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Civility, Epistemic Injustice, and Criticality: Toward a Praxis of Affective Democratic Friction

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Abstract

Socially-privileged students' discomfort in the social justice classroom as injustice is dramatically increasing in public discourse, especially as the Anti-Critical Race Theory (CRT) movement thrives. It is in the current climate of Anti-CRT that social justice educators must be vigilant of how classrooms could reproduce the very injustices they seek to problematize. Coupled alongside social justice educators' fears of job security and violence—physical, emotional, and epistemic—calls for civility that function to mute discomfort about systemic injustices could easily creep into classrooms. I claim civility can function speciously—when appeals to civility falsely claim, even if well-intentioned, to create just, open dialogue. *Specious civility* acts to conceal reiterations of socially-unjust power relations and, in turn, reify epistemologies of whiteness under the guise of "safe" or "comforting" spaces. I assert that such functions of civility conceal/maintain white students' resistance to engage with counter testimony, especially testimony that might reveal their complicity in systemic oppressions. Social justice educators, then, must be hyper-cognizant of possible epistemic injustices perpetrated toward socially-marginalized students/testifiers. Building on the work of Miranda Fricker and José Medina, I propose that our evaluations of testimony may be better served by practices of criticality that acknowledge the social, communal aspects of inquiry/critique/reflection. I, then, develop and illustrate a praxis of *affective democratic friction*, expanding on AnaLouise Keating's "pedagogies of invitation," Medina's "epistemic friction and activism," and Gloria Anzaldúa's "spiritual activism," to propose teaching practices that could incite students to recognize their discomfort, postpone assessment/judgments of testimony, and create opportunities for recognizing the affective happenings causing distress and, in turn, cultivate a *relational criticality*.

CIVILITY, EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE, AND CRITICALITY:
TOWARD A PRAXIS OF AFFECTIVE DEMOCRATIC FRICTION

by

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Finishing this project has not been easy . . . to say the least. I started my doctoral journey wanting to rival the age of achievement many great women before me accomplished. I was definitely too young, perhaps naïve, and maybe even too focused on the finish line. Entering stage left, introducing Life. I'm not sure I could ever imagine some of the "stuff" Life threw at me—at the world (entering global pandemic)! What I can say today, however, is that I finished. The footpath I took was not the most logical, but I still found my way here—even if on a much different timetable than I ever envisioned.

First and foremost, I could not have finished this project at this stage of my life without the support of my life partner, Jim Wagner. My two children, Asher and Levi, who gave me hope and motivation in my darkest hours. You all, my dearest family, have given me the opportunity—time and grace—to achieve something I almost gave up on—THANK YOU! Next, and just as important, I'm forever grateful to my advisor, Barbara Applebaum, who pushed and supported me (probably much longer than she ever thought!) throughout my doctoral expedition. Emily Robertson, who always pushed me to think a little differently than I was comfortable with, I thank you for your guidance. George Theoharis, who provided encouragement and ever-important practice-oriented perspectives, I'm enduringly thankful. Alan Foley, who signed up to help me reach the finish line without hesitation, I will always appreciate your advocacy.

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Table of Contents

Chapter One:

Introduction

In one of my graduate-level courses on the politics of race in education, which utilized critical pedagogy, the primary course goal was engaging students in a critical thought process about issues of racial oppression. All of the students in the course were in M.A. or Ph.D. programs that emphasize equality in education and, as such, the course was designed with the assumption that students had prior introductory knowledge about racial oppression. In fact, many of the students had previously taken classes together regarding issues of race, class, gender, or sexuality and education. Students, in general, arrived to class excited to share a course where we knew so many of our peers and hoped that this class would provide great discussion. The class, however, took a turn for the worse when Claire,[1] an older-white-female student, was unwilling to acknowledge how racism extended beyond individual, overt-racist acts.[2] Claire was reluctant, ultimately, to give credibility to testimony about how her white skin, not only her actions, could make her complicit in systemic racism.

As the course progressed, many of the students stopped participating regularly. Generally speaking, many students became silent, preoccupied with Facebook or email, and often just nodded and smiled when Claire spoke. In class it would not have been obvious most of the time that students disagreed with Claire; however, outside conversations provided evidence of

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[1] For anonymity purposes, I have changed the student's name to Claire.

[2] I understand that I am constructing a dichotomy in this paper between white/black or privileged/marginalized students. While I do believe such categorical distinctions are socially created and, in turn, arbitrary, I have constructed this dichotomy to highlight how these identities have very "real" implications for classroom social dynamics.

frustration, opposing views, and anger toward her. In various out-of-class discussions, the students would talk about each other's pent-up hostility. In my view, a lot of the anger arose from feelings that Claire did not try to engage with other student's experiences/ideas and, more importantly, think outside her own racial background. We felt, though, that since the instructor, a woman of color, did not question the white student and/or express any "uncivil" emotions or statements, that it was not our place to do so. In this sense, we felt that we needed to maintain civility, even though we had all withdrawn from engaging in class discussions in a productive, critically-reflective manner.

While the professor, a woman of color, did not interject when Claire spoke, it should be acknowledged that the professor's and racially-marginalized students' reasons for silence could be different and, potentially, guided by a refusal to re-center whiteness by placing privileged students' needs above their own.[3] Civility may be one of the reasons marginalized class participants remained silent; however, as one who occupies a socially-dominant position I must be conscious of my inability to completely understand or presume civility is the only reason. Furthermore, my own actions of silence could be viewed as reinforcing whiteness by not continuing to try to provide Claire with information contrary to her viewpoint of colorblindness—that is, my employment of civility, in theory, could justify dominantly-positioned students' lack of responsibility. Essentially, I do not presume to know why all class participants remained silent, but rather I am arguing that civility could be a significant and critically important reason for less-than-effective course dynamics in social-justice classrooms.

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[3] Deanna Blackwell, "Sidelines and Separate Space: Making Education Anti-racist for Students of Color," *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 13, no. 4 (2010): 473-94.

At first glance, though, this classroom represents a common dilemma for social justice educators—that is, systemically privileged students' refusal to learn and know about how their privileged social locations may make them complicit in reproducing systems of oppression and privilege.[4] Claire's refusal to engage and/or hear counter testimony, however, did not necessarily reveal a denial of epistemic authority to counter testimony—that is, testimony which provides contradictory evidence for her beliefs. Discussions about racism in the class often provoked responses of initial agreement with opposing testimony, but were always followed by comments such as "my best friend is black" or "I don't see color." These replies, which Kim Case and Annette Hemmings call "distancing strategies," were used to disassociate Claire from racism—to be recognized as a "good," white person.[5] Claire did not want her refusal to hear counter testimony to initiate disapproval from her peers, especially students of color. Her seemingly civil statements—polite responses—implied disapproval, but in an approving way.

But why did the disagreeing students stay quiet and, in turn, build up immense hostility toward Claire? It is possible that the frustrated students remained silent partly because of the social convention of civility—that is, a notion that certain "uncivil" emotions like anger, annoyance, or contempt are not permissible in classroom environments and that even expressions of sharp, critical disagreement might be read as anger. When I use the term civility, I am specifically referencing normalized, social-communicative practices that involve, as Cheshire Calhoun claims, "displays of respect, tolerance, or considerateness."[6] Adhering to customs of

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[4] Barbara Applebaum, "Engaging Student Disengagement: Resistance or Disagreement?," *Philosophy of Education Yearbook (*2007): 335-45.

[5] Kim A. Case and Annette Hemmings, "Distancing Strategies: White Women Preservice Teachers and Antiracist Curriculum, *Urban Education* 40, no. 6 (2005): 606-25.

[6] Cheshire Calhoun, "The Virtue of Civility," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 29, no. 3 (2000): 259.

civility may imply suppressing one's own feelings and beliefs in order to avoid being construed

as ill-mannered or impolite by others. I am not, however, asserting that all manifestations of

civility are harmful. Civility can be viewed as a communicative virtue that secures

companionability between seemingly unfamiliar persons and, as such, assists in creating friendly

environments for exploring issues of social difference.[7]

Civility is more multifaceted than trivial representations of "being nice no matter what."

Civility references socially-normalized patterns of communication that, while attitudinal to some

degree, are more about properly displaying one's "conformity to socially established rules."[8] In

this vein, civility has a performative function.[9] When one displays civility, one is conveying

one's understanding of conventional-social rules of expression and, in turn, constituting one's

self as respectful, tolerant, and considerate. Exhibiting civility, then, operates to portray one's

willingness to enter into a "civic friendship." Etiquette manuals, for instance, which referred to

Aristotle's concept of "civic friendship" not only highlighted the necessity of such displays

and/or etiquette of civility, but also the motivation of "judgment and care for the good of

others."[10] Cris Mayo notes, however, that while exercises of civility were, to some degree, meant

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[7] Calhoun, "The Virtue of Civility"; Megan Laverty, "Civility, Tact, and the Joy of Communication," *Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (2009): 228-37.

[8] Calhoun, "The Virtue of Civility," 255.

[9] In order to make this distinction, I am understanding language as discursive rather than representational. In this sense, when I speak, move my body, etc. in accordance with conventional displays of respect, I am performing civility. Thus, my language (i.e., spoken, written, or bodily) is not neutral, but rather performing/repeating codes of civility that acknowledge/constitute myself civilly. See Claudia Ruitenberg, "Check Your Language! Political Correctness, Censorship, and Performativity in Education, "*Philosophy of Education Yearbook (*2004*): 37-45.

[10] Cris Mayo, "The Binds that Tie: Civility and Social Difference," *Educational Theory* 52, no. 2 (2002): 172.

to contribute to the good of society, such practices highlighted relationships of power. Mayo explains, "[C]ivility is a practice derived in part from civic friendship, the pre-political capacities to interact well with others, and in part from courtesy, the ritualized forms of interaction that cement stable political relations."[11] Social codes of civility that function to promote a common good for a collective populous, then, operate to encourage discourse for issues/concerns that would potentially impact an inclusive collective.[12]

In contrast to a form of civility that provides a forum to discuss topics for the public good, I agree, with Tracey Owens Patton, that civility can reinforce hegemony by "suppressing or silencing an opposition, in favor of the status quo." "Hegemonic civility," as Patton describes, is "normalized or naturalized behavior—appropriate behavior—even as the action can be uncivil or even silencing in order to uphold the hegemonic order."[13] Hegemonic civility operates strategically and discursively.[14] Patton connects hegemonic civility to tactical intercessions of whiteness by arguing that Alice McIntyre's concept of "white-talk," a discourse that shields white people from "examining their/our individual and collective role(s) in the perpetuation of racism,"[15]demonstrates how discourses of civility can parallel those of white-talk. In other words, white-talk—civil talk—is strategically structured to not promote a critical analysis of one's possible responsibility in perpetuating racism. Rather, as Patton further explains, civility

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[11] Ibid, 172.

[12] Ibid, 173.

[13] Ibid, 65.

[14] Thomas K. Nakayama and Robert L. Krizek, "Whiteness: A Strategic Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, no. 3 (1995): 295, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335639509384117.

[15] Alice McIntyre, *Making Meaning of Whiteness: Exploring the Racial Identity of White Teachers* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 45.

can conceal hegemony and, in turn, further reinscribe racism.[16] For instance, civility can operate to silence marginalized voices in diversity courses when said voices create dissonance with dominant norms and conventions (e.g., colorblindness). To further explain, Mayo claims, and I agree, that a suppression of voices may lead to pent-up hostility that perpetuates the status quo,[17] such as disengagement from classroom discussions.

My concern with civility is directed, then, not at the concept itself, but rather at how the norm functions within certain contexts like post-secondary, social justice classrooms. As Elizabeth Higginbotham explains,

> Teaching to a diverse student population requires attention to classroom interactions. Our classrooms are part of the larger social world, thus structural inequalities in the larger society are reproduced in the classroom in terms of power and privilege.[18]

While it can be argued that civility may help students of different social locations discuss topics of social hierarchy and oppression, it is important for the social justice classroom to also address how such a norm may conceal and, in turn, reproduce social injustices. In discussions with students of color in the classroom, Claire's peers, they stated that their silence was often due to an understanding that their feelings were not appropriate in the classroom. That is, the students of color felt that their anger and sadness would be perceived as "uncivil" by white students like Claire. Sara Ahmed explains, "To speak out of anger as a Black woman is then to confirm your

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[16] Tracey Owens Patton, "In the Guise of Civility: The Complicitous Maintenance of Inferential Forms of Sexism and Racism in Higher Education," *Women's Studies in Communications* 27, no. 1 (2004): 64-5.

[17] Mayo, "The Binds that Tie," 173.

[18] Elizabeth Higginbotham, "Getting All Students to Listen: Analyzing and Coping with Student Resistance," *American Behavioral Scientist* 40, no. 2 (1996): 205.

position as the cause of tension."[19] Diversity, at least within the mainstream discourse, has become a "cuddly" word to describe "a politics of feeling good." [20] If a person of color spoke out in anger in the classroom, then, they would be charged with disrupting the happiness of the classroom. Ahmed further explains in her discussion of feminist subjects, that the very entrance of persons that discuss "unhappy" topics, such as racism, sexism, etc., reveal how happiness is maintained and, in turn, erase "the signs of getting along" and "disturb the very fantasy that happiness can be found in a certain place."[21] Any person who's verbal or bodily presence presumes a position of opposition to norms of civility or discourses of happiness, like people of color, feminists, and so on, are already positioned as "uncivil" and, as a result, difficult to converse with.

Statement of Purpose

In this dissertation, I examine and provide arguments to support the contention that civility can function to conceal white student resistance—a refusal to know[22]—and, as a result, not foster critical thinking regarding counter testimony—namely testimony that challenges white students' moral innocence regarding systemic oppression and privilege. To elaborate further, Claire's statements, which implied disapproval in an approving way, civil talk, could have functioned to camouflage her reluctance to hear testimony by her peers and course texts that

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[19] Sara Ahmed, "Embodying Diversity: Problems and Paradoxes for Black Feminists," *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 12, no. 1 (2009): 41-52.

[20] Ibid., 44.

[21] Sara Ahmed, "Killing Joy: Feminism and the History of Happiness," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 35*, no. 3 (2010): 571-94.

[22] Shoshana Felman, "Psychoanalysis and Education: Teaching Terminable and Interminable," *Yale French Studies* 63 (1982): 30.

refuted her own beliefs about her complicity in racism. Claire's civil talk, potentially, signals

disengagement with criticality regarding the counter testimony and the course more generally.

Such resistance to engage with counter testimony, I contend, can result in epistemic injustices,

like epistemic authority deficiencies, which unduly harm marginalized testifiers. I explore how

civility potentially hinders critical thinking in the social justice classroom[23] regarding counter

testimony by concealing appraisals of testifiers' trustworthiness and, thus, can cause systemically

privileged students to epistemically harm marginalized testifiers. While this dissertation

primarily focuses on the harm that occurs to marginalized testifiers, I will also examine how all

students in the social justice classroom, marginalized or dominantly-located, are put at an

epistemic disadvantage when testimonial assessments are concealed. Building on my

investigation, I claim that critical thinking regarding counter testimony, at least within the social

justice classroom, may necessitate recognizing the potential cognitive role emotions play in

evaluations of testifiers' trustworthiness and how giving attention to such emotions can create a

more just process of ascribing epistemic authority and, ultimately, might promise a more

enhanced and engaged mode of criticality toward systemic oppression and privilege.

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[23] I define the social justice classroom as a space where students are asked to critically engage with issues of systemic and institutionalized power, privilege, and difference. Social justice classes expose and confront deeply-rooted assumptions about difference and ask students to self-reflect and, hopefully, develop a more critical awareness of their co-responsibility in the perpetuation of systemic inequality. Classes with a social justice objective place an emphasis on facilitating the development of students' critical consciousness – that is, how they perceive and make sense of the world. See Lee Anne Bell, "Theoretical Foundations for Social Justice Education," in *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, 2nd ed., Eds. Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 1-14.

Philosophical Importance

I. White Student Resistance

University classes designed to understand and challenge systems of privilege and oppression have become quite popular.[24] These courses often present unique challenges for social justice educators, especially when such courses ask/encourage students to reflect inward— to examine and analyze how their own social identities are constituted by and complicit in the maintenance of systemic oppression.[25] More often than not, such reflective engagement is intensely troublesome in terms of discussions about racism, especially for white students, because racism is often conceived as individual, overt acts towards people of color; thus, "[t]he realization that racism is much more pervasive and is embedded in seemingly race-neutral institutions and policies creates great dissonance."[26] Consequently, racism frequently emerges in these course contexts, sometimes blatantly but, more often than not, subtly. Racism may operate very slyly, for example, in white students' well-intentioned comments that seek to recenter, and make prominently known, their good, non-racist selves.

Well-intentioned, but also frequently covertly racist, comments by white students reflect what Alice McIntyre describes as "white talk." "White talk" is the means by which white students can perpetuate, reinscribe their whiteness without awareness. McIntyre explains, "White talk" is a form of intercourse that "serves to insulate white people from examining their/our

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[24] See Applebaum, "Engaging Student Disengagement;" Lee Anne Bell, "Sincere Fictions: The Pedagogical Challenges of Preparing White Teachers for Multicultural Classrooms," *Equity and Excellence in Education* 35, no. 3 (2002): 236-44; Case and Hemmings, "Distancing Strategies."

[25] See Applebaum, "Engaging Student Disengagement"; Lisa Werkmeister Rozas and Joshua Miller, "Discourses for Social Justice Education: The Web of Racism and the Web of Resistance," *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work* 18, no. 1 (2009): 24-39.

[26] Rozas and Miller, "Discourses for Social Justice Education," 26.

individual and collective role(s) in the perpetuation of racism."[27] While there are various

strategies for employing "white talk," some of the most common mechanisms are silence,

evasion, and the all-too-familiar employment of color-blind rhetoric. Utilization of color-blind

rhetoric is often indicated in verbal expressions such as "I don't see color" and "I view everyone

as human." These statements, which conform to conventional norms of racial discourse in our

so-called "post-racial" society, inadvertently leave the white subject unexamined and, in turn,

exempt the subject from acknowledging potential complicity in perpetuating racial inequality.

Societal norms of interacting in multi-racial settings regularly indicate, however, that

colorblindness is a good, moral attitude to espouse.[28] Students like Claire, then, are a common

conundrum for social justice educators because their positioning of themselves as good, color-

blind persons reinforces whiteness, albeit unconsciously, and any challenges against such

constructions may create dissonance—and resistance—with privileged students' understandings

of norms of civility.

Color-blind ideology, which is one of the most common instances of "white talk" in

social justice education, which Patton argues parallels civil talk,[29] is often taken to be derived

from societal scripts of progress. Claire's employment of colorblindness, for instance, represents,

on one hand, a recognition that racial inequality existed, but, on the other hand, since we have

advanced past the times of slavery and civil rights, "noticing things as obvious as skin tone and

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[27] Alice McIntyre, *Making Meaning of Whiteness,* 45.

[28] See Barbara Applebaum, "Social Justice Education, Moral Agency, and the Subject of Resistance," *Educational Theory* 54, no. 1 (2004): 59-72; Applebaum, "Engaging Student Disengagement."

[29] Patton, "In the Guise of Civility," 64-65.

as personally meaningful as nationality and ethnicity is somehow bad, something to 'see past.'"[30]

White students' rhetoric of color-blind ideology, then, often depict what Joe Feagin (2001) calls

"sincere fictions"—namely illustrations of white-moral goodness and dominance that guide

whites' understandings of people of color.[31] These narratives are "sincere" given that "whites

who espouse them truly believe themselves to be color blind people who do not discriminate

against others," but also fictitious because "they ignore the enduring realities of racism" and

mythically adopt stories of "progress and social reform that bolsters images of white decency and

goodness."[32] These white tales, while operating under the guise of moral rightness, support a

form of resistance, however, which protects white students' refusals to engage with their

complicity in systems of oppression and privilege and, in turn, can induce frequent offenses

against socially-stigmatized students.[33] The morally-virtuous paradigm that undergirds white

students' employments of "white talk" raises the question of whether social practices of civility

can further endorse race-neutral ideologies and, simultaneously, function to camouflage white-

student resistance.

II. Testimonial Assessment and Criticality

Within a post-secondary educational context, the primary mode though which students

are presented reasons for and/or against claims and asked to critically examine issues, such as

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[30] Bell, "Sincere Fictions," 239.

[31] Joe R. Feagin, *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Generations* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

[32] Bell, "Sincere Fictions," 237.

[33] Dalia Rodriguez, "The Usual Suspect: Negotiating White Student Resistance and Teacher Authority in a Predominantly White Classroom," *Cultural Studies ⇔ Critical Methodologies* 9, no. 4 (2009): 483-508.

systemic racism, is through testimony (e.g., course readings, instructors' lectures, and students' experiences). The type of testimonial knowledge I am concerned with, unlike formal testimony in contexts like courtrooms, is related to how we come to know things without first-hand, direct evidence.[34] Susan Sanchez-Casal and Amie Macdonald illustrate this process in their example of a white student's assertion that black women are "welfare queens" who take advantage of America's welfare system. By engaging with testimonial evidence that provides counter reasons—for example, how institutional racism and sexism structure U.S. economics—the student is encouraged to assess the accuracy of her own reasons.[35] In other words, testimony is the principal means by which students are prompted to critically think about the fallibility of their own reasons and, in turn, reassess such reasons for more appropriate beliefs and actions. The operation of civility in the social justice classroom, I argue, may make hearing counter testimony—literally and figuratively—and, in turn, critically reflecting on differing alternative viewpoints more difficult.

Social epistemologists have often failed to consider how testimonial knowledge is influenced by difference. In other words, "discussions of differing degrees of epistemic privilege do not appear within mainstream discussions of testimony."[36] A few philosophers, such as

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[34] Jennifer Lackey, "The Nature of Testimony," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 87, no. 2 (2006): 177-197.

[35] Susan Sanchez-Casal and Amie Macdonald, "Identity, Realist Pedagogy, and Racial Democracy in Higher Education," in *Identity in Education*, eds. Susan Sanchez-Casal and Amie Macdonald (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 21-2.

[36] Lisa Bergin, "Testimony, Epistemic Difference, and Privilege: How Feminist Epistemology Can Improve Our Understanding of the Communication of Knowledge," *Social Epistemology: A Journal of Knowledge, Culture, and Policy*, 16, no. 3 (2002): 198.

Miranda Fricker and Nancy Duakas,[37] have examined how social differences influence testimonial exchanges and, consequentially, whose knowledge is trusted or not. Chapter three, then, seeks to join this conversation by exploring how dominantly-positioned students' appraisals of testimony that often imply disapproval in seemingly-civil ways, like Claire in my opening example, can potentially conceal how such assessments maintain and/or further perpetuate social inequalities like racism. Furthermore, I explore ways to foster students' criticality, especially dominantly-located students, regarding testimony about systems of inequality and privilege received from peers, articles, teachers, etc.

Criticality, according to Nick Burbules and Rupert Berk, is an extension of more conventional notions of critical thinking that considers both the values and deficiencies certain abilities and skills, like reasons assessment and a disposition to be properly motivated by reasons,[38] have for encouraging new conversations— "to think outside a framework of conventional understandings."[39] A primary requirement for Burbules and Berk's concept of criticality is a habit/disposition for openness. In other words, the acknowledgement that alternative viewpoints exist and "that they be engaged with sufficient respect to be considered imaginatively."[40] Difference, then, is the basis for criticality and, as such, students' disposition to

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[37] See Miranda Fricker, "Epistemic Injustice and a Role for Virtue in the Politics of Knowing," *Metaphilosophy* 34, no. 1/2 (2003): 154-73; Miranda Fricker*, Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Nancy Duakas, "Epistemic Trust and Social Location," *Episteme* 3, no. 1/2 (2006): 109-23.

[38] Harvey Siegel, "The Reasons Conception," in *Philosophy of Education: An Anthology*, ed. Randall Curren (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 435-47.

[39] Nick Burbules and Rupert Berk, "Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy: Relations, Differences, and Limits," in *Critical Theories in Education: Changing Terrains of Knowledge and Politics*, eds T.S. Popkewitz and Lynn Fendler (New York: Routledge, 1999), 59.

[40] Burbules and Berk, "Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy," 60.

engage in the practice of criticality regarding testimony, especially counter testimony that presents contradictory and/or different evidence than one's own viewpoint, is of utmost importance for creating more just processes of ascribing epistemic authority.

If civility functions to conceal/maintain white student resistance toward engaging with counter testimony, particularly testimony that reveals student's complicity in systems of oppression and privilege, then we must consider whether such denials cause epistemic harm to marginalized testifiers. For instance, even though Claire had evidence that invalidated her colorblind perspective, such as a credentialed professor selecting the course readings, Claire may still not trust the counter testimony because of her epistemic socialization—"a social training of the interpretive and affective attitudes in play when we are told things by other people."[41] In other words, trust operates on an affective level and, as a result, is influenced by one's learned patterns of trust.[42] As Catherine Elgin explains, "Because a feeling of trust can be experienced in an instant, we are apt to overlook how richly textured its conditions are, how much we had to learn and internalize in order to be in a position for the deliverance to be a deliverance of that emotion."[43] When we fail to recognize how our feelings of trust/distrust toward testifiers are motivated by internalized belief, though, we can make the mistake of epistemically harming a testifier unduly—that is, not affording them the epistemic authority the testifier deserves.

While the dailiness and instantaneous evaluations of testimony makes such habits almost second nature, the possible epistemic injustices that can occur in the social justice classroom by

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[41] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 61.

[42] See Catherine Elgin, "Emotion and Understanding," in *Epistemology and Emotions*, eds. Georg Brun, Ulvi Doğuoğlu, and Dominique Kuenzle (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008) 33-49; Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 2007; Karen Jones, "Trust as an Affective Attitude," *Ethics* 107, no. 1 (1996): 4-25.

[43] Elgin, "Emotion and Understanding," 43.

not pursuing practices of criticality about assessments of trustworthiness, in many ways, defeats

a primary course goal—to broaden students' understanding of injustices in the world and, in turn,

to make students more aware of their possible complicity in the replication of such injustices. For

this reason, this dissertation seeks to contribute to current conversations about testimonial

injustice and, in turn, explore what type(s) of criticality can be most useful for testimonial

assessment in the social justice classroom.

III. Cognitive Emotions and Testimonial Assessment

If trust, as Elgin, Fricker, and Karen Jones contend, is affective, it seems that a

recognition and evaluation of students' emotions for granting testifiers trust—that is, believing

their testimony—may help social justice educators understand how to better improve criticality

regarding testimonial assessment. For example, if Claire was prompted to reflect on her reasons

behind her distrust and, therefore, denial of testimony that questioned her white moral innocence,

the teacher might be able to create an opening for her to further evaluate the validity/invalidity of

her emotions. A critical evaluation of her emotions, then, may reveal her unconscious biases

and/or systemic ignorance regarding her preliminary testimonial evaluation. Michalinos

Zemblyas, Lynn Fendler, and Ahmed argue, that our emotions, like our identities, are situated

socially and historically[44]; thus, questioning our emotions and the discourses out of which they

have arisen, may create an opening for engaging in a process of criticality that can produce "the

possibility of thinking otherwise,"[45] of knowing whether the emotions we experience are soundly

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[44] Michalinos Zemblyas and Lynn Fendler, "Reframing Emotion in Education Through the Lenses of Parrhesia and Care of Self," *Studies in Philosophy of Education* 26, no. 4 (2007): 319-33; Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[45] Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 277.

justified or stimulated by the "effect of relations that set or fix persons and objects in particular relations."[46]

In this dissertation, I build on current research that acknowledges emotions as historically and socially situated by examining how a critical analysis of our emotions may assist in more accurate testimonial assessments. Elgin and Elizabeth Anderson[47] have both asserted that emotions have the ability, when recognized and assessed, to provide information that could otherwise be overlooked. Emotions are not unprompted reactions, but rather are responses which are motivated by events, people, and so on. If we acknowledge the presence of emotions, "we can correlate emotional reactions with the events that trigger them . . . and use those reactions as sources of information about the environment."[48] Thus, this dissertation explores the potential for evaluating students' emotions regarding testimony (both from the course material and other peers' experiences) and how such critical reflection might better highlight students' patterns of affording/denying epistemic credibility and, in turn, practices and/or virtues may produce more just testimonial assessments in the social justice classroom.

IV. Criticality and the Communal Move

In the course of my research on testimony and criticality, I contend that generally the proposed solutions have been individualistic. John Hardwig asserts that a focus on the individual is common in epistemology. That is, epistemology often contains an "individualistic bias" that

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[46] Barbara Stengel, "The Complex Case of Fear and Safe Space," *Studies in Philosophy of Education* 29, no. 6 (2010): 530.

[47] See Elgin, "Emotion and Understanding"; Elizabeth Anderson, "Uses of Value Judgments in Science: A General Argument, with Lessons from a Case Study of Feminist Research on Divorce," *Hypatia* 19, no. 1 (2004): 1-24.

[48] Elgin, "Emotion and Understanding," 35.

focuses on "epistemic self-reliance and self-sufficiency" in order to avoid "epistemic vulnerability."[49] Is coming to know an individual endeavor? If we acknowledge that much of what we know is from the testimony of others, it seems implausible to claim that knowing is an individual process. Knowing and, sequentially, criticality may be better conceived of as a social practice. If knowing is a social endeavor, it logically follows, I argue, that the most just testimonial assessments will not be individual appraisals of testifiers' credibility, but rather community evaluations. I explore how communal assessments of testimony may, potentially, provide more moments for students within the classroom to practice criticality because of the diversity of interpretations of testimony and students' varying social/historical locations.

Promoting a classroom environment that fosters the disruption of social hierarchies that both acknowledges the importance of emotions and concurrently deconstructs and situates emotions is congruent with Burbules and Berk's concept of criticality. As Burbules and Berk claim, criticality

> is a function of collective questioning, criticism, and creativity, it is always social in character, partly because relations to others influence the individual, and partly because certain of these activities (particularly thinking in new ways) arise from interaction with challenging alternative views.[50]

Building on Burbules' and Berk's concept of criticality, this dissertation will examine and provide arguments to support the contention that criticality must include a communal, inter-connectionist component. Part of this communal process and, in turn, group-critical reflection, I contend, will necessitate sharing and deconstructing our emotions regarding course material about social inequalities. Such an affective orienting of inquiry/critique/reflection, I argue, might

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[49] John Hardwig, "The Role of Trust in Knowledge," *The Journal of Philosophy* 88, no. 12 (1991): 701.

[50] Burbules and Berk, "Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy," 62.

be a worthy goal for the social justice classroom because it may help educators call attention to how social location influences people's willingness to engage, accept, and practice criticality, especially about testimony which may call into question students' complicity.

Present-Day Importance and Outline

At various moments along the extensive timeline of this research project, I've questioned the importance and need for the research included in this dissertation. During this project, the U.S. has shuffled between post-racial claims with the election of Barak Obama, repugnant and hate-filled rhetoric espoused by Donald Trump, to white-savior like investments in civility with the election of Joe Biden. How would, then, a critique of hegemonic functions of civility be understood during the Trump Era? It wasn't until shortly after the 2020 election that I found myself able to justify the importance of this research now—that is, it wasn't until I was reminded of my own investments in civility, as a person with white privilege, that I became aware of how civility can function deceptively to reinforce and camouflage whiteness.

The week post-2020 election night was highly politicized and, for myself, quite anxiety ridden—I found myself glued to the television. Whether such behavior was exacerbated by COVID lock-down can't be ignored as a possibility, but I also found myself dumbfounded that there could be another presidential term for Trump. Not long after this long-drawn-out election night, week, months, I came across a blog describing the white hysteria, "white performative anxiety,"[51] that ensued during the 2020 election. In his blog, theteej described his perplexity at white Democrats having a meltdown on social media as the possibility of Trump winning the

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[51] theteej, "On White Performative Anxiety on Election Night," *Ridiculosity. Critical Theory. Poor Life Choices* (blog), November 4, 2020, https://theteej.tumblr.com/post/633880881390665728/on-white-performative-anxiety-on-election-night.

election loomed. He realized, however, that white Democrats "really believed their own lies. They thought there was going to be a magical, massive blue wave of repudiation of President Trump, after the xenophobia, the racism, the wanton cruelty, the vicious fascism."[52] In this regard, white people who voted for Biden needed to feel redeemed by this election and, therefore, were "mourning, almost disproportionally, this sense of utter collapse."[53] I see, however, that white people voting for Biden (myself included) was an expression of civility that functioned to deflect complicity—to superficially reinforce one's white-moral innocence. To put into perspective the performativity of white anxiety, theteej describes a white friend who expressed in length their election anxiety and plea for "good" to conquer on social media. In response to his friend's status, pro-Trump comments ensued and there was silence. His white friend's anxiety was performative— "[j]ust white folk hoping civility will save them, with the same baffling surety as King Canute commanding the waves to ease lapping at the feat of his throne."[54] White people's investment in "being good" enables hegemonic civility to speciously re-root in what seem like practices of social justice (i.e., voting for candidates other than Trump). One election, one vote, does not constitute absolution from one's possible complicity in reproducing social injustices. When enactments of civility operate to preserve one's white goodness, the importance of living and grappling with paradoxes— "to push and transform [them] and remember that there are no cheat codes here"[55] is forgotten, even if unintentionally. The 2020 election, then, was my own realization that even educators who are aware of the

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[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

systemic and incessant operations of whiteness can find themselves invested in avoiding

contradictions that call into question their goodness—to be social justice advocates.

