

COV&R'07: Colloquium on Violence & Religion
4-8 July 2007, Soesterberg, NL
www.girard.nl



Undermining Mimetic Contagion on the Net: Argumentation Tools as Critical Voices

Simon Buckingham Shum

Senior Lecturer & Hypermedia Discourse Project Lead
Knowledge Media Institute, The Open University
Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA, U.K.

<http://kmi.open.ac.uk/people/sbs>
sbs@acm.org

KNOWLEDGE MEDIA
KMi
I N S T I T U T E

Overview

- Reasoned, respectful discourse
- The internet as mimetic medium
- Internet discourse
- Mapping argumentation and dialogue
- Positive mimesis
- Open questions

Reasoned, respectful discourse

- **Jaw jaw not war war**
- **Argumentation as a (the?) principled way to contest truth, or appropriate pragmatic action**
- **Persuasive discourse as a strategy for, and inevitable medium of, positive and negative mimetic contagion**

The Net

- A 'frictionless' *mEmetic* medium → *mĭmetic rivalry*
 - "Mimetic contagion on a *global scale*" - Girard
- *We're drowning in information and starving for meaning*
- *Attention* is the scarce resource (mimesis as attention?)
- *Identity* as networks of social and conceptual relations, extending for many into cyberspace
- *Hypermedia* for weaving multiple narratives
- *Polarisation or dissolving* effect on prejudices?

Discourse on the Net

- **Unprecedented ability to publish, discuss and tune to multimedia channels**

blogs, wikis, newsfeeds, social bookmarking, podcasts, screencasts, webcasts...

- **Discourse tools do not promote reflective, critical thinking**
- **Multimedia annotation tools can insert critical voices that subvert popular media**
- **Dialogue and argumentation tools can elevate the level of discourse, exposing implicit assumptions and fallacious logic (possibly hidden intentionally)**

Example: 'argumentation' on YouTube

national front Counter demo 15/06/07



Movie posted by National Front on YouTube to demonstrate their activities

Example: 'argumentation' on YouTube

National Front Counter Demo Against Muslims



Movie posted by National Front on YouTube to demonstrate their activities

Example: 'argumentation' on YouTube

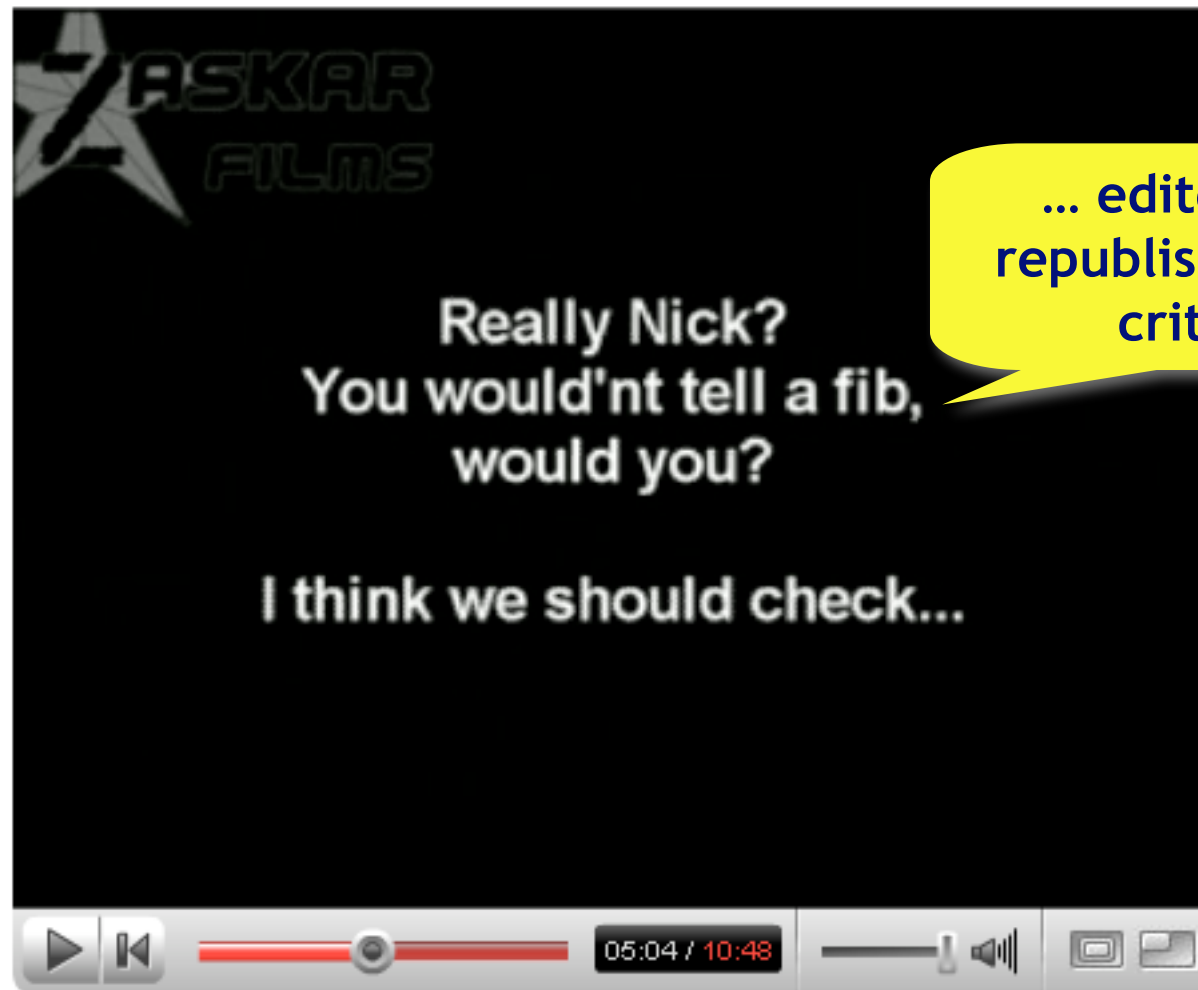
BNP scum



<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=qD0zFX3BFz4>

Example: 'argumentation' on YouTube

BNP scum



<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=qD0zFX3BFz4>

Example: 'argumentation' on YouTube

BNP scum

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=qD0zFX3BFz4>

The screenshot shows a YouTube video player interface. The video title is "BNP scum". The video description reads: "Angle has only made it to one council meeting since 2004. She has also nearly been kicked out as a councillor. Once for assaulting a PC when pissed up and once for failing to delcare council tax arrears when voting on council spending." The video is from the channel "zaskarfilms", added on June 29, 2007. The video has tags: "BNP", "fascists", "antinazi", "antifascist". The video URL is "http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qD0zFX3B". A yellow callout box points to the video player area with the text: "BNP election video edited and republished by a critic... Videos can be posted as 'replies' to others, and tagged with the same keywords so that they are identically indexed".

Try out the NEW (beta) version of this page!

Added: June 29, 2007
From: [zaskarfilms](#) [Subscribe](#) to zaskarfilms

All footage from the BNP, with a bit of editing showing what scum they really are, and all in thier own words ([less](#))

Category [News & Politics](#)

Tags: [BNP](#) [fascists](#) [antinazi](#) [antifascist](#) ([more](#))

URL <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qD0zFX3B>

Embed `<object width="425" height="350"><param r`

[Back to Councillor Index](#)

Keighley Town Council © 2006 developed and powered by [Webanywhere](#)

[See All Videos](#)

[Manchester](#)

BNP election video edited and republished by a critic...

Videos can be posted as "replies" to others, and tagged with the same keywords so that they are identically indexed

Example: 'argumentation' on YouTube

BNP scum

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=qD0zFX3BFz4>



Example: 'argumentation' on YouTube

The image shows a screenshot of a YouTube video page. At the top, the YouTube logo and navigation links are visible. A blue banner with a lightbulb icon and the text "You have great taste. Donate it to others less gifted. Share a video today." is displayed. The video title is "nick griffin's kieghtly bnp speech trial free speech". The video player shows a dark, grainy image of a person speaking. To the right of the video player, a yellow callout box contains the text: "BNP meeting secretly filmed by BBC, and basis for a court case. Recorded by a viewer from a documentary, and then posted to web". Below the video player, there are options to rate, save to favorites, share, and flag as inappropriate. The video has 1,864 views, 39 comments, and 14 favorites. A list of related videos is shown at the bottom, including "BNP Gay Pornography", "bnp dinner", "BNP Nazi Pride", "EURO 2008 Qualifier - Latvia vs. Denmark", and "EURO 2008 Qualifier - Latvia vs. Denmark".

BNP meeting secretly filmed by BBC, and basis for a court case.

