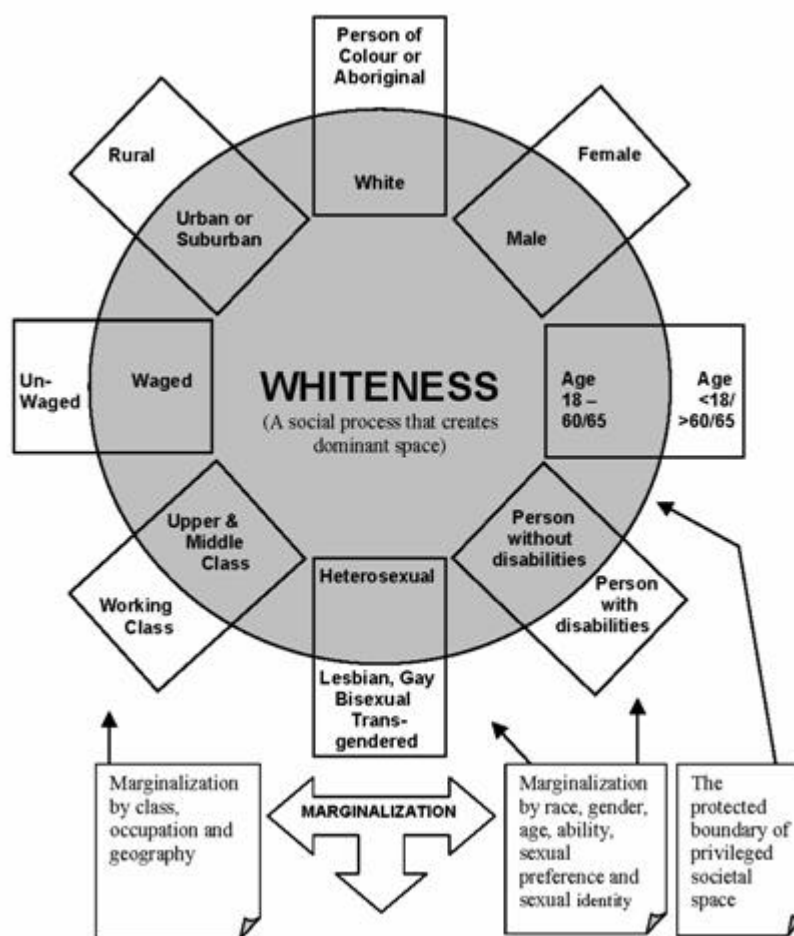


A Spatial Representation of Whiteness

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This figure presents a spatial representation of the relationship between domination and oppression and shows how “mainstream” societal space is occupied by locations of privilege and “minority” locations are pushed to the social margins. The oppression shown in this Figure is accumulative, with the more marginalized sites one occupies resulting in being pushed further from the centre. For instance, a lesbian woman of colour living with a disability is likely to experience more marginality and other forms of oppression than a heterosexual White male with a disability. Just as sites of oppression interlock, so do sites of dominance and privilege with prime societal space monopolized by the male, heterosexual, White, able, middleclass, professional/managerial locations that situate themselves as epitomizing the Canadian social fabric.



Although this Figure aids social analysis, it does not empirically represent society—it is abstracted from select characteristics of society. The Figure must not be taken literally because to do so would oversimplify and reduce the dynamics of oppression into a clash of binary opposites. Such reduction is problematic because although power is held within the locations shown in the centre of the Figure, this is not universally so and the ways oppression operates are much more fluid and complex. The Figure is further complicated by its categories being social constructions. “Race,” for instance, is a category that gains meaning only because of the oppression experienced as a result of racialization.

Consequently, the significance of the locations shown in the Figure do not lie in an “essential” difference within the categories listed, but in the power held by the dominant groups to define specific locations as “different” and marginalize those so defined. The Figure, therefore, does not provide a map of society that can be used to identify individuals who oppress and others who are oppressed, but it provides a broad topography of Canada’s social landscape that reveals the socially constructed contours that shape oppression.

Figure based on Dumbrill, G. C. (2003). Child welfare: AOP’s nemesis? In W. Shera (Ed.), *Emerging perspectives on anti-oppressive practice* (pp. 101-119). Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press.