In this dissertation, I explore and provide evidence in chapter two to support my assertion

that civility can function to conceal white student resistance, especially in social justice

classrooms. When analyzing civility, my concerns are not directed at the concept itself, but are

focused on how norms of civility function in certain contexts. In chapter three, I examine how

epistemic injustices are (re)produced in testimonial evaluations and examine alternative ways to

attribute epistemic authority and subvert unjust power relations in the social justice classroom.

Chapter four builds on chapter three by envisioning ways of thinking, criticality, that better

encourage students to question their presuppositions and engage with alternative perspectives. In

conclusion, chapter five endeavors to present a praxis of affective democratic friction—that is,

how to pedagogically generate/nourish a criticality that necessitates thinking differently.

Chapter Two:

Specious Civility

If you need a trigger warning or a safe space, I urge you to drop this class.[1]

U.S. education has long been concerned with the practice and training of civility and, in turn, the development of civilized persons. Indigenous boarding schools, for example, provide historical evidence of the U.S. Government's efforts to civilize populations according to specific norms of civil etiquette—that is, white, Euro-centric standards of civil behavior, language, and dress.[2] In many ways, this historical background hits on a primary issue with civility and education—the adoring of polite versus critique-oriented political civility in U.S. schools.[3] Joanne Marshall and George Theoharis draw attention to the issue of "niceness" in teacher education, specifically post-secondary, white-raced politeness, when they explain that "[i]t is not nice, for example, to ask students to reflect critically upon how inequity and injustice occur and is perpetuated in their schools and in their hometowns. It is also not nice to point out the benefits of white privilege and the ways in which whiteness is not culturally neutral."[4] While some

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[1] Loretta Ross, as quoted in Jessica Bennett, "What If Instead of Calling People Out, We Called Them In?" *The New York Times*, November 19, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/19/style/loretta-ross-smith-college-cancel-culture.html.

[2] Mary Crow Dog & Robert Endroes, "Civilize Them with a Stick," in *Social Constructions of Differences and Inequality: Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality*, (ed.) Tracy Ore (New York: McGraw Hill Publishing Company, 2003): 279-86.

[3] Cris Mayo, "The Binds That Tie: Civility and Social Difference," *Educational Theory* 52, no. 2 (2002): 170.

[4] Joanne M. Marshall and George Theoharis, "Moving Beyond Being Nice: Teaching and Learning About Social Justice in a Predominantly White Educational Leadership Program," *Journal of Research on Leadership Education* 2, no. 1 (2007): 2.

college education courses, such as ethics, might promote political civility, a form grounded in our association as citizens within a democratic society, the field of education and, more specifically, diversity and social justice-oriented courses have generally leaned toward polite civility—the suppression of discomfort for the sake of "safeness."[5]

Civility is commonly shallowly reduced to manners. For example, the *American Heritage Dictionary* defines civility as courteous behavior, politeness, or courteous utterance.[6] One component of civility is etiquette; however, when searching for evidence to further understand and dissect my observations regarding civility and dominantly-located, white-student resistance, I became overwhelmed by the varied representations, explanatory terms, and so on that individuals employed to argue for "their" concept of civility. Attempting to define civility had me suspecting I was embarking on a dreadful, impossible, and unreasonable task. Nevertheless, while thinking about the various definitions and representations of civility in current political and philosophical theory it became clear to me that civility can, in certain contexts, function as a normative practice to silence, exclude, or suppress identities and ways of living and, as a result, conceal social and individual responsibility.

Tracey Owens Patton problematizes an un-interrogated, organized civility by calling attention to the potential hegemonic operations disguised within institutional appeals to civility. Patton argues that *hegemonic* civility can performatively work "to resist and distance oneself from personal accountability for sexism and racism" because polite, civil discourse is designed to

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[5] Dalia Rodriquez, "The Usual Suspect: Negotiating White Student Resistance and Teacher Authority in a Predominantly White Classroom," *Cultural Studies ⇔ Critical Methodologies* 9, no. 4 (2009): 483-508.

[6] HarperCollins Publishers, "The American Heritage Dictionary Entry: Civilities," accessed April 19, 2023, https://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=civilities.

not evoke critique or discomfort.[7] She elaborates on the performative function of hegemonic

civility by connecting civil talk with Alice McIntyre's concept of "white talk"—language that

shields "white people from examining their/our individual and collective role(s) in the

perpetuation of racism."[8] White talk, Patton claims, is civil talk.[9] Civility disguises power

relations and inferential racism—"also known as nonracist racism"—by preventing further

examination and dialogue about individual and systemic oppression, which reinforces hegemonic

power relations.[10] Nina M. Lozano-Reich and Dana L. Cloud make a similar claim by

historically situating how appeals to civility strengthened oppressive, normative standards that

silenced women, people of color, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ)

people.[11] LGBTQ sexual practices, for example, have past and presently "been vulnerable to

oppressive charges of indecorum."[12] Hetero-normative sexual standards can operate "to shame

queer individuals, and stigmatize nonnormative acts of sexuality" and, in turn, have encouraged

justifications of violence (i.e., sexual harassment, rape, and other hate crimes, etc.).[13]

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[7] Tracey Owens Patton, "In the Guise of Civility, The Complicitous Maintenance of Inferential Forms of Sexism and Racism in Higher Education," *Women's Studies in Communications* 27, no. 1 (2004): 65.

[8] Alice McIntyre, *Making Meaning of Whiteness: Exploring the Racial Identity of White Teachers* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 45.

[9] Patton, "In the Guise of Civility," 65.

[10] Ibid., 61.

[11] Nina M. Lozano-Reich and Dana L. Cloud, "The Uncivil Tongue: Invitational Rhetoric and the Problem of Inequality," *Western Journal of Communication* 73, no. 2 (2009): 223.

[12] Ibid., 224.

[13] For a fuller discussion on hetero-normative sexual standards, please see Charles E. Morris III & John M. Sloop, "What Lips These Lips Have Kissed: Refiguring the Politics of Queer Public Kissing, *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 3, no. 1 (2006): 1-26; Michael Warner, *The Trouble With Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

I agree with Patton, Lozano-Reich, and Cloud that civility can, in certain contexts, operate as a façade that discursively conceals and reinforces hegemonic systems of inequality. Expanding on their claims, I assert that employments of civility can obscure more than "white talk" in social justice classrooms. Beneath the camouflage of civility is a dominant, normative epistemology circulating—'whiteness.'[14] I do not reduce or liken 'whiteness' with white-identified people. To clarify, I concur with AnaLouise Keating that "[b]ecause this framework functions to benefit 'white'-raced people, they can be more invested in it."[15] I use the term 'whiteness' to refer to a framework—epistemology—that shapes how we (human beings of all races, classes, genders, sexualities, religions, etc. in the U.S.) construct and perceive identities, experiences, and social practices.[16] I contend that civility, as a hegemonic discourse, supports the maintenance of 'whiteness' by: (1) reinforcing dualisms and rigid boundaries that sustain hegemonic power relations (e.g., civil vs. uncivil behavior and evading critical examinations of social differences); (2) (re)circulating single-voiced perspectives and identities (e.g., silencing students' voices whose anger is viewed as uncivil); (3) purporting neutrality (e.g., colorblindness); and (4) maintaining non-relationality (e.g., a self-focus on preserving one's feelings of "goodness"—as nonracist, nonsexist, etc.—above listening to other's experiences). Identifying civility within a larger epistemological framework— 'whiteness'—may enable us to more critically analyze the usefulness and/or uselessness of civility in social justice education.

I keep asking, however, why civility is so attractive to educators? Is the appeal an

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[14] I use single quotation marks around 'whiteness' to highlight the contrast between 'whiteness' as an epistemology and white as a racial category.

[15] AnaLouise Keating, *Teaching Transformation* (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY, 2007), 131.

[16] Sally J. Sayles-Hannon, "In Search of Multiculturalism: Uncovering 'Whiteness' in Curriculum Design and Pedagogical Strategies," *The International Journal of Learning* 16, no. 10 (2009): 711.

assumed, but misled, belief that civility can quickly heal social opposition and uncomfortable conversations? Is the allure of civility—behind the smokescreen of niceness and getting along—an innermost affinity, like a favorite pair of PJs, that you cannot quite let go of? Could it be a deeply-rooted habitude of thinking—rigid and oppositional—like 'whiteness'? Does systematic opposition attract new opposition to sustain the system? Could 'whiteness' attract a hegemonic civility as a pretext to systemic transmutations of 'whiteness'? As Richard Dyer eloquently explains:

> Power in contemporary society habitually passes itself off as embodied in the normal as opposed to the superior. This is common to all forms of power, but it works in a peculiarly seductive way with 'whiteness,' because of the way it seems rooted, in common-sense thought, in things other than ethnic difference.[17]

Dyer's assertion that 'whiteness' is embedded in the ordinary—the common everydayness of our lives—is concerning if civility operates to preserve its invisibility. Civility is ill-defined, yet it is a communicative process we all take part in daily, I assume. Many college campuses have instituted civility initiatives, student civility groups are growing in popularity, and some colleges have mandatory civility courses.[18] As we inch closer to another presidential election season, I cannot fail to mention increasing public commentary (e.g., op-eds and *every* news station) and higher education critiques about civility. Curiosity might have killed the cat *(they can be troublemakers)*, but we must not accept or employ civility uncritically or without questioning its

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[17] Richard Dyer, "White," *Screen* 29, no. 4 (1988): 44-64.

[18] See: Michelle Bachelor Robinson, "21st Century Civility in the Wake of the Obama Presidency: A New Perspective—the Same Old Story," *AlabamaHumanitiesReview.com* (blog), March 31, 2011, https://alahumanitiesreview.wordpress.com/issue-no-1-2011/; Nick Jones, "Civility, Sincerity, and Ambiguity," *AlabamaHumanitiesReview.com* (blog), March 31, 2011, https://alahumanitiesreview.wordpress.com/issue-no-1-2011/; Steven Mintz, "Should College Students be Required to Take a Class in Civility?," *WorkplaceEthicsAdvice.com* (blog), April 3, 2023, https://www.workplaceethicsadvice.com/2012/08/should-college-students-be-required-to-take-a-class-in-civility.html.

purpose. The allure of civility is magnetizing—who would not want, especially on bad days, a nice comment or act of kindness? It is the desirability of niceties, smiles, and comforting exchanges, though, that make us susceptible to what I have coined "specious civility." Specious civility is tempting, but deceptive. The term describes when appeals to civility falsely claim, even if well-intentioned, to create just, open dialogue—an inclusive assemblage of topics and equitable authority for all participants to voice their perspectives and concerns. It is a form of civility that functions to conceal its reinforcement of socially-unjust power relationships and, in turn, support a dominant-oppositional epistemology— 'whiteness.' My goal is not to propose an alternative civility, but to demonstrate that civility can operate deceptively in certain context and, therefore, is in danger of reinforcing the systems of oppression and privilege social justice educators seek to dismantle.

Chapter Framework

In this chapter, I aim to examine and provide evidence to support my argument that civility may function performatively to conceal white student resistance in social justice education.[19] My concern with civility is directed, then, not at the concept itself, but rather at how the norm functions within certain contexts, like post-secondary social justice education. I begin this chapter with an overview of how civility is most often professed as a communicative virtue by discussing three theorist's interpretations: Mark Kingwell, Cheshire Calhoun, and Megan Laverty. In contrast, I contend viewing civility as *only* a communicative virtue in social justice

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[19] I understand social justice education as spaces (i.e., classes) where students are asked to critically engage with issues of systemic and institutionalized power, privilege, and difference. Social justice classes/activities expose and confront deeply-rooted assumptions about difference and ask students to self-reflect and, hopefully, develop a more critical awareness of their co-responsibility in the perpetuation of systemic inequality. Classes with a social justice objective place an emphasis on facilitating the development of students' critical consciousness—that is, how they perceive and make sense of the world.

education is insufficient, oversimplified, and susceptible to specious civility. I claim that a single-focused, superficial understanding of civility may reinscribe an oppressive, binary-oppositional epistemology, 'whiteness,' which can support concealments of white student resistance and oppressive classroom conditions. Lastly, I examine a recent student group at a small Midwest College, Project Civility, which encourages civility to break-down discrimination as an example of well-intentioned specious civility. I contend that their use of civility, if not critically interrogated, could support on-going exclusion by omitting/silencing voices, generating underlying hostility, and contributing to watered-down respect—that is, respect equates to silence and tolerance.[20] Building on my preceding investigations, I argue that civility, in terms of how it operates in social justice education, may perform in a manner that not only hinders critically-engaged dialogue, but actually reinforces the very systems of oppression and hierarchy such education seeks to reveal and problematize.

Virtuous Aspirations and Limitations

Recent presidential elections, 2016 and 2020, have spurred often heated and "uncivil" public debates/commentary regarding political candidates. Such events would be one way to explain the purpose and/or aim of political civility. As Michael Meyer explains, political civility "has its source within the idea of an association of citizens."[21] In other words, the aim is to provide a way of communicating about common issues that will influence the common good for all participants within a particular public domain. One component of political civility is

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[20] Leland G. Spencer, Jennifer A. Jackson, and Pamela M. Tyahur, "Civility and Academic Freedom: Extending the Conversation," *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric*, 6, no. ¾ (2016): 50-61.

[21] Michael Meyer, "Liberal Civility and the Civility of Etiquette: Public Ideals and Personal Lives," *Social Theory and Practice* 26, no. 1 (2000): 71.

providing a set of norms and rules for practicing "reasonable public discourse" that encourage and promote a shared understanding about ideas and opinions or knowledge related to the common good.[22] Shared understanding does not necessarily need to produce agreement about said topics, but rather the overall goal of political civility is to create an ongoing disposition for dialogue. In contrast to certain understandings of civility that abstain from discomfort, Meyers explains, political civility "may not only sanction but also requires behavior" that is "indecorous, even at times rancorous, public disagreement."[23] Even though political civility welcomes tension about the common good, the function of civility within these public forums is to allow freedom of expression without creating physical violence.[24]

In contrast to political civility, polite civility is grounded in the civilization of society. As Meyer contends, the "civility of etiquette" exemplifies "a central goal and major achievement of civilization."[25] In clearer terms, defining proper etiquette or courteous action is the primary function of polite civility and represents a system of social norms that varies depending on the cultural context. A common historical example of polite civility would be the gallant action of a man holding a door open for a woman. Today this activity may seem to mean no more than courteous behavior; however, such gallant behavior is rooted in norms that were at one point utilized to represent and further reinscribe unequal status between men and women. On one end of the spectrum, polite civility may appear to be a set of normative rules, but on the other side of

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[22] Ibid., 72.

[23] Ibid., 73.

[24] In my understanding, while political civility functions to prohibit physical violence, it could be argued that it promotes and encourages other forms of violence—emotional, psychological, and, to an extent, spiritual.

[25] Meyer, "Liberal Civility and the Civility of Etiquette," 71.

the coin, polite civility is also attached to moral and/or ethical issues. As Meyer contends, the rules of politeness and courteousness attached to a particular social context do include modes of practicing respect—that is, styles of "public and personal address as well as displays of concern or deference to elders, superiors, and strangers."[26] Presumably, then, polite civility is not entirely divorced from the practice of political civility and vice versa. To explain further, a widely recognized function of civility "is to impose some restriction on communication."[27] If one was in a public debate regarding issues about abortion or some other controversial topic, then, polite civility would curb one's use of defamatory statements toward their counterpart discussant. Such restricting of speech might increase the probability of more pleasant and respectful dialogue and, potentially, encourage future dispositions toward such public discussions.

In an effort to deconstruct civility, I examine three theorists' arguments that claim civility is worthy of a virtuous status or ethos. The three theorists are Mark Kingwell, Cheshire Calhoun, and Megan Laverty. Each philosopher has overlaps and departures from one another, yet all three proclaim virtuous aspirations for civility as a necessary, indeed indispensable for one, virtue.

I. Mark Kingwell

The first question I had when analyzing Kingwell's work was "why civility"? As a political philosopher, Kingwell explains that he believes the virtue of civility can enable citizens to approach political discussion and compromise with a higher degree of self-confidence and, ideally, have more success negotiating political topics and problems with fellow citizens'

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[26] Ibid., 72.

[27] Timothy Shiell, "Debunking Three Myths about Civility," in *Civility in Politics and Education*, eds. Deborah S. Mower & Wade L. Robison (New York: Routledge, 2012), 10.

differences.[28] In line with his disciplinary background, he claims that civility is a basic virtue, but unlike Calhoun and Laverty, is principally directed at political conversations. Developing sensitivity toward tolerance and an exceptional perspicacity for various moral conversations is for Kingwell the ambition of justice—claiming "justice as civility."[29] Kingwell contends the sensitivity he describes is his understanding of civility, which "is indeed a form of right-over-good abstraction because it suspends judgment of moral differences in the interests of social coexistence."[30] In his theory, Kingwell swaps "politeness" and "civility" frequently. His justification for the interchangeable use of politeness and civility is twofold: "first, it is part of [his] claim that the politically respectable virtue of civility is on a continuum with politeness [. . .]; second, the specifically linguistic aspect of [his] argument accept[s] 'politeness' as the term of conversational strategies of indirection, self-restraints, and face-saving."[31] As Kingwell contends, justice by way of civility necessitates politeness as an essential partner. That is, civility is an awareness of the need for self-restraint and politeness is the delicacy—tact—necessary for good citizenship.

Surprisingly, Kingwell gives a significant amount of effort to explaining the character behind his notion of civility. While Kingwell claimed that civility is a basic virtue he relegates its usefulness primarily to political conversations. When he "gives" character to his version of civility, he contends that it requires a disposition of politeness. He clarifies the disposition of

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[28] Mark Kingwell, *A Civil Tongue: Justice, Dialogue, and the Politics of Pluralism* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), viii.

[29] Ibid., 196.

[30] Ibid., 42.

[31] Ibid., 196.

politeness as the ability to "(1) refrain from saying all one could say and (2) listen sensitively to what others are saying—it is a disposition, in short to rise above one's own likes and dislikes and consider those of others."[32] Civility is not, according to Kingwell, about attaining truth or presenting the most popular theory, but is more concerned with communicating in an amicable fashion. The example Kingwell provides to elucidate his point about "getting along" is his use of politeness to not comment on the hideous suit his friend wore to his dinner party. By keeping silent, he was able to maintain smooth social interaction without being deceitful. It is important to uphold, and perhaps too indefinable for my liking, a "distance between not saying and lying."[33] The ideal civil discourse is to be amenable to foregoing the "whole" truth to reach a more important objective: "living together in a way that allows different versions of the good life to be pursued."[34] At this point in my analysis of Kingwell's character representation of civility, I found myself perceiving his primary focus and elevation of politeness to a desire to maintain on-going communication with fellow citizens. Nevertheless, his idea and fondness for politeness might only be reserved for those "friends" that come over for dinner in a not-so-stylish suit.

Kingwell's theory of justice as civility, in his book *A Civil Tongue,* appears to be fluctuating. Perhaps Kingwell was trying to cover all his bases when he embarked on his ambitious journey to define justice as civility, but his argument, to my surprise, ended in a rather precarious stance. Falling in line with a more political conception of civility, Kingwell contends that civility still allows room for "giving offense and for making politically unpopular or even

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[32] Ibid., 218.

[33] Ibid., 220.

[34] Ibid., 223.

dangerous claims."[35] After Kingwell's detailed description on the character of civility, which posits politeness as a central ally, I found myself wondering where such aggressive, disliked, and risky claims supported his argument for justice as civility. He does attempt to clarify this theoretical jump by contending that confrontational statements must be part of an on-going, open dialogue—a conversation accessible to additional evaluations. Kingwell elaborates further by exclaiming that such claims "must be *claims* [. . .] and not simply abuse or insult."[36] Following up his assertion that there is space for quarrelsome claims in his theory, he expands his argument by calling attention to the power of anger and shock in political conversations. Kingwell's example of a representational (and shocking) message is an "abortion poster, with [. . .] strong symbolic message[s]—dead fetuses, bloody coat hangers."[37] Kingwell's assertion encouraging anger concerns me because it does not necessarily follow that marginalized individuals' claims expressed with frustration or anger would receive the same level of credibility and, in turn, be given a comparable opportunity to be part of an on-going political conversation. He acknowledges that an unequal distribution of power in society means not everyone will have an even ability to speak civilly; he contends that this issue "poses its own problems" and does not further elaborate. [38] As I interpret his dismissal of socially-institutionalized power dynamics, I assert that his idea of a virtue of civility only considers a socially-dominant perspective (i.e., white-raced-heterosexual male).

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[35] Ibid., 245.

[36] Ibid., 245.

[37] Ibid., 245.

[38] Ibid., 239.

II. Cheshire Calhoun

Calhoun, in contrast to Kingwell, asserts that civility is an important *moral* virtue. She adopts a modified view of the position "that civility involves conformity to socially established rules of respect, tolerance, and considerateness."[39] She diverges from opinions purporting civility as conformity to socially established rules and, therefore, only a minor virtue, she disagrees that social compliance is a justification to disregard civility's moral prominence. Instead, she claims shared social understanding is vital to the moral function of civility.[40] To simplify her position, Calhoun declines the idea that civility is social conformism to established rules of respect, tolerance, and considerateness. Calhoun's disjuncture is based on her contention that the task of civility "is to communicate basic moral attitudes."[41] She contends that these characteristics of civility (e.g., respect, etc.) are *moral attitudes*—how one expresses their respect—rather than *rules*—one's conformity to established expectations. This distinction is crucial because morality, for Calhoun, is a communal endeavor upheld by social agreements about what's right and wrong. Civility norms can only productively manage controversy by "appealing to social understanding" and, in turn, supplying a common language.[42]

According to Calhoun, civility—as a communicative practice of moral behavior—*always* involves displaying respect, tolerance, and considerateness to others if they follow socially appropriate viewpoints and behaviors. For that reason, one may need to make a choice between

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[39] Cheshire Calhoun, "The Virtue of Civility," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 29, no. 3 (2000): 255.

[40] Ibid., 255.

[41] Ibid., 255.

[42] Ibid., 272.

being civil and conducting one's self in *genuinely* civil ways. Calhoun explains that genuine civility is "treating people with real respect" and never obeying unjust social norms that may wrongly burden others.[43] My initial reaction to Calhoun's statement about genuine civility had me very perplexed about her reasoning. I back-tracked and re-read her argument multiple times to make sure I was grasping (*after many moments of confusion*) her assertion that being genuinely civil would be a choice. Why would someone prefer not to act and treat people in genuinely civil ways? Even though it may be more just to adopt a morally critical point of view, Calhoun claims that norms of civility are what make possible conversations "wherein nonlike-minded people" will need to enter political discussions and work towards socially shared understandings.[44] If everyone operates from different critical moral frameworks, then "civility anarchy" is likely. To elaborate, "[a] socially critical moral view is, after all, a particular normative view and thus likely to be held by some people and not by others."[45] Operating from any specific moral viewpoint to determine the bounds of civility—what deserves and does not deserve a civil response—requires us to consider queries resolved instead of open for discussion. Calhoun does contend that there is a way for us to identify actions, behaviors, etc. that don't deserve civil responses, which is determined by the status of social consensus on the issue. If the topic has been socially agreed upon, such as the wrongness of sexual harassment, you do not owe a civil response.

Calhoun's argument that civility requires conforming to social norms, even if they may unjustly harm others, arises from her fixation with proving civility is an essential moral virtue. I

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[43] Ibid., 267.

[44] Ibid., 269.

[45] Ibid., 270.

reason that her resolute position might weaken the persuasiveness of her claim, however. She does state that a component of morality is to be critically aware and reflective, but, more importantly, the ambition is to work toward social agreement. Civility norms, Calhoun contends, "work to regulate disputes precisely because they do not appeal to socially critical moralities that may themselves be under dispute;" therefore, not being "regulated by a critical morality is central to civility's being a moral virtue."[46] Can one maintain integrity towards their life/identity by going along with social norms that do not support their livelihood? While I find it difficult to ethically comprehend, Calhoun states one's choice to have self-integrity and be civil will largely depend on the progressiveness of socially-shared understandings. To clarify, she provides an example of a family where one of the partners in a same-sex couple is being excluded from family get-togethers. She states, that there may be occasions when one needs to choose between a peacemaking reply and response that "makes clear how intolerably disrespectful such an exclusion is."[47] Such a claim appears to put an unjust onus on those who do not "fit" neatly into the social concord. Calhoun believes, however, that dismissing civility solely on the potential imbalance of respect towards the socially marginalized is a mistake. Civility norms, she argues, can provide security for disadvantaged social groups since norms enact pressure to restrain people's expressions of judgmental and antagonizing opinions. While she acknowledges that civility norms in morally-flawed societies may not equally protect those who are socially disadvantaged, she exclaims the fault is not in the value of civility, rather the deficiency lies within our shared social understandings and those should be contested *(with a smile, of course)*.

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[46] Ibid., 274.

[47] Ibid., 274.

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III. Megan Laverty

Laverty diverges from Kingwell and Calhoun's positions that civility is a stand-alone virtue. In contrast, she takes the middle road and argues that civility generates a moral *ethos* that benefits the subsistence of 'major morals.'[48] Laverty interprets civility to be "a mode of address that involves the mutual acknowledgment and accommodation of others through everyday communicative gestures."[49] Only communicative exchanges, not individuals, can be civil or uncivil. Civility is less about conveying respect and more about intercommunicating emotions stimulated by the interaction, "such as reticence, reserve, frustration, impatience, sympathy, solicitousness, surprise," and so on in a respectful way.[50] It is this joint, back-and-forth practice of civility that facilitates the productive sharing of truthful evaluations, according to Laverty. Agreeing with Calhoun, Laverty also maintains that properly communicating civility requires a shared language and, therefore, requires adhering to social standards for conveying respect, tolerance, and considerateness. For this reason, Laverty stresses her preference for the term "civility" over others, such as "tone" and "tact," because it emphasizes the social conventions and political functions crucial for partaking in democracy. She does not, for this reason, propose a polite or political form of civility, but "offer[s] an alternative vision of how civility enhances communication by affirming human dignity."[51]

Unlike, Kingwell or Calhoun, Laverty acknowledges that civility is hampered by dualistic thinking. Either/or thinking does a disservice to civility, according to Laverty. Civility

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[48] Megan J. Laverty, "Communication and Civility," in *Civility in Politics and Education*, eds. Deborah S. Mower and Wade L. Robison (New York, Routledge, 2012), 76.

[49] Ibid., 65.

[50] Ibid., 65.

[51] Ibid., 67.

cannot be reduced to being entirely about displaying conformity to social norms or disregarding one's individual views to engage benevolently with others. When lessened to social behaviors, civility makes it acceptable for those who fulfill those norms to be hypercritical toward those whose conduct does not comply. Such a "mandatory" view, she contends, confirms that civility functions "in the interest of privilege and power."[52] Laverty claims a mandatory civility is one that censors disagreement and conceals systematic inequality. Mandatory civility is frequently conflated with "political correctness"—a forbidding of any impolite or abusive comments and actions, especially with regards to race, class, gender, sexuality, class, etc. According to Laverty, adversaries of political correctness believe they are critiquing civility, but are, in fact, criticizing "snobbery." She defines "snobbery" as "an ordinary vice that betrays a self-interested desire to retain and reinforce one's superiority over others."[53] Laverty gives an example of a concierge and resident's exchange that was curtly interrupted by another resident who felt she was socially superior to concierges. The interjecting resident's action—steering the other resident away from his conversation with the concierge—is actually snobbery. While the concierge may think the non-snob resident is respectful and considerate in comparison, it is possible the exhibited civility is exercised exploitatively—insincerely offering tokens of friendliness to achieve an ulterior purpose. Maybe the non-snob resident was positioning himself to be a greater priority on the concierge's to-do list, for instance.

Ritualistic elements of civility—for example, acknowledging one's hospitality with replies of "please" and "thank you"—do increase chances for deceptiveness and insincerity,

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[52] Ibid., 67.

[53] Ibid., 68.

Laverty asserts.[54] She contends, however, that civil exchanges cannot be narrowly categorized as mere social customs because a civil communication is not realized if the people one is expressing a civil act to do not react in a similar way. To clarify, Laverty asserts that civility requires a dedication to respectfulness—which necessitates balancing one's self-interests with others—that affirms delicate transmissions of assessments and emotional sensations. Unlike Calhoun, though, Laverty thinks civility is more than *always* displaying respect, tolerance, and considerateness.[55] In an effort to illustrate her concept of civility, Laverty describes a relationship between two women in Mary Wilkins Freeman's short story, "*A Poetess*," who personify a "deep patience"—"an attitude or manner or orientation" of "acceptance."[56] Mrs. Caxton, an affluent woman, sees that her neighbor, Betsy Dole, is outside in her garden picking beans and calls over to her. Mrs. Caxton recently lost her only child and Betsy, already aware of her loss, perceived her current solemnness by reading her bodily expressions. Despite the possibility that Betsy had not completed her tasks outside, she welcomes Mrs. Caxton into her home to chit-chat. Mrs. Caxton acknowledges Betsy's underprivileged social situation by remarking on the low quantity of beans she has picked and delicately advising Betsy to plant more beans next year. As they talk, Betsy unknowingly takes on a similar solemn facial expression as Mrs. Caxton, which demonstrates Betsy's recognition of her grief. Laverty describes the women's interaction as a poetic, relational process—a practice coalescing the "intellectual, aesthetic, and ethical dimensions of communication"—that exhibits a genuine acceptance of each other's lives by revealing their

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[54] Ibid., 69.

[55] Ibid., 69-72.

[56] Ibid., 75. For the complete story of Mrs. Caxton and Betsy Dole, please see Mary Wilkins Freeman, "A Poetess," in *A Mary Wilkins Freeman Reader*, ed. Mary R. Reichardt (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 107-20.

"sympath[y] with one another's difficulties, without completely understanding, or fully sharing in, the other's predicament."[57] Civility's relationality, Laverty explains, is why we can't *always* be civil. The practice of civility Laverty describes is reliant on the peculiarities of people's personalities and the daily happenings occurring when the communicative exchanges take place. For this reason, rituals of civility—handshakes, general greetings, saying thank you, etc.—are indispensably important to Laverty's vision of civility; namely, they uphold an ethos of civility in times when we are unequipped to be wholly in the here and now to do so ourselves.[58]

Virtuous Limitations

> [W]e have all been programmed to respond to the human differences between us with fear and loathing and to handle that difference in one of three ways: ignore it, and if that is not possible, copy it if we think it is dominant, or destroy it if we think it is subordinate. But we have no pattern for relating across our human differences as equals. As a result, those differences have been misnamed and misused in the service of separation and confusion.[59]

The three theories of civility discussed were intentionally selected to demonstrate the differences and similarities between political, polite, and, what I would call, a synthesis of political and polite forms of civility. Kingwell argued that civility is a basic virtue that generally applies to political contexts, but, at the same time, requires politeness to promote self-restraint and tactically avoid confrontation—that is, face-saving. Calhoun differentiates her perspective of civility by advocating that civility is a moral virtue that aims to communicate moral attitudes of respect, tolerance, and considerateness to others. Successful transmission of our moral attitudes

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[57] Ibid., 73-75.

[58] Ibid., 75-76.

[59] Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, ed. Cheryl Clarke (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 2007), 115.

necessitates a common language established by social norms that represent our shared moral understandings. Laverty claims to provide an alternative vision of civility that enhances communication "in a manner that is sensitive to the dignity of all."[60] In this regard, civility is a communicative method that necessitates a communal recognition and accommodation of each other that is aided by the moral ethos norms/rituals of civility create. The common theme among these philosophers is the virtuous importance of civility—either as a stand-alone virtue or ethic that supports major virtues. I do not seek to disregard the theories of civility these scholars assert; however, I will argue in this section that civility, if employed uncritically in social justice contexts, could contribute to the misnaming and misuse of social differences and, as a result, propagate injustice, as Audre Lorde explains in my epigraph.

