Unraveling the Margins of Social Understanding: Analyzing the Ways of Overcoming Hermeneutical Injustice

By

Merve Tokgöz

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Supervisor: Anca Gheaus

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Abstract

This thesis investigates ways of overcoming hermeneutical injustice by analyzing two strategies that are creating safe and free spaces and forming integrated spaces. According to Miranda Fricker (2007), hermeneutical injustice occurs when collective hermeneutical resources render one's social experience unintelligible, due to the marginalization of members of one's social group from their access to and shaping of social understanding (p. 155). By providing examples from experiences of women, deaf, and black communities, I specify the primary cognitive harm of hermeneutical injustice as the "misidentifying of needs and desires" and the "diminishing of one's capabilities." I argue that marginalized groups can alleviate the harm of hermeneutical injustice by using the two strategies. In this regard, I approach integrated spaces as a complementary strategy to the method of creating safe and free spaces in terms of addressing its main shortcomings. This thesis examines the strengths and weaknesses of the two strategies in order to show how they can together contribute to overcoming hermeneutical injustice.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

In this thesis, I argue that people who belong to disadvantaged social groups and those who are marginalized in their access to shaping social understanding can overcome hermeneutical injustice by creating and reconfiguring alternative spheres that exclude or constrain those who are members of the dominant group. Since the needs and demands of vulnerable groups are context-dependent, I will point out possible strategies that can alleviate the negative effects of hermeneutical injustice in terms of making the experiences of disadvantaged groups intelligible to others and themselves.

I will mainly focus on two strategies that are creating integrated spaces and the method of group segregation by enabling safe and free spaces. I consider these two strategies complementary to each other in terms of addressing their shortcomings. Firstly, I will focus on the harm that is specific to hermeneutical injustice rather than the more generic harm oppression entails. Later, I will point out the contributions of the strategy of safe and free spaces in mitigating the harms of hermeneutical injustice. After specifying its shortcomings, I will approach integrated spaces as a complementary strategy for overcoming hermeneutical injustice and bring up its benefits and limitations. To support my arguments and show how those strategies alleviate hermeneutical injustice, I will provide examples from experiences of women, deaf, and black communities.

My argument makes two main contributions. One is specifying the harm of hermeneutical injustice by scrutinizing Miranda Fricker's (2007) concept of "the constitutive construction of selfhood" (p. 168) and showing why this social construction is harmful. I coin the harmful elements of the construction of self as "diminishing one's capabilities" and "misidentifying one's own needs and desires." The second main contribution is to consider the strategy of creating safe and free

spaces – which has been a commonly used method by social movements – and integrated spaces as ways of overcoming hermeneutical injustice. Also, I assert integrated spaces as a complementary strategy to the method of safe and free spaces in terms of addressing its primary shortcomings.

The literature on the possible ways of remedying epistemic injustice indicates the main strategy for the development of virtues (Fricker, 2003, 2007), and sensitivities (Medina, 2013). In addition, Elizabeth Anderson (2012) pointed out the need for structural solutions and suggested the adoption of epistemic virtues such as accountability, equality, and universal participation by institutions. This thesis will present such practices based on empirical examples and draw the limitations and advantages of each strategy within various contexts. I think this case-by-case approach is more helpful than identifying the ideal characteristics with the help of which social structures and individuals can resist epistemic injustice.

Epistemic injustice refers to the wrong done to someone in their capacity as the subject of knowledge in terms of having an equal share in contributing to social understanding or having the epistemic resources to make sense of her experience (Fricker, 2015). In this thesis, epistemic injustice is considered as a form of wrongful discrimination that undermines the epistemic capacity of the subject, by lowering their credibility based on social-imaginative attributions or marginalizing someone from the process of formation and use of interpretive resources (Fricker, 2007, 2015, 2017). Based on real-life examples, I will focus on the cognitive harm of hermeneutical injustice to marginalized subjects. The primary cognitive harm results from the power of social-imaginative meanings on one's identity and the sense of self. The discrepancy between the social constructions and the actual self disorients people's understanding of their own identities and experience in everyday life. In this regard, Fricker (2019) gives the example of the experiences of trans people. Due to negative social interpretations of transgender identity, some transgender

individuals developed severe self-hatred that harms their sense of self and relationship with outer life in terms of making choices that can serve their real interests (p. 275). Hence, one of the first steps for remedying the cognitive harm is to eliminate the discrepancy in identity formation and therefore allow for the empowerment of the marginalized subjects.

One of the cases that I will present as a case of hermeneutical injustice is the influence of the ban on sign language in The Second International Congress on Education of the Deaf in 1880 on the deaf community (Moores, 2010). Congress convened to decide on the most effective methods for educating "the deaf and dumb" with the participation of 164 representatives who were instructors of the deaf. The first congress was held in Paris in 1878 to resolve the issues in communication between the deaf and hearing people by establishing a universal standard in education (Gallaudet, 1963). The second congress had reached the consensus that the oral method which includes lip-reading, hearing aids, and speech is the best method for instructing the deaf and banned the use of sign language, or the manualist method, in schools in 1880 (Jowers-Barber, 2011). The aim was mainly to raise the quality of education of language for deaf people and the ban reflected the assumption of the superiority of speech over sign language (Moores, 2010). According to Richard Elliot (1882) who was one of the delegates of the congress, the consensus on the superiority of the oral system is the result of excluding deaf people from the debate, which lead to an imbalance in representing the advantages of the oral method and using sign language (p. 146). The number of deaf teachers and professionals had been incrementally reduced in the field. The effect of the decisions of the congress predominantly lasted until the 1960s and thousands of deaf children have left schools because they had serious difficulty in learning due to the ban on sign language in schools (Ladd, 2003).

The assumption of the inferiority of sign language has reflected itself in the social position of being a deaf person. In other words, it undermined the value of deaf individuals as a social being. As I will argue in the section on hermeneutical injustice, the issue is not only having the knowledge of sign language but also the social construction of the meaning of being deaf and of sign language in a marginalizing way. The drawn line between normality and abnormality by society has affected also how deaf people perceived themselves. In the US, there have been some residential schools accommodating only deaf children and teachers and differentiated from the mainstream schools in using only sign language. As Paddy Ladd (2003) mentions, experiences in residential schools where deaf children had an opportunity to communicate with each other were significant for the development of a positive sense of self.

It is important to diversify the strategies for resisting this form of epistemic injustice since the isolation of the marginalized community – the strategy I advocate here – is not a general solution. Hence, this thesis will present multiple different strategies while acknowledging that neither is an entirely ideal method fit for all cases. It is important to highlight the point that the strategies may not work equally well in other similar cases of hermeneutical injustice. The cases, I will illustrate to analyze different strategies and their contributions to overcoming hermeneutical injustice, are successful examples that show these solutions can work in principle.

To support my main argument, I firstly claim that the in-group experience of those who are marginalized by the same mechanism such as gender, race, or ability-based discrimination is one of the essential steps in overcoming hermeneutical injustice since it provides a space for empowerment and development of positive identity as opposed to its marginalized social meaning. An analogy might help to see how social separation can help. As Melanie Walker (2018) has shown, there have been lingering effects of apartheid forming the feelings of confidence and

encounters between black and white students at the University of Cape Town. In this regard, some black students, who have been affected by the Black Consciousness movement, advocated the exclusion of white people from institutions to empower themselves, and develop their ways of interpreting themselves and the world (Biko, 1978). Secondly, I argue that as long as social inequalities and oppression still prevail in the social background, providing equal conditions between marginalized and non-marginalized in epistemic practices that take place in integrated spaces may not be sufficient to ensure an equal contribution. Hence, better conditions would prioritize the needs of vulnerable subjects and constrain those who have the power to ensure ethical equality in epistemic practices such as making vulnerable groups speak first in discussions. Based on examples, I will present the ways for reconfiguring an ethical ground in epistemic relationships that allow the marginalized subjects equally to contribute and represent their ideas and will point out the limitations of these strategies.

