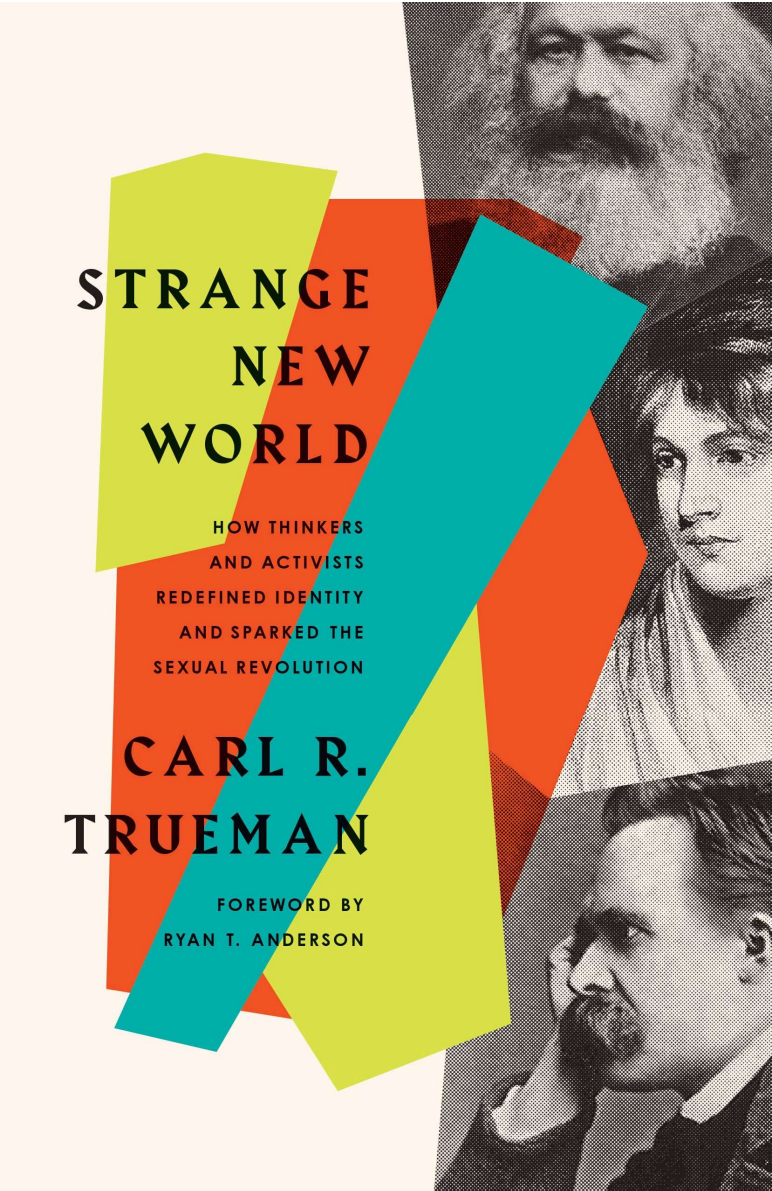


# CHAPTER 6

## *Plastic People, Liquid World*

### Major Premise:

The view of human identity as “plastic” (human identity is infinitely malleable) and the view of the world as “liquid” (society & culture no longer have stable institutional foundations) enable the conceptualization of alternative “communities”, such as the LGBTQ+ “community”.



## STRANGE NEW WORLD

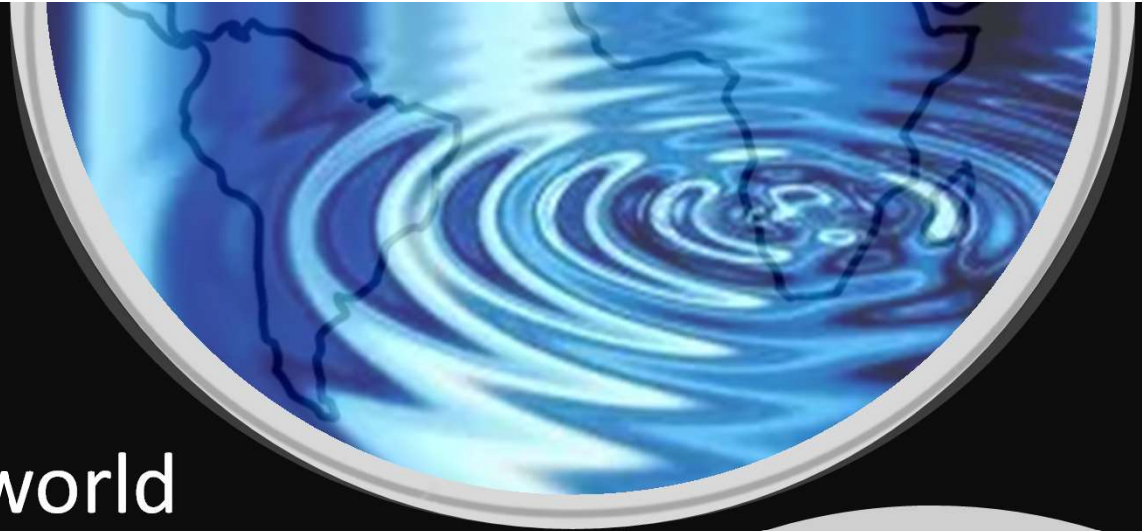
HOW THINKERS  
AND ACTIVISTS  
REDEFINED IDENTITY  
AND SPARKED THE  
SEXUAL REVOLUTION

CARL R.  
TRUEMAN

FOREWORD BY  
RYAN T. ANDERSON

## The Framework of Plasticity & Liquidity

The reality of “plastic” people and a “liquid” world can be better understood through the concept of personhood, the “politics of recognition,” and the idea of “imagined communities”.



