

# Orwellian Othering

I recently characterized “diversity and inclusion” as a deeply Orwellian movement – doublethink all the way:

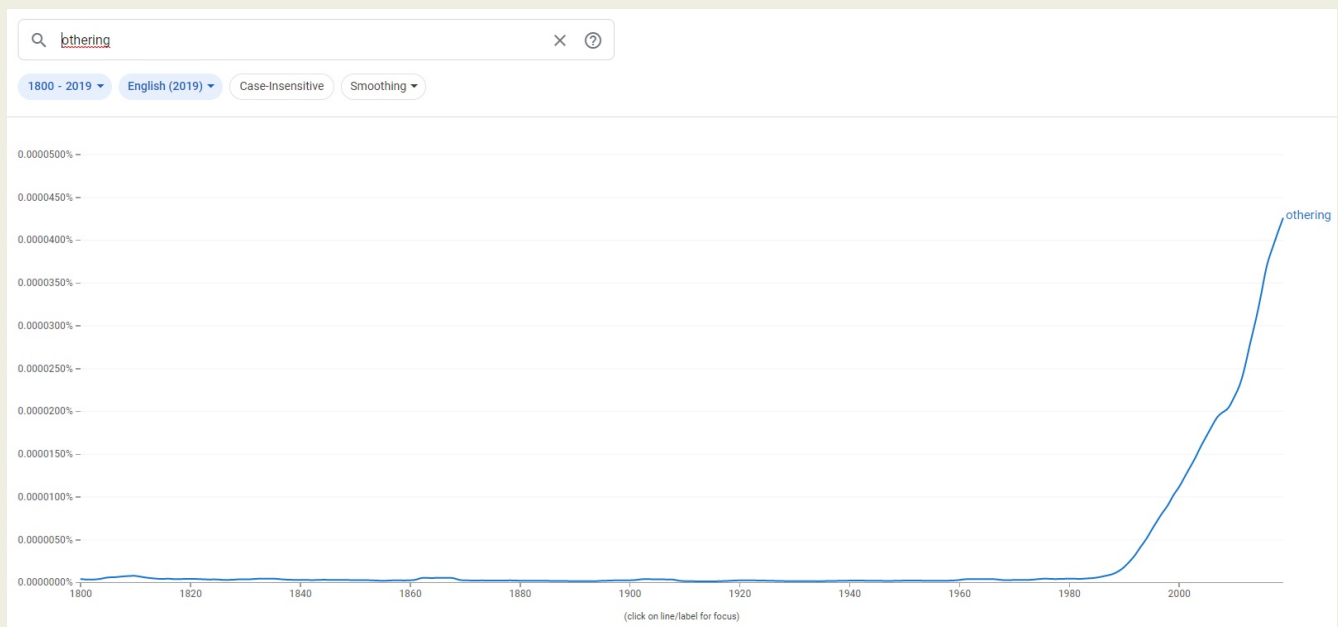
*Out of all the major political movements on Earth, none is more Orwellian than “social justice.” No other movement is so dedicated to achieving the opposite of what its slogans proclaim – or so aggressive in the warping of language.*

For example:

*1. The diversity and inclusion movement is nominally devoted to fervent “anti-racism.” In practice, however, they are the only prominent openly racist movement I have encountered during my life in the United States. Nowadays they routinely mock and dismiss critics for the color of their skin – then accuse those they mock and dismiss of “white fragility.”*

Recently, I noticed yet another fine mess of diversity and inclusion doublethink: the crusade against “othering.” What does “othering” mean? *Defining other groups of human beings as objectionably different in order to rationalize the poor treatment they receive at your hands.*

The crusade against “othering” has become a prominent component of the diversity and inclusive movement, with over 1.5M google hits for this odd neologism. Check out the Ngram:



The most noted skirmish of the anti-othering crusade happened in an English class at Iowa State, where the syllabus gave this now-notorious “GIANT WARNING”:

*GIANT WARNING: any instances of othering that you participate in intentionally (racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, sorophobia, transphobia, classism, mocking of mental health issues, body shaming, etc) in class are grounds for dismissal from the classroom. The same goes for any papers/projects: you cannot choose any topic that takes at its base that one side doesn't deserve the same basic human rights as you do (ie: no arguments against gay marriage, abortion, Black Lives Matter, etc).*

Yes, the media scandal only happened because the story was atypically dramatic. The professor was even ordered to fix her syllabus and “provided additional information regarding the First Amendment policies of the university.” Yet the “othering” meme – and the attendant crusade – are already commonplace in the humanities and social sciences.

What is so Orwellian about this crusade? *The fact that most of those who denounce “othering” exemplify the practices they denounce.* The diversity and inclusive movement has a broad list of odious outsiders they mention with scorn and treat with disdain: “straight cis white males,” adherents of traditional religions, conservatives, moderates, opponents of abortion, and even insufficiently radical liberals and progressives.

You might think those who preach against othering would strive to assure the world of their

hospitable intentions: “Just because you have other ideas doesn’t mean I’m going to other *you*.” Instead, they reliably do the opposite, responding to even mild dissent with anger and ostracism.

True, few professors threaten their students in writing. Yet for every educator who others unbelievers on the record, there are probably dozens – if not hundreds – who do so informally. Imagine you were a student of the chastised Iowa State professor. After she grudgingly affirms your First Amendment rights, would you feel comfortable submitting work he previously stated was grounds for dismissal? Not likely, because her initial statement so stridently othered you.

The moral: The crucial variable is not official class policy, but the attitude of the teacher. And teachers who *think* what the Iowa State professor *wrote* abound.

As far as I know, intolerant, thin-skinned, anti-intellectual educators have been around for... well, forever. What has changed is the Orwellian nature of their reaction to dissent. Traditional authoritarians othered openly. Orwellian proponents of “diversity and inclusion” other vast swaths of humanity while giving the evil eye to anyone who doubts their supreme commitment to compassion and acceptance.