

Race, Class, and Gender

The Strengths and Weaknesses of
the Ideology of the Social Justice
Movement

Dr. Neil Shenvi

Acknowledgements

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Ratio Christi @ NCState

Outline

- Why study the social justice movement?
- What is social justice?
- What is 'critical theory'?
- What are the strengths of critical theory?
- What are the weaknesses of critical theory?

Why Study the Social Justice Movement?

Political relevance



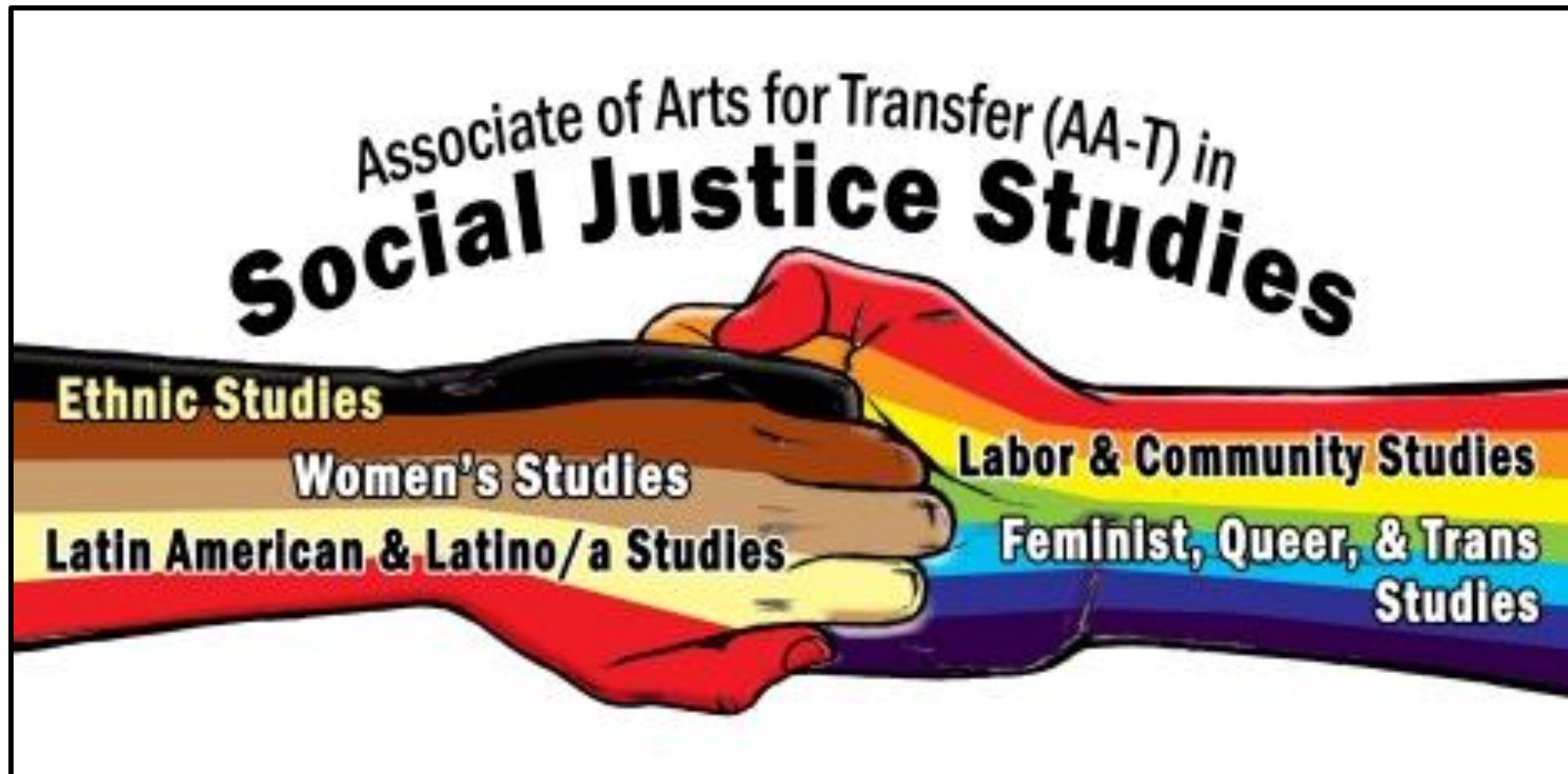
Why Study the Social Justice Movement?

Cultural relevance



Why Study the Social Justice Movement?

Ideological relevance



Why Study the Social Justice Movement?

