

Combatting Epistemic Violence against Young Activists

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Introduction

Young people are advocating for social and political change. In response to the worsening climate crisis, young people have organized several movements, including the Sunrise Movement and the School Strike for Climate movement. Following the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, students led a nationwide movement for gun control. Young people led the charge for justice following the death of Trayvon Martin and have played significant roles in the Black Lives Matter movement. Members of the climate, gun control, and anti-racism movements are well-educated on their respective issues and have articulated clear political and economic aims.¹ Young people have rallied around concerns for their shared futures, using knowledge of climate science, gun dangers, and white supremacy and their correspondingly rational interests in a safe and ecologically healthy world, to create sound platforms for reform. Even though their positions are sound, many adults believe they could not possibly understand the scope of the issues or have the tools to respond to the crises. Their beliefs are often dismissed as childish because adults assume that children are too naïve to understand the full extent of issues like the climate crisis and what it would take to address them. The result is that their position as young persons who must endure the effects of current policies and practices is discounted and they are subject to epistemic injustice, a concept introduced by Miranda Fricker, and epistemic oppression, a concept introduced by Kristie Dotson.

In this paper, we seek to establish the way in which young people are subject to two forms of epistemic oppression in testimony, what Dotson calls testimonial quieting and testimonial smothering. Testimonial quieting happens when a hearer fails to identify a speaker as a person who knows about whatever subject about which the speaker is offering testimony (Dotson, “Tracking Epistemic Violence” 242), and testimonial smothering occurs when a speaker stifles their own testimony to avoid being the object of prejudice or ridicule on the part of hearers (244). We also consider how young people are subject to what Fricker calls hermeneutical injustice, which occurs when a group is less able to make sense of their experiences due to an imbalance of social power. We

¹ See the principles articulated by the Sunrise Movement (“Sunrise Principles”). Also, see the speech given by activist Greta Thunberg to the British House of Parliament (Thunberg). For an account of the position held by the Never Again MSD activists, see Hogg and González. For a list of the demands by one offshoot of the larger Black Lives Matter movement, see “About.” See also an op-ed by Thandiwe Abdullah, 15, co-founder of the Black Lives Matter LA Youth Vanguard, on the Parkland shooting and the response to the Never Again MSD activists (Abdullah).

examine three different scenarios of quieting: quieting of Parkland activists following a shooting at their school; quieting of Dream Defenders and Black Lives Matter activists following the shooting death of Trayvon Martin; and quieting of climate activists. Because of the different ways these groups were quieted, we consider the importance of analyses attentive to how race and other identity factors intersect with age to compound the epistemic oppression faced by young people. We then argue that Philosophy for Children (P4C) can help remedy epistemic oppression by helping young people who might otherwise stifle their testimony develop their voices, helping adult facilitators better listen to young people as equal interlocutors, and helping young people become adults who are less likely to quiet the testimony of any specific group in public discourse or elsewhere.

Epistemic Injustice and Epistemic Oppression

While many philosophers have examined the damage done to individuals and social groups by social and political injustices, few had explicitly considered what it meant to harm someone as a knower before Miranda Fricker's groundbreaking work *Epistemic Injustice*. Fricker examines how a special wrong, which she calls an epistemic injustice, is inflicted upon someone when they are damaged in their capacity as a knower (20). In testimonial injustice, the first type of epistemic justice, the audience fails to take the speaker seriously as a knower (4). The audience does not give the speaker what they need, namely an audience that is open to hearing them and able to hear them without prejudice, and a successful linguistic exchange fails to take place. The other type, hermeneutical injustice, occurs when "a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair advantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences" (Fricker 1). Hermeneutical injustices exist when a group is unable to explain, describe, and assign meaning to a common set of experiences, often because the dominant social group fails to recognize these experiences as worth understanding or even as real. As social power dictates the creation of concepts, the group with relatively less power is left with fewer concepts at hand to explain everyday encounters.

