Reflection on My Work as a Critical Theorist

At the core of my academic journey is a deep engagement with critical theory, which serves as both a lens and a compass for my work. It informs how I see the world, how I ask questions, and how I seek to contribute to a more just and equitable society. My research on radicalisation, extremism, Islamophobia, and race and ethnicity is not just about understanding these phenomena—it's about uncovering the structures of power and inequality that sustain them and imagining ways to dismantle them.

For me, critical theory is not a static framework, but a dynamic approach to scholarship. It pushes me to interrogate the hidden mechanisms of power, to question the taken-for-granted, and to centre the voices and experiences of those who are marginalized. It's a way of thinking that refuses to accept the status quo and instead seeks to illuminate the possibilities for transformation.

In my work, I use critical theory to critique the social, political, and cultural structures that shape the lives of individuals and communities. Whether I'm examining the systemic roots of Islamophobia, the intersections of race and ethnicity in shaping identity, or the socio-economic conditions that fuel radicalisation, I am always asking: *How do these structures operate? Who benefits from them? And how can we challenge them?*

This approach is inherently interdisciplinary. I draw on sociology, political science, psychology, and cultural studies to build a holistic understanding of the issues I study. Critical theory teaches us that social problems are interconnected, and so my work reflects that by weaving together insights from multiple fields. It's not enough to look at one piece of the puzzle; we need to see the whole picture.

A central thread in my work is the focus on marginalised communities. Critical theory compels me to centre their experiences, not as passive victims of oppression but as active agents of resistance and change. My research on race and ethnicity, for example, explores how systemic racism and ethnic hierarchies are embedded in institutions, from education to criminal justice, and how they intersect with other forms of inequality. By amplifying these voices, I aim to challenge dominant narratives and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of social reality.

But critical theory is not just about critique; it's also about hope. It's about imagining alternatives and working toward emancipation. In my research, I strive to move beyond diagnosis to action, using my findings to inform policies and practices that promote social justice and inclusion. Whether it's advocating for more equitable counter-terrorism policies or challenging the neoliberal structures that exacerbate inequality, my work is driven by a commitment to transformation.

At the same time, critical theory keeps me grounded in reflexivity. It reminds me to constantly examine my own positionality, biases, and the ethical implications of my research. This self-awareness is not just an academic exercise—it's a moral imperative. It ensures that my work remains accountable to the communities I study and serves their interests, not just my own.

In the end, my work is about liberation. It's about using the tools of critical theory to understand the world, to challenge its injustices, and to imagine a better future. It's a journey that is always evolving, always questioning, and always striving for something more. And that, to me, is the essence of critical theory—not just as a framework, but as a way of being in the world.