CHAPTER 1- KEY CONCEPTS AND NORMATIVE BACKGROUND

1.1 Epistemic Injustice

Epistemic injustice is a distinct form of injustice that harms someone's "capacity as a knower" (Fricker, 2007, p. 1). Fricker claims that this capacity is fundamental to human value, therefore, harming someone's capacity as a knower implies that the subject is perceived as less than fully human in the web of social relations (p. 44). Thus, she problematizes the ethical quality of epistemic practices in society by demonstrating their connection to background power relations. Fricker differentiates between two kinds of epistemic injustice: testimonial and hermeneutical injustice. Testimonial injustice refers to the instances when people are thwarted in their credibility due to prejudice against their social group. As an example, Fricker mentions the case of discrimination based on gender identity in Anthony Minghella's screenplay of *The Talented Mr. Ripley.* A man discredits a woman's claim by appealing to a dichotomy between "female intuition" and "facts" (p. 88), and this prejudice shapes the perceived credibility of the speaker based on social-imaginative belonging to social identity (p. 101).

Hermeneutical injustice occurs when a person's interpretive resources render her experiences unintelligible or misunderstood, due to the hermeneutical marginalization of members of her social group from participating in practices of meaning-making (Fricker 2007, p. 155). Fricker gives the example of the emergence of the term "sexual harassment" that has begun to be commonly used in the 1970s. Before the concept was in use, women had trouble construing and addressing their experiences at work or home; they could not have found a proper concept to describe what they experienced. For this reason, they were subjected to hermeneutical injustice. The term "sexual harassment" came up in a women's consciousness-raising group, whose

members, after having several meetings, realized that what they experienced in everyday life was a common structural pattern. Despite their social marginalization, they overcame the injustice in this area of their lives when they started to produce their conceptual tools in order to address their experience.

1.2 The Source of Injustice

One of the main questions raised by epistemic injustice concern its source and the kind of social inequality that constitutes the basis for epistemic inequalities between subjects. The main theories about epistemic injustice see it as a matter of maldistribution (Coady, 2017), discrimination (Fricker, 2007, 2017), and lack of recognition (Medina, 2018; Congdon, 2017; Giladi, 2017; Doan, 2018). The former refers to the unfair distribution of epistemic goods in society such as education, media, and legal advice. Fricker does not disregard the distributive aspect and does not draw a clear distinction between the distributive and discriminatory sides of epistemic injustice (2017, 59) but claims that it is a form of injustice that is primarily based on wrongful discrimination (2017, 53). Since epistemic injustice occurs by either misjudging someone's epistemic capacity based on prejudices about their social identities or excluding someone from participating in meaning-making and meaning-sharing processes, it is plausible to classify epistemic injustice under the concept of discrimination.

The third understanding of epistemic justice considers epistemic injustice from the perspective of Axel Honneth's (1996) theory of recognition. This relational approach highlights morally problematic patterns of recognition and self-determination in society (Giladi, 2017; Medina, 2018; Doan, 2018). The unfair relations of recognition materialize themselves in the public

discourse that damages the credibility of the disadvantaged groups. The recognition account of epistemic injustice differs from the discrimination approach by highlighting the significance of relationality and criticizes the understanding of epistemic injustice as discrimination because this understanding puts too much emphasis on the hearer or those who discriminate against the marginalized and disregards the agency of the speaker (Doan, 2018).

This thesis mainly relies on Fricker's approach to discriminatory epistemic injustice since social power operates in a discriminatory way that demeans the capacity of individuals in specific social positions to contribute to epistemic practices. Since these three approaches are not mutually exclusive, I also provide the recognition approach while analyzing the cognitive harm of hermeneutical injustice. The discrimination approach allows me to analyze how particular socially constructed attributions, identities, and stereotypes marginalize groups of people, preventing their equal participation in epistemic practices. It thus allows me to extend the analysis to social norms and structures. Since this thesis will defend another form of discrimination, meant to prioritize the needs of the vulnerable subjects in epistemic practices, it is important to highlight the wrongness of discrimination in epistemic injustice. As I will discuss in the section specifying the harms of the particular kind of epistemic injustice I analyze, the wrongful discrimination in epistemic injustice mainly stems from harming and unfairly disadvantaging people's capacity to express themselves in communication or make sense of their experiences.

1.3 The Question of Intention

The second major debate on epistemic injustice focuses on the question of intention, responsibility, and culpability. Fricker (2017) contends that the distinctive element of epistemic

injustice is unintentional discrimination. Although testimonial injustice happens at an interpersonal level, it does not stem from deliberate manipulation but empirical misjudgment due to prejudice against a social type (p. 54). Otherwise, epistemic injustice would be independent of the background power relations between social positions. However, the absence of intention does not necessarily absolve the hearer from culpability in some cases of testimonial injustice. To illustrate this claim, imagine a police officer listening to the testimony of a young woman, who accuses a rich and famous man of being a criminal in the relevant case. Later, the officer talks with the alleged man and he claims that the woman slanders him because she is jealous of him. Although some pieces of evidence can prove the guilt of the man, the officer disregards seeking evidence due to his trust in the man. The woman's claims are not put into the official process. Instead of deliberate intention to seek the other's interest, the officer made this choice due to social attachments to the woman as being highly emotional and the great positive reputation of the man. However, the officer would be still culpable because of prioritizing the credibility of the man's testimony, rather than evidence, and not treating both equally, even though their job requires it.

Unlike testimonial injustice, hermeneutical injustice is purely structural because it cannot be traced back to an individual perpetrator. In other words, social inequality produces another form of inequality in accessing and shaping hermeneutical resources (Fricker, 2007, p. 159). In the case of hermeneutical injustice, the absence of the relevant concepts that are needed to address the experience of the marginalized mostly is not the fault of a single individual (Fricker, 2016, pp. 14-15). On the other hand, in some cases, the agential and structural parts intersect with each other in producing a hermeneutical gap. For instance, imagine that a committee that is responsible for preparing school books of science for primary education deliberately excludes homosexuality and homosexual identity in the books in order to sustain the status quo and their privileged positions in

society. In this case, since the hermeneutical gap is deliberately produced by the privileged group, the committee is epistemically culpable according to Fricker (2016). However, culpability is not a necessary condition for hermeneutical injustice as in the example of the term "sexual harassment". Hence, Fricker emphasizes considering how the background social power produces hermeneutical gaps and marginalization, rather than the incidents of hermeneutical injustice (p. 19). Although the committee is epistemically culpable in the case of preparing school books, the central reason for the hermeneutical injustice is not the action of the committee but the specific socio-imaginative designation of homosexuality that leads to the hermeneutical marginalization of that social position. Otherwise, there would not be a difference between excluding, say, elders and excluding homosexuality in terms of epistemic wrongfulness.

Jose Medina (2017) departs from Fricker's account by enlarging the scope of individuals that can be held responsible for hermeneutical injustice; at the same time, he argues that assigning responsibility does not entail individual culpability. On his view, the entire culture or collective could share responsibility for not making any effort to understand the specific experience of the disadvantaged subject (Dotson, 2012; Mason, 2011; Medina, 2017). Furthermore, the limited power of the individual does not eliminate individual responsibility. Thus, they can still be held responsible for the way they sustain or respond to limitations of interpretive resources (Medina, 2017, pp. 42-43). Medina mentions that understanding someone's experience is a matter of degree and that rather than the existence of hermeneutical tools, it is the effort to make sense of the other that matters morally. Individuals in command of the same hermeneutical tools can make more or less effort to understand and validate others' experiences, hence they can have different degrees of responsibility. Thus, hermeneutical responsibility refers to trying to facilitate and support the marginalized voices and expand the limits of common hermeneutical tools to include previously

excluded meanings. Similarly, Gaile Pohlhaus (2012) has coined the concept of "willful hermeneutical ignorance" to refer to the situations in which those occupying the privileged positions in society deliberately disregard the interpretive resources that have been developed by the marginalized groups. Since they deliberately exclude or distort knowledge of the hermeneutically marginalized, they are both culpable and responsible for hermeneutical injustice.