Ideological relevance

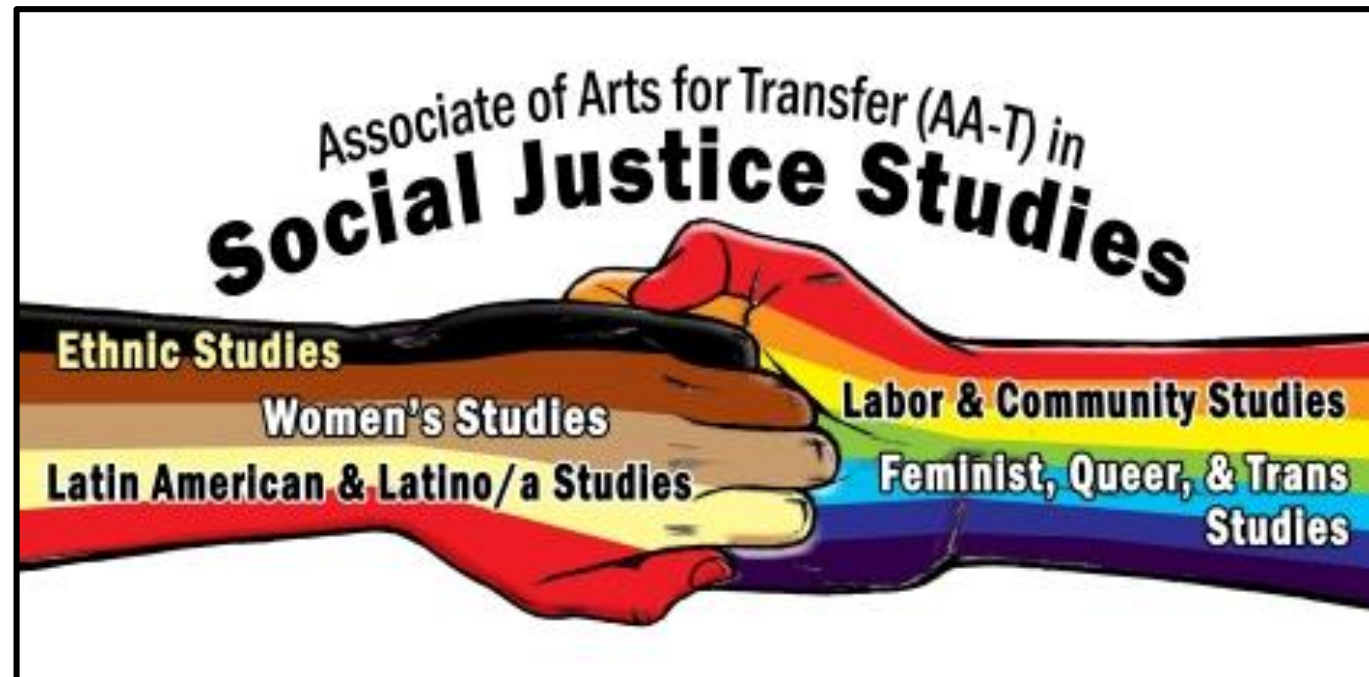
Reality Studies



Why Study the Social Justice Movement?

Ideological relevance

CRITICAL THEORY



Why Study the Social Justice Movement?

Religious relevance



Why Study the Social Justice Movement?

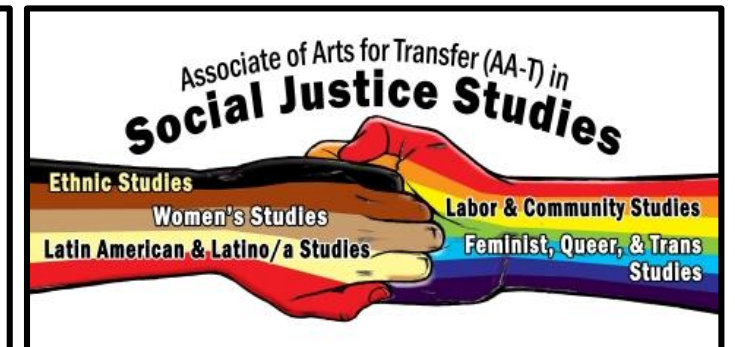
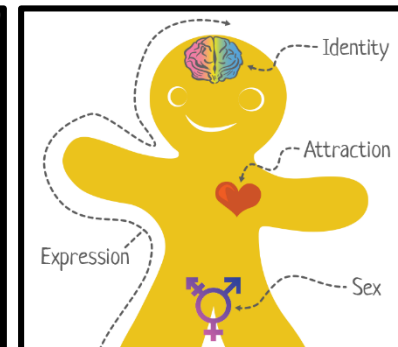
Political



Cultural



Ideological



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What is 'social justice'?

Religious social justice



"1943 Society ensures social justice by providing the conditions that allow associations and individuals to **obtain their due.**

1944 Respect for the human person considers the other "another self." It presupposes respect for the **fundamental rights** that flow from the dignity intrinsic of the person.

1945 The equality of men concerns their **dignity as persons and the rights that flow from it.**

1946 The differences among persons belong to God's plan, who wills that we should need one another. These differences should encourage charity.

1947 The equal dignity of human persons requires the effort **to reduce excessive social and economic inequalities.** It gives urgency to the elimination of sinful inequalities.

1948 Solidarity is an eminently Christian virtue. It practices the sharing of spiritual goods even more than material ones. "

– *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

What is 'social justice'?