Recorded by a viewer from a documentary, and then posted to web

Example: 'argumentation' on YouTube (annotation via mojiti.com)

Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West, Part III



Save Share Embed

Click to download one of the following files:

- Original video file
- Spot Set in SubRip format (*.srt)
- Spot Set in SubViewer format (*.sub)
- Spot Set in Simple Lyric format (*.lrc)
- Spot Set in SMIL format (*.smil)

Select a Spot Set (1 total)

Create Your Own Spot Set

Spot Organize (spots)

Organize + Add Spot

Click any icon below to add annotations

Text Spots

Shape Spots

Media Spots

Mojiti tools for adding text, highlighted regions, voice and video annotations

Example: 'argumentation' on YouTube (annotation via mojiti.com)

The screenshot displays the Mojiti website interface. At the top, the logo "mojiti" is followed by the tagline "video in your own words" and a link to "Sign In or register for a free account". Below the navigation bar, three numbered steps are shown: "1 Select any online video", "2 Personalize it with Mojiti Spots", and "3". The main content area features a video player for "Do schools today kill creativity? (TEDTalks, Ken Robinson)". An annotation is overlaid on the video, stating: "Sir Ken Robinson ([wikipedia entry](#)) was the chair of the 1999 [All Our Futures](#) report for DfES. by iusher". Below the video player are buttons for "Save", "Share", and "Embed". To the right, a "Select a Spot Set" panel is visible, showing a list of spot sets created by "iusher". The list includes: "Shakespeare's Father" (Start: 06:48, End: 06:53), "Education Systems" (Start: 08:42, End: 08:48), "Academic Ability" (Start: 11:55, End: 12:00), and "Views of Intelligence" (Start: 13:09, End: 13:14). A yellow callout bubble points to the annotation, containing the text: "Mojiti allows you to add your own annotations to movies on YouTube and other sites".

Example: a “scientific argument” on National Front website

www.natfront.com/prejudic.html

Patterns of Prejudice

A revised and updated version of an article by Steve Brady which originally appeared in *Vanguard* magazine in April 1987.

One of the favourite accusations thrown at the National Front by its multiracialist critics is that we are simply a bunch of bigots, that our stance on race, at the core of our political philosophy, is just ignorant prejudice against people whose skin colour is no more than a superficial manifestation. Is this so? Are our racial policies merely the product of prejudice, or are they instead based on sober realism and the courage to face facts?

Example: a “scientific argument” on National Front website

“Never Fit

We argue, for example, that West Indian and other Negroes will never fit in, as multiracialists claim, to become equal and integrated members of a predominantly White society. This is because they are inherently unfitted to do so intellectually, and are thus condemned to exist in White society as a permanent underclass, confined to the lower social strata and, not unnaturally, bitterly resentful of the alien society in which they are thus trapped. This resentment will inevitably explode into violence, rioting and crime.”

Example: a “scientific argument” on National Front website

“What are the facts? Over almost seventy years, in study after study, conducted by scientists and educationalists in numerous countries, studies conducted by such bastions of racial rationalism as the Inner London Education Authority, the US Army, and Harvard and Oxford Universities, **on every measure of intellectual ability and educational attainment Blacks perform significantly worse, on average, than Whites. In the case of average IQ, for example, the average Negro figure is only 85% of the White average. In fact the higher the proportion of White genes the higher the intelligence: a pure-bred Negro fresh out of Africa scores nearer 70%.**”

Readers can consult *Race* by Dr. John R. Baker, former Reader in Cytology at Oxford University, published by the Oxford University Press, or *The Testing of Negro Intelligence*, an exhaustive review of hundreds of studies demonstrating racial differences in intellectual ability by Dr. Audrey M. Shuey, and of course there is *The Bell Curve* by Herrnstein and Murray.

Example: a “scientific argument” on National Front website

“If "social deprivation" and "racial discrimination" are responsible for the poor performance of Negroes, groups such as the American Indians, who score considerably worse than American Blacks on every measure of social deprivation, would be expected to do worse, or at least as badly, as Blacks. In fact they do a lot better in the same tests.”

Example: a “scientific argument” on National Front website

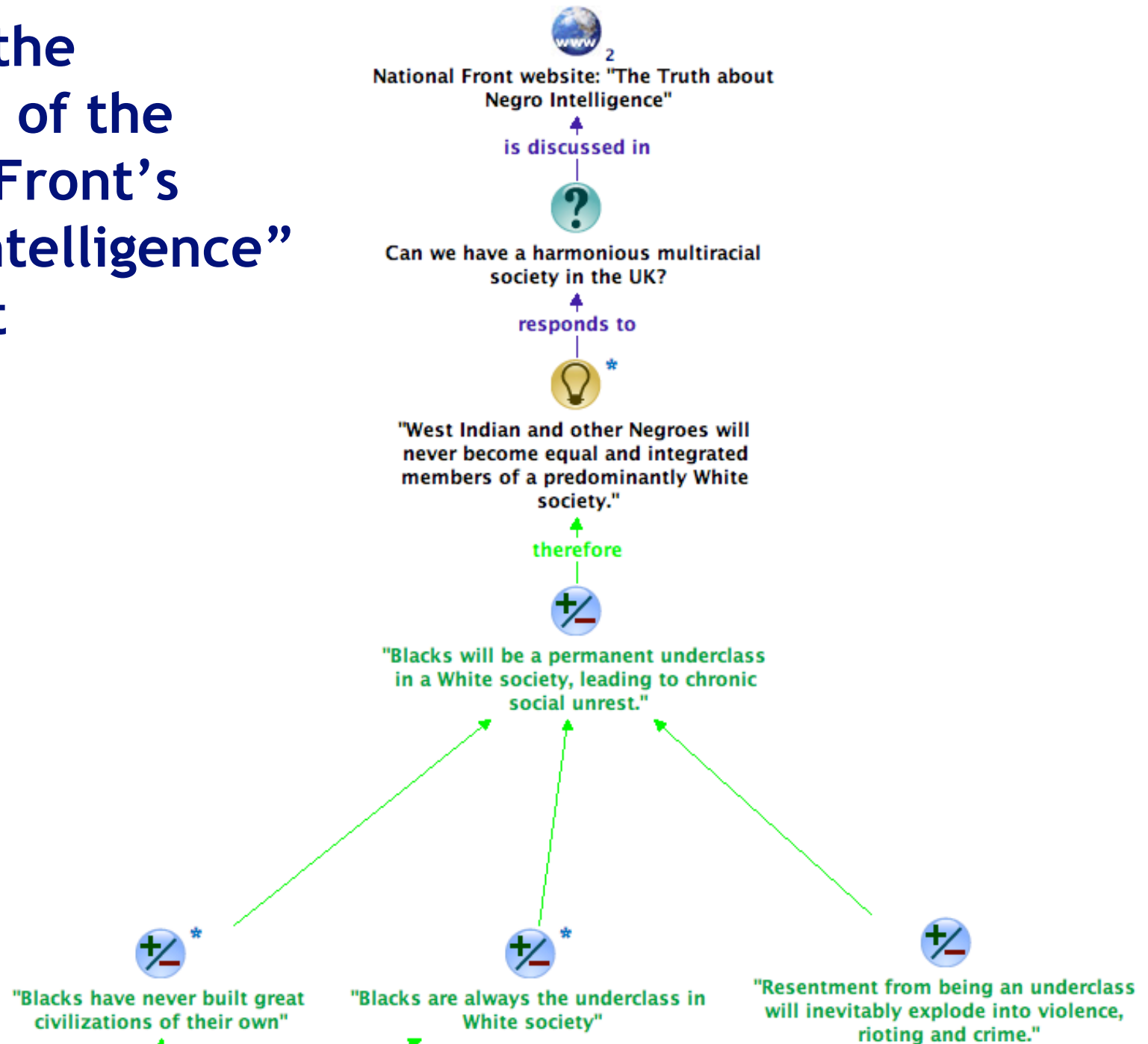
“Real World

Stepping out from the arcane field of intelligence measurement, what do we see in the real world? We see exactly what honest psychologists' conclusions would lead us to expect. Negroes, innately less intelligent, are at the bottom of every White social heap, but this is blamed by advocates of the dogma and their tan-skinned imitators on "White racism."