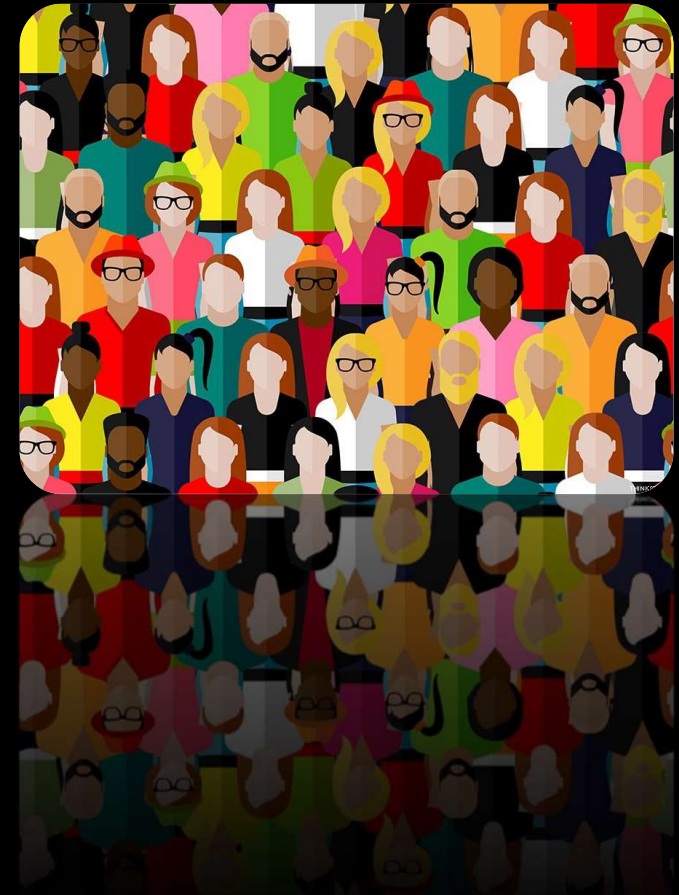
## What is a Person?

A person is more than his or her physical or genetic make-up. A person is “someone with a particular history” (p. 112.). Though we perceive ourselves as “free agents”, our sense of personhood is “constituted by the social relationships [we] have with other people” (p. 113). And “we do not simply wish to be free. We also want to belong . . . to be accepted & affirmed” (p. 115).



# The Politics of Recognition

The *recognition* in the “politics of recognition” is the kind “that is given to us in the act of belonging to a community by having our identity as part of that community recognized” (p. 115). The *politics* in the “politics of recognition” is about who gets to control the “framework of recognition” — “the set of cultural standards and expectations” to which people must conform to belong to a given community (p. 116).



## Imagined Communities

Any sufficiently large community, like a nation-state, is constituted by members who “must imagine that they hold things in common that give them a coherent identity as a body of people” (p. 117). For a nation-state, a “strong national narrative” is necessary” ( p. 118).



## Imagined Communities

The de-authorization of traditional narratives and the (nearly infinite) proliferation of information on the internet have made the traditional communities of family, church, and state into “battle-zones” rather than the basis of “social unity” (p. 120).



## Recognition and Narrative

The “current conflicts that are causing such tensions within Western democracies” are leading to fragmentation on the basis of “race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, etc. . . . because the imagined communities to which people choose to belong lack any shared narrative” (pp. 124-125).



## Recognition and Narrative

“Human selves exist in dialogue with the terms of recognition set by the wider world. When that world is liquid, those terms are set by the loudest voices and the most dominant narratives” (p. 127).





## Discussion Questions

1. How do you think Carl True man is doing so far with his analysis?
2. How have many American institutions (civil, religious, educational, etc. ) become platforms for personal expression rather than institutions for passing on shared tradition?
3. Where have you seen yourself acting as an expressive individual in your life?
4. What shared narrative or culture do you try to cultivate in your family?
5. What community [or sub-community] do you find yourself putting your identity in?

## Discussion Questions

6. What are you willing to do and how far are you willing to go to defend your values in today's society?
7. In what ways are our current times unprecedented? In what ways are they not?
8. In what ways is the Church an "imagined community"? In what ways is it not?
9. The gospel is a narrative and a "meta-narrative." In what ways can or should we work to make it the "dominant narrative"?