The difference between Fricker (2017) and Medina (2017) concerns holding individuals culpable for their lack of epistemic virtues. Medina defends the view that virtuous listening can prevent the occurrence of incidents of hermeneutical injustice. Therefore, failing to exercise hermeneutical responsibility is wrongful. Contrary to Medina, Fricker argues that failing to be virtuous does not make individuals perpetrators of hermeneutical injustice. Although such insensitivities are bad in themselves, one can be culpable only for the incident they are involved and not for "the broader injustice itself" (Fricker, 2016, p. 172).

Considering the discussion of responsibility, my position that remedying epistemic injustice requires more than sensitivity in interpersonal relations differs from Medina's with respect to the effectiveness of holding individuals responsible. Contrary to Medina, I argue that, in hermeneutical injustice, the main issue is not the absence of understanding the other's experience since the experience most of the time is explainable by the existing interpretive resources. Rather, the problem is that the experience is interpreted in a way that puts the subordinate in a disadvantaged position. Going back to the example of the concept of "sexual harassment," instances of it could have been explained by using the hermeneutical tools of the time, as a form of flirting or "a matter of her 'lacking a sense of humour'" (Fricker 2007, p. 153). When doing so, individuals may not even have felt that there was a gap in their understanding. I assume that holding individuals responsible for hermeneutical injustice would not be effective to remedy the structurally facilitated

injustice that is embedded in daily norms, practices, and discourse. This is because in order to fairly expect individual hearers requires a proper environment or system of education to develop relevant virtues. Those virtues – such as recognizing the other as equal, being aware of the possible hermeneutical gaps, and prioritizing others' claims that are not even intelligible at first – need to be practiced and learned in time in order to be internalized. Secondly, the dynamics generating wrongful prejudice and marginalization are pervasive in social and economic systems such as advertisements, tv shows, children's books, and fashion. In broader terms, all those cultural, economic, and political practices produce a tendency to think and act according to the social categories and norms. Hence, in the absence of structural reforms, it is not fair to expect people to act and think outside the box.

Furthermore, since I will explore the ways of empowering the disadvantaged groups due to hermeneutical injustice by strategies to reconfigure the environment, it is in line with the aim of this thesis to follow Fricker's approach in terms of prioritizing structural factors and the operation of power over individual responsibility. Before moving to discuss ways of overcoming some forms of hermeneutical injustice, it is necessary to elaborate on its harm.

1.4 Hermeneutical Injustice

Fricker's account of hermeneutical resources has been revised by Medina (2017, 2013), Dotson (2012), and Mason (2011). Mason and Dotson criticize not differentiating hermeneutical resources as the mainstream collectively shared resource and other community-specific hermeneutical resources (Mason, 2011). Similarly, Medina interprets Fricker's approach as that "when there is a hermeneutical gap, a range of experiences will be rendered unintelligible for

everybody" (p. 101). Thus, those scholars have signaled the necessity to make a distinction between varying hermeneutical resources produced by different communities.

Regarding the existence of multiple hermeneutical resources in a society, Trystan S. Goetze (2018) differentiates the types of harm in hermeneutical injustice as communicative and cognitive to clarify different sorts of hermeneutical gaps. Communicative harm exists in cases when the marginalized subject has the relevant hermeneutical tools to understand her experience, however, her claims are not intelligible to others or dominant subjects (Mason, 2011), because the shared hermeneutical resource cannot address the other's experience. For instance, the difficulties in obtaining legal documents for intersex people result from the perceived discrepancy between their gender identities and appearance (Open Society Foundation, 2014).

The second type of harm identified by Goetze is cognitive harm, referring to the fact that the marginalized subject cannot find proper interpretive tools to understand her own experience. Fricker gives, as an example of this harm, the way of socially constructing homosexuality in Edmund White's autobiographical novel *A Boy's Own Story.* The passage is about how Tom experiences the inner conflict between his homosexual identity and its reflection on society as a sickness. Hence, he oscillates between his own feelings of love, abnormality, and sickness. Based on this example, it is important to highlight that the hermeneutical gap does not only signify the absence of concepts or language but unmatching and marginalizing definitions and depictions of a particular experience. Those social meanings result in significant cognitive harm to the subject: Fricker indicates that the discrepancy between one's own experience and its social meaning causes "internalized yet falsifying hermeneutical constructions of one's social identity" (p. 165). Thus, the social construction of identities has constitutive power that prevents someone from "becoming who they are" (p. 168) and one may start to resemble the stereotypical image of herself.

1.4.1 Overcoming Hermeneutical Injustice

Both cognitive and communicative harms are epistemic injustices since they affect the subject's capacity as a knower in terms of the ability to make her experience intelligible to either herself or others. One of the ways of addressing hermeneutical injustice is for those who are not marginalized to develop the virtue of sensitivity in their epistemic evaluations of social interactions. Fricker (2007) calls it the virtue of hermeneutical justice referring to being aware of the social hermeneutical gap while trying to make sense of others' experiences (p. 169). In this regard, the source of the inability to understand the other does not stem from a failure in the subject's articulation but the gap in collective hermeneutical understanding.

Regarding the hermeneutical gap between localized hermeneutical practices and collective interpretive resources, Medina (2017, 2013) develops the notion of hermeneutical responsibility, that is collectively shared responsibility, in order to stress the necessity to extend the scope of the hermeneutical pool by including dissenting and marginalized voices, discourses, and practices. Taking hermeneutical responsibility requires both opposing the constructed social meanings and putting effort into creating alternative forms of expressions and meanings (p. 48). Hence, according to Medina, all individuals should develop a self-critical gaze in their communicative relationships by pushing the limitations of the expressive and interpretive tools and being sensitive hearers.

As in Fricker's example of the emergence of the concept of "sexual harassment", consciousness-raising groups play an important role in the production of original meanings that match the experiences of the vulnerable subjects (Fraser, 2007; Haslanger, 2021; Mansbridge, 2001). Those alternative spaces pave the way for, firstly, acknowledging the unjust social patterns and the hermeneutical gap in making sense of experiences, and secondly, developing dissenting discourses and practices. Haslanger (2021) highlights the importance of those groups within which

"the subordinated can complain to each other without being 'corrected' by members of the dominant group" (p. 18). For instance, if the consciousness-raising meeting mentioned above was not being restricted to women-only, other members could have imposed an explanation of instances of sexual harassment as forms of flirting or joke (Fricker, 2007, p. 153). Therefore, creating spheres outside of the mainstream unjust structures so as not to repeat hierarchical domination of social relations is critical to developing self and group agency in resisting injustice. However, it is important to remind that consciousness-raising groups might not fill the criteria of being sufficient conditions for remedying epistemic injustice (Zamora, 2017). This is because the mainstream norms and values might be internalized by marginalized subjects, who may be likely to reproduce the same dominating and exploitative relations within the consciousness-raising groups.

Elizabeth Anderson (2012) brings a critical perspective to individualistic virtue-based solutions to epistemic injustice in two ways. Her first point considers the effectiveness of the solution and the second one indicates its inability to operate as a structural remedy (p. 167). She argues that although epistemic injustice is facilitated by prejudice that results in discriminatory behavior based on stereotypes and socially constructed capacities attached to identities, individuals have limited ability to understand how much cognitive bias they have and control it. Accordingly, assigning responsibility to individuals probably does not produce effective results in remedying epistemic injustice due to their very embeddedness in daily life (Alcoff, 2010).

