Hermeneutical Injustice, Willful Hermeneutic Ignorance, and Hermeneutic Justice: The Missing Link

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The theories of Hermeneutical Injustice and Willful Hermeneutic Ignorance are important in describing the ways that people in marginalized communities interact with the world around them. While these two ideas do help give names to some injustices that marginalized communities experience, there is still something missing from them that gives names to and describe the ways that people in marginalized communities express themselves in society and institutions of knowledge production. These deficiencies can be found in the solutions proposed by Fricker and Pohlhaus. Both philosophers advocate for leaving the status quo intact, when it needs to be reformed to rectify the effects of testimonial and hermeneutic injustice and ignorance. Fricker proposes an idealistic, agent-centered solution to a realistic, systemic problem. While Pohlhaus provides a more pragmatic approach to solving for Hermeneutic Injustice and ignorance: dominantly situated knowers should use epistemic resources developed by marginally situated knowers. However, her proposed solution leads to more problems than it solves. The ideas of Pragmatic Necessity, the Dual System of Societal Knowledge, Epistemic Gatekeeping, and Second Hand Hermeneutical Injustice will be examined to identify the epistemological gaps seen in the solutions provided by Fricker and Pohlhaus.

The Missing Link

In her book *Epistemic Injustice*, Miranda Fricker proposed the idea of epistemic injustice. She provides two types of what she called "epistemic injustice": "testimonial injustice" and "hermeneutic injustice". These give a name to the phenomena of injustice that are present in the creation and transfer of knowledge. Testimonial injustice relies on prejudice, either grounded in identity or actions of a specific social group or person, meaning it can be systemic or localized. Systemic testimonial injustice is when people experience a deflated level of credibility due to systemic prejudices e.g., women's ideas being ignored in the workplace; localized testimonial

injustice is when people experience a deflated level of credibility in one off circumstances e.g., a board of editors not giving credence to a paper because of the research method used.

This injustice, systemic or localized, leads to a more epistemically holistic injustice through an unequal ability to create knowledge; people situated marginally in society will not be able to contribute as much knowledge as they should, whereas people situated dominantly are able to contribute more than they should. Prejudice can be skewed negatively towards an individual or a social group, which means that there is a disparity in the collective well of knowledge because of identity and action based prejudices, e.g. not believing what someone says because they are perceived as a "hysterical woman." Societal permeation of identity based prejudice leads to a different phenomenon Fricker calls "hermeneutic injustice". She defines this injustice as "A gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences (Fricker, 2007, p. 1)."

Fricker uses the Women's Movement of the 20th century as an example of when hermeneutic injustice occurs and is overcome. The example she talks about is women suffering from postnatal depression being able to shine a light on the hermeneutic darkness they had been living in by coming together and talking about the depression they had experienced in their postnatal lives. As a further explanation, Fricker uses the rampant sexual harassment seen in offices during the mid to late 1900s. The story that is used is of Mrs. Carmita Wood. Mrs. Wood worked at a nuclear physics laboratory for eight years before quitting as a result of constant sexual harassment. When she applied for unemployment insurance Mrs. Wood was asked why she quit her job, a question she could not answer because while the phenomenon of sexual harassment existed, the words to describe it did not. That is the crux of hermeneutic injustice: there is a gap in the collective well of knowledge that prevents people from giving proper descriptions about their social experience. Not only does hermeneutic injustice prevent the experiences from being rendered intelligibly, it also prevents them from being understood completely; both society and the victim are left in the dark.

Words and phrases do not exist that adequately describe people's social interactions, lived experiences, and, in some cases, identity. Fricker asserts that only people with marginalized identities (women, people of color, people in the LGBTQ+ community, etc.) are the ones that experience hermeneutical injustice on account of identity, "The powerless are more likely to find themselves having some kind of social experience through a glass darkly, with at best ill-fitting

meanings to draw on in the effort to render them intelligible (Fricker, 2007, p. 148).” The majority of people who experience hermeneutic injustice do so because they are not situated in positions of societal privilege or power, which means they lack the ability to easily contribute to systems of knowledge. More people than just Carmita Wood were experiencing sexual harassment, but because they held marginalized social identities, they were not able to contribute their experiences to any system of knowledge leaving themselves, and society, in the dark about what it was like to be a working woman in the mid to late 20th century. While people who are situated in positions of societal privilege or power may also experience a gap in society’s collective interpretive resources, their experience with hermeneutical injustice is vastly different. The person (or people) who sexually harassed Carmita Wood also experienced injustice because they too did not know what was occurring in those interactions and how their actions helped maintain the status quo.

Hermeneutic injustice expands far beyond the issues seen by women in the 20th century. This injustice can also be seen today with people in the LGBTQ+ Community. When I was eight years old I knew that something was different about me. The feelings that my friends had for girls, I had for boys and girls. I came to the realization that I am bisexual before I even knew that was something someone could be. It was not for another five years until I heard the word “bisexual” and knew that it was a label that described who I am. This is not a unique experience to me either. Many people in the LGBTQ+ Community struggle to find the words that describe them and their identity. While the words to describe our identities exist, they are not as readily available to us as they should be. It was until a community started to form and gain more access to the dominant system of knowledge, these words were not readily available to society at large, which left many people wondering what a portion of their identity was. I do contend that even though the words that describe my identity existed it should still be considered hermeneutic injustice because the words are being kept from the system (s) of knowledge that I had access to. Hermeneutic injustice should not be restricted just by the existence of words, but access to them as well. If someone does not have access to the words that exist that can describe their interactions with society, it should be considered an injustice because without them people cannot render their lived experiences, social interactions, and in some cases identity intelligible to anyone, not even themselves. This inability for one to interpret themselves necessarily precludes their ability to share who they are with the people around them.