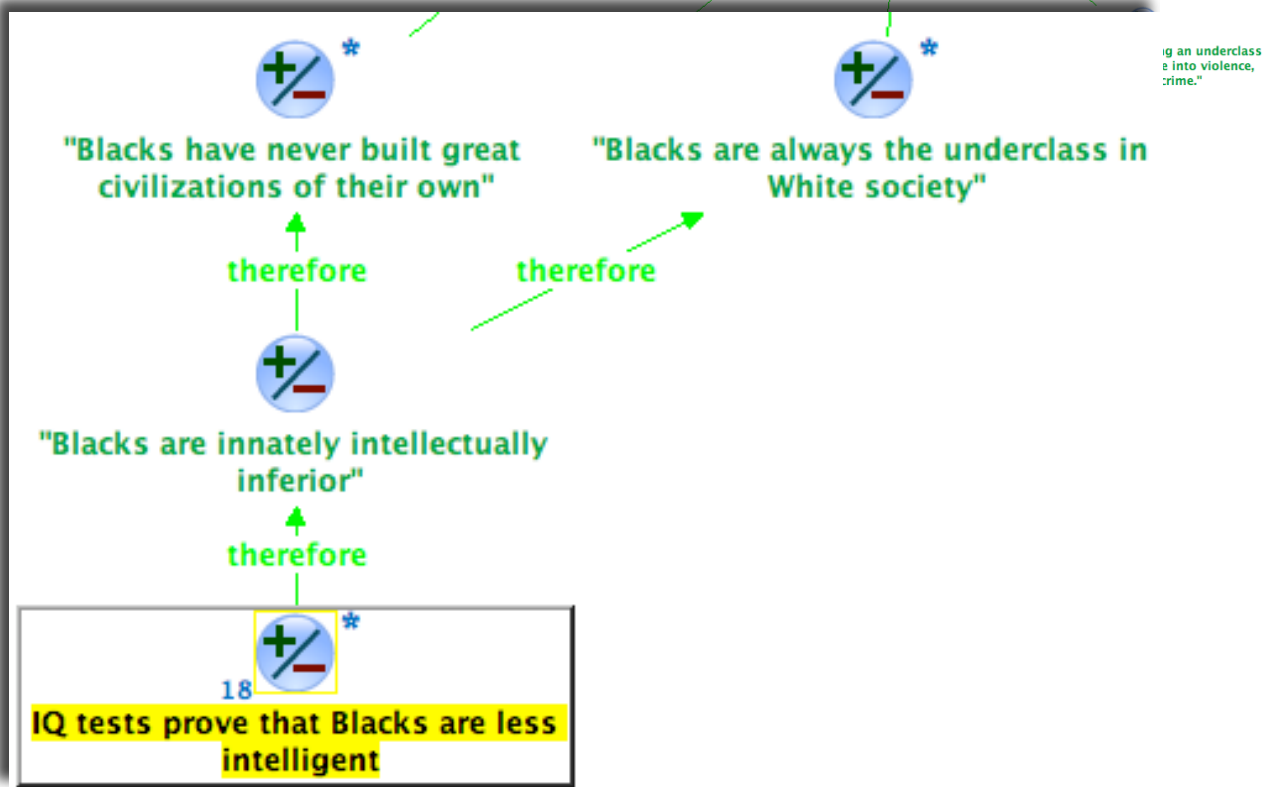
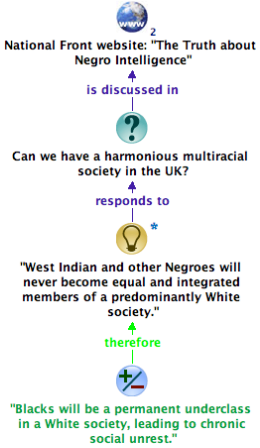
[...]

“So what about Black performance when there are no Whites to be "racist"? What did the Negro accomplish in Africa before the White Man came? As Baker illustrates in *Race*, virtually nothing.”

