

FACES OF OPPRESSION

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Oppression & Justice (Fall 2013)

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Opening Thoughts

- Oppression results from everyday practices, policies, and habits (inc. well-intentioned ones)
 - Embedded, systemic, structural
- *Who* can be oppressed and *how* can change over time, in different contexts
 - Not homogenous – varied experiences
- *What are some of the observable effects of oppression?*
- *Are there forms of oppression that might not be visible or clearly observable?*
 - *If so, how do we identify and ameliorate them?*

Effects of privilege

- ⇒ Many opportunities
- ⇒ Make most public & private decisions
- ⇒ Empowered & retain power
- ⇒ Significant social mobility
- ⇒ Determine social norms of acceptability, desirability
- ⇒ More social/political/economic resources
- ⇒ Generally believed, included, trusted

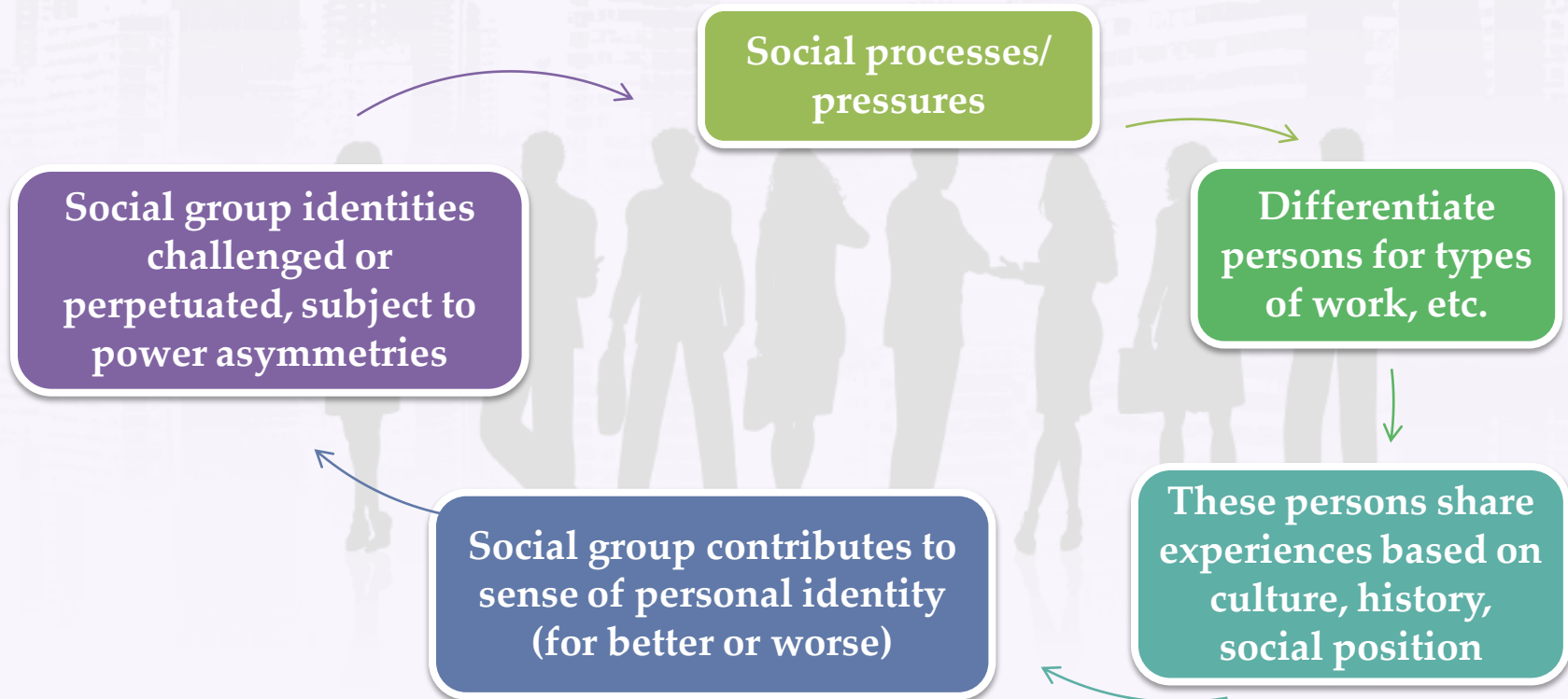
Effects of oppression

- ⇒ Limited power in public & private decision-making
- ⇒ Severely vulnerable/ highly susceptible to coercion
- ⇒ Compromised legal/social/political standing
- ⇒ Limited options for work, education, group affiliation, etc.
- ⇒ Activities frequently stigmatized
- ⇒ Experience routine skepticism, ostracization, looks of fear/disgust from others
- ⇒ Labeled as Other – deviant, abnormal