Kristie Dotson has also developed an important account of epistemic harm, which, while overlapping with Fricker's account, differs in a few key ways. Dotson examines what she calls epistemic violence in testimony and claims that it relies in large part on pernicious ignorance, or reliable and ongoing ignorance about a group that causes harm ("Tracking Epistemic Violence" 238). Pernicious ignorance often manifests itself in negative stereotypes (243). Dotson defines epistemic violence in testimony or epistemic oppression as "a refusal, intentional or unintentional, of an audience to communicatively reciprocate a linguistic exchange owing to pernicious ignorance" (238). Dotson characterizes Fricker's notion of epistemic injustice as a "species of epistemic oppression" (238). Dotson argues, however, that Fricker misses a type of epistemic injustice, which Dotson calls contributory injustice. Contributory injustice is "caused by an epistemic agent's situated ignorance, in the form of willful hermeneutical ignorance, in maintaining and utilizing structurally prejudiced hermeneutical resources that result in epistemic harm to the epistemic agency of a knower" (Dotson, "A Cautionary Tale" 31). While Fricker claims that hermeneutical injustice occurs because social power dictates the creation of concepts, Dotson emphasizes that there is rarely only one set of hermeneutical resources at any given time. Contributory injustice occurs when someone fails to use available hermeneutical resources created by a marginalized group and only uses the prejudiced

hermeneutical resources of the oppressor.

Both Fricker and Dotson's contributions are essential to our project, but their differences, while significant, bear less on our argument. Instead we borrow Fricker and Dotson's arguments on the epistemic oppression of women and people of color to apply to children, which is something few thinkers have done to date. Those thinkers who have begun the conversation about epistemic injustice and children have opened the door to an important field of inquiry. Karin Murriss, for instance, has applied Fricker's concepts to epistemic injustice against Black children in educational settings. Murriss holds that the mistaken and influential views of developmental psychology disadvantage children by positioning them as partial humans and do not allow for the fact that adults may learn from children (254). Michael D. Burroughs and Deborah Tollefsen consider epistemic injustice against children in forensic contexts and argue that pervasive prejudices determine whether children are considered credible in courtroom scenarios (369). We engage in a similar project, focusing on testimonial quieting and smothering of young activists.

Testimonial Quieting and Smothering of Youth Activists

Dotson explains that testimonial quieting and smothering result from pernicious ignorance, and we contend that ignorance regarding children's and young people's intellectual and rational capacities are types of pernicious ignorance. In the traditional educational setting and in public spaces, the interpretative tools employed by children are often dismissed as undeveloped or simply incorrect. Children are often seen as ignorant and incapable of forming rational beliefs without first being taught how, when, and with what facts to do so. Ignorance regarding young people's ability to know shows up in terms adults use to describe children's interpretations of the world, like "childish," "naive," and "uneducated." These terms do not necessarily assail the content of children's understandings (in the way "irrational" or "misinformed" might), but rather the thinkers themselves. To call a child's wishful thinking "childish" does not dismiss the value or accuracy of the belief's content, but dismisses the child's position as a knower. In what follows, we consider testimonial quieting of young activists in the public sphere, looking at three examples of recent youth activism: the youth-led climate movement, Never Again MSD, and Black Lives Matter.

1. Testimonial Quieting

We can see a clear example of testimonial quieting in the response to the student leaders of the climate movement, specifically in an encounter between representatives from the Sunrise Movement and Senator Dianne Feinstein. Around fifteen young people, from age ten to eighteen, visited Feinstein's office to present her a letter and request that she support the Green New Deal, a proposed economic stimulus package that addresses the climate crisis and economic inequality. Feinstein responded that she was not in support of the proposed measure, as she thought it was not feasible and instead had co-authored an alternative bill (Sunrise Movement Bay Area). When the children responded that she should listen to their reasons, she asked their age and dismissed them with the statement, "you didn't vote for me." She also told the crowd, "I know what I'm doing." This is an example of quieting because Feinstein dismissed these children's ability to offer testimony about the

climate crisis by virtue of a social prejudice about the naiveté of children's understanding of political (and scientific and economic) concepts.

Despite her claim, Feinstein cannot properly “know what [she's] doing.” If to know something means to know the truth, she becomes further from the truth as she excludes significant viewpoints from her evaluation of the climate crisis. She is acting in a way that has obfuscated the actual consequences of her actions by quieting the Sunrise protesters, who have a relevant standpoint regarding the need to act as young people who will endure the consequences of today's climate policy. In refusing to engage with the students as rational agents, she has excluded the experiences and needs of children from her evaluation of the climate crisis due to children's lack of social power. In the case of the climate crisis discourse and this example in particular, the testimony of children is *especially* relevant to the production of climate policy, as children are the ones who will have to deal with the most significant consequences of present decisions. As such, we should afford special attention to the standpoint of children regarding the climate crisis. Feinstein's perspective toward these young people is in keeping with many educators, politicians, and other adults: you don't know what you're talking about; let the adults handle it.