Mapping the structure of the National Front's "negro intelligence" argument





Mapping the structure of the National Front's "negro intelligence" argument

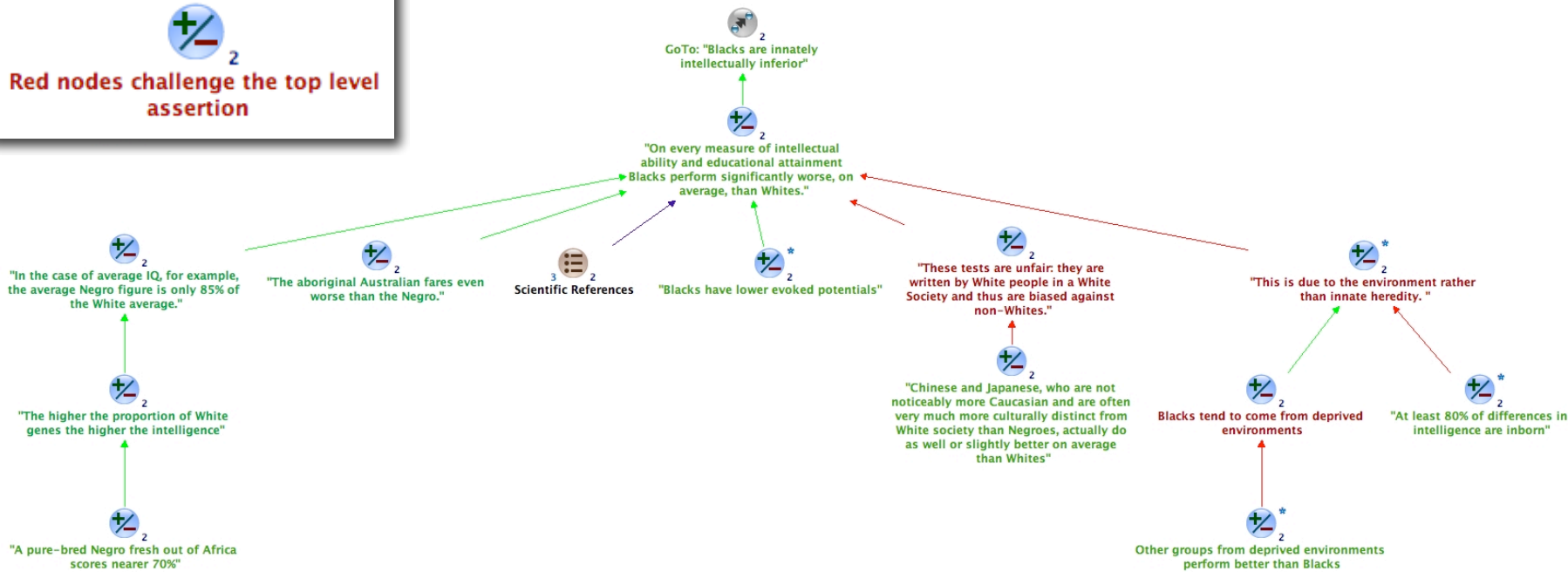


Mapping the structure of the National Front's "negro intelligence" argument

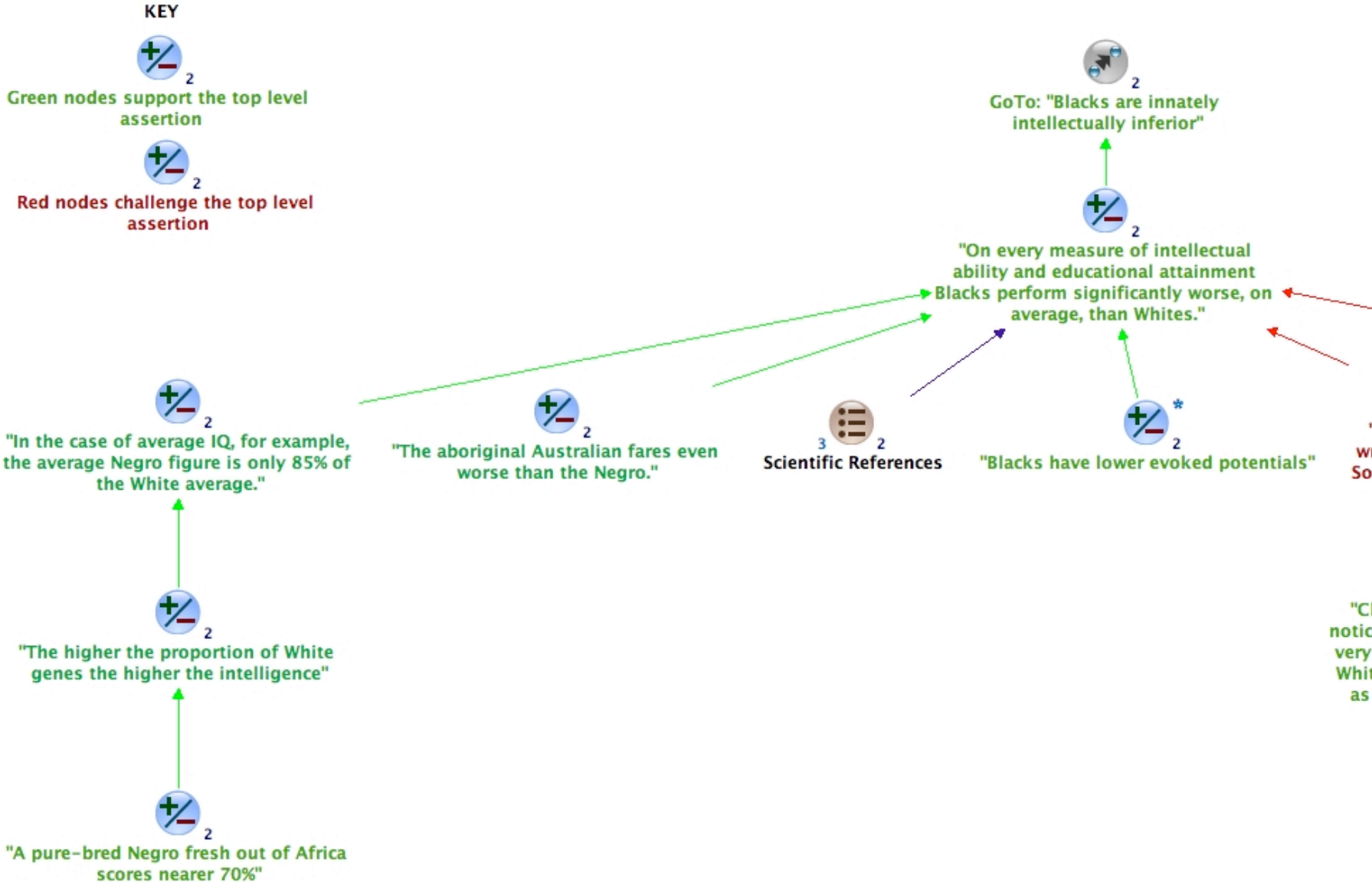
KEY

 **Green nodes support the top level assertion**

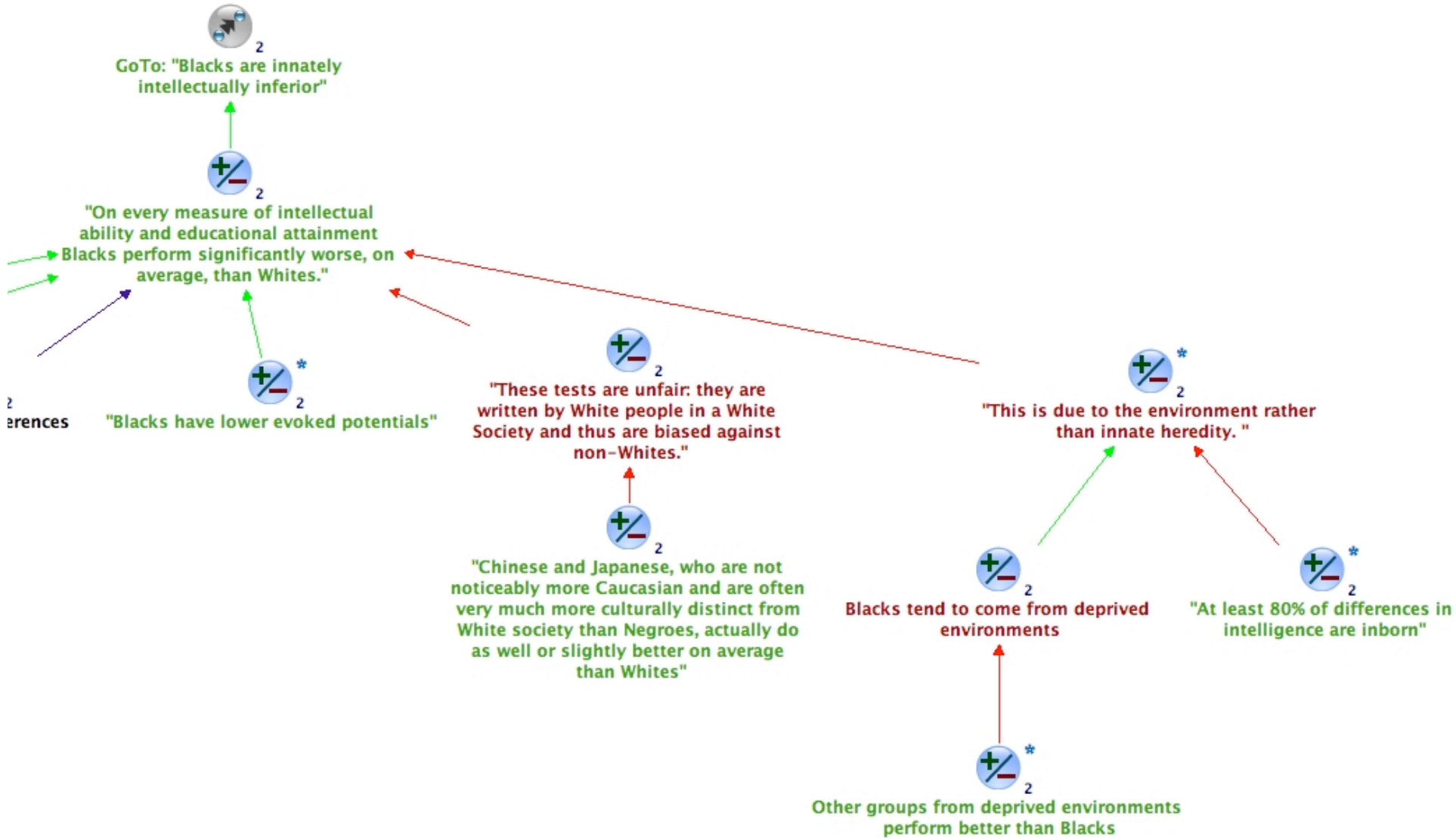
 **Red nodes challenge the top level assertion**



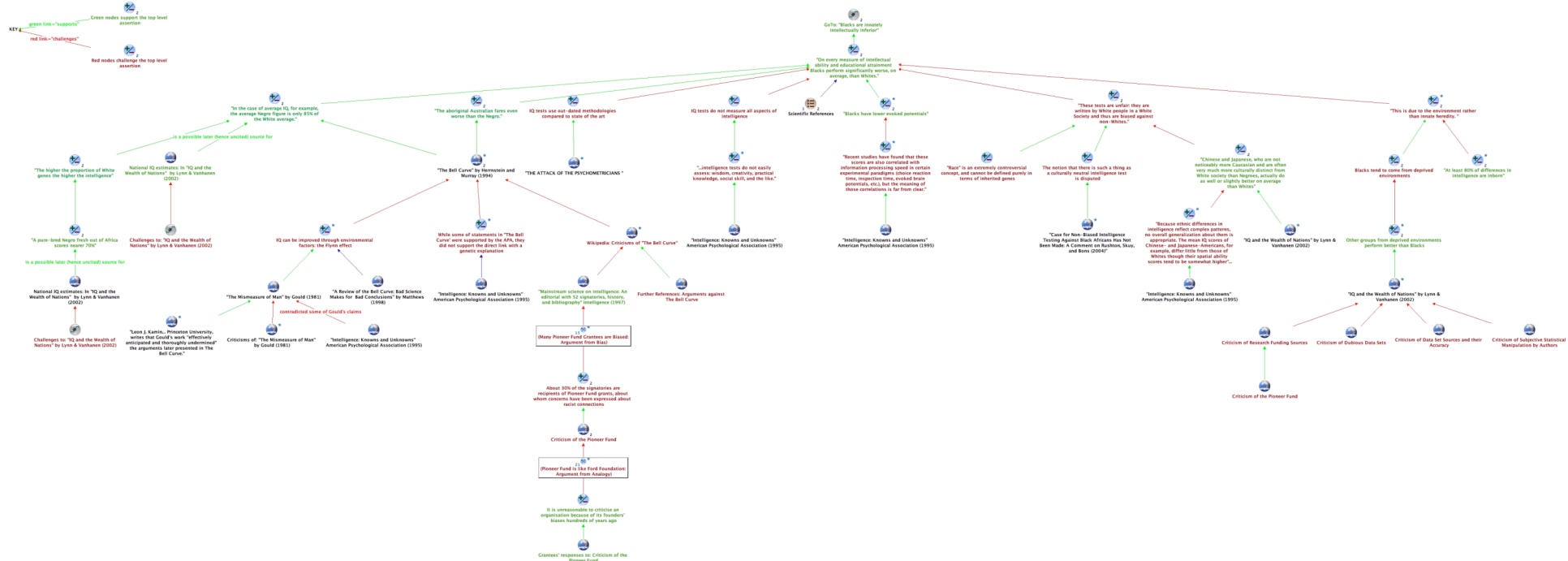
Mapping the structure of the National Front's "negro intelligence" argument