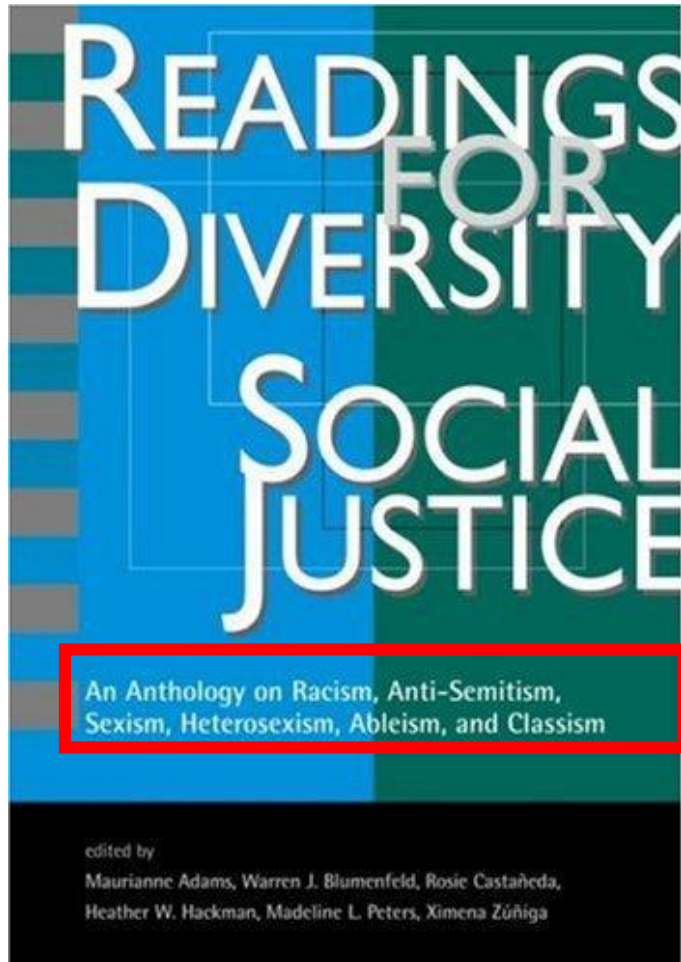
Nebulous social justice



“A cry for social justice is usually little more than a **call for goodness**; “progressive” has become a substitute for “all good things.” But sometimes the word is too vague. So if you press a self-declared progressive to say what it means, he’ll respond, eventually, with something like, “It means fighting for social justice.” If you ask, “What does ‘social justice’ mean?” you are likely to get an exasperated eye roll, *because you just don’t get it.*” – Jonah Goldberg, *National Review*

What is 'social justice'?

Secular social justice



“social justice [is] **the elimination of all forms of social oppression**” – Mary McClintock, “How to Interrupt Oppressive Behavior,” p. 483

“**Heterosexism** is the institutionalization of a heterosexual norm or standard, which establishes and perpetuates the notion that all people are or should be heterosexual, thereby privileging heterosexuals and heterosexuality, and excluding the needs, concerns, cultures, and life experiences of LGBT people.” – Blumenfeld, p. 262

“First, in considering oppression theory, the question ‘what is **sexism**?’ is addressed through a definition that combines prejudicial attitudes or beliefs with social power. Suzanne Pharr defines sexism as ‘an enforced belief in male dominance and control’ held in place by system of power and control that ultimately keep women subordinate to men. These systems of power and control take place at institutional, cultural, and individual levels.” – Hackman, p. 199

“Like other forms of oppression, **ableism** operates on individual, cultural, and institutional levels. Ableism affects those with disabilities by inhibiting their access to and power within institutional structures that fulfill basic needs, like health care, housing, government, education, religion, the media, and the legal system.” Castaneda and Peters, p. 320

What is 'social justice'?

Three influential definitions



“1943. Society ensures social justice by **providing the conditions that allow associations and individuals to obtain their due.**

1944. Respect for the human person considers the other "another self." It presupposes respect for the fundamental rights that flow from the dignity intrinsic of the person.”

– *Catechism of the Catholic Church*



“A cry for social justice is usually little more than **a call for goodness...** If you ask, “What does ‘social justice’ mean?” you are likely to get an exasperated eye roll, *because you just don’t get it.*” – Jonah Goldberg, *National Review*



“social justice [is] the **elimination of all forms of social oppression**” – Mary McClintock, “How to Interrupt Oppressive Behavior” in Adams et al. *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*

What is 'social justice'?



good
Note at good
good (good)
or desirable
news from
victims!

Secular social justice



“social justice [is] the
elimination of all forms of
social oppression” – Mary
McClintock, “How to
Interrupt Oppressive
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*Readings for Diversity and
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What is 'social justice'?

SOCIAL JUSTICE #3

=

CRITICAL THEORY

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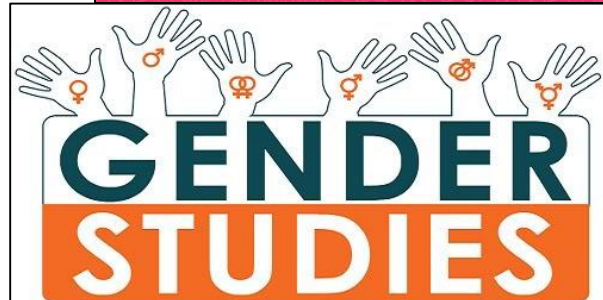
What is critical theory?

