

Christianity and Critical Theory: Are They Compatible?

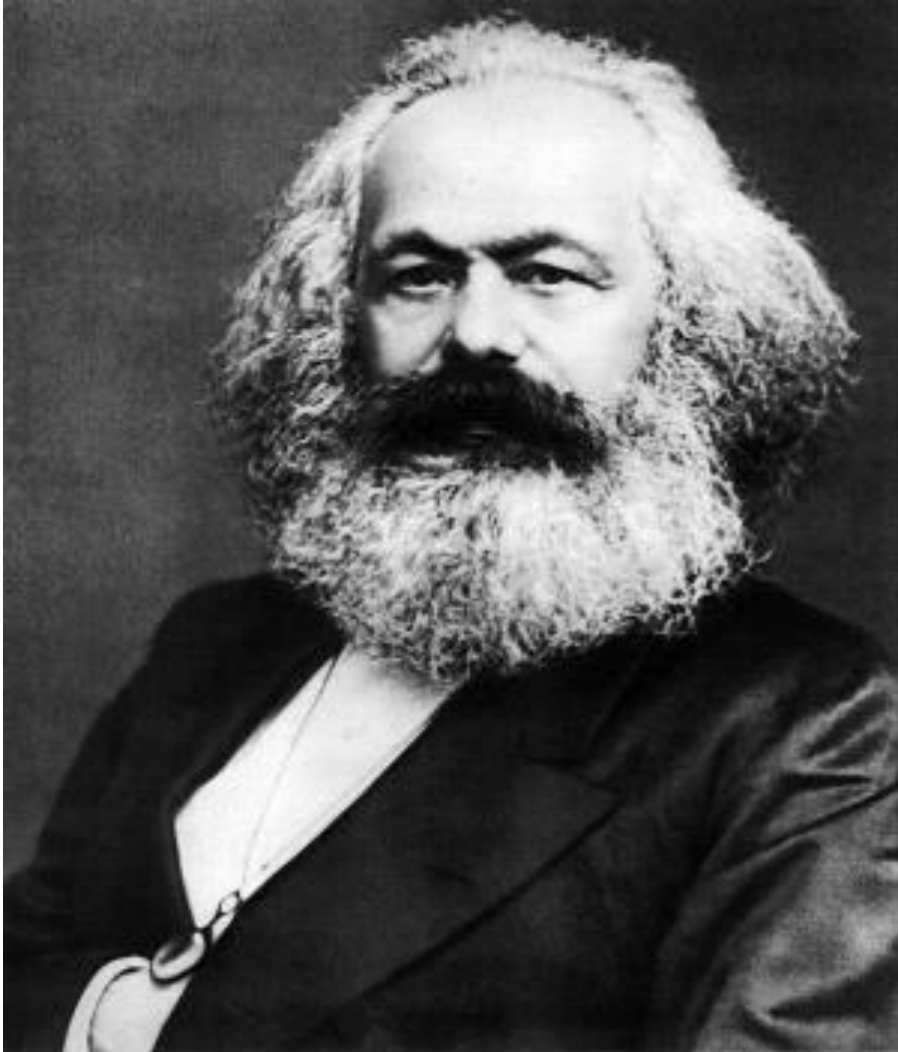
Dr. Neil Shenvi

Gospel and Social Justice Conference

Ft. Worth, TX

Nov. 9-10, 2018

The Origins of Critical Theory



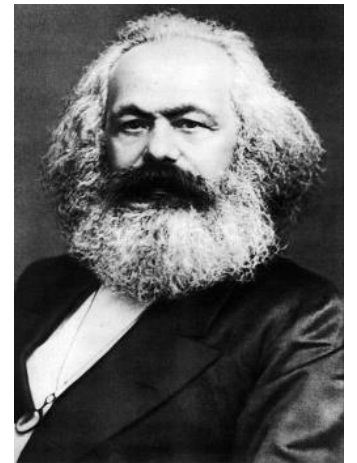
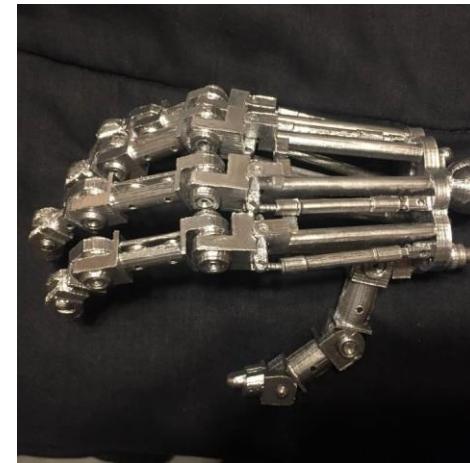
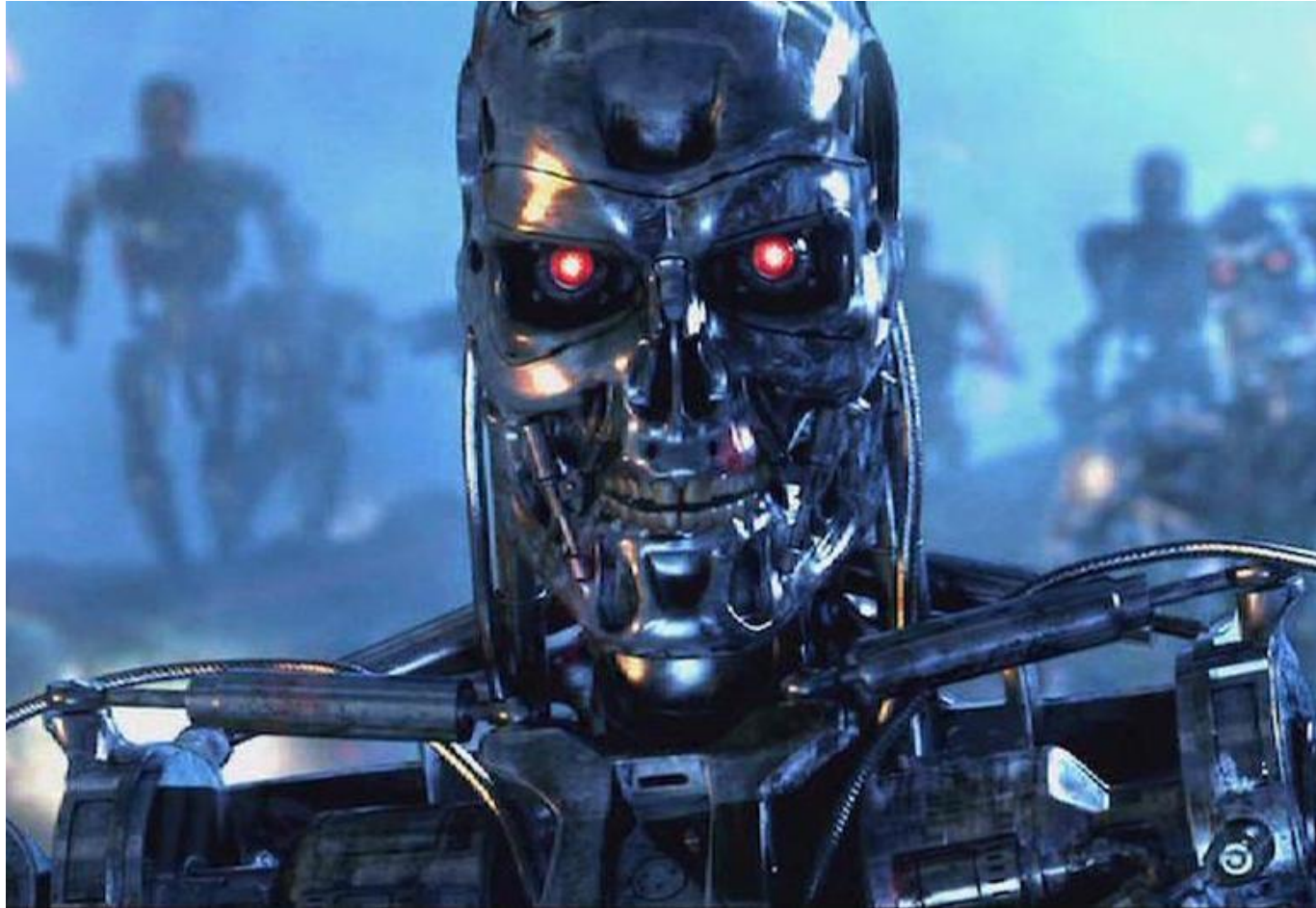
The Dark Origins of Critical Theory



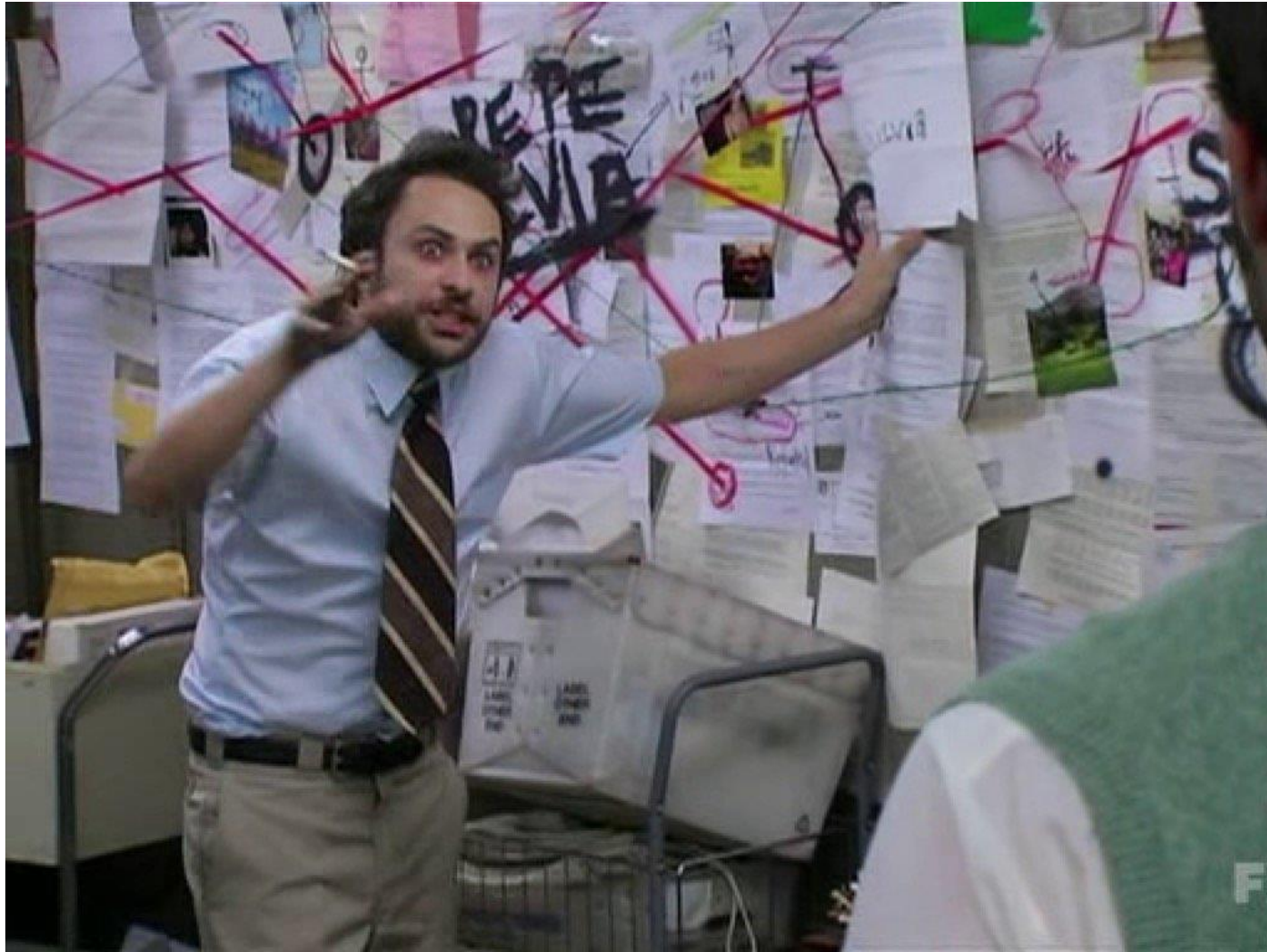
The Dark, Secret Origins of Critical Theory



The Dark, Secret, but 100% Legit and Completely Believable Origins of Critical Theory