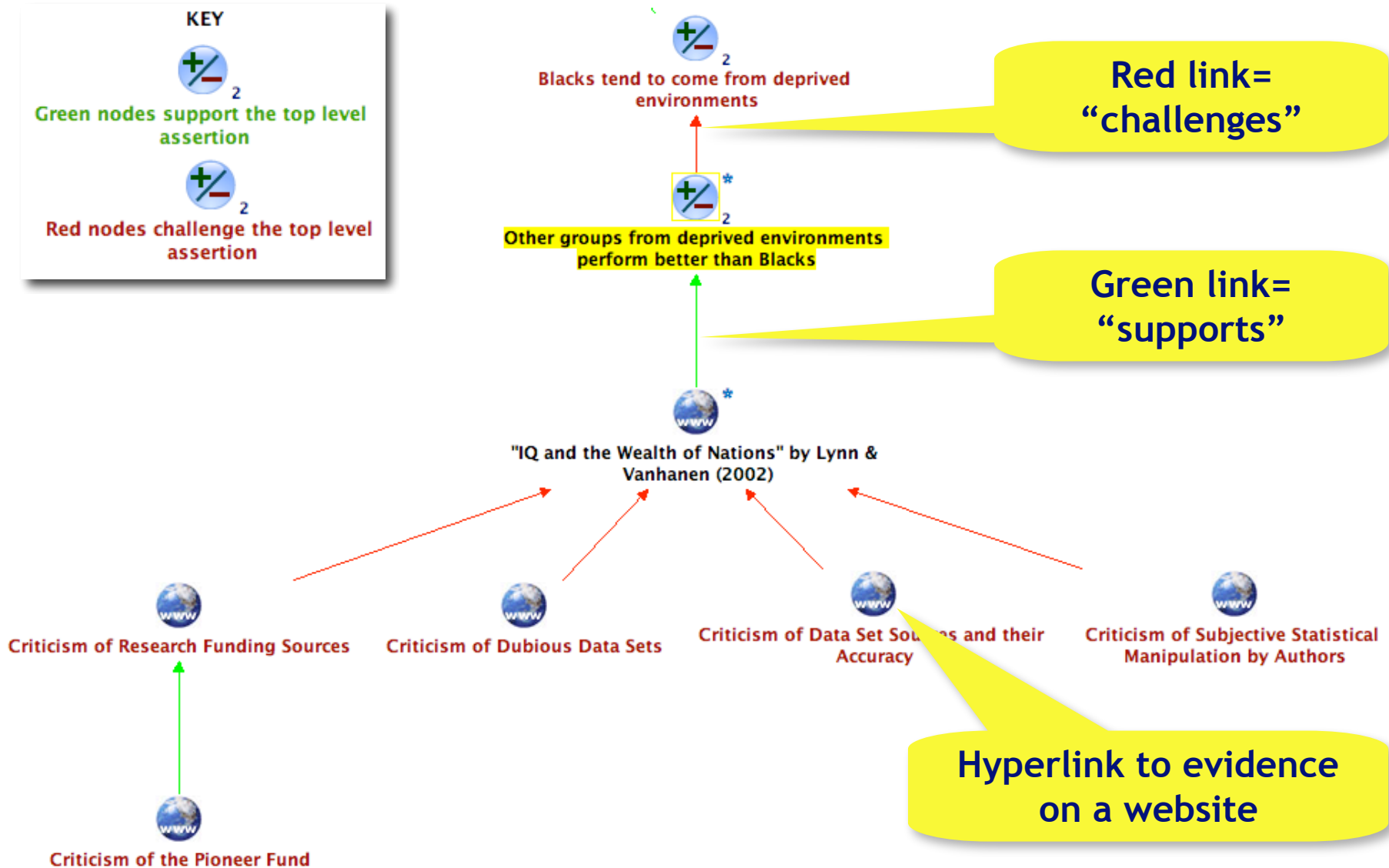
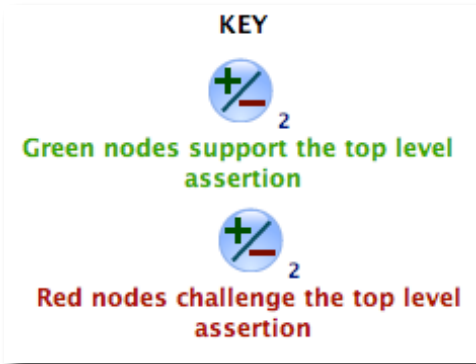
Mapping the structure of the National Front's "negro intelligence" argument



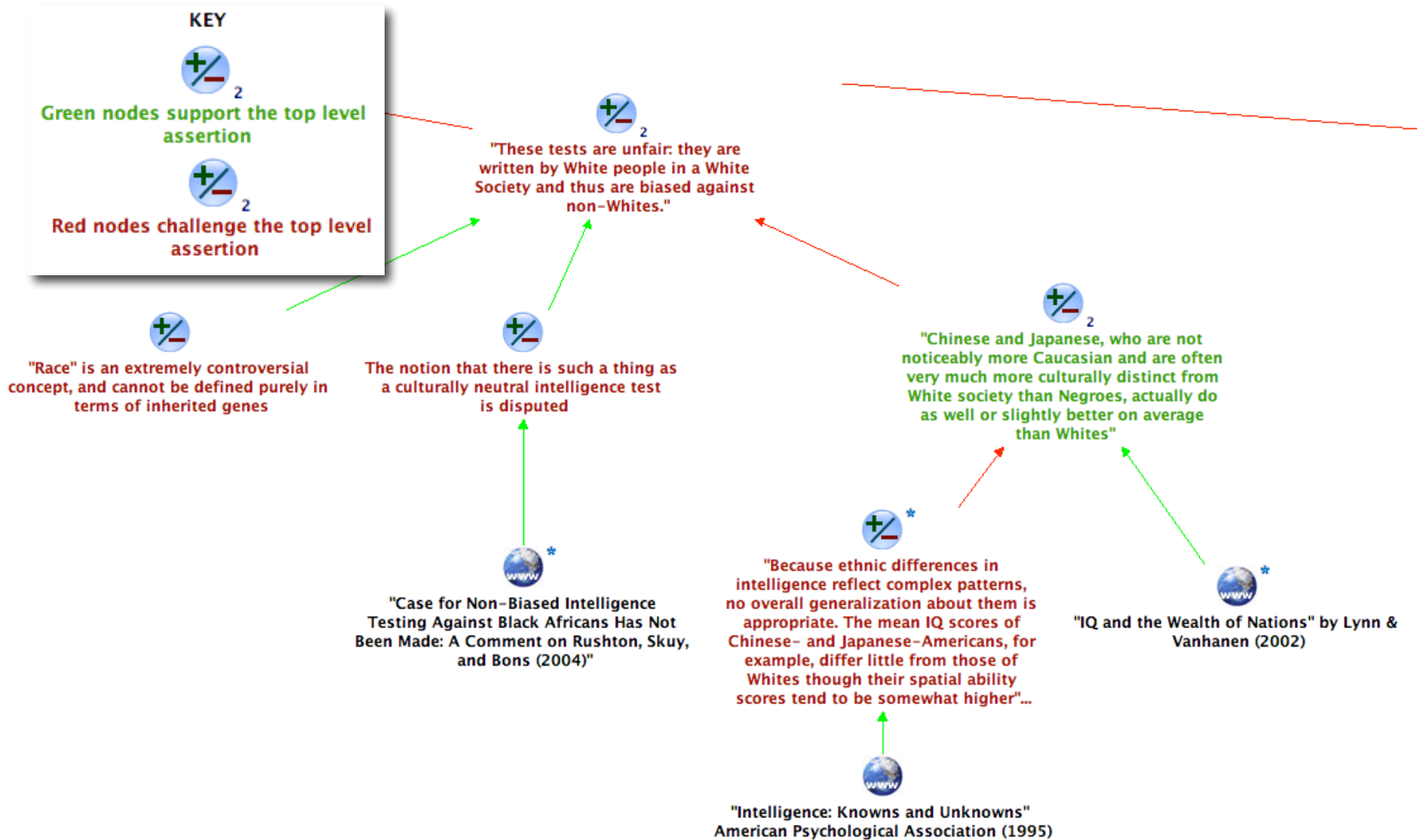
Refuting the NF “negro intelligence” argument using argument mapping