I find myself questioning if situating civility within a virtue ethics framework is useful for social justice education. To clarify, I understand the social justice classroom as a space where students are asked to critically engage with issues of systemic and institutionalized power, privilege, and difference. Social justice classes expose and confront deeply-rooted assumptions about difference and ask students to self-reflect and, hopefully, develop a more critical awareness of their co-responsibility in the perpetuation of systemic inequality. Classes with a social justice objective place an emphasis on facilitating the development of students' critical consciousness—that is, how they perceive and make sense of the world.

If civility is contextual and produces different effects in different places, such as the social justice classroom, does a conception of civility based in virtue ethics increase the probability of reinforcing socially-unjust power relations? The goal of virtue ethics—to develop the character to be a good person, to live a moral life—is not necessarily undesirable. When a

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[60] Laverty, "Communication and Civility," 76.

marginalized person develops a virtuous habit (i.e., civility) that encourages elevating the feelings of others above oneself could, however, result in "the subjection of the self to the demands of others."[61] Within the social justice classroom, a virtue of civility that encourages dominantly-located students to suspend their self-concern in an effort to engage in considerate and tolerant dialogues with socially-marginalized students about systemic injustices could be useful. If we understand that marginalized students are already operating from a position of less authority—who may already neglect their selves when enduring offensive comments about racism, sexism, etc. in their everyday lives—we can better grasp how cultivating a virtue of civility may contribute to oppressive classroom dynamics rather than helping to alleviate them. Cris Mayo makes a similar claim when she argues civility expects "that one should 'learn things that are offensive in a pleasant way;'" which "demand[s] that one extend oneself and one's efforts toward knowing what might be offensive prior to engagement with people who would be offended."[62] For example, white-identified students might feel offended if/when a class discussion about racism points out how their racial socialization may implicate them in reproductions of racism. A virtue ethics version of civility would, in this context, imply students of color *should* want to withhold the "offensive" portions of their narratives (e.g., identities, experiences, etc.), especially if those stories support claims about white privilege and systematic complicity in an effort to aid the comfort of their dominantly-located, white classmates.

When analyzing Kingwell, Calhoun, and Laverty's positions for how a virtuous civility would address unequal power relationships, I get varied and similar answers. Kingwell refers to

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[61] Sarah Conly, "Why Feminists Should Oppose Feminist Virtue Ethics," *Philosophy Now*, no. 33 (2001), par. 3.

[62] Cris Mayo, "The Binds that Tie," 181.

potential unequal epistemic authority among peoples of dissimilar social locations engaging in

civil conversations. He does not, however, offer any answers for how his argument for a virtue of

civility, even if only a basic virtue, would address unequal power relationships. In fact, he only

elaborates enough to express that unequal power relationships create "its own problems."[63] In a

social justice classroom context, Kingwell's use of civility as a strategy to redirect conversations

by shifting focus away from one's views and onto the beliefs and ideas of others—a face-saving

tactic to avoid confrontation—could be problematic. To illustrate, let's say the class topic for the

day was institutionalized sexism (e.g., the workplace) and a male student wanted to redirect the

conversation away from him when he asserts, "I don't want to offend anyone." The student's

strategic use of civility shields him from further questioning and releases him from his dialogue

responsibilities for the remainder of class. A civility that is firstly guided by motivations of

"getting along with one another" allows a student to "politely" disengage from difficult

conversations; especially, conversations with students whose social-location is different than

oneself.[64] In turn, the student's deliberate move of restraining his dialogue—to separate himself

from the conversation—insulates him from engaging in discussions that could challenge his

perspective and/or expand his viewpoints. Consequently, Kingwell's account of civility as a

virtue might, in social-justice education contexts, be an example of specious civility—when calls

for civility falsely claim, even if unintentionally, to create just and open dialogue. To be more

precise, a civility principally concerned with discussants having congenial relationships instead

of dialogues that critically engage each other's varied life experiences and ways of thinking,

which may generate not-so-comfortable feelings, may possibly operate to maintain the unjust

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[63] Kingwell, *A Civil Tongue*, 239.

[64] Ibid., 223.

status quo.

Calhoun attempts to address issues of unequal social power when she declares that in "morally imperfect social worlds, we may have to choose between being civil [. . .] and behaving in ways that are genuinely respectful and tolerant."[65] Even though Calhoun empathizes with one's need to maintain one's integrity—be true to oneself—and on occasion not follow social norms of civility, she stands by her belief that aiming for shared moral understandings is of utmost importance. She does elaborate that not all behavior or points of view merit civil responses. Views that are not socially agreed upon—for example, immigration—would not warrant civil responses.[66] What would one be required to do, or not do, in social dialogues if their identities or experiences were contrary to what is "socially acceptable"? Calhoun attempts to acknowledge that socially-marginalized persons cannot place "civility" above their selves all the time by conceding that one may, on occasion, have to decide to make a stand towards an offense or brush the offence off with a pacifying response. I see Calhoun making an effort to convey a bit of agency to members of, what she calls, *disesteemed* social groups, but I argue she actually obligates members to take on an oppressive responsibility to speak up without any assurance of reciprocation or, I would add, guarantee that anyone is listening. To speak up as a socially-disadvantaged person about the inequalities or hurtful behaviors one has experienced, be it racism, sexism, homophobia, etc., can locate that person as the point of contention. The inequalities and hurtful behaviors the person spoke about aren't always received by privileged

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[65] Calhoun, "The Virtue of Civility," 262.

[66] I am not asserting that immigration in the U.S. is not socially agreed upon. For instance, I consider violence towards immigrants not socially acceptable in the U.S. Nevertheless, the current social and political climate in the U.S. causes me to consider we have not communally reached any shared understandings, let alone collective agreements about racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, etc.

social groups as problematic—for example, expressions of frustration about racism from people of color frequently go unacknowledged as excessive complaining or playing the race card. For this reason, the social "other" who spoke up, whose story might not have been heard or understood by socially-privileged persons, becomes *the problem*.

Calhoun's argument for civility obliges socially-marginalized people to speak up in order to change socially shared understandings—remaining silent or offering peace-making replies to injustice would only support the very systemic injustices that oppress them. Additionally, her model of civility implies that those who express disagreement with social norms would not require civil responses or any acknowledgement for that matter. In this regard, I see Calhoun's civility being susceptible to propagating a specious civility in social justice classes by assisting a domineering "white silence"—a silence that operates "to shelter white participants by keeping their racial perspectives hidden and thus protect[ing] [them] from exploration or challenge."[67] Not all white-student silence is problematic, but its use can be complicated. Robin DiAngelo explains that white "[s]ilence has different effects depending on what move it follows."[68] Silence from white-raced students after a person of color shares a story about discrimination discredits their experience. White silence in Calhoun's idea of civility could be seen as a respectable response, yet it could work to disguise unjust power relationships, as well—predisposing employments of civility to specious civility.

Laverty's endeavor to provide an "alternative vision" of civility tries to address the potential misuses of civility to mask systemic injustice by calling attention to how civility is

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[67] Robin DiAngelo, "Nothing to add: A Challenge to White Silence in Racial Discussions," *Understanding and Dismantling Privilege* II, no. I (2012): 5.

[68] Ibid., 5.

oftentimes confused with political correctness.[69] She also explains that the ritualistic features of civility can increase its possibilities of being exercised deceitfully and insincerely. Laverty distinguishes her understanding of civility as a practice of communication by arguing that civility is a cooperative activity and, in turn, a successful interaction can only be civil if both parties respond similarly. I appreciate Laverty's attention to how civility can be exerted oppressively. I argue, however, that her theory does not dig deep enough to fully address possible unequal power dynamics in communicative interactions. She contends that successful communications of civility require a shared language, which "assumes shared interests between oppressors and oppressed."[70] Who determines the rules for assessing the parameters of what counts as a civil communicative interaction? I claim that Laverty does not consider that social norms of civil language customarily favor those in privileged social positions and, as Jennifer Simpson explains, influence "when and with whom [socially privileged] choose to be civil."[71]

Factoring in who has a greater investment in the terms of civil communication will impact how civility operates in different contexts, especially if the topic of discussion could cause discomfort. In the social justice classroom these power dynamics—that is, what, when, and with whom a dialogue is considered civil/uncivil—can surface when questions of safety arise. A white student, for example, exclaims during a classroom discussion on racism, "I don't feel safe." Does the student feel they are in physical harm? When "safety" discourse is invoked in social justice classrooms by white students, it signals, most often, that the conversation is beyond

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[69] Laverty, "Communication and Civility," 68.

[70] Lozano-Reich and Cloud, "The Uncivil Tongue," 221.

[71] Jennifer Lyn Simpson, "The Color-Blind Double Bind: Whiteness and the (Im)possibility of Dialogue, *Communication Theory* 18, no. 1 (2008): 152.

their comfort level; they feel they are being attacked—no longer in a civil, comfortable, dialogue.[72] White students labeling spaces or conversations as unsafe could result in students of color self-editing to avoid uneasiness. Civil interactions, therefore, can be relational—comparably reciprocated by each party—and still contribute to unequal power dynamics in the social justice classroom if the onus for maintaining civility obligates one party to edit their voices to only include content that does not offend those with more social power. Laverty's theory of civility, when applied to the social justice classroom, is predisposed to specious civility. Proposing civility as a communal communication act is a positive step, but does not consider who has a greater investment in civil exchanges and how this unequal distribution of power could limit the authority of dissenting voices and, as a result, advance a specious civility.

In review, I see three primary themes among Kingwell, Calhoun, and Laverty's concepts of civility that could, in a social justice education context, reinscribe an epistemology of 'whiteness': (1) self-enclosed individualism; (2) reinforcement of dualisms and rigid boundaries; and (3) perpetuation of non-relationality and neutrality. First, in my analyses of each theory's plausible reifications of unequal power relationships an active script of self-enclosed individualism is present. To elaborate, I am referring to a narrow individualism, unlike advocating for personal agency and integrity, with a hyper-emphasizes on "inflexible boundaries dividing self from other," "absolute isolation," and an "intense focus on the particular human being."[73] In the social justice classroom, a self-enclosed individualism can act as a justification for using civility to insulate oneself from experiences and ideas that are contrary to one's own. A

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[72] Robin DiAngelo, "Nothing to add," 12.

[73] AnaLouise Keating, *Transformation Now: Toward a Post-Oppositional Politics of Change* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 171.

self-enclosed individualism prompts white student to firstly ask, "How will this situation affect me?" If the answer to that question is discomfort or conflict, especially when the topic of discussion (e.g., racism) might conflict with one's ideas about their identity or social-historical positioning, to ask, "How can I avoid this discussion without conflict?" The script of self-enclosed individualism is visible in all three of my examples of white-student's potential misuses of civility to shield oneself from confronting their potential complicity in perpetuating systemic inequality. Comments stating "I don't want to offend anyone," "I don't feel safe," or the absence of talk—invalidating white silence—can discursively perform to release students, most often white students, from having to engage in not-always-so-comfortable dialogue and restrict challenges to their cognitive exits because they replied in seemingly "civil" ways.

Second, a pattern of binary-oppositional rhetoric supporting rigid boundaries between white-raced people and people of color is detectible. For example, a white student, Tom, during a class dialogue on the rhetoric of colorblindness states, "I don't feel safe." By invoking a language of safety, Tom is positioning himself as innocent and non-violent and the students of color in the class as violent—implying they, students of color, make him feel unsafe. Tom's rhetoric reinforces a binary between white-raced people and people of color—a rigid regulatory boundary. John Powell, emphasizing the role of racial categories, explains that "[b]oundaries are designed to keep some in, or out, or both. There needs to be some differential between who or what is inside and who or what is outside with a different valuation between them," which works for the "benefit of one group in opposition to another."[74] The safety discourse Tom misuses positions him as white victim that obscures power dynamics—a benefit to his dialogic comfort—

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[74] John A. Powell, "Dreaming of a Self Beyond Whiteness and Social Isolation," *Washington University Journal of Law and Policy* 18 (2005): 16.

and protects him from having to encounter alternative views. The phrase, "I don't feel safe," is a speech act—a polite exit to avoid offensive/confrontational interaction—that does not allow students of color to refute without contributing to Tom's discomfort because to do so would only give credibility to Tom's statement.

Third, in each scholar's theories is an underlying theme of neutrality that inhibits an examination of how our identities intersect with and influence each other. Colorblindness—a race-neutral, individual-centric discourse—"perpetuates a system of thought in which White ways of being, knowing, and experiencing are […] 'neutral, normative, average, and ideal.'"[75] Kingwell's idea of civility claims living together peacefully is more important than "reaching the truth or articulating the best possible theory or moral vision."[76] An idea of civility that promotes getting along over critical conversations of social difference can, within the context of social justice classrooms, invalidate the voices of socially-marginalized students because they upset the status quo. For example, if Shelly, a student of color, talks about a classroom experience where she felt tokenized—when a person of color or any socially-marginalized person is singled out to speak for their entire social group—and her narrative is followed by white silence, Shelly's story is discredited. An invalidating white silence following people of color's stories could operate to sustain a counterfeit race-neutral space. To paraphrase Dyer, a space absent of race is not possible—race is always on stage.[77] A civility that functions to support colorblindness in social justice classrooms reinforces the status quo and precludes relational dialogue—conversations that can expose and expand our social understandings by exploring, for example, how social

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[75] Simpson, "The Color-Blind Double Bind," 142.

[76] Kingwell, *A Civil Tongue*, 218.

[77] Richard Dyer, *White* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 1.

constructions of white and black racial identities are co-produced.

Reflecting on my epigraph at the beginning of this section, Audre Lorde calls attention to how our socialization lacks blueprints for responding to our social differences in equitable ways. She highlights the insufficiency of our dominant epistemology, 'whiteness,' to understand human difference and, in turn, our approach to these differences is one of three ways: "ignore it, and if that is not possible, copy it if we think it is dominant, or destroy it if we think it is subordinate."[78] Lorde's words support my assertion that civility can in certain contexts—for example, spaces designed to expose and confront systemic and institutionalized power—conceal resistance to engage with the probable discomfort generated in dialogues about social difference, especially for dominantly-located students. If the utmost concern of civility in social justice education is pleasant and agreeable relationships, then civility may operate to camouflage unjust power dynamics by enabling dominantly-situated students to exercise evasive, but "civil," strategies to distance themselves from difficult conversations—prejudicing applications of civility in social justice classrooms to what I term specious civility. In this section, I have attempted to reveal how civility, even if well intentioned, can reproduce unjust power relationship and reinforce an epistemology of 'whiteness' in social justice education by preserving repressive norms of self-enclosed individualism, dualistic and rigid categorization, and neutrality and non-relationality. Theories of civility that posit race-neutral frameworks, like the virtue-based understandings I have discussed, require us as social justice educators to not get caught up in the romanticism of civility—doing so makes our praxis susceptible to specious civility and, consequently, an "unspoken, distortion of vision" that "respect[s] fear more than our

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[78] Lorde, "Age, Race, Sex, and Class," 115.

own needs for language and definition."[79]

Social Justice Education and Specious Civility:

Exploring Project Civility

Educational spaces rooted in social justice are unique settings that present tricky obstacles when civility functions in ways that discriminate and/or create underlying hostility. Social justice education, as I understand it, engages with issues of systemic and institutionalized power, privilege, and difference. Courses aimed at promoting social justice encourage students to explore and confront their social-historical positioning and cultivate an enriched critical consciousness. Additionally, I think a primary goal of social justice education is to encourage action, both personally—within individuals' lives—and collectively—within our families, communities, and classrooms. For this reason, I was particularly intrigued by Leland Spencer, Pamela Tyahur, and Jennifer Jackson's case study about a student group, Project Civility, at a small Midwest college. Spencer, Tyahur, and Jackson argue that the student group demonstrates how civility is a requisite for "freedom of expression" on campuses. [80] In contrast, I contend certain features of Project Civility might be an example of well-intentioned specious civility, which can contribute to oppressive contexts by: (1) generating underlying hostility; (2) omitting/silencing voices; and (3) contributing to watered-down respect—that is, respect equated to silence and tolerance.

Project Civility was enacted in 2011 as a reply to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) bullying and other impolite statements over the course of the academic year.

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[79] Lorde, "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, ed. Cheryl Clarke (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 2007), 42-3.

[80] Spencer, et al., "Civility and Academic Freedom," 56.

Student government wanted to act on the incidence of LGBTQ bullying by employing the campus' code of conduct to seek punitive measures. Instead of seeking disciplinary action, the student government formed Project Civility "in an effort to foster a greater sense of civility, broadly defined on campus."[81] As the project has evolved, the group promotes civility by: (1) awarding wooden nickels to people who demonstrate civil actions and publishing the awardee's photo on their social media page; (2) hosting programing that exhibits the complexity of civility; and (3) establishing a permanent civility wall. Spencer, Tyahur, and Jackson assert that Project Civility exemplifies free speech on campus because: (1) students started the project to address LGBTQ bullying and, in turn, to provide a more hospitable environment for personal expression; (2) the project's mission is liberatory—an action-oriented citizenry; and (3) the project exercises civility as a method to generate dialogue on issues of significance on campus. Even though Spence, Tyahur, and Jackson argue Project Civility demonstrates how civility can enhance freedom of expression on campuses, they understand their example is context specific but could also apply to other contexts.[82] I appreciate the authors' acknowledgement that how civility operates is contextual—I agree. I do not claim to know every aspect of their project, campus, or student population. My objective is only to illustrate how appeals to civility, even if guided by a mission of emancipation, may reproduce hegemonic relationships in social justice classrooms and work to disguise such power dynamics—specious civility—in order to mask an epistemology of 'whiteness.'

I. Underlying Hostility

Since Project Civility was enacted in response to LGBTQ bulling, Spencer, Tyahur, and

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[81] Ibid., 56.

[82] Ibid., 59-60.

Jackson state the group wanted to create programming to address issues of social injustice. One of the programs Project Civility hosted was a talk by a woman raised in Nazi Germany and a member of the Hitler Youth. She reflected during her lecture on the moment she and her friend came to realize the songs taught to the Hitler Youth promoted the Nazi agenda. Growing up in "a country where people faced severe punishment for criticism of the government" taught her "the importance of a civility that goes beyond politeness to political engagement, then on to active involvement in the world in a way that reduces the suffering of others."[83] She understands civility as a requisite for the "resistance of oppression" and "sometimes rejecting messages from the government or others in power [. . .] can constitute and contribute to civility."[84] Project Civility has adopted, with permission, her definition of civility to call attention to how practices of civility include community engagement. Spencer, Tyahur, and Jackson claim the speaker's talk represents how Project Civility's exercises of civility assist free speech on their campus.

Even though Spencer, Tyahur, and Jackson's case study provides limited information about Project Civility's programming, I partially agree with their assertion that practices of civility encouraging social justice may entail rejecting oppressive norms/messages in an effort to render more "livable lives."[85] I ask, nonetheless, more livable lives for whom? The speaker does not—at least in the fairly short description presented in the authors' article—address outward displays of denouncement, such as speaking up to harmful, and possibly unintentional, comments that reinforce racial inequality. I must re-emphasize that operations of civility are context based and, at least in the speaker's situation, an active outward rejection of not singing

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[83] Ibid., 57.

[84] Ibid., 57.

[85] Ibid., 61.

songs with the Hitler Youth may not be wise if she could incur physical punishment.

Are outward rejections of repressive messages required in social justice classrooms/programs to represent the civility Project Civility advocates? For example, would the civility Spencer, Tyahur, and Jackson explain call for white students, who have reached a level of awareness about how they benefit from 'whiteness' or other forms of oppression, to speak up about their reasoning? DiAngelo highlights that "[w]hite people, while served well by the dynamics of ['whiteness']," are "in a prime position to interrupt ['whiteness']" and staying silent following a problematic comment made by a white classmate—for example, "I'm colorblind . . . I don't treat any human differently"—functions to corroborate their statement.[86] White students who remain silent following their white classmates' declaration of colorblindness would not contribute to a more hospitable environment for students of color. While not overtly uncivil, a white student expressing "I'm colorblind" is a microaggression for students of color because it invalidates the existence of racial inequalities and, in turn, their lived experiences.[87] Microaggressions have significant effects for socially marginalized people, which can include negative "psychological health, […] low self-esteem, and emotional turmoil."[88] In contexts like the social justice classroom, microaggressions can create hostile environments for students of color, which could result in their disengagement from discussion in order to avoid confrontation or further psychological harm. In the social justice classroom, the civility Project Civility

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[86] DiAngelo, "Nothing to add," 5.

[87] Microaggressions are "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual-orientation, and religious slights and insults." See Derald Wing Sue and Lisa Spanierman, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons, 2010), 5.

[88] Mark Tschaepe, "Addressing Microaggressions and Epistemic Injustice: Flourishing from the Work of Audre Lorde," *Essays in the Philosophy of Humanism* 24, no. 1 (2016): 90.

emphasizes may lead to more livable lives for white students who announce their non-complicity in racism, but could very well contribute to a negative environment for students of color.

II. Silencing/Omitting Voices

Project Civility, in an effort to create a fixed presence on campus, established a civility wall, dry erase board, in the student cafeteria on campus. The board includes the group's mission statement (i.e., promoting civility to combat oppression), weekly civility quotes and essays, community volunteer options, and space for campus members to comment on the topic of civility.[89] Spencer, Tyahur, and Jackson contend that the group's civility wall is a forum that increases free speech opportunities on campus and encourages community volunteering— speaking to the group's promotion of a more engaging and participatory civility. Given that they provide indistinct geographical information, a small-local Midwest campus, I question if the absence of additional demographic data in their study represents a superficial analysis of the group's impact.

Excluding the group's initial motivation for the project—a response to an incident of LGBTQ bulling—the researchers do not explore how variations in campus members' identities (e.g., race, class, gender, religion, etc.) might provide different results for the group's effectiveness and/or positive presence on campus. Mayo, associating Aristotle's concept of "civic friendship" and civility of etiquette, explains exercises of civility intending to contribute to the good of society often highlight social relationships of power. When civility functions in a discriminating fashion, such as excluding persons' concerns in lower social status than oneself, then "civility will necessarily leave out those whose presence disrupts the bias that presumes

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[89] Spencer et al., "Civility and Academic Freedom," 58.

their absence."[90] A recent study of African-American students' experiences in post-secondary education at two Midwestern universities and one Southwestern university, for example, identified a dialectical tension of "revelation-concealment." Specifically, African-American students struggled with the urge to want to teach campus members about their culture and the pull to protect their values, beliefs, and spirit from the campus community. All three universities had African-American student populations less than 8 percent. One research contributor and member a Black student performing arts group explained:

> The first meeting we had this big argument over who our target audience was with the performances we were planning. At first, we thought that the performance should just be for our African-American peers because we wanted to give something to them and we knew they'd be supportive. On the other hand, we thought that these performances would be a great opportunity to share the merits of Black literature—that is ignored in English classes—with our White peers. We felt we could share our culture with them. It could serve instructional and inspirational purposes. But you are never sure if they would show up, and if they did, would they appreciate it?[91]

This student's statement calls attention to his need to protect himself from potential white students' denial of his life experiences and culture—a concern for his safety. If the students of color's performances of black literature were uptaken as a threat to white students' belief of their innocence in racism, they could assert it was an incident of reverse racism that made them feel unsafe. That is, an act discrimination—rudeness—toward white students' belief in colorblindness and, in turn, a violation of civility. For this reason, black students may make a choice to self-edit or remain silent in an effort to not make waves.[92] Project Civility, then, could increase students

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[90] Mayo, "The Binds that Tie," 174.

[91] Jake Simmons, Russell Lowery-Hart, Shawn T. Wahl and M. Chad McBride, "Understanding the African-American Student Experience in Higher Education through a Relational Dialectics Perspective," *Communication Education* (2013): 376-94, https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2013.813631.

[92] Kristie Dotson, "Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing," *Hypatia* 26, no. 2 (2011): 236–57, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23016544.

of color's concern for safety and, in turn, silence their perspective from the group's concept of civility—contributing to a decrease in free speech on campus for students of color.

III. Watered-Down Respect

The first activity Project Civility initiated was the distribution of wooden nickels, printed with the group's logo, when they witnessed an act of civility on campus. Some examples of wooden nickel awards were "to people who hold doors open for others, to members of the campus community who [went] out of their way to help strangers, and to students who picked up litter in a campus parking lot."[93] When giving away a wooden nickel, the awardee would take a picture with the group member and post it to their social media website to increase knowledge of the group on campus, develop awareness about the importance of civility in everyday life, and to motivate future acts of civility. The researchers contend that the act of distributing wooden nickels, even if the most basic practice of civility, contributes to students' expression by "increasing politeness on campus [that] enables more (and more diverse) expression."[94] Project Civility's award of wooden nickels to recognize people's acts of civility, in the researchers' opinion, boost a campus climate of respect and kindness that better accommodates students' ability to freely express their identities.

As my analysis of Kingwell, Calhoun, and Laverty brought to light, respect is interwoven tightly with each theorist's idea of civility—for instance, the repeated phrase "displays of respect." My concern with linking civility to displays of respect, polite acts Project Civility would award nickels for, is that the relationship could contribute to a negative civility in social justice education. In the social justice classroom, white students, for example, often declare, "I

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[93] Spencer, et al., "Civility and Academic Freedom," 56.

[94] Ibid., 57.

respect all people," when discussing racism to announce their innocence—to declare they do not participate in racism because they treat *all* people equally. Cheryl Matias explains that she finds herself fearful of white students proclaiming their respect. Matias states, "[W]hen my students say 'Respect is key,' what I fear most is what definition of respect is referred to—the one that merely caters to her needs, or the one that rightfully distributes the power embedded in respect?"[95] She questions white students' idea of respect when reflecting on a white female expressing she had never had people of color in authority and did not think her perspective would change. Following, the student made a point to assert, "Respect is key no matter what my view."[96] The student pointing out she believes in the importance of respect regardless, shuts down the opportunity for students of color to reply. Both phrases, "I respect all people" and "Respect is key no matter what," dilute respect to mere tolerance when employed to mask insensitive comments and insulates white students from interacting with other viewpoints— limiting the expression of diverse perspectives and increasing the likelihood of silence for students of color.

I think that Project Civility's goal to increase civility on their campus is done so with well intentions. I also cannot speak to the entire context of the groups' university; thus, it is only my presumption that the lack of expressed identity differences (e.g., race, class, ethnicity, etc.) signals the absence of such points of view being included. What I have attempted to highlight in my analysis of their group's activities is that even well-intentioned civility runs the risk of becoming specious civility. Spencer, Tyahur, and Jackson claim Project Civility increases the

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[95] Cheryl E. Matias, *Feeling White: Whiteness, Emotionality, and Education* (Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2016), 16.

[96] Ibid., 15.

chances of student self-expression by encouraging a climate of civility and generating more opportunities for students to exercise their academic freedom. Their claim could very well be true in the context of their campus; however, I have sought to show how activities, like those modeled by Project Civility, could in a social justice education setting function to conceal reifications of socially-unjust power relationships and, in turn, support an epistemology of 'whiteness' by means of generating underlying hostility, silencing voices of those in socially-marginalized positions, and contributing to a watered-down definition of respect.

Conclusion

As my preceding examinations in this chapter bring to light, civility may function to conceal student resistance, especially white students, in social justice education. When civility operates in a fashion that constrains opportunities for students of color to voice their points of view—specifically by means of causing underlying hostility, which can silence dissenting voices—is disposed to what I call specious civility. In social justice education environments, civility is often falsely advocated as a communicative virtue that can ease difficult conversations. In practice, though, it can camouflage oppressive conditions for socially-marginalized students that, in retrospect, sheds light on how appeals to civility in social justice classrooms can behave deceptively—hence, enacting specious civility. In support of this claim, my review of Kingwell, Calhoun, and Laverty's theories of civility call attention to how a single-focused virtue or ethos of civility may reinscribe a binary-oppositional epistemology— 'whiteness'—by way of advancing self-enclosed individualism (i.e., a hyper-focus on oneself), reinforcing dualistic/binary rhetoric (i.e., civil vs. uncivil behaviors or safe vs. unsafe spaces), and implying a race-neutral discourse (i.e., colorblindness). Lastly, my investigation of Project Civility's activities illustrates an example of well-intentioned specious civility in a social justice context.

As I initially stated, my goal in this chapter was not to provide an alternative version of civility or to discount civility entirely, but rather to establish the context from which I investigate civility—that is, the social justice classroom—and to problematize its usage by providing examples of whose voices a prejudicing civility may exclude. Throughout this chapter I have provided examples detailing *who* civility can exclude, but I have not discussed in great detail *what* and *how*. In chapter three, I aim to explore how civility conceals and contributes to epistemic and testimonial injustices in social justice education. I claim socially unjust power relationships, which signal unequal epistemic authority, can epistemically harm socially-marginalized students by not affording those students' sufficient credibility—invalidating their lived experiences and perspectives as untrustworthy testimonial knowledge.

Chapter Three:

Epistemic Injustice

Cultural decolonization often involves an interrogation of the epistemic and affective consequences of our social location, of historically learned habits of thinking and feeling.[1]

In a diversity course for education majors who were primarily middle-class, white, and female, we watched a video, *A Girl Like Me*, created by a woman of color about how white standards of beauty impact black women.[2] A large portion of the video included a reenactment of the doll experiment which demonstrated that young, black kids attribute white-skin dolls as "nice" and black-skin dolls as "bad." When the black children were asked which doll looked like them, the majority of the children pointed to the black-skin doll they labeled as "bad." As soon as the video finished, Mary, a white, female student asserted that the woman of color was leading the children to specific answers. Recalling this moment, I know many members of the class were taken back by her question. Quickly, the instructor stated that the doll experiment was a reenactment of the famous research utilized in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case which prompted the court to rule in favor of school desegregation. Immediately, Mary began retreating from her original argument and gave the video authority. While the instructor provided additional evidence to support the credibility of the video, the few marginalized peers in the class also testified to the accuracy of the information.[3]

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[1] Satya Mohanty, "The Epistemic Status of Cultural Identity: On Beloved and the Postcolonial Condition," in *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism*, eds. Paula M. Moya and Michael R. Hames-Garcia (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 63.

[2] *A Girl Like Me*, directed by Kari Davis (2007, Media that Matters), https://web.archive.org/web/20070207045014/http://www.mediathatmattersfest.org/6/a_girl_like_me/.

[3] A condensed version of this chapter was presented at the 2012 Annual Philosophy of Education Society Meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

I have found myself thinking about this class interaction frequently. Why did Mary not give epistemic authority to the video created by the black woman? What made Mary question so abruptly the trustworthiness of the video's creator? Did the social location of the creator affect Mary's trustworthiness of the creator's claims? Was Mary's questioning of the testimony presented problematic or a necessary step in the proper evaluation of testimonial evidence? All of these questions led me consider the possible epistemic movements that occur in the social justice classroom and how not assessing students' reasons for or against conferring epistemic authority to marginalized authors or students could lead to immense epistemic injustices.

Reflecting on this experience, I examine and provide arguments that support the possibility that Mary's initial inability to afford the video's creator epistemic authority may be due to engrained prejudice and/or systemic-white ignorance regarding the credibility of the creator. Even though the instructor included many materials by marginalized people and acknowledged the epistemic privilege of such authors regarding the class' topics, Mary's difficulty affording the video's creator epistemic authority may imply that privileging marginalized authors' work is not sufficient. The issue of epistemic authority—whose voices are given credibility—must be disconnected, then, from the issue of epistemic privilege. In this respect, it seems that epistemic authority, which is often "conferred in a social context" based on "other people's judgment of [one's] sincerity, reliability, trustworthiness, and 'objectivity,'" is perhaps of greater significance for the social justice classroom.[4] The implications of such an inquiry may help clarify the process by which individuals and the classroom community more generally confers epistemic authority when evaluating testimonial evidence such as articles, videos, and personal experiences. I argue, then, that exposing and examining processes of

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[4] Marianne Janack, "Standpoint Epistemology Without the "Standpoint"?: An Examination of Epistemic Privilege and Epistemic Authority," *Hypatia*, 12, no. 2 (1997): 133.

evaluating testimonial evidence is crucial to preventing the reproduction of epistemic injustices in the social justice classroom.