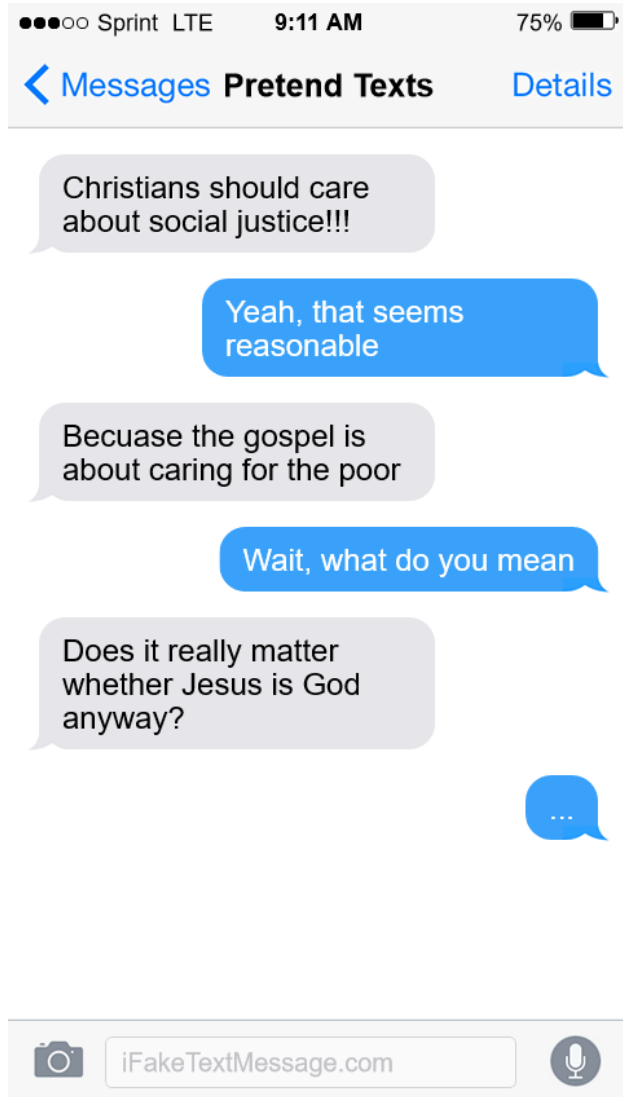
The Origins of Critical Theory



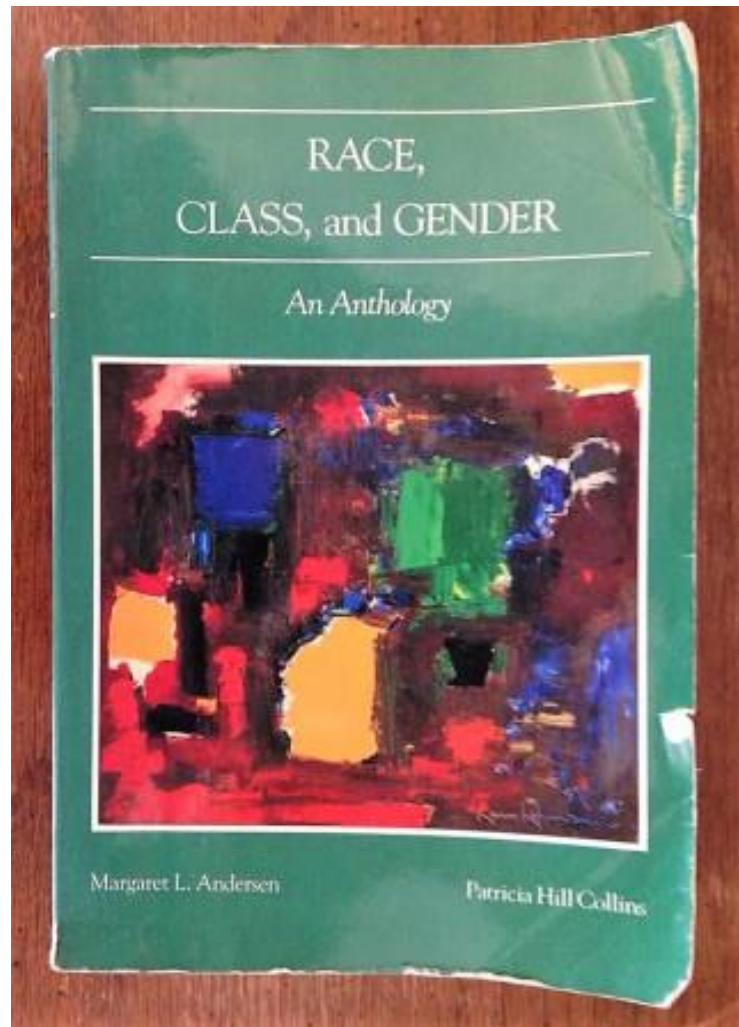
Outline

- Why should we care?
- What is critical theory?
- Conflicts between critical theory and Christianity
- Logical implications
- Advice for dialogue

Why should we care?



Why should we care?



Outline

- Why should we care?
- What is critical theory?
 - Premise 1: 'Oppressed' vs. 'oppressor'
 - Premise 2: Oppression through hegemonic power
 - Premise 3: Solidarity in oppression
 - Premise 4: Liberation as moral duty
 - Premise 5: 'Lived experience' vs. objective evidence
 - Premise 6: Guise of objectivity
 - Premise 7: Intersectionality
 - The strengths of critical theory
- Conflicts between critical theory and Christianity
- Logical implications
- Advice for dialogue

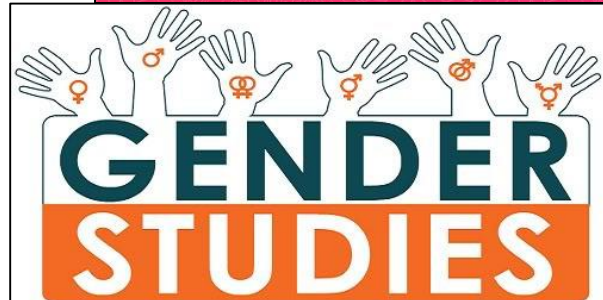
What is critical theory?

LITERARY
CRITICISM

Anthropology

Neo-Marxism

feminism



intro to
critical
race
theory

CRITICAL
PEDAGOGY

CULTURAL
STUDIES

CRITICAL THEORY

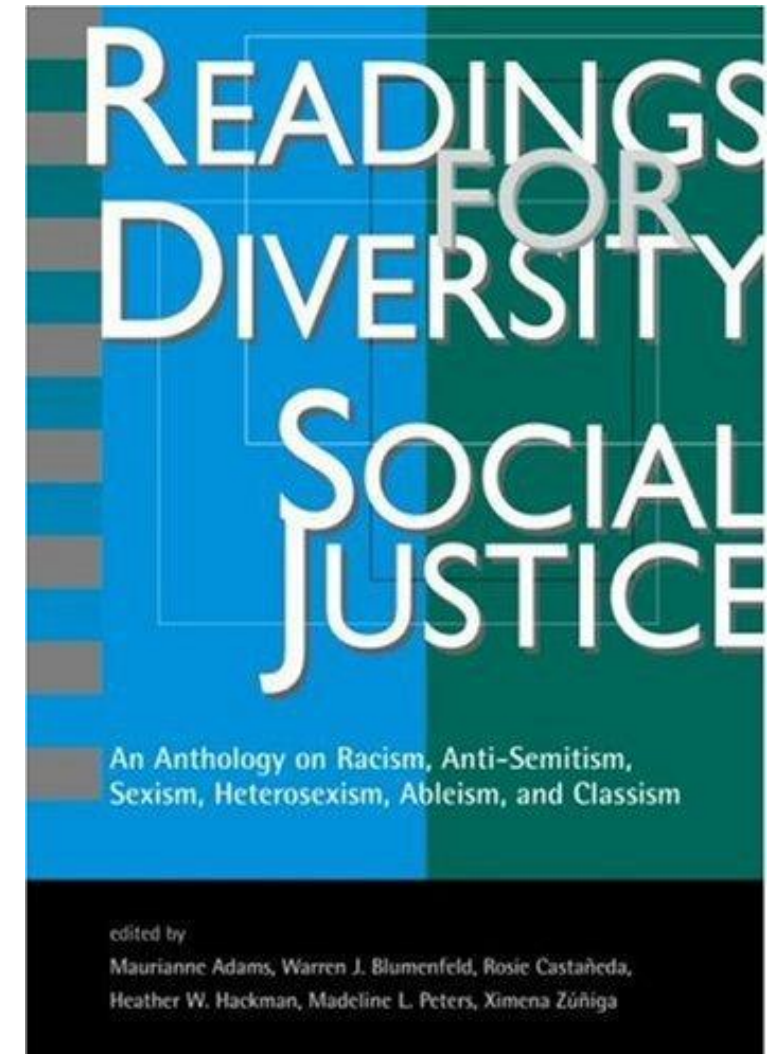
What is critical theory?

Major premises:

1. 'Oppressed' vs. 'oppressor'
2. Oppression through hegemonic power
3. Solidarity in oppression
4. Liberation as moral duty

Minor premises:

5. 'Lived experience' vs. objective evidence
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



· 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

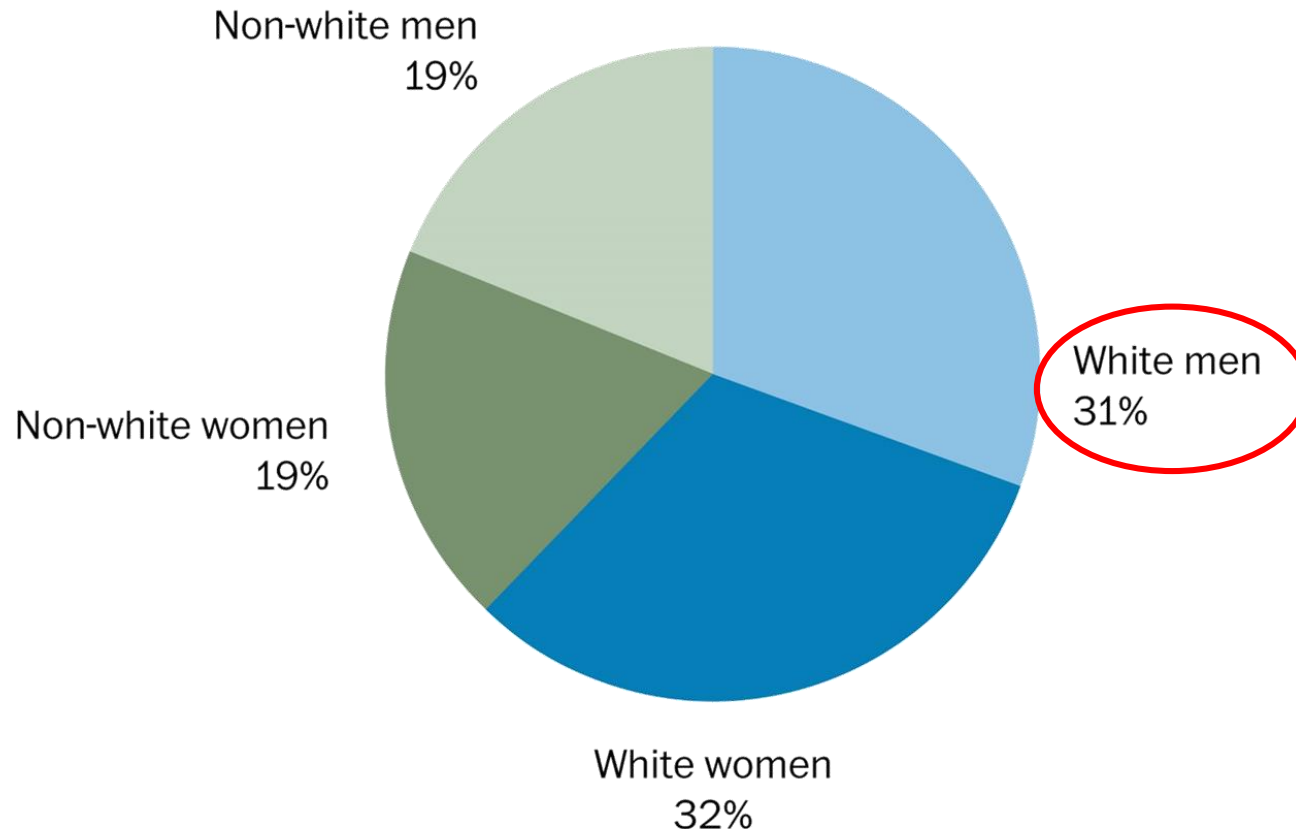
Premise #2: Oppressor groups subjugate oppressed groups through the exercise of hegemonic power

“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

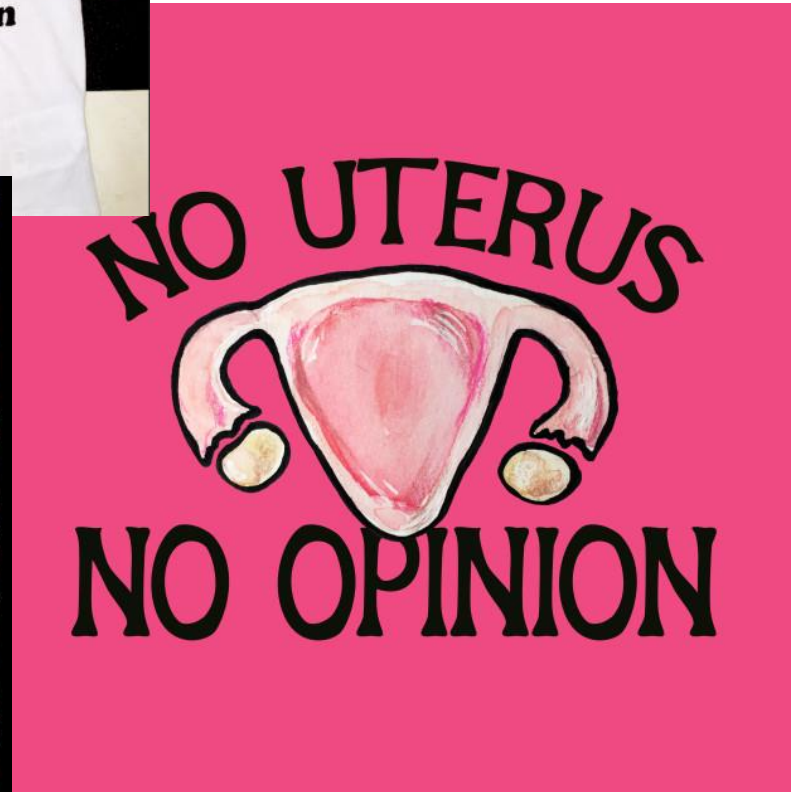
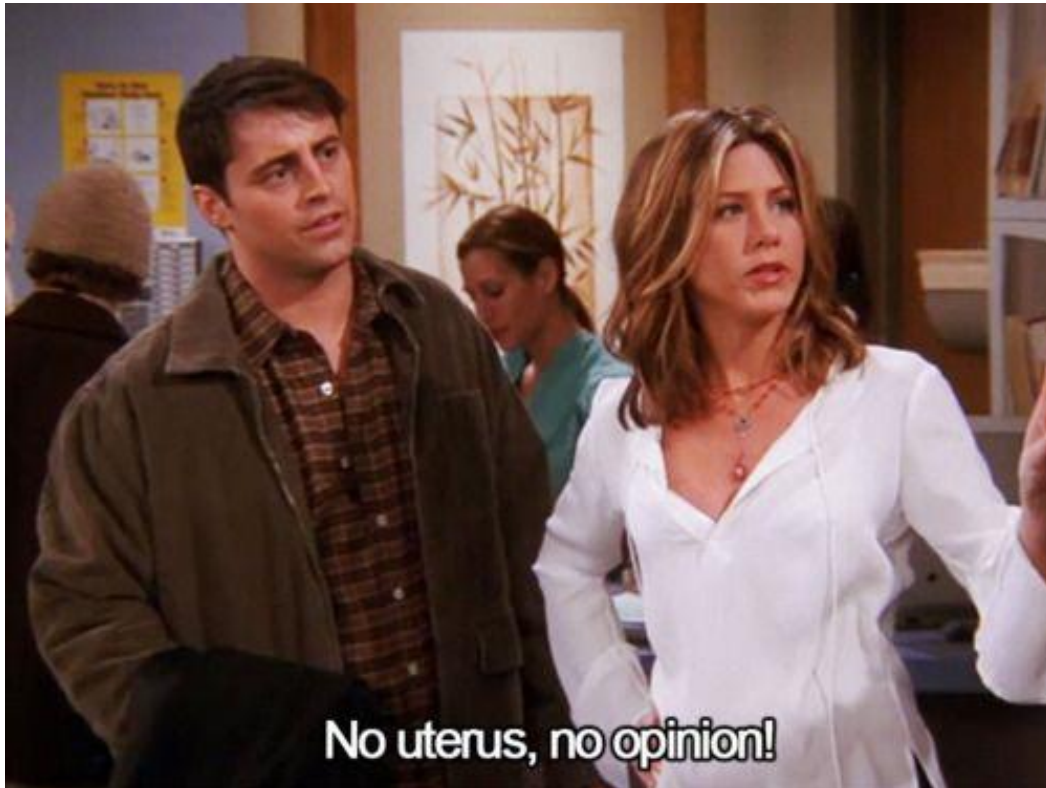