But the adults often do not handle things, as the Parkland students know too well. They formed Never Again MSD in the aftermath of a mass shooting at their school in February 2018 (Seelinger). The movement began as a Twitter hashtag—#NeverAgain—and transformed into one of the largest nationwide protests on March 24, 2018 (Lopez). The goal of the group was to prevent future shootings by advocating for universal background checks and influencing elections. The students were adept organizers and public speakers, effectively using social media and mobilizing groups around the country to act quickly.

Several influential people publicly attempted to silence the leaders of the movement. A Republican candidate for the Maine House called Emma González, one of the youth leaders who survived the shooting, a “skinhead lesbian,” and David Hogg, another movement leader, a “bald-faced liar” (Stevens). Gonzalez also appeared in a doctored video tearing up the Constitution (Mezzofiore). In the original video, which was posted online by Teen Vogue, she and friends tore up a gun-target poster. While it is unclear who doctored the video, the altered one was shared on the right-wing forum 4chan and then on Twitter, by verified users including actor Adam Baldwin (Wanshel). David Hogg, another movement leader, has also received criticism from the conservative media. RedState, an influential right-wing blog with 206,400 Twitter followers, for instance, posted doubts as to whether Hogg was even at school on the day of the attack (Bromwich).

The vitriol against the young activists came from gun supporters, who wanted to discredit the movement. However, there was significant blowback against the young activists' detractors, even from those who were against the movement's aims. After an aide to Republican Florida legislator Shawn Harrison called Gonzalez and Hogg crisis actors on Twitter, Senator Marco Rubio (R-Florida) defended the students (Astor). He tweeted that “[c]laiming some of the students on tv after #Parkland are actors is the work of a disgusting group of idiots with no sense of decency” (Rubio). The blowback from figures like Rubio demanded response, and Harrison apologized and fired his aide

(@ShawnHarrisonFL). The Maine candidate who criticized Hogg and Gonzalez received criticism from other Republicans, and in response he ended his candidacy (Stevens).

Similar blowback has not occurred, however, against those who have tried to silence youth leaders and participants of the Black Lives Matter movement and its predecessors. Young Black people in Florida began the fight against gun violence after the death of Trayvon Martin in 2012, six years before the shooting in Parkland. The shooting death of Martin resulted in the formation of youth-led movements such as the Dream Defenders and the Million Hoodies Movement, groups that were formed before the BLM movement began in 2013. In 2012, high school and college-aged Dream Defenders occupied the capitol building in Tallahassee for 31 days, demanding an end to the stand-your-ground law which was invoked during George Zimmerman's trial (Alvarez). The young people were silenced when the lawmakers refused to speak with them. Scott eventually met with them during their occupation, but still refused to hold a special session of the legislature.

The BLM activists have received many criticisms, but Republican lawmakers have never publicly come to their defense. For the most part, Republicans had nothing to say to the teen activists in the early years of the movement. They did not take young Black people seriously at all, not even enough to criticize them. Also, when young people engage in direct action—through actions such as interrupting Bernie Sanders or Martin O'Malley during the 2016 presidential primary to foreground racial justice concerns or holding “die-ins” at restaurants in major cities during brunch—they are criticized by their ostensible supporters, white progressives, who question their methods and targets (Lind). The BLM activists are often told that they should be more peaceful like the Civil Rights activists before them, and even Civil Rights activists like Barbara Reynolds, John Lewis, and Andrew Young have criticized the movement (Reynolds; Theoharis). Oprah Winfrey also criticized BLM for its leaderless structure and what she saw as its lack of concrete demands (“Oprah Winfrey's Comments”).² Then, while she did not offer support to the Dream Defenders, she offered \$500,000 to the MSD movement (@oprah). The Dream Defenders and subsequent young BLM activists have encountered opponents on all sides.