This chapter examines how the process of evaluating testimonial evidence and epistemic authority may produce epistemic injustices due to engrained prejudices or systemic ignorances toward the testifiers. In the previous chapters, I argued that civility may conceal/silence student resistance, particularly white students, which could possibly lead to course dynamics replicating the unjust status quo. In this chapter, I will discuss what might be concealed—that is, what processes/procedural parts of knowing/not knowing are not visible when classroom dynamics do not promote critically-reflective dialogue about sensitive topics such as racism? I start with a discussion of the nature of testimony that defines and highlights the significance of testimonial knowledge. Second, I build on John Hardwig's analysis of testimonial assessment which is premised on the necessity for trust.[5] I explain how appraisals of testifiers' trustworthiness potentially create epistemic injustices towards testifiers in the social justice classroom. Third, I explore how to possibly encourage more just testimonial assessments by examining and building on the work of Miranda Fricker and José Medina. I argue that testimonial assessment, at least within the social justice classroom, requires recognizing the possible role emotions play in the evaluation of testifiers' credibility. The goal of this chapter is to both highlight possible epistemic injustices that occur in testimonial evaluation and to consider more just ways of attributing epistemic authority and subverting unjust power relations in the social justice classroom—that is, does the absence of discussing testimonial assessments further reinscribe unjust operations of civility?

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[5] John Hardwig, "The Role of Trust in Knowledge," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 88, no. 12 (1991): 693-708.

What is Testimonial Knowledge?

Much of what we claim to know in our daily lives is based on the testimony of others. By hearing the weather person predict snow in the afternoon on Monday, I generally know it is going to snow on Monday *(unless you live in Upstate New York)*. My college education has largely revolved around learning from the testimony of other theorists and professors. In recent times, social epistemologists have taken an increasing interest in testimonial knowledge. C.A. J. Coady's book, *Testimony* (1992), is most often credited with initiating social epistemologists' interest in analyzing and validating how testimony is a vital source of knowledge.[6] Natural testimony, unlike formal testimony in contexts like courtrooms, is related to how we come to know things without first-hand, direct evidence; for example, everyday occurrences such as "giving someone directions to the post office, reporting what happened in an accident, etc."[7] Within the field of social epistemology, there have been various ongoing debates regarding what constitutes valid testimony. For instance: What counts as testimony?; When is a hearer justified in accepting testimony?; and, Is testimony a discreet source of knowledge or reducible to other types (e.g., perception, reasoning, memory)? Debates regarding what counts as testimony, then, often lie between two poles, asserting that there needs to be a balance that accounts for both speakers' intentions to testify and hearers' consumption of speakers' utterances as testimony. All in all, social epistemologists contend that all utterances cannot convey information that counts as testimony.[8] Acknowledging the disparity between what counts as testimony and what is adequate

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[6] C. A. J. Coady, *Testimony: A Philosophical Study* (Oxford: New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1992).

[7] Jennifer Lackey, "The Nature of Testimony," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 87, no. 2 (2006): 178.

[8] Deborah Tollefesen, "'Wikipedia' and the Epistemology of Testimony," *Episteme: A Journal of Social Epistemology* 6, no. 1 (2009): 8-24.

justification for accepting testimony, this chapter seeks to understand possible ways testimony is given and received or not received in the social justice classroom.

When analyzing testimony in the social justice classroom, I contend that Jennifer Lackey's disjunctivist account of testimony enables one to consider the various ways students could be hearing and giving testimony, even non-deliberately. Lackey's disjunctivist account of testimony seeks to provide a solution to how utterances, even when not intended to be, can count as testimony: "S testifies that p by making an act of communication a if and only if (in part) in virtue of $a's$ communicable content, (1) S reasonably intends to convey the information that p, or (2) a is reasonably taken as conveying information that p."[9] Lackey's concept of testimony considers the possibility that utterances can be valid testimony even when speakers do not intend them to be so. In general, Lackey's account of what testimony is enables one to see that testimonial knowledge is everywhere and, often times, testimonial knowledge is derived from sources that might not intend to convey information or from sources that do not necessarily realize they are conveying information, like daily school operations that reiterate social norms of colorblindness.

Lackey's account of testimony enables us to consider how institutionalized processes or policies and/or individuals' responses or lack thereof could, in many ways, present information even if the intent is absent. While Lackey's proposed account of testimony does enable a broader scope for understanding testimony—that is, beyond what someone intentionally communicates—it still does not address when one is justified in accepting testimony. To clarify, it does not account for how prejudice and/or ignorance on the part of the hearer could make S's communicable act a unintelligible. Act a could, for instance, reasonably communicate that p, but

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[9] Lackey, "The Nature of Testimony," 193.

if the hearer cannot comprehend act *a* (for example, the hearer may operate within different social and historical contexts than the speaker), the hearer may not feel justified in accepting that *p*. In some instances, the hearer could be rightly justified in not accepting that *p*—perhaps they have first-hand direct evidence to the contrary. When, however, is the hearer not justified in their dismissals of that *p*? If the hearer dismisses that *p*, are they causing epistemic harm to the speaker and, potentially, themselves? What constitutes epistemic harm/injustice?

Trust, Testimonial Assessment, and the Social Justice Classroom

Understanding the ubiquitous nature of testimony and, in turn, how one acquires knowledge without first-hand experience, it is important to consider how such knowledge might function in contexts that ask students to question their presuppositions about themselves and the world. In educational contexts, for instance, an educator relays information to students, but do students always believe said testimony? Hardwig's principle of testimony states: "If *A* knows that *B* knows *p*, then *A* knows *p*."[10] In a class on schooling and diversity, a student knows the professor knows institutional racism exists and, in turn, the student knows institutional racism exists. Hardwig's principle of testimony is simple enough, but it also presents a myriad of other issues. Should students blindly accept the testimony of their professors? Does the principle of testimony encourage students to be credulous? Since a primary educational ideal is critical thinking, I doubt many educators would find encouraging the trait of gullibility desirable.[11] Extreme skepticism, the flipside of gullibility, is not necessarily an attractive trait either. Such a conundrum requires students develop a set of tools for examining the reliability of testifiers.

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[10] Hardwig, "The Role of Trust in Knowledge," 698.

[11] William Hare, "Credibility and Credulity: Monitoring Teachers for Trustworthiness," *Journal of Philosopy of Education,* 41, no. 2 (2007): 207-19; Elizabeth Fricker, "Against Gullibility," in *Knowing from Words*, eds. B.K. Matilal and A. Chakrabarti (Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994): 125-61.

In the college classroom students often come from various disciplines and social position; thus, students may not have the background knowledge to understand a testifier's particular reasons for knowing something. If one is not able to comprehend the testifier's reasons, how does one evaluate the reliability of the testifier? According to Hardwig, one evaluates the reliability of a testifier based on the testifier's moral character (i.e., truthfulness) and epistemic character (i.e., competence). Hardwig elaborates by asserting that "*A* must TRUST *B*, or *A* will not believe that *B*'s testimony gives her good reasons to believe *p*. And *B* must be TRUSTWORTHY or *B*'s testimony will not in fact give *A* good reasons to believe *p*."[12] A student, then, must trust the professor and the professor must be trustworthy in order for the student to have good reasons to believe the professor about class topics. Trusting a testifier, though, often requires experience with the testifier, such as familiarity with the testifier's work. It is often necessary to trust the testimony one receives from a testifier without knowing the testifier, however. If one does not know the testifier, Hardwig explains that evaluating the trustworthiness of the testifier and, in turn, trusting the testifier often necessitates corroborating the testifier's testimony.[13]

Comparing my opening example to Hardwig's analysis of testimonial assessment and trust, it seems logical to claim that Mary was simply performing a good assessment of the testimony presented. Mary watched the video and, because she was unfamiliar with the black woman's work, asked for more information from her professor about the creator's reliability. After Mary received corroborating evidence from her professor and peers, she began to trust the testimony of the video's creator. While I think it is sensible to assert that Mary's intentions for

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[12] Hardwig, "The Role of Trust in Knowledge," 700.

[13] Ibid., 701.

asking for corroborating testimony was not intended to be harmful, I wonder if there is more to her testimonial assessment. Therefore, I contend that Hardwig's conception of testimonial assessment and trust is too simplistic because it does not acknowledge how assessing a testifier's reliability may be influenced by the testifier's social location. Assessing the trustworthiness and trusting a testifier in a world where multiple prejudices regarding race, class, gender, and/or sexuality exist, means it is possible, whether consciously/unconsciously, that one could epistemically harm a testifier of marginalized status by not affording them the authority and/or trust they deserve. Did Mary, then, so abruptly question the credibility of the video's creator because she was a black woman? Considering the professor, who is knowledgeable about the class topic, picked the video, it seems more plausible that Mary's initial assessment of distrust might be prompted by engrained prejudices regarding the black woman's credibility.

Is trusting a testifier as straightforward as one having evidence for the testifier's reliability? Just because I have evidence that a testifier is competent in her field, does it necessarily follow that I trust her? Even though Mary had evidence that the video's creator was reenacting a very influential experiment, the student may still not trust the creator because of her epistemic socialization—"a social training of the interpretive and affective attitudes in play when we are told things by other people."[14] In other words, trust is affective and, in turn, influenced by one's learned patterns of trust.[15] Karen Jones explains that trust has an affective component; the

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[14] Miranda Fricker, "Epistemic Injustice and the Role of Virtue in the Politics of Knowledge," *Metaphilosophy*, 34, no. ½ (2003): 161.

[15] Catherine Elgin, "Emotion and Understanding," in *Epistemology and Emotions*, eds. Georg Brun, Ulvi Doğuoğlu, Dominique Kuenzle (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 33-49; Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Karen Jones, "Trust as an Affective Attitude," *Ethics* 107, no. 1 (1996): 4-25.

act of trusting is informed by our previous patterns of trust.[16] When one is prompted to trust, one often depends on examples of those one has previously trusted and often seeks out similar evidence for evaluating trustworthiness. If Mary had not been exposed to many authors of color, her reservation to trust the video's creator could have more to do with the unconscious belief that the creator was not trustworthy because of her social location. As Catherine Elgin explains, "Because a feeling of trust can be experienced at an instant, we are apt to overlook how richly textured its conditions are, how much we had to learn and internalize in order to be in a position for the deliverance to be a deliverance of that emotion."[17] When we fail to recognize how our feelings of trust toward a testifier are motivated by internalized belief, though, we can make the mistake of epistemically harming a testifier unduly—that is, not affording them the epistemic authority the testifier deserves.

In our everyday lives we are often called upon to assess a testifier's trustworthiness immediately, such as my believing the Starbucks cashier that my coffee is $2.11. While the dailiness of evaluating testimony makes such habits of assessment almost second nature, the possible epistemic injustices that can occur in the social justice classroom by inaccurately assessing the trustworthiness of a testifier, in many ways, defeats a primary course goal—to broaden students' understanding of injustices in the world and, in turn, to make students more aware of their possible complicity in the replication of such injustices. To clarify, the type of epistemic injustices I am concerned with are those that occur when testifiers are not given the correct amount of epistemic authority—authority deficiency or surplus.[18]

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[16] Jones, "Trust as an Affective Attitude," 17.

[17] Elgin, "Emotion and Understanding," 43.

[18] Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc., 2007): 86-98.

Epistemic injustices are not always associated with credibility deficits or surpluses independently, but rather authority imbalances are often interdependent. In other words, "[e]pistemic injustices are produced as much by lack of epistemic recognition (the credibility deficits of some) as they are produced by epistemic privilege (the credibility excesses of others)."[19] For example, what person/experience/belief was Mary basing her response on in order to initially distrust the video? If she was basing her belief of the videos unreliability on her own experience, was she giving herself a credibility surplus in order to justify her initial assignment of less credibility to the video? While I do not know what evidence Mary was basing her assessment on, the example demonstrates that Mary was grounding her assessment on something other than the video and, in turn, such an inaccurate assessment of authority could have led her to initially deny the video credibility.

My example of Mary also demonstrates that epistemic injustices do not always produce immediate harms. Even though Mary did not initially give credibility/authority to the video's creator, that instance in itself did not necessarily create harm toward the speaker in that moment. As Medina explains, "[E]pistemic injustices are not always direct and immediate harms; they tend to have temporal trajectories and to reverberate across a multiplicity of contexts and social interactions."[20] Mary's initial denial of credibility could, then, have long term influences on her testimonial assessments and/or her communicative interactions with individuals from different social contexts. To further clarify, the example of Claire in chapter one highlights the trajectory of epistemic harm—that is, her continued inability to see different perspectives, to hear her

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[19] José Medina, "The Relevance of Credibility Excess in a Proportional View of Epistemic Injustice: Differential Epistemic Authority and the Social Imaginary," *Social Epistemology* 25, no. 1 (2011): 22.

[20] Ibid., 16.

classmates' perspectives took much of the class term to reveal harms. The continuous imbalances of credibility Claire afforded overtime led to an extremely hostile class environment and perhaps the future ability of those individuals in the classroom to approach the social justice classroom with an open mind.

What, then, are the dangers of a testifier being given less epistemic authority than she deserves in the social justice classroom? If, for instance, the class is examining how white standards inversely affect people of color, like the day the video was shown in my opening example, an inaccurate assessment of the testifier's trustworthiness by a white student can encourage white dismissals or disassociations that distance themselves from complicity in replicating such white standards. An inaccurate assessment of the testifier's trustworthiness and epistemic authority based on her social location can prompt the white student to resort to a form of "victim blaming." Kim Case and Annette Hemmings explain, "Victim blaming is a standard catch phrase in attacks on theories that hold people of color responsible for the poverty, lack of education, crimes, and other social problems they experience."[21] "Victim blaming," then, enables a white student to not only epistemically harm a marginalized testifier by not granting them sufficient epistemic authority, but also disassociates the student from understanding how she may be complicit in the replication of such discriminating practices.

What are the dangers of a testifier being given more epistemic authority than she deserves in the social justice classroom? If, for example, the topic for the day was anti-racist pedagogies, which included a mixture of readings from both white and black authors, and an authority surplus is assigned to the white authors by a white student viewing their work as more trustworthy, the viewpoints of the black authors could be entirely dismissed. Additionally, a

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[21] Kim A. Case and Annette Hemmings, "Distancing Strategies: White Women Preservice Teachers and Antiracist Curriculum," *Urban Education* 40, no. 6 (2005): 620.

70

white student could grant an epistemic surplus to the white authors because it enables that

student to once again disassociate themselves from racism. That is, they may grant more

epistemic authority to the white authors' readings about anti-racist pedagogies because those

readings enable her to identify with the "good white" label.[22] If the white student affords the

black authors less epistemic authority over the white authors unjustly, it could result in her

feeling justified to dismiss the arguments by the black author's entirely because it enables her to

disconnect herself from complicity. In addition to such actions enabling a white student to deny

complicity, an undeserved overvaluing of credibility to authors who occupy the same/similar

social location as the student could have immediate influences (though not necessarily

instantaneous) on the student as a speaker. As Medina notes, it is possible to see how a students'

assignment of excess credibility to white authors could cause the student to be perceived as

"becoming arrogant and dogmatic by the interlocutors" and, in turn, "unmoved by dissent and

impervious to criticism."[23] In this way, then, the student could continue to deny opposing

evidence unjustly because she overly privileges her own. This over privileging of testimony from

similar social locations could, as a result, lead to the silence of other students—"they may feel

intimidated by the speaker's authoritative voice, inhibited to express dissent or to raise

objections, and so forth."[24]

Continuous reiteration of inaccurate testimonial assessment from dominantly-located

students regarding marginalized testifiers not only enables said students to develop attitudes of

disassociation from issues like racism, but can create a self-perpetuating cycle of epistemic

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[22] Ibid., 616.

[23] Medina, "The Relevance of Credibility Excess," 17.

[24] Ibid., 18.

injustice.[25] As Jones argues, one relies on previous patterns of trust to assess whether a testifier is worthy of trust. A white student's habit of affording less epistemic authority to marginalized testifiers can, if not corrected, perpetuate inaccurate testimonial assessments. Nancy Duakas explains, "we make discriminating judgments regarding the different epistemic value of different (actual or potential) testifiers in particular situations, regarding particular domains."[26] If, for instance, a white student always affords white authors' testimony more credibility than black authors' testimony about racism, such patterns of testimonial assessment and granting of epistemic authority could result in the white student unintentionally always privileging the testimony of white authors about racism. In this sense, the consequences of a white student's routine of customarily assigning less epistemic authority to black authors begins to "perpetuate the inequalities that fulfill, and therefore seem to justify, the discriminatory expectations that, in turn, perpetuate unjust epistemic exclusion."[27] Assessments of trustworthiness in the social justice classrooms, when unacknowledged, can potentially replicate the unjust power-relations between dominant/subordinate populations. The examples I have given regarding epistemic authority deficiency and surplus demonstrate how a hearer's assessment of a testifier's trustworthiness can be the result of the hearer's inability to acknowledge or correct for internalized prejudices. In both instances the white student fails "to adjust for the way in which [her] *own* social identity affects the testimonial exchange."[28] If the white student's assessments of testimony are not critically examined in the social justice classroom, the white student is

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[25] Nancy Duakas, "Epistemic Trust and Social Location," *Episteme* 3, no. ½ (2006): 116.

[26] Ibid., 115.

[27] Ibid., 116.

[28] Fricker, "Epistemic Injustice," 169.

unable to recognize how her habit of assigning less credibility to black authors on racism may enable her to disassociate herself from racism, but at the same time can make her culpable of perpetuating epistemic injustice on the basis of a testifier's social locations. I argue, then, that it is necessary to develop ways for assessing testimony in the social justice classroom that call attention to possible inaccurate assessments of trustworthiness and encourage more just ways of attributing epistemic authority.

Encouraging Just Testimonial Assessment

As I reflect on my opening example, if Mary's inability to initially trust the testimony of the video's creator is motivated by underlying, most likely unconscious, beliefs about the creator's credibility, we must consider whether such distrust has an emotional element. If trust is in fact affective, it seems that a recognition and evaluation of student's emotionally-motivated reasons for granting a testifier trust may enhance testimonial assessment. If Mary reflected on the feelings of distrust she initially had regarding the credibility of the video's creator, the teacher can create an opening for her to discover that her feelings of distrust were not rational. Specifically, a critical evaluation of her emotions of distrust may reveal prejudicial attitudes and/or systemic ignorances regarding the epistemic authority of the video's creator or of the person giving testimony in the film because of the creator's social location.

How would an evaluation of our emotionally-motivated reasons—by using the term emotionally-motivated reasons I am demonstrating that emotions can guide our cognitive processes and, thus, cannot be divorced from our thinking/reasoning processes—assist in more accurate testimonial assessments? Elgin and Elizabeth Anderson both assert that emotions have the ability, when recognized and assessed, to provide information that could otherwise be overlooked. Emotions are not unprompted reactions, but rather are responses which are

73

motivated by events, people, and so on.[29] If we acknowledge the presence of emotions, "we can correlate emotional reactions with the events that trigger them . . . and use those reactions as sources of information about the environment."[30] For example, if Mary recognized that her distrust of the video's creator may have been emotionally motivated, she could analyze whether her reasons for distrusting the video were actually influenced by engrained prejudicial beliefs and/or systemic ignorances. Assessing her emotions of distrust might enable her to correct her testimonial assessment of the video's creator. By assessing her emotionally-motivated reasons for initially distrusting the video, she could become more aware of her habits of evaluating testimony and, in turn, highlight how such habits may have made her complicit in producing epistemic injustices towards testifiers of marginalized status in the past. Reflecting on the past, calls for one to focus on the future, to understand how one's feelings guide one's "obligations and opportunities, and [one's] sense of [self] as a moral agent with on-going relations to other moral agents."[31] Thus, Mary's evaluation of her emotions of distrust might enable her to view that accurately assessing marginalized testifiers' epistemic authority requires moral motivation. Because Mary is a dominantly-located student, it is important for her to recognize how her patterns of testimonial assessment can, even if unconsciously, perpetuate epistemic injustices towards marginalized people. When one is in a dominant position it is important for one to exercise, to a degree, epistemic humility—to be aware of how one's dominant social status influences one's automatic evaluations of others' testimony.[32]

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[29] Elizabeth Anderson, "Uses of Value Judgments in Science: A General Argument, with Lessons from a Case Study of Feminist Research on Divorce," *Hypatia* 19, no. 1 (2004): 1-24.

[30] Elgin, "Emotion and Understanding," 35.

[31] Ibid., 41.

[32] Duakas, "Epistemic Trust," 121-22.

By claiming that our testimonial assessments must be morally motivated, I am not, like Hardwig or Daukas asserting that people who occupy dominant-social positions should hold a default position of trust towards testifiers of marginalized status. Such a status, I contend, leaves us open to gullibility and credulity. I agree with Fricker that the issue with over-optimism regarding the trustworthiness of a testifier "represents the hearer as having his critical faculties in snooze mode unless and until he is alerted to some cue for doubt that flicks a switch to reawaken his critical consciousness."[33] Any default mode, even if morally motivated, makes a hearer not only less apt to identify possible cues for the testifier's trustworthiness, but could also make the hearer less aware of his emotional reasons for trusting/distrusting a testifier. It seems, then, that the default position of trust does not help a hearer perform a more just testimonial assessment. If a goal of the social justice classroom is to assist students in becoming aware of how they may be complicit in systems of oppression, taking a default position of trust towards testifiers seems to diminish the hearer's reflections on how their testimonial assessments can be impacted by engrained prejudices. A dominantly-located hearer taking a default position of trust towards marginalized testifiers may appear to correct for power imbalances, but such a position may only be a band-aid that further conceals prejudicial attitudes that have arisen in the past or could arise in future evaluations.

If taking a default position of trust, as I have asserted, leaves a hearer open to gullibility and credulity, what position should a dominantly located hearer take when evaluating marginalized testifiers? Fricker explains that a hearer has an epistemic responsibility to develop a "well-trained testimonial sensibility"—a sensitivity to identify how and when our social location

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[33] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 66.

can influence our testimonial evaluations.[34] As asserted earlier, an analysis of one's emotions of

trust may be one way to help develop a testimonial sensibility that can identify how prejudicial

beliefs may impact our reasons for or against trusting a testifier. However, what epistemic virtue

motivates one to analyze their emotional responses of trust/distrust every time one evaluates a

marginalized testifier?

While it seems that there is no sure-fire way to solve possible prejudices that may arise in

testimonial assessments, Fricker asserts that a virtue of "reflexive critical openness"—an

alertness to the impact of the testifier's social location and to one's own social location in

granting epistemic authority—may assist in producing more just testimonial assessments.[35] By

cultivating a reflexive critical awareness of one's potential prejudice/ignorance in inaccurately

affording testifiers epistemic authority, one takes the first step toward amending authority

deficiencies/surpluses. Fricker claims a reflexive critical openness works to correct for prejudice

by making the hearer more alert to "sensing cognitive dissonance between her perception,

beliefs, and emotional responses, or . . . self-conscious reflection."[36] For example, by Mary

cultivating a virtue of reflexive critical openness, she could be more apt to go into a critical-

reflective mode which might better equip her to assess how much her prejudice/ignorance might

have influenced her assessment of the black woman's credibility. If Mary's critical reflection

found that her distrust of the black woman was due to prejudice regarding the black woman's

social location, she might be prompted to counteract her authority judgment by increasing the

amount of authority she originally granted the black woman. Fricker claims there is no fixed

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[34] Fricker, "Epistemic Injustice," 169.

[35] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 91.

[36] Ibid., 91.

formula for predicting how much a hearer should increase their credibility of a testifier when prejudice is the reason why an inaccurate amount of epistemic authority was afforded. The ideal of such credibility reparation is, however, to "neutralize any negative impact of prejudice in one's credibility judgments by compensating to reach the degree of credibility that would have been given were it not for the prejudice."[37] While I generally agree that a virtue of reflexive critical openness is a positive virtue to cultivate in students, especially in the social justice classroom, I wonder whether such a virtue is sufficient for creating a more just process of testimonial assessment.

In contrast to Fricker, Medina argues that "reflexive critical openness" is not enough to facilitate more just testimonial assessments, especially when systemic ignorance is potentially involved. Systemic ignorance, for example, inhibits hearers' ability to recognize the validity and content of testimony, especially when accepting such testimony could challenge their beliefs and worldviews. Medina bases his argument on the notion that systemic ignorance operates at a meta-level and "should be understood as grounded in a *meta-blindness.*"[38] Meta-blindness[39] is used by Medina to symbolize that social/historically privileged hearers often fail to recognize how the dominant social imaginary—"the collective social imagination that govern [*sic*], for instance, what it means to be gay or straight, young or old, and so on"[40]—influences their capability to comprehend the experiences/testimony of marginalized individuals. Instead of

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[37] Ibid., 91-2.

[38] Medina, "The Relevance of Credibility Excess," 28.

[39] While I agree with Medina's notion of "meta-blindness," I am aware that using the term "blindness" to describe such a phenomenon can be derogatory and further reinscribe social constructions of disability.

[40] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 14.

acknowledging one's lack of understanding, systemic ignorance operates to make a dominantly-located hearer aloof to such social and historical differences and, in turn, feel justified in dismissing testimony and/or not trusting testimony from individuals that could upset the dominant social imaginary.

In order to correct and/or make room for multiple social imaginaries to operate simultaneously, Medina argues that we must seek to create "epistemic friction." Epistemic friction is created by "actively search[ing] for more alternatives than those noticed, to acknowledge them or their possibility), and to attempt to engage with them whenever possible."[41] As Medina highlights, one reason for utilizing epistemic friction is because our social-communicative interactions operate dichotomously—seeing in "black" and "white." Medina further explains:

> [I]t is crucial to have more than one form of receptivity culturally available; but it is also important to have the ability to move back and forth among alternative sensibilities, to look at the world from more than one perspective, to hold different viewpoints simultaneously so that they can be compared and contrasted.[42]

In other words, in order to cultivate of virtue of "reflexive critical openness," we must first attempt to open ourselves up to the friction that occurs when multiple social imaginaries produce epistemic differences and, in some ways, generate moments of intelligibility. We cannot encourage the virtue of "reflexive critical openness" until we have actually acknowledged other social imaginaries and opened ourselves up to our possible "blind" spots that our dominant-social imaginary creates.

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[41] Medina, "The Relevance of Credibility Excess," 29.

[42] Ibid., 29.

Conclusion

As I have examined possible ways to encourage more just testimonial assessments, it seems that, in general, the solutions have focused solely on the individual who may hold prejudice regarding the credibility of a testifier. Epistemology often contains an "individualistic bias" that focuses on "epistemic self-reliance and self-sufficiency" in order to avoid "epistemic vulnerability."[43] Is knowing an individual endeavor? If we acknowledge that much of what we come to know is from the testimony of others, it seems implausible to claim that knowing is an individual process. It seems to logically follow, then, that the most just testimonial assessments will not be individual appraisals of a testifiers' credibility, but rather communal evaluations. Communal assessments of testimony, potentially, provide more moments for individuals within the community to practice epistemic friction and reflexive-critical openness—that is, multiple interpretations of testifiers' trustworthiness can be brought forth and put into dialogue. The diversity of perspectives present in a community regarding a testifier's credibility can possibly yield conversations for or against a testifier's trustworthiness which could alert individuals within the community to reflect more deeply on feelings of trust/distrust.

If, as I have claimed, the most just testimonial evaluations will occur within an epistemic community, the social justice classroom could be an excellent place to start discussing possible prejudices or systemic ignorances that may influence assessments of testifiers' epistemic authority. In order to make the process of testimonial assessment more explicit in the social justice classroom, however, educators need to construct the classroom as a "community of negotiation"—a place where "persons are willing to negotiate their positions within . . .

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[43] Hardwig, "The Role of Trust in Knowledge," 701.

interpretive communities."[44] In many ways, the social justice classroom is already a community of negotiation where individuals from different disciplines and social locations come together to become more aware of social injustices. Thinking back to my opening example, when Mary questioned the epistemic authority of the video's creator, both the professor and marginalized students in class testified to the credibility of the creator's testimony. In many ways, the multiple testimonies Mary received regarding the reliability of the creator's testimony emulates a communal-testimonial assessment. What I claim is missing from this communal-testimonial assessment is Mary's reflection on why she initially distrusted the creator's testimony. The lack of such reflection, I argue, is a learning moment lost. While Mary may have further reflected on that moment later on, other students in the course who may have held similar feelings of initial distrust regarding the video, might never take the opportunity to critically reflect on their assessments. I do not think that this missed learning moment was the fault of the professor, but rather testimonial assessment and the granting of or denying of epistemic authority is a very subtle process. In addition, how we assign credibility/authority is not just a "thinking" problem, but also an emotional one—that is, "the failure to relate to others affectively."[45] I argue, then, it may be a worthy goal for social justice education to call attention to the process of testimonial assessment and the potential epistemic injustices produced due to inaccurate evaluations of testifiers' epistemic authority.

Revealing our evaluations of testimony/knowledge/experiences requires an awareness of the way(s) our patterns of thinking—how we engage with assessments of reasons and testimonies—can decrease our motivations to become aware and, in turn, disguise systemic

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[44] Sylvia Burrow, "The Political Structure of Emotion: From Dismissal to Dialogue," *Hypatia* 20, no. 4 (2005): 38.

[45] Medina, "The Relevance of Credibility Excess," 31.

epistemic injustices. How we learn to come to knowledge, reflect on our and others' beliefs, etc. is influenced by institutional structures, normative rules of social engagement that have been inscribed in our educational systems—such as civility. While the social justice classroom has the potential to generate "communities of negotiation," it is also hindered by norms of civility that postulate discomfort and critique, especially regarding people's systemic—and often epistemic— privileges, as impolite—uncivil.[46] As stated earlier, recognizing and evaluating students' affective reasoning could enhance testimonial assessment. Yet, both civility and critical thinking could, and historically have, limited or excluded emotions—often asserting emotions are "unreasonable." For these reasons, I now turn to exploring how a mode of criticality—practices of critical thinking—that recognizes the function of emotions in our ways of thinking/knowing could better assist in generating more just processes of evaluating testimony—particularly testimony that challenges our understanding of our social identities.

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[46] Tracey Owens Patton, "In the Guise of Civility, The Complictous Maintenance of Inferential Forms of Sexism and Racism in Higher Education," *Women's Studies in Communications* 27, no. 1 (2004): 65.

Criticality

> Keeping an open mind is an essential requirement of critical thinking. I often talk about radical openness because it became clear to me, after years in academic settings, that it was far too easy to become attached to and protective of one's viewpoint, and to rule out other perspectives.[1]

Introduction

Each year I enter the four walls of a social-justice classroom, I am reminded of the difficulties associated with teaching about race, especially white privilege and complicity. Educating students about race became even more problematic in our so-called "post-racial" society—that is, white students often proclaim, more than ever, that "we have made progress" and/or "racism is a thing of the past." Today's political climate in the United States (U.S.), which came to the fore with the 2016 election of President Donald Trump, continues to exacerbate the difficultly of discussing racial inequalities and inequities in the classroom. Despite the change in racial discourse, I and other educators claim "students are still hesitant to discuss race and racism" and struggle with "defining what race and racism are."[2] While students agree the "concepts of race and racism have returned" since the 2016 election, white students struggle with "understanding that both systemic and everyday racism persisted [. . .] during Obama's presidency."[3] White students' colorblindness—"a mode of thinking about race organized around

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[1] bell hooks, *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* (New York: Routledge, 2010): 10.

[2] Vanessa Stout, Eric Earnhart, and Mariam Nagi, "Teaching Race and Ethnicity in the Age of Trump: Using Popular Culture in a Polarized Classroom," *Teaching Sociology* 48, no. 3 (2020): 221.

[3] Ibid., 221.

an effort to not 'see,' or at any rate not acknowledge race difference"[4]—continues to prevent

discussions of how racism might operate in their individual everyday lives and decision making.

How can social justice educators motivate students, especially privileged-white students, to

engage in a form of criticality that asks them to question their presuppositions concerning

systems of inequality and oppression? How do social justice educators encourage not just critical

thinking about systemic inequality, but foster a form of criticality that can assist in

circumventing specious civility and, in turn, stimulate epistemic friction?[5]

    As I continue to reflect on these questions, I am reminded of a social foundations

graduate course I taught. The course was composed predominately of white students, which is

not unusual for social foundations courses in education,[6] and proved to represent the all-too-

familiar challenges that arise when teaching about race. To elaborate, white-student resistance—

defined as a refusal to knowing/learning that is motivated by desires to distance and disassociate

one's self from any possible complicity in the replication of systems of oppression/privilege, was

extensively visible.[7] I included many readings throughout the course that raised issues of white

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[4] Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 142.