Premise #5: 'Lived experience' is more important than objective evidence in understanding oppression

“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

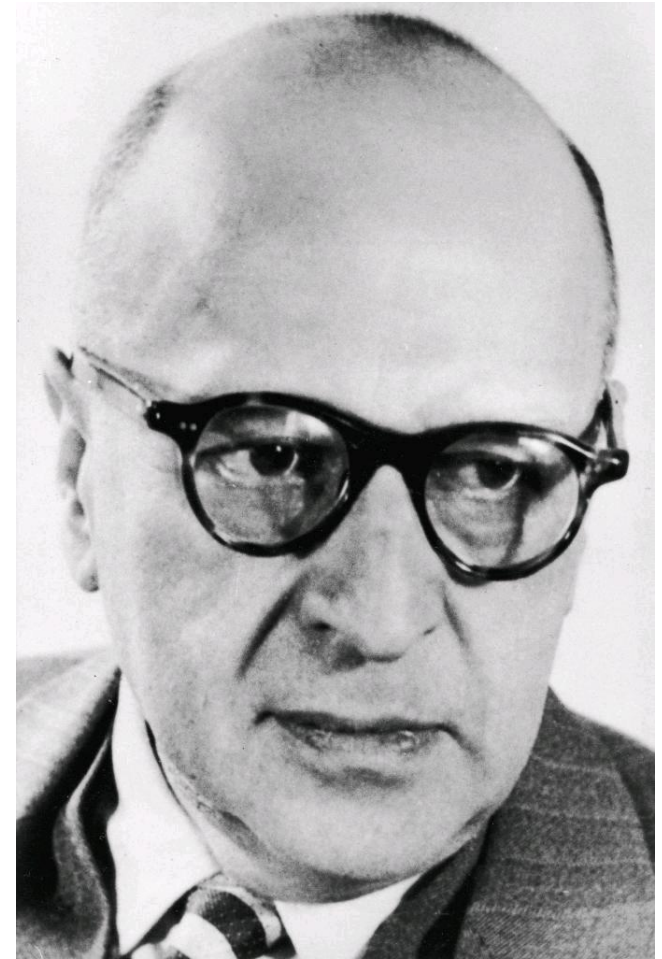


Premise #5: 'Lived experience' is more important than objective evidence in understanding oppression



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: Oppressor 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](#)

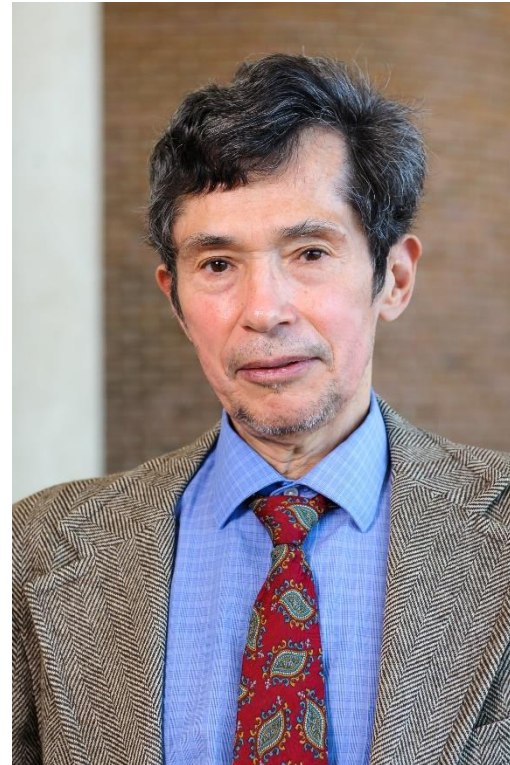
[glacier impacts](#)

[glaciers and society](#)

...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.

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

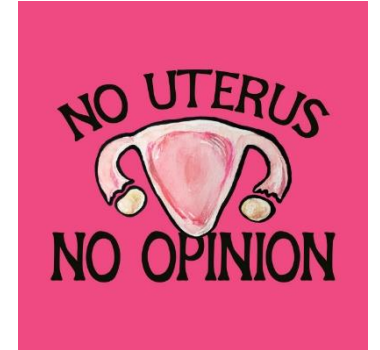
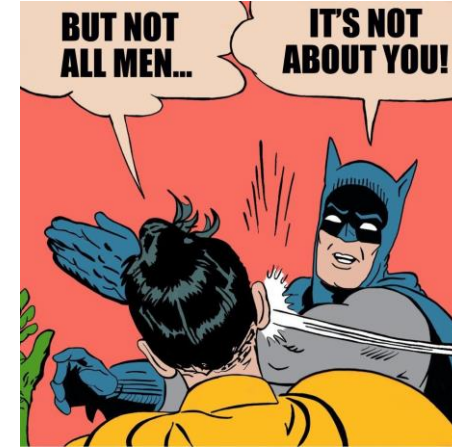
“Imagine a black woman [who may be] a single working mother... She experiences, potentially, not only multiple forms of oppression but ones unique to her and to others like her.” – Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, p. 59



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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University of Oregon, USA

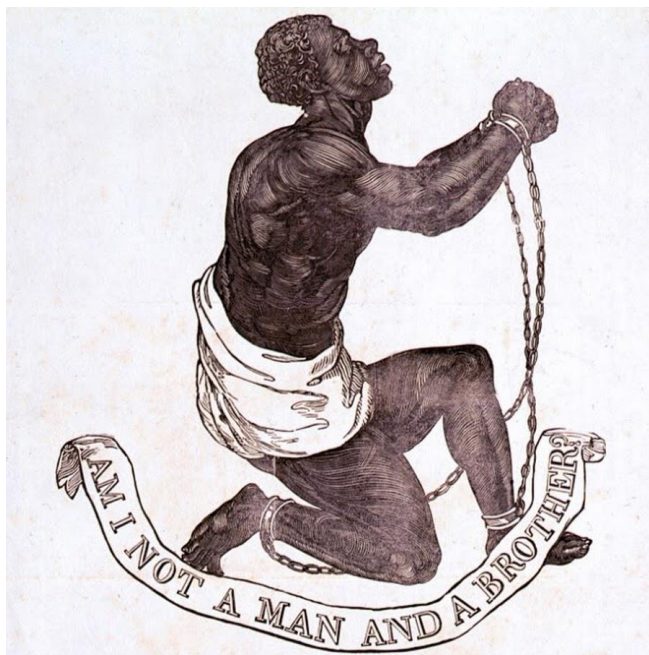
Mark Carey, Robert D. Clark Honors College, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, USA. Email: carey@uoregon.edu

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The strengths of critical theory



Strength #1. Emphasis on the sinfulness of oppression

- “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
- “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 #2. Focus on structures, systems, and norms



Strength #3: Recognition of hegemonic power




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- Why should we care?
- What is critical theory?
- Conflicts between critical theory and Christianity
 - Worldview
 - Epistemology
 - Adversarial identities
 - Hegemonic power
 - Moral asymmetry
- Logical implications
- Advice for dialogue

Worldview questions

- Who are we?
- What is our fundamental problem as human beings?
- What is the solution to our problem?
- What is our primary moral duty?
- What is our purpose in life?

Christianity and critical theory are competing worldviews

Christianity	 <div>CREATION</div> <div>FALL</div> <div>REDEMPTION</div> <div>RESTORATION</div>
Critical theory	<div>-----</div> <div><div><div>Patriarchy</div><div>White supremacy</div><div>Heteronormativity</div><div>Toxic masculinity</div><div>OPPRESSION</div><div>Classism</div><div>Ageism</div><div>Ableism</div><div>Cisgenderism</div></div><div><div>Protest</div><div>Resistance</div><div>ACTIVISM</div><div>Education</div><div>Awareness</div></div><div><div>Equality</div><div>Power reversal</div><div>LIBERATION</div><div>Justice</div><div>Diversity</div></div></div>

Worldview questions

	Christianity	Critical theory
Who are we?	God's creatures	Members of various groups
What is our problem?	Sin	Oppression
What is the solution?	Jesus	Liberation
What is our duty?	Loving God	Liberating the oppressed
What is our purpose?	Glorifying God	Working for liberation

“In the end, there can be only one”



Critical theory as worldview



Union Seminary ✓

@UnionSeminary

Follow



I. Scripture

While divinely inspired, we deny the Bible is inerrant or infallible. It was written by men over centuries and thus reflects both God's truth and human sin & prejudice. We affirm that biblical scholarship and critical theory help us discern which messages are God's.