Black students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High as well as other young people involved in the BLM movement have noted the divergent responses to their protests and the Never Again MSD protests. In a press conference in the days after the March for Our Lives protest in Washington, which she attended, Marjory Stoneman junior Tyah-Amoy Roberts stated, “The Black Lives Matter movement has been addressing this topic since the murder of Trayvon Martin, since 2012. Yet we've never seen this kind of support for our cause. And we surely do not feel that the lives or voices of minorities are as valued as our white counterparts” (Green). A clear example of testimonial quieting of young BLM activists occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High, in fact, a week before the shooting. A student published a critique of the BLM movement in the school newspaper, calling it “ridiculous” and saying its participants “seem to be good for nothing but creating mistrust between civilians and police” (Green). In a Black History Month presentation, several Black students responded to the letter and defended the movement. A teacher cut off their mic, literally silencing them, and ushered them

² In August 2016, over sixty organizations associated with the BLM movement released a policy platform with [six central demands](#) (Alcindor).

off the stage. The administration defended the teacher's actions, saying that they prevented the students from finishing their address because the speech was not rehearsed or a planned part of the show. An article on the event indicates that it was a "last-minute decision by some of the black student organizers" to read their response letter aloud at the event (Green). The students were silenced, unable to communicate their message to their classmates, teachers, and community members.

It is clear that the type of epistemic silencing experienced by each group is different. In the first example offered above, the climate activists are dismissed by someone who is, ostensibly, on their side. Feinstein says she understands the dangers of the climate crisis, but she does not support the Green New Deal because she does not believe it is feasible. Her dismissal of the young people stems in large part from the fact that they are not a constituency that matters to her—they are not of the age of majority. However, they recognize that it is not feasible to ignore the exigencies of the climate crisis and fail to act swiftly. The Never Again MSD activists are dismissed, on the other hand, by rightwing figures with a clear pro-gun agenda, who often focus on the young people's age to discredit them. However, not all of those who were ideologically opposed to the students spoke out against them, as it became less than politically expedient to do so. The students appeared sympathetic to the public because of the tragedy they faced, so they gained a perhaps politically privileged position for a moment from which to act.

We cannot assume, therefore, that because a person is young, they will face epistemic injustice in the precise way the climate activists have. The epistemic violence faced by the Dream Defenders and the young BLM activists is very different from both the above examples. The young Black activists are often ignored outright or dismissed with hostility, not only by those who would appear ideologically opposed to their aims, but also by those who agree with their goals but question their methods.

One factor that makes sense of the treatment of the Black BLM activists and Dream Defenders and the white MSD activists is the racial frames around how we see youth and childhood. Following the killing of Trayvon Martin, many images shared by the media depicted him as adult-like and thus more dangerous (Adler; Pareene). Though he was a 17-year-old with Skittles in his hand, the images shared by conservative news outlets depicted him as a formidable presence on the street, perhaps a dangerous adult, justifying the attack on him (Adler). Holding a pellet gun in his hand, Tamir Rice, who was 12 years old when he was shot and killed, appeared threatening and perhaps adult-like to the officer, even though the 911 caller indicated that the gun was "probably fake" and the person holding it "probably" a child (Never and Lowery). These young people did not appear young and innocent to the people who killed them, and subsequently the media does not portray them as such. Studies have confirmed that young Black people suffer from an adultification bias. In a series of studies, black boys appeared more like adults than their white peers (Goff et. al.). Researchers have also found that adults consider Black girls as young as 5 as needing less protection and more independent than their white peers (Epstein, Black, and González). It is plausible, then, that the public has been more sympathetic toward the MSD activists because they see them as youthful and innocent, and they sympathize less with young Black people who suffer. The way that epistemic injustice works towards young Black activists and white activists is therefore very different, especially when their activism is a result of trauma and gun violence.

2. Testimonial Smothering

When young people routinely face testimonial quieting and become accustomed to being dismissed, they may also begin to experience smothering, the second type of epistemic violence Dotson identifies. Testimonial smothering occurs when a speaker stifles their own testimony to avoid being the object of prejudice or ridicule on the part of hearers (Dotson, 244). Also, and although Dotson does not offer this as a reason, testimonial smothering may occur when people do not want to waste their time offering an account that they know will not be heard. While tangible examples of smothering are harder pin down—as it is the non-sharing of testimony that constitutes smothering—it is fruitful to at least illustrate a couple plausible descriptions of how it might occur among children in educational settings.