Secondly, Anderson claims that epistemic injustice is not only caused by prejudice and discrimination but also by structurally produced inequalities such as ethnocentrism or access to education. Therefore, she suggests that virtue-based solutions and structural remedies do not conflict with each other and both strategies are necessary to form an effective method to address epistemic injustice. Thus, she extends the scale of epistemic virtues to include the virtues of social

structures. In other words, the structural procedures and organizations themselves should be accountable to the same or relevant epistemic virtues. She gives the example of segregation in the US and how it lowers the quality of education for the immigrants, poor, and African-Americans. Then, with respect to general education, adopting the method of group integration and universal participation based on the equality of all participants is a fundamental virtue for social institutions (pp. 171-172).

But the integration solution is not appropriate with respect to all problems. Regarding the integration of localized hermeneutical practices to include marginalized voices into the social meaning pool, Fricker (2016) and Medina (2017) have pointed to a crucial dimension which is that integration may not fit as a proper strategy in dealing with hermeneutical injustice. So, there might be "cases in which it may not be in the interests of an oppressed group to fight immediately for the introduction of local meanings into the wider collective hermeneutical resource" (Fricker, 2016, pp. 168-169). Since hermeneutical marginalization is not the only dimension of inequality, oppression, and exploitation, sometimes keeping the interpretive tools private can turn into a form of defense and resistance in the context where oppressive conditions still prevail (Bailey, 2007; Fricker, 2016; Medina, 2017; Pohlhaus, 2011). An interesting example can be given from the case of trans sex workers in Turkey. LGBTIQ+ individuals have developed a special language called "lubunca" to protect themselves from persecution. The term "lubunca" etymologically comes from Romani *lubni* meaning "prostitute" and it consists of words from Greek, Arabic, Armenian, Kurdish, and Romanian. It has been mostly used by trans sex workers to avoid imprisonment and expulsion while communicating in public (KaosGL, 2021). During the 20th century, Polari as an English-based slang had the same function in the UK for the gay community and female impersonators (Baker, 2017). Although those cases do not constitute examples of hermeneutical

injustice in terms of making sense of their experience, they show that the integration of localized hermeneutical resources may not always serve the interest of oppressed groups.

Considering the importance of both keeping hermeneutical practices private and circulating new interpretive tools – as in the examples of the emergence of the word "sexual harassment" and the function of "lubunca" – in overcoming epistemic injustice requires diverse the methods according to needs and societal conditions. My position is similar to Anderson's view that virtue-based and structural remedies do not conflict with each other. However, rather than specifying the virtues adopted by the large-scale social institutions, I will focus on the organizational strategies that seem promising for realizing equality and fairness in epistemic contributions. In this regard, this thesis concentrates on hermeneutical injustice while keeping in mind that the two kinds of injustice (i.e. testimonial and hermeneutical) are interrelated since social inequality and domination is the condition for both sorts of injustice. Fricker (2016) clarifies the relationship between the two as that due to reduced credibility, the knowledge coming from marginalized subjects cannot be included in the pool of ideas, opinions, sources of information, and public discussions. Thus, testimonial injustice may harbor the mechanism of hermeneutical injustice.

CHAPTER 2 - THE PRIMARY HARM OF HERMENEUTICAL INJUSTICE: THE CONSTRUCTION OF SELFHOOD

As I have discussed earlier, one of the primary harms of hermeneutical injustice is the cognitive harm caused by the inability of making sense of one's own experience due to the lack of hermeneutical resources. In this section, I will focus on "the construction of selfhood" (Fricker, 2007, p. 168), during which one can incur the specific harm of hermeneutical injustice. I specify why and how the harm is incurred by marginalized subjects. My main question in analyzing the empirical examples from women and deaf groups is how the hermeneutical gap is experienced by the marginalized subjects. Since hermeneutical injustice results from the background social inequalities, the lack of intelligibility of one's experience plays a central role in the life of the marginalized subject, rather than being incidental or minor.

Going back to the example of the autobiographical novel *A Boy's Own Story,* the main character oscillates between his own desires and social attachments to homosexuality which makes his experience be perceived as shameful and abnormal. Hence, he visits a psychiatrist, treats his desires as just "a temporary stage", and has to constantly deal with the social depictions of homosexuality. Based on this example, Fricker identified the primary cognitive harm of hermeneutical injustice as not only the inarticulate experience of the subject but more importantly, his experience of being himself. To clarify the last point, hermeneutical constructions of social identities do not only make the specific experience, desire, or part of an individual's life obscure but also harm one's selfhood. Fricker (2007) calls this primary harm "the constitutive construction of selfhood" meaning that "someone is socially constituted as, and perhaps even caused to be, something they are not, and which it is against their interests to be seen to be" (p. 168). I will divide the construction of selfhood into two categories to point out why it is cognitively harmful. Thus, I

am going to state different expressions of the epistemic harm of hermeneutical injustice by marginalized groups and divide the primary harm into two interrelated categories that are the misidentification of real needs and desires, and diminishing one's capabilities.

2.1 Misidentification of Real Needs and Desires

The first impact of the social construction of selfhood under conditions of injustice is alienation from or misidentifying of one's own needs and desires. For instance, in the 1940s and 1950s, women's behaviors and expressions of emotions generally often were associated with psychological disorders (Adams, 2020; Showalter, 1985). In America, many women who were showing symptoms of depression, neurosis, or suicidal tendencies started to be medically diagnosed with "housewife syndrome" at the beginning of the 1950s. The vast majority of patients diagnosed as mentally ill were women, according to the data from the US National Institute of Mental Health (Chesler, 1972). In the 1940s, psychologists of the time explained that the reason why generally American women were diagnosed with psychological disorders is "because [they] sought a career and life outside the home" (Lundberg & Farnham, 1947; as cited in Adams, 2020). Edwin Boring (1947) who was a renowned psychology professor at Harvard University at the time agreed that there is a need to "bring back the importance of the home [and] of the women in it" to treat the neurosis women experience (p. 481). In sum, at that time in America, the "unfeminine" behaviors were considered abnormal and an obstacle to the happiness of women.

The mentality of the time affected the decisions of lots of women on their way of meeting their desires, needs, and aspirations in life. Betty Friedan (1979) illustrated women's situation in the 1950s' America by trying to address "the problem that has no name" (p. 17). In hospitals,

women were dying of cancer because they refused a drug whose "side effects were said to be unfeminine" (p. 12). Similarly, some girls did not prefer to study physics because it was unfeminine. She gives another example of a girl who rejected an offer of a science fellowship at Johns Hopkins. "All she wanted, she said, was what every other American girl wanted: to get married, have four children, and live in a nice house in a nice suburb" (p. 13). Although the 1950s' magazines, newspapers, and psychological advice have depicted being a housewife as a way of life that leads to good mental health and happiness, housewives who expected to be satisfied with their roles in life expressed feelings of desperation, disappointment, and nervousness (Friedan, 1979). Hence, the hermeneutical construction of women has led many women to choose things that disadvantaged them, in order to fit the description of their constructed identities.

It is important to clarify the point that even if the girl who refused to study at Johns Hopkins might have had a happy life by being a housewife, those constructions have been still disadvantaging the woman. It systematically disadvantaged many women not only in mental and physical health but also in giving them a lesser range of choices in life than it would have been otherwise in the absence of the normative construction of feminine identities and positions. Since hermeneutical construction of identities and social positions establishes certain actions and behaviors as appropriate and not appropriate for a specific identity, it limits the number of choices one has or encounters in her or his life. For instance, a woman who is happy with her current life might have a skill in a job she has never encountered because that job was being considered only for men. However, she would have been happier or more satisfied if she had done that job. Thus, the hermeneutical constructions can disadvantage one by constraining her or his range of choices in life.