Pohlhaus believes that there is more to epistemic injustice than just testimonial injustice and hermeneutic injustice, there is also a willful hermeneutic ignorance. This occurs when marginalized knowers can make sense of their interaction with society and their social identity, but dominantly situated knowers do not believe them. An example that Pohlhaus discusses in her paper *Relational Knowing and Epistemic Injustice: Toward a Theory of* Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance, is that of Tom Robinson. The all-white jury in *To Kill a Mockingbird* refused to believe the experiences of Tom Robinson, they could not understand why a black man in the Deep South in 1934 would help a white woman because he pitied her and could not understand that Tom was, "Being set up because a white woman made a sexual advance toward him, and her white father witnessed it (Pohlhaus, 2012)." People dominantly situated in society, sometimes, cannot make sense of the lived experiences or social interactions of marginally situated people.

Unlike testimonial injustice and hermeneutic injustice, willful hermeneutical ignorance is always systemic. Pohlhaus says, "Dominantly situated knowers… misunderstand and misinterpret the world (Pohlhaus, 2012)." Willful hermeneutical ignorance is best exemplified through people's disbelief of social phenomena like heteronormativity or white privilege. These phenomena exist, but people who see the benefits of them ignore their existence. Willful hermeneutical ignorance is perpetrated mainly by dominantly situated knowers[1] because people dominantly situated in society cannot make sense of the world they have created for marginalized groups. These people also do not have the incentive to make or maintain epistemic resources for marginally situated knowers because the dominantly situated knowers' grasp on epistemic power weakens (Pohlhaus, 2012).

An example of willful hermeneutical ignorance can be seen in society today with the LGBTQ+ community, more specifically with the idea of cisnormativity[2]. People operate under the idea that others are cisgender until proven otherwise, even though they know about the trans community. Some people take this idea further and believe that transgender individuals do not exist. This can, and will, greatly limit people's ability to understand others' identity and lived experience; on the flip side, this will prevent transgender individuals from being able to render their identity and lived experience intelligible to others. This difficulty in rendering identity and experience ineligible stems from others (not necessarily just those dominantly situated) operating

[1] Dominantly situated knowers are people who have identities that are considered dominant in society i.e., white, mid to upper class, heterosexual, and cisgender male.
[2] The belief that everyone is the gender they were assigned at birth.

with an outdated framework of society. They believe that either believe that there are default identities and anyone who does not fit those vary from the norm, or they believe that being transgender is something that simply does not exist. Either way, willful hermeneutical ignorance occurs because the framework that is necessary to make what transgender people have to say intelligible exists, but some people refuse to use it. That is the crux of willful hermeneutical ignorance: people use a framework of society that renders others people's testimony unintelligible, but the hearers refuse to change frameworks even though nothing is stopping them from doing so, which hinders the processes of knowledge production and sharing.

But what happens when people overcome willful hermeneutic ignorance, or do not have it in the first place? What happens when people accept that social phenomena like white privilege exist? This is what I refer to as the third progression from the moment epistemic injustice arises to when it fades out of existence. The timeline of epistemic injustice to, what Fricker calls, epistemic justice is as follows: groups or individuals are not given the same credibility as another person or group; because of this, the people contributing their experiences to society's system of knowledge are those who are dominantly situated leaving people in marginalized groups to not have the resources they need to explain their identity or interactions with society; when marginalized people attempt to share their experiences with society the dominantly situated knowers misinterpret the experiences that are trying to be shared because people ignore the pertinent social phenomena[3]; dominantly situated knowers accept the pertinent social phenomena, but cannot adequately fix the part (s) of the system that gave rise to the social phenomena that forced people to be marginalized knowers; finally a majority of the dominantly situated knowers and marginally situated knowers work together to fix the system that gave rise to epistemic injustice in the first place.

While dominantly situated knowers may accept the existence of social phenomena, that is not the panacea that either Fricker or Pohlhaus want because people need to act on the elimination of these social phenomena that gave rise to epistemic injustice in the first place. Furthermore, the marginally situated knower needs to be included in the dissolution of the systemic components that made them marginalized knowers.

An example of this progression is the LGBTQ+ community (the community). For centuries, the community had not been given the same credibility to those outside of the

[3] This is also known as willful hermeneutical ignorance.

community. This translates itself to the community not being able to share their true experiences, like mental health problems, with society, which creates a deficiency in the system of societal knowledge; the only people who have the knowledge of what it is like to be in the community are the members of the community. This gap leads to the bastardization of the experiences of people in the community when shared with dominantly situated people. This bastardization arises from the belief in cishetnormativity[4]. The dominantly situated members of society have begun to accept the phenomenon that we assume people are heterosexual and cisgender until proven otherwise. This has led to the attempt to normalize the existence of other sexualities, the existence of transgender individuals[5], and breaking the gender binary. Currently society has made it to the transition period between the third and final progression of moving from epistemic injustice to epistemic justice. People in the community are starting to be included in the eradication of the social barriers that have caused them to be marginally situated, but that is in its infancy because it is a partnership that only exists a portion of the time.

The Netflix Original show *Big Mouth*, as vulgar as some may see it, has done a great job bringing to light the experience of puberty and the budding sense of pre-teen sexuality. The show has done a good job with including sexual orientations other than heterosexual, but there exists a problem with that representation. In the third season of the show, a pansexual character was introduced. This brought more representation of the community to one of the most popular shows on Netflix, but there are problems with how the character was introduced and the definition of pansexuality that the show uses. The problematic nature of the character comes from how she defines her sexuality:

> No, bisexuality is so *binary*. Being pansexual means my sexual preference isn't limited by gender identity… It's like, some of you borings like tacos, and some of you like burritos. And if you're bisexual, you like tacos and burritos. But I'm saying I like tacos and burritos, and I could be into a taco that was born a burrito, or a burrito that is transitioning into a taco, *comprende*? And honey, anything else on the … menu. (Linnell, 2019)

The problem here stems from the misrepresentation of what bisexuality and pansexuality are. This opening statement paints bisexuality as an orientation that is transphobic, and pansexuality

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[4] Cishetnormativity is the belief that being cisgender and heterosexual are default identities that society should revolve around. One is cisgender and heterosexual until proven otherwise.