LITERARY
CRITICISM

Anthropology

Neo-Marxism

feminism



intro to
critical
race
theory

CRITICAL
PEDAGOGY

CULTURAL
STUDIES

CRITICAL THEORY

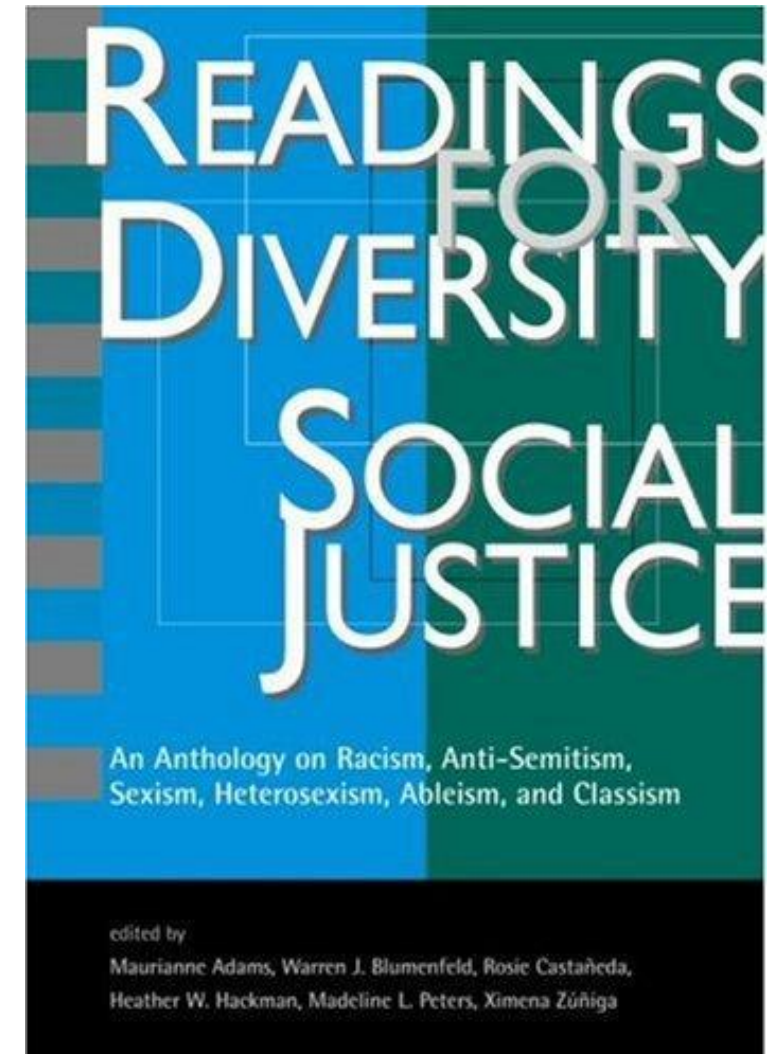
What is critical theory?

Major premises:

1. 'Oppressed' or 'oppressor'
2. Oppression through hegemonic power
3. Solidarity in oppression
4. Liberation from oppression

Minor premises:

5. 'Lived experience'
6. Guise of objectivity
7. Intersectionality



Premise #1: Individual identity is inseparable from group identity as 'oppressed' or 'oppressor'

“My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor... I was taught [wrongly] to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will” – Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege and Male Privilege,” in Andersen and Collins, *Race, Class, and Gender*, p. 72



Premise #1: Individual identity is inseparable from group identity as 'oppressed' or 'oppressor'



Liam O'Brien ✓
@VoiceOfOBrien

Follow

2018 is the year terrible old white men
scramble to protect terrible old white men.

11:33 PM - 29 Sep 2018



(((Christine Fair))) ✓
@CChristineFair

Follow

Look at thus chorus of entitled white men
justifying a serial rapist's arrogated
entitlement.
All of them deserve miserable deaths while
feminists laugh as they take their last gasps.
Bonus: we castrate their corpses and feed
them to swine? Yes.

© Dr. C. Christine Fair/youtube

19 hours ago



Michael Avenatti ✓ @MichaelAvenatti · Sep 28

These **old white men** like @tedcruz will say anything. They are now claiming that Mark Judge can't testify publicly because he suffers from depression, etc. As the below shows, this is a complete lie. These misogynists must not know there is something called Google.

*Mark G.
Judge*

3.7K 10K **27K**



Shane Claiborne @ShaneClaiborne · Sep 29

As **white men** move from an **entitled** majority and our country is increasingly led by women and people of color, a future without nuclear weapons feels within reach. A world where the weapons of colonialism and subjugation are confined to museums seems plausible. Help us Lord.

97 162 **1.4K**

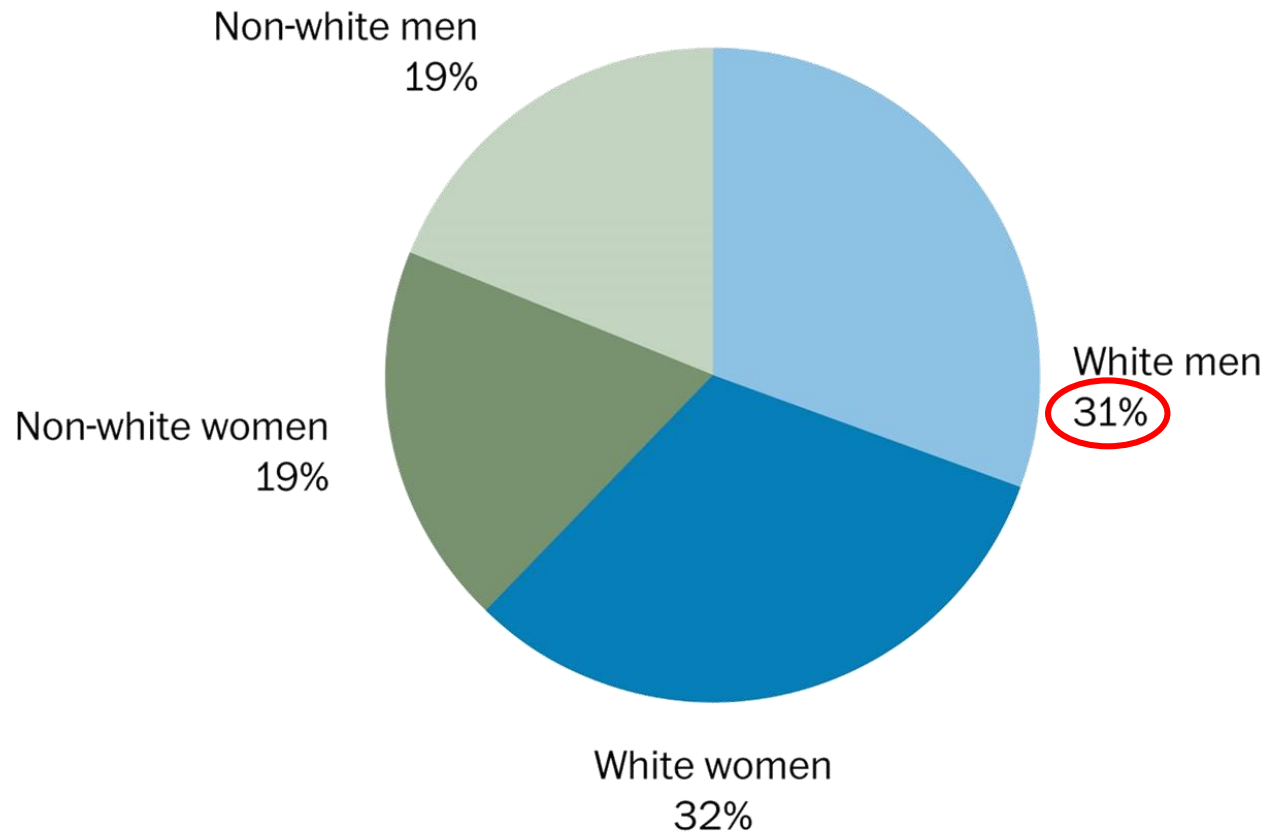
Premise #2: Oppressor groups subjugate oppressed groups through the exercise of hegemonic power

