

## The Christian and Contemporary Critical Theory / Social Justice

**Introduction:** Over the last seven years or so, a number of **strange words** have entered into our national vocabulary, words we'd never heard prior: Cisgender, Misogyny, Trans-woman, Patriarchy, Whiteness, BIPOC, microaggression, and many more. Indeed, many previously used words have now been "**repurposed**" with different meanings: Gender, Oppression, Harm, Racism, and the list goes on.

Along with the circulation of this new language, we began to hear about "**becoming woke**" and observed **societal unrest** in various places and spaces with **activism**, protests, and riots from groups such as **BLM**-TM and Antifa. **Early on** most of this seemed **distant** to us here in **Mebane**, but our children in local **universities** were coming home with this strange language and the ideas conveyed with it.

**Fast forward** to today, I'm aware of **former members** of our church and children of former members who now **identify** as lesbian, trans, or **publicly support** the LGBTQ+ "community." **Others** may not go this far but still show "**adjacent support**" of the same by listing their own "**preferred pronouns**" on their social media biographies. Some appear to be **obsessed** with **racial dynamics** or oppression or abuse within the church itself. Some have **departed** from the Biblical norms of **male headship** in the church and in the home for **egalitarian** arrangements in the same. Most of this is **connected** to Contemporary Critical Theory & Critical Social Justice in our culture and society.

As a **parent** of three in local universities and our fourth to begin in the Fall, I can tell you our children are regularly confronted by professors and peers with this stuff. One of our children told me her history teacher told his class on the first day, "I'm **gay**. If you don't like this, you'll want to choose

another class.” Another child shared that on her first day, a teacher told the class she’s “gender queer.” One of our children was taught by her sociology professor right here at ACC that nearly all differences between men and women are merely socially constructed. Our children hear race-positionality comments regularly. Indeed, many professors present these ideas with “evangelical zeal,” and infuse their class material with it!

You think, “well, my kids aren’t in college yet.” The social media our kids consume are riddled with these messages, and these messages are reinforced by many of their peers on the same. Have you noticed how frequently we’re exposed to gay, lesbian, and trans behavior on commercials and in more recent movies? And what’s up with the drag-queens?

**Slides:** Comic portraying how the world really appears vs how it appears to some of our kids after college indoctrination.

**Slide:** Christianity swallowed up in Critical Social Justice → the subtle Serpent

**Slide:** Definition of Contemporary Critical Theory → Marxist philosophers at the Frankfurt School in the 1920s → Postmodern scholars → Anticolonialists writers → “to the numerous intersectional scholars writing in the context of feminist, queer, and race theory” (Shenvi & Sawyer, p. 3)

**Slide:** “what on earth is ‘wokeism’?” Wilfred Reilly

**Slide:** Define Culture → Good, bad, & non-moral elements → Subculture → Dominant Group

According to Sawyer and Shenvi, there are **three** identifiable **anchors** that keep the discipline of Contemporary Critical Theory connected (pg. 4). I'll add an additional point of focus for Critical Social Justice.

**Slide:** **Outline**

### **1. Group Identity**

**Slide:** **Group Identities**

### **2. Group Liberation**

CRT/CCT does a good job **analyzing** the **power dynamics** involved in and the horrors of **slavery**, Jim Crow, and other forms of institutional oppression of **black** people in the United States. Also, CT documents the **historical oppression** of **women** in the US, including withholding from them the right to **vote** and access to higher **education**.

**Slide:** Group **Identities Across** Relations of Power

**Slide:** **Define Hegemony** → **Kent** Thompson's dress hegemony and his **microaggressions** → **Intersectional/ality**

**Slide:** **DOMINATE CULTURE**, Hegemony & the Flow of Oppression

### **3. Group Equity**

**Slide:** "Not all **hierarchies** are oppressive ... Neil **Shenvi**

**Slide:** "White buddies: does it bother you ..." Wilfred Reilly

### **4. Group Access to Truth**

**Patriarchy:** “The belief in the inherent superiority of men and male norms and the organization of society based on this belief” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, p. 227).

**Whiteness:** “The academic term used to capture the all-encompassing dimensions of White privilege, dominance, and assumed superiority in society. These dimensions include: ideological, institutional, social, cultural, historical, political, and interpersonal. Whiteness grants material and psychological advantages (white privilege) that are often invisible and taken for granted by Whites.”

**White supremacy:** “The academic term used to capture the all-encompassing dimensions of White privilege, dominance, and assumed superiority in mainstream society. These dimensions include: ideological, institutional, social, cultural, historical, political, and interpersonal” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, pp. 229-230).

**Gender:** “The socially prescribed and enforced roles, behaviors, and expectations that are assigned to us at birth. These roles determine how you are “supposed” to feel and act based on your body.”

**Gender Identity:** “The development of one’s self as a male or female in relation to others.”

**Genderqueer (or Genderfluid, non-Binary):** “People who do not identify in binary terms and /or whose gender identity and expression is fluid and dynamic. See also Sex and Gender” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, p. 223).

**“Contemporary critical theory,** which we’ll distinguish from the critical tradition as a whole (see below), divides the world into oppressed groups and their oppressors along lines of race, class, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical ability, age, weight, and a host of other identity markers. The central goal of contemporary critical theorists is to work for the liberation of oppressed groups ... Critical theorists pursue this liberatory work in part by deconstructing hegemonic narratives, which are stories, discourses, and accounts that oppressor groups offer to justify their dominance in society” (Shenvi & Sawyer, p. 1).

**Culture:** “The norms, values, practices, patterns of communication, language, laws, customs, and meanings shared by a group of people located in a given time and place” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, p. 36).

**Subculture:** A cultural subgroup differentiated by status, ethnic background, residence, religion, or other factors that functionally unify the group and act collectively on each member.

**Dominant Group:** “The group at the top of the social hierarchy. In any relationship between groups that define each other (men/women, able-bodied/person with disability), the dominant group is the group that is valued more highly (avoid referring to the minoritized group as “non” dominant group, e.g., “non-White”). 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” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, p. 223).

**Hegemony:** “The imposition of dominant group ideology onto everyone in society. Hegemony makes it difficult to escape or to resist believing in this dominant ideology, thus social control is achieved through conditioning rather than physical force or intimidation” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, p.224).

**Intersectionality/ality:** “The understanding that we simultaneously occupy multiple social positions and that these positions do not cancel each other out; they interact in complex ways that must be explored and understood” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, p. 225).

Sensoy, Ozlem; DiAngelo, Robin. *Is Everyone Really Equal?: An Introduction to Key Concepts in Social Justice Education (Multicultural Education Series)*. Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

Shenvi, Neil; Sawyer, Pat. *Engaging Critical Theory and the Social Justice Movement*. Ratio Christi Online Booklet.