2.2 Diminishing One's Capabilities

Another element of the primary cognitive harm of hermeneutical injustice is reducing one's own capabilities and skills, which affects one's self-confidence. This element is related to the previous point which is misidentifying needs and desires. However, its distinction lies in underestimating one's own ability to do something due to social attachments instead of wrong assessment of needs and aspirations. For instance, at the end of the 19th century, one of the reasons for the ban on sign language in schools was the increasing belief in the inferiority of deaf culture and in being deaf. These beliefs were upheld by the scientist working on eugenics and social Darwinism, and by some deaf educators who believed that using sign language negatively affects the development of deaf students (Baynton, 1992; Ladd, 2003). Thus, treating the deaf as inferior in social understanding caused deaf people to internalize being inferior and underestimate their own abilities.

As a deaf student pointed out in an interview, although deaf children were contributing to class discussions well, they have been disapproved because of using sign language. "Yet for just pronouncing two words correctly, they get praised. *That leads to an obsession with 'getting it right', but only with regard to very small things"* (Ladd, 2003, p. 326). This classroom experience is a good example to observe how the mainstream culture shapes the actions of individuals by incentivizing and disincentivizing them. In the example, the student was evaluated according to only what she or he cannot do, and the ability to speak becomes the precondition for assessing all her other actions, abilities, and skills. Thus, being deaf has become to be identified only with a disability, and obscures all other characteristics of an individual. J. Widell (1993; as cited in Ladd, 2003) pointed out how deaf children internalized the negative connotations of being deaf in society and felt that "I cannot, I am no good, to be a hearing person is good, to be deaf is bad" (p. 464). In

this regard, prioritizing speaking over all other actions and capacities can cause a person to evaluate all her or his actions in terms of disability. The internalization of seeing their disabilities as an inability that should be improved led them to consider themselves unable in other spheres because of the overfocus on hearing and speaking. Consequently, this resulted in a lack of self-confidence when starting or doing something in other areas of life as well.

The example of being a deaf student also fits into the relational approach of epistemic injustice in which individuals are dependent on the recognition of their agencies in realizing their epistemic capacities. Without recognition of their epistemic actions and skills, individuals have severe difficulty in practicing their epistemic capacity. If we imagine the hypothetical continuation of the story of the deaf student, it would be very likely that even though the student was very good at math, she could not find an opportunity to exercise her talent in the absence of recognition and appreciation of her capacity.

So far, I analyzed the primary harm of hermeneutical injustice that is described by Fricker as the constitutive construction of selfhood by society. Based on the examples from experiences of the women and deaf people, I examined how the construction of selfhood operates and why it is harmful, by analyzing it in two categories which are misidentifying one's own needs and desires and diminishing one's capabilities. Hermeneutical gaps do not only lead to a lack in making sense of experience but also to distortions in understanding one's self. In other words, hermeneutical constructions obscure what one truly needs, desires, and is capable of, and direct marginalized subjects to act in a way that conforms to social norms. Since the harm is cognitive and very embedded in daily life experience, it is hard to detect and create strategies to overcome it.

CHAPTER 3 – OVERCOMING HERMENEUTICAL INJUSTICE

In this thesis, I focus on two strategies for overcoming hermeneutical injustice. The first is creating safe and free spaces for the marginalized groups to develop their own hermeneutical resources to understand their experience, and the second is designing integrated spaces that can provide a ground for ethical epistemic interaction between the members of marginalized and non-marginalized groups. Although the two strategies have not been discussed straightforwardly as ways of overcoming hermeneutical injustice in the literature, well-documented practices of marginalized communities – consciousness-raising groups, classroom, and university practices – allow me to uncover promising aspects and shortfalls of both methods in overcoming hermeneutical injustice. Firstly, I elaborate on the role of safe and free spaces in overcoming hermeneutical injustice. The reason why free spaces are considered a promising strategy is that they provide a space for localized hermeneutical practices. After discussing how the application of this method can contribute to overcoming hermeneutical injustice, I move to the method of creating integrated spaces as a complementary strategy to safe and free spaces in contributing to overcoming hermeneutical injustice.

3.1 Group Segregation: Safe and Free Spaces

One of the strategies for overcoming hermeneutical injustice is to provide alternative safe and free spaces, that are separated from the mainstream social culture, for hermeneutically marginalized communities. Marginalized groups segregate themselves by creating safe and free spaces outside of conventional social structures that produce unjust practices and discourses. The group segregation strategy has been commonly implemented by social movements that create and

demand their own spheres. In this regard, the concept of free spaces has been used in the literature on social movements along with another term, "safe spaces" (Evans, 1980; Evans & Boyte, 1986; Polleta, 1999). Although it is a controversial concept in terms of the ambiguity of criteria for being safe and free, I will consider safe and free spaces as spaces in which marginalized groups segregate themselves from the wider culture in order to communicate with each other without being controlled or interfered with by members of the non-marginalized group. Thus, those spaces are safe since members of the marginalized groups know that they can comfortably talk without self-censor and hesitation. Also, those segregated spaces are free in the sense of being free from the intervention of the dominant culture. In this regard, the strategy of providing safe and free spaces allows for the development of localized hermeneutical practices outside of the common hermeneutical resource.

In this section, I explain, firstly, why providing safe and free spaces for hermeneutically marginalized groups can be a method of overcoming hermeneutical injustice. Afterward, based on examples from university student protests, women groups, and deaf communities, I claim that safe and free spaces can contribute to remedying hermeneutical injustice in three ways. The first is by detecting hermeneutical injustice, the second is by creating hermeneutical tools to address and understand the group members' social experience, and lastly, by constituting a positive experience of their identities. Later, I point out the main shortcomings and possible dangers of this strategy.

3.1.1 Detecting the Hermeneutical Gap

To find out the dissonance between one's own experience and the constructed meaning at the societal level, the marginalized groups generally need a space to reevaluate their experiences

and feelings in isolation from interaction with the members of the dominant group (Groch, 2001, p. 65; Haslanger, 2021). It is important to keep those occupying privileged positions outside the group, in order to avoid interference, gaslighting, or silencing while opening up their experience. For instance, Friedan (1979) wrote that in the 1950s and 1960s, if a woman experienced a problem, "she knew that something must be wrong with her marriage, or with herself… She was so ashamed to admit her dissatisfaction that she never knew how many other women shared it" (p. 14). Even if women would have wanted to share their problems with each other, they would not have been speaking about their issues in the existing spheres where men were present, due to their marginalization and feelings of discomfort. Hence, the realization that the sense of dissonance is shared by others who are in a similar position to us is usually the first step toward detecting the hermeneutical gap. Thus, the early feminist movement attached great importance to consciousness-raising groups and the demand for safe and free spaces at universities (Morris & Braine 2001, p. 30).

In the case of the deaf community after the marginalization of using sign language, the communication with other deaf peers was a turning point for most deaf children, especially those who could not have found an opportunity to develop their sign language skills. Ladd (2003) indicated that many deaf children had to wait until going to residential schools to have real interactions and relationships with their peers. Accordingly, about how he felt about his first contact with another deaf child, one of his interviewees said "Yet I identified myself with him like that... Yep, that moment *opened me to the world, really"* (Ladd, 2003, p. 301). The child's first experience shows that overcoming the communicative obstacle was very central to making sense of other experiences. Although, in this case, the subject primarily suffered from communicative harm – because he could not have encountered other children using sign language until that time –

according to his last sentence, the severity of communicative harm affected the perception of his experience in other areas of life. Considering the cases of deaf children and American housewives in the 1950s, the role of safe and free spaces for marginalized groups is crucial for realizing that the sense of dissonance, that they are experiencing due to the hermeneutical gap, does not stem from the problem inherent to individuals but from their social position. This identification of the dissonant experience, or the hermeneutical gap, is the first step toward overcoming injustice.