Black students, for example, often have a different experience in schools than white children. For instance, Black children receive a disproportionate level of discipline from their teachers. They are much more likely to receive out-of-school suspensions than their white peers (“K-12 Education”). And federal investigations show that these punishments occur even if the students of color are not causing more problems (Staples). As we have seen, the adultification bias impacts Black children as young as 5 years old, and research shows that even very young Black children—preschoolers—are punished more than their white classmates (“Data Snapshot: School Discipline”). When the classroom appears to be a place where they are not wanted, Black students may be more likely to smother their own testimony when in that classroom or outside.

Another example might involve the smothering of testimony in light of a hegemonic discourse. Consider, for example, a Native American child learning about Christopher Columbus in public school. The Native American child has some ideas about Columbus, having heard her parents discuss Columbus’s catalytic role in Native genocides and mass slavery. The textbook the Native American child is reading in school, however, focuses on Columbus’s “heroic discovery” of the Americas more than the tragedies enacted thereafter. Furthermore, the child may have learned that her understandings are untrustworthy and childish and may have had experiences in the past where her testimony was rejected. Or she may trust her family’s account and not want to waste her time correcting an educator she knows will not believe her. If this child has been the victim of epistemic injustices, it is plausible that she will not offer her testimony about Columbus as received from her parents. Wanting to avoid the anxiety or embarrassment of offering a “false” understanding, or simply wanting to pass the tests and earn good grades, this child may smother herself, and it is further plausible that the child will abandon her own understanding of Columbus in favor of the school’s. The consequences of this smothering involve not only preventing other students (and potentially the teacher) from developing a more nuanced view of Columbus, but also significant cognitive dissonance for the Native child.

3. Hermeneutical and Contributory Injustice

Another reason that the voices of young people may not be heard is that they are often deprived of the hermeneutical resources to make sense of their own experiences and suffer from what Fricker

calls hermeneutical injustice. In this case, it is not that they actively smother their own testimony, but that “their social situation is such that a collective hermeneutical gap prevents them...from making sense of an experience which it is strongly in their interests to render intelligible” (Fricker 7). Fricker offers as an example of hermeneutical injustice women who were victims of sexual harassment at work before the term sexual harassment was created (1). Fricker explains that the “powerful tend to have appropriate understandings of their experiences ready to draw on as they make sense of their social experiences, whereas the powerless are more likely to find themselves having some social experiences through a glass darkly, with at best ill-fitting meanings to draw on in the effort to render them intelligible” (149). In contributory injustice, Dotson explains, the oppressed have their own set of hermeneutical resources, but the oppressor fails to use them to understand relevant experiences (“A Cautionary Tale” 31). The oppressor instead uses the concepts they have created, which are often prejudiced against the oppressed group.

In the first case, young people, therefore, may not have the hermeneutical resources to understand their experiences because they have not been afforded the opportunity to contribute to the creation of concepts (Fricker 6). There are fewer concepts adequate to accounting for their particular experiences. They may therefore not participate in activist struggles because they do not have concepts to name their disenfranchisement. In the case of contributory injustice, they have the appropriate resources, but since the dominant group fails to recognize these resources, young people may smother themselves and consider the activist venture a lost cause.

4. Promoting Epistemic Justice through Philosophy for Children (P4C)

Epistemic injustice against young people is pervasive. While we have examined epistemic injustice largely in the public sphere, one place to combat it is in schools. We contend that many epistemic problems are cultivated in traditional educational settings because the pedagogy assumes a mistaken account of the knower and follows what Paulo Freire calls the “banking model” of education. The banking model relies on an account of the knowing subject as an atomistic, independent, even disembodied knower, who encounters phenomena as discrete things to know through mastery or acquisition. The subject appears to approach these phenomena from a bird’s eye perspective or a “view from nowhere” (Nagel 67-70). The material this knower encounters in textbooks and on standardized exams passes itself off as universal knowledge.