10:27 AM - 5 Sep 2018

15 Retweets 122 Likes



292

15

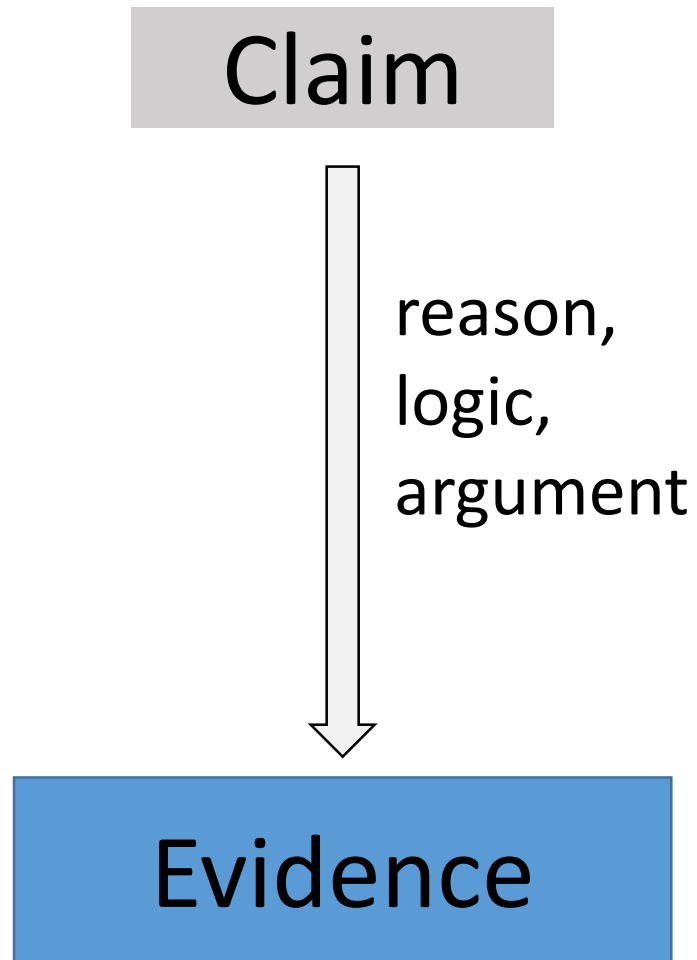
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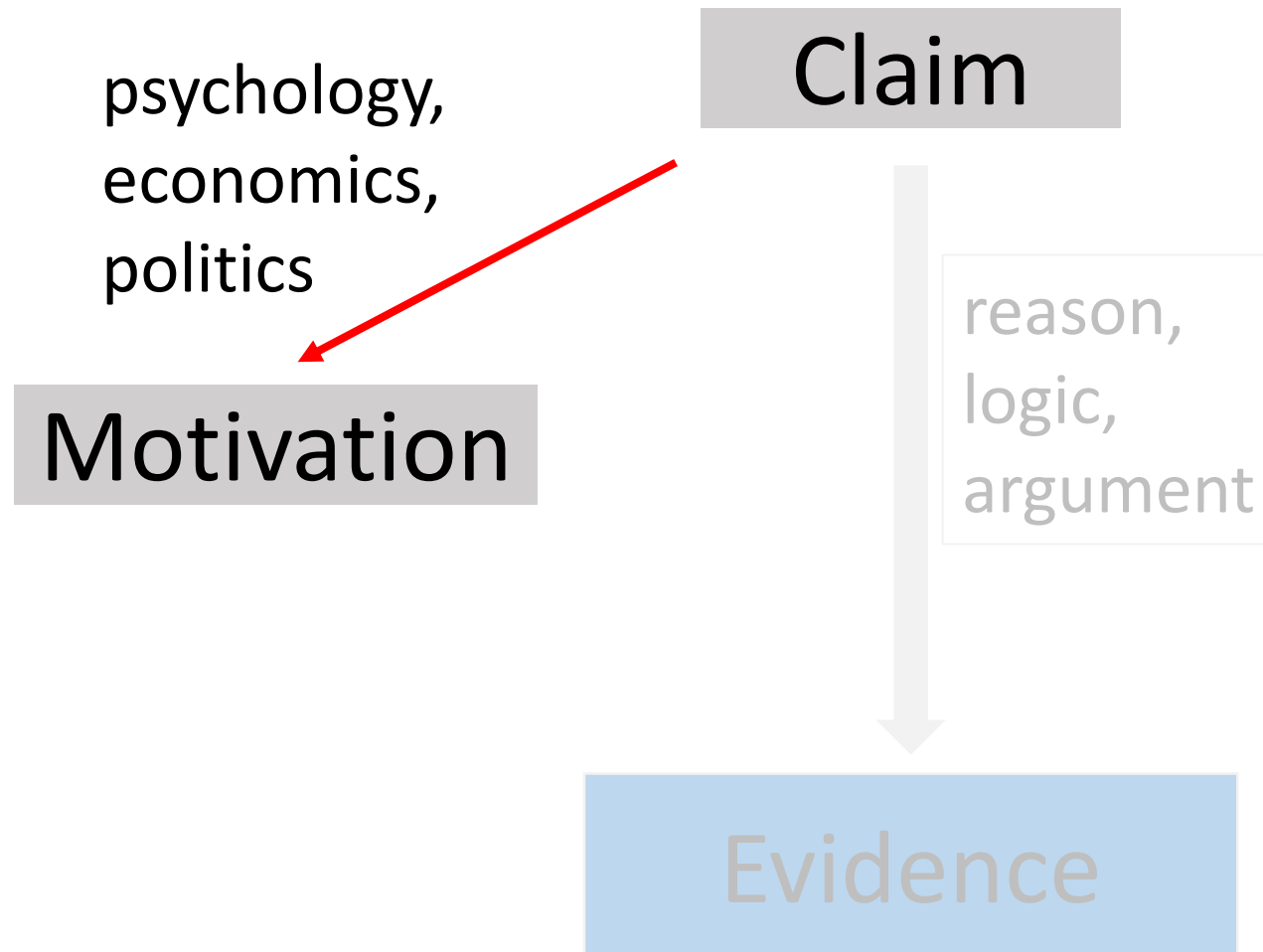
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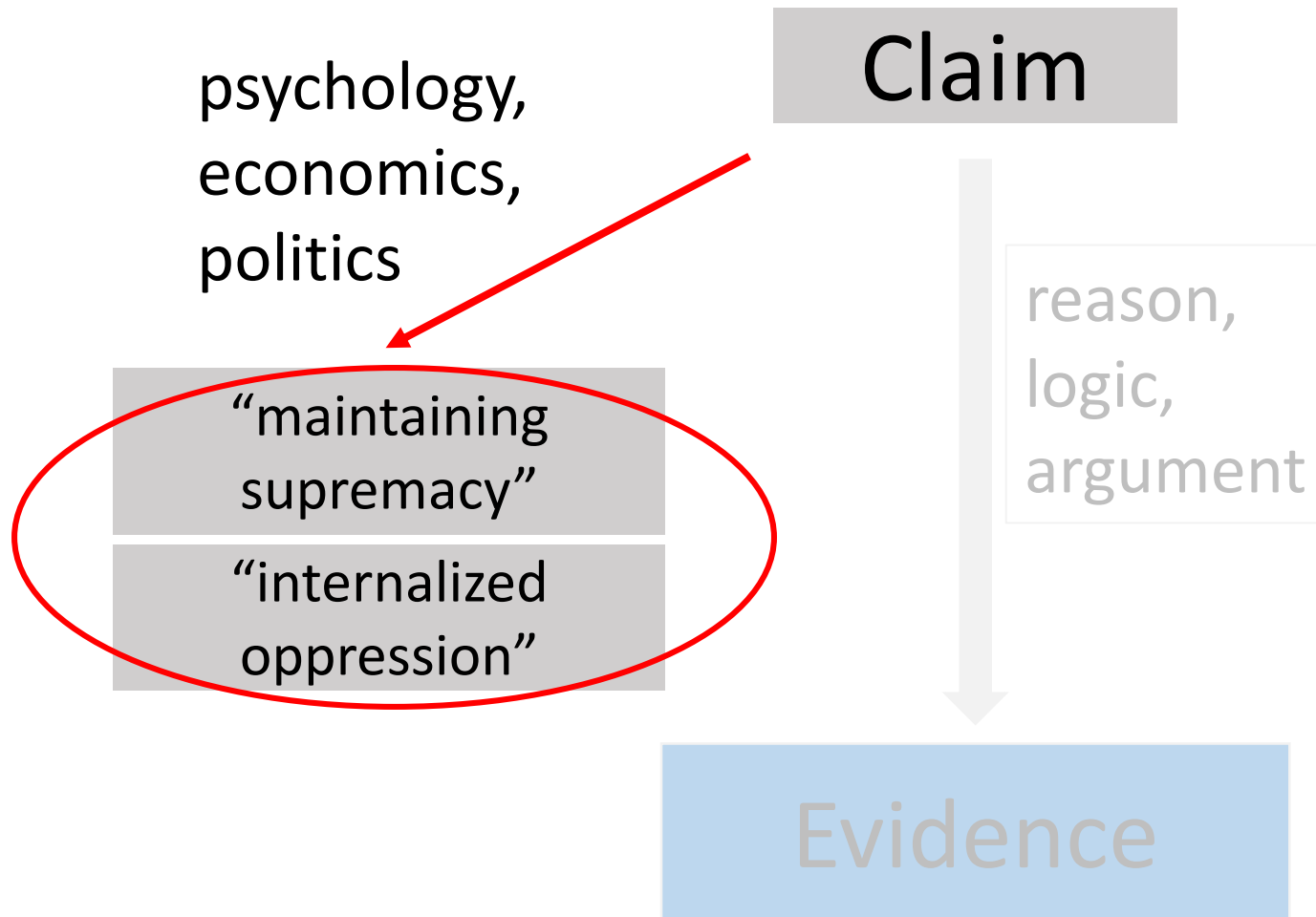
Epistemology



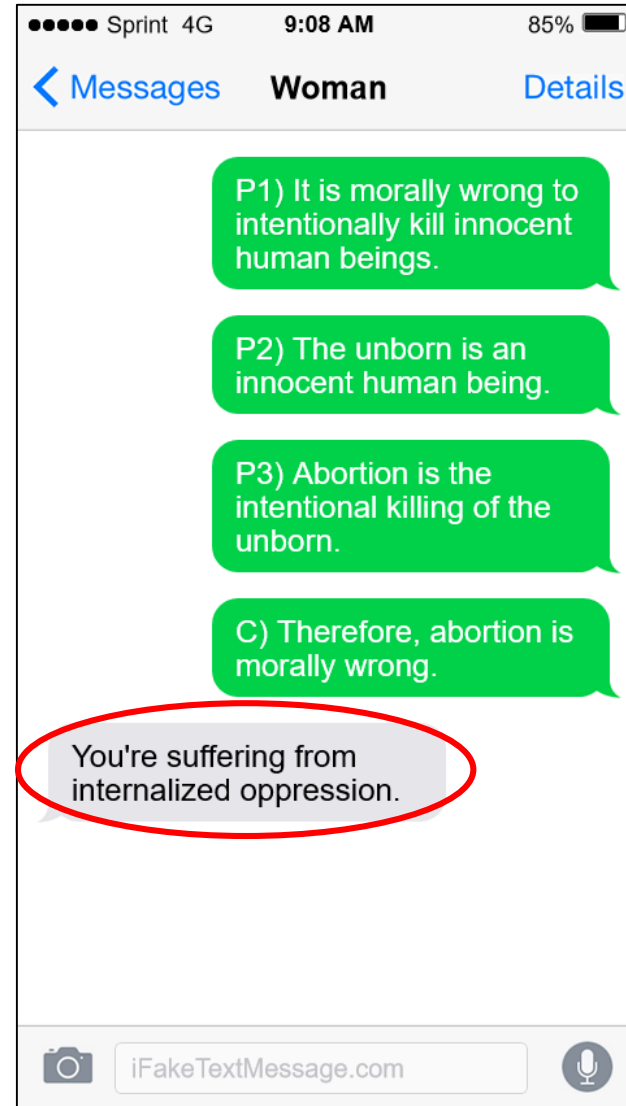
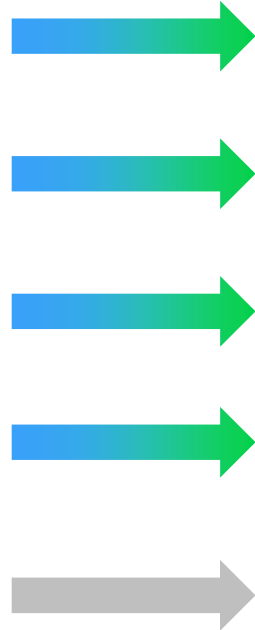
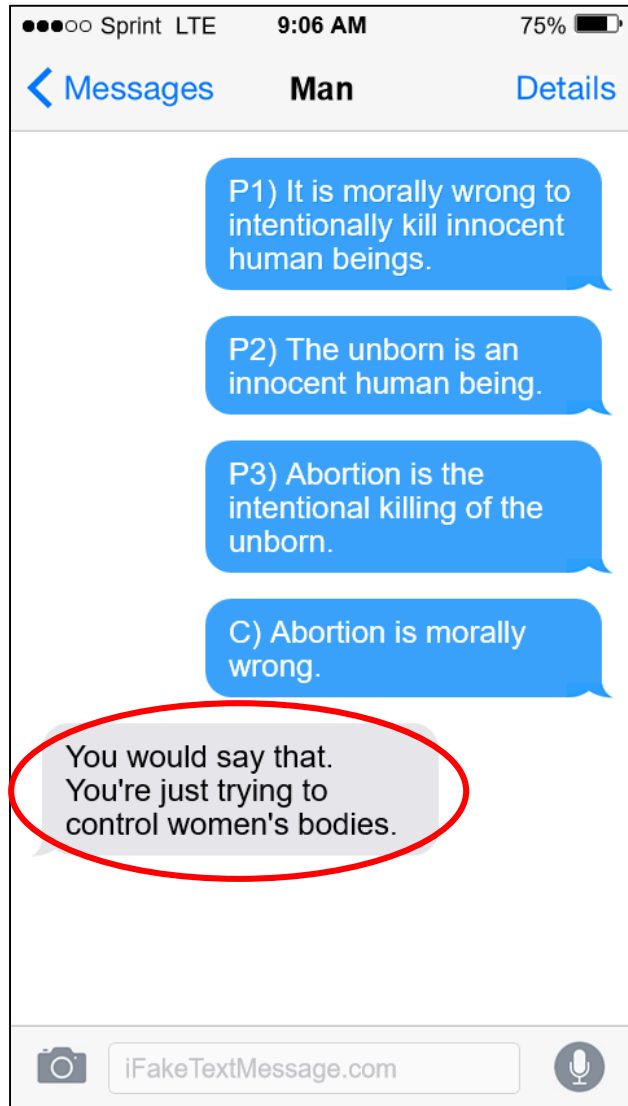
Epistemology and Bulverism



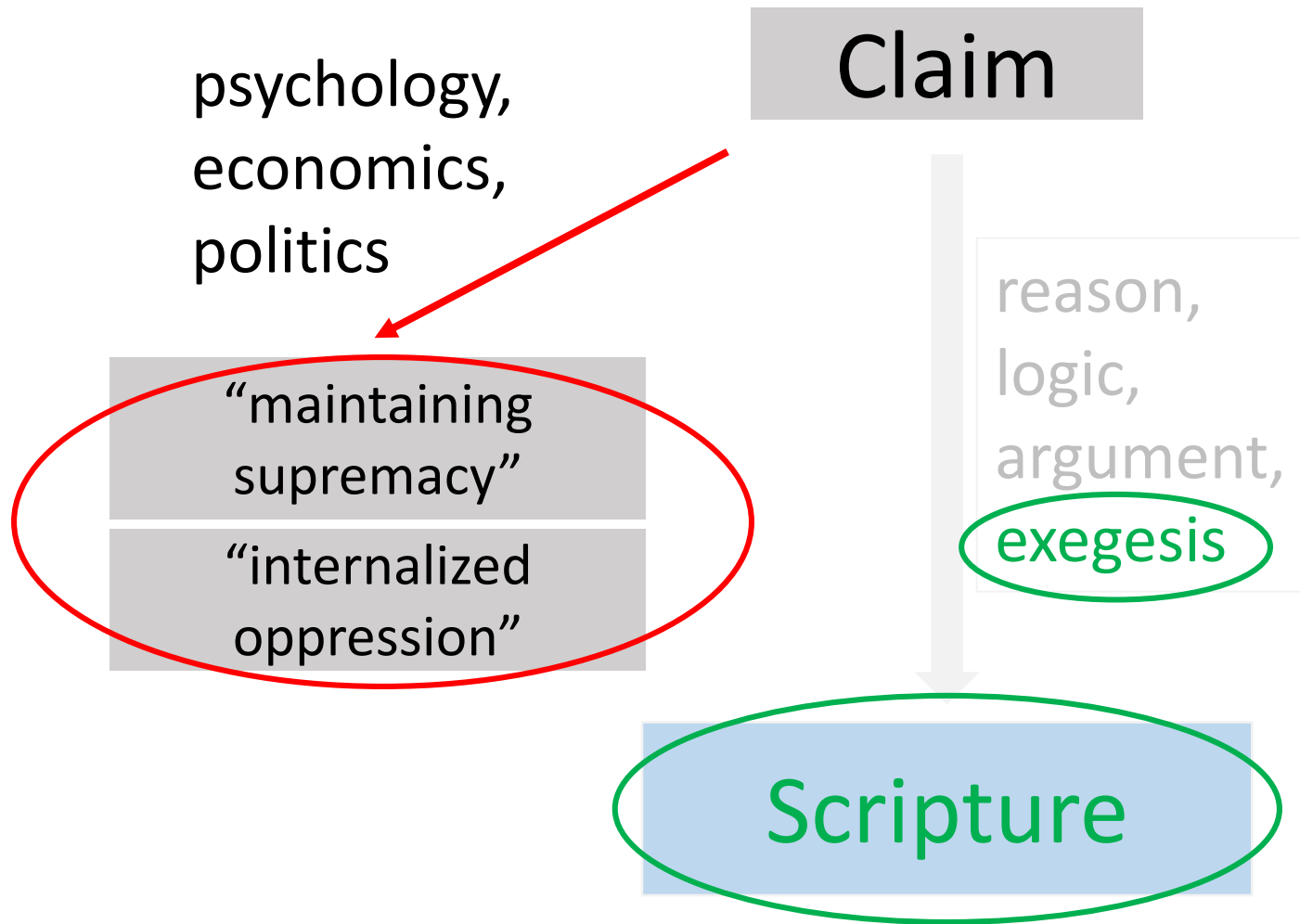
Critical theory and Bulverism



An example from abortion



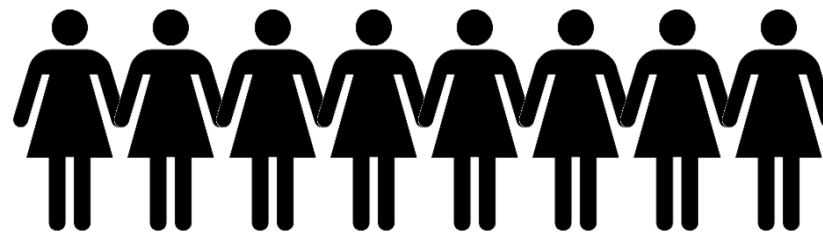
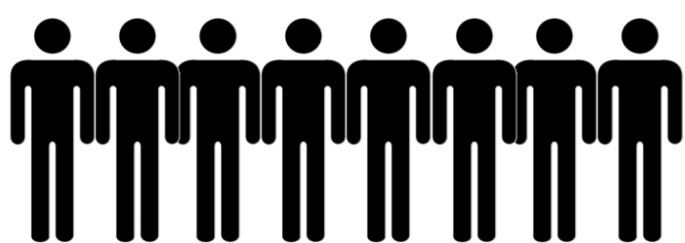
Critical theory, Bulverism, and the Bible