“In any relationship between groups that define one another (men/women, able-bodied/disabled, young/old), the dominant group is the group that is valued more highly. Dominant groups set the norms by which the minoritized group is judged. Dominant groups have greater access to the resources of society and benefit from the existence of the inequality” (p. 25) “Hegemony refers to the control of the ideology of a society. The dominant group maintains power by imposing their ideology on everyone.” (p. 50) – Sensoy and DiAngelo, *Is Everyone Really Equal?*



Premise #2: Oppressor groups subjugate oppressed groups through the exercise of hegemonic power

Example: U.S. Demographics



Premise #3: Different oppressed groups find solidarity in the experience of oppression

“I, as a Japanese-American, feel a kinship to both Blacks and Native Americans that I do not feel with white Americans. It... comes from our histories as victims of injustice” – David Mura, in Andersen and Collins, *Race, Class, and Gender*, p. 14

“I realized I could be beaten on the street for being a [lesbian]. If my sister’s being beaten because she’s Black, it’s pretty much the same principle.. The connection is blatant...” Cherrie Moraga, in Andersen and Collins, *Race, Class, and Gender*, p. 23



Premise #3: Different oppressed groups find solidarity in the experience of oppression

Example: sustainability.ncsu.edu/



Premise #4: Our fundamental moral duty is freeing groups from oppression

“These political times call for renewed dialogue about and commitment to the politics of liberation...Liberation requires a struggle against discrimination based on race, class, gender, sexual identity, ableism and age”
– Suzanne Pharr, “Reflections on Liberation,” in Adams et. al., *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*, p. 450



Premise #4: Our fundamental moral duty is freeing groups from oppression

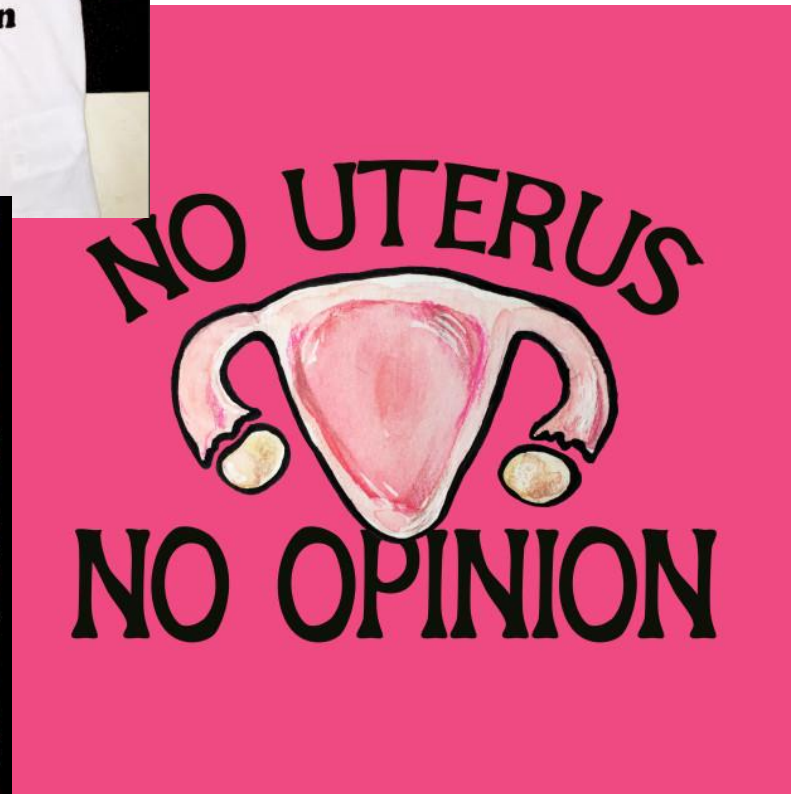
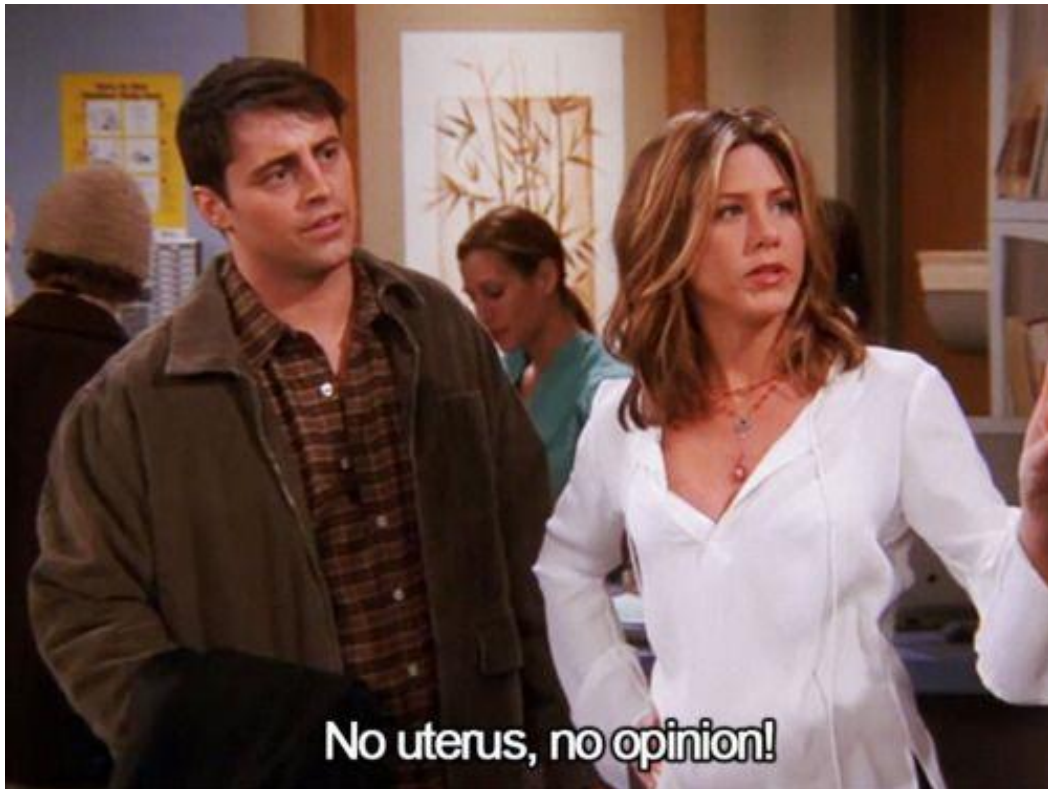