There are multiple problems with this model. First, it in fact privileges a particular type of knowledge, that of middle-class and wealthy, white, able-bodied, native English-speaking Americans. The textbooks and exams take the particular experience of one group of people and raise it to the level of the universal. Insofar as it raises the experiences of a particular group of people to the level of the universal, it covers over the knowledges and experiences of marginalized people. Second, insofar as it frames certain knowledge as universal, it ignores the way knowledge is situated and context-specific. Freire explains that implicit “in the banking concept is the assumption of a dichotomy between human beings and the world: a person is merely in the world, not with the world or with others; the individual is spectator, not re-creator” (85). The person is not portrayed to be a situated knower, who in fact creates a world. She is rather a disembodied knower.

In the banking model, however, the student is not yet a powerful, atomistic knower, though that may be a goal. During her education, that knower is her teacher, and the student is a passive learner. The learner is not understood to be a richly thoughtful, question-forming and answer-seeking agent. Rather, the learner is treated as a kind of epistemic tabula rasa or empty vessel.³ The learner is not seen as having a particular context or as able to contribute her own experiences to the learning process. In the perceived absence of young people's meaningful "starting point" in the learning process, educators use the banking model to fill these empty vessels with textbook and lecture content. The epistemic and testimonial capacities of young people, and thereby their ability to answer meaningful questions, are neglected as educators assume that learners are not yet knowers. In this process each learning agent is considered interchangeable—all learners, some exceptions granted, read the same textbooks and hear the same lectures—reflecting a disembodied, decontextualized model of the knower. This phenomenon occurs both in education and in the public sphere: young people are thought to have nothing to contribute to the production of knowledge and discourse and can only endure the consequences of political and educational discourses.⁴

P4C is a methodology that gives children, those on the downside of epistemic oppression, the license to fight back. P4C shifts the dynamic from a top-down flow of information to a bottom-up or non-hierarchical exchange. While many young people already have little trouble offering testimony, as we can see in the examples above, still others suffer from testimonial smothering, and P4C is a way to address this by helping young people gain confidence. In addition, P4C may help the adults who participate as facilitators become less likely to smother young people's testimony, both in the P4C context and outside of it. Finally, P4C may help the young people who participate grow into adults who are less likely to quiet young people. In this section, we aim to demonstrate key ways the structure of P4C helps remedy the epistemic injustices committed against young people.

P4C is a movement that emphasizes the ability young people have to critically analyze the world and themselves and the importance of open-ended inquiry. A key method P4C employs to help young people critically engage with their world and promote epistemic equality is by establishing "Communities of Philosophical Inquiry." Communities of Philosophical Inquiry (CPI) share much in common with Paulo Freire's "problem-posing" method, which he designed to work with peasant workers in Brazil. Freire argues that the most liberatory mode of education is one determined and driven by the oppressed themselves (Freire 126). Both methods are effective at working with epistemically and otherwise disadvantaged groups, such that those groups can find ways to articulate their own problems and needs. CPIs often, but need not, take place within the K-12 setting; they can take place at refugee resettlement centers, youth groups, in student-led movements, in border communities, and elsewhere. While many student-led movements are already democratic and challenge established hierarchies, the P4C movement is a way for adults and educators to act as allies and combat prejudices against young people. A CPI is a collective endeavor where young people and a

³ Philosophers and developmental psychologists have considered the young person to be a blank slate. See, for example, Locke 33 and Piaget 38.

⁴ Young people are not only denied the vote, as in most countries the voting age is 18, but they are also denied any type of involvement in the political process approximating the vote. (We are indebted to REDACTED for helping us strengthen this line of our argument.)

facilitator do philosophy together. Participants are able to take an active role in the development of understanding, restructuring the learning process so that the participants exercise power collectively.

We do not mean to suggest that a CPI is merely a formless friendship circle where rationality is abandoned. Rather, a CPI is a situation in which critical thinking and rational dialogue are *part and parcel* of young people's flourishing. Contrary to many prejudices against young people's ability to produce valuable discourse, a CPI does not produce understandings about monsters under the bed except perhaps to provide rational interpretations of what purpose narratives about monsters serve in the lives of children. By directly building rationality and dialogical learning into the discussion, a CPI makes the imaginative curiosity of children into a tool for gaining genuine understanding about the world.