3.1.2 Producing Hermeneutical Resources

The second contribution of the strategy of safe and free spaces to remedying hermeneutical injustice is by developing people's own ways of interpreting life, by communicating with each other. As I mentioned earlier, isolation is important for avoiding "being corrected by the members of the dominant group" (Haslanger, 2021, p. 18). Hence, without that kind of interference, marginalized groups have an opportunity to address and interpret their experience in their own way. Going back to the case of the housewife syndrome, the growing literature and discussions among women on their situation and problems have allowed them to understand the real cause of housewife syndrome which was not "madness" but "oppression" (Adams, 2020).

Another example can be given from the deaf community. As Ladd indicates, deaf children could not have found proper opportunities to express themselves and enhance their skills in signing. After attending residential schools, they improved their skills in storytelling (p. 307) which has great importance in the creation of deaf culture. In this way, they developed and advanced their expressive tools to address and communicate their perceptions. Opening up themselves to others

and developing their abilities mitigate the harms that are a lack of self-confidence and underestimating their own abilities as I specified earlier.

3.1.3 Creation of A Positive Experience of Marginalized Identities

The last positive effect of providing safe and free spaces is creating a positive experience of marginalized identities. Although being victims of injustice damages the lives of individuals in many aspects, constructing a positive identity leads to the empowerment of marginalized people. For instance, Ladd indicated how deaf people considered themselves only disabled and believed they could do fewer things before joining deaf residential schools or deaf clubs. By improving their signing skills and being part of a larger culture, the members of deaf communities see themselves as linguistic and cultural minorities rather than the disabled (Dolnick, 1993; Groch, 2001; Lane, 1992). The main point here is that altering the social meaning of their identities – which is that being deaf does not entail inabilities in other spheres of life – has enabled them to demand inclusionary reform in social and political arrangements along with regaining self-confidence and identify their needs and desires to suit their own interests.

Another example can be given from the experiences of black students at South African universities, that are still subject to ongoing discussions of epistemic injustice (Hull, 2016; Walker, 2018). Also, the practices at universities may set an example for the intersection of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice, since the inability of including marginalized subjects in knowledge production processes affects the inclusivity of the shared hermeneutical resource. In 1971, some black students published a manifesto writing that "[W]e believe that in all matters relating to the struggle towards realizing our aspirations, Whites must be excluded" (Badat, 2009, p. 125). The

reason underlying the demand for exclusion is that, in 1968, black students started to separate themselves from the white-dominated university with the rise of the Black Consciousness movement (Walker, 2018, p. 2). Black students have experienced difficulty in participating as equals with their peers in discussions and group works at universities due to a lack of self-confidence, feelings of not belonging, or not speaking English as their first language (pp. 5-9). Steve Biko (1978), the president of the movement, specified as one of the primary problems that black people have a "false understanding" and "false images" (p. 52) of themselves because the racially derogating discourse still existed in the historical, cultural, political narrative of the society. Thus, developing black consciousness aims "to show the black people the value of their own standards and outlook" (Biko 1970; as cited in Hull, 2016, p. 575). Black Consciousness theorists advocated the exclusion of white people from specific institutions, to allow black people to discern their aspirations, needs, and interests to overthrow mainstream distorted understandings of blackness (Hull 2016, 577). In this regard, this case exemplifies the positive identity formation function of the group segregation strategy by creating safe and free spaces.

Considering multiple different cases from women, deaf, and black communities, I asserted three interrelated benefits of creating safe and free spaces for hermeneutically marginalized groups. The first step is detecting the hermeneutical gap to identify the reason for the sense of dissonance by sharing perceptions and opinions with people who are marginalized because of their social identity or position. The second benefit is producing interpretive and expressive tools to address their experience. Finally, I argued the advantage of group segregation in creating a positive experience of marginalized identities. Thus, developing new ways of expression and identity experience allowed them to restore their self-esteem and reidentify their needs and desires which are distorted by the social construction of their selfhood.

Although having safe and free spaces has been a common strategy for marginalized groups to overcome hermeneutical and other injustices, it brings some shortcomings and questions that are related to having multiple marginalized social identities and social fragmentation. The question is how to sustain political communities that make many different groups and identities equally heard. After addressing those questions, I am going to elaborate on forming integrated spaces as a complementary method to the former strategy I discussed in overcoming hermeneutical injustice.

3.1.4 The Question of Multiple Marginalizations

The question of multiple marginalizations concerns how to implement safe and free spaces, given the existence of different types of social identities that mark people as victims of hermeneutical injustice. In this section, I point out how multiple marginalizations challenge the strategy of safe and free spaces. Firstly, I indicate why multiple marginalizations constitute a problem, and then I elaborate on the possible shortcomings of the strategy of providing safe and free spaces. After specifying the shortcomings of providing free spaces, I discuss the integration of different groups as a strategy that can compensate for the shortcomings of free spaces in overcoming hermeneutical injustice.

If safe and free spaces aim to exclude the patterns of unjust social relationships in order to allow the production of alternative interpretive tools, there is still a risk of marginalizing people. Since different social mechanisms producing inequalities generate different hermeneutically marginalized groups, there is no unique way to separate the marginalized and the dominant groups in society. For instance, Sharon Groch (2001) points out how people of color and women were excluded from deaf communities (p. 73). Similarly, Ladd (2003) shows how class differences have

led to marginalization in deaf clubs (p. 342). Since unjust social relationships and mechanisms are multifaceted, some members of a marginalized group can be in a privileged position in their other social interactions and disadvantage other people.

If the strategy of providing safe and free spaces was further implemented based on all combinations between types of race, gender, sexual orientation, and economic class, social life would be extremely fragmented. In such a case, applying the strategy of safe and free spaces in a way that causes too much fragmentation risks (a) compromising the ability to reflect on wider social issues and appreciate others' concerns and therefore (b) developing more just epistemic relations outside of the wider social context while maintaining unjust epistemic interactions in society.

The first problem is the creation of small and quite homogenous groups in the case of having too many safe and free spaces. The high fragmentation poses a problem, given that individuals are part of the wider political community. Individuals mostly would be unable to elaborate on different experiences in those small groups since there would be few people whose standpoints are quite similar to each other, in terms of being marginalized due to the same social position. Although sharing perceptions with those whose social experience is similar to each other can allow understanding of unaddressed social experience, this situation can cause failure to appreciate the existence of different viewpoints. Thus, keeping epistemic interactions in small groups may lead to blunting the virtues of acknowledging the concerns of fellow citizens, and the capacity to accommodate different perspectives while contemplating public issues. As Iris Marion Young (1990) indicates, the democratic public should be heterogeneous and requires the inclusion of each different standpoint in public expression and decision-making processes (p. 120). In this regard, citizens should be able to appreciate differences and engage various opinions in public discussions.

Thus, there is a need to extend the ethical epistemic interactions beyond safe and free spaces as well.

Another shortcoming of this strategy is that although it may empower marginalized people to transform their daily interactions, it does not directly target unethical patterns of epistemic relations in society. In other words, it focuses on ameliorating the harms of hermeneutical injustice outside of everyday social relationships so does not transform the source of injustice. Since epistemic practices are held by the participation of various individuals in daily life, the general established patterns and epistemic relationships also should be the subject of the strategy of overcoming hermeneutical injustice. Regarding the equal participation of each citizen in political and social processes, restructuring social relationships is a necessary step to ensure the equal and just share of everyone in epistemic processes. Providing safe and free spaces cannot address this issue, because the idea of this strategy is to separate marginalized groups from the existing social patterns in order to allow them to develop their hermeneutical resources. Thus, this strategy is not sufficient and comprehensive in dealing with hermeneutical injustice and there should be another method that can accommodate the diversity of epistemic positions.