[5] José Medina, "The Relevance of Credibility Excess in a Proportional View of Epistemic Injustice: Differential Epistemic Authority and the Social Imaginary," *Social Epistemology* 25, no. 1 (2011): 29.

[6] Brenda G. Juárez, Darron T. Smith, and Cleveland Hayes, "Social Justice Means Just Us White People: The Diversity Paradox in Teacher Education," *Democracy and Education* 17, no. 3 (2008): 20–25.

[7] Barbara Applebaum, "Social Justice Education, Moral Agency, and the Subject of Resistance," *Educational Theory* 54, no. 1 (2004): 59–72; Barbara Applebaum, "Engaging Student Disengagement: Resistance or Disagreement?," *Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (2007): 335–45; Lee Anne Bell, "Sincere Fictions: The Pedagogical Challenges of Preparing White Teachers for Multicultural Classrooms," *Equity & Excellence in Education* 35, no. 3 (2002): 236–44; Kim A. Case, and Annette Hemmings, "Distancing Strategies: White Women Preservice Teachers and Antiracist Curriculum," *Urban Education* 40, no. 6 (2005): 606–26; Alice McIntyre, *Making Meaning of Whiteness: Exploring*

privilege and resistance in everyday life and classroom contexts. Classroom discussions on

readings about white privilege and resistance provoked frequent employments of colorblindness,

though. For example, Max, a white male student, often replied to readings that challenged his

individualistic understanding of racism with statements such as "I have many friends of color,"

"I prefer to focus on culture instead of race" or "I believe Black Lives Matter." While I use Max

as an example, these statements were frequently iterated in different ways by multiple students.

In an effort to disturb the pattern of colorblind dialogue—often revolving around white

students' proclamations of innocence—I had the class watch a racial dialogue video between

white men and men of color, *The Color of Fear*.[8] While watching this movie and afterwards, I

noticed students emotional reactions to Victor's anger, a black man, and David's ignorance, a

white man, which seemed to prompt uneasiness, but, nevertheless, it appeared that a cognitive

light bulb went off. After the movie, much of my class was shocked at the viewpoints David

espoused—those that often distanced him from racism and, at the same time, denied the

importance of how systemic oppressions influenced the lives of people of color. Classroom

conversations after this video—a video that proved somewhat traumatic for many of my white

students—seemed to imply a great criticalness towards systems of oppression—namely

whiteness. This increased critical eye toward norms and functions of whiteness was further

confirmed when many of the students' formal papers (the papers had no topic-choice limitations)

took up the subject of how whiteness, when not examined, can further perpetuate systems of

inequality. Even Max, who, for much of the class, perniciously resisted a systemic understanding

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Racial Identity with White Teachers (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997); Dalia Rodriguez, "The Usual Suspect: Negotiating White Student Resistance and Teacher Authority in a Predominantly White Classroom," *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 9, no. 4 (2009): 483–508; Juárez, Smith, and Hayes, "Social Justice Means Just Us White People."

[8] Mun Wah Lee, *The Color of Fear: A Film* (1994, Stir-Fry Productions), VHS.

of racism and, sequentially, his own possible complicity in racism looked at how white, male educators can work to expose norms of whiteness in the classroom.

Reflecting on this classroom experience, I see two things occurring. First, there seems to be a difference in how I wanted students to critically engage—that is, to practice of form of "criticality" that necessitated thinking anew, "to think differently,"[9] and the actual process of criticality many of my students were performing prior to watching the film. Secondly, the norm of civility, at least in terms of how it functioned in this classroom, might have inhibited my white students from hearing and assessing reasons or experiences outside of their own frameworks of understanding and, consequently, may have hindered epistemic friction. While it can be argued that civility can help moderate conversations of social location and difference, I have argued in this dissertation that it can also be a road block that hinders critically-engaged dialogue. In fact, the absence of emotions, like anger, sadness, or guilt, seems to have prevented some of my white students from employing a criticality that requires "openness to, and a comfort with, thinking in the midst of deeply challenging alternatives."[10]

In an effort to explore how to better encourage my students, especially my privileged-white students, to engage in a form a criticality that asks them to not only question their presuppositions concerning systems of inequality and oppression, but to acknowledge and engage with alternative perspectives, this chapter starts by exploring different "modes of criticality."[11] Specifically, I will discuss three modes of criticality: 1. Critical Dogmatism; 2.

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[9] Nicholas C. Burbules and Rupert Berk, "Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy: Relations, Differences, and Limits," in *Critical Theories in Education: Changing Terrains of Knowledge and Politics*, eds. Lynn Fendler and Thomas Popkewitz (New York: Routledge, 1999), 59.

[10] Ibid., 60.

[11] Nicholas C. Burbules, "Modes of Criticality as Modes of Teaching," *Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (1998): 485–88.

Transcendental Critique; and, 3. Deconstruction. Within this discussion, I contend that critical

dogmatism and transcendental critique fail to capture what critique does and does not do,

especially when civility is uncritically assumed. It is only the deconstructive mode of criticality, I

assert, that has the potential to capture how what might seem "rational or reasonable" could also

discursively oppress the systemically marginalized and simultaneously comfort the systemically

privileged. Secondly, I discuss how a criticality that assumes civility is unbeneficial for the social

justice classroom and whether a deconstructive mode of criticality is sufficient enough to

develop epistemic friction. Lastly, I conclude this chapter by asserting that criticality could be

enhanced by recognizing and utilizing the cognitive role of emotions in social justice courses. In

short, this chapter does not dismiss the importance of criticality/critical thinking in social justice

education, but rather desires to demonstrate how criticality can be a more constructive and

impactful tool for social/educational transformation.

Modes of Criticality[12]: What Mode is Most Effective for Social Justice Pedagogy?

A widely accepted general aim of education is critical thinking. Encouraging critical

thinking in students has been theorized to help prepare them to be rationally-functioning human

beings in the world. Broadly speaking, critical thinking is a logical-thinking process that assists

in helping individuals analyze, interpret, and understand information/experiences and, as a result,

lead to more sound judgments. Christine Doddington explains, the concept of critical thinking is

wide-ranging and necessary for "any developed life," in that it entails what Robert Ennis

describes as "reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe and

do."[13] Ennis is often credit with the renewed sense of importance attributed to critical thinking,

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[12] Burbules, "Modes of Criticality as Modes of Teaching."

[13] Christine Doddington, "Critical Thinking as a Source of Respect for Persons: A Critique,"

especially in regards to educational value.[14] Ultimately, however, critical thinking is intimately

intertwined with the educational ideal of autonomy—that is, critical thinking prepares students to

be self-motivated/directed.[15] In this respect, prominent voices within the critical thinking cannon,

such as Harvey Siegel, have claimed that "critical thinking is rationality's 'educational

cognate.'"[16]

Critical thinking, however, has been heavily scrutinized by postmodernists, feminists, and

neo-pragmatists that claim critical thinking is inherently biased and, as such, any notion of

neutral and objective ways of reasoning can, potentially, leave unexamined norms that perpetuate

injustices toward stigmatized populations. Challenges to critical thinking, especially those that

question the primary tool of critical thinking—that is, rationality—have not been aimed at

rejecting the ideal of critical thinking, but rather as a way to encourage rearticulations of critical

thinking that are more nuanced and extensive. As Gert Biesta and Geert Jan Stams illuminate,

questions regarding potential biases in critical thinking are "initimately connected with the way

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Educational Philosophy and Theory 39, no. 4 (2007): 449–59; Robert H. Ennis, "A Taxonomy of Critical Thinking Dispositions and Abilities," in *Teaching Thinking Skills: Theory and Practice*, eds. Joan Boykoff Baron and Robert J. Sternberg (New York, NY: W.H. Freeman, 1987), 9–26.

[14] Ennis, "A Taxonomy of Critical Thinking Dispositions and Abilities"; Gert J.J. Biesta, and Geert Jan J.M. Stams,"Critical Thinking and the Question of Critique: Some Lessons from Deconstruction," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 20, no. 1 (2001): 57–74; Gert J.J. Biesta and Geert Jan J.M. Stams, "Critical Thinking and the Question of Critique: Some Lessons from Deconstruction," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 20, no. 1 (2001): 57–74; Harvey Siegel, *Educating Reason: Rationality, Critical Thinking, and Education* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1988); Barbara Thayer-Bacon, "Transforming and Redescribing Critical Thinking: Constructive Thinking," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 17, no. 2/3 (1998): 123–48.

[15] Biesta and Stams, "Critical Thinking and the Question of Critique," 58.

[16] Harvey Siegel, *Rationality Redeemed?: Further Dialogues on an Educational Ideal* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 1.

in which we conceive of the idea of critique itself."[17] They further explain that, in this way, critical thinking is tied to our understandings of criticality.[18] Criticality, rather than denying the important benefits that can be derived from critical thinking and its tools such as rationality, is more concerned with practice and, more specifically, the conditions that encourage critique and "reflection on one's own presuppositions" which "allow for a fresh rethinking of the conventional."[19] It is with this notion of criticality, or rather what critique does and does not do, that I now turn to a discussion of modes of criticality.

I. Critical Dogmatism

Biesta proposes that types of critique that include the application of a criterion[20] to what is being evaluated are inherently dogmatic. He explains, "The operation is *critical*, in that it gives an evaluation of a specific state of affairs. The operation is *dogmatic,* in that the criterion itself is kept out of reach of the critical operation and is applied to the state of affairs 'from the outside'" (p. 476).[21] My students' repeated proclamations of white resistance, then, which were indicated by statements like "I don't see color" or "racism is a thing of the past" represent the type of

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[17] Biesta and Stams, "Critical Thinking and the Question of Critique," 59.

[18] Ibid., 59.

[19] Burbules and Berk, "Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy," 59.

[20] My use of criterion here and, in my view, also Biesta's, resonates with Mark Weinstein's definition of criteria. Weinstein explains, "Criteria are the most decisive considerations appealed to in an instance of critical thinking. Criteria are those reasons that reflect the critical thinker's assessment of the essential factors to be taken into account when offering an analysis, or when supporting and challenging a claim." See Mark Weinstein, "Critical Thinking: Expanding the Paradigm," *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines* 15, no. 1 (1995): 35.

[21] Gert J.J. Biesta, "The Right to Philosophy of Education: From Critique to Deconstruction," *Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (1998): 476.

critique Biesta contends is "critical dogmatism."[22] In other words, their conclusions often

facilitated and confirmed denials of complicity in systemic racism, because the

framework/criterion—that is, whiteness[23]—applied to readings about continual racial injustice

and white privilege, did not ever critique the very criterion used in analysis. Barbara Thayer-

Bacon, while discussing Socrates' employments of critical thinking, contends that doubt is an

essential component of critique and being open to new ideas. In other words, if Socrates' could

get his dialogue participant "to doubt his own beliefs, he might be open to real learning—the

willingness to consider other possibilities."[24] In critical dogmatism, however, the applied

criterion is held as truth—as the answer.[25] This practice of critique, then, is particularly

troublesome for social justice educators because it never engages students in a process of inward

reflection which might facilitate a critique of the very criterion—truth—used to evaluate.

II. Transcendental Critique

In contrast to critical dogmatism, transcendental critique claims to avoid the dogmatic

application of a criterion to what is being evaluated. This is possible with transcendental critique,

according to Biesta[26] and Burbules,[27] because language mediates that which can be critiqued. In

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[22] Ibid., 476.

[23] When I refer to whiteness, I am not placing blame on white-raced people, but rather calling attention to a dominant, Eurocentric framework of knowing. In my view, whiteness is an epistemology, a belief that is premised on promoting/sustaining the status quo in the United States. See Sally Sayles-Hannon, "In Search of Multiculturalism: Uprooting 'Whiteness' in Curriculum Design and Pedagogical Strategies," Thesis (Denton, TX: Texas Woman's University, 2008), 3.

[24] Thayer-Bacon, "Transforming and Redescribing Critical Thinking," 60.

[25] Biesta, "The Right to Philosophy of Education," 476; Biesta and Stams, "Critical Thinking and the Question of Critique," 60.

[26] Biesta, "The Right to Philosophy of Education."

[27] Burbules, "Modes of Criticality as Modes of Teaching."

other words, "the leverage point of critique is the set of conditions that make language itself possible—the conditions of communication that are invoked implicitly if not explicitly every time we speak and expect others to understand or to agree with us."[28] The "ideal community of communication"[29] offers a criterion that provides the "conditions of possibility." Within transcendental critique, though, the conditions of possibility must be presumed otherwise intelligibility is not possible.[30] If one, however, argues against these conditions of possibility, Biesta claims that one will ultimately commit a performative contradiction—"a situation where the performative dimensions of the argument (the act of arguing) contradict the propositional content (what is argued)."[31] In more simplistic terms, one cannot argue against rationality without actually engaging in rationality. Thus, unlike ideological determinists who argue that ideology structures one's beliefs and actions, astute defenders of transcendental critique would claim that rationality was needed to justify ideology and, for this reason, rationality operates outside ideology. Instead of rejecting foundations, then, Biesta explains that transcendental critique avoids the dogmatic application of a criterion through the "principle of performative consistency." The principle of performative consistency brings into focus "the criterion which can reveal the ultimate foundations of the argumentative use of language."[32] In other words, the

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[28] Ibid., 485.

[29] Karl-Otto Apel, "The Problem of Philosophical Foundations in Light of a Transcendental Pragmatics of Language," in *After Philosophy: End or Transformation?*, ed. Kenneth Baynes, James Bohman, and Thomas McCarthy (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 250–90.

[30] Biesta, "The Right to a Philosophy of Education," 479.

[31] Ibid., 479.

[32] Ibid., 479.

principle of performative consistency exposes foundations that don't need any further grounding, which according to proponents of transcendental critique is rationality.

The issue with transcendental critique, however, is that once the foundations that do not need any further grounding are discovered—those with which we cannot act and live without—they may no longer be evaluated. For instance, because many of my students have been entrenched in institutions of education that often purport the necessity for displays of civility,[33] especially in contexts where difference is highlighted and/or the point of dialogue, this foundational norm could be part of the conditions of possibility—that with which argumentation would not be intelligible without. If civility is part of the conditions of possibility, students, especially those in positions of privilege, are obstructed from assessing reasons that challenge conventions of civility. Sara Ahmed helps bring this into focus more clearly when she explains that "[t]o speak out of anger as a Black women is then to confirm your position as the cause of tension."[34] Thus, any utterance by stigmatized students that did not, at least according to conventions of civility, resonate with "displays of respect, tolerance, or considerateness[35] may be positioned as unintelligible. Max's proclamations of colorblindness, which according to social norms of race might be construed as appropriate displays of civility, are outside the parameters of critique. This is not to say that the concept of colorblindness cannot be critiqued, but rather Max's language and, in a sense, his intentions for employing such statements may not be examined because they are within the conditions of possibility.

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[33] Cris Mayo, "The Binds That Tie: Civility and Social Difference," *Educational Theory* 52, no. 2 (2002): 169–86.

[34] Sara Ahmed, "Embodying Diversity: Problems and Paradoxes for Black Feminists," *Race Ethnicity and Education* 12, no. 1 (2009): 49.

[35] Cheshire Calhoun, "The Virtue of Civility," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 29, no. 3 (2000): 259.

Even though Max's employments of civility—in this example those which reflect a position of colorblindness—are part of the conditions of possibility, Burbules contends that this does not mean Max cannot be persuaded to change his colorblind position. Burbules explains, "One does not identify and criticize lying, for example, by saying 'that isn't how people in an ideal community of communication would act.'"[36] If one wanted to confront Max's position of colorblindness, then, one could raise an argument with the desire to persuade Max and, in turn, hope that the argument sways Max to change his position. While rationality is fallible, especially when human error is involved,[37] does such a practice of critique necessarily prompt one to investigate/examine foundational concepts—in this case civility? Specifically, does transcendental critique provide the most just process of criticality—that which looks to examine and make visible that which is excluded/other—for the social justice classroom? In my opinion, transcendental critique is useful, but because the point of critique is rationality—that is, the pursuit for consensus/truth—it does not examine how such points of consensus may "hide the conditions of its possibility."[38]

III. Deconstruction

In order to provide an alternative to transcendental critique that does not deny that we can't but rely on foundations but also seeks to unsettle them, Biesta employs Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction. For Derrida, the tradition of Western philosophy has always searched "to locate a fundamental ground which serves both as an absolute beginning and as a center from

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[36] Burbules, "Modes of Criticality as Modes of Teaching," 485.

[37] Barbara Applebaum, "Critique of Critique: On Suspending Judgment and Making Judgment," *Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (2011): 55–64.

[38] Ibid., 57.

which everything originating from it can be mastered and controlled."[39] Derrida, thus, challenges

the metaphysics of presence—that is, the foundations which are claimed to be most stable,

normative, and sound—by employing Ferdinand de Saussure's understanding of language.[40]

Unlike transcendental critique's representational view of language, in that words name things

that operate outside of the system of language, Saussure argues that language and the words we

assign to ideas and objects are part of a system of meaning and, sequentially, such concepts are

irrelevant outside of that system.[41] Derrida argues Saussure's concept of language assists in

revealing that all language is constituted in the system by what it excludes—that is, by what it is

different from.[42] Because, however, what is present is always defined by what it is not,

differences remain silent and abstract. In other words, differences cannot be articulated without

expressing that which is present or, in simplistic terms, the norm. Deconstruction highlights,

then, the "constitutive outside" of what appears normative or, as Biesta explains, reveals "what is

excluded and forgotten [. . .] of what is *other*."[43] This form of critique, therefore, uncovers

systems of language by identifying the *other*—what cannot be articulated by the system but at

the same time establishes the system.[44] What this form of critique necessitates, then, is analyzing

and questioning that which is unimaginable according to the conditions of possibility. The

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[39] Biesta, "The Right to a Philosophy of Education," 480.

[40] Ibid., 480.

[41] Applebuam, "Critique of Critique," 56; Biesta, "The Right to Philosophy of Education," 480; Biesta & Stams, "Critical Thinking and the Question of Critique," 66.

[42] Jacques Derrida, *The Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

[43] Biesta, "The Right to Philosophy of Education," 481.

[44] Applebaum, "Critique of Critique."

unimaginable does not imply what is not imaginable, but rather "what cannot be foreseen, predicated and calculated as a possibility"[45] at least according to the presupposed conditions of possibility.[46]

Reflecting on my classroom example, deconstruction seems to provide a form a critique that necessitates one to critique the very conditions of possibility one assumes to be true by what such conditions exclude. Max, for example, who may have utilized his colorblind statements to constitute himself as civil—respectful, tolerant, and considerate[47]—might be, at least if he was operating from a deconstruction mode of critique, prompted to question what such declarations of civility exclude, what those statements deny entrance into conversations of racial inequality and systemic oppression. If Max asked what is *otherized* by his presupposed conditions of possibility, he may find that such civilly-directed comments of colorblindness functioned to 1) maintain himself as a morally "good" white and 2) not consider his possible complicity in replications of systemic oppression. In this way, deconstructive critique may prompt Max not to necessarily dismiss the conditions of possibility and/or foundations with which he lives and acts, but to question whether such foundations unjustly exclude and, potentially, if such exclusions make him complicit in maintaining systemic oppression. At the core of deconstructive critique is

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[45] Biesta, "What Can Critical Pedagogy Learn from Postmodernism?," in *Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy Today: Toward a New Critical Language in Education*, ed. Ilan Gur Ze'ev (Haifa, Israel: University of Haifa, 2005): 143-59.

[46] Ibid., 147.

[47] Calhoun, "The Virtue of Civility"; Megan Laverty, "Civility, Tact, and the Joy of Communication," *Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (2009): 228-37.

justice and, as such, the function of such critique is not necessarily what is most rational, but rather what is most just.[48]

If justice, which Derrida often identifies as deconstruction's concern for the other,[49] is what makes deconstruction critical, then it seems to logically follow that the type of criticality prompted by deconstruction may be the most useful for the social justice classroom. The critical, self-reflexive nature of social justice courses which often stimulates great student resistance, especially for those who are privileged by the systems of contention,[50] might be better able to reveal through deconstructive critique how the very ways we learn to communicate and *be* in the world often rest on conditions of possibility that may unjustly exclude the *being* of others. Additionally, deconstructive critique asks educators to continually question, and rightly so, the educative endeavors we utilize in these classrooms to promote social justice. An example of where such critique could be utilized to possibly reveal educational methods that may be unjust and/or protect those who are privileged by systems of oppression, for instance, is found in educational-diversity programming that may sacrifice critical engagement, critique about social differences in the name of "getting along."[51] A deconstruction mode of critique could, however,

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[48] Biesta, "The Right to Philosophy of Education" 483.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Applebaum, "Engaging Student Disengagement: Resistance or Disagreement*?," Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (2007): 335-45; Lisa Werkmeister Rozas and Joshua Miller, "Discourses for Social Justice Education: The Web of Racism and the Web of Resistance," *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work* 18, no. 1-2 (2009): 24-39.

[51] Joyce M. Bell and Douglas Hartmann, "Diversity in Everyday Discourse: The Cultural Ambiguities and Consequences of 'Happy Talk.," *American Sociological Review* 72, no. 6 (2007): 895–914, https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240707200603.

prompt such educators to question the very classroom dynamics they might encourage in the name of justice. In short, deconstructive critique questions "justice" in an effort to seek justice.

An Alternative Form of Criticality?

Even though I have argued that a deconstruction mode of criticality may be most useful for social justice classrooms, is such form of critique enough to develop epistemic friction? If not, why? Despite the three modes of criticality discussed here, certain meanings of what critical thinking is, especially as a skill, dominate academic understanding.[52] Thayer-Bacon describes the normative critical thinker in the academy as "a solitary figure with a furrowed brow, deep in thought"[53]—an image that represents "a specific paradigm of critical thinking and of the critical thinker that privileges masculine, [white,] individualized and rationalist knowledge practices."[54] The "critical thinker" is archetypal in the academy and, sequentially, rationality has become normalized cultural information—a meme.[55] Illusory imagery of college students in the classroom practicing civil, democratic deliberation on hot-topic political issues strongly comes to mind. Yet, Lynn Sander's contends "what happens when [. . .] citizens talk to each other is often neither truly deliberative nor really democratic."[56] Depictions of such normative deliberative

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[52] Emily Danvers, "Who Is the Critical Thinker in Higher Education? A Feminist Re-Thinking," *Teaching in Higher Education* 23, no. 5 (2018): 548–62, https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2018.1454419.

[53] Barbara Thayer-Bacon, *Transforming Critical Thinking: Thinking Constructively* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2000), 17.

[54] Danvers, "Who Is the Critical Thinker in Higher Education?," 551.

[55] Memes are "unit[s] of cultural information spread by imitation." See Kara Rogers, "Meme," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 31, 2023, https://www.britannica.com/topic/meme.

[56] Lynn M. Sanders, "Against Deliberation," *Political Theory* 25, no. 3 (1997): 347-76, http://www.jstor.org/stable/191984.

dialogue overlook how positionality effects epistemic authority in classrooms. If *what is* critical thinking and *who is* a critical thinker is incessantly entrenched in our educational institutions is it possible to practice a criticality that encourages "think[ing] differently"?[57]

Another potential road block to effectively practicing a deconstruction mode of criticality is the tendency for students to conceive of critical thinking as an arrival at a "truth" or "right" answer. Catherine Fox explains, social justice educators' use of critical thinking is often unsuccessful because critical thinking is seen as a "point of arrival."[58] Moreover, the point of arrival is often viewed as the instructor's understanding of an issue. By construing critical thinking as a point of arrival, students could resist entering the conversation entirely and/or take up the instructor's claim/position to ensure a good grade. In this scenario, a deconstruction mode of criticality is moot because once "truth" has been arrived at then critique stops.

Within the social justice classroom, I see the "point of arrival" paradigm occurring most frequently when civility functions hegemonically. When questioning the usage and, subsequently, usefulness of critique in the social justice classroom, we must be assiduously cognizant of what role civility is serving. If civility obstructs the ability to assess one's reasons for denials of white complicity, then students will be limited in their motivation to hear and give epistemic credibility to students' testimony that contradicts their own (e.g., Max's initial reasons for rejecting his possible white complicity could be due to him giving counter testimony less credibility). Students' resistance to discomfort, as well as current anti-critical race theory

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[57] Burbules and Berk, "Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy," 59.

[58] Catherine Fox, "The Race to Truth: Disarticulating Critical Thinking from Whiteliness," *Pedagogy* 2, no. 2 (2002): 203.

discourse,[59] renders the social justice classroom especially susceptible to pernicious functions of civility.[60]

When you consider both of these impediments—normative conceptions of critical thinking/critical thinker and the tendency for students to default to a "point of arrival" paradigm—you could devise that the most crucial hurdle to encouraging a deconstruction mode of critique is that the process of critical thinking is often posited as a solitary task. The practice of criticality often reifies a "self-enclosed" individualism.[61] Such hyper-individualism boosts an egocentric framework for critique. We assess who/what is "reasonable" by asking "'What's in it for me' 'How can I succeed' 'How will this event, this situation affect me?' 'What can you do for me?' 'What can I take from you?'".[62] AnaLouise Keating explains that such individualism prevents us from perceiving how "what affects others—all others, no matter how separate we seem to be—ultimately affects them, as well."[63]

How could a deconstruction mode of critique bring about epistemic friction in the social justice classroom? Burbules and Berk propose an alternative form of criticality premised on practice.[64] Firstly, Burbules and Beck conceive of "criticality as a practice—what is involved in

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[59] Daniel D. Liou and Raquel Alvara, "Anti-Critical Race Theory Movement in Postsecondary Education: Faculty Expectations Confronting Emotionalities of Whiteness," *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Leadership Studies* 2, no. 4 (2021): 77–98.

[60] "Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping," Federal Register, September 28, 2020, https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/09/28/2020-21534/combating-race-and-sex-stereotyping.

[61] AnaLouise Keating, *Transformation Now!: Towards a Post-Oppositional Politics of Change* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 171.

[62] Ibid., 171.

[63] Ibid., 175.

[64] Burbules and Beck, "Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy," 59.

actually thinking critically, what are the conditions that tend to foster such thinking, and so on."[65] Firstly, they agree that criticality does utilize a skill-set similar to transcendental critique—how to reason. Such acquisition of skills must, they contend, also be linked to "not only an appreciation for what they can do but an appreciation for what they cannot do."[66] Burbules and Berk claim thinking outside of traditional—conventional—frameworks is an essential skill for alternative criticality—"to think differently."[67] While their proposed criticality needs some elaboration on how one deliberates outside of traditional frameworks, Burbules and Berk note that an initial condition is openness."[68] From my understanding of their theory, openness entails acknowledging that alternative ways of thinking exist, even if such non-conventional frameworks are not validated by one's epistemology. Such openness will bring up contentions, but Burbules and Berk assert that acknowledging and living in the tensions of difference is a condition of criticality.[69]

Burbules' and Berk's critically necessitates an aptitude "to reflect on one's own views and assumptions as themselves features of a particular and historical formation."[70] Practicing criticality, then, depends on one's willingness to enter those conversations. Criticality is both a relational manner of living/being and an "intellectual capacity."[71] One's interaction with others

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[65] Ibid., 59.

[66] Ibid., 59.

[67] Ibid., 59.

[68] Ibid., 60.

[69] Ibid., 60.

[70] Ibid., 61.

[71] Ibid., 62.

impacts one's self and in order for one to think in novel ways, one must connect with different viewpoints. That is, one cannot identify assumptions that, through habitual practice, now operate at an unconscious level. Exploring one's assumptions, then, seems to require one having a willingness to not only reflect, but to first listen, especially if one is in a dominantly-located position. Criticality must divorce the process of critical thinking from individualism. Burbules and Berk view criticality not as something we *do* in specific contexts at precise moments, but also something we are and "not only how we think."[72] For this reason, I see possibility in Burbules' and Berk's alternative criticality. I see the potential to start disruptions—to change what Keating calls "status-quo stories"—descriptions of "world views, belief systems, and actions [. . .] that normalize and naturalize the existing social system, and standards"[73] and impede our ability to think otherwise.

The Cognitive Function of Emotion in Critique

How do we motivate our students to pursue a criticality that asks them to "think differently"? As I reflect on my own classroom, the viewing of *The Color of Fear*[74] seemed to bring about an emotional trigger that provoked students to think more deeply about declarations of colorblindness and white moral innocence. In this way, the classroom dialogue changed slightly to encourage more nuanced discussions of race and white complicity and, in turn, enabled the entrance of questions and experiences that often went against social conventions of civility. As I explained earlier, I felt that the silence exhibited by my students of color may have

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[72] Ibid., 62.

[73] Keating, *Transformation Now!*, 169.

[74] Lee, *The Color of Fear: A Film*.

been due to the fact that the presupposed civil discourse in classes on diversity did not offer moments for them to critically engage, for to do so would be confirm themselves "as the cause of tension."[75] What if, however, my white student's comments, which did not express anger or disrespect, also functioned to disguise emotions? For example, why did Max feel like he needed to disassociate himself from racism with his declarations of colorblindness? He might have been feeling guilt, sadness, or remorse regarding racism.[76] It seems, then, that criticality in the social justice classroom could be enhanced if the connection between uncivil behavior and emotions were disrupted. Such interruption necessitates that social justice educators acknowledge that emotions are essential tools in the process of criticality.[77]

Do emotions motivate criticality, especially deconstructive forms of critique? Elgin and Anderson have both asserted that emotions have the ability, when recognized and assessed, to provide information that could otherwise be overlooked.[78] Emotions are not unprompted reactions, but rather are responses which are motivated by events, people, and so on. If we acknowledge the presence of emotions, "we can correlate emotional reactions with the events that trigger them . . . and use those reactions as sources of information about the environment."[79]

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[75] Ahmed, "Embodying Diversity," 49.

[76] Cheryl E. Matias and Zeus Leonardo, *Feeling White: Whiteness, Emotionality, and Education* (Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2016).

[77] Barbara Thayer-Bacon, "Constructive Thinking: Personal Voice," *Journal of Thought* 30, no. 1 (1995): 55–70.

[78] Catherine Elgin, "Emotion and Understanding," in *Epistemology and Emotions*, eds. Georg Brun, Ulvi Doğuoğlu, and Dominique Kuenzle (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 33-49; Elizabeth Anderson, "Uses of Value Judgments in Science: A General Argument, with Lessons from a Case Study of Feminist Research on Divorce," *Hypatia* 19, no. 1 (2004): 1–24, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2004.tb01266.x.

[79] Elgin, "Emotion and Understanding," 35.

For example, if the students of color were able to voice their emotionally-motivated reasons, such reasons could have potentially prompted emotions from the white students, like Max, that could enable them to access feelings of fear or blameworthiness which, in turn, might have facilitated a more in-depth critique. Max's comments of disassociation, if explored more fully in the classroom, may provide insight into possible feelings of blameworthiness. Yet, because he did not recognize/analyze how comments like "I prefer to focus on culture rather than race" are emotionally motivated, critiques regarding Max's statements were limited. Elgin explains that blameworthiness has the capability to acquaint individuals with past and future information.[80] Subjects must examine the past because such guilt highlights instances where one may have "contributed to misfortune. Reflecting on the past, calls for one to focus on the future, to understand how one's feelings guide one's "obligations and opportunities, and [one's] sense of [self] as a moral agent with on-going relations to other moral agents."[81] If Max acknowledged his feelings of blame, which are recognizable by his statements of disassociation, he may have assessed possible actions of beliefs—that is, foundations—which may have made him complicit in racism, but, more importantly, he could practice of form of criticality that focused on changing his beliefs which could prompt acting in more just ways. Thus, by valuing the cognitive role emotions serve in the social justice classroom, which is to provide access to evidence that may be otherwise neglected/impossible according to the conditions of possibility, emotional responses can be disconnected from "uncivil" behavior. Emotions like remorse, guilt, anger, and

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[80] Ibid.