Premise #5: 'Lived experience' is more important than objective evidence in understanding oppression

“The idea that objectivity is best reached only through rational thought is a specifically Western and masculine way of thinking – one that we will challenge throughout this book.” – Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins, “Reconstructing Knowledge,” in Anderson and Collins, *Race, Class, and Gender*, p. 4-5

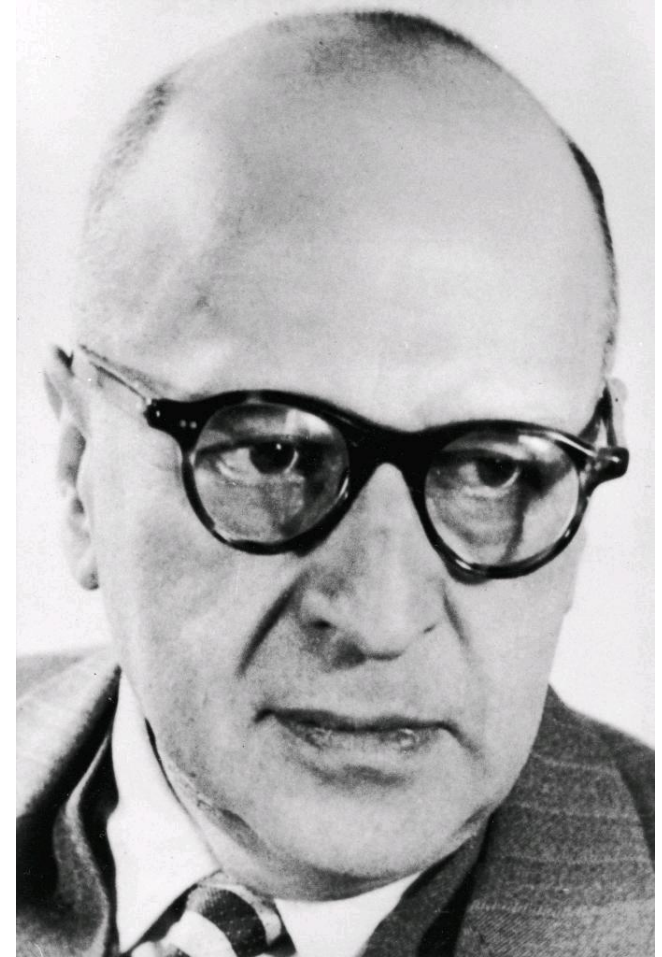


Premise #5: 'Lived experience' is more important than objective evidence in understanding oppression



Premise #6: Oppressor groups hide their oppression under the guise of objectivity

“Other [non-critical] forms of thought were seen as affirmative of the existing order in spite of their self-proclaimed neutrality and objectivity... Social interests were hidden within the philosophical discourse.” Stephen Bronner, *Critical Theory*, p. 23



Premise #6: Oppressors groups hide their oppression under the guise of objectivity

Glaciers, gender, and science

A feminist glaciology framework for global environmental change research

Mark Carey¹

M Jackson

Alessandro Antonello

Jaclyn Rushing

University of Oregon, USA

Mark Carey, Robert D. Clark Honors College, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, USA. Email: carey@uoregon.edu

Abstract

Glaciers are key icons of climate change and global environmental change. However, the relationships among gender, science, and glaciers – particularly related to epistemological questions about the production of glaciological knowledge – remain understudied. This paper thus proposes a feminist glaciology framework with four key components: 1) knowledge producers; (2) gendered science and knowledge; (3) systems of scientific domination; and (4) alternative representations of glaciers. Merging feminist postcolonial science studies and feminist political ecology, the feminist glaciology framework generates robust analysis of gender, power, and epistemologies in dynamic social-ecological systems, thereby leading to more just and equitable science and human-ice interactions.