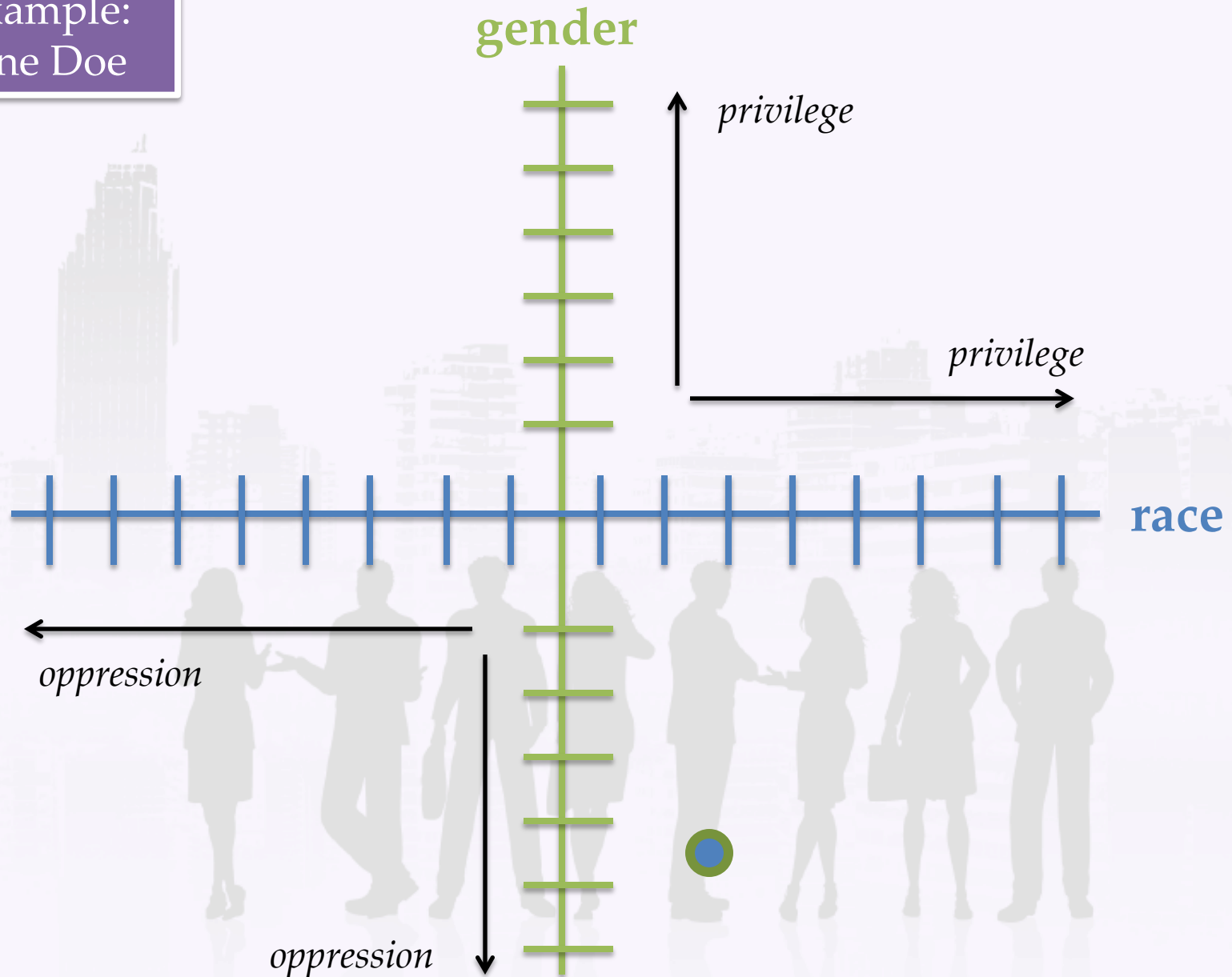
Comes in degrees

Social Groups & Identity

- Personal identity and traits largely the product of social, relational ties
 - Some of these ties chosen, many others *given* or *forced*