[5] Transgender individuals includes female to male (FtM), male to female (MtF), female to non-binary (FtX), and male to non-binary (MtX). Non-binary genders are neither male nor female e.g., gender fluid, bi-gender, agender, etc.

as the more progressive and open sexuality. This is a prime example of the bastardization of people's identity because it does not properly convey what it is like to be bisexual. It has been my experience as a bisexual that the only real difference between identifying as pansexual or bisexual is not one's attraction to transgender individuals, but rather one's comfort in taking on a label that describes themself. The above quote from *Big Mouth* also shows an effect of the shortcomings of Fricker and Pohlhaus that I call *Epistemic Gatekeeping*, which will be discussed later.

On the other hand, the Netflix Original *Orange is the New Black*, has included people in the community to portray the gender identities shared with their characters. A prime example of this is seen in Sophia Burset, a transgender inmate at Litchfield Correctional. Laverne Cox, the actress who portrays Sophia, is a transgender woman. This character is not only portrayed by someone who shares her gender identity, but also teaches society about what it is like to be transgender in the prison system. There seems to exist a dichotomy where either people outside of the community use their misinterpretation of what they have heard from people in the community to create problematic characters that perpetuate negative stereotypes of the community, or they will involve people in the community to provide accurate representation.

These examples from Netflix Originals show a transition between the third progression to hermeneutic justice. While dominantly situated people have accepted that the LGBTQ+ community exists and needs representation in media, some of the representation is negative and others are positive. The representation in *Big Mouth* is negative because it does not accurately represent the LGBTQ+ community because it is represented through the lens of dominantly situated knowers. The example of *Orange is the New Black* is better because people share the identities of the people they portray. This almost dichotomistic representation shows that society is in a transition period between the third progression and hermeneutic justice because we are moving towards including the community in the media, but at the same time negative stereotypes and simplistic, problematic, one dimensional portrayals still exist.

Moving Between the Progressions

How does society move from one progression of epistemic injustice toward a world of epistemic justice? The answer to this question lies with Dotson in her work *Conceptualizing Epistemic Injustice*. Dotson uses the theory of loops as proposed by Walsh to break down epistemic oppression, and it is the implementation of these loops that allows society to move

forward in the progressions of hermeneutic injustice to hermeneutic justice. Dotson proposes first-loop, second-loop, and third-loop behaviors to break down epistemic oppression. Each loop is more rigorous than the last and each additional loop helps improve and change permeate society on a deeper level.

Progressions	Loop Behaviors
Epistemic Injustice to First Progression	None; it is an innate social phenomenon
First Progression to Second Progression	Single Loop Behavior
Second Progression to Third Progression	Single Loop and Double Loop Behavior
Third Progression to Epistemic Justice	Single Loop, Double Loop, and Triple Loop Behavior

Fig. 1

The transition of epistemic injustice to marginally situated knowers experiencing hermeneutic injustice (the first progression) is an innate phenomenon. Without marginally situated people contributing to the collective well of knowledge (which is what happens with epistemic injustice), marginally situated people will reach a state where they cannot make sense of their experiences with society in regard to their identity. The prevention of marginally situated people from being able to contribute their experiences and knowledge to the collective whole inevitably leads to people in similar positions from being able to make sense of their experiences because they have limited and inadequate resources to draw their information from.

The transition from the first progression (marginally situated knowers experiencing hermeneutic injustice) to the second progression (the bastardization of marginally situated knowers testimony of their experience) happens through single loop behaviors. Single loop behaviors are, “Alterations made to address a given problem without changing underlying schemata (Dotson, 2012).” Single loop behaviors do not change the system that gave rise to epistemic injustice, it is localized behavior that does not inherently change the system that has maintained and created the injustice.

The transition from the second progression (the bastardization of marginally situated knowers testimony of their experience) to the third progression (dominantly situated knowers attempt to fix the system, but cannot because of the bastardization of experience) happens with single and double loop behaviors. Second-loop behaviors are “When individuals, sets of

individuals or groups are "willing to alter their values … [and thereby] create new strategies or ways of thinking, feeling, or acting that actually improve their effectiveness (Dotson, 2012)." Second loop behaviors are ones that alter the system (s) that maintain and give rise to epistemic injustice, it tries to give equality to the system. The transition between the second and third progression requires single and double loop behaviors because in order for groups to start altering their values and attempt to change a system (requirements for double loop behaviors), individuals need to open themselves to hearing the testimony of marginally situated knowers, which happens locally then works its way into the system.

The transition from the third progression (dominantly situated knowers attempt to fix the system, but cannot because of the bastardization of experience) to epistemic justice requires single, double, and triple loop behaviors. Triple loop behaviors are, "[recognizing] "governing values and behaviour" that are, by no means, universally held and to possibly alter them (Dotson, 2012)." Triple loop behaviors give equity to a system that previously held equality. Single and double loop behaviors alone provide equality because the words of people are no longer silenced due to prejudice; however, they can be misinterpreted. Single, double, and triple loop behaviors working together are what enables the misinterpretations to stop, giving equity to the system because everyone is not only listened to, their experiences are no longer bastardized. The reason the transition to epistemic justice needs all three loop behaviors is because the loops build on each other. Localized instances of people accepting testimony allows the marginally situated people to share their testimony, which allows for groups to change their outlook on society, which eventually leads to people acknowledging society working in different ways for different people.

Returning to the LGBTQ+ community (the community) the progressions and loop behaviors can be seen. Throughout history the acts of the community have been criminalized and the members have been persecuted. This treatment has led to people in the community not being able to contribute to the system of societal of knowledge, which leads to people not being able to make sense of their experience of attraction to people of the same gender or multiple genders, or the experience of being transgender. What happens when society does not give credibility to people being attracted to members of the same gender or people not identifying with the gender assigned at birth, is erasure of LGBTQ+ identities. Because society does not believe the

testimony of these people, society will believe that they do exist and frame those identities as non-valid or non-existent.

