

# Shifting the Bell Curve



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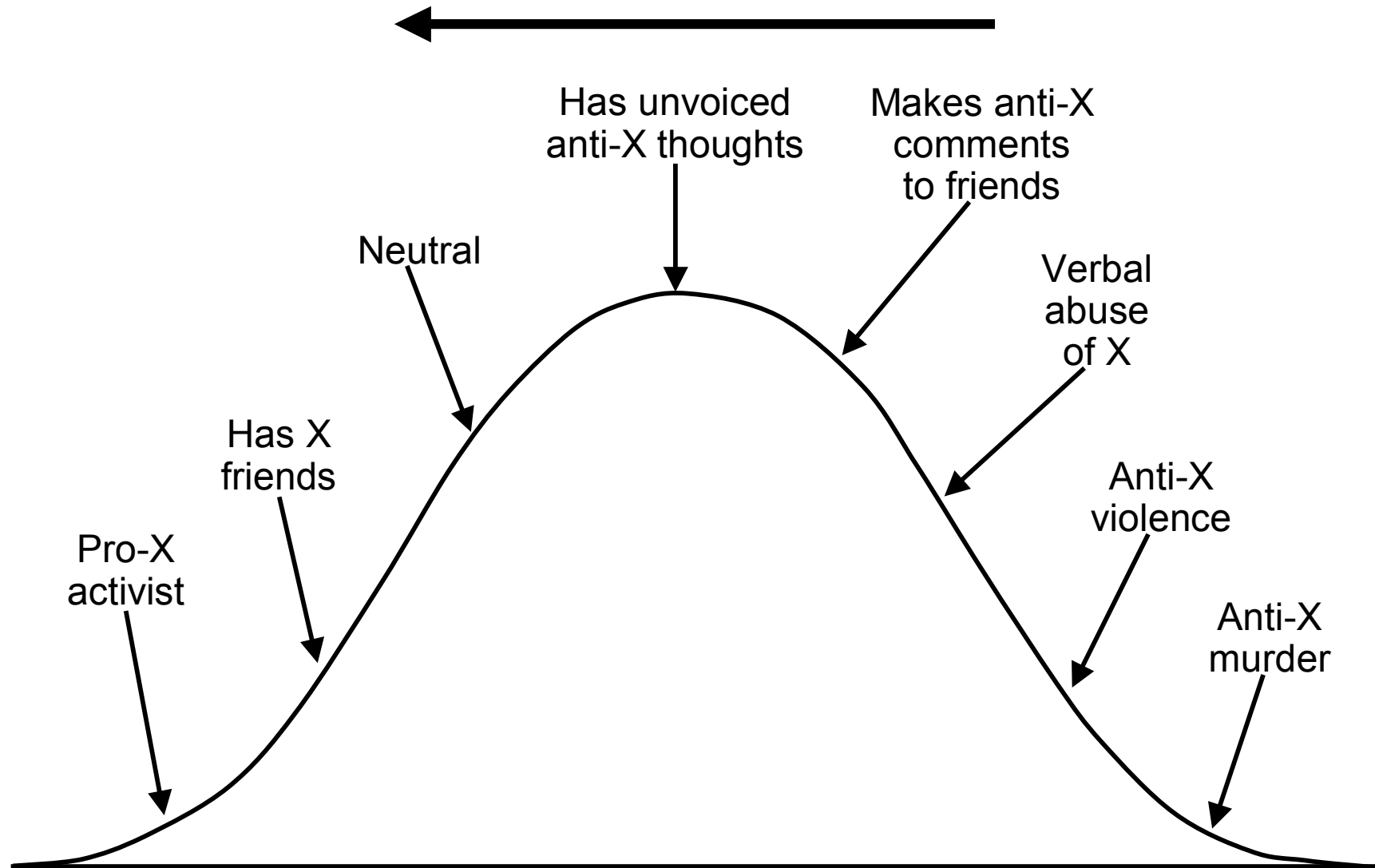
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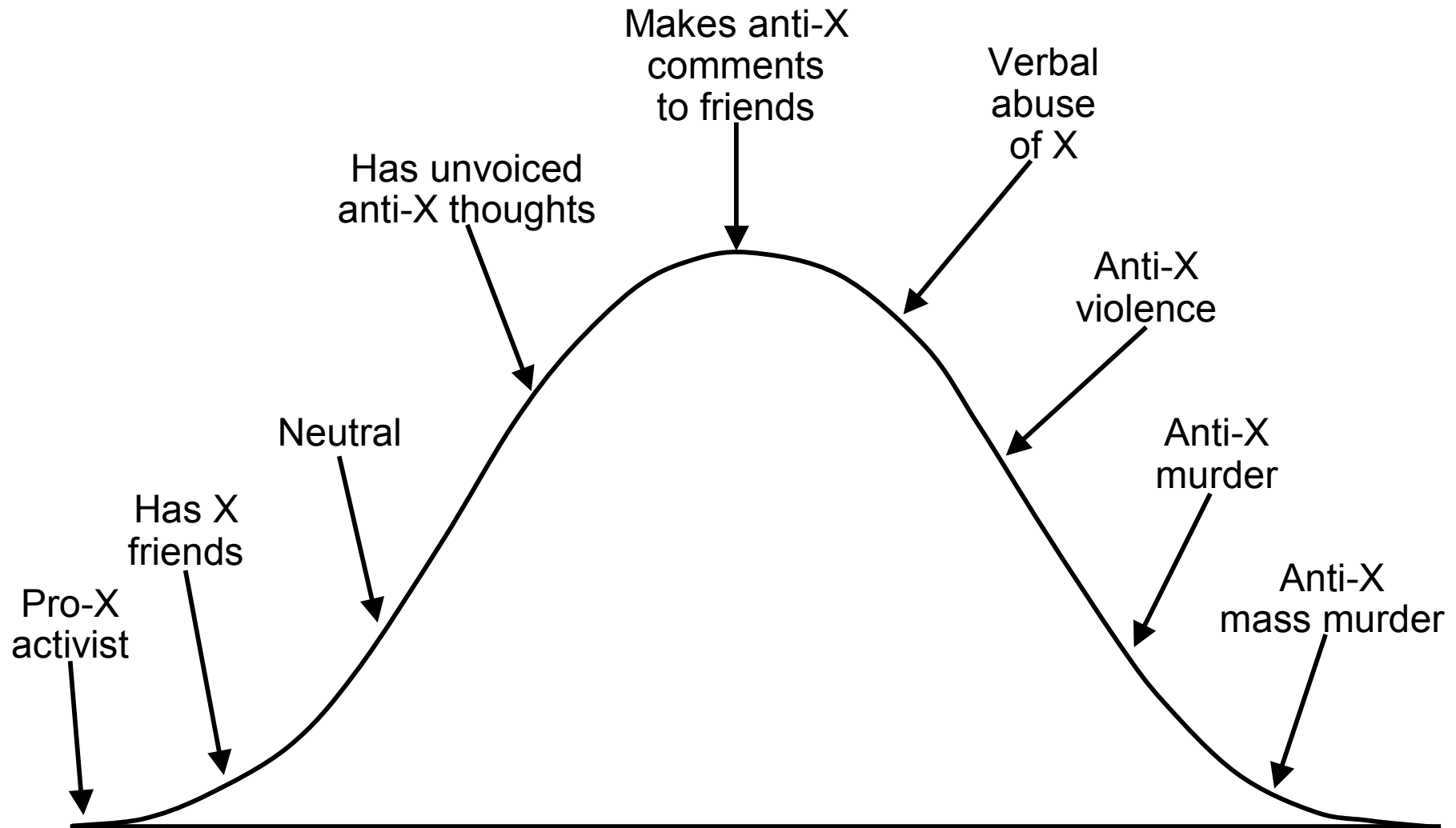
# Shifting the labels to the left