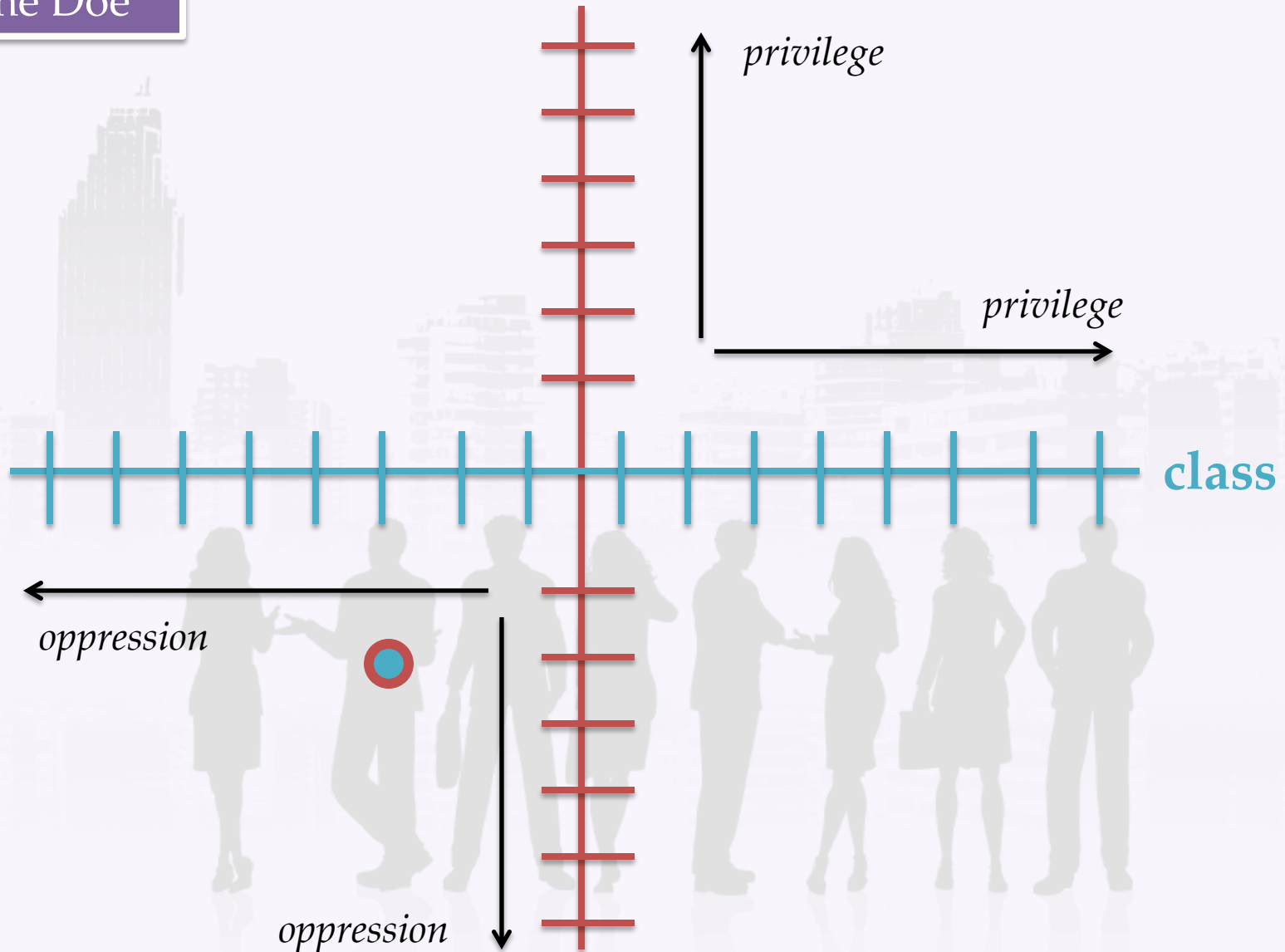


Example:
Jane Doe

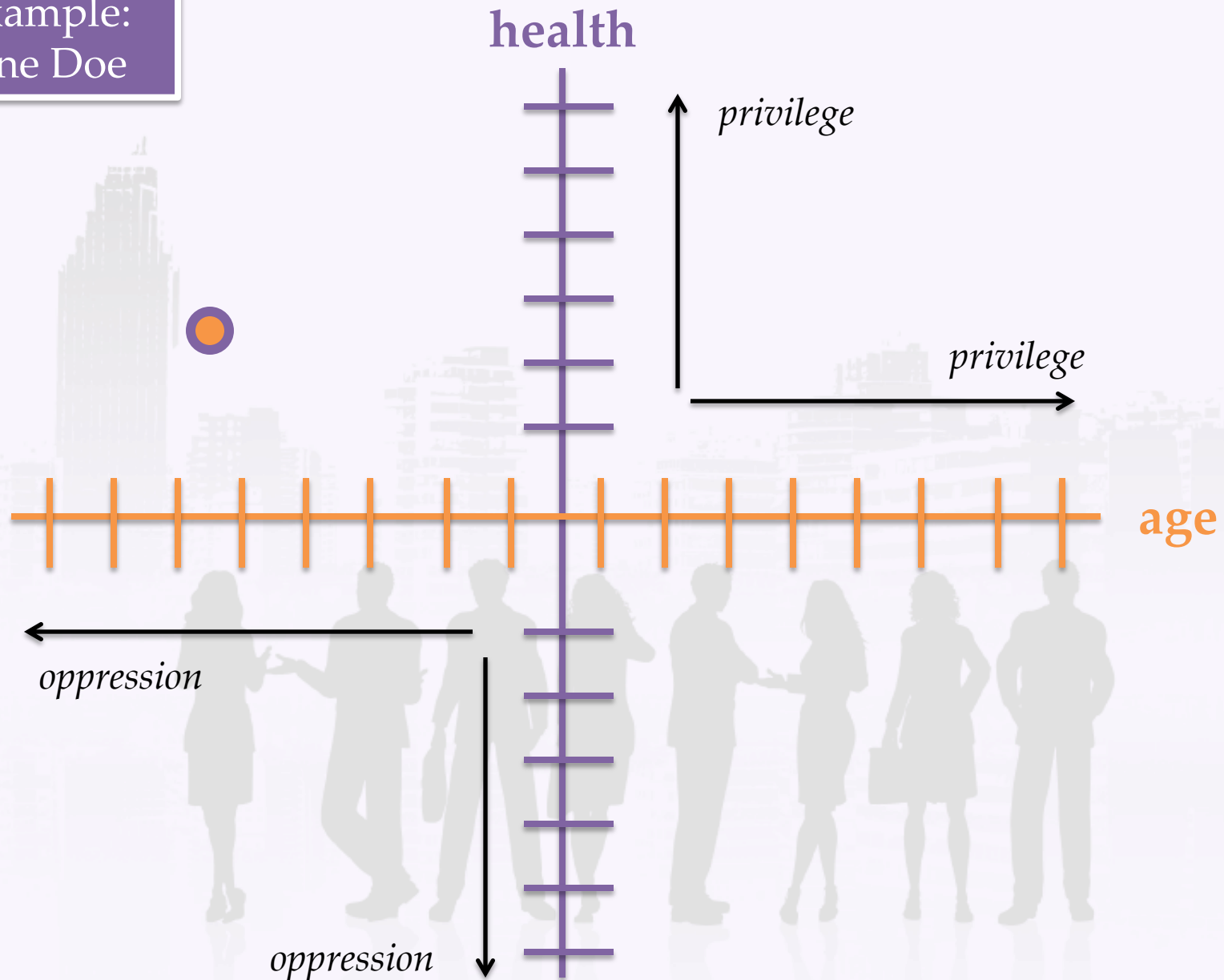


Example:
Jane Doe

sexual orientation



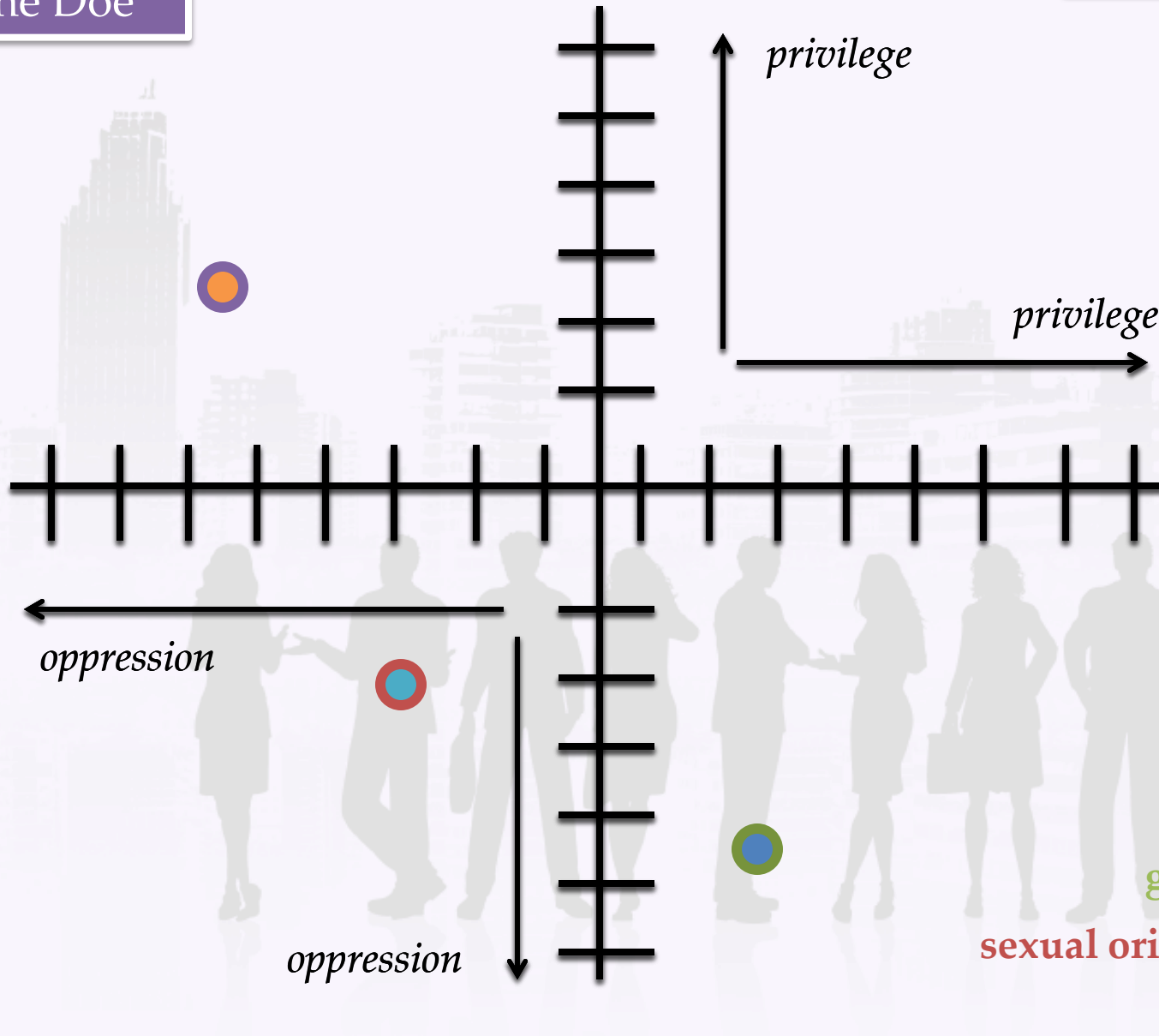
Example:
Jane Doe



Example:
Jane Doe

Is this still vastly over-simplified?

Yes.



- Depends on economic/ social/ political/ interpersonal context
- Types of privilege and oppression can vary
- Not cleanly or completely quantifiable
- Could have different position in public and private spheres

Exploitation

- Structural relation between haves and have-nots:
 - Productive labor, power, wealth, status, care, emotional energies, time are systematically sacrificed by one group for the sake of another's enrichment