Through single loop behaviors, select individuals start changing ever so slightly to no longer believe that these identities are not valid or do not exist. Single loop behaviors acknowledge that people of the LGBTQ community and their identities exist. Double loop behaviors knock down the inability of people who hold those identities from being able to accurately give words to what it is like to have those identities. Triple loop behaviors allow the collective knowledge formed by members of that community to enter into the collective well of societal knowledge unperturbed. It is this triple loop behavior that eliminates epistemic injustice and the deficiency in society's collective episteme.

The Origin of the Missing Link

Both Fricker and Pohlhaus forget the key component in eradicating epistemic injustice: the people who are adversely affected by the very phenomenon the two brought to society's attention. Dominantly situated people have an incentive to keep the system the way it is, and when they see how the system they have created is problematic for people who are not like them, they attempt to act unilaterally to tackle the problem in an attempt to maintain the balance of power. Fricker ignores the need of including the people who have been a victim of epistemic injustice to achieve what she calls epistemic justice. This is the missing link that exists within the framework of the work of Fricker and, to an extent, Pohlhaus between the creation of epistemic injustice and its eradication. Fricker only identifies the problem and proposes using single loop behaviors to eradicate that problem; Pohlhaus acknowledges that more needs to be done, but falls short of providing a solution to creation of knowledge because she includes double loop behaviors, but ignores triple loop behaviors. Both accounts of rectifying epistemic injustice fall short addressing the entirety of the third progression of the solution to the eradication of epistemic injustice.

Fricker believes that the creation of epistemic justice is to simply eradicate the credibility deficit, if we do not give people a deficiency of credibility, then we will not have epistemic injustice. Fricker would be correct in this account if we lived in a perfect world. Her solution to the problem she identified is part of the proper course of action moving forward, but there is more work that needs to be done now to correct for the damage that epistemic injustice has

caused so far, which should not be ignored because it has created a gap in the system of societal knowledge that needs to be filled. The proposed solution by Fricker is only a single loop process because it requires little to no reorganization of society and there is no change in the shared epistemic resources; her proposed solution is a unilateral action of dominantly situated knowers. Marginally situated people, people who experience more testimonial and hermeneutic injustice are nowhere to be seen in what Fricker proposes.

It is not enough to just give people more credibility because that is a short term solution to a long term problem. Society needs to be re-evaluated so epistemic injustices do not keep occurring over and over again, which does not happen with Fricker's proposed solution. The societal structures that gave rise to credibility deficits need to be taken down in order to truly prevent the occurrence of epistemic and hermeneutical injustice and eradicate it from society. Fricker herself acknowledges that testimonial and hermeneutic injustice are, for the most part, systemic, but she only provides an agential solution.

Pohlhaus expanded on Fricker's theory and attempts to correct for her solution's lack of rectifying the harm of hermeneutical injustice that currently exists in society. Pohlhaus does a better job of finding a solution for Fricker's problem than Fricker does. It is not enough to just say, "Rid yourself of prejudice and give everyone the same amount of credibility." That is a solution fit for a utopia, not for how the world actually operates. Pohlhaus gets us much closer to a viable solution:

> The dominantly situated knower cannot step outside of her situatedness in order to experience the world as others do; however, she can learn to use epistemic resources developed from the experiences of marginalized knowers (Pohlhaus, 2012)

Here Pohlhaus acknowledges that dominantly situated knowers cannot work unilaterally to fix the problems that they caused; they need to work with marginally situated knowers to address the difficulties that the latter faces. Pohlhaus believes that dominantly situated knowers should use epistemic resources developed by marginally situated people to help the former understand the world of the latter, which is the use of double loop behaviors.

Double loop behaviors lead to second order changes which, "Seeks to change the [system itself] (Dotson, 2014)." The change that Pohlhaus seeks is to incorporate the different systems of knowledge that exist in the world. She wants society to pull from the systems of knowledge created by various marginally situated knowers so that their experiences and voices are not

ignored. The system is changing because the status quo, however briefly, now includes the experiences of marginally situated knowers, but only when dominantly situated knowers deem it necessary. What makes this a second order change is that the status quo is amended, instead of recreated.

Fricker is arguing for equality amongst people's testimony. Pohlhaus is arguing for a slightly more equitable approach; she acknowledges that marginally situated knowers have access to the system of knowledge created by the dominantly situated knowers, but not vice versa, and she wants that to change. Pohlhaus advocates for keeping the systems of knowledge separate and allowing different people in. My approach is the dissolution of the system that necessitates the existence of multiple systems of knowledge, a fundamental reorganization of the status quo surrounding the creation and disbursement of knowledge: a third order change to a problem that results in first, second, and third order epistemic exclusions. The missing link to eradicating epistemic injustice is the use of triple loop behaviors that fundamentally redefine and consolidate society's systems of knowledge while making it easier to share the knowledge that is produced.

Fricker's Folly

Fricker's solution to hermeneutical injustice cannot be successful because it does not really correct for the injustice that happens. People cannot be aware of the biases they have because more often than not they are implicit biases, something that is subconscious that people cannot correct for. People need to be aware of what they are not aware of in order for people to be epistemically virtuous according to Fricker and that cannot be done. People cannot be aware of what they are not aware of [6]. The reason testimonial injustice arises is because of the limited access that dominantly situated knowers have to the wells of knowledge produced by marginally situated knowers, which in turn leads to hermeneutical injustice. Fricker's solution does not account for the root of existence of hermeneutical injustice because it does nothing to address the accessibility that dominantly situated knowers have to different wells of knowledge.