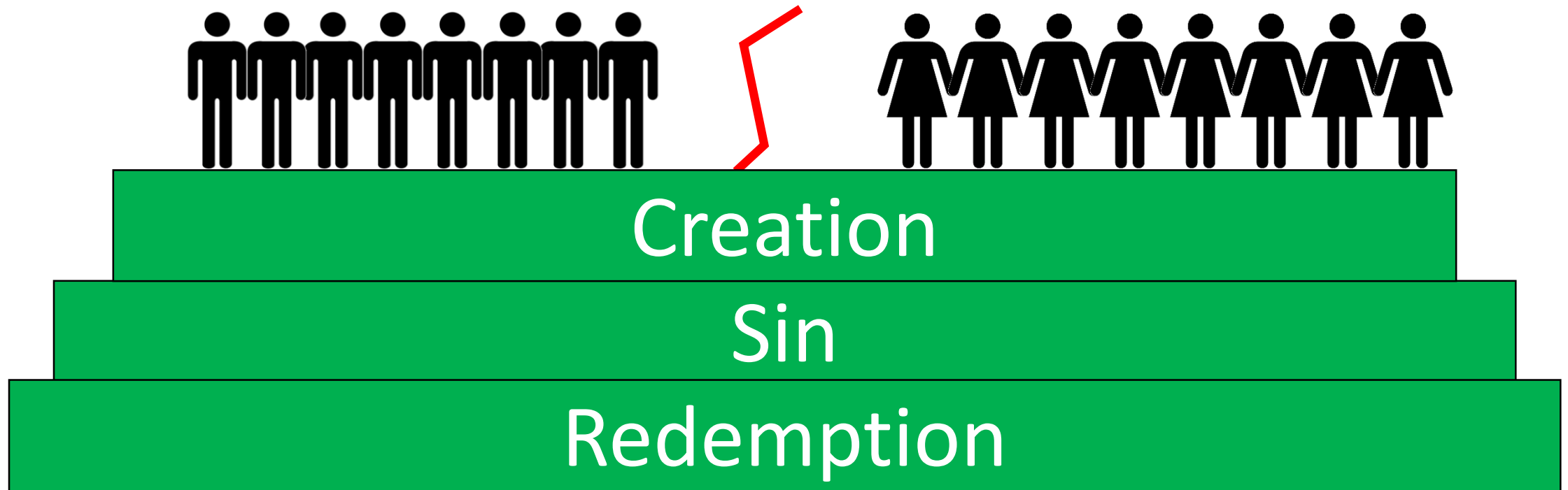
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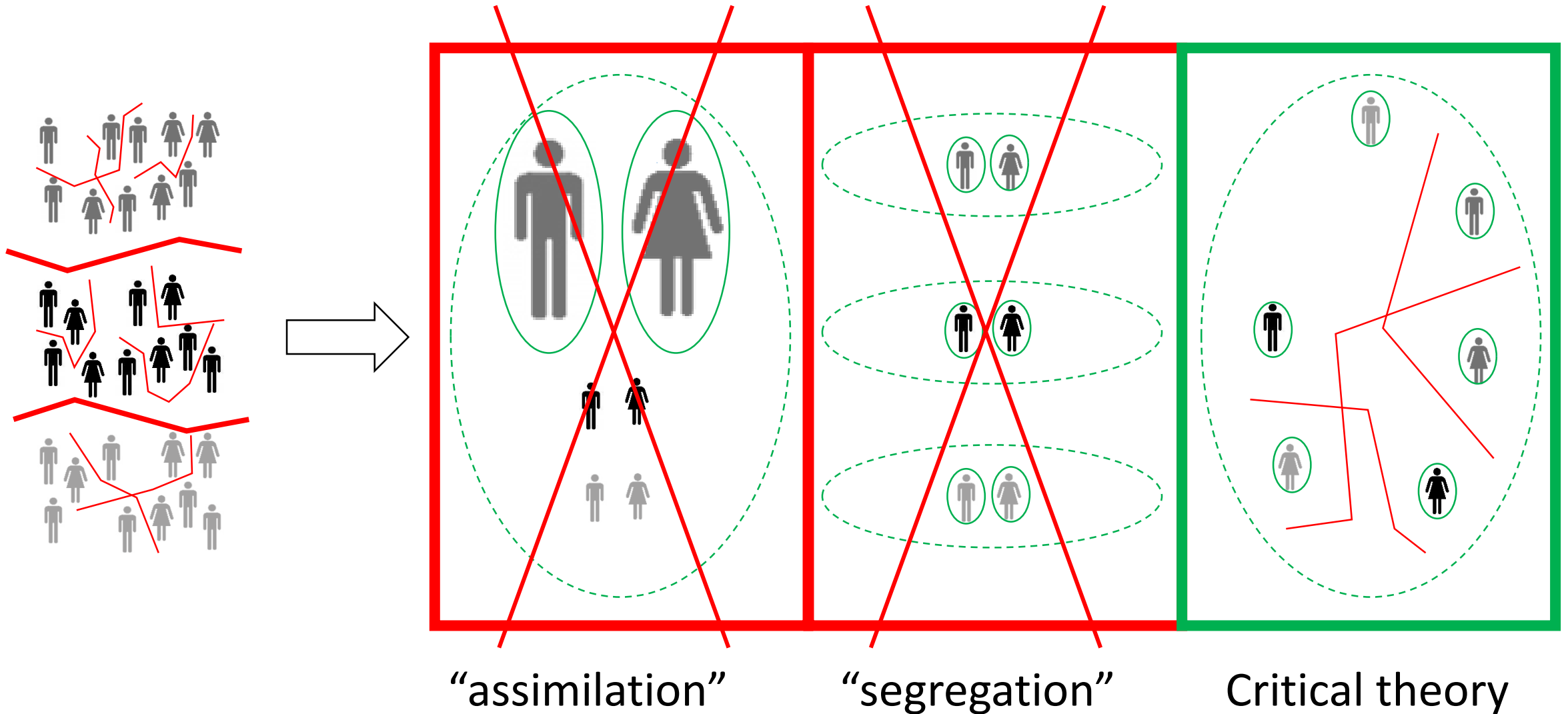
Identity and solidarity



Identity and solidarity



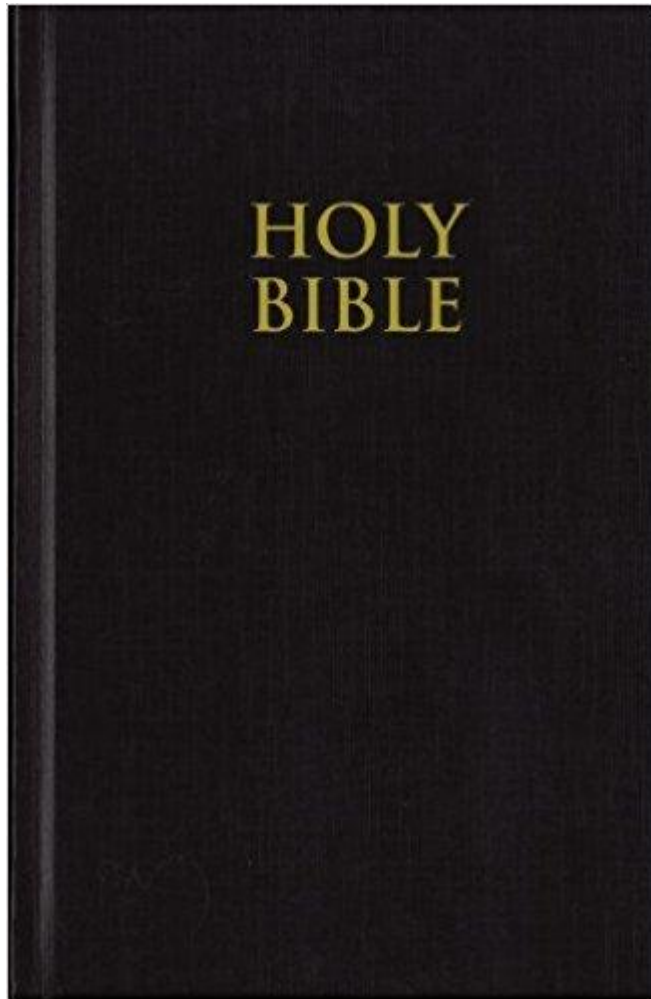
Sin and human relationships



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Christianity as hegemonic discourse



Religion



Morality



Sexuality



Gender



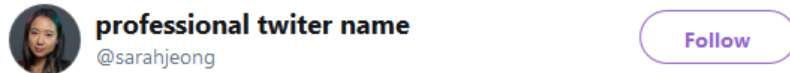
etc...



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Moral Asymmetry



Dumbass fucking white people marking up the internet with their opinions like dogs pissing on fire hydrants

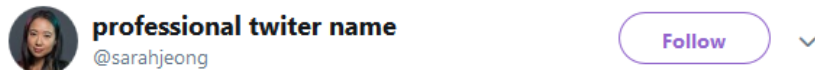
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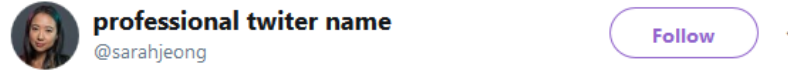
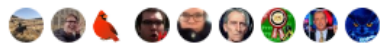
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1) white men are bullshit
2) no one cares about women
3) you can threaten anyone on the internet except cops

5:43 PM - 31 Dec 2014

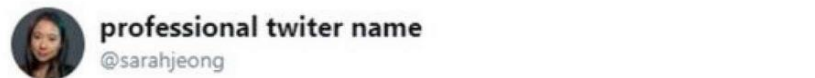
4 Retweets 26 Likes



Are white people genetically predisposed to burn faster in the sun, thus logically being only fit to live underground like groveling goblins

6:23 PM - 23 Dec 2014

21 Retweets 87 Likes



oh man it's kind of sick how much joy I get out of being cruel to old white men

6:20 PM - 24 Jul 2014

8 Retweets 21 Likes



Moral Asymmetry

- “What makes these quasi-satirical generalizations about “white people” different from actual racism is, yes, **the underlying power structure in American society**. There is **no sense of threat** associated with Jeong making a joke about how white people have dog-like opinions. But when white people have said the same about minorities, it has historically been a pretext for **violence or justification for exclusionary politics**.”
– Zach Beauchamp, “In Defense of Sarah Jeong”
Vox, 8/3/18



Moral Asymmetry

“Privileged people who are committed to listening well will eventually encounter oppressed people who are angry (and **rightfully so**). Most of the time, this anger will seem directed **at the privileged person or at privileged people in general**... Now is not the time for privileged folks to be a “prophetic voice” in the lives of oppressed people by speaking hard truth about what (privileged people think) oppressed people should be doing to improve their situation. **Privileged people lost their right to the prophetic megaphone** when they knowingly or unknowingly participated in societal systems that benefit some people and oppress others. Sorry folks - **you can’t be a prophet and an oppressor at the same time.**” – Christian professor



Moral Asymmetry


“Don’t chastise POCs (or dismiss their message) because they express their grief, fear, or anger in ways you deem “inappropriate.” Understand that historically, we white people have silenced voices of dissent and lament with our cultural idol of “niceness.” **Provide space for POCs to wail, cuss, or even yell at you.** Jesus didn’t hold back when he saw hypocrisy and oppression; POCs shouldn’t have to either.” – Christian racial reconciliation group



Biblical commands to particular groups

- Never violate God's universal commands to all Christians
- Are based on roles, not on power differentials
- Affirm the legitimacy of authority (Rom. 12, Eph. 5:21-6:9, Col. 3:18-4:1, Titus 2:1-10, 1 Pet. 2:18-3:7)
- Do not contradict God's commands to judge impartially (Lev. 19:15, Deut. 1:17, Prov. 20:11)

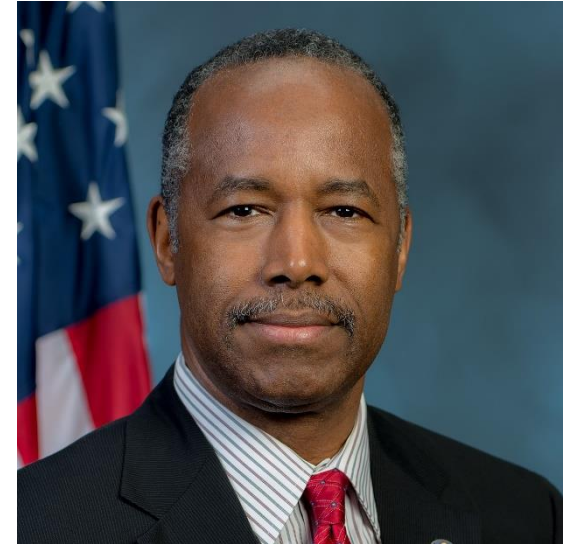
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 - “We should never challenge ‘lived experience’.”
 - “We need to liberate our theology from privileged groups.”
 - “We should dismantle all structures which perpetuate privilege.”
- Advice for dialogue

Claim #1: “We should never challenge ‘lived experience’”



Claim #1: “We should never challenge ‘lived experience’”

“As a **woman**, I know that our society is deeply sexist.”