Elements of the Community of Philosophical Inquiry

A CPI usually develops over multiple meeting periods. Lone and Burroughs explain that a CPI is typically comprised of five stages: prompt, reflect, form questions, discuss, and close (57). The members first reflect upon a prompt (a picture, video, short story, philosophical passage, etc.) and then create questions about it, which shape the direction of the subsequent discussion. What is key here is that participants create the questions; the line of inquiry is not imposed from without. In creating questions, young people develop the ability to learn what they don't know: they are able to identify areas of confusion or curiosity elicited by a prompt and develop the ability to respond accordingly. These initial steps echo Freire's method, which also relies on the oppressed to generate worthwhile questions about problems identified in their own social reality. By generating a critical consciousness of reality that starts from the interests of the oppressed, the oppressed develop a praxis that can lead to liberatory action (Freire 66).

A CPI typically has four key elements in addition to its five stages, according to Lone and Burroughs. First, the members seek to build meaning in a collective fashion (Lone and Burroughs 54-55). In a CPI, the teacher or club leader acts as a facilitator rather than one who solely delivers content. While participants decide the course of dialogue, facilitators play an important role, especially in the discussion phase, according to Lone and Burroughs. For the discussion to be a philosophical one, the facilitator has to listen carefully, noting the connections and contradictions between what the participants say and making those relationships explicit. The facilitator has to point out when students are giving reasons for their positions or when someone offers a counter-argument. The facilitator also has to recognize if the discussion is progressing (Lone and Burroughs 60). Therefore, the facilitator has to have developed what Lone and Burroughs call philosophical sensitivity: familiarity with fundamental philosophical questions and debates and ability to see philosophical elements and patterns in the students' discussions (60). They can then allow students to drive the discussion, while they help them develop it into a philosophical dialogue. A CPI is not primarily about learning a particular body of information, though that is frequently learned along the way, but rather about discovery and logical development.

Because of this first requirement, a CPI reinforces a different model of the knower. Unlike "view from nowhere" account, a CPI recognizes participants as situated knowers. The understanding

produced by a CPI is intricately linked to all participants, their particular experiences, and their current setting. The P4C model is intersubjective and situated. The way dialogue is pursued in a CPI highlights how each of us comes to know through and alongside one another. Since dialogue is at the heart of a CPI, participants come to learn vis-à-vis the learning of others. The nature of dialogue requires participants to recognize the fact that they learn about the world and their selves through the experiences of other people. By forging understanding with the experiences and perspectives of other people alongside a student's own, participants come to understand the world from an intersubjective point of view.

Insofar as a CPI focuses on learning as a collective pursuit, it promotes a sense of community and collaboration. A CPI demonstrates to the participants that one person learns less when the others fail to learn because the wider discourse is truncated. This occurs because the person who has failed to learn is less able to invigorate the discussion with their own perspective on the new knowledge. Each member's learning is contingent on every other member's. Knowledge becomes less about mastery of a subject than about engagement in a shared project. As P4C does not promote a competitive view of knowledge, it relies on an egalitarian and a radically democratic orientation to its participants. Advocates of P4C do not believe that young people have less access to truth or reason than adults do. Adults and children are equal interlocutors and meaning makers in a P4C CPI. All children are also equal to one another.⁵ P4C is also radically democratic insofar as it rejects age limits for reason.⁶ While the groups radical democrats discuss are usually the poor, women, Black people, and other minority groups, they can definitely be children. In fact, Samuel Chambers examines the anti-democratic function of age restrictions on voting or holding national office. He explains that while U.S. citizens are said to exercise "full democratic rights" at 18, the constitution prohibits them from holding national office until they are older. Chambers believes that from the perspective of democratic politics, we cannot defend age restrictions (13). In the same way, P4C challenges the idea of age limits for reason or rational discourse.⁷

A second requirement of a CPI that Lone and Burroughs offer, which corresponds with the commitment to radical democracy, is that there is no requirement and in fact an aversion to the use of technical terms and jargon in a CPI. This requirement ensures that the CPI remains as open as possible to everyone. It is also based on the premise that all people have equal intelligences and can engage in philosophical engagement and dialogue. They do not need the language of a specialist to do so.

⁵ Radical democrat Jacques Rancière emphasizes the importance of starting with equality as a presupposition, not arriving at it as a destination (16). He explains that we in fact already do this when we communicate. We presume the equality of intelligences when we presume that the other can understand what we say. Those engaged in P4C explicitly begin with the assumption of the equality of the intelligences of the young people in the community.