The reason Fricker fails to find a solution to the very problem she identifies is because she is not looking at the solution with any sort of pragmatism and what she proposes is only a minor adjustment to society's production of knowledge. Because epistemic injustice causes societal harm, the solution to it has to be one that takes into account the intricacies of the world

[6] This is also known as the Dunning-Kruger effect.

we live in, not the world we wished we lived in and Fricker fails to account for that. She falls victim to what Charles Mills refers to as a vice of idealism called "idealized capacities." This vice states, "The human agents as visualized in this theory will also often have completely unrealistic capacities attributed to them (Mills, 2005)." As stated before, people will need to be aware of what they are not aware of, which is idealistic. Realistically, there will always be people who are given deflated accounts of credibility for whatever reason. In order to correct for these reasons, the status quo needs to be recreated to allow for an equality in people's credibility and ability to create knowledge; anything less and dominant power structures are maintained.

It is not pragmatic to assume a major societal change, like the erasure of identity prejudice, will happen without the reformation of the system that gave rise to those prejudices in the first place; however, it is pragmatic to assume that a major societal change, like the erasure of identity prejudice, can occur when people with marginalized identities begin to have equity in the production of knowledge. This is a pragmatic assumption because when people who were previously excluded from shaping society, society will change, "Dominant power relations are maintained through the power to shape people's understanding of the world in ways that prevent them from asking questions or seeing any possibilities for change (Grassroots Policy Project)." When the power to shape people's understanding of the world starts to be shared with people who previously did not have that power, there will be a fundamental change in the way society as a whole understands the world.

The Principle of Pragmatic Necessity

The Principle of Pragmatic Necessity requires people to look at issues of social philosophy through a pragmatic lens. Social philosophy identifies problematic behaviors in society and potential solutions to those problems. Because these problems directly affect society and the people in it, it is necessary to view solutions to these behaviors pragmatically. An idealistic solution to these realistic, problematic behaviors does us no good because we do not live in an idealistic world, if we did there would be no need to discuss epistemic injustice and attempts to correct it. In an idealistic world, people would not suffer from the issues that arise in social epistemology, thereby negating the need for a solution. Looking at solutions through a pragmatic lens, instead of an idealistic lens, allows for solutions to negative social behaviors to have their intended effect. This is where Fricker's folly lies. She does not develop a theory toward epistemic justice pragmatically, she develops it idealistically. Fricker gives us a solution

that fits a world where it is not needed because the problem the solution is intended for would not exist. This is why it is necessary to look at solutions through a pragmatic lens, something that Fricker does not do.

The Necessity of Triple Loop Behaviors

We run into huge problems when it comes to solving hermeneutical injustice with single and double loop behaviors alone. These are the problems of second hand hermeneutical injustice, which occurs because of the phenomenon I mentioned earlier called epistemic gatekeeping. Both of these phenomena occur because of the existence of the dual system of societal knowledge. With the use of single and double loop behaviors alone, there still exists two different systems of knowledge in society: the one created by the dominantly situated knowers and the ones[7] created by marginally situated knowers. I refer to this as the dual system of societal knowledge. Triple loop behaviors are necessary to solve the problem of hermeneutical and testimonial injustice because without these behaviors nothing will fundamentally change. Not only will people still experience hermeneutical injustice, marginalized individuals will still not be able to make accurate contributions to the system of knowledge that society at large has access to. A fundamental change needs to occur in the way knowledge is produced in order to find a solution because without the fundamental change (consolidation of the systems of societal knowledge) the phenomenon of epistemic gatekeeping still exists, which allows for the existence of second hand hermeneutical injustice.

Epistemic Gatekeeping

Previously, I mentioned the phenomenon I refer to as "epistemic gatekeeping." This phenomenon arises through maintaining the dual system of societal knowledge. What Pohlhaus proposes is that dominantly situated knowers use the epistemic resources that have been created by marginally situated knowers in order for the former to understand the experiences of the latter. Because of this there arises a bastardization to the interpretation of what dominantly situated knowers take from the system of knowledge created by marginalized knowers, as demonstrated through the problematic definition of pansexuality in *Big Mouth*. This phenomenon arises from the existence of two separate systems of knowledge. Because people with power will do

[7] There are multiple wells of knowledge created by marginally situated knowers based around specific aspects of identity and the various combinations therein.

everything they can to keep power, they will resist including people with other identities from having access to power, so they will do what they can by themselves.

This is something that, I believe, Pohlhaus realized which is why she argues for dominantly situated knowers to use epistemic resources developed by marginally situated knowers. Pohlhaus views this as rectifying epistemic injustice because people who created the system of epistemic oppression that necessitated the existence of the dual system of societal knowledge, now have the resources they need in order to view the world in a similar way of marginally situated knowers, thus the phenomenon of epistemic gatekeeping is created. The only people who can decide what resources the dominantly situated knowers use, are the dominantly situated knowers; they get to decide what they use, which means they can leave behind important aspects of epistemic resources. This is something that can be seen in society right now in regard to the LGBTQ+ community.

After the United States Supreme Courts' ruling in *Obergefell vs Hodges* (the case that ruled restrictions on homosexual couples from marrying are unconstitutional), people believed that the fight for equality was over because same sex marriage was legalized, but people did not realize that more needed to be done. This can be seen in two cases pending on the floor of the Supreme Court as of April 8th, 2020: *Bostock vs. Clayton County* and *R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes v. EEOC*. Both cases are requesting a ruling on the legality of firing someone because of their gender identity or sexual orientation, which is something that not many people outside of the community knew about until the Supreme Court heard oral arguments. This is epistemic gatekeeping because having equal protection under the law is something that the community is still fighting for, but was not in the system of knowledge created by the dominantly situated knowers. They believed that once marriage equality was achieved, then those in the community would have the same rights as people outside of it, but that is not the case. Only part of the equality fight was let in the dominant system of knowledge, part of it was left behind. The only part of the equality fight that was let in was access to equal marriage rights, the fight to work as an open member of the LGBTQ+ community was gatekept from the dominant system of knowledge.