“As a **black man**, I know that our society is deeply racist.”

“As a **lesbian**, I know that sexual orientation is fixed from birth.”

“As a **Sufi Muslim**, I know that Islam is true.”

“As a **polyamorous man**, I know that sex outside of marriage is okay.”

“As a **Hindu**, I’ve had religious experience that show me how all religions are paths to the divine.”

Truth claims must be evaluated on the basis of
Scripture and objective evidence.

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Claim #2: “We need to liberate our theology from privileged groups”

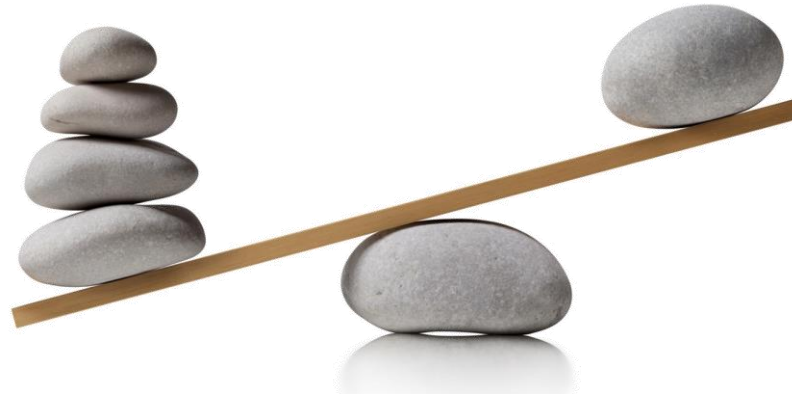
- “We need to de-center ‘white theology’ and platform the theology of people of color.”
- “We need to de-center ‘Western theology’ and platform non-Western theology.”
- “We need to de-center male theology and platform feminist theology.”
- “We need to de-center the Eurocentric creeds of the Reformation, and platform liberation theology.”
- “We need to de-center the all-male books of the Bible and platform the extra-biblical books written by women.”

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Claim #3: “We should dismantle all structures which perpetuate privilege”

- “We should dismantle **capitalism**, because it perpetuates economic privilege.”
- “We should dismantle **male eldership**, because it perpetuates male privilege.”
- “We should dismantle **the institution of marriage**, because it perpetuates heterosexual and monogamous privilege.”
- “We should dismantle **anti-abortion laws**, because they perpetuate male privilege.”
- “We should dismantle **the connection between sex and gender**, because it perpetuates cis-privilege.”
- “We should dismantle all **Christian moral norms**, because they perpetuate Christian privilege.”



Positives and negatives

Claim #1: “We should never challenge ‘lived experience’”

Positive: Lived experience can give us unique insights

Negative: ...but must still be subjected to the scrutiny of Scripture and evidence.

Claim #2: “We need to liberate our theology from privileged groups”

Positive: We should constantly reexamine our theology to recognize where our identity has biased our interpretation

Negative: ...but the truth or falsehood of a claim does not depend on the identity of the person making it.

Claim #3: “We should dismantle all structures which perpetuate privilege”

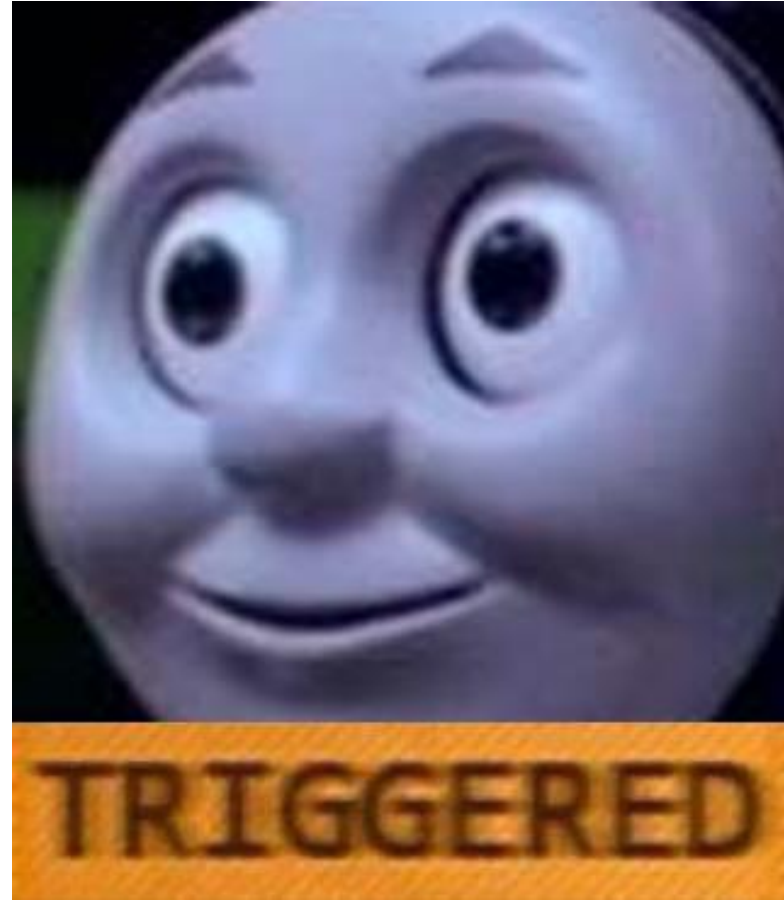
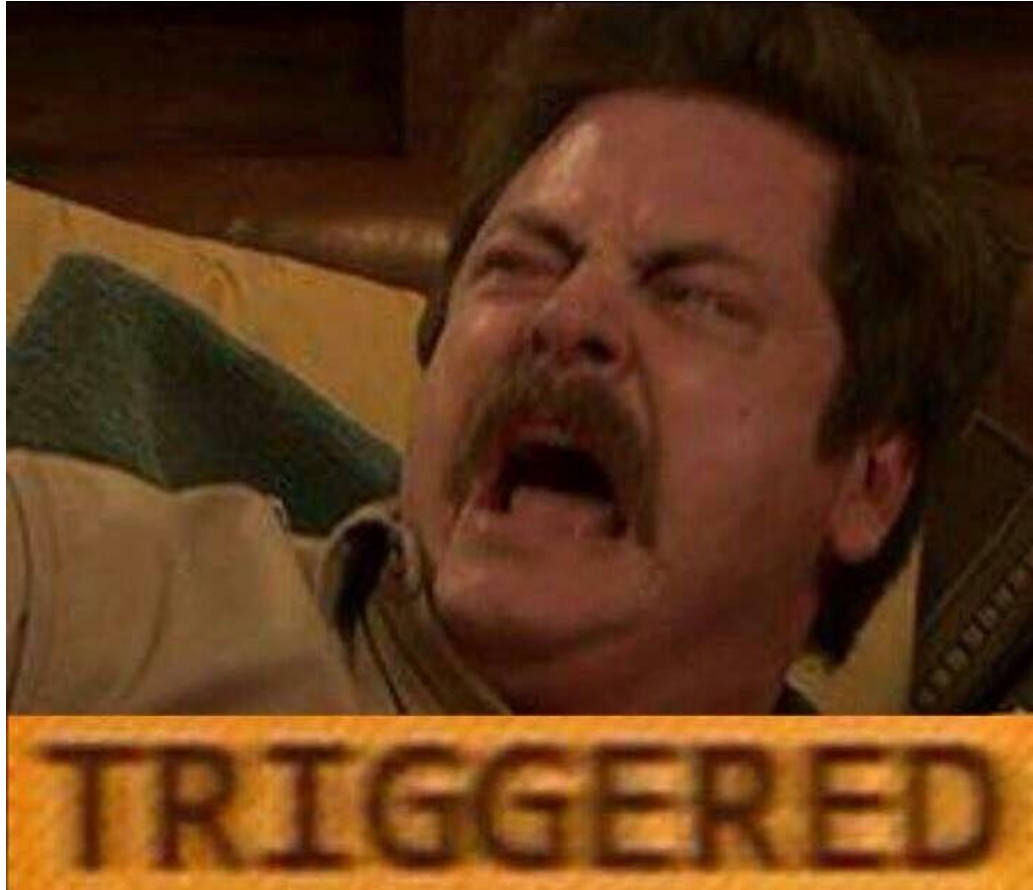
Positive: Power can be abused and misused

Negative: ...but power is not inherently evil and power imbalances are not necessarily unjust.

Outline

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Advice for dialogue

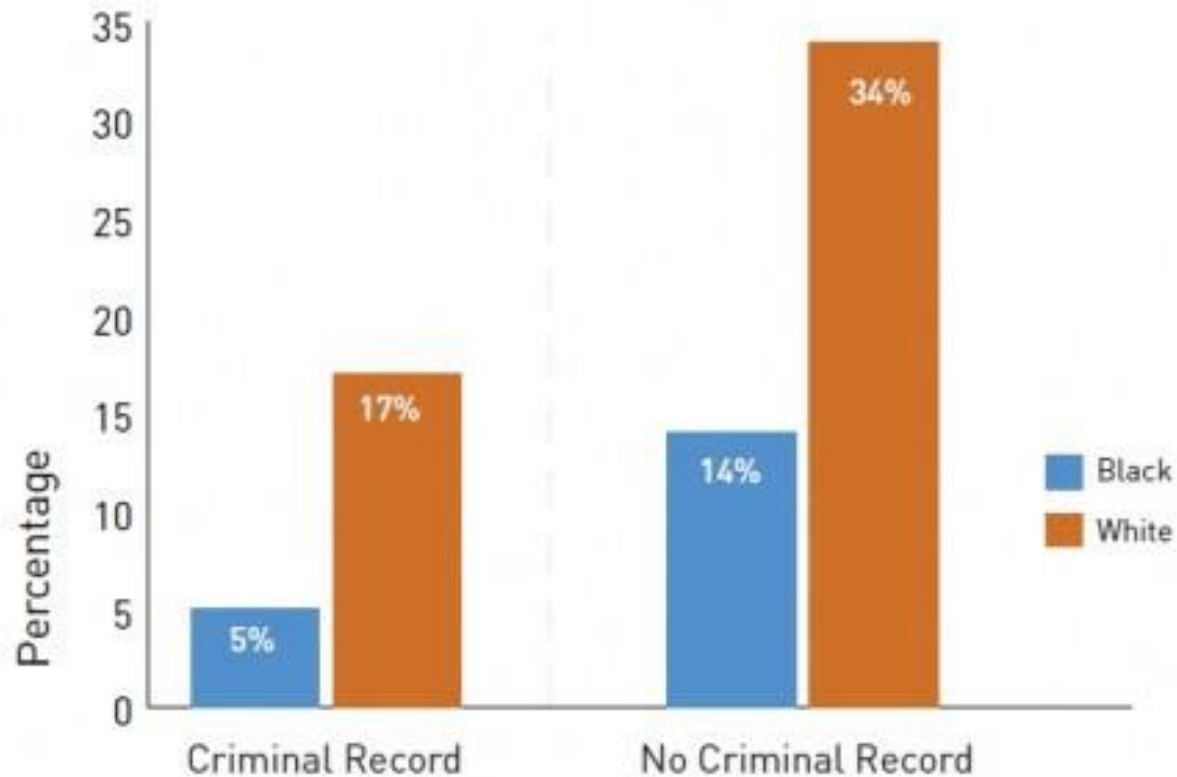


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Acknowledge and fight racism

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.

20% higher response rate for whites **with criminal record** compared to blacks **with no criminal record**

Acknowledge and fight racism

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



Source: National Bureau of Economic Research

THE HUFFINGTON POST

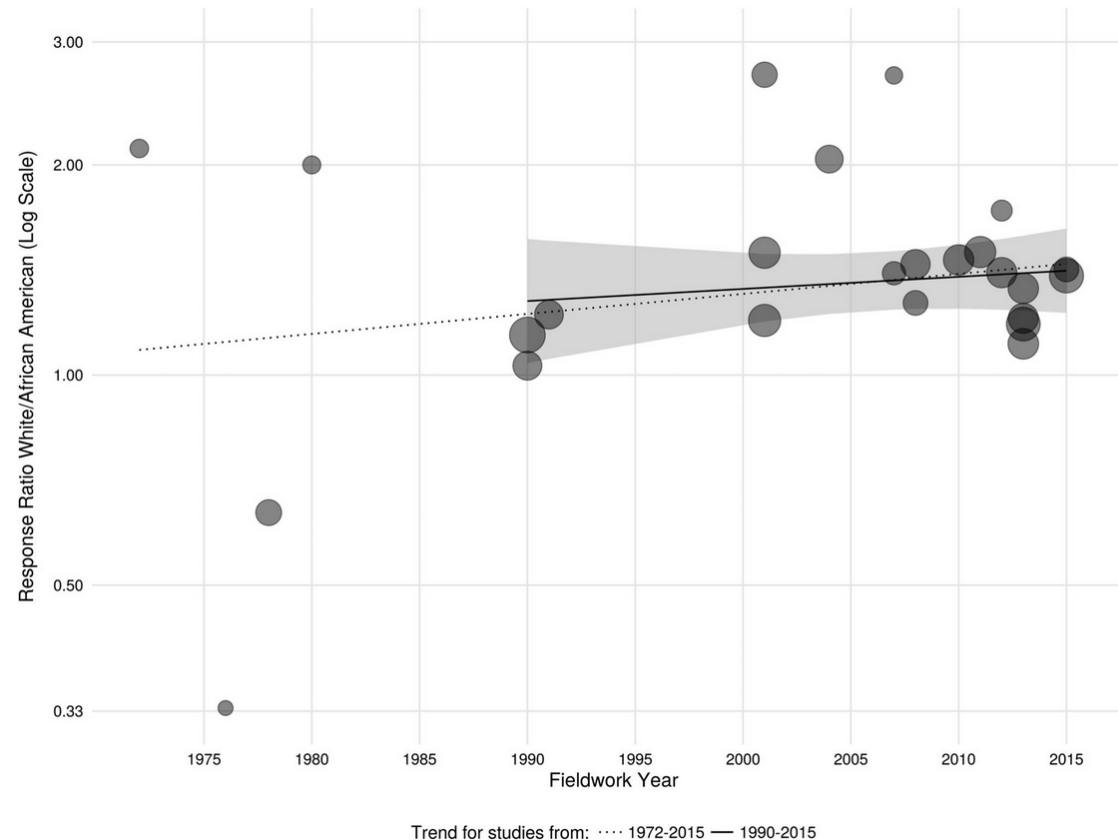
50% higher response rate for whites with identical resumes