[81] Ibid., 41.

so on that are often read as disruptive or impolite, can be recognized not as irrational or unimportant, but "perhaps even indispensable for cognition."[82]

While I have asserted that emotions have a cognitive role in enhancing or rather prompting criticality, do general emotions encourage criticality about social justice? Max's recognitions of his emotions of guilt might prompt reflection on his past beliefs and advance a critical analysis of his own views, but do such reflective processes encourage social justice? If power dynamics between dominant and stigmatized students are going to be disrupted to produce more equitable and, potentially, critical conversations, I urge not only the incorporation of general emotions, such as sadness, happiness, or anger, but also "outlaw emotions." "Outlaw emotions" are most often experienced by marginalized groups who, because of discourses of civility, are denied voice in the classroom. Emotive responses that might be classified as "outlaw" would be those that indicate non-dominant perspectives, such as feminist, critical, and anti-racist points of view.[83] Such emotions differ drastically from dominant views of the emotions it's appropriate to feel under the circumstance; thus, the inclusion of "outlaw emotions" in the classroom "may enable us to perceive the world different than we would from its portrayal in conventional descriptions."[84] Such emotions may enable a social justice classroom to increase criticality, especially in regards to deconstruction because such emotions call attention to what is

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[82] Georg Brun and Ulvi Doğuoğlu, "Introduction: A New Role for Emotions in Epistemology?," in *Epistemology and Emotions*, eds. Georg Brun, Ulvi Doğuoğlu, and Dominique Kuenzle (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 16.

[83] Alison M. Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology," in *Feminist Social Thought: A Reader*, ed. Diana T. Meyers (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 384-405.

[84] Ibid., 397.

other, regarding racism systematically.[85] For example, students from different racial backgrounds often have descriptions of the functions of racism that are unintelligible within normative frameworks like whiteness and, as such, might engage students in critiques that question those foundations. Inclusion of such emotions may support a disposition toward a deconstruction mode of critique in the social justice classroom.

Utilizing Emotions in the Social Justice Classroom

Reflecting on my own position as a white-female teacher, I will admit that it is somewhat frightening to think about the challenges that could arise when emotions enter the classroom. Do all students' emotions receive equal epistemic authority in the social justice classroom—in practices of criticality? As I have claimed in this dissertation, if civility functions in a way that protects dominant students from analyzing positions of colorblindness or innocence and, in turn, potentially silences/excludes voices deemed as other—civility does not advance social justice. If we are not vigilant of what purpose civility is serving in our classrooms, welcoming emotions into our practices of criticality could cause greater epistemic harm to students whose feelings don't "fit" normative scripts of civility. What can social justice educators do to prevent practices of criticality not affording epistemic authority to students' emotions that violate "feeling rules"?[86] Such recognition requires a reconfiguration of classroom power dynamics and the practice of criticality.

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[85] "Outlaw" is a loaded word. Does characterizing emotions as outlaw reinforce dismissals by privileged students? If outlaw is associated with negative judgment (in contrast, opposite, of law-abiding), using the word could strengthen privileged students' beliefs for dismissing marginalized students' anger or other emotions as overreactions, playing the race card, and so on.

[86] Megan Boler, *Feeling Power* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999), 5.

Facilitating how emotions are acknowledged and epistemically valued in the social justice classroom will require reconfiguring and consciously analyzing how power dynamics impact our just practices of criticality. Ann Berlak proposes educators utilize a process of confronting and mourning trauma.[87] When speaking of trauma, she describes "massive, painful, isolated events outside the normal range of human experience and to daily insidious and persistent events that continue to re-injure the wounded."[88] Educators need to provide examples that enable dominantly-located students to gain awareness, confront, and understand one's complicity within systems of oppression. Privileged students' exposure to trauma may cultivate a genuine "moral deference"— "an attitude of respectful listening"—that could potentially transcend uncritical civility.[89] The point of such trauma is to encourage a recognition of emotions which, in turn, provide self-critique/reflection of feelings—mourning. Berlak explains, "Mourning is a process of naming and confronting one's own and other's suffering, of recognizing and coming to terms with loss."[90] Through the back-and-forth, ongoing process of trauma and morning, dominant students are required to confront feelings of anger, guilt, shame, sadness, and so on that enables them to "hear and respond empathetically to, rather than erase,"[91] the emotions of marginalized students.

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[87] Ann C. Berlak, "Confrontation and Pedagogy: Cultural Secrets, Trauma, and Emotion in Antioppressive Pedagogies," *Counterpoints* 240 (2004): 123–44, https://www.jstor.org/stable/42978384.

[88] Ibid., 134.

[89] Sylvia Burrow, "The Political Structure of Emotion: From Dismissal to Dialogue," *Hypatia* 20, no. 4 (2005): 27–43, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2005.tb00534.x.

[90] Berlak, "Confrontation and Pedagogy," 139.

[91] Ibid., 139.

As I think back to my opening example, I believe many of my students, including myself, entered the classroom with the intent of collaboratively sharing our experiences, backgrounds, and beliefs. It was only when discourses of civility shielded my white students from questioning their complicity in racism that the conversations became stagnate. Max feared social disapproval and, my students of color may have felt any response, be it emotionally motivated or not, might position themselves as the cause of tension. Perhaps if we were willing to more constructively explore our fears, our emotions, to feel in the name of social and political change, the classroom would have provoked earlier nuanced conversations about racism and, hopefully, justice. Promoting such a classroom environment—one that fosters the disruption of social hierarchies and the recognition of emotions (even anger)—necessitates a fleshing out of what pedagogies, strategies, tools, etc., could encourage epistemic, social, and political change.

Chapter Five:

Affective Democratic Friction

> When we open ourselves to another point of view, our own ideas will have to shift to take into account new information, new possibilities, and new strategies for resolving problems.[1]

November 2022—I received a text from a close family member with a *Fox New* article about a pharmaceutical heiress' mother paying a $300/day "deprogrammer" to reverse the brainwashing her daughter endured at Mount Holyoke College. Annabella Rockwell, the graduate, claimed she left school emotionally disturbed—anxious, sad, depressed, etc.—because she "saw everything though the lens of oppression and bias and victimhood."[2] Her "indoctrinated" worldview had changed the dynamic between her parents and herself—her mother described their relationship as estranged. If "pharmaceutical heiress" did not have you assuming Annabella's social positionality, she identifies as a white female who grew up on New York City's Upper East Side. In the same week, *Fox News* reported on the University of Chicago's 'Problem of Whiteness' course complaint and a student's subsequent social media outrage—calling specific attention to how the college is precipitating "anti-white hatred"[3] by scheduling such a course. Since this occurrence, the faculty member has received death threats

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[1] Fran Peavey, "Strategic Questions Are Tools for Rebellion," in *The Wisdom of Listening*, ed. Mark Brady (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2003), 171.

[2] Danielle Wallace, "Mother of NYC Heiress Paid 'Deprogrammer' Big Bucks After Daughter 'Brainwashed' by College's Woke Agenda," *Fox News*, November 27, 2022, https://www.foxnews.com/us/mother-nyc-heiress-paid-deprogrammer-big-bucks-daughter-brainwashed-college-woke-agenda.

[3] Taylor Penley, "University of Chicago's 'Problem of Whiteness' Class Sparks Controversy," *Fox News*, November 23, 2022, https://www.foxnews.com/media/university-chicago-problem-whiteness-class-sparks-controversy.

and online bullying. Such media-driven, anti-white, and white-victimhood rhetoric is the Trump Era.[4]

Headlines exclaiming diversity initiatives and Critical Race Theory (CRT) indoctrinate students have exploded since President Donald Trump's Executive Order (EO) 13950. Issued in September of 2020, EO 13950 sought to "combat offensive and anti-American race and sex stereotyping and scapegoating" by banning Federal contractors from requiring any trainings that imply "an individual, by virtue of their race or sex, is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously."[5] CRT is an academic-legal theory that "challenge[s] assumptions associated with race neutrality"[6] by identifying and naming systemic racism and other institutionalized oppression. The Anti-CRT movement utilizes CRT as an all-encompassing phrase to "weaponize against" education aimed at "fostering justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion."[7] At the start of 2022, 36 U.S. states have introduced or passed legislation that targets restricting, if not banning, education on "racism, bias, the contributions of specific racial or ethnic groups to U.S. history, or related topics."[8] Most legislation focuses on

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[4] Vanessa Stout, Eric Earnhart, and Mariam Nagi, "Teaching Race and Ethnicity in the Age of Trump: Using Popular Culture in a Polarized Classroom," *Teaching Sociology* 48, no. 3 (2020): 220–30, https://doi.org/10.1177/0092055X20928469.

[5] "Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping," *Federal Register*, September 28, 2020, https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/09/28/2020-21534/combating-race-and-sex-stereotyping.

[6] Daniel D. Liou and Raquel Alvara, "Anti-Critical Race Theory Movement in Postsecondary Education: Faculty Expectations Confronting Emotionalities of Whiteness," *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Leadership Studies* 2, no. 4 (2021): 78, https://doi.org/10.52547/johepal.2.4.77.

[7] Ibid., 78.

[8] Cathryn Stout and Thomas Wilburn, "CRT Map: Efforts To Restrict Teaching Racism and Bias Have Multiplied across the U.S," February 1, 2022, https://www.chalkbeat.org/22525983/map-critical-race-theory-legislation-teaching-racism.

PK-12 schools, yet we cannot deny that our post-secondary classrooms have not or will not be impacted by the Anti-CRT movement. As my two opening headlines illuminate, privileged students' discomfort in the social justice classroom as injustice is increasing in public discourse. It is in the current climate of the Anti-CRT movement that we must be vigilant of how social justice classrooms could reproduce the very injustices they seek to problematize. Coupled alongside educators' fears of job security and violence (both physical and epistemic), we can see where calls for civility that "quiets"[9] conversations around systemic injustices could easily creep into our classrooms more than ever.

In this dissertation I have claimed that civility can function speciously—that is, when appeals to civility falsely claim, even if well-intentioned, to create just, open dialogue. It is a form of civility that acts to conceal reiterations of socially-unjust power relations and, in turn, reify epistemology of whiteness under the guise of "safe" or "comforting" spaces. When civility discursively operates to conceal/maintain white-students' resistance to engage with counter testimony, especially testimony that might reveal students' complicity in systems of oppression and privilege, then social justice educators must be cognizant of how such denials could epistemically harm socially-marginalized students/testifiers. Building on Miranda Fricker's virtue of "reflexive critical openness"[10] and José Medina's concept of "epistemic friction,"[11] I

[9] Kristie Dotson, "Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing," *Hypatia* 26, no. 2 (2011): 236–57, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23016544.

[10] Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

[11] José Medina, "The Relevance of Credibility Excess in a Proportional View of Epistemic Injustice: Differential Epistemic Authority and the Social Imaginary," *Social Epistemology* 25, no. 1 (2011): 15–35, https://doi.org/10.1080/02691728.2010.534568; José Medina, "Racial Violence, Emotional Friction, and Epistemic Activism," *Angelaki* 24, no. 4 (2019): 22–37, https://doi.org/10.1080/0969725X.2019.1635821.

have claimed that our evaluations of testimony—how we come to know—may be better served by a practice of criticality that acknowledges the social, communal aspects of inquiry/critique/reflection. Such a praxis also necessitates an acknowledgement and deconstruction of how emotional discomfort impacts our willingness to engage with, hear, and promote epistemic justice in the social justice classroom. At this junction, then, it is ever so important to shift to *how we*, social justice educators, could encourage—motivate—our students, especially our socially-privileged students, to engage in a praxis of criticality that supports social justice.

Much of what I have claimed thus far has theorized about classroom situations—my experiences as an educator and student, the ideas of what could and might be. What I have not discussed yet is how I, as a social justice educator, have attempted to pedagogically generate the type of criticality I have called for—one that requires "thinking differently."[12] For this reason, this concluding chapter illustrates a praxis of *affective democratic friction*. I describe affective democratic friction as a pedagogical strategy to incite students to recognize their discomfort regarding systemic injustice, but to also sit with that discomfort—to postpone their assessments/judgements of the experiences and worldviews they encounter that differ from their own. Such suspension opens an opportunity for students to possibly recognize the affective happenings that cause discomfort; for example, their positionality in the classroom or their emotionality within a specific space/moment that triggers discomfort. Interacting with one's

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[12] Nicholas Burbules and Rupert Berk, "Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy: Relations, Differences, and Limits," in *Critical Theories in Education: Changing Terrains of Knowledge and Politics*, eds. Lynn Fendler and Thomas Popkewitz (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999), 45-65.

discomfort requires interaction—that is, "[w]e are all changed through our interactions."[13] In this vein, the praxis I present is democratic because it is through our relational encounters—*dialogic/deliberative/activist* or just *being/feeling* in a collective space, that initiates intersections between each other's stories—among our varied epistemic experiences. The democratic process I'm calling for here is not one of finding resolution or an "arrival" at truth, but an epistemic engagement—friction—with other perspectives, "to hold viewpoints simultaneously so that they can be compared and contrasted."[14] Affective democratic friction fosters the possibility of transformation—activating social justice—yet recognizes such change is not immediate or eminent.

How does a social justice educator cultivate affective democratic friction in the social justice classroom? What foundations/understandings/cautions/goals are needed? Firstly, I situate a praxis of affective democratic friction in what AnaLouise Keating calls "pedagogies of invitation."[15] Secondly, I describe affective democratic friction as a deliberative practice that builds on Iris Marion Young's theory of deliberative democracy, which is inclusive of both activist and deliberative tactics.[16] I suggest, however, that Young's distinction between the activist and deliberator is too oppositional[17] and, as a result, could spur specious civility

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[13] AnaLouise Keating, *Transformation Now! Toward a Post-Oppositional Politics of Change* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2013): 177.

[14] Medina, "The Relevance of Credibility Excess in a Proportional View of Epistemic Injustice," 29.

[15] Keating, *Transformation Now!.*

[16] Iris Marion Young, "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy," *Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (2001): 41–55, https://educationjournal.web.illinois.edu/archive/index.php/pes/article/view/1868.pdf.

[17] Emily Robertson, "Why Can't We Have It All?," *Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (2001):

depending on changes in context. Within this discussion, I turn to Nicholas Burbules' attempt to reckon the oppositionality in Young's depiction of activist and deliberative speech.[18] I advise that Burbules' sketch, however, reinforces the exclusion of activist speech in democratic deliberation. Thirdly, drawing from José Medina's theories of epistemic friction, emotional friction, and epistemic activism[19] and Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of spiritual activism,[20] I suggest an expansion of what activism entails and is aspiring towards in the social justice classroom. Following these claims, I illustrate a praxis of affective democratic friction by providing examples of course design and activities in a graduate-level Social Foundations of Education course.

A Praxis of Affective Democratic Friction

The social justice classroom is a collective space—not a safe space—tasked to reveal and engage students in essential reflections about systemic injustices. Often times, however, such

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60–63, https://educationjournal.web.illinois.edu/archive/index.php/pes/article/view/1870.pdf.

[18] Nicholas C. Burbules, "Being Critical about Being Critical. A Response to 'Toward a Transformative Criticality for Democratic Citizenship Education,'" *Democracy & Education* 24, no. 2 (2016): 4.

[19] Medina. "The Relevance of Credibility Excess in a Proportional View of Epistemic Injustice"; José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); José Medina, "Racial Violence, Emotional Friction, and Epistemic Activism"; José Medina. "Complex Communication and Decolonial Struggles: The Forging of Deep Coalitions through Emotional Echoing and Resistant Imaginations," *Critical Philosophy of Race* 8, no. 1–2 (2020): 212–36, https://doi.org/10.5325/critphilrace.8.1-2.0212.

[20] Gloria E. Anzaldúa, "now let us shift … the path of conocimiento … inner work, public acts," in *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*, eds. AnaLouise Keating and Gloria E. Anzaldúa (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 540-78; Gloria Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark =: Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, ed. AnaLouise Keating (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2015); AnaLouise Keating, "Spiritual Activism, Visionary Pragmatism, and Threshold Theorizing," *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research* 5, no. 3 (2016): 101–7, https://doi.org/10.1525/dcqr.2016.5.3.101.

conversations prompt socially-privileged students (often white) to become uncomfortable, defensive, and dismissive of testimonies, both class material(s) or classmates, that conflate with their own presumptions of innocence regarding systemic injustices—the systems from which their own privileges may be rooted. As I have claimed in this dissertation, it is in these instances where civility risks functioning speciously—concealing epistemic injustices by not affording marginalized students' epistemic authority. Civility, in these situations, acts to "quiet" testimonies that might disrupt privileged students' denials of complicity.[21] A recognition of our epistemic interconnectedness is masked when certain voices are silenced more than others—that is, the epistemic-power relations circulating in these collective spaces that shift "depending on who is speaking and who is listening."[22]At the base level, then, exercises of affective democratic friction aim to recognize our epistemic interrelatedness—"interconnected and interdependent."[23]

I. Pedagogical Guidance

What constricts social justice educators' efforts to foster a criticality that asks our students to "think differently"—to engage in epistemic friction? When privileged students get defensive and dismissive, all learners in the classroom are affected—our epistemic community can become harmful and stunted. Learning/knowing is unable to go beyond what, Keating calls, an "oppositional consciousness"— "a binary either/or epistemology and praxis."[24] A consciousness that reinforces a self-enclosed, covetous individualism that "relies on a

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[21] Dotson, "Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing," 242.

[22] Greta Christina, "Loaded Words," in *PoMoSexuals: Challenging Assumptions about Gender and Sexuality*, Carol Queen and Lawrence Schimel (San Francisco, CA: Cleis Press Inc., 1997), 31.

[23] Keating, *Transformation Now!,* 183.

[24] Ibid., 2.

dichotomous framework that positions the individuals in opposition to all other human and nonhuman beings."[25] Such self-obsessed thinking can lead to privileged students being hyper-focused on protecting their innocence and marginalized students invariably on high alert for epistemic harm or withdrawn from the class entirely. In these instances, the social justice classroom risks replicating the dominant us-them narrative. Keating expressively explains that we end up with two options:

> Either *I'm* right and I win, or *you're* right and you win. This binary structure flattens out commonalities, reducing them to sameness: Our views are either entirely the same or they're entirely different. And, if our views are *not* the same—if they're different—then one of us (*me, I hope!*) is right and the other one (*you, I will argue!*) is wrong. There's no room for contradiction (*we're both right, even though our views seem strikingly different*); for overlapping perspectives and friendly disagreements (*we're both partially right and partially wrong*); for the building of new truths (*let's take your perspective, my perspective, and at least one more perspective and develop several synergistic alternatives—new perspectives!*); or for whatever other complex commonalities our imaginations might cook up. We remain locked into our already-existing opinions, which we cling to with desperation and fierce determination.[26]

A binary-oppositional consciousness not only limits the perspectives given epistemic authority, social justice educators risk their classrooms reproducing the conditions of injustice they seek to disrupt.

How do social justice educators encourage our students to recognize that our classrooms, ourselves, our world, etc. are epistemically interconnected? Namely, "What affects others—all others, no matter how separate we seem to be—ultimately affects them as well." [27] As noted above, oppositional frameworks endanger replicating social injustices. In this regard, a praxis of

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[25] Ibid., 171.

[26] Ibid., 6.

[27] Ibid., 175.

affective democratic friction necessitates "post-oppositionality."[28] Post-oppositionality "is not 'anti'-oppositional,"[29] but rather travels through/besides the opposition. A post-oppositional consciousness integrates worldviews, histories, knowledges, and so on that "incorporate and build on the lessons of oppositional politics without becoming locked into their binary frameworks."[30]

Creating spaces that foster thinking otherwise—in new ways—can be tricky, especially when dialogues and self-reflection are discomforting. It is very easy to slip back into "old ways" that pacify disquieting emotions of anger, fear, and guilt over exercises of criticality. Is it possible that social justice educators' desires for justice and heightened awareness of injustices ensnare our classrooms with a limiting oppositionality? For example, "If we begin our teaching with the assumption that we already know precisely what social justice should look like and how we can effectively achieve our progressive social justice goals, we tend to impose our views on our students, perhaps alienating a few."[31] Social justice educators can't conclusively "know" what social justice looks like—each class will have different "epistemic terrain[s]."[32] For this reason, social justice educators should attempt to approach each class, maybe even each class

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[28] AnaLouise Keating, "Post-Oppositional Pedagogies," *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy* 26, no. 1 (2016): 25, https://doi.org/10.5325/trajincschped.26.1.0024.

[29] Ibid., 25.

[30] Ibid., 25.

[31] Ibid., 24.

[32] Alison Bailey, "The Unlevel Knowing Field: An Engagement with Dotson's Third-Order Epistemic Oppression," *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 3, no. 10 (2014): 27, https://social-epistemology.com/2014/09/29/the-unlevel-knowing-field-an-engagement-with-dotsons-third-order-epistemic-oppression-alison-bailey/.

session, as an opportunity to *sprout* individual and collective transformation on behalf of justice. In this context, transformation is not a quick alteration in beliefs. Rather, transformation is a rolling process "that moves us towards balance and relationality,"[33] and the acknowledgment of our interrelatedness.

Entering each classroom without preconceived expectations of what social justice should entail is difficult for social justice educators—maybe even more so when the course is a general education requirement. Your class, however, may be the only social justice course, "diversity requirement," a student is enrolled in during their post-secondary education. It is not surprising, then, that college requirements can lead to students' unwillingness to be in class. As such, students of various identities and social locations often enter social justice courses with "epistemological-ethical ignorance—a willful yet unacknowledged desire to look away from troubling, potentially life altering information about ourselves and/or our worlds."[34] In concurrence with Keating, I agree that parallel circumstances would necessitate the need for social justice educators to be flexible, inviting, non-imposing, and nonoppositional. Correspondingly, Keating describes "pedagogies of invitation"[35] as a fluid approach that invites social justice without the requirement of transformation.

Initially, Keating's pedagogies of invitation might seem like a cop out—that is, how can students, especially privileged students, acknowledge and give epistemic credibility to new

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[33] Dana Olwan, et al., "Make/Shift Pedagogies: Suggestions, Provocations, and Challenges for Teaching Introductory Gender and Women's Studies Courses," *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice* 37, no. 2 (2016): 18, https://journals.msvu.ca/index.php/atlantis/article/view/8-21%20PDF.

[34] Ibid., 17.

[35] Ibid., 18.

worldviews, stories, and the experiences of their marginalized peers without some insistence in their epistemic authority? Wouldn't a critical pedagogy that *challenges* the class to recognize, engage, and *critically* examine individual and institutional inequality and, in turn, relationships of power, ideology, and culture that reinforce such injustices be more effective?[36] Pedagogies of invitation are related to critical pedagogy—both operate to foster justice; however, critical pedagogy can comply over-emphasis critique and reify dualistic, oppositional, and divisive thinking. Furthermore, critical pedagogy "often relies on negative difference—an antagonistic, dichotomous worldview and an (unintentionally) essentializing epistemological framework."[37] Students' focus is often directed, then, at finding "limitations and weakness"[38] in course readings, classmates' experiences different than their own, and so on. In contrast, pedagogies of invitation assist in navigating students through opposition—recognizing the usefulness of opposition—with the aim of moving beyond and towards relational thinking.[39] Similar to pedagogies of invitation, a praxis of affective democratic friction guides students to grapple with opposition/discomfort, especially if such uneasiness activates an emotional resistance. Affective democratic friction, however, encourages students to think with that which unsettles—to

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[36] William Bigelow, "Inside the Classroom: Social Vision and Critical Pedagogy," *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education* 91, no. 3 (1990): 437–48, https://doi.org/10.1177/016146819009100305; David A. Gruenewald, "The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place," *Educational Researcher* 32, no. 4 (2003): 3–12, https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X032004003; Peter McLaren, "Critical Pedagogy: A Look at the Major Concepts," in *The Critical Pedagogy Reader*, eds. Antonia Darder and Rodolfo D. Torres (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 171-97.

[37] Keating, *Transformation Now!*, 183; Elizabeth Ellsworth, "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering? Working through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy," *Harvard Educational Review* 59, no. 3 (1989): 297–324.

[38] AnaLouise Keating, *Teaching Transformation: Transcultural Classroom Dialogues*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 109.

[39] Keating, *Transformation Now!*, 183.

generate epistemic friction—but to not remain stagnate in the opposition. Subsequently, the epistemic friction affective democratic friction incites acknowledges that "transformation is painful, unexpected, and cannot be fully controlled,"[40] but can hopefully encourage an affective synergism—a greater epistemic accountability—to all classroom participants.

As mentioned earlier, I don't want a praxis of affective democratic friction to perpetuate a criticality that, in practice, reinforces an "arrival" at truth perspective. Students, as well as myself, have had repeated exposures to normative processes of critical thinking—*reasonable* thinking—in which there is a "correct" answer. "Critical" is often equated to negative, oppositional thinking.[41] It is important for social justice educators to distinguish critical thinking/criticality/critique from criticism. Students' association of critical thinking with criticism—disapproval—could encourage hegemonic enactments of civility to avoid discomfort or disengage from the class entirely. Whereas, affective democratic friction aims to invite students to engage in more relational and interconnected thinking or, as Keating has described previously, "holistic-critical thinking"[42] that may encourage post-oppositional, both/and thinking. To reiterate, the post-oppositionality of pedagogies of invitation are not non-oppositional or against opposition, but rather encourage students to enmesh with opposition, stay with uneasiness/friction, and shift through it. Discomfort, therefore, is not synonymous with antagonistic conditions. Rather, as Alison Bailey explains, "discomfort comes from inviting

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[40] Olwan, et al., "Make/Shift Pedagogies."

[41] Keating, *Teaching Transformation*, 109.

[42] Ibid., 109.

members of privileged groups to leave our epistemic home terrains"[43]—to engage with new

testimonies, to think in new ways. In practice, pedagogies of invitation, a praxis of affective

democratic friction, entails "intellectual humility, flexibility, and an open-minded attitude."[44]

II. Democratic Practices and Civility

As I've worked on this project, I've questioned whether I should engage democratic

deliberation/dialogue in the post-oppositional pedagogical practice I am developing—affective

democratic friction. Democratic theory, however, has been and continues to be significantly

influential for conceiving how education can promote social justice by fostering learning

environments where "students are ideally learning not only how to communicate across

difference, but also how to open themselves up to having their minds changed."[45] Reflecting on

the development of my own education, thinking, and research, exposure to democratic theories

of education—Jane Addams, John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and so on—sparked my interest,

"almost" two decades ago, in social justice education. During this time, however, my

understandings of democratic education have altered. Is democratic education, maybe even

democracy, possible in the U.S.'s current socio-political environment? If you peruse social

media, watch television, listen to the radio, and so on, you are wholly aware of the intense

disagreement among Americans today. The blatant divisiveness in the U.S. does not allude

younger generations. For example, an undergraduate student of mine prominently displayed their

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[43] Alison Bailey, "Tracking Privilege-Preserving Epistemic Pushback in Feminist and Critical Race Philosophy Classes," *Hypatia* 32, no. 4 (2017): 885, https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12354.

[44] Keating, *Transformation Now!*, 23.

[45] Melissa Gibson, "From Deliberation to Counter-Narration: Toward a Critical Pedagogy for Democratic Citizenship," *Theory & Research in Social Education* 48, no. 3 (July 2, 2020): 434, https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2020.1747034.

Trump, "Keep America Great," flag, which was pinned to the ceiling above their bed, during a

Zoom video class (taking place during the start of COVID)—a symbol to many of hatred,

racism, sexism, etc.[46] Common interpretations of democratic deliberation include discursive

engagement with multiple voices, all of which are equally granted epistemic authority/agency,

and work collaboratively towards the common good.[47] Yet, the student's nonchalant flag display

did not aid democratic deliberation in the classroom—an exhibition of one's possibly oppressive

views. Rather, the student's actions reflect the U.S.'s political reality and the complicated power

dynamics that can occur in the classroom; "each voice is not respected equally nor does each

voice have equal opportunity to participate in democratic discourse"[48] at all times.

In her effort to demonstrate a more inclusive democratic theory, Young contends

democratic processes should primarily function in deconstructive/critical forms—a theory that

"exposes the exclusions and constraints in supposed fair processes" of democratic deliberation.[49]

Young concludes that both the democratic deliberator—who maintains conflict should be

discussed through rational and even-handed dialogue in order to arrive at an agreeable

outcome/policy/knowledge—and activist are necessary. An activist is wary of democratic

deliberations, especially when such practices occur in institutions that reinforce unjust power

relations between those who speak, who are heard, and who are not speaking. Justice is most

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[46] This example merits a much larger discussion regarding video-class vs. in-person class environments and social justice courses. In a Zoom class were each student is on their personal devices—in their own Zoom window—the classroom environment can largely be out of educators' hands. How does students being in their "protected" environments limit conversation about social injustice? How does a student's environment—or multiple student environments—interact with the environments of other students?

[47] Gibson, "From Deliberation to Counter-Narration."

[48] Ibid., 435.

[49] Young, "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy," 45.

possible, according to the activist, in engagements of critical resistance rather than dialogues with those already privileged by unjust systems of power—the very institutions the activist is working to change. Even if the activist attempts to participate in deliberations, what drives them to work toward justice (e.g., anger) can also exclude their experiences from being up-taken accurately or perceived at all—posited as uncivil, unreasonable, and not acceptable for "equitable" discourse. For Young, just practices of deliberative democracy cannot only entail dialogic engagements absent of "irrational," emotive, and/or oppositional speech. The interchanging of ideas and how they are voiced *must* be inclusive of alternative expressions, such as "street demonstrations and sit ins, musical works and cartoons"[50] and "emotional appeal[s], slogans, irony and disruptive tactics."[51] While it could seem that democratic deliberation is not or can never be just due to systemic injustice, Young claims the inclusion of activist speech is a step toward justice. Groups and persons striving to expose injustices and further justice must both "engage in discussion with others to persuade them that there are injustices which ought to be remedied, and to protest and engage in direct action."[52] Can both deliberation and activism occur simultaneously? Young deduces that it is unlikely for activist and deliberative speech to transpire concurrently—increasing the probability of one practice being granted more authority than the other. For Young, we cannot avoid the dichotomy between deliberation and activism, but we can "affirm them both while recognizing the tension between them."[53]

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[50] Ibid., 54.

[51] Ibid., 45.

[52] Ibid., 54.

[53] Ibid., 54.

Similar to Young, I concur democratic practices must be inclusive of deliberative and activist discourses. Unlike Young, I suggest there is less opposition between activist and deliberative approaches in efforts to reveal injustices and labors to generate justice. In circumstances where it is doubtful that activist and deliberative speech can function in tandem one strategy will likely get more visibility, which Young admits. I advise, however, that the stark contrast Young proposes between both could, depending on the environment, give more authority to deliberative tactics, such as civility, that operate contrary to their intentions.[54] If the objective of activist speech is *only* to oppose—to expose conflict, not shift through it— deliberation does not have a purpose. Nicholas Burbules explains that "[d]eliberation [. . .] is not the opposite of activist speech: It is the objective toward which activist speech or dissent must be directed."[55] Activist tactics, in this perspective, create the footpaths to earnest democratic deliberation.[56] Does this mean, then, that the activist is not heard once the opportunity for deliberation is attained? In my view, I do not think Young would advocate for the absence of activist practices in deliberation. Rather, activist practices might change based on the context— different forms, different levels of assertiveness or opposition, etc. Burbules, however, does contend that activist speech, "language of demands," is no longer productive after you are "at the table."[57] Oppositional tactics eventually create limitations, according to Burbules, when forward movement and progress in deliberative discourse is stalled. In deliberation, Burbules stresses, we

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[54] Barbara Applebaum, "When Incivility Is a Form of Civility: Challenging the Comfort of Willful Ignorance," *Educational Theory* 70, no. 6 (2020): 721, https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12458.

[55] Burbules, "Being Critical about Being Critical," 4.

[56] Natasha Levinson, "Deliberative Democracy and Justice," *Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (2001): 59, https://educationjournal.web.illinois.edu/archive/index.php/pes/article/view/1869.pdf.

[57] Burbules, "Being Critical about Being Critical," 4.

can "challenge the terms of discussion, the positions of unequal power, or the privileging of certain ways of communicating. But you cannot always and only be doing that, or else participation is pointless."[58] Both Young and Burbules want democratic theory and practices to be more inclusive—to not reproduce injustice. Yet, both have very distinct delineations between what and when activist and deliberative speech/actions/aims are needed or, in Burbules' case, no longer constructive.

Affective democratic friction, as I have proposed, does not purport all opposition as bad, but does seek post-oppositional strategies—non-dichotomous frameworks. Young makes an exceptionally important contribution to democratic theory by asserting the importance and inclusion of activist speech in democratic deliberation, but I would suggest the two are not as oppositional as proposed. If the activist and deliberator cannot conjointly participate, there is a greater possibility that one will often overshadow the other. In the Trump Era,[59] deliberations that accentuate civility as the *primary* means to "bridge communication and a catalyst for creating social bonds,"[60] may well operate inversely. Burbules analogizes, "You can demand a seat at the table, but once you are at the table, the language of demands does not work anymore."[61] Does the language and practices of the activist only entail opposition— "speaking *to*, perhaps *at*, or even *against*"[62]—something or someone? Can deliberators also be activists? Do democratic deliberations require a reciprocal willingness to learn from each other (and by

[58] Ibid., 4.