Refuting the NF “negro intelligence” argument using argument mapping

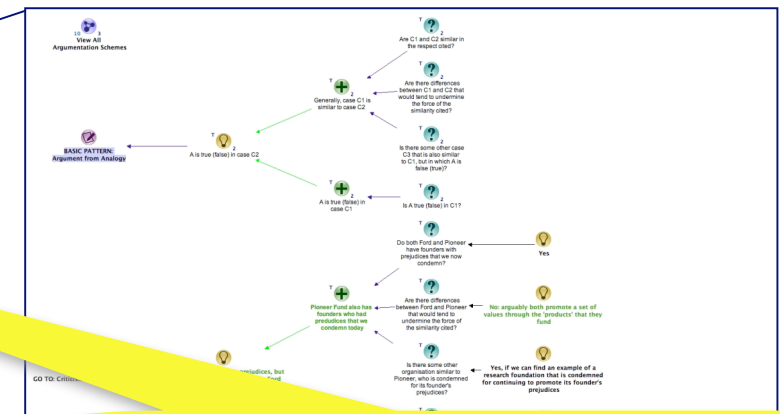
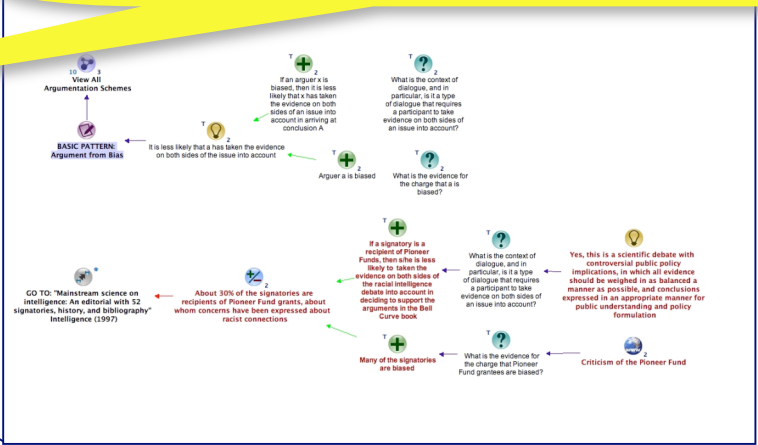
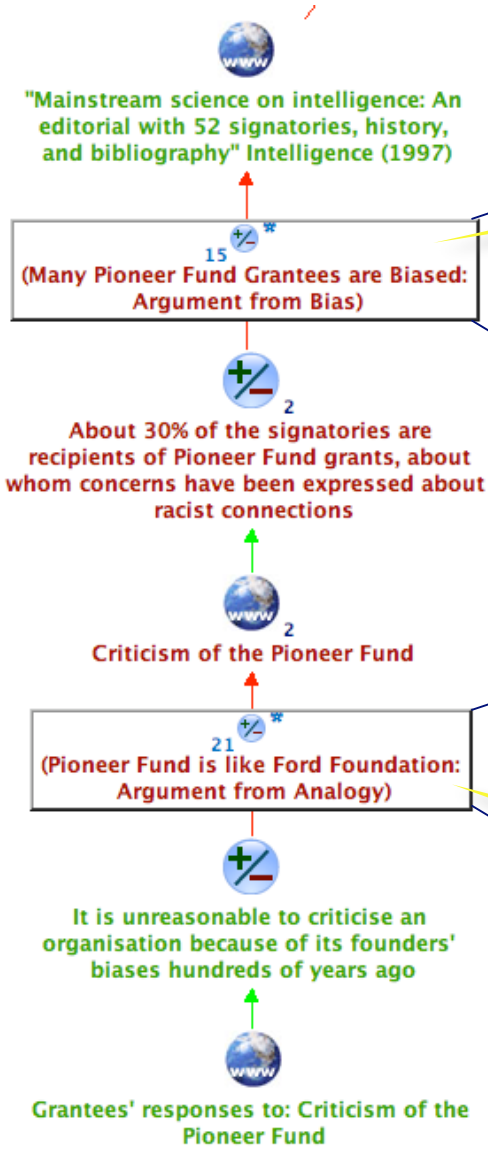


Refuting the NF “negro intelligence” argument using argument mapping



Refuting the NF “negro intelligence” argument using argument mapping

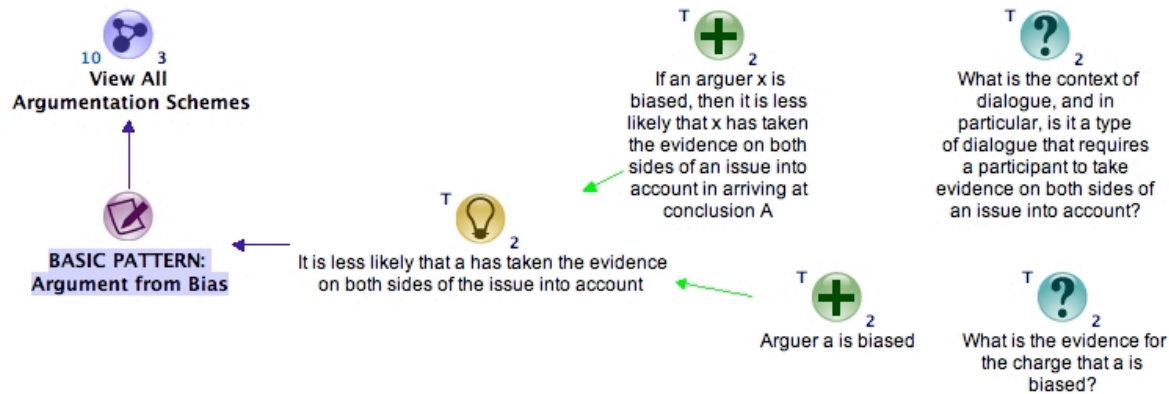
The structure of an “Argument from Bias” can be exposed..



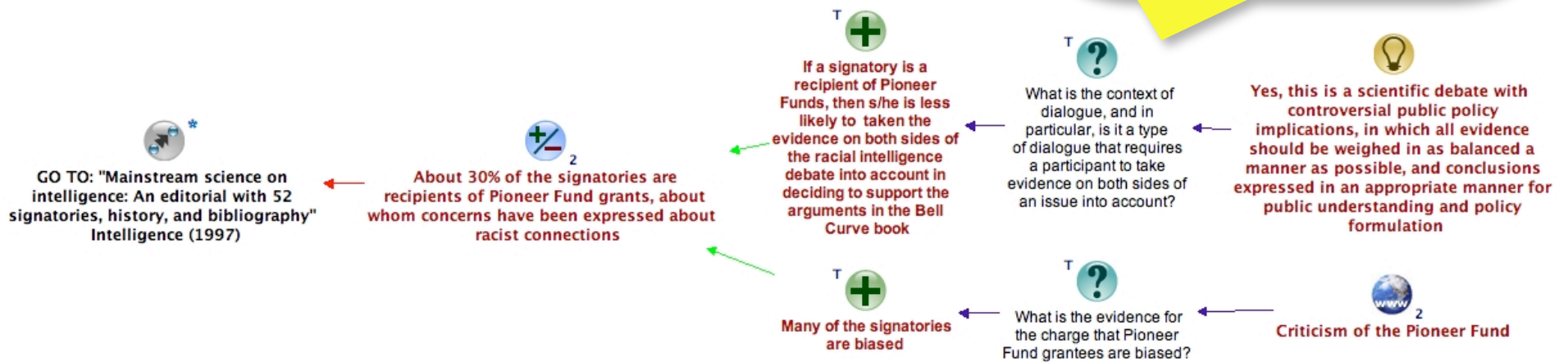
The structure of an “Argument from Analogy” can be exposed..

Refuting the NF “negro intelligence” argument using argument mapping

Template for an “Argument from Bias”





Instantiating the “Argument from Bias” template





Template for an "Argument from Analogy"



BASIC PATTERN:
Argument from Analogy



A is true (false) in case C2



Generally, case C1 is
similar to case C2


Are C1 and C2 similar in
the respect cited?


Are there differences
between C1 and C2 that
would tend to undermine
the force of the
similarity cited?

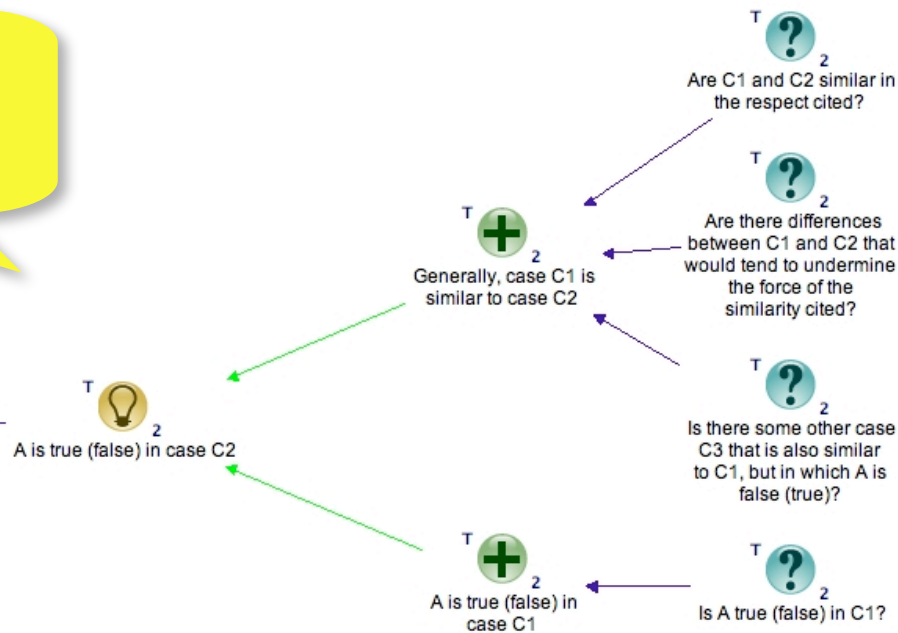

Is there some other case
C3 that is also similar
to C1, but in which A is
false (true)?