- Justice demands “institutional forms that enable all to develop and use their capacities in a way that does not inhibit, but rather can enhance, similar development and use in others” (49)
- *What are some controversial examples of exploitation?*
 - *How should we determine whether these gray-area cases are cases of exploitation?*

Marginalization

- Exclusion from useful, productive, respect-worthy participation in certain spheres or decision-making
 - False, damaging notions of dependency
- *Why might marginalization be the “most dangerous form of oppression”?*

Powerlessness

- Problems of status privilege:
 - Lack of opportunities to develop capacities, receive recognition
 - Minimal to no daily autonomy
 - Outside norms of respectability
- *What are the ways in which powerlessness can reinforce other forms of oppression?*

Cultural Imperialism

- Dominant groups determine norms for how people ought to be valued, treated, categorized
- Subordinated groups marked as Other
 - Stereotypes + Invisibility
 - Double-consciousness
- *What are some concrete examples of cultural imperialism? Has our society adequately addressed these cases?*

Violence

- Systematic, random, irrational attacks or threats on persons and property
- “According to the prevailing social logic, some circumstances make such violence more ‘called for’ than others” (62)
 - Socially accepted or reinforced
- *Besides refraining from personally assaulting someone or destroying his/her property, how should we curb violence in our communities?*



Questions? Comments?