⁶ Radical democracy challenges exclusionary consensus-based governments. According to Rancière, the true scandal of democracy is that the demos—the people—means everyone and anyone (16). No one has a preordained title to rule.

⁷ While according to liberal tenets we could make good arguments for and against age limits, there are no *democratic* grounds for the age limits. There have been historic efforts to curtail political participation of and deny the vote of those people considered less intelligent, uneducated, or undisciplined. These have taken the form of literacy tests, which have been outlawed, largely because we recognize that even non-literate adults should be able to have a voice in how they are governed. Just as non-literate adults should have a voice in policies that will impact them, so too should people under 18, even if they are considered by many to be less intelligent, uneducated, or undisciplined.

The final requirements involve epistemic virtues, those virtues conducive to “knowing well.” First, those in the CPI must exercise “epistemological modesty” and recognize that they can make mistakes (Lone and Burroughs 56). Lone and Burroughs also hold that a CPI must be an intellectually safe environment where ideas are met with acceptance and charity (56), which calls for its members to exercise benevolence and open-mindedness. Participants must be willing to adjust their own ideas when presented with good reasons to do so. These virtues promote a knower’s capacity to know because they cultivate a collaborative, non-competitive view of understanding by encouraging all participants to engage in dialogue with care.

Freire also emphasizes the importance of developing epistemic virtues in the problem-posing method. First, he emphasizes the importance of epistemological modesty. He asks, “How can I dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own... if I regard myself as a case apart from others—mere ‘its’ in whom I cannot recognize other ‘I’s?’” (Freire 90). The explicit call for modesty and humility applies to both participants and facilitators as Freire implores dialoguers to “learn more than they now know” (90). The problem-posing method also calls members to be charitable, recognizing that ideas come from other situated subjects, who are working toward a shared goal. The banking model, on the other hand, relies on a “mechanistic view of reality” and thus a mechanistic view of consciousness (Freire 130). If members assume the other consciousnesses with whom they are engaging are like machines, they are less likely to be charitable and supportive, such that epistemic failures are attributed to poor programming or hardware (i.e., education or intelligence) rather than seen as an opportunity for fruitful dialogue.

Conclusion: Testimonial Justice for Young People

Since dialogue is the fabric of P4C, testimonial injustices are much less likely to occur in P4C settings than in traditional educational settings and in the environments they condition, including current public spheres. Dialogue can only happen via the sharing of testimony, and P4C puts great emphasis on the dialogues that can take place between young people. Insofar as young people learn in an environment in which others’ testimony is central to developing understanding, testimonial injustices are not systemically sustained under P4C. Unlike traditional educational settings which impose self-doubt on students, P4C encourages students to form and answer their own questions (without thinking that they are infallible), thus developing the epistemic skills necessary for critically engaging with the world.

P4C’s facilitation of discourse among young people and cultivation of epistemic virtues are critical for healthy public discourse. On the one hand, by promoting epistemic virtues in young people, we help ensure that these young people, when they are adults, exercise the epistemic virtues with the young people with whom they interact, leading to less testimonial quieting and better dialogue. A future senator who recognizes young people as valuable interlocutors may not silence the young Sunrise activists and may instead trust their ability to engage in honest dialogue. More importantly, however, if young people today experience less testimonial quieting in their schooling, where they spend a great deal of their time, they are less likely to smother themselves. Young people

who cultivate epistemic virtues in educational spaces that encourage them to employ their own experiences and interests to produce meaningful discourses become more resilient to epistemic injustices that pervade the public's treatment of their testimony. They become more confident to speak truth to power. P4C, rather than cultivating epistemic self-doubt, promotes and develops epistemic confidence as a virtue demanded by discourse in a CPI. Young people, especially marginalized young people including young people of color, develop the license to speak their mind and gain the ability to demand that those words are heard. Testimonial smothering regarding political and public discourse among young people should therefore become much rarer when education focuses on dialogue and CPIs. This is critically important for the vitality of discourse because it opens the door for meaningful public debate, such as that provided by BLM, the Sunrise Movement, and Never Again MSD, to include many more young people. As these groups and others grow in size and importance, it will become more difficult for adults with public power to ignore these meaningful voices and perspectives.

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