[59] Stout, Earnhart, and Nagi, "Teaching Race and Ethnicity in the Age of Trump."

[60] Applebaum, "When Incivility Is a Form of Civility," 721.

[61] Burbules, "Being Critical About Being Critical," 4

[62] Ibid., 3 (author's emphasis).

willingness, I'm including when norms of civil discourse insist on "equal" participation—even if it causes epistemic harm)?[63]

III. Epistemic Friction and Activism

Young, in her elucidation of the deliberator and activist, portrays the activist utilizing emotive solicitations that aim to provoke unrest and protest[64]—outwardly directed. Whereas, deliberation is inwardly directed—carefully analyzing information, willingly listening to those who have opposing views and, then, presenting a persuasive line of reasoning to get the opposing party to take up their position.[65] I concur that activists/activist speech is essential for equitable democratic theories, but are we limiting the reflective and transformative possibilities of democratic practices if we constrain the narratives—either/or—of who is an activist/deliberator and what is activism/deliberation? Is the purpose of democratic deliberation only to change opinions (and by change opinion, I mean modifying one's opinion to whoever's argument is the loudest, requires the least change, and offers the most benefits)?

Medina claims, yes, political engagement and resistance involves more than shifting opinions—"it requires political actions and interventions that engage the affective and embodied sensibilities of subjects, communities, and publics."[66] Political resistance/engagement, Medina asserts, requires changing our "sensibilities at a deeper level"—activating, creating, and "sharing

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[63] Rachel Wahl, "Learning in Democracy: Deliberation and Activism as Forms of Education," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 38, no. 5 (2019): 517–36, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-019-09671-2.

[64] Young, "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy," 45.

[65] Ibid., 44.

[66] Medina, "Racial Violence, Emotional Friction, and Epistemic Activism," 25.

meaning [. . .] not only cognitively and verbally but also affectively, visually, and spatially."[67]

Such intimate exploration, for Medina, starts with "epistemic activism"—"practices of

interrogation and resistance that unmask, disrupt, and uproot forms of epistemic insensitivities"[68]

and create opportunities to perplex our points of view, shape new nexuses, and initiate shifts

toward shared transformation.[69] Epistemic activism aspires to generate "*thick* critical

engagements"[70]—cognitive-affective engagements with our ways of thinking/seeing/believing

and our proclivity to engage with new perspectives/ways of knowing which, in turn, stretch our

imaginations to reshape our habits of perception, feeling, and dispositions to act and change.

These thick critical engagements result from sustained epistemic and "emotional friction."[71] As

discussed in Chapter Three, epistemic friction encompasses the active exploration for and

engagement with divergent sensibilities—a cultivation of one's skills to accept and move

fluidly—back and forth, up and down—among more than one perspective while comparing and

contrasting.[72] Opinions, however, are not formed, held, or changed solely based on cognitive

evidence and assessment—rather, beliefs are cognitively and affectively oriented.[73]

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[67] Ibid., 25.

[68] Medina, "Resisting Racist Propaganda: Distorted Visual Communication and Epistemic Activism," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 56 (2018): 59, https://doi.org/10.1111/sjp.12301.

[69] Medina, "Complex Communication and Decolonial Struggles," 228-29.

[70] Medina, "Racial Violence, Emotional Friction, and Epistemic Activism," 24.

[71] Ibid., 26.

[72] Medina, "The Relevance of Credibility Excess in a Proportional View of Epistemic Injustice," 59.

[73] Medina, "Racial Violence, Emotional Friction, and Epistemic Activism," 25.

Similar to my assertion in Chapter Four—specifically, emotional responses can be cognitive lightbulbs and indispensable for practices of criticality encouraging thinking differently—Medina's theory of epistemic activism claims emotional friction is crucial for "mobilizing people and making them care enough" to engage in epistemic friction.[74] Medina describes emotional friction both negatively or positively. "Negative emotional friction" relates to the affective hinderances privileged persons must confront to acknowledge and overthrow their complicity in systems of oppression—such as, unfeelingness or indifferences toward marginalized groups.[75] On the contrary, "positive emotional friction" describes the "emotional attitudes and responses that need to be mobilized to resist oppression, such as empathy, grief and anger for the suffering of oppressed subjects."[76] Medina draws on the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) anti-lynching pamphlets and, in particular, the speeches Ida B. Wells' gave alongside the pamphlets as demonstrating epistemic activism. Wells is representative of Medina's epistemic activist— "guerilla fighters for the liberation of oppressed epistemic sensibilities and producers of epistemic friction between sensibilities for the sake of their mutual transformation and enrichment."[77] The visual criticality the anti-lynching pamphlets created demonstrate the dual aims of epistemic activism: "(1) "disarming the spectacular visibility of black suffering that instills spectatorial attitudes and negative emotional friction against empathy; and (2) promoting positive emotional friction [...] that could motivate

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[74] Ibid., 26.

[75] Ibid., 26.

[76] Ibid., 26.

[77] Medina, "Complex Communication and Decolonial Struggles," 228.

publics to stand up against racial violence."[78] In particular, the pamphlets and Wells' speeches were designed to shock white audiences—to jolt their emotions—in such a way to encourage them to take part in practices of mourning—to feel the harm, loss, and anger victims' communities experience. The NAACP's actions were provocative communications—epistemic activism—designed to create openings for the intermingling of multiple viewpoints, epistemic friction, with the potential to generate alliances and shared transformation.[79]

Medina's work on epistemic activism is quite impactful as I've explored a praxis of affective democratic friction, as well as significant for social epistemology. Epistemic activism helps orient the purposefulness of epistemic friction and the crucialness of emotional friction in mobilizing persons, especially those who benefit from systemic privilege, to engage in "epistemic friction for critical purposes"[80]—for epistemic justice. I see both the need and potential, simultaneous engagement, for deliberation and activism in Medina's theory. I claim, however, that his theory could be limited by implied dualisms regarding the who and what of epistemic friction and epistemic activism. I have identified three areas that could benefit from future elaboration: (1) epistemic activists' unduly bearing "epistemic exploitation"[81] in the environment one is acting in, (2) the binary between negative and emotional friction, and (3) the dualistic opposition between who is/is not an epistemic activist and what counts/doesn't count as acts of epistemic activism. *First*, could Medina's theory, while demonstrating the crucialness of both/and activism and deliberation, trigger epistemic injustice? If, for example, epistemic

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[78] Medina, "Racial Violence, Emotional Friction, and Epistemic Activism," 30.

[79] Medina, "Complex Communication and Decolonial Struggles," 228-29.

[80] José Medina, "Resisting Racist Propaganda," 73.

[81] Nora Berenstain, "Epistemic Exploitation," *Ergo* 3, no. 22 (2016): 569–90, https://doi.org/10.3998/ergo.12405314.0003.022.

activists— "guerilla fighters"—are most-commonly the epistemically marginalized, is their activism (e.g., testimonies, storytelling, visual art, etc.) more likely to be dismissed as irrational, false, or fanatical? In environments more predisposed to hegemonic operations of civility, such as classrooms that challenge students' white innocence and complicity, could marginalized epistemic activists be more frequently silenced? *Second*, does the dichotomy Medina constructs with emotional friction—negative or positive—ignore emotional and cognitive in-betweenness (i.e., transitional/middle space)? If a primary goal of epistemic activism is to eliminate negative emotional friction—a recognition of the barriers one must confront in order to resolve their complicity in systemic oppression—is positive emotional friction an end state (one has arrived)? What is missing when people, especially those who "overcame" negative emotional friction, are unidirectionally fixated on positive emotional friction (e.g., empathy, grief, anger, etc.)?[82] *Third*, do epistemic activists only include those who perform outward actions (e.g., protest, graffiti, storytelling, building, etc.)? Could forms of inner work, such as components of deliberation or renovating activities (e.g., mindfulness, openness, proclivity for learning, etc.), be acts of epistemic activism? I advise that these three areas reveal that Medina's theory of epistemic activism and, concurrently, epistemic friction is limited by an inability to fully part with a binary-oppositional framework, which too often results in reifications of social injustice even in the midst of seeking social justice.

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[82] Medina does caution that emotions can also epistemically harm. He contends, however, that there is a significant amount of literature on the employment of emotions to reinforce systemic oppression (e.g., fear and hate). On the other hand, not as much as been written about affective breakdowns. His goal with emotional friction is to focus on the emotional failures that cultivate insensitivity and participation in epistemic injustice—specifically racial violence. See Medina, "Racial Violence, Emotional Friction, and Epistemic Activism," 26.

How can a praxis of affective democratic friction both encourage and engage in epistemic activism(s) to generate epistemic and emotional friction without reifying a limiting dualistic-oppositionality? Similar to, but more expansive than, Medina's theory of epistemic activism, Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of "spiritual activism"[83] seeks to recognize the epistemic importance and interconnectivity between our emotional and cognitive faculties in challenging social injustices and generating social transformation. Anzaldúa's praxis of spiritual activism arises from engaging in *conocimiento*[84]—a seven-stage epistemology that holistically intermingles "self-reflection, imagination, intuition, sensory experiences, rational thought, outward-directed action, and social-justice concerns."[85] The seven stages of conocimiento are:

> (1) el arrebato (rupture, fragmentation . . . an ending, a beginning); (2) neplanta . . . torn between ways; (3) Coatlicue state . . . desconocimiento and the cost of knowing; (4) the call . . . el compromise . . . the crossing and conversion; (5) putting Coyolxauqui together . . . new personal and collective 'stories'; (6) the blow-up . . . a clash of realities; and (7) shifting realities . . . acting out the vision or spiritual activism.[86]

While listed chronologically here, the stages do not necessarily occur linearly nor is there an arrival/destination on the path of conocimiento.

Conocimiento is a post-oppositional epistemology—a path "between personal and collective consciousness, desire and action, destruction and growth, of our selves and of the world."[87] *Phase one* of conocimiento is initiated by a jolt or trauma—an experience that thwarts

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[83] Anzaldúa, "now let us shift."

[84] Ibid.

[85] AnaLouise Keating, "From Borderlands and New Mestizas to Nepantlas and Nepantleras: Anzaldúan Theories for Social Change," *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 4, no. 3 (2006): 5–16, https://scholarworks.umb.edu/humanarchitecture/vol4/iss3/3.

[86] Anzaldúa, "now let us shift."

[87] Kelli Zaytoun, "Shifting," in *Bridging: How Gloria Anzaldúa's Life and Work Transformed*

the stability of one's knowledge(s), which resembles Medina's call for acts "that can wake people up from their epistemic slumbers."[88] Such shock, propels one into a *second stage*—nepantla—of conflict with multiple perspectives; a phase of epistemological in-betweenness and critical analysis of both ourselves and world—the space where personal and social transformation starts.[89] Medina's first stage of emotional friction, negative emotional friction, is coming to recognize one's complicity in systemic injustices and acknowledging what work is needed to conquer their complicity—evocative of Anzaldúa's nepantla stage. Instead of jumping to an arrival point, as Medina's concept of emotional friction does, conocimiento includes a juncture in Coatlicue—*third phase*—a state of recoil, feelings and thoughts of despair, grief, and, perhaps even, apathy. Anzaldúa explains, "Self-pity swamps you, que suerte maldita! Self-absorbed, you're unable to climb out of the pit that's yourself."[90] It is during Coatlicue, however, where one's emotions shift and one begins to wrestle with inner struggles and resistances to experiences and perspectives that may challenge one's culpability in systemic oppressions—an acquisition of self-knowledge and movement through/with feelings of "fear, anxiety, anger, and blast into another reality."[91] *Fourth phase*, the call, signals the processes of moving through and growing from one's desconocimientos—ignorances—a decision to sit with one's discomfort and

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Our Own, ed. AnaLouise Keating and Gloria González-López (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011), 205.

[88] Medina, "Racial Violence, Emotional Friction, and Epistemic Activism," 23.

[89] C. Alejandra Elenes, "*Nepantla*, Spiritual Activism, New Tribalism: Chicana Feminist Transformative Pedagogies and Social Justice Education," *Journal of Latino/Latin American Studies* 5, no. 3 (2013): 134-35, https://doi.org/10.18085/llas.5.3.w3528w365m860188.

[90] Anzaldua, "now let us shift," 550.

[91] Ibid., 552.

willingness to part with inaccurate knowledge and outdated beliefs.[92] *Fifth phase*, new stories,

occurs as one moves through/between nepantla, Coatlicue, and the call. New personal and

collective narratives, alternative ways of knowing that bare systemic inequalities, and an igniting

of personal and collective agency. *Sixth phase*, the blow-up, ensues frequent testing and clashing

of newly imagined realities and perspectives—epistemic friction. Shifting, *seventh stage*,

initiates and engages inward to outward action(s)—spiritual activism.[93]

Spiritual activism, an inner-to-outer synergistic spirituality, is the path of conocimiento—

a practice-grounded epistemology for social change. Yet, there is an inherent contradiction

between spirituality (i.e., inward/individualistic focused) and activism (i.e., outward/collective

focused), such a paradox is an essential part of spiritual activism.[94] Anzaldua's conjunction

"embraces the apparent contradictions and insists that inner/outer, spiritual/physical, and

individual/collective are mutually constitutive parts of a larger whole, joined in an intricate,

interwoven pattern."[95] Spiritual activism is premised on interrelatedness—self-change and social

change are interlinked.[96] Anzaldúa was not inexperienced or credulous to the innumerable ways

resistance to change can masquerade as critical self-reflection or social justice.[97] In fact,

Anzaldúa insists that resistance and uncertainty is part of conocimiento and, sequentially,

spiritual activism. Keating, in her review of Anzaldúa's work after her death, notes how spiritual

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[92] Ibid., 554-58.

[93] Ibid., 568-74.

[94] Keating, "Spiritual Activism, Visionary Pragmatism, and Threshold Theorizing."

[95] Ibid., 103.

[96] Keating, "Shifting Perspectives," 244.

[97] Keating, "From Borderlands and New Mestizas to Nepantlas and Nepantleras," 6.

activism highlights the complicatedness of self/collective change. Firstly, Keating explains that the changing of self is not an arrival point. Rather, "'recreation of the self' must be part of a larger process requiring both intense self-reflection and back-and-forth action on individual and communal levels."[98] Secondly, transformation is complex and can be risky— "filled with uncertainty and unanswered questions."[99] Lastly, enacting spiritual activism can be painful and entail periods of grief and mourning. In this regard, practicing spiritual activism is multifaceted—including both conventional forms of spirituality and public forms of activism. Anzaldúa's spiritual activism was designed to sustain her simultaneous public work as a Chicana-feminist, which exposed her to microaggressions and "modern violence," and increasing health demands (i.e., diabetes).[100] There will be periods where, in an effort to avoid exhaustion and emotional breakdown, activist practices will entail self-healing exercises—contemplation, self-reflection, meditation, and the like.[101] Spiritual activism is part of every stage; that is, staying with/on the path of conocimiento is spiritual activism—a nonlinear journey that "invites us to think differently."[102]

How could Anzaldúa's theory of conocimiento/spiritual activism enrich the type of friction a praxis of affective democratic friction aims to bring about? That is, how might a

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[98] AnaLouise Keating, "'I'm a Citizen of the Universe': Gloria Anzaldúa's Spiritual Activism as Catalyst for Social Change," *Feminist Studies* 34, no. 1/2 (2008): 59, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20459180.

[99] Ibid., 59.

[100] Keating. "Spiritual Activism, Visionary Pragmatism, and Threshold Theorizing," 105.

[101] Anzaldúa, "now let us shift," 573.

[102] Emek Ergun, et al., "Epistemic Agitations and Pedagogies for Justice: A Conversation around Hungry Translations: Relearning the World through Radical Vulnerability," *Feminist Studies* 48, no. 1 (2022): 152, https://doi.org/10.1353/fem.2022.0009.

melding of spiritual and epistemic activism better encourage a criticality that generates "*thick critical engagements*"?[103] Medina proposes that these dense encounters cognitively impact our social and political lives and, more revolutionarily, rouse "our affective reactions, our imaginations, and our propensity to act or remain stuck in inaction."[104] As I've claimed earlier, Medina's theory of epistemic activism could limit these modes of engagement by encouraging binary-oppositional dynamics. Dichotomous undercurrents, especially in environments where either/or oppositions are more prone to enactments of oppressive civility, may well cause epistemic injustices and restrict, maybe even prohibit, self/collective change. To start, epistemic activism, as Medina outlines, requires immense vulnerability on the part of the activist—a role most frequently held by the marginalized. Could sticking such responsibility on these activists, especially in environments where they may be the only or one of a few oppressed persons, unduly subject one to "epistemic exploitation"? In other words, marginalized persons might feel pressured to educate the privileged about their oppression. The probability, then, that oppressed persons feel compelled to perform "unrecognized, uncompensated, emotionally taxing, coerced epistemic labor"[105] could be amplified; furthermore, civility could incite epistemic exploitation by concealing epistemic injustice in normative vernacular—"exercising harmless curiosity," "just asking a question," "making a well-intentioned effort to learn," "offering alternative explanations," or "playing the devil's advocate"—which conceals epistemic violence "as virtuous epistemic practices related to the pursuit of truth."[106] Anzaldúa's fusion of spiritual and

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[103] Medina, "Racial Violence, Emotional Friction, and Epistemic Activism," 24.

[104] Ibid., 24.

[105] Nora Berenstain, "Epistemic Exploitation," 569.

[106] Ibid., 570-71.

activism expands what epistemic activism can encompass. Spiritual activism embraces self-recovery and self-healing as part of the spiritual activist's path— "the path of conocimiento."[107] Anzaldúa explains, there will be times when the spiritual activist "realizes that to make changes in society and transform the system, she must make time for her needs—the activist must survive burn-out."[108] When environmental conditions spur epistemic exploitation, merging spiritual and epistemic activism encourages activists to include necessary disengagement as a subversive act—epistemic activism.

Both Medina and Anzaldúa emphasize the importance of mobilizing our cognitive-affective attitudes for activating a criticality—processes of epistemic and spiritual activism—that could foster transformative social change. Their theories diverge from each other, however, in the route such emotional mobilization travels. For Medina, emotional friction is either in a negative or positive state; for example, a racially-privileged person is in a stage of recognizing their affective numbness[109] to systemic racism or engaging/experiencing emotions—grief, anger, empathy—that function to resist racial oppression.[110] The non-linear course of conocimiento, in contrast, highlights the many cognitive-affective happenings that tandemly occur and, often, transpire more than once on the path. Stage one of conocimiento, for instance, describes "an ending, a beginning," sidestepping presumptions of successive progression commonly proposed in traditional theories.[111] Practicing conocimiento—engaging in spiritual activism—is a

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[107] Anzaldúa, "now let us shift."

[108] Ibid., 574.

[109] Medina, "Racial Violence, Emotional Friction, and Epistemic Activism."

[110] Ibid., 26.

[111] Zaytoun, "Shifting," 206.

relational/communal process toward self and, potentially, social change. White students, for example, could find themselves in the Coatlicue state—a phase of hopelessness, perhaps paralysis—on multiple occasions in a social justice course because whiteness is often disguised in the normative or, as I have claimed in this dissertation, in enactments of civility that conceal systemic injustice. Ongoing cultivation of both epistemic and spiritual activism could, potentially, create several jolts/discomforts over the course of a semester that pull one back into a "transitional in-between place"[112]—neplanta. Emotional friction, is not unidirectional. Attaining positive emotional friction regarding racism—arriving to feelings of grief, mourning, anger toward racial violence—could make one less prone to identify when they have shifted to less vigilant cognitive-affective attitudes/actions. One may not plop back into total numbness/apathy, rather gradual slides/shifts in between the two stages are more likely. For example, white students could, overtime, subtly lose cognizance of the gravity of racism as they continue to benefit from white privilege. Anzaldúa enlightens:

> The struggle has always been inner, and is played out in outer terrains. Awareness of our situation must come before inner changes, which in turn come before changes in society. Nothing happens in society. Nothing happens in the 'real' world unless it first happens in the images in our heads.[113]

Anzaldúa's spiritual activism can enrich Medina's epistemic activism by accommodating the continuous—never-ending—inner to outer work that's necessary to create/sustain social/collective transformation.

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[112] Elenes, "Nepantla, Spiritual Activism, New Tribalism," 135.

[113] Gloria Anzalduá. *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 87.

Medina and Anzaldúa both identify political-public actions as performances of their theories of activism—epistemic and spiritual. Epistemic activism, Medina claims, challenges dominant views of deliberative democracy that reduce political engagement to "giving reasons and responding to reasons in the public sphere."[114] In contrast, epistemic activism involves deeper exchanges that change the "communicative dynamics and communicative sensibilities" of individuals, groups, and institutions—interactions that do not just focus on thinking and discourse, but also entwine us "affectively, visually, and spatially."[115] Both give similar examples of these public (outwardly-focused) actions: protests, speakouts, visually changing public spaces (e.g., graffiti), demonstrations (i.e., both disruptive and inconvenient), new subversive spaces, storytelling, and so forth.[116] Anzaldúa proposes a more expansive spiritual activism that not only includes the outward/visible acts, but also the inward/introverted acts—"to respond not just with the traditional practices of spirituality (contemplation, meditation, and private rituals) or with the technologies of political activism (protests, demonstrations, and speakouts), but with the amalgam of the two."[117] The inclusivity in spiritual activism makes possible to conceive of practices as more than compartmented experiences/moments, but also an epistemic and ethical lifestyle and way of acting/interrelating in the world which premises interconnectedness—recognizing/mobilizing both our differences and commonalities (not

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[114] Medina, "Racial Violence, Emotional Friction, and Epistemic Activism," 24.

[115] Ibid., 25.

[116] Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark*; Medina, "Racial Violence, Emotional Friction, and Epistemic Activism"; Medina, "Complex Communication and Decolonial Struggles"; José Medina, "Vices of the Privileged and Virtues of the Oppressed in Epistemic Group Dynamics," in *The Routledge Handbook of Political Epistemology*, eds. Michael Hannon and Jeroen de Ridder (London, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), 336–46.

[117] Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark*, 19.

sameness) to produce social change.[118] Anzaldúa's spiritual activism, in contrast to epistemic activism, encompasses the ongoing self, collective, and in-between levels necessary for revealing entrenched social injustices and deracinating/reorganizing/rebuilding for social justice—the long and unending process and products of epistemic friction.

Medina's epistemic activism, I claim, focuses foremostly on changing certain public/collective epistemic and discursive conventions, which, in turn, ignores that social change first starts in our imaginations. In his recent work, Medina acknowledges his early theories on epistemic friction focused too much on the individual and, for this reason, has reoriented his efforts toward collectives and strategies for uprooting negative epistemic behaviors/beliefs on a group level. I concur with Medina's assessment of his early work on epistemic friction/epistemic resistance,[119] I would argue, however, that his most recent work on epistemic activism and friction simply makes an about-face rather than fully encompassing the complexity and multilayered entrenchment of hegemonic epistemologies, especially whiteness.[120] In this regard, I suggest that a merger of spiritual activism and epistemic activism would begin to break down the binary between individual and collective epistemic levels of action. A person or group does not simply flip an epistemic toggle switch, rather it is several multi-faceted, relational encounters/activisms—engagements in dialogue, deliberation, subversive public acts, being in multiple/different spaces, and/or feeling on both collective and individual levels concurrently

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[118] Keating, "Shifting Perspectives," 242.

[119] Medina, "The Relevance of Credibility Excess"; Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*.

[120] Medina proposes that focusing on the collective level will, invariably, also address the individual level and, in this regard, the separation between the two is often artificial. While I agree, to an extent, with Medina's claim, I don't think he adequately demonstrates how the collective level generates social change on the individual level. See Medina, "Vices of the Privileged and Virtues of the Oppressed in Epistemic Group Dynamics," 336.

that create the sustained epistemic friction needed for epistemic and social change—to generate spiritual-epistemic activism or, as I've proposed, affective democratic friction.

Practicing Affective Democratic Friction

The road to social justice is not linear; rather the movements are circular with multiple points of encounters with power, ideology, successes, and failures.[121]

Up until now, I have focused on how I have theoretically grounded a praxis of affective democratic friction. How can a praxis of affective democratic friction be employed and evolve to expose and uproot injustices in the social justice classroom, though? Like Özlem Sensoy and Robin DiAngelo, I assert that an essential goal of the social justice classroom is to cultivate students' aptitude to acknowledge the vitalness for and engagement towards social justice—preparing students to be active contributors working toward a just democratic society. [122] From my experiences as a social justice educator, I endeavor to pedagogically design classes in ways that shift students, and myself, to think differently—to cultivate conocimiento—to mobilize a spiritual-epistemic friction and activism. In this section, I will briefly explain how I organize my curriculum and class activities with the intent to foster affective democratic friction—premising non-binary, relational, and non-static strategies. I preface, however, that the curricular design and examples I illustrate are based on my own reading/learning/teaching and should not be seen as an all-encompassing solution; to do so would espouse a set-in-stone, static way of teaching, learning, and being in the social justice classroom and contrary to the cultivation of affective democratic friction.

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[121] Elenes, "*Nepantla*, Spiritual Activism, New Tribalism," 134.

[122] Özlem Sensoy and Robin DiAngelo, "Respect Differences? Challenging the Common Guidelines in Social Justice Education," *Democracy & Education* 22, no. 2 (2014): 7.

Destabilizing binary-oppositional thinking, which because of our socialization within normative-belief systems—whiteness—seems very customary and a natural way of organizing course content, requires social justice educators to be cognizant of how easily and subtly reverting to either/or oppositions in our course material and teaching can occur.[123] As indicated earlier, an oppositional thinking can prevent us from hearing and engaging with multiple perspectives and limits our imaginations from creating nuanced alternatives to the unjust status quo. Anzaldúa makes a similar point: "As long as we see the world and our experiences through 'white' eyes—in a dominant/subordinate way—we're trapped in the tar and pitch of the old manipulative and strive-for-power ways."[124] Organizing course content in ways that reinforce binaries paralyzes us—framing injustices, identities, and alternative epistemologies in an either/or framework locks us into rigid dichotomies. For example, an over-reliance on rigid-identity categories within curricula (i.e., race, class, gender, sexuality, or other identity elements) reinforces the prevailing idea that each person must fit into one box (e.g., white/black, female/male, gay/straight, etc.). A praxis of affective democratic friction, however, aims to generate a post-oppositional consciousness that both acknowledges the conflicts and searches for alternatives within/between differences and injustices—to cultivate what I describe as a *relational criticality*. A practice of criticality occurring in tandem with "relational thinking"— thinking that, Keating states, exercises "analysis, imagination, and self-reflectivity in

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[123] Earlier versions of some ideas presented here were previously published. *See* Sally Sayles-Hannon, "In Search of Multiculturalism: Uprooting 'Whiteness' in Curriculum Design and Pedagogical Strategies," (Texas Woman's University, 2008).

[124] Gloria Anzaldúa, "En Rapport, In Opposition: Cobrando Cuentas a Las Nuestras," in *Making Face, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Foundation Book, 1990): 142-48.

conjunction."[125] I describe the coalescing of a critically-informed, post-oppositional way of thinking and Keating's relational thinking as *relational criticality*.

Similar to Anzaldúa's path of conocimiento, relational criticality is multilayered and is inclusive of becoming aware of and reflecting on one's "surroundings, bodily sensations and responses, intuitive takes, emotional reactions to other people and theirs to you" and engagement with/in the realities our "imagination creates—images connecting all tiers of information and their data." [126] Pedagogically, I strive to generate relational criticality by utilizing relational literacy and teaching tactics. As an example of relational literacy, I refer to my graduate-level Social Foundations of Education curriculum.[127] Instead of organizing the course around fixed categories of analysis, such as race, class, gender, ethnicity, and/or sexuality, I arrange the course content thematically—positioning different, yet interconnected, viewpoints in dialogue. I carefully structure the course around broad themes, such as (1) "Social Constructions and Social Power: Systems of Privilege and Oppression," (2) "Complicating Identities: In/Outside the Classroom," and (3) "Pedagogies of Change." Within these themes, I provide weekly reading assignments that present multiple, often opposing, perspectives regarding the theme(s) under examination. For example, one week within the first theme, I assign readings like Marilyn Frye's "Oppression," Allan G. Johnson's "Patriarchy," Suzanne Pharr's "Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism," and Bob Herbert's "Shh, 'Don't Say 'Poverty'" that explore racism, classism, sexism/heterosexism, and systemic oppression together.[128] Thematic and relational course-

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[125] Keating, *Teaching Transformation*, 48.

[126] Anzaldúa, "now let us shift," 542.

[127] Please see Appendix A for an abridge version of my Social Foundations of Education syllabus.

[128] Please see bibliography for complete references.

content organization opens a path for students to potentially recognize interlocking systems of inequality and injustice.

A praxis of affective democratic friction strategically encourages relational literacy and teaching methods as a means to generate "jolts" to incite students' suspension of judgments/assessments—increasing the likelihood that students recognize interconnections between seemingly separate topics, texts, and/or worldviews. For example, I assign Stephanie M. Wilman and Adrienne D. Davis' "Language and Silence: Making Systems of Privilege Visible," Gregory Mantsios' "Media Magic: Making Class Invisible," and Beth Ferri and David Connor's "Challenging Normalcy: Dis/Ability, Race, and the Normalized Classroom" in conjunction to encourage students to locate interconnections/intersections between different, but often similar, systems of oppression.[129] Juxtaposing readings representing multiple systems of injustice "makes it difficult, if not impossible for students to dismiss the former as 'abnormal.'"[130] By emphasizing relational reading and thinking, educators can encourage relational criticality and, in turn, create moments that function to de-normalize hegemonic systems of inequality (e.g., whiteness).

If a praxis of affective democratic friction is going to have any on-going, long-term impact on social justice and our students' ways of thinking, pedagogical strategies and course designs need to emphasize non-static outcomes and goals. Emphasizing non-static processes relates to and supports contradiction, inclusiveness, and, most importantly, "intellectual humility—the recognition that our knowledge is always partial, incomplete, and thus open to

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[129] Please see bibliography for complete references.

[130] Keating, *Teaching Transformation*, 115.

revision."[131] Assignments that encourage relational criticality, then, leave room for mistakes and also acknowledge that stumbles may be part of the process. Audre Lorde explains, "[W]e have, built into all of us, old blueprints of expectation and response, old structures of oppression, and these must be altered at the same time as we alter the living conditions which are the result of those structures."[132] Because we have all been engrossed in the unjust status quo and schooled within hierarchical structures, we cannot presume social transformation will be an outcome of social justice courses. In fact, to do so opens up our teaching, classrooms, and students to reifying the very injustice such social transformation sought to uproot—that is, we potentially lose intellectual humility and enable the possibility of hegemonic discourses, such as civility, to transmute, re-root, and disguise injustice in what has been assumed social transformed. As Anzaldúa explains, we need practices/theories that "will enable us to interpret what happens in the world, that will explain how and why we relate to certain people in specific ways, that will reflect what goes on between inner, outer, and peripheral 'I's within a person and between the personal 'I's and collective 'we' of our ethnic communities."[133] To summarize, not only do our theories need to have practical functions such as promoting social justice, but they must also provide a lens for understanding our complex selves and negotiating our individual and community identities. Social justice classrooms and the pedagogical strategies educators utilize, then, will differ depending on each person's and community's needs. Enacting a praxis of

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[131] Ergun, et al., "Epistemic Agitations and Pedagogies for Justice," 152.

[132] Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches,* rev. ed. (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 2007), 123.

[133] Gloria Anzaldúa, "Haciendo Caras, Una Entrada," in *Making Face, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Foundation Book, 1990), xxv.

affective democratic friction, therefore, encourages continuous content revision and the malleability to alter course materials and assignments to better align with each classroom community's composition and awareness—to be strategically vigilant about how to create spaces for the relational criticality needed to generate the "thick critical engagements"[134] to promote social justice.