Regarding the issue of intersectionality and diversity of everyday relations, Medina (2013) points out the importance of communication and cooperation among the members of a heterogeneous and pluralist society. In this respect, Anderson (2006, 2011) and Medina argue that the diversity and heterogeneity of social context can both help with the overcoming of epistemic injustice because differently situated people can learn from, check on, and balance each other. Based on their approach, I am going to elaborate on the integration of different groups in epistemic practices as a strategy for overcoming hermeneutical injustice. It is important to highlight the point that I will not present integration as an alternative to safe and free spaces but it can address the

main shortcomings of that method. Thus, my main aim is not to favor one method over the other but to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the two in order to show how they can together contribute to overcoming hermeneutical injustice.

3.2 Integrated Spaces

The second method I consider as a complementary strategy to safe and free spaces in overcoming hermeneutical injustice is providing integrated spaces. In this part, I first explain what I mean by integrated spaces in this thesis by introducing Medina and Anderson's accounts of integration. Then I indicate how this strategy can contribute to overcoming hermeneutical injustice. I point out its possible benefits which are the dissemination of new hermeneutical tools, reducing prejudice, and the restructuring of existing social relationships. Finally, I elaborate on one of the possible controversial aspects of the strategy of creating integrated spaces.

I follow Medina's understanding of interaction (2013) and Anderson's approach to integration (2006, 2010) which fundamentally draws upon pluralistic and diverse communities interacting with each other on the principles of equality and democracy. Hence, integrated spaces do not imply any kind of space including members of various groups but indicate social integration concerning just and equal interactions between members of diverse communities. The emphasis on diversity and heterogeneity by Medina and Anderson stems from the that those authors consider these two aspects, diversity and heterogeneity, valuable in knowledge production and decision-making processes. The first reason is that the diversity of epistemic positions can provide an enhanced and sophisticated perspective in solving an issue or problem. Therefore, it has epistemic merit. The second reason is that different viewpoints can function as correctives for each other and

lead to the development of virtues such as open-mindedness, accountability, and sensitivity to marginalized voices (Medina, 2013, p. 284). Hence, the diversity of epistemic positions can lead to more ethical relations in epistemic practices. Another main reason is that the fair and equal contribution of each citizen in political decision-making processes must be ensured to sustain the representativeness and legitimacy of public decisions (Anderson, 2006, 2010). Keeping in mind that the hermeneutical injustice stems from the background social inequalities, protecting an equal and fair share of each individual in epistemic processes is a key to overcoming epistemic injustice.

Considering the reasons for integration as Anderson and Medina pointed out, spatial integration alone cannot be the aim of the strategy of integrated spaces since it is not a sufficient condition for social integration. Social integration requires improving *"*opportunities by opening up social networks of information and referral to disadvantaged groups, and by enabling them to acquire the cultural capital needed to advance in mainstream institutions" (Anderson 2010, p. 118). Thus, integrated spaces try to implement organizational or procedural adjustments so that the background power imbalances do not affect the current relationships and unjust social patterns do not repeat themselves in those spaces. I will present the ways of configuring the integrated spaces by providing examples from classroom and university conference practices in order to ensure the fair and equal contribution of different people without being affected by the power asymmetries between their social positions.

3.2.1 Dissemination of New Hermeneutical Tools

Apart from producing concepts that allow making sense of the experiences of marginalized groups, there is a need to circulate created hermeneutical concepts in some contexts in order to

allow other similarly marginalized people to understand their experiences and include them in the shared hermeneutical resource. Secondly, the dissemination of new hermeneutical tools produced by marginalized groups plays an important role for non-marginalized groups in terms of making them also part of the change in the collectively shared hermeneutical resource. Integrated spaces allow for popularizing localized conceptual tools by targeting diverse and heterogenous spheres, and thus, constitute a complementary strategy to creating safe and free spaces. Remembering the criticism on the threat of integrating localized hermeneutical practices in some cases as in the example of "lubunca," the dissemination here does not indicate popularizing whole tools produced by the marginalized. Rather, it can be applied in cases that such dissemination can be useful for reaching other marginalized people and integrating non-marginalized people into the new discourse.

It is important to introduce and implement the practical implications of those concepts with marginalized groups in integrated spaces. The sole integration of concepts may not be sufficient to grasp the reasoning and social criticism behind localized hermeneutical tools. Moreover, it can lead to a change in unjust relationships between the marginalized and non-marginalized by making their criticism intelligible to people from non-marginalized groups. The contribution of such change in addressing unjust social patterns is twofold.

The first benefit is changing the social perspective over unjust actions and discourses and the second benefit is the achievement of structural transformation. As in the previous example of the term "sexual harassment", the women in the consciousness-raising group not only invented the concept but made it a part of the movement. They have put their effort into making the term recognized by the legal court and conducted research to specify how widespread the problem was. In the 1970s, the humiliating way of talking to women or touching them in the workplace was very

common because it was considered normal (Nemy, 1975). Thus, one of the first steps of the feminists and lawyers was preparing a legal basis to protect the rights of women in cases of sexual harassment. Another step was to integrate the term into work ethics to transform the current normalized discriminatory practices. Hence, the dissemination of the concept aimed to transform the legal structure to protect the rights of the marginalized, raise awareness in society to allow others to make sense of their experience, and change people's attitudes toward normalized discourse and actions. Thus, ethical practices can be extended from epistemic production to the political sphere in terms of reconfiguring power relations and dismantling social patterns that harm the cognitive capacities of individuals.

3.2.2 Reducing Prejudice

One of the advantages of integrated spaces is the opportunity to change and shape the perspective of non-marginalized groups. In this sense, this strategy is complementary to safe and free spaces because it can target the false understandings of members of the dominant group. Since the marginalized are not the only subjects of unjust epistemic practices, addressing the epistemic needs of non-marginalized groups is essential to make them part of ethical epistemic interactions. Based on social psychology research and studies, Anderson (2010) analyzes the influence of racially integrated schools on social relations and racial prejudice and claims that increasing intergroup relations diminish prejudice and beliefs in racial stereotypes (p. 123). Hence, the cooperative environment weakens the existence of false social beliefs that can lead to epistemic injustice.

Furthermore, cooperating with others in integrated spaces can shape the perspective of marginalized groups and reduce their internalized prejudice toward themselves and members of dominant groups. Marginalized people might have a bias that they will be in a disadvantaged position again in their encounter with members of the dominant group. Thus, they might prefer to act less confident than they would have acted in the absence of people from the dominant group. Having a positive experience with members of other groups can serve to improve their self-esteem which might be damaged by the social construction of selfhood as I mentioned earlier. Anderson illustrates this point by the example of black students who overcome their "anxieties and discomfort over participating in plurality-white institutions" (p. 122) with their experience in integrated environments. Thus, similar to safe and free spaces, the empowerment process of the marginalized can be reinforced by ethical encounters with others. Similarly, integrated spaces can pave the way for having a positive experience of marginalized identities beyond safe and free spaces in order to restore their sense of self that might be damaged by distorted social understanding.

Diminishing prejudice of both the marginalized and non-marginalized individuals can prevent the perpetuation or reduce the power of harmful social constructions that lead to a lack of self-esteem, diminishment of marginalized people's capabilities, and their alienation from their real needs and desires. Since biases and stereotypes shape social imaginary, increasing intergroup relations can diminish the normativity of socio-imaginative power of those constructions such as equating women with emotional turmoil, the deaf with incompetence, and homosexuality with a psychological disorder.

3.2.3 Restructuring Existing Social Relationships

Another significant contribution of the strategy of integrated spaces in overcoming hermeneutical injustice is that it helps to restructure existing social relationships. In this regard, it resolves one of the shortcomings of safe and free spaces by accommodating the diversity of epistemic positions. The restructuring of existing social relationships can arise from marginalization-sensitive ways of organizing relationships in integrated spaces, with the aim of diminishing the influence of oppressive and unequal social patterns. Although restructuring current social relationships does not directly address hermeneutical injustice – in terms of detecting the hermeneutical gap and producing relevant resources to make sense of the experience of marginalized communities, – it has great importance in enabling epistemic justice. The absence of proper conceptual tools that can address the experience of marginalized people results from exclusionary and oppressive social mechanisms preventing the marginalized from participating in the production processes of shared hermeneutical resources. Therefore, the transformation of political and epistemic relations based on principles of equality and fairness is a necessary step toward having more inclusive interpretive resources (Medina, 2013, p. 85).