Epistemic gatekeeping can only happen when there is more than one system of knowledge, currently there are multiple. There is the system of knowledge that was created and continues to be maintained by dominantly situated knowers and there are the systems of

knowledge that are created by marginally situated knowers[8]. Epistemic gatekeeping, which is an inevitable occurrence when there are two or more systems of knowledge, only affects knowers with marginalized identities. Marginalized individuals have readily available access to the systems of knowledge created by the dominantly situated people in society because the social experiences of dominantly situated knowers make up a lot of what we see in movies, T.V shows, books, and other forms of media. People with marginally situated identities see the social experiences of dominantly situated people all the time the disparity between their experiences and the ones that they see in movies, on T.V, in books, and even on the news.

People with marginalized identities cannot ignore the systems of oppression that affect them. In the paper *Learning From the Outsider Within*, Collins writes:

> Accounts of Black domestic workers stress the sense of self-affirmation they experienced at seeing white power demystified-of knowing that it was not the intellect, talent, or humanity of their employers that supported their superior status, but largely just the advantages of racism (Collins, 1986)

The people with marginalized identities (black domestic workers) would see the advantages of racism and could not ignore a fundamental part of the system that kept them oppressed; however, because dominantly situated knowers do not experience the negatives of social phenomena like racism, they can ignore the parts of the system that keep marginally situated knowers oppressed. The reason that epistemic gatekeeping does not happen both ways, is because the marginally situated people in society cannot ignore the social phenomena that oppress and otherwise harm them because those phenomena permeate almost every aspect of their lives. Those dominantly situated can, and actually have an incentive, to ignore these phenomena because they benefit from them, or they are ignored simply because people refuse to believe the experiences of marginally situated knowers.

The social phenomena of racism, homophobia, transphobia, cishetnormativity, and other systems of structural oppression are things that people with marginalized identities are negatively affected by and see dominantly situated people have unfair advantages because of these systems of structural oppression. There is no equivalent for those who are dominantly situated, there is

[8] Again, it is important to note that there are multiple wells of knowledge created by marginally situated knowers based around certain identities and combinations therein.

nothing to be epistemically gate kept from the system of knowledge created and maintained by the dominantly situated people.

Epistemic gatekeeping is a by-product of the dual system of societal knowledge because dominantly situated knowers who use epistemic resources that were created by marginally situated knowers, can leave important aspects of those resources behind. This translates to a world where dominantly situated people think they understand what the world is like as seen through the lens of a marginally situated person, but they left behind an important aspect of that world view. Epistemic gatekeeping leads to misinformed dominantly situated knowers who attempt to unilaterally fix the problems seen by marginally situated knowers and unknowingly causing more harm than good. And a wrong assessment of their understanding of the situations of marginally situated individuals.

Second Hand Hermeneutical Injustice

Second hand hermeneutical injustice is an individual or a group of dominantly situated knowers using misinformation in an attempt to understand the social experience of marginally situated knowers. What makes this second hand is the fact that a group of people is attempting to make sense of a different person or group of people's interactions with society because there is a gap in the well of knowledge that the former has access to. It is second hand because people are unable to make sense of others' social experience. What makes it an injustice though? After all that is a very strong word.

In *Powerlessness and Social Interaction* Fricker says, "For something to be an injustice it must be harmful but also wrongful, whether because discriminatory or otherwise unfair (Fricker, 2006)." This phenomenon is harmful because it leads to the bastardization and misrepresentation of people's social identities, like the definition of pansexuality in Netflix's *Big Mouth*. This is harmful because misinformation leads to confusion, which often time leads to hate, which leads to oppression and marginalization[9]. Because this harm leads to oppression and marginalization it is fair to assert that it fulfills the "Discriminatory or otherwise unfair" requirement for it to be considered an injustice.

Second hand hermeneutical injustice is something that can only happen when epistemic gatekeeping occurs because there needs to be a misunderstanding of the societal experiences of marginally situated knowers, which only happens when there is information that cannot pass

[9] This is something I have firsthand knowledge of as someone who is transgender and bisexual.

from one system of knowledge to another. This is different than willful hermeneutic ignorance because when willful hermeneutic ignorance occurs people do not accept the pertinent social phenomena at play, by contrast in second hand hermeneutical injustice the pertinent social phenomena is accepted. Where willful hermeneutic ignorance is centered around unintelligible testimony, second hand hermeneutical injustice is centered around bastardized testimony. Using the example that Pohlhaus used from *To Kill a Mockingbird* the difference between the two will be examined.

Pohlhaus asserts that the white jury is guilty of willful hermeneutic ignorance because Atticus Finch proved beyond a doubt that Tom Robinson could not have beaten and raped Mayella Ewell because whoever did it had to be left handed, and Tom Robinson lost the use of his left hand when he was a child. The jury chooses to ignore what Robinson is saying because they are, "Using epistemic resources that do not allow for the intelligibility of what Robinson has to say (Pohlhaus, 2012)." The jury is not looking through the lenses of the pertinent social phenomena that are at play in the life of a black man in Alabama in the 1930s, rather they are looking through the lens of white men when deciding if a black man is innocent or guilty. The jury renders Tom Robinson's testimony unintelligible because of the lens they are being looked through. If the case were slightly different, it would not be willful hermeneutic ignorance at play, but rather second hand hermeneutical injustice. If the jury had looked at Robinson's testimony through the lens of a black man in the American south during the 1930s and misinterpreted what Robinson was saying instead of just not believing it, then second hand hermeneutical justice would have occurred.