Designing flexible assignments, especially for lessons that seek to do more than create awareness of injustices but to also promote social justice, is not easy and necessitates an educator's on-going energy to think beyond the "traditional" course layout. Projects that focus more on motivating students to engage in affective democratic friction than arriving at a "correct" answer, I suggest, offer more opportunities for encouraging students to develop relational criticality—to begin the path of conocimiento. One assignment that I have utilized in various courses over the years is what I call a Social Artifact Project.[135] While I have adjusted the project prompts to correlate with different course goals—psychology, sociology, and education—my examples here are drawn from my graduate-level, Social Foundations of Education course. The main deliverable for this project is the creation of an artifact—a meaningful and thoughtful piece or action. Students are asked to use course readings and experiences to reflect on the following three questions: (1) In what ways do *systemic forces* (e.g., cultural, social, political, economic, historical) affect teaching?; (2) What values and norms are being emphasized and marginalized by *systemic forces*?; and, How do you plan to negotiate the impact of *systemic forces* on your professional work? Using these questions as a framework, students are asked to craft an artifact. The project has little creative restrictions; an artifact could

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[134] Medina, "Racial Violence, Emotional Friction, and Epistemic Activism," 24.

[135] See Appendix B for full assignment instructions.

be a piece of 2-D or 3-D artwork, an original musical composition, a play, a board game, a social action, Power Point, and so on.

Over the years I've had all of the above social artifacts and many others that I can't give justice to with words. Students' artifacts demonstrated, though, the creative potentials of our imaginations for inciting awareness, encouraging engagement with what is unknown or discomforting, and thinking beyond what is easily evident—alternatives, co-responsibility, interrelatedness, and social change. While my graduate-level teacher education courses are predominantly composed of white-female students, I've found the artifact project to be particularly impactful for my systemically-marginalized students. The process of creating and re-creating can be restorative, but it can also unearth and incite grappling with unconscious beliefs—beliefs that could uphold systemic injustices. Patricia, a woman of color and in-service K-12 teacher, created a puzzle for her social artifact.[136] In her written reflection, she explained:

> This semester has brought up some personal debates within me as a mother of two multi-racial children and me as a teacher. I never realized how my experiences with inequities as an educator impacted how I manage my classroom. As an educator, creating change in my classroom will not be easy. I have to remember that I come to the table with my own preconceived notions that I must first delve into and scrutinize. Looking at oneself is the first step and the toughest. I have to peel back my layers and really reflect on my teaching—thinking about how it operates as part of the 'birdcage' and the 'why' question constantly roaming in my mind. Change has to start within and it wasn't until this class that I really had to evaluate who I was. My artifact, a puzzle, represents me as an individual. I am the starting point for any changes to occur in my classroom with or without the support of the institution. The larger picture (whole birdcage) cannot exist without my wire. I need the collective's perspectives and the collective needs mine. So, what do you mean, one person cannot do it alone? In actuality, teachers are never alone. We can change society because we are educating and engaging with young society every day.

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[136] Student's name has been changed to protect anonymity.

Patricia's artifact and subsequent reflection reveal that the social justice classroom is not always just a place for white, privileged students to gain cognizance of their possible complicity in systemic injustices. Patricia's artifact reflection demonstrates the complexity of our interconnections and the importance for all, especially those with systemic privilege, to dig deeper, engage with different/various viewpoints, and partake in on-going self-reflection. Patricia's reflection expresses that her marginal positionality does not exempt her from unintentionally reifying systemic injustice and, for that reason, she must remain unceasingly aware of the need for on-going critical self/collective awareness.

Encouraging students to think-forward, to imagine how their roles as citizens, teachers, parents, etc. can engage in social change efforts—to act, both outwardly and inwardly—the second component of the artifact project ask students to reflect on their role(s) and responsibilities. In reflection, students are asked to answer the following questions: (1) How are schools (teachers, students, staff, etc.) affected by social and political issues such as race, gender, sexuality, ability, language, class, funding, teacher certification, testing, curriculum, disparities in funding, etc. (choose one of these issues)?; (2) What is the relationship between these effects and the issues of social justice, equity, and access in schools?; and, (3) What role do you have as an educator in creating change in your classroom and in the larger socio-political context? Question three is, in the context of this project, what I want students to reflect on most. As current and future teachers entering normative educational institutions, creating social change necessitates being and maintaining alertness to injustices built into educational customs and systems. Danielle's artifact represented her imagination's processing of the need for and on-going

emotional work necessary for maintaining an awareness of systemic injustices.[137] Danielle, a

white-female student, elucidates her process of awareness:

> I created my artifact, two masks, to represent awareness. Lack of awareness is treacherous, insidious, and permeates our beings. It affects every word we utter, every step we take, and every action we undertake. The first mask depicts a blueprint (blank, white), and represents lack of awareness. We think we are aware, but we are not really. We are not blank slates when we come to our classrooms. Stereotypes and prejudices influence our thinking and shape our actions. Moving from the individual to systemic level, schools, are affected by many social and political factors such as class, race, and gender. Becoming aware of the inequities these conditions create, is the second step to meaningful change. My second mask has many different images on it and has words on it such as: class, race, white privilege, poverty, media, language, etc. These terms represent all the factors that influence our perceptions and attitudes and have different impacts on education, such as sexism, homophobia and genderism, racial inequities in classrooms, ESL students being prohibited from using their home language, unequal funding. My second mask also has a *third eye*. The *third eye* is a symbol of new awareness. I feel the process of becoming aware, is like having a *third eye*. It is uncomfortable and unsettling: seeing things that you haven't seen before, things that challenge the very nucleus of your being. Questioning your perceptions puts your actions and notions in a new light, and that can be confrontational.[138]

Danielle's reflection highlights her recognition of the necessity for a vigilant awareness toward

systemic inequality. Her inclusion of a *third eye* as a symbol of new awareness also eludes to her

ongoing responsibility to witness— "a process in which we do not have the luxury of seeing a

static truth or fixed certainty . . . witnessing is a dynamic process. . . as a witness we undertake

our historical responsibilities and co-implications."[139] In contrast to spectating, "learned and

chosen modes of visual omission and erasure"[140] which denote one's privilege to watch from

afar, witnessing entails responsibility. Danielle expresses that her path of awareness involves

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[137] Student's name has been changed to protect anonymity.

[138] My emphasis.

[139] Megan Boler, *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999), 186.

[140] Ibid., 184.

discomfort, questioning, and confrontation/pain. Witnessing, Zofia Zaliwska and Megan Boler explain, comprises questioning and "the act of questioning moves static understanding into a dynamic field where anything can happen."[141] It is through Danielle's willingness and acknowledgement of the importance of questioning, especially in contexts where she benefits from privilege, that enables her to accept a responsibility for social injustices. Danielle concludes her reflection by acknowledging that knowledge of injustice makes one responsible for injustice: "From the moment you become aware, you have to assume responsibility."

Both Patricia's and Danielle's social artifacts illustrate a praxis of affective democratic friction. The creation of their social artifacts emulates a relational criticality—a conjoining of critique, imagination, and self/collective-reflexive thinking. Not every student's artifact project depicted the same-level of spiritual-epistemic awareness as Patricia and Danielle. I have found, however, that affective democratic friction is more likely when assignments provide flexibility, but also guide students to question/confront oppositions and uneasiness. The Social Artifact Project presented here is one tool, I claim, to encourage students to think with the unfamiliar, engage in epistemic friction, and move beyond the opposition—toward new alternatives and strategies for creating/enacting social change. As prefaced at the beginning of this section, the examples I draw from to illustrate a praxis of affective democratic friction are from my own teaching experiences and are not one-size-fits all. Non-static pedagogies/theories are ever-evolving to accommodate new forms of injustice and new strategies of resistance; thus, my examples here are context specific and may not be applicable to all social justice classrooms. What my students' work supports, though, is that a praxis of affective democratic friction—

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[141] Zofia Zaliwska and Megan Boler, "Troubling Hope: Performing Inventive Connections in Discomforting Times," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 38, no. 1 (2019): 71–84, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-018-9630-7.

emphasizing non-binary, relational, and non-static exercises and course design—could potentially de-normalize hegemonic discourses of civility and, in turn, expose enactments of epistemic resistance and injustice, especially those which function to conceal epistemologies of whiteness.

Conclusion

Circling back to the beginning of this chapter, the U.S. is in unprecedented times. The Anti-CRT movement, Trump Era rhetoric/ideology, and the very real threats of violence social justice educators face—physical, psychological, and material violence—indicate the continuing need for social justice education that disrupts the normative. In this concluding chapter, I have attempted to illustrate a praxis of affective democratic friction—a pedagogical framework and praxis to cultivate and engage in relational criticality. In practice, affective democratic friction highlights the importance of feeling and sitting with the discomfort that can arise from awareness of systemic injustices. I have proposed affective democratic friction as a praxis grounded in pedagogies of invitation, democratic education, and a melding of spiritual-epistemic activism. Non-binary, relational, and non-static relational reading and teaching strategies illustrate the potential for affective democratic friction to generate/develop relational criticality—an active engagement—friction—and recognition of how our perspectives and experiences are co-created, supported, and/or altered through our relational encounters. As such, it is through self and collective interactions—*dialogic/deliberative/activist* or just *being/feeling* in collective spaces— that we best activate/open possibilities for social transformation. Anzaldúa elucidates:

148

> Change requires a lot of heat. It requires both the alchemist and the welder, the magician and the laborer, the witch and the warrior, the myth-smasher and myth-maker.
>
> Hand in Hand, we brew and forge a revolution.[142]

Hegemonic functions of civility conceal socially-unjust power-relations—putting water on the fire—limiting epistemic resistance, and the possibility of exposing and uprooting normative ways of thinking—epistemologies of whiteness. Generating social justice is not comfortable, it is unlikely to occur in "safe" spaces and enduring social change/transformation could very well be painful, even oppositional/confrontational at moments, but through on-going, back-and-forth, inward-to-outward friction we open our individual/collective imaginations to new visions/frameworks—creating opportunities to dislodge, smash, and/or eradicate social injustices.

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[142] Gloria Anzaldúa, "El Mundo Zurdo," in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, eds. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1981), 196.

Appendix A. Abridge Syllabus: Social Foundations of Education

Abridged Syllabus:
Social Foundations of Education
Graduate Course
Sally Sayles-Hannon, *Instructor*

 "The quality of light by which we scrutinize our lives has direct bearing upon the product which we live, and upon the changes which we hope to bring about through those lives." (Audre Lorde)

Course Description: This course encourages the development of interpretive, normative, and critical perspectives on education. Students strengthen their capacities to examine, understand and evaluate educational policies, institutional practices, and the rights and responsibilities of all education partners. Conceptualizing education broadly to include school and non-school enterprises, this course aims to deepen students' awareness of the social contexts and implications of educational activities.

Section Description: This section addresses issues in education that fall outside of the official curriculum and textbook. What do students learn that we do not intend as result of social interaction, television and advertisements, cultural environment, and all the other factors that influence the lives and education of kids today? We will read a variety of articles that address the social and cultural foundations of schools in this country. We will look at how issues of "social location" such as race and racism, gender, poverty, ability, sexuality, ethnicity (etc.) shape and complicate what goes on in the classrooms of our schools.

The course is reading and discussion based, so your input is essential to our success. I value all insights and viewpoints that are based on thoughtful reading and consideration of the issues at hand. You will be asked to investigate your own biases and beliefs and the way in which your own beliefs relate to societal norms; an open mind is an important part of our discussion and your learning in this class. Participation and attendance are large parts of your grade, so you are expected to be here, complete the reading, and have lots of questions, opinions, and stories about your experience to share. Some of our topics can be controversial, and you are expected to listen respectfully to your classmates and display tact and respect in your responses.

Some questions to think about before we begin: How does my education shape the way I see the world? How do my personal/social/cultural beliefs affect my learning and teaching? Does the official school curriculum include certain assumptions or biases based on class, race, ethnicity, or gender? How are issues of power played out within classrooms and schools? Does education occur only in school, or within the broader culture and media?

If you have any problems/issues/questions during the semester please email me, stop into my office hours, or make an appointment for an informal meeting.

Course Objectives: Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. understand the social construction of norms and assumptions that inform the operation of schooling in the United States; to reflect and evaluate one's own relationship with these norms and assumptions; (normative perspective)

2. question and analyze the ideas, values, and norms that inform educational policies and arrangements; use critical judgment to examine the presence or absence of social justice in education; (critical perspective)

3. understand the ways by which teachers and students construct meaning of their experience in education and how the interpretation of this meaning is dependent upon perspective and context; reflect on one's own construction of meaning and how this will inform one's work as an educator; (interpretive perspective)

4. develop a commitment to creating democratic classrooms and schools; reflect on one's own responsibilities to engage and foster diversity.

Academic Integrity Policy: Academic Integrity is essential to the educational mission of Anonymous College; for the free pursuit of knowledge and understanding is seriously impeded by any form of academic dishonesty. Hence, no form of academic dishonesty will be condoned by the college. Procedures pertaining to this policy are available in the Office of Graduate Student Services.

Please come to me with any questions you have about this policy or if you are concerned about citations, etc.

Inclusion Policy: It is my goal and responsibility to make this classroom as accessible to and inclusive of every student as possible. I hope that you will come to see me if you are struggling or if you need specific help. My understanding of inclusion is broad and includes, but is not limited to, students labeled with disabilities. Please also refer to the College's Disabilities Handbook for the complete policy.

Required Reading:
- Rothenberg, P. *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States* (Denoted as **R** in the course schedule)
- Supplemental readings—essays, book chapters, and journal articles located in Course Documents on Blackboard. (Denoted as **BB** in the course schedule)

Assignments

Participation and Attendance:
- **Two Reading Reflections:** Twice during the semester you will write a reading reflection that demonstrates your comprehension of the readings, but also how you have connected the readings and class discussions. These reflections should be 3-4, double-spaced pages in APA format.
- **Attendance:** You are expected to be in class, prepared to share thoughts, reflections, and experiences. You are expected to complete all of the readings and be ready to share your insights about the text. For each class, choose a quote, short passage, or question regarding the readings that interests you. If you have to miss class, please notify me prior.

Discussion Leaders:
During the semester, you will have the opportunity to lead a class discussion on a particular reading for the week (these readings are denoted as ** in the schedule). Discussion leaders will be assigned on the first and second weeks of class. You will need to provide a brief summary of the main points and then use discussion questions, small group work, games, media, etc. to encourage class engagement. As educators, you are expected to be engaging and informative and to get the entire class involved in discussion. Please use this opportunity to work on your creative-teacher energies.

Formal Paper:
You will write a 7-10, double-spaced paper in APA format on one of the class topics this semester. In addition to course readings, you are required to research at least 3-5 other scholarly sources. This paper should explore the social foundations of your chosen topic and should identify the problems associated with it. Consider the relationship between schooling and society relative to your topic. For instance, how has the social construction of gender and gender roles influenced the education of girls and boys? How has the regulation of gender in schools affected these social norms? How have social norms of gender affected how and where girls and boys are educated? Consider the contemporary context, its historical roots and, perhaps, future trajectory. More information will be given in class.

Social Foundations Artifact:
You will use the course readings and material to reflect on the following three questions:
- In what ways do *systemic forces* (e.g., cultural, social, political, economic, historical) affect teaching?
- What values and norms are being emphasized and marginalized by *systemic forces*?
- How do I plan to negotiate the impact of *systemic forces* on my professional work?

Using these three questions as a framework for your artifact, you will create a meaningful and thoughtful piece or action. Your project could take on many forms: a piece of 2-D or 3-D artwork, an original musical composition, a play, a board game, a social action, etc. Originality is highly valued in this artifact and you will be expected to synthesize the course material and your own experience as a student, citizen, and educator. In addition to the form your artifact takes, you need to provide a 2-3, doubled-spaced written description in APA format.

<u>Class Schedule</u>

Week One: Introductions and Overview—*What is social foundations of education?*
- Herbert Kohl – "I Won't Learn From You! Confronting Student Resistance" (BB)

**I. Social Constructions and Social Power:
Systems of Privilege and Oppression**

Week Two
- Amanda E. Lewis – "There's No 'Race' in this School Yard: Color-Blind Ideology in an (Almost) All-White School" (BB)
- Janet Ward Schofield – "The Colorblind Perspective in School" (BB)
- Harlon Dalton – "Failing to See" (BB)
- Jane Roland Martin – "Gender in the Classroom: Now You See It, Now You Don't" (BB)**

Week Three
- Michael Omi and Howard Winant – "Racial Formations" (R)
- Pem Davidson Back – "Constructing Race, Creating White Privilege" (R)**
- Peggy McIntosh - "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (R)

   Watch: *Race- The Power of Illusion*

Week Four
- Marilyn Frye – "Oppression" (R)
- Allan G. Johnson – "Patriarchy" (R)
- Suzanne Pharr – "Homphobia: A Weapon of Sexism" (R)**
- Bob Herbert – "Shh, "Don't Say 'Poverty'" (R)

Week Five—Reading Reflection Due
- Stephanie M. Wilman & Adrienne D. Davis – "Language and Silence: Making Systems of Privilege Visible" (BB)
- Gregory Mantsios – "Media Magic: Making Class Invisible" (R)
- Beth Ferri and David Connor – "Challenging Normalcy: Dis/Ability, Race, and the Normalized Classroom" (BB)**

Week Six
- Jeffrey Gettleman – "The Segregated Classrooms of a Proudly Diverse School" (R)**
- Gary Orfield and Chungmei Lee – "Racial Transformation and the Changing Nature of Segregation" (BB)
- George Smith – "The Ideology of 'Fag': The School Experience of Gay Students" (BB)

Week Seven
- Kim A. Case and Annette Hemmings – "Distancing Strategies: White Woman Preservice Teachers and Antiracist Curriculum" (BB)**
- Ann Berlak – " Confrontation and Pedagogy: Cultural Secrets, Trauma, and Emotion in Antiracist Pedagogy" (BB)

Watch: *The Color of Fear*

II. Complicating Identities: In/Outside the Classroom

Week Eight—Formal Paper Due
- Audre Lorde – "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" (R)
- Evelyn Alsutany – "Los Intersticios: Recasting Moving Selves" (R)**
- Mireya Navarro – "Going Beyond Black and White, Hispanics in Census Pick 'Other'" (R)
- Gloria Anzaldúa – "La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness" (BB)

Week Nine—*No Class*

Week Ten
- Paula Moya – "What's Identity Got to Do with It? Mobilizing Identities in the Classroom" (BB)**
- Elizabeth Ellsworth – "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myth of Critical Pedagogy" (BB)
- Lisa Delpit – "Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children" (BB)

Week Eleven—*Reading Reflection Due*
- Barbara Applebaum – "Engaging Student Disengagement: Resistance or Disagreement? (BB)**
- Megan Boler – "All Speech is Not Free: The Ethics of 'Affirmative Action Pedagogy'" (BB)
- Claudia Ruitenberg – "Check Your Language! Political Correctness, Censorship, and Performativity in Education" (BB)

III. Pedagogies of Change

Week Twelve
- Audrey Thompson – "Listening and Its Asymmetries" (BB)
- K. Dara Hill – "Code-Switching Pedagogies and African American Student Voices: Acceptance and Resistance" (BB)**
- Henry A. Giroux – "Rewriting the Discourse of Racial Identity: Towards a Pedagogy and Politics of Whiteness" (BB)**

Week Thirteen—*No Class*

Week Fourteen —Social Foundations Artifact Presentations

- Alison Bailey – "Locating Traitorous Identities: Toward a View of Privilege-Cognizant White Character" (BB)**
- Bonnie TuSmith and Maureen T. Reddy – "Conclusion: Teaching to Make a Difference" (BB)
- bell hooks – "Feminism: A Transformational Politic" (R)

Week Fifteen—*Social Foundations Artifact Presentations*

Appendix B. Social Artifact Assignment

Social Artifact Assignment (100 pts)

You will use the course readings and material to reflect on the following three questions in your artifact:
- In what ways do *systemic forces* (e.g., cultural, social, political, economic, historical) affect teaching?
- What values and norms are being emphasized and marginalized by *systemic forces*?
- How do I plan to negotiate the impact of *systemic forces* on my professional work?

Using these three questions as a framework for your artifact, you will create a meaningful and thoughtful piece or action. Your project could take on many forms: a piece of 2-D or 3-D artwork, an original musical composition, a play, a board game, a social action, etc. Originality is highly valued in this artifact and you will be expected to synthesize the course material and your own experience as a student, citizen, and educator.

In addition to the form your artifact takes, you will need to **write a 2-3, doubled-spaced written reflection** in APA format answering the following questions:
- How are schools (teachers, students, staff, etc.) affected by social and political issues such as race, gender, sexuality, ability, language, class, funding, teacher certification, testing, curriculum, disparities in funding, etc.? Choose one of these issues to focus on for this reflection.
- What is the relationship between these effects and the issues of social justice, equity, and access in schools?
- What role do you have as an educator in creating change in your classroom and in the larger socio-political context?

Grading:

Artifact: **50 pts** (Your artifact should represent a meaningful and thoughtful piece or action. This artifact, while distinctively unique for each person, should demonstrate a thoughtful engagement with the questions above.)

Written Portion: **25 pts** (This written portion will reflect on the three questions above. The written portion should be 2-3, double spaced pages in APA format. While answering your questions, you should utilize at least two classroom sources. Content will comprise **15 points** of your total written portion; **10 points** will be reserved for punctuation, grammar, and citation format.)

Presentation: **25 pts** (This portion of your artifact should be at least five minutes, but no longer than ten minutes. It will comprise of you presenting your artifact to the class and orally answering how your artifact represents the three questions above and the personal meaning behind the creation of your artifact.)

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<div align="center">**Curriculum Vitae**</div>

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Education

Ph.D. Syracuse University, Cultural Foundations of Education, 2023
- Dissertation: "Civility, Epistemic Injustice, and Criticality: Toward A Praxis of Affective Democratic Friction"
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M.A. Texas Woman's University, Women's Studies, 2008.
- Thesis: "In Search of Multiculturalism: Uprooting 'Whiteness' in Curriculum Design and Pedagogical Strategies"

B.S. *magna cum laude***, Grand Valley State University, Liberal Studies**, 2006.
- Thesis: "Feminist and Liberatory Pedagogies: Journey Toward Synthesis"

Research and Teaching Interests

Areas of Specialization: Social/Cultural/Psychological Foundations of Education; Philosophies of Education; Social Justice Education; Emotions and Critical Thinking; Women's Studies; Feminist & Critical-Race Theories.

Professional-Skill Distinctions

Certificate of Effective Teaching Practice, Lumen Circles, 2021**.**

Certificate in University Teaching, Syracuse University (Syracuse, NY), Future Professoriate Program, 2011.

Competent Toastmaster (C.T.M.), Toastmasters International, McNair Scholars Program, Grand Valley State University (Allendale, MI), 2006.

Teaching Experience

Lecturer, Cayuga Community College, Social Sciences and Education, 2017-Present.
- Introductory Psychology (PSY 101)
- Introductory Sociology (SOC 101)
- Deviant Behavior (SOC 105)

Lecturer, Nazareth College, Social & Psychological Foundations of Education, 2010-2014.
- Social Foundations of Education (SPF 501)
- History and Philosophy of Education (SPF 204)

Co-Instructor, Graduate Teaching Assistant, Syracuse University, Cultural Foundations of Education, 2009-2010.
- Schooling and Diversity (CFE 444)

Instructor of Record, Graduate Teaching Assistant, Texas Woman's University, Women's Studies, 2007-2008.
- ▪ Gender and Society (WS 2013)

Teaching Apprenticeship, Grand Valley State University, 2006.
- ▪ Visionary Thinkers: Jane Addams (LIB 400)

Peer-Reviewed Publications

"Being Heard, but NOT Listened To (Response Essay)." *Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (2017): 141-144.

"Restructuring Intellectual Authority: Affective Democratic Friction." *Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (2016): 522-531.

"On Whose Authority? Issues of Epistemic Authority and Injustice in the Social Justice Classroom." *Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (2012): 380-388.

"'Uncivilizing' the Social Justice Classroom: Civility and Emotion in Critical Thinking." *Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (2011): 152-160.

"In Search of Multiculturalism: Uprooting 'Whiteness' in Curriculum Design and Pedagogical Strategies." *International Journal of Learning* 16.10 (2009): 709-719.

"Feminist and Liberatory Pedagogies: Journey Toward Synthesis." *International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations* 7.2 (2007): 33-42.

"Education for Democracy: Discovering Civic Engagement." *International Journal of Learning* 13.6 (2006): 35-45.

Collaborative Publications

"Review Symposium of Meira Levinson, *No Citizen Left Behind*." Co-authored with Eduardo M. Duarte, Michele S. Moses, Winston C. Thompson, and Quentin Wheeler-Bell. *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 32.6 (2013): 653-666.

University Publications

In Search of Multiculturalism: Uprooting 'Whiteness' in Curriculum Design and Pedagogical Strategies. Thesis, Texas Woman's University, 2008. Dissertations & Theses @ Texas Woman's University.

"Education for Democracy: Discovering Civic Engagement." *Grand Valley State University McNair Scholars Journal* 9 (2005): 121-132.

Book Reviews

Review of *Transforming Feminist Practice: Non-Violence, Social Justice and the Possibilities of a Spiritualized Feminism*, by Leela Fernandes. *Feminist Teacher* 19.1 (2008): 76-78.

Relevant Scholarly Presentations

"Important Facts, Figures, and Futures: Gender Inequality and Inequity," *Spring 2017 Speakers Series*, Cayuga Community College, Auburn, New York, March 2017.

"'What would it take for you to set me free' Emotion(s) and our Social Imaginaries," Work-in Progress Session, *Philosophy of Education Society Annual Meeting*, Toronto, Ontario, March 2016.

"Restructuring Intellectual Authority: Affective Democratic Friction," *Philosophy of Education Society Annual Meeting*, Memphis, Tennessee, March 2015.

"Tweening Emotions: Obstacles and Radical Possibilities," Response Paper, *Philosophy of Education Society Annual Meeting*, Albuquerque, New Mexico, March 2014.

"Meet the Author: Meira Levinson's *No Citizen Left Behind,*" Panel Presentation, *Philosophy of Education Society Annual Meeting*, Portland, Oregon, March 2013.

"On Whose Authority? Issues of Epistemic Authority and Injustice in the Social Justice Classroom," *Philosophy of Education Society Annual Meeting,* Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, March 2012.

"Affectively Orienting Inquiry: Testimonial Assessment and the Realist Classroom," *American Educational Studies Association Annual Conference*, St. Louis, Missouri, November 2011.

"'Uncivilizing' the Social Justice Classroom: Civility and Emotion in Critical Thinking," *Philosophy of Education Society Annual Meeting*, St. Louis, Missouri, March 2011.

"Disrupting 'White' Distancing Strategies in the Classroom," Panel Presentation, *American Educational Studies Association Annual Conference*, Denver, Colorado, October 2010.

"Outside the Ordinary: Philosophizing Multicultural Education from 'Whiteness' to 'Color' and the Spaces In/between," Panel Presentation, Philosophy of Education Society Annual Meeting, San Francisco, California, April 2010.

"The Benefits of Knowing/Not Knowing in Social Justice Education," Panel Presentation, *American Educational Studies Association*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, November 2009.

"In Search of Multiculturalism: Uprooting 'Whiteness' in Curriculum Design and Pedagogical Strategies," Virtual Presentation, *Sixteenth International Conference on Learning*, Barcelona, Spain, July 2009.

"Feminist Pedagogy and Liberatory Pedagogy: Journey Towards Synthesis," *Seventh International Conference on Diversity*, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, July 2007.

"Education for Democracy: Discovering Civic Engagement," *Thirteenth International Conference on Learning*, Montego Bay, Jamaica, June 2006.

"Pathways to Democracy," *What Citizen Jane Can Teach Us: Higher Learning and Democracy*, Citizens' University of Rockford College, April 2004.

University Presentations

"In Search of Multiculturalism: Uprooting 'Whiteness' in Curriculum Design and Pedagogical Strategies," *Student Creative Arts and Research Symposium*, Texas Woman's University, April 2008.

"Transforming Education: Enhancing Learning through Feminist and Liberatory Pedagogies," *Feminist Forum Series*, Texas Woman's University, April 2007.

"The Power of Rhetoric: The Stigma of Dependency in Welfare Policy," *Student Creative Arts and Research Symposium,* Texas Woman's University, April 2007.

"Education for Democracy: Discovering Civic Engagement," *Student Scholarship Day*, Grand Valley State University, April 2006.

Invited Lectures

"(Re)Thinking Feminist and Liberatory Pedagogies: From Information Transfer to Information Transformation," Texas Woman's University, June 2007.

"Liberal Education Aspirations for Students," First Year Faculty Seminar: Liberal Education Initiative, Grand Valley State University, 2005.

Relevant Professional Experience

ERIE21 Senior Academic Services Coordinator, Le Moyne College (LMC), 2021-Present.
- Served as a leadership figure and advisor for 150+ undergraduate students
- Supervised and evaluated 10+ STEM classroom tutors
- Advised 150+ non-traditional, international, and underrepresented students about academic and career path opportunities.
- Created, organized, and executed assessment for 7.2 million dollar grant program.

President and Community Service Chair, Believe in Syracuse (BIS), April 2016-Present.
- Collaborate with community organization to provide essential goods to benefit the vital needs of Greater Syracuse residents.
- Prepare grant proposals, budgets, and manage expenditures in accordance with federal and state non-profit requirements.
- Provide administrative monitoring of committee business, community relationships, and on-going relationships with benefiting partner organizations.

Program Coordinator, Writing Our Lives (WOL), School of Education, Syracuse University, August 2012-August 2013.
- Collaborate with community-writing activists, faculty, and teachers to provide free youth-writing/literacy workshops to students, particularly in urban settings, in Central New York.

- Workshops range from poetry, hip hop, comics, digital media, political writing, college writing, leadership, and public activism.

Research Assistant, Reading & Language Arts Department, School of Education, Syracuse University, January 2013-August 2013.
- Analyze data for a 4-year, federally funded literacy research project with emphasis on longitudinal effectiveness and/or weak/positive consistent trends.
- Provide data for a qualitative research project on the quantity of bilingual research content available to pre-service and current teachers via frequently utilized educational journals.

Research Assistant, Continuous Education and Global Outreach/Marketing & Communications, School of Education, Syracuse University, August 2010-August 2013.
- Organize LGBTQ, Holocaust education, and differentiated-learning programs and events.
- Coordinated disability accessible services, such as Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART).
- Evaluate and adhere to international standards for awarding Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) to New York State teachers.

Graduate Administrative Assistant, Say Yes to Education, Inc, Elmwood & Delaware Elementary, Syracuse City School District, Summer 2009 & Summer 2010.
- Developed and evaluated curriculum for K-5 students in an urban-education settings.
- Supervised, organized, and scheduled day-to-day activities inclusive of the needs of disadvantaged students.
- Say Yes to Education, Inc. is a national, non-profit education foundation committed to dramatically increasing high school and college graduation rates for our nation's urban youth.

Grant Coordinator, Alternative Preparation for Librarians in Urban Settings (A-PLUS), P-16 Initiatives, Texas Woman's University (TWU), August 2006-August 2007.
- Managed grant expenditures and provided narrative justification for grant purchases.
- Assisted with writing periodic grant assessment briefs for federal grant compliance.
- Provide administrative monitoring of grant business and master files.
- The A-PLUS Project was a Librarians for the 21st Century grant, funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The grant's purpose was increasing the number of certified school librarians, especially those with Spanish language skills, in Dallas Independent School District.

Awards and Honors

McNair Fellowship, Syracuse University, 2008-2009.

Chancellor's Student Research Scholar, Texas Woman's University, 2007.

Ronald E. McNair Scholar, Grand Valley State University, 2005-2006.

Outstanding Liberal Studies and Female Student, Grand Valley State University, 2006.

Professional Memberships

Believe in Syracuse, 2014-Present.

American Educational Studies Association, 2009-2017.

Philosophy of Education Society, 2009-2018.

Golden Key International Honour Society, Texas Woman's University, Inducted 2007.

Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, Grand Valley State University, Inducted 2006.

Professional & University Service

President and Board Member, Believe in Syracuse, 2017-Present.

Chair, Community Service Committee, Believe in Syracuse, 2016-Present.

Editorial Board Member, Philosophy of Education Society, 2015 Annual Meeting.

Program Committee Member, American Educational Studies Association, 2013.

Senior Member, Minority Group Student Orientation Program (MGSOP), Syracuse University, August 2008-2017.

Peer Reviewer, Seventh International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations, 2007.

Peer Reviewer, Thirteenth International Journal of Learning, 2006.

Committee Member, Outstanding Teacher Award, Grand Valley State University, 2004.

Student Representative, Intergroup Dialogues: Claiming a Liberal Education, PEW Faculty Teaching and Learning Center, Grand Valley State University, 2004.

Board Member, Women's Center Advisory Board, Grand Valley State University, 2003-2006.