A is true (false) in
case C1


Is A true (false) in C1?

Template for an "Argument from Analogy"

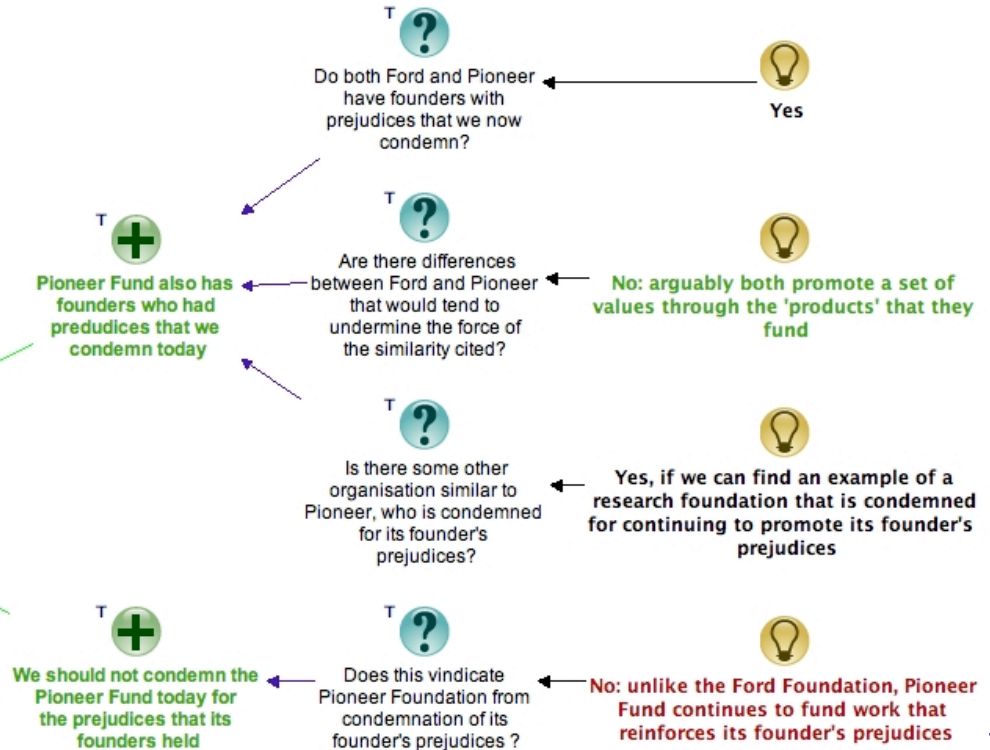
BASIC PATTERN:
Argument from Analogy



Instantiating the "Argument from Analogy" template

GO TO: Criticism of the Pioneer Fund

Henry Ford held dubious prejudices, but we do not use these to condemn Ford Company today



Embedding a website inside another

The top part of the image shows a video player with a video of Nick Griffin, a Parliamentary Candidate for Keighley, British National Party. The video player interface includes a play button, a progress bar at 04:08 / 10:48, and volume controls.

The bottom part of the image shows a flowchart diagram illustrating the embedding process. At the bottom is a globe icon labeled "Criticism of the Pioneer Fund". A green arrow points up to another globe icon labeled "Criticism of Research Funding Sources". From there, a red arrow points to a globe icon labeled "Criticism of Dubious Data Sets". Another red arrow points to a globe icon labeled "Criticism of Data Set Sources and their Accuracy". A fourth red arrow points to a globe icon labeled "Criticism of Subjective Statistical Manipulation by Authors". These four globe icons all have red arrows pointing to a central globe icon labeled "'IQ and the Wealth of Nations' by Lynn & Vanhanen (2002)". From this central globe, a green arrow points up to a globe icon labeled "Other groups from deprived environments perform better than Blacks". Finally, a red arrow points to a globe icon labeled "Blacks tend to come from deprived environments".

www.mywebsite.net

Video somewhere on the web

My critique (e.g. an argument analysis) linked to the video to provide a commentary



Prior to argumentation
– and during it –
we often need to switch to
dialogue
to build common ground

Dialogue Mapping (Jeff Conklin) **for deliberation** **over “wicked problems”** (Horst Rittel)

- ***Participatory deliberation***
 - how to define a problem
 - what the success criteria are
 - the arguments for/against possible courses of action
 - (global community of practice reflecting on experiences)

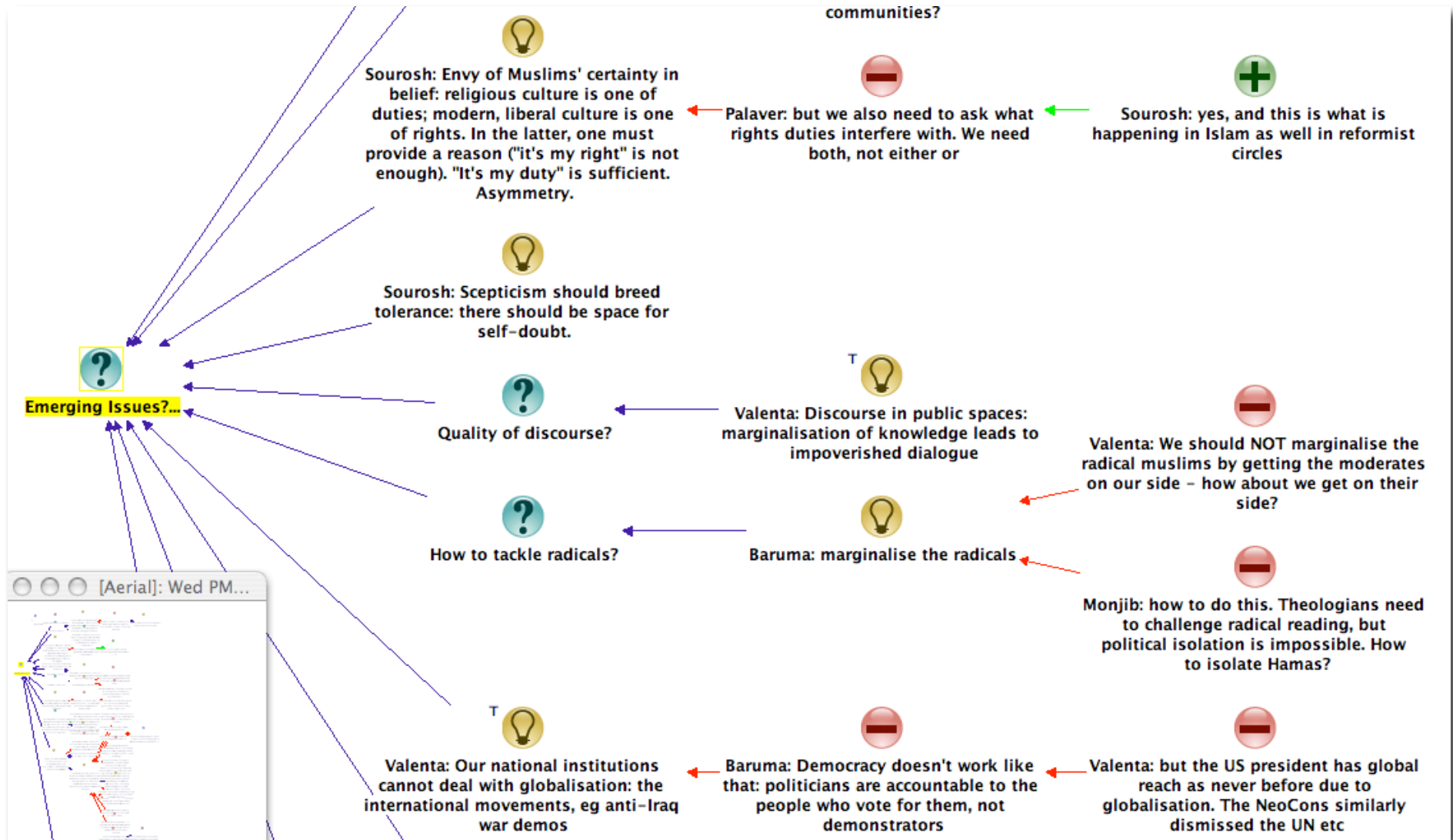
- ***Simple visual language*** for Issues, Ideas, Pros and Cons