Acknowledge and fight racism

Meta-analysis of field experiments shows no change in racial discrimination in hiring over time



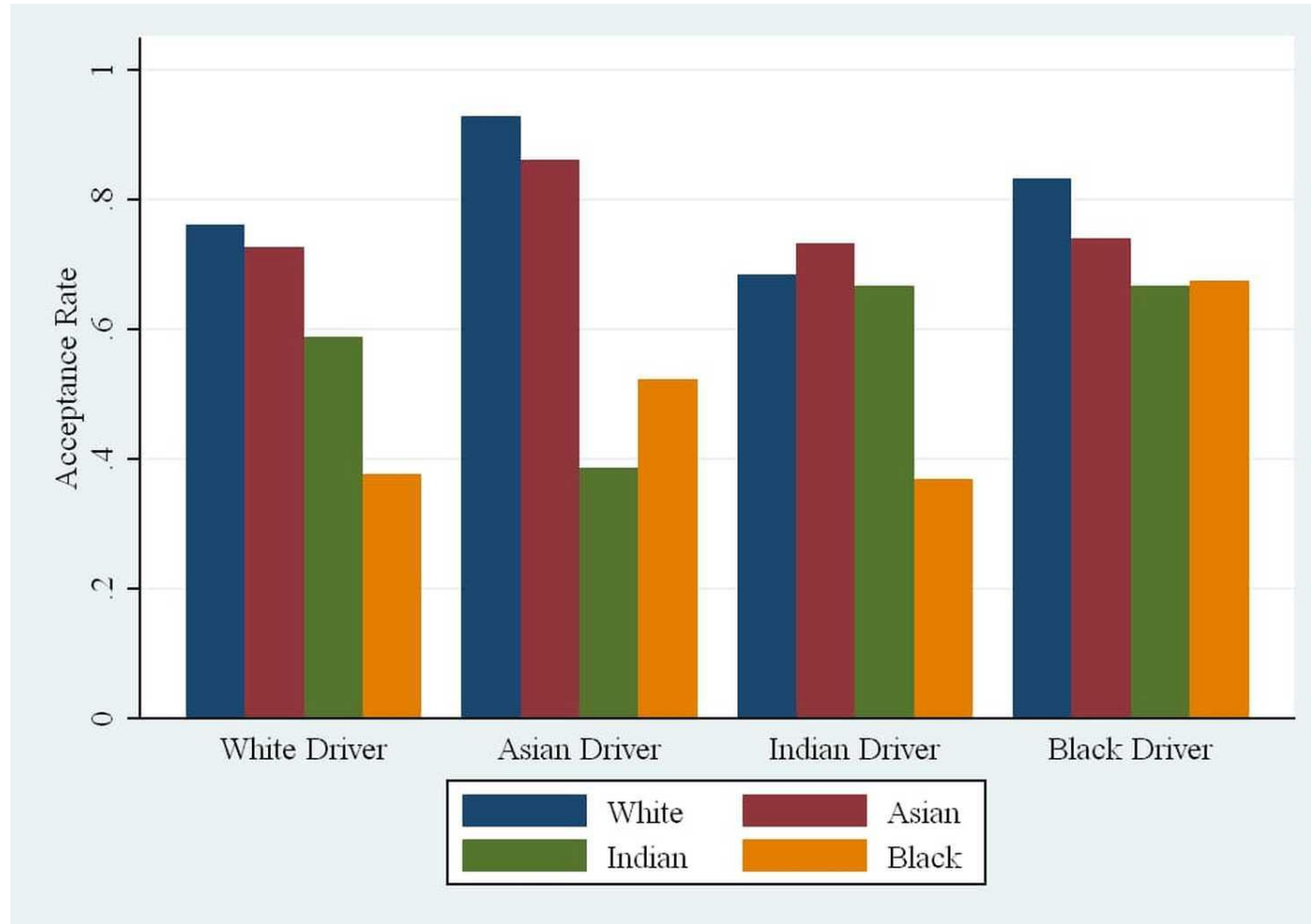
Lincoln Quillian, Devah Pager, Ole Hexel, and Arnfinn H. Midtbøen



Note: Size of plotting symbols proportional to meta-regression weights. Shaded region gives 95% confidence interval.

40% higher response rate for whites has not changed in at least three decades

Acknowledge and fight racism

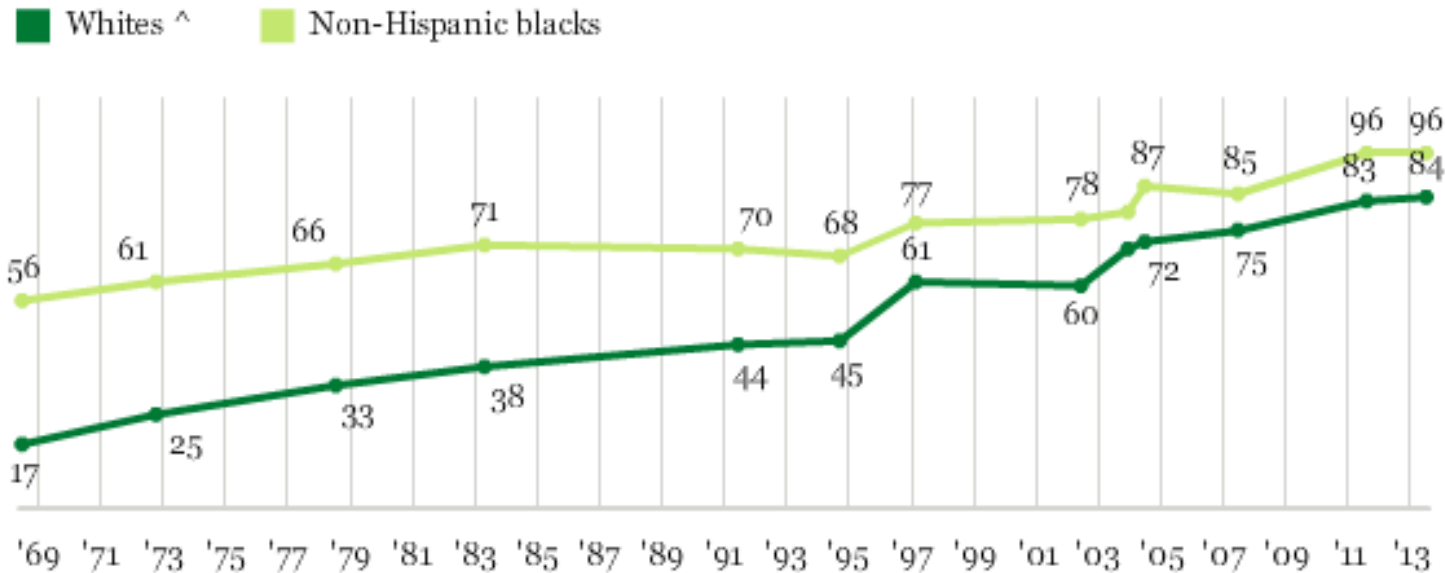


White bus drivers were **2x more likely** to give a free ride to white passengers than to black passengers

Acknowledge and fight racism

Approval of Black-White Marriage Among Whites and Blacks

Selected trend



1958 wording: "... marriages between white and colored people"

1968-1978 wording: "... marriages between whites and nonwhites"

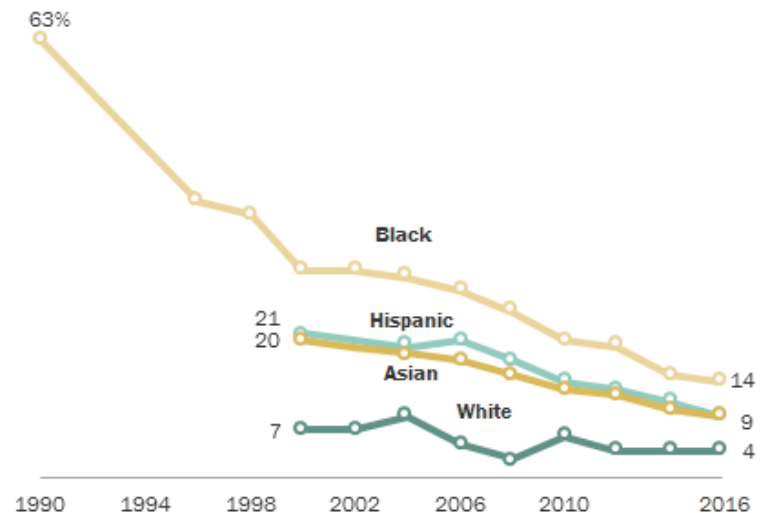
^ Trend from 1968-2003 includes Hispanics; trend from 2004-2013 is for non-Hispanic whites only

16% of whites do not approve of intermarriage between whites and blacks

Acknowledge and fight racism

Dramatic dive in share of nonblacks who would oppose a relative marrying a black person

% saying they would be very or somewhat opposed to a close relative marrying someone who is ____ among U.S. adults who are not that race or ethnicity



Note: Due to changes in question wording, the universe of nonblacks prior to 2000 includes anyone who reported a race other than black; in 2000 and later, the universe of nonblacks includes those who did not identify as single-race, non-Hispanic blacks (and so may include Hispanic blacks and multiracial blacks).

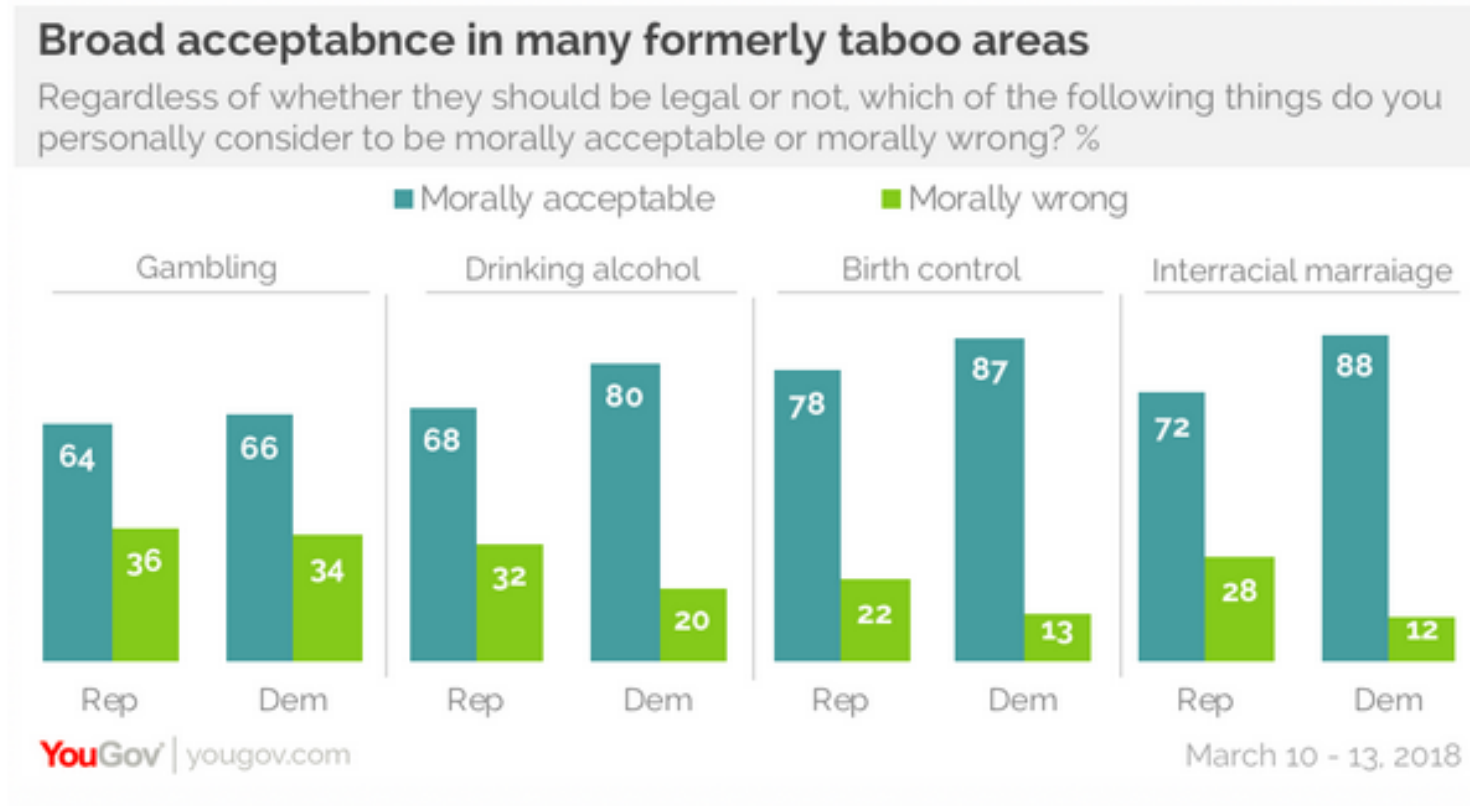
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of General Social Survey.