Configuring relationships and practices in a way that prevents power asymmetries from turning into advantages or disadvantages, plays an important role in avoiding reiterating the unjust social relationships that lie behind hermeneutical injustice. One example of such adjustments that aim to prevent the reproduction of unjust social patterns can be given from classroom practices. In *From Equal Educational Opportunity to Diversity Advantaged Learning*, Willis D. Hawley (2007) illustrates beneficial methods that can help to ensure equal relationships in diverse classrooms. One of the methods he presents is to facilitate distributed leadership, and shared responsibility among students, and to create curricula allowing intercultural collaborations. Thus, students have an

opportunity to practice values, such as equality, openness, and being responsive, by learning from each other and occupying different positions within the group. In other words, integrated spaces can facilitate engaging as equals without attaching power positions to individuals. More importantly, this strategy does not only dismantle unjust epistemic practices but provides a ground for establishing more just ones.

Another example can be given from a procedural arrangement of asking questions at a conference at the University of Sheffield.[1] During Q&A sessions, students are prioritized so that the possibility of age or seniority dominating the environment is prevented and students are encouraged to participate. Thus, things that symbolize power in society are prevented from turning into an advantage or disadvantage, and such arrangements help to step out of oppressive cycles. To compare and show the importance of such designs of integrated spaces, I will give another example of a conference from the University of Pretoria. As one of the students participating in the conference, Pedro Mzileni (2017) expressed his observations that the participants were predominantly white students and the institution made no arrangements that are sensitive to racialized relationships that can affect the discussion. He indicated his experience at the conference:

> White students seemed to be an intellectual elite: highly educated, very bright and, for the most part, very liberal people. When my colleague did raise the issue [the link between race and inequality], the white students felt accused of being racists…. One of the white students argued that it was unnecessary to bring race into the inequality problem. In other words, the debate was "subconsciously silenced" and they thought she agreed with their logic. That's how the invisible structural power of white privilege works – stifling debate.

[1] I learned this conference practice happening at the University of Sheffield from my thesis supervisor, Anca Gheaus, in one of our conversations.

As can be seen in the paragraph, spatial integration alone cannot avoid the effects of the operation of multiple mechanisms such as race, class, and gender since they are very embedded in perceptions and everyday practices. Thus, social and historical backgrounds have the power to reproduce themselves in the present moment and create an obstacle to interacting without the influence of historical relationships. In such an environment, the dissidence of opinion has a great possibility to turn into racial conflict. Similarly, different opinions cannot be heard outside of racialized relationships. Therefore, there is a need to make arrangements by constraining those who are in advantaged positions in power asymmetries to prevent intentional or unintentional silencing and to ensure the participation of the marginalized without the feelings of discomfort.

Based on Medina's and Anderson's accounts, I argued in favor of three contributions of integrated spaces in overcoming hermeneutical injustice. By accommodating diverse epistemic positions, the strategy of integrated spaces constitutes itself as complementary to safe and free spaces since it can address the shortcomings of group segregation in two respects. Firstly, it allows integrating localized hermeneutical practices into wider shared hermeneutical resources to change social discourse and structures. Secondly, it can shape perceptions of those in non-marginalized groups to eliminate prejudice and make them part of ethical epistemic interactions. Also, the strategy of integrated spaces can transform existing social relationships that hinder the equal contribution of marginalized groups in the processes of producing common hermeneutical resources.

To enable social integration, I claimed that integrated spaces should be arranged in ways that are sensitive to background social inequalities, in order to prevent the perpetuation of advantages and disadvantages in epistemic interactions. However, there may be a problem with how to organize and decide such arrangements that may prioritize one group over another. In other

words, the design or organization of integrated spaces raises the question of how to differentiate and identify who has the power to be constrained and who should be prioritized.

3.2.4 The Question of Identifying Who Has the Power

The question of identifying who has social power is important for finding arrangements of integrated spaces that ensure more ethical epistemic practices. Going back to the issue of intersectional identities, there can be members of groups that are marginalized due to different social mechanisms based on their gender, ethnicity, or economic class in integrated spaces. If we accept the necessity of arranging integrated spaces to prevent the transformation of background social inequalities into advantages and disadvantages, a problem occurs about how to prioritize when there is no clear separation between the marginalized and non-marginalized. For instance, whose needs should be prioritized when there are members of different communities that are distinctively marginalized by race and gender mechanisms? In this regard, occupying different social positions brings the issue of how to arrange integrated spaces in a way that will not cause comparing or ranking of people's sufferings and marginalization. These types of comparisons would not be plausible due to mainly two reasons. Firstly, hermeneutical injustice can cause different harm to differently marginalized groups, depending on the other type of injustice their members suffer. For instance, comparing the sufferings of being a white lesbian woman and being a black heterosexual woman in society is not reasonable because they are affected by distinct mechanisms. Secondly, comparing and ranking marginalizations may result in competitive victimhood which is also not a desirable situation since it creates another obstacle to engaging as equals by turning sufferings into means of competition.

One solution to this question can be to approach those power asymmetries in a context-dependent way instead of specifying a fixed recipe that can be applied in every space. There would not be any need to rank and determine degrees of marginalization between different social identities because the status of power depends on relationships between social positions residing in the integrated space. For instance, in university conferences, there is a hierarchy of seniority that determines who has more power. To avoid the possible influence of the hierarchy on epistemic interactions, some organizers give priority to comments and questions coming from those with less power, i.e. students. However, in the case of the University of Pretoria, due to apartheid past and historical circumstances, there might be a need to consider race and seniority together while arranging a fair way of epistemic contributions. On the other hand, in workplaces, the power imbalance pertains to workers and management, rather than being determined by seniority. Thus, the way of arranging epistemic relations in integrated spaces should depend on the power relations between those who are parts of the integrated space.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued that marginalized groups can address the harm of hermeneutical injustice and establish more ethical epistemic practices by using the two strategies that are creating safe and free spaces and organizing integrated spaces. In this regard, this thesis aimed to show that integrated spaces can be considered complementary to the strategy of safe and free spaces. By analyzing the demands and practices of social movement groups from the perspective of hermeneutical injustice, I have pointed out the benefits of the strategy of safe and free spaces in overcoming this type of injustice. I suggest that integrated spaces can address the main shortcomings of the previous strategy in terms of targeting current social relationships and including non-marginalized groups in epistemic practices. Considering the possibility of repetitions of unjust patterns in integrated spaces, I claimed that those spaces should be configured in a way that prioritizes disadvantaged groups and constrains those who have the power. However, this claim brings the question of how to arrange those spaces, and what kind of arrangement is enough to ensure a fair and equal share in epistemic interactions. In this regard, one of the limitations of this thesis is exemplifying integrated spaces because the data is limited on such configurations of epistemic practices.

The novel contribution of this thesis is to specify the primary harm of hermeneutical injustice as the "misidentifying of needs and desires" and the "diminishing of one's capabilities" by scrutinizing "the constitutive construction of selfhood" which is coined by Fricker (2007). Another contribution is to investigate these two methods – safe and free, as well as integrated, spaces – which are widely used tools for social movements, as ways of overcoming hermeneutical injustice. Furthermore, I pointed out how those strategies can contribute to remedying the harm and changing unjust social patterns of epistemic interactions producing hermeneutical injustice. I

have argued that the two strategies as complementary; there may be other, additional, solutions as well to overcome hermeneutical injustice. Keeping in mind that the harms of hermeneutical injustice differ across the different groups, depending on what other types of injustice their members suffer, in-depth exploration of new methods is required to ensure the formation of more ethical relationships in political and epistemic practices.

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