- ***Shared display***: objectify the problem, not the stakeholders (cf. “Getting to Yes” conflict resolution method)

- ***Validate the record*** as contributions are made

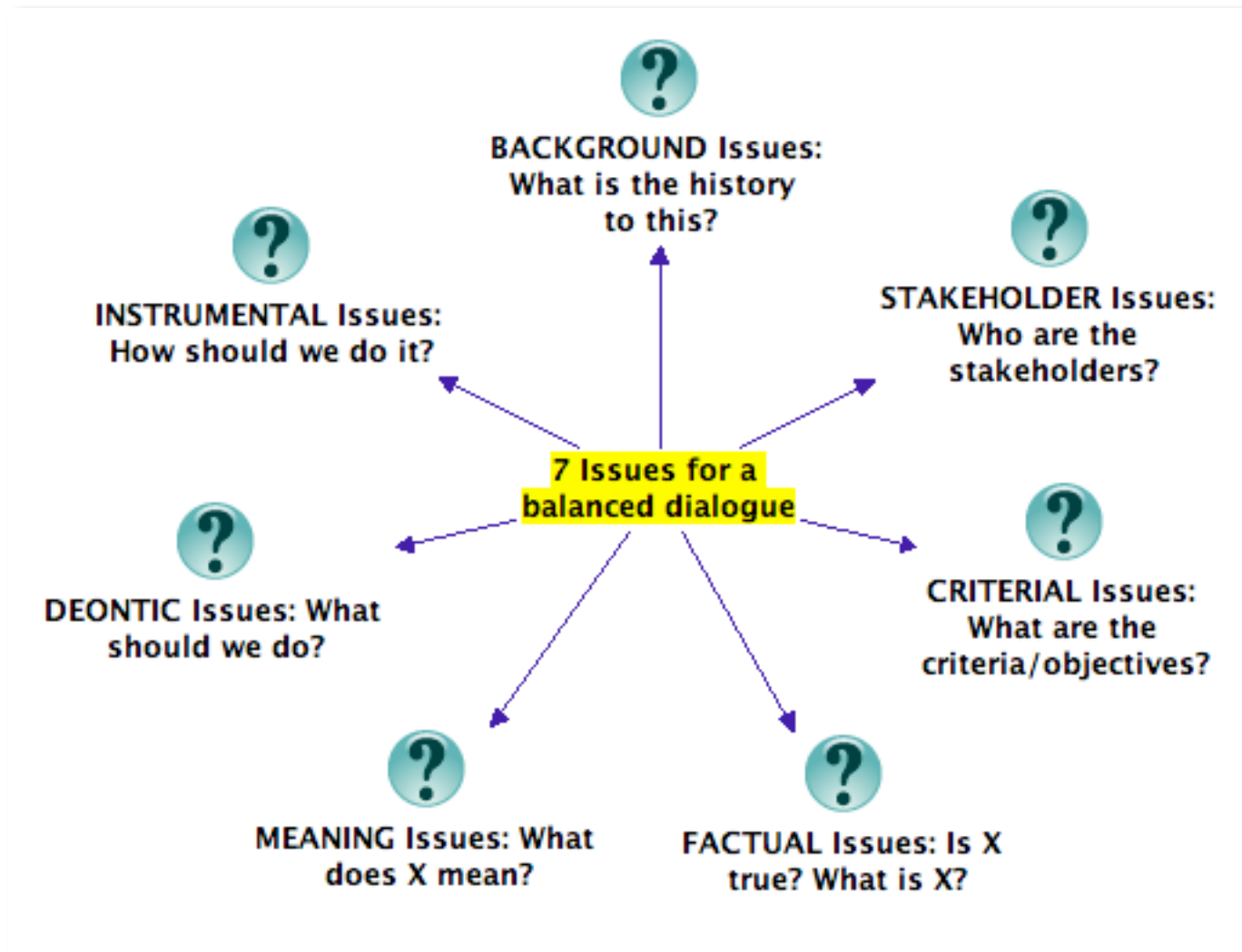
- ***Conversational Modelling*** is an extension of Dialogue Mapping, extending it with methodologies and models

Dialogue Map from COV&R 2007 opening plenary



Heuristic for balanced Dialogue Mapping

(from Jeff Conklin's book "Dialogue Mapping", 2003)

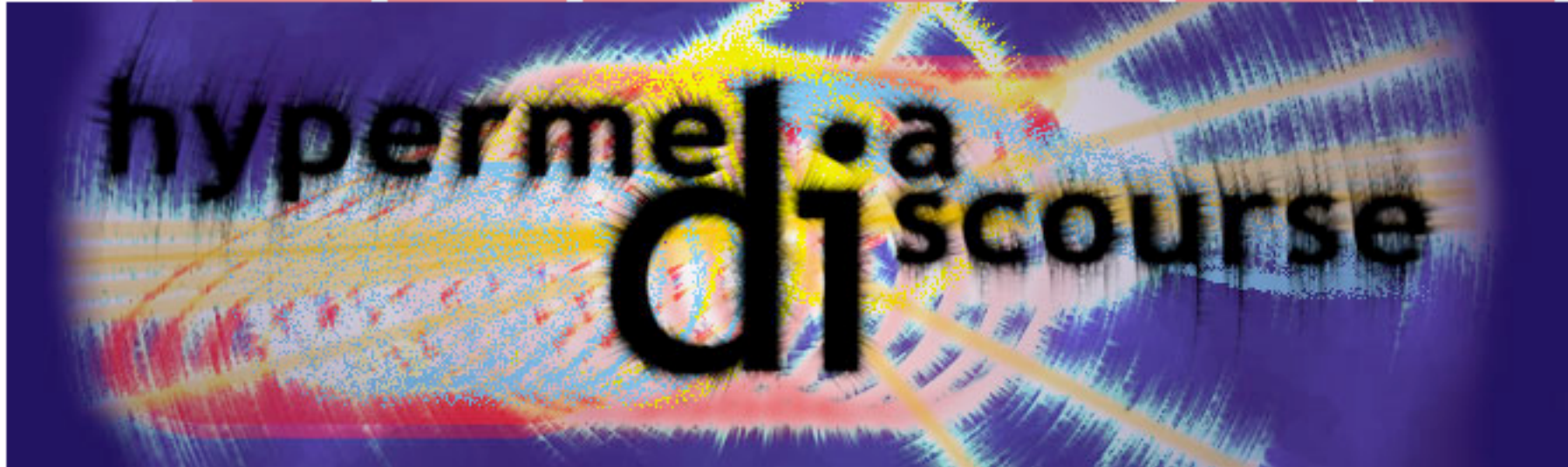


Negative to positive mimetic conversion?

- Education of the next generation: sharpening critical thinking faculties
- Clarification of confusion before it escalates in meetings or on the net
- Slowing down: learning to listen
- Making co-construction of a shared artifact the focus
- Memetic imitation of the tone and content of incisive analysts

Open questions...

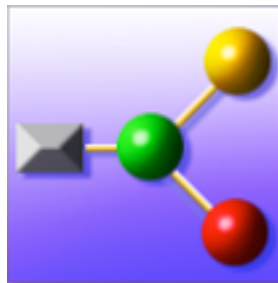
- **Different mimetic subversion strategies for different media and audiences?**
 - movie vs. book culture; intelligentsia vs. pop culture; committed vs. enquirers on an issue...
- **Are dialogue/argumentation mapping schemes biased to Western rationality?**
 - perpetuating an “epistemology of antithesis” fostering antagonism
...or prolonging engaged dialogue which might otherwise break down?
- **What to do when the assumptions underpinning rational argumentation break down?**
 - Analysis of conflict mediators’ strategies (Mark Aakhus)
 - Possible switch from Argument Mapping to Dialogue Mapping to reframe a new context for conversation



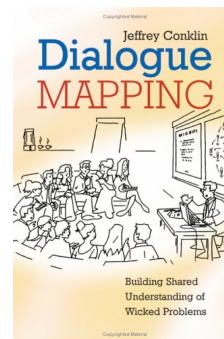
Hypermedia Discourse project:

community / theory / software / screencasts / case studies / user studies

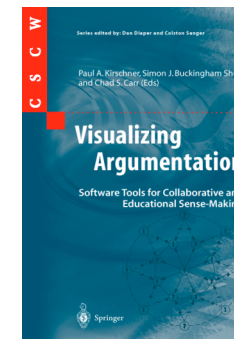
www.kmi.open.ac.uk/projects/hyperdiscourse



Compendium Institute
www.CompendiumInstitute.org



Dialogue Mapping
www.cognexus.org



Visualizing Argumentation
www.VisualizingArgumentation.info