"Intermarriage in the U.S. 50 Years After Loving v. Virginia"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

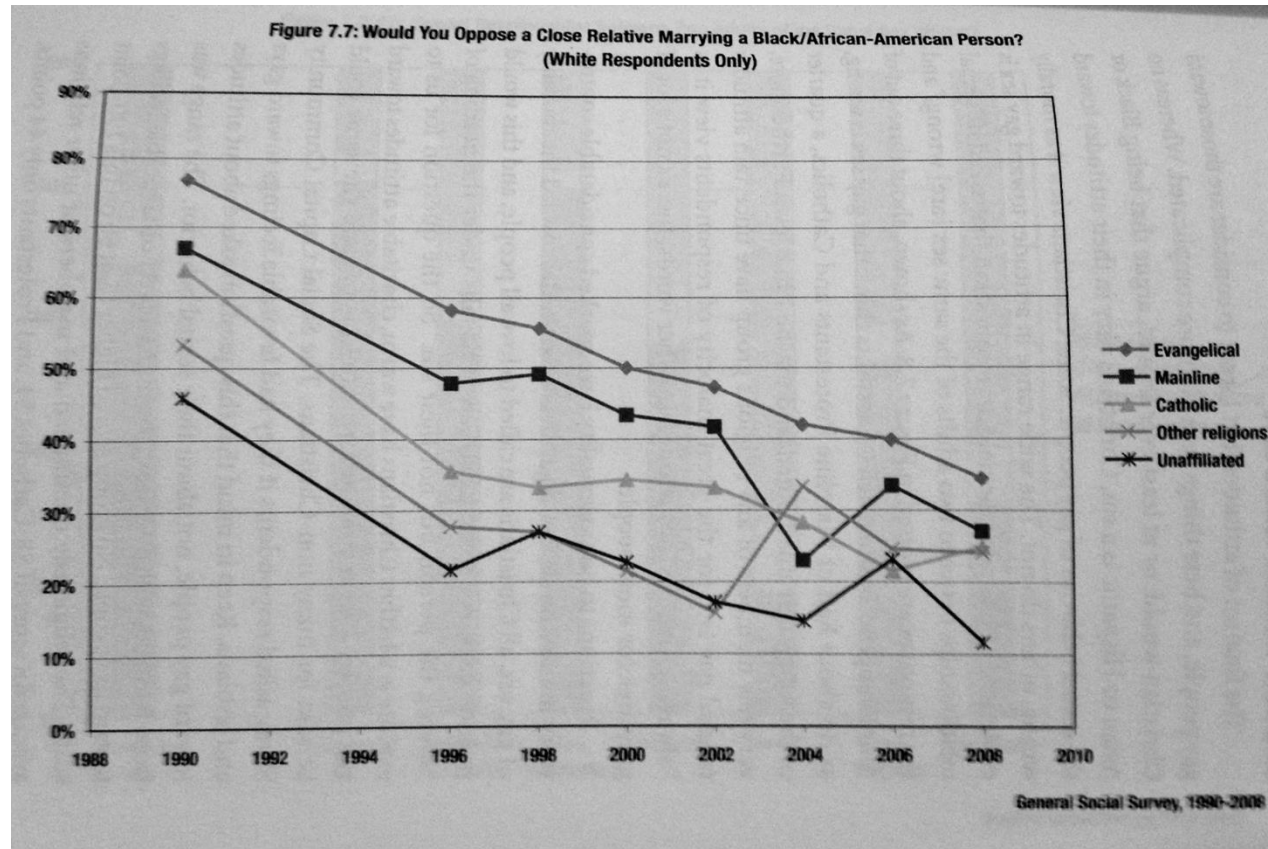
14% of non-blacks
would oppose a
relative marrying a
black person

Acknowledge and fight racism



28% of Republicans think interracial marriage is 'morally wrong'

Acknowledge and fight racism



34% of white
Evangelicals would
oppose a close
relative marrying a
black person

“Among Evangelicals... we see no evidence of prejudicial attitudes decreasing with church attendance.”
– Bradley Wright, *Christians Are Hate-Filled Hypocrites... and Other Lies You’ve Been Told*, p. 170

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Don't be that guy



Avoid labels



I think immigration laws should exist.

AMERICAN EVANGELICALISM is captive to **CONSERVATIVE, FASCIST, WHITE SUPREMACIST, NATIONALIST** ideologies that have more in common with the philosophy of **AYN RAND** than the teachings of Jesus!!!!



Avoid labels



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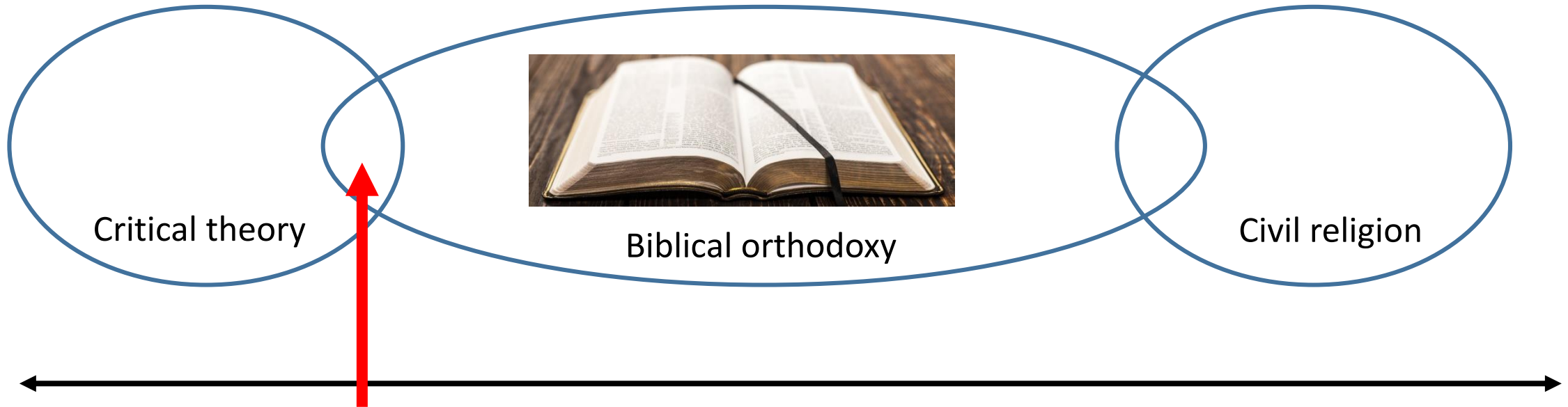


I think affirmative action laws should exist.

'WOKE' EVANGELICALISM is captive to **PROGRESSIVE, SOCIALIST, THIRD-WAVE FEMINIST, GLOBALIST** ideologies that have more common with the philosophy of **KARL MARX** than the teachings of Jesus!!!!

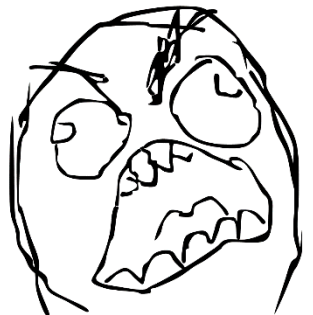


Beware of polarization

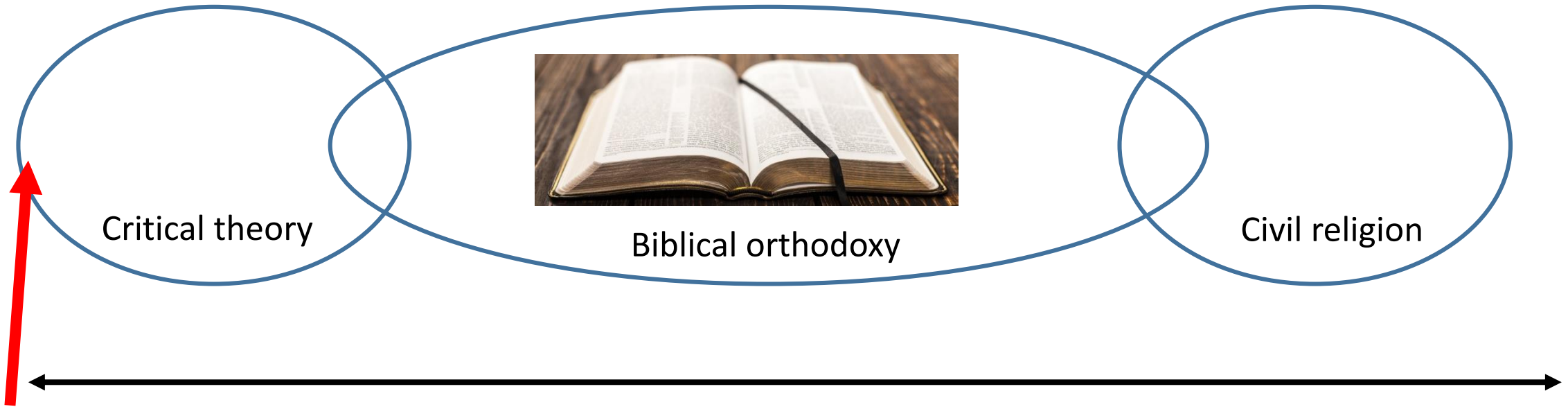


I think Christians should care about justice.

**GO PEDDLE YOUR CULTURAL
MARXISM SOME PLACE ELSE YOU
AVOCADO TOAST-EATING SJW!!!!**



Beware of polarization



I won



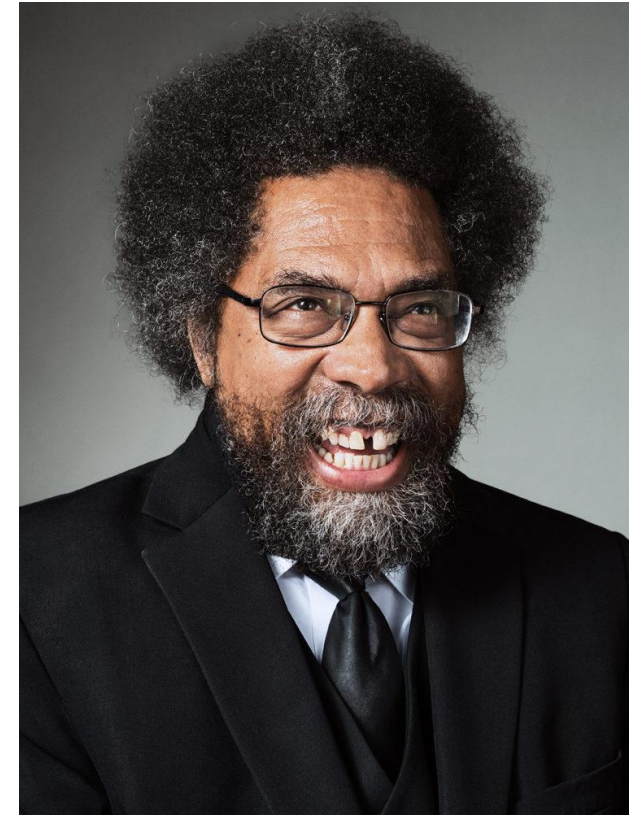
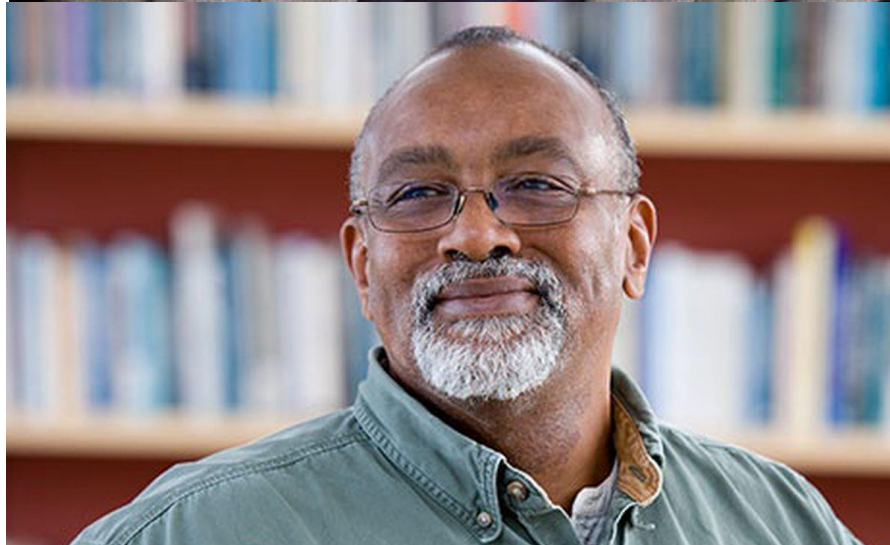
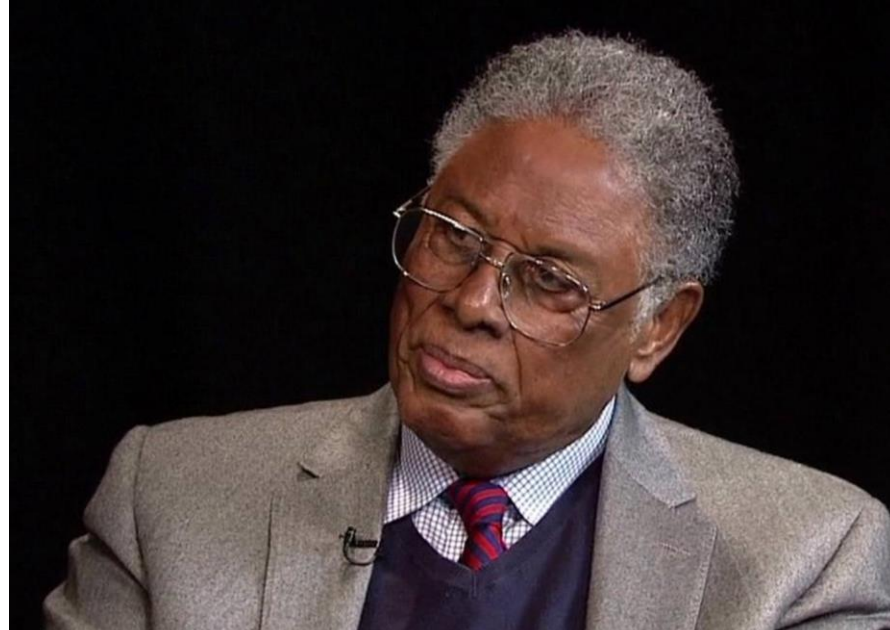
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Read broadly



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Put the gospel first



Two crucial questions

- Is **social justice** a Christian imperative? Does God command it? Is it our moral obligation? Is it something we *ought* to do?
- Is **the gospel** an imperative or a pure indicative? Is it a statement of what we *ought* to do, or what God *has done* in Christ?