The difference in the two injustices is the action taken by the dominantly situated party. If the dominantly situated party ignores pertinent social phenomena, ignores the marginally situated party, and refuses to accept a knowledge transfer, then willful hermeneutic ignorance has occurred. If the dominantly situated party uses pertinent social phenomena, misinterprets what is being said, and accepts parts of the knowledge transfer, then what happens is second hand hermeneutical injustice. One of the most important differences between the two injustices is the fact that one does not allow for the transfer of knowledge, whereas the other one allows for a partial transfer of knowledge. Second hand hermeneutical injustice does allow for a transfer of knowledge to take place because there is something about the transfer that is either incomplete or misunderstood as a result of epistemic gatekeeping that creates the phenomenon of second hand

hermeneutical injustice. Willful hermeneutic ignorance does not allow for a transfer of knowledge to the dominantly situated knowers because they are incapable of understanding what is being said due them not using proper epistemic resources.

Consequences of Epistemic Gatekeeping and Second Hand Hermeneutical Injustice

Second hand hermeneutical injustice does allow for the transfer of knowledge, but it should still be considered an injustice because the knowledge that is transferred is not complete. Oftentimes what is epistemically gatekept is fundamental to understanding the social interactions, lived experiences, and even identities of people in a whole community. An example of epistemic gatekeeping and second hand hermeneutical injustice has already been presented in this essay via dialogue in *Big Mouth*:

> No, bisexuality is so *binary*. Being pansexual means my sexual preference isn't limited by gender identity… It's like, some of you borings like tacos, and some of you like burritos. And if you're bisexual, you like tacos and burritos. But I'm saying I like tacos and burritos, and I could be into a taco that was born a burrito, or a burrito that is transitioning into a taco, *comprende*? And honey, anything else on the … menu. (Linnell, 2019)

This is a prime example of both epistemic gatekeeping and second hand hermeneutical injustice as it relates to the LGBTQ+ community.

The dominantly situated knowers are using epistemic resources developed by a marginally situated group of people with the former acknowledging the existence of pansexuality. Despite this use of epistemic resources developed by the Community, there is still a fundamental aspect of pansexuality that does not cross over from one system of knowledge to the other and that is the definition of pansexual. The definition of pansexual is, for whatever reason, epistemically gatekept, the dominantly situated knowers refuse to let it cross over into their system of knowledge, so they create a definition of their own. The dominantly situated knowers are falling victim to second hand hermeneutical injustice with the creation of their own definition of pansexuality because it prevents them from fully understanding the identity[10] of a group of people.

Just like hermeneutical injustice, second hand hermeneutical injustice is a two way street. There is an injustice that dominantly situated people experience and that would be not fully

[10] Identity is not the only thing that can be misunderstood in order for something to be considered second hand hermeneutical injustice. The misunderstanding of others' social interactions and experiences also qualify as second hand hermeneutical injustice.

understanding the social interactions, lived experiences, or identities of people around them; likewise, there is an injustice that the marginally situated knowers face, except this injustice is not epistemic, it's social. The social injustice that the marginally situated people experience is known as intersocial which is the, “Treatment of a group(s) of other people based on personally-held biases and prejudices (Social Justice Issues).” The bastardization of social interactions, lived experiences, or identity of marginally situated people leads to preconceived, faulty beliefs about marginalized communities. These preconceived, faulty beliefs arise out of the second hand hermeneutical injustice that is seen in dominantly situated knowers that comes from fundamental aspects of marginalized systems of knowledge being epistemically gatekept. The injustice that is seen by marginally situated people is not an injustice of knowledge creation, but an injustice of not being properly understood.

Epistemic gatekeeping and second hand hermeneutical injustice work hand in hand to prevent the social interactions, lived experiences, or identity of people from being understood outside of the marginalized community or communities that they belong to. The lack of understanding is not only detrimental to the production of knowledge, but also to the treatment of marginally situated people in society. Because we live in a world where we usually interact with people who do not share every aspect of our identity, misconceptions about people and their experiences can be harmful due to the lack of comprehension about them. These two detrimental phenomena can only exist when there is a dual system of societal knowledge. If there is one system of knowledge nothing can be gatekept from one system to another and if there is nothing to be gatekept, then second hand hermeneutical injustice does not occur because there is not a misunderstanding of interaction, experience, or identity.

Consolidating Systems of Knowledge

In order for phenomena like testimonial injustice, hermeneutical injustice, willful hermeneutic ignorance, epistemic gatekeeping, and second hand hermeneutical ignorance to disappear, there needs to be a consolidation of the dual system of societal knowledge. Both of the injustices, the ignorance, and their inevitable side effects are the result of the creation and maintenance of the dual system of societal knowledge. Consolidating the numerous knowledge systems that exist in society will do the exact thing that is missing from both Fricker’s and Pohlhaus’ solutions to the epistemic problems that they identify: attack the cause at the source.

In her *Epistemic Injustices Power & The Ethics of Knowing*, Fricker uses the movie *The Talented Mr. Ripley* as an example of testimonial injustice. She explains how Marge is the victim of testimonial injustice perpetrated by her late fiancé's father, Mr. Greenleaf, "Yet [Mr. Greenleaf] fails to see Marge as the source of knowledge about [his late son] that she manifestly is (Fricker 2007, 88)." Marge is the victim of testimonial injustice because Mr. Greenleaf fails to see her as the epistemic agent that she is. Because of her deflated status, Marge is unable to contribute to the system of knowledge that Mr. Greenleaf uses. The testimonial injustice that Marge faces is due to the fact that there is more than one system of knowledge that exists and she can't contribute to the system of knowledge that she needs to in order to be seen as the epistemic agent that she is. While this may seem like a localized instance of testimonial injustice, it is in fact systemic because the reason Marge is not believed is due to the fact that she is a woman, "Marge, there's female intuition, and then there are facts (Fricker 20007, 14)." Marge is being undermined as an epistemic agent because of her gender and the systemic bias against women.