[feminist glaciology](#)

[feminist political ecology](#)

[feminist postcolonial science studies](#)

[folk glaciology](#)

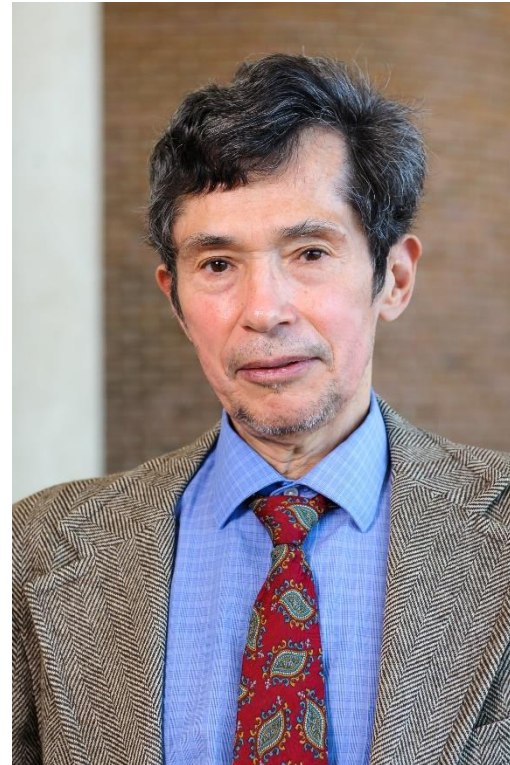
[glacier impacts](#)

[glaciers and society](#)

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Premise #7: Individuals at the intersection of different oppressed groups experience oppression in a unique way

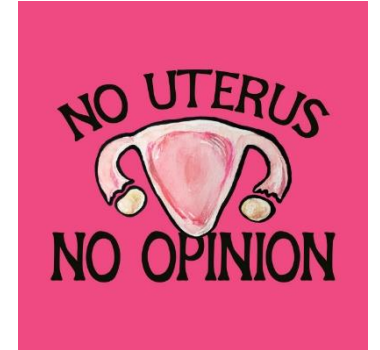
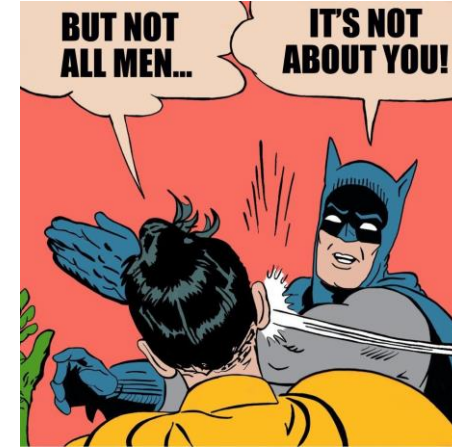
“Imagine a black woman [who may be] a single working mother... She experiences, potentially, not only multiple forms of oppression but ones unique to her and to others like her.” – Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, p. 59



Premise #7: Individuals at the intersection of different oppressed groups experience oppression in a unique way



Critical theory is an important and influential ideology in today's culture



Glaciers, gender, and science A feminist glaciology framework for global environmental change research

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Strength #1. Focus on structures/systems and norms

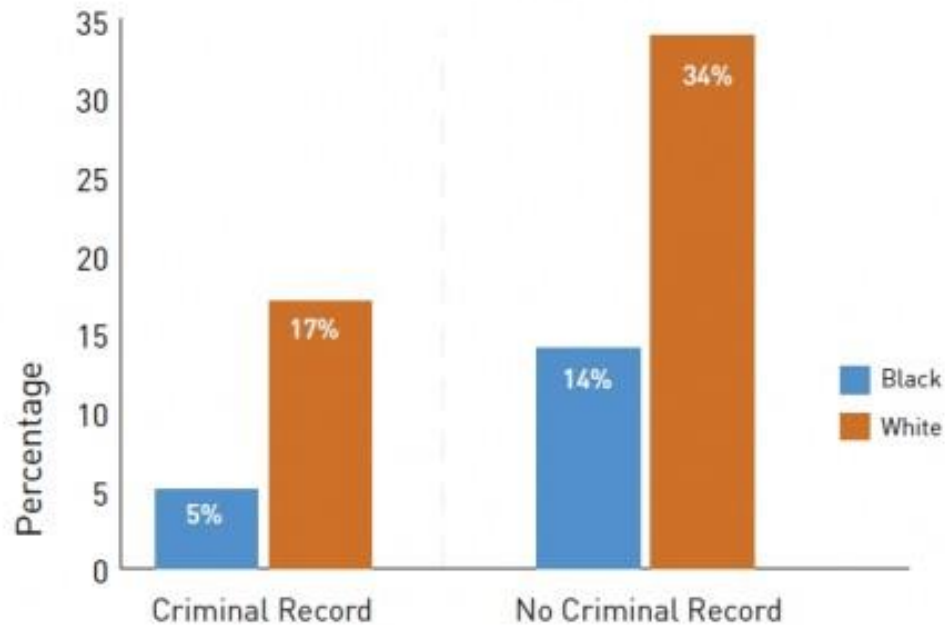
- Systemic racism – unjust systems which harm certain racial groups



Strength #1. Focus on structures/systems and norms

- White privilege – unearned advantages that whites have over people of color, *all other things being equal*

Fig. 9. Racial Impact of a Criminal Record on Interview Callbacks, 2003



Source: Devah Pager, "The Mark of a Criminal Record", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 108, No. 5 (March 2003), Figure 6, p. 958.

Mean callback rate by potential employers, by racial soundingness of names



Source: National Bureau of Economic Research

THE HUFFINGTON POST

Strength #1. Focus on structures/systems and norms

WARNING: DEFINITIONS MATTER

Strength #2. Emphasis on the sinfulness of oppression

Old Testament:

- “Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.” – Is. 1:17
- “Do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.” – Zech. 7:20

New Testament:

- “Love your neighbor as yourself.” – Mark 12:30
- “Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts” – James 5:4

Strength #3. Recognition of the noetic effects of power



Strength #4. Desire to give voice to the marginalized.



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Weakness #1: Not everything can be reduced to power dynamics

“Christine Delphy (1984), for example, describes **marriage as a class relation in which women’s labor benefits men without comparable remuneration**” – Young, “Five Faces of Oppression in Adams’ et al. *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*, p. 39



Weakness #1: Not everything can be reduced to power dynamics

- “most of us were **oppressed as children through the impact of adultism**” – Thomson, “Can White Heterosexual Men Understand Oppression?” in Adams’ et al. *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*, p. 479
- “**Children are ... being considered helpless, dependent, and cute** - creatures to be cherished and taken care of, but not full human beings to be deeply respected and **trusted with significant power. They experience 10-15 years of unpaid labor and brainwashing in our current form of education.**”
 - Blood, Tuttle, and Lakey in “Understanding and Fighting Sexism: a Call to Men” in Anderson and Collins’ *Race, Class, and Gender*, p. 139-140



Weakness #1: Not everything can be reduced to power dynamics

- Truth is not reducible to power.
- Oppressors can make true claims.
- An oppressed person can make false claims.



Weakness #2: Power is context-dependent and person-dependent

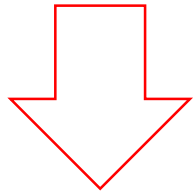


Weakness #2: Power is context- and person-dependent

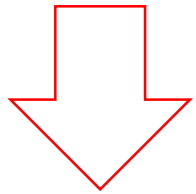


Weakness #3: 'Lived experience' is not always a reliable guide to objective, generalizable truth

"As a woman, I have **personally experienced** gender discrimination, sexism, and even sexual violence."



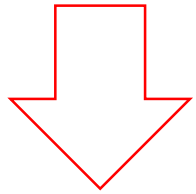
Gender discrimination, sexism, and sexual violence against women are **objectively rampant** in our culture.



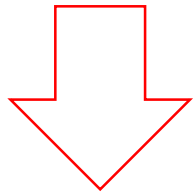
We **should** dismantle the Patriarchy.

Weakness #3: 'Lived experience' is not always a reliable guide to objective, generalizable truth

"As a woman, I have **never personally experienced** gender discrimination, sexism, or sexual violence."



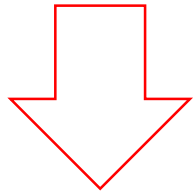
Gender discrimination, sexism, and sexual violence against women **do not exist** in our culture.



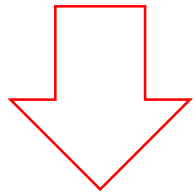
We **should reject the idea** of the Patriarchy.

Weakness #3: 'Lived experience' is not always a reliable guide to objective, generalizable truth

"As a mother, I have **personally experienced** the damage that vaccines did to my child."



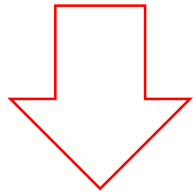
Vaccines are **objectively dangerous** to children.



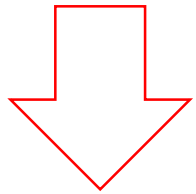
We **should** stop using vaccines.

Weakness #3: 'Lived experience' is not always a reliable guide to objective, generalizable truth

"As a cult leader, I have **personally experienced** the voice of God in my life."



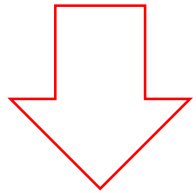
God is **objectively speaking** to me.



You **should** come live in my compound and prepare for Armageddon.

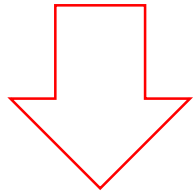
Weakness #3: 'Lived experience' is not always a reliable guide to objective, generalizable truth

Personal experience



Interpretation / Extrapolation

Objective truth



Analysis

Prescriptive solution



Weakness #4: critical theory is itself a hegemonic discourse that creates power differentials



Weakness #4: critical theory is itself a hegemonic discourse that creates power differentials

Hi Jane,

First off, your premise is wrong. The wage gap is very real. So the reason why you are having this problem is because you will not find any sources that state this.

The way the wage gap works largely today is through the glass ceiling.

Perhaps you want to write your paper on the glass ceiling. You need to look at feminist sources on this issue. I would suggest beginning with Caroline Gatrell's book, *Embodying Women's Work*. Chapter 7 looks specifically at the glass ceiling.

Do NOT use business sources. They blame women. The reality is patriarchy.

You need to do a lot of research. Look at feminist sources on this issue. Feminists have been writing about the gender division of labour, the feminization of work, and the glass ceiling since the 1970s. There is a ton of feminist research on this topic.

Weakness #5: The oppressed and the oppressor both need forgiveness