- If we shift the labels of the bell curve towards the left...



## Shifting the labels to the left (cont')

- ...then we end up with a more intolerant society



## Example bell-curve shifts

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- Obviously, shifting the labels to the right would produce a more tolerant society
- Example shift that *increased* intolerance:
  - Rise of Nazism in 1930s Germany resulted in more intolerance of Jews
  - This culminated in the holocaust during World War 2
- Example shift that *decreased* intolerance:
  - America used to have black slaves
  - Then slaves were freed, but there was widespread segregation
  - Black-rights activism ended the segregation in the 1960s
  - Racism is still widespread but America today is much less intolerant of blacks than it was 50, 100, or 200 years ago
- Shifts *do* happen:
  - But they can take years, decades or even centuries to be noticeable

- This website has photographs of lynchings in the USA:
  - From 1870 up to 1960
- The website contains:
  - Over 80 photographs of lynchings
  - A 5-minute flash video of the photographs with commentary
  - A forum for leaving comments
- Many comments in the forum fall into two categories:
  - “I don’t see how the historical lynching photographs relate to modern-day USA”
  - The bell curve model might help such people see the relationship
  - “The most shocking part is not the dead black people but the faces of the white spectators”

## **www.withoutsanctuary.org (cont')**

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- Many photographs emphasize the *extent* of the bell-curve shift
  - Many photographs contain identifiable faces of white spectators
  - So, there was no fear of being prosecuted for taking part in a lynching
  - In some photographs, children are present
  - Apparently, a lynching was considered family entertainment
  - Some photographs include the names of the photographers
  - Presumably they hoped to get repeat business
  - Many photographs were sold as postcards
  - So, a niche consumer market existed
  - Comments on some postcards indicated pride at being there
  - Some photographs show large groups attending lynchings
  - An estimated 15,000 people attended one lynching

# Summary

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- Countries can increase or decrease their level of intolerance
  - Decreasing intolerance: Anti-black racism in USA
  - Increasing intolerance: Anti-Semitism in 1930s Germany
- Changes in intolerance levels occur slowly
  - Can take years, decades or even longer
  - Expecting to see changes immediately leads to frustration and burn-out
  - Instead, look for improvement milestones every few years