While it seems that the necessary solution here would be to correct for the systemic biases that allow for the deflated level of credibility to be assigned to someone because of their identity, that is exactly what would happen with the consolidation of the dual system of societal knowledge. The creation of these systemic biases happens subconsciously, they are what is known as an implicit bias. Alexis Johnson the executive director of the Perception Institute, a consortium of researchers and strategists who attempt to reduce bias, says, "Implicit bias is our brains' automatic processing of negative stereotypes that have become embedded in our brains over time … without our conscious awareness (Chang, 2018)." While it is possible to combat the implicit biases that have formed, it takes a fundamental change in the understanding of society in order to do that. With a consolidation of the systems of knowledge people will have more readily available access to the knowledge that they need in order to break down the implicit biases they hold, and eventually the implicit biases will cease to exist because the negative stereotypes that have "become embedded in our brains" will no longer be there.

With the lack of implicit biases in society, systemic testimonial injustice will no longer exist because the root cause of testimonial injustice, prejudice and negative stereotypes, will cease to exist. Because of the lack of systemic testimonial injustice, hermeneutical injustice will also disappear. Fricker acknowledges that testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice are inherently linked because testimonial injustice wrongs people two different ways. The first way

testimonial injustice wrongs people is in their capacity as knowers because they are not seen as the epistemic agent that they are. The second way testimonial injustice wrongs people is in their capacity to know who they are:

> I do not think it an exaggeration to suggest that persistent cases of this sort of wrongful epistemic exclusion could, especially if they are also systematic, genuinely inhibit the development of an essential aspect of a person's identity (Fricker, 2007, 54)

Persistent, systematic exposure to testimonial injustice leads people to not having a full understanding of who they are and how they interact with society. Testimonial injustice is a root cause of hermeneutical injustice. If testimonial injustice no longer exists, then neither will hermeneutical injustice because the latter is a consequence of the former. Consolidating the dual system of societal knowledge into a unitary system of knowledge, will combat the existence of both testimonial and hermeneutical injustice.

The creation of a unitary system of knowledge will also combat willful hermeneutic ignorance. Pohlhaus uses the story of Tom Robinson from *To Kill a Mockingbird* to examine her theory. Tom Robinson, an African American, was accused of and charged for beating and raping Mayella Ewell, a white woman, in Alabama during the 1930s. The jury is unable to make sense of Tom Robinson's testimony because they are using epistemic resources developed by dominantly situated knowers to examine the experience of a marginally situated knower. This is considered to be willful hermeneutic ignorance because the members of the jury are willfully ignoring the resources that they can use to better understand the plight of Tom Robinson. Pohlhaus' solution to the problem she identifies is dominantly situated knowers using epistemic resources developed by marginally situated knowers when listening to testimony, "She can learn to use epistemic resources developed from the experiences of marginalized knowers." Pohlhaus' solution creates more epistemic problems because it leads to epistemic gatekeeping and second hand hermeneutical injustice through the maintenance of the dual system of societal knowledge.

Creating a unitary system of knowledge, that everyone has access to, and everyone contributes to regardless of social identity, is the solution that is needed to solve for epistemological phenomena that Fricker, Pohlhaus, and I identify. First, the unitary system allows for the implicit biases that pave the way for testimonial injustice to no longer be a part of our society because people will have the knowledge they need to break the subconscious biases that they have, which also eradicates hermeneutical injustice by removing its root cause. Second,

the consolidation of knowledge systems will also see the end of willful hermeneutic ignorance because there will be no disparity in the access to epistemic resources developed by people who are marginally situated because all epistemic resources will be in the same place. Lastly, creating a unitary system of knowledge will see the end to the phenomena known as epistemic gatekeeping and second hand hermeneutical injustice because it is the existence of the dual systems of knowledge that allowed them to exist in the first place. If the dual system of societal knowledge no longer exists, then neither does epistemic gatekeeping or second hand hermeneutical ignorance.

Conclusion

Miranda Fricker and Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr. brought attention to epistemic injustices that people experience. Fricker brought to light both testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. Pohlhaus shed light on willful hermeneutic ignorance. While it is important that all three epistemic injustices were brought to society's attention, it is equally important that there are viable, pragmatic ways for the injustices to be corrected for. Unfortunately, neither Fricker nor Pohlhaus were successful in that endeavor. While Fricker does propose a solution that could work moving forward, she seemingly ignores the need to correct for the damage that testimonial and hermeneutical injustice have already done. Pohlhaus also provides a solution to the phenomenon that she identifies; however, it leads to more epistemic problems.

The main failings of Fricker and Pohlhaus is their lack of utilizing triple loop behaviors. The problems that both philosophers identify are the result of something that is a fundamental part of our society and how we interact with others. In order to correct for the harm that they do, the way we store and create knowledge has to fundamentally be restructured because of the root causes of the problems Fricker and Pohlhaus identified. People need more access to more sources of knowledge in order to break the biases that bring testimonial and hermeneutical injustice to light. Access to this type of knowledge will also prevent dominantly situated people from being able to ignore pertinent social phenomena (white privilege, cishetnormativity, etc.) that shape the way marginalized people interact with society.

Triple loop behaviors, a fundamental re-work of our knowledge systems, are required to successfully mitigate the harms that are seen in epistemic injustice. The system that gave rise to these injustices cannot be the same system that sees them disappear because it was created to help these injustices form. In order for epistemic injustice to truly be eradicated a new system

needs to be put in place. It is this fundamental overhaul that Fricker and Pohlhaus neglect to include in their solutions. They both maintain the broken system that helped the injustices they identified not only form, but flourish. A third order change, achievable through triple loop behaviors, is necessary because the status quo is inadequate to see these injustices and their harms removed from society because it was created to foster the injustices.

Fricker and Pohlhaus are both fine with maintaining separate but equal systems of knowledge, which will not fully mitigate the harms of epistemic injustice. The maintenance of the dual system of societal knowledge only helps perpetuate the parts of epistemic injustice that Fricker and Pohlhaus identify. It is through a unitary system of knowledge that their injustices will disappear because people will have the resources that they need to break implicit biases and they will not be able ignore social phenomena like white privilege or cishetnormativity because everyone and every community will be able to contribute their social interactions and lived experiences